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RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Statement Circulated by Mr. Vladimir Karastin,
Deputy Minister for External Economic Relations and Trade
(As An Observer)

On behalf of the Government of the Russian Federation and our delegation let me welcome all the participants of this Conference and express gratitude to its organizers for the possibility to participate in such an authoritative international forum.

The present Conference is an outstanding event in the life of the World Trade Organization. In many aspects it will indicate the guidelines for the further development of the international trading system for the period till the end of this millennium and into the 21st century. Having made a definite choice in favour of a full membership in the WTO, the Russian Federation has an objective interest in strengthening the Organization, making it more universal, further improving the international trading rules against the background of the rapid changes in the world economy.

The strategic course of Russia is the every possible increase in foreign

markets of some South-East Asian countries. For the first time Russia really felt the real interlinkages between its market and the world finances.

This year is of particular importance for us in respect of the negotiating process on the accession to the WTO. At present the multilateral, "information" component of the accession process is in the advanced stage, bilateral tariff negotiations on the basis of the Russian offer have been launched and are continuing successfully. In the near future we will submit our initial offer on services.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend our gratitude to Member countries for a constructive stance in our Working Party and general support of our accession to the WTO.

We have a pragmatic task before us, bearing in mind that the trade regime for Russia should improve after the accession to the WTO. In exchange, our partners would get stable and predictable conditions of access to the Russian market.

We understand that these issues should be resolved in the course of the negotiations and we are ready to pursue them with all the interested Member countries. What we have at present at the "negotiating table" are our initial proposals, and that is how we would like our negotiating partners to consider them.