

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

WT/MIN(01)/ST/98
11 November 2001

(01-5690)

MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE
Fourth Session
Doha, 9 - 13 November 2001

Original: English

LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

Statement Circulated by H. E. Mr Siasavath Savengsuksa
Vice Minister, Ministry of Commerce

(As an Observer)

First and foremost, let me express my deepest gratitude to the Chairman of the Ministerial Conference, and the Qatar Government for hosting this important event. I also would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Director-General of the WTO, Mr Mike Moore, and the Chairman of the General Council, as well as the staff at the WTO Secretariat, for their tireless efforts in organizing this conference.

On behalf of the Lao PDR Government I would like to extend my congratulations on the convening of the Doha meeting.

We all are aware that trade is regarded as one of the most important and effective tools to foster development. Increasing trade boosts economic activities and in turn, generates employment. Trade is important to all the countries of the world. It is vitally important to least-developed countries (LDCs) of the world for their survival. The Lao PDR is no exception.

The Lao PDR's accession to WTO is consistent with national policy to open the door and promote economic integration. Right now the Lao PDR is negotiating for accession to the WTO together with more than 30 nations. All of them are developing and least developed countries. They all would like to be part of the multilateral trading system.

However, whether a country can obtain membership depends mostly on the internal capacity of the economy. For the Lao PDR, the accession is closely connected with the trade policy review and improvement of the economy's capacity. This is essential to turn the WTO accession into development opportunities. Therefore, the accession process of the Lao PDR as well as that of the least-developed countries must be proceeded quickly without unreasonable delay.

In order to accelerate the accession process, the Lao PDR calls on the international community to extend support and assistance to the economies of the LDCs.

First, LDCs are facing with many limitations in preparation for their integration; as a result, they lack experience and thorough understanding of all related issues. Therefore, it is of great importance that the international community offers help for the LDCs to strengthen knowledge of technical issues including the various agreement, rules and regulations, standards of the WTO as well as trade negotiation techniques and tactics.

Second, the Lao PDR calls on all WTO Members not to request obligations extending beyond those contained in the WTO's regulations so that the Lao PDR as well as the other acceding LDCs may become a full Member of this Organization in the near future.

The new round of trade negotiation

The time of the launching of a new round of negotiations is also the time when the multilateral trading system has to make choices. The choice we must make today is whether to allow more countries, including developing and least-developed countries, to enjoy the opportunities and benefits brought about by the economic globalization, or to widen the gap between rich and poor countries.

The Lao PDR supports the launch of a new round of trade negotiation and holds:

First, the economic development of objectives of developing and least-developed countries and corresponding pattern of gradual market opening should be fully respected.

Second, developed countries should meet their obligations stipulated in the agreements of the Uruguay Round, and improve the market access environment for developing and least-developed countries.

Third, the formulation of new trade rules must have the full involvement of developing and least-developed countries.

Fourth, the coordination among developing countries should be strengthened, and their collective negotiation ability in the multilateral trading system should be improved.

Fifth, the new round of multilateral trade negotiations should focus on discussing issues related to trade. The Lao PDR holds that those issues that are not related to the functions of WTO such as labour standards should not be incorporated into the agenda.

Sixth, it is to be assured that new rule-making negotiations should allow substantial expansion of the special and differential (S&D) treatment provisions for LDCs, seriously taking into account their development needs and making these provisions more practical and responsive to the actual interests of the LDCs.

Seventh, the accession provisions should also be revised and include S&D issues in order to facilitate the accession process of the acceding LDCs.

The times are advancing and human being is progressing. We expect that all voices are being heard. Therefore we hope that through the joint endeavour of all the countries, the new round of negotiations will achieve satisfactory results.
