

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

WT/MIN(09)/ST/37
1 December 2009

(09-6104)

MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE
Seventh Session
Geneva, 30 November - 2 December 2009

Original: English

THE SEPARATE CUSTOMS TERRITORY OF TAIWAN, PENGHU, KINMEN AND MATSU

Statement by HE Dr Yen-Shiang Shih
Minister of Economic Affairs

It gives me great pleasure to participate on behalf of the Separate Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu in this Seventh Ministerial Conference of the WTO. I would like to thank both the Director-General, Mr Pascal Lamy, and the Chairman of the General Council, Ambassador Mario Matus, for their efforts in arranging the Ministerial Conference at this decisive moment. I hope that, collectively, we can seize this opportunity to reach consensus on our path forward and demonstrate the real value of the multilateral trading system to our constituents at home.

It has been more than one year now since the onset of the global financial and economic crisis. We are heartened to see that through efforts Members have made to tackle the most severe financial plight we have confronted since the 1930s, the world economy is beginning to recover and trade is returning to normal. Even though concerns about protectionism have been re-awakened, thankfully, the WTO's monitoring and transparency mechanisms, as well as the Members' hard work in other fora such as APEC and the G-20, have helped to prevent its spread to a large degree.

As a WTO Member that is heavily reliant on trade, we know from experience that measures to liberalize and facilitate trade based on WTO rules and the principles of transparency and non-discrimination, are the best tools for building sound, sustainable and balanced economic development. In further pursuit of this belief, we became a signatory to the Agreement on Government Procurement this past July, demonstrating once more our support for the goals of free and open trade. We believe that enlargement of the GPA membership and coverage of commitments can be effective tools in creating more trade and restraining protectionism.

I think we have all learned yet again, not only from the current economic crisis, but also from various challenges we face today such as H1N1, climate change and food security, that we must inevitably cooperate in order to coexist and prosper. Global problems require globally-coordinated solutions. Now more than ever before, we need to work together to address the Members' prevailing concerns such as boosting economic recovery, restraining protectionism, protecting public health and mitigating the effects of global warming. The same goes for finding ways to further strengthen the WTO so it may better meet the global challenges that lie ahead.

To this end, I firmly believe that a prompt, substantial and balanced conclusion to the Doha Round is the most effective way of re-energizing global economic growth and strengthening the multilateral trading system to meet such challenges. Accordingly, I urge Members to exercise political will and flexibility to bring the negotiations to a successful conclusion.

While bearing in mind that the ultimate goal of our negotiations is to pursue a sustainable growth and benefits for all Members, we should not forget the importance of the developmental needs of the developing countries, particularly the LDCs. In addition, we urge that the concerns of the G-10, a group of net food importers, be taken into account in the agriculture modalities and that the extensive commitments made by recently acceded Members (RAMs) at their accessions be given appropriate consideration in the Round. The Members of the RAMs Group have also made clear their concerns in this Round, including their case for special treatment in the communication WT/MIN(09)/6 dated 27 November 2009.

Moreover, given the importance of the dispute settlement mechanism, I also encourage Members to maintain the negotiating momentum, and ensure that a consensus is reached before the conclusion of the single undertaking.

Apart from the negotiations, I would also like to stress the importance of maintaining a sound environment for the development of globally emerging industries, such as electronic commerce. In this regard, we reiterate our support for maintaining the Members' current practice of not imposing customs duties on electronic transmissions until our next session. As such, we urge Members to support the draft decision on the agenda. I believe that such an outcome will be the best way to balance taxation jurisprudence and trade facilitation. In addition, I propose that the WTO should further enhance its systematic cooperation with relevant international organizations, especially in the areas of establishing international standards and building global financial and economic order. Doing so will help Members mitigate potentially detrimental trade impact deriving from serious global incidents or crises.

Finally, I would like to emphasize that the WTO, which is member-driven, is now at a crucial crossroads. It is of the utmost importance that Members take action to restore the world's confidence in the multilateral trading system.
