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POLAND

Statement Circulated by Mr. Janusz Steinhoff,
Minister of Economy

Poland is proud to join other WTO Members in commemorating fifty years of the multilateral trading system. One obvious reason for this satisfaction are the accomplishments of the system itself, its great contribution to the development and stability of the world economy. But there are also particular reasons, related to my country's own history during this half century.

Poland's accession to GATT in 1967, helped us to retain institutional links with the international market place at the time when my country was still subjected to a political and economic system alien to aspirations and entrepreneurial spirit of its people. However, it has been only after the transformation process was launched at the turn of the present decade, that Poland could assume her full rights and obligations within the system. Our participation in the GATT/WTO framework has helped to consolidate the reform. Similarly, Poland's economic transformation enabled us to make tangible contributions to the system in the form of effective concessions and commitments.

Poland has faithfully responded to obligations resulting from the Uruguay Round, availing herself only of admissible derogations applicable to countries in the process of transformation from the centrally planned to market economy. More than 90 per cent of Poland's market access commitments resulting from the Uruguay Round negotiations have been implemented so far. The WTO legal framework is now extensively reflected in Poland's legislation and administration.

I turn now to the future. This Ministerial WTO Conference should, in our view, decide to commence a preparatory process aimed at preparing recommendations for the Third Ministerial WTO Conference to launch new comprehensive multilateral negotiations. Such recommendations should encompass issues stemming out from the existing mandates and agreements as well as from consideration of other matters proposed and agreed to by Members.

We believe that a comprehensive approach can provide all Members with the opportunity to let their interests be known and to participate effectively in preparing jointly the organization and management of future negotiations, including the scope, structure and the time frames aimed at achieving an overall balance of interests of all Members.

We are in full agreement that the multilateral trading system is a pillar of the world economic order. But we also believe that regional trading agreements are very useful components of that system, and contribute to the process of global liberalization. Future accession of Poland to the European Union will not create barriers to trade with third countries. It will enhance our ability to contribute to a global

trade expansion. The regional trading agreements should be scrutinized in the WTO in the light of respective WTO rules without going beyond the established criteria.

Poland is involved in WTO work related to the establishment of a proper approach to the issue of mutual relationships between trade and competition. In our view all WTO Members should create and implement an effective legislation on protection of competition.

My Government undertakes steps towards adjusting trade and industry to high standards of environmental protection. We believe that trade and environmental policies can be mutually compatible.

In our view the transparency of the public procurement should be assured by all WTO Members and we are looking forward to the establishment of a WTO agreement on transparency of procedures in the Government procurement rules.

Poland gradually introduces the provisions of the TRIPS Agreement into her legislation. Availing herself of the four year waiver, Poland adjusted her legislation on copyright and related rights to the WTO principles as demonstrated during a recent review of this legislation. The work is in progress on amendments to the industrial law which should be implemented this year.

My Government favours development of international investments. Consequently we support the ongoing work on the Multilateral Agreement on Investments (MAI) in OECD. However, if the present difficulties are not resolved after recommencement of the OECD work in October, Poland would be favourably disposed towards transferring the negotiation to the WTO, with possibly close cooperation involving WTO, OECD and UNCTAD.

Our WTO team actively participates in accession negotiations of new countries. Poland favours a rapid process of accession provided that acceding countries implement all the WTO principles and grant meaningful and commercially viable market access. The accession process should lead to achieving a satisfactory progress in adjustment to the WTO rules by the candidates in the course of multilateral and bilateral negotiations.

We recognize the particular importance of modern technologies in the economy, as demonstrated by our accession to the ITA, and intend to follow closely future WTO work in this area.

Poland favourably views the need to implement fundamental rights of employees and recognizes the International Labour Organization as the most competent Organization in this area. The ILO conference in June this year should bring specific results in the sphere of the enforcement of employee's rights with the participation of WTO Members.
