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EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

Statement Circulated by the Right Honourable Margaret Beckett MP,
President of the Board of Trade,
On Behalf of the Presidency of the Council of the European Communities

The European Union remains strongly committed to the primacy of the multilateral trading system and to maintaining the momentum of multilateral trade liberalization. The European Union is committed to the World Trade Organization as the foundation of the multilateral trading system with its clear framework of rules and disciplines and an effective system for the resolution of disputes.

The Second Ministerial Conference provides us with the opportunity to assess the state of implementation of the WTO agreements since our last meeting in Singapore and to look forward to future activities. This week we are also celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the multilateral trade system. This provides an ideal opportunity to highlight to a wide audience the contributions which the original General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and the subsequent WTO Agreements have made to world growth and development and to underline the benefits of continued trade liberalization for raising living standards and job creation.

The achievements since our last

the
benefits it provides for all, the European Union considers that this Conference provides a useful opportunity for all WTO Members to adopt a trade pledge. Recognizing the interlinkages between openness, economic growth and continued liberalization, we see this as in the interests of all WTO Members. This should take the form of a commitment to keep our markets open, to resist protectionist pressures, and to continue the process of multilateral liberalization.

At the same time, the success of the WTO, and prospects for further consolidation and strengthening of the multilateral trade system, depend very much on the full implementation of the range of commitments negotiated during the Uruguay Round and signed at Marrakesh. That is why we attach particular importance to the full implementation of these commitments by all WTO Members within the agreed timescales.

We appreciate that the particular conce

The European Union attaches particular priority to the integration of the Least-Developed Countries into the multilateral trading system. We are determined to ensure full implementation of the commitments made at the High-Level Meeting which took place last