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Statement by H.E. Mr Hwang Doo-yun
Minister for Trade

On behalf of the Korean Government, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the people and Government of Mexico for hosting the Fifth WTO Ministerial Conference. I would also like to thank Director-General, Dr Supachai Panitchpakdi, the WTO Secretariat and Ambassador Carlos Perez Del Castillo, the Chair of the General Council, for their dedication and hard work in preparing for this Ministerial.

I would like to begin by taking this opportunity to wholeheartedly welcome our newest Members: Cambodia and Nepal, who will formally join the WTO at this Ministerial Conference. Our congratulations also go to the Republic of Macedonia and Armenia, who joined us this year. My country looks forward to working together with these new Members to meet the many challenges facing the WTO.

Two years ago in Doha, we launched the Doha Development Agenda, with a shared belief in the primacy of the multilateral trading system. We are now at the mid-point of the negotiations, yet the landscape is filled with hazards. The recovery of the global economy continues to suffer amid economic uncertainties and growing tensions around the world. The expansion of international trade has virtually come to a halt over the last two years, departing from the unprecedented growth in the previous decade. The proliferation of regional trade agreements has raised doubts about the validity of the WTO. And, in wake of the breathtaking advance of globalization, the multilateral trade rules are in urgent need of adjustment.

These are serious challenges, but these are the very reasons why we cannot allow these negotiations to fail. To dispel the doubts and restore confidence in the global open economy, the success of the Doha Development Agenda is crucial.

We have made considerable progress under the Doha Development Agenda thus far. The progress may not be up to the standard we set for ourselves in Doha. But we are now seeing encouraging signs of renewed momentum. The historic agreement on TRIPS and public health reached less than two weeks ago in Geneva not only shows that the system is working, but it also demonstrates to the world our commitment to alleviating human suffering.

It is my sincere belief that we can build upon this momentum to fulfill our mission here in Cancún. In our view, the principal tasks are threefold: first, to establish sound frameworks for the agriculture and the non-agricultural market access negotiations; second to launch the negotiations on the Singapore Issues; and third, to provide necessary political guidance in other areas.

In the area of agriculture, Korea remains committed to continuous reform. To this end, Korea has been faithfully implementing its Uruguay Round commitments. But the process has been extremely painful and difficult, politically as well as economically. A more radical reform

programme, which may undermine the minimum basis of production for food security and rural viability, is certain to fail. This is why we agreed in Doha that the reform process must address non-trade concerns. The framework to be established for the agricultural negotiations must be faithful to this agreement.

Non-agricultural products have been the backbone of international trade for many decades. Therefore, it is imperative that we set higher ambitions. Expansion in market access offers an excellent avenue for moving out of economic difficulties. This is equally true for trade among developing countries, who are increasingly trading with each other.

The WTO must continue to evolve to keep abreast with the fast-changing global trade environment. The call for negotiations on the Singapore Issues is a response to this challenge. After seven years of discussion, we cannot afford to waste any more time in launching the negotiations on the issues of investment, competition policy, transparency in government procurement, and trade facilitation. These issues are real trade concerns that touch upon the very heart of market access. In order for the WTO to remain relevant in the global economy, the WTO must start negotiations on the Singapore Issues.

The DDA is a broad-based and balanced agenda. For Korea, substantial achievements in the services and rules negotiations represent critical parts of the final package. We are encouraged by the progress in these negotiations. We look forward to acceleration of the services negotiations with greater participation of developing countries. We also look forward to clarifying and improving the Anti-Dumping Agreement through the rules negotiations, which remains one of Korea's top priorities in the DDA.

Needless to say, addressing the development-related concerns is critical to the success of the Doha Development Agenda. But our efforts to this end should not be limited to the so-called development issues. In Korea's experience, greater market access and effective multilateral rules are among the most powerful engines of economic development.

In closing, I would like to stress that this Ministerial Conference is more than a mid-term review. Our ability to make the necessary decisions and to provide additional guidance here will have a critical bearing on the fate of the Doha Development Agenda. Like many other Members, Korea is committed to the successful conclusion of the Doha negotiations by 1 January 2005. Korea will be an active and constructive partner in the common endeavour to further strengthening the multilateral trading system.
