

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

WT/MIN(03)/13
10 September 2003

(03-4787)

MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE
Fifth Session
Cancún, 10 - 14 September 2003

Original: Spanish

ADDRESS BY THE HONOURABLE VICENTE FOX QUESADA PRESIDENT OF MEXICO

(AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE FIFTH MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE)

Good morning, welcome to Mexico, to this your home, which receives you with open arms in Cancún, this beautiful, marvellous corner of Mexico.

We hope you have a most enjoyable stay and that you will achieve clear and tangible results in your deliberations and work. It is an honour for me to welcome you to my country.

Mr Supachai Panitchpakdi, Director-General of the WTO,

Dear friends,

For us in Mexico, it is an honour to host this Fifth WTO Ministerial Conference, which is the Organization's supreme decision-making body. On behalf of the people and Government of Mexico, I extend to all of you the warmest welcome.

The 146 Members of this Organization are seeking to ensure that global trade flows circulate with the greatest possible fluidity, predictability and freedom in the interests of our peoples' wellbeing.

We share the awareness and the responsibility regarding the major challenges which the 21st century poses to trade and development. Confronting these challenges is a duty we share, a common responsibility which we cannot eschew.

We cannot permit prosperity to be restricted to certain countries; we cannot run the risk of continuing to live in a world marked by exclusion and injustice; we cannot put off the battle against poverty and marginalization.

So far we have failed to ensure that every person, every family, can fully exercise their right to an existence that is compatible with human dignity. Poverty is the real enemy to be vanquished.

Poverty leads to exclusion and kills hopes for the future. We cannot close our eyes when millions of people are living in poverty, as long as the dramatic gap between the rich and the poor continues to widen.

We do not want a world in which inequalities and exclusion continue to increase. We must now make every effort to associate economic and trade relations with the most important values and demands of our societies.

People and organizations in different parts of the world are asking us to find more human and more imaginative ways of promoting greater economic and social development in our countries.

Once and for all, we must meet the challenge of responding to this demand. Let us give a hearing to groups which are legitimately defending different economic alternatives. Let us listen to the ideas and proposals of those who, at this very moment, are expressing their views outside.

It is vital to find a global development strategy in which competitiveness and efficiency are associated with equality of opportunity. Let us once again ask ourselves whether we can afford the luxury of failing to establish just ties with least-developed regions and countries; whether we want conflict and violence to be the distinguishing traits of the 21st century.

I am convinced that combatting poverty is a combat in favour of justice and peace in the world. The major challenge facing humankind is to achieve far-reaching and equitable development, prosperity that is shared by all peoples on earth.

The WTO plays an essential role in this task because trade should be a catalyst for economic growth and make a decisive contribution to progress in all countries. Our challenge today is to consolidate a transparent and efficient multilateral trading system. With the rules we have adopted as a basis, let us guarantee freedom and equity in all our trade, and so promote real assistance for developing countries.

Thanks to teamwork, we can also speak of concrete results. In 2002, there was an increase in international trade in goods despite a slowdown in global growth.

The WTO has provided the environment for this recovery, for reflection and the discussion of ideas. There has also been progress in the anti-dumping negotiations and in access to global trade by the least-developed countries.

Our Organization, the WTO, can also help to resolve humanitarian problems. I would like to express my satisfaction at the recent agreement which allows the poorest countries to import generic medicines, that is to say, high-quality medicines at lower cost, in order to deal with such serious diseases as AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis, *inter alia*.

As Members of the WTO, we have placed development issues at the forefront of our negotiations. The Doha Round incorporates the interests and needs of developing countries in an ambitious and extensive work programme. Our success will define the terms for international trade relations in this new century and what we decide in this Organization could therefore have a major impact on the future of millions and millions of human beings.

We must reaffirm our commitment with a revitalized system of multilateral cooperation that underlines the joint responsibility of countries to deal with the problems of poverty, unemployment and the misuse of natural resources.

We therefore welcome the considerable efforts made by the United Nations and global institutions to promote and give impetus and commitment to a "virtuous circle", with the holding of meetings such as the one in New York in order to put into practice the Millennium objectives relating to human development. Mexico has assumed this commitment with the utmost seriousness and has given it the first priority.

Over the past two years, Mexico has reduced extreme poverty, families living in extreme poverty, by 17.1 per cent according to data from ECLAC. Maternal mortality has fallen by

14.5 per cent and we are still striving to achieve the Millennium objectives before the date fixed, 2015.

There was the Doha Conference and now we are here in Mexico to provide this catalyst for development. There was the International Conference on Financing for Development in Nuevo León, Mexico, with its important conclusions and actions. We were also all present at the meeting on natural resources in South Africa, where we undertook new commitments in this respect.

