

PRESS RELEASE

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SWEDEN DONATES 7 MILLION SWEDISH CROWNS TO WTO TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FUND

The Swedish government pledged this week to provide 7 million crowns (about CHF 1.3 million) for WTO Technical Assistance to benefit least-developed countries. Swedish Minister for Trade, Mr. Leif Pagrotsky, signed a Memorandum of Understanding with WTO Director-General Mike Moore, who visited Stockholm this week.

"The aim of the development assistance allocation is to increase the participation of the developing countries and to create greater opportunities for them to influence the work of the WTO", said Mr. Pagrotsky. "In the Swedish view, we are convinced that the very poorest of the countries within the WTO system are in need of extra support, partly in order to protect their own interests in ongoing negotiations and trade disputes and partly in order to be able to carry out the necessary adjustments prescribed by WTO agreements. Sweden's contribution to the WTO fund is an important building stone in the work of establishing fair rules of the game in the field of trade.

"I am very grateful to Sweden for its contribution to the Trust Fund", said Mike Moore. "At the moment, the WTO can only respond to an increasing demand for technical assistance through these types of generous contributions. Unfortunately, the WTO's regular budget for technical assistance of CHF 741, 000 is insufficient to meet all the requests from least developed and developing countries, and economies in transition."

The Director-General has appealed to all WTO Member governments to raise the regular budget for technical assistance. A group of countries, including Sweden, has proposed to increase the regular budget for technical assistance by CHF 10 million. Sweden is one of the initiators of the WTO Trust Fund set up in 1999.

Mr. Moore and Mr. Pagrotsky issued a joint article¹ on Monday 24 July which called for the improvement through greater technical support of developing countries' capacity to participate in the work of the WTO: "All 137 member countries must be given real opportunities to participate in the decision-making process and to make their voices heard".

¹ The article was jointly published on 24 July by Dagens Nyheter (Sweden) and the Guardian (United Kingdom).