If the planet is our common dwelling, we are all responsible for ensuring that it shelters and protects us in the same way, we are all responsible for reversing the marked degradation of the environment and for promoting sustained and sustainable development. It is essential for ecological considerations to be included in our economic strategy and in our development programmes.

Poor countries need to grow and trade could be the vital engine for such growth. In order to achieve an open and non-discriminatory trading system, we must fight for the elimination of subsidies which, unjustly, constitute unfair trade practices and are of benefit to no-one.

Special attention should be paid to trade in agricultural products with developed countries. It is essential to eliminate non-tariff barriers.

One fundamental problem is unfair trade in the agricultural sector, which is the cornerstone of the economies of least-developed countries. The incomes of people who live in rural areas depend on the development of a fair and equitable agricultural sector.

There must be an end to the vicious circle in which, on the one hand, donor countries transfer resources in the form of development aid to beneficiary countries, while, on the other, they hamper their progress by imposing trade restrictions.

We must ensure that globalization does not exacerbate inequalities. We must achieve free trade in which competition depends on the quality of products and services and not on the amount of the subsidies given to create them.

It is not enough to try to dress up the current form of globalization with compensatory policies. The existence of divided and inequitable societies requires us all to show justice, goodwill and interest in others. If we all focus on this, the new trade round launched in Doha could yield immense benefits.

Dear friends,

Mexico has ceased to be an observer of the major global changes taking place. We are one of the most open economies, with considerable trade flows, and we have clearly benefited from the advantages of free trade. We are now the eighth largest exporter in the world and the first in Latin America; in terms of size, we have the ninth largest economy in the world.

Mexico is aware of its responsibilities in designing the new international architecture. We have fought for peace and we are promoting stronger multilateralism.

We are also advocating the right to development and cooperation among countries. We have hosted and promoted important meetings such as this WTO meeting in Cancún, the United Nations Conference on Financing for Development and the Summit of Leaders of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum (APEC); during these meetings we have adopted an open and respectful position and have given organizations in civil society an opportunity to express their views.

In international forums at the highest level, Mexico has spoken in favour of building bridges between developed and developing countries; bridges that will allow us to associate economic growth and human development; bridges to international openness and local strengthening; bridges to macroeconomic stability and individual prosperity.

Mexico, like other Latin American countries, is currently engaged in far-reaching changes which allow it to view the future with renewed hope. With democratic regimes as its basis, our region is leaving behind years of backwardness and political upheavals that only served to exacerbate the injustices.

Democracy has been the foundation on which our societies are building a better present and seeking a new future; it is the basis for the moral strength with which this continent is calling on the rest of the world to change and is itself changing at the pace dictated by the times.

Today, Mexico is speaking for Latin America and is reaffirming the determination to promote decisions that give developing countries equitable treatment and resolve their problems so as to implement the existing agreements.

Our aim is to consolidate the integration of developing countries into the multilateral trading system and thus reinforce their political and economic stability and social well-being.

Before concluding, I should like to recall that it will be two years tomorrow since the sad events that took place in New York and Washington, in which thousands of innocent people of different nationalities lost their lives.

The people and Government of Mexico once again express their solidarity with the United States of America and the victims, as well as the families of the victims of that tragic event.

Today, as before, we resolutely reject terrorism. We shall always be at the side of countries which are combating this terrible scourge and shall continue to be part of all the multilateral initiatives taken to eradicate it.

Dear friends,

This Ministerial Conference is a unique historic opportunity to assess the progress of our work; reach agreements and conclude our negotiations in a successful and timely manner so that in January 2005 we arrive at genuine solutions and practical plans of action for the objectives proposed by this Organization.

We underline the importance of international economic cooperation. We urge developed countries and international financing institutions to show flexibility and support solutions to problems and access to development especially the request now being made for Argentina.

The results of this Fifth Ministerial Conference will reaffirm the commitment by the Members of the WTO to a balanced agenda that seeks to achieve progress for all its Members. We must reach a conciliatory consensus in order to achieve a balance of visions and interests.

The agreements assist us in this, they do not divide us, because they bring us closer to our common objective. I call on you to meet the challenges facing us together in order to consolidate a stronger and more equitable multilateral trading system and a global economy with a human face that is more open and prosperous for all.

Many thanks and I wish you every success.

With your permission, I shall now open the meeting.

It is my great pleasure now to formally declare open the Fifth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization and express the hope that its work will be of great benefit to all the countries participating.

Once again, I wish you every success and hope that you have a pleasant stay in Mexico.
