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KAZAKHSTAN

Statement by H.E. Mr Zhaksybek Kulekeyev
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(Speaking as an Observer)

First of all, let me express our gratitude to the Government of Qatar and the friendly people of Qatar for the warm reception to all conference participants in the hospitable land of Qatar.

This year Kazakhstan celebrates its tenth anniversary of state independence. It is a short period during which we have been developing an open market economy.

We cannot envisage such reforms without integration into the multilateral trading system, based on the principles and rules of the World Trade Organization.

Kazakhstan considers accession to the World Trade Organization as a priority task of its external economic policy.

Kazakhstan began the process of accession in 1996. During this period we completed preparatory tasks which are essential for eventual accession: we submitted for consideration for Working Party members the Memorandum on Foreign Trade Regime; and we undertook significant work to bring the legislation of the country into conformity with the rules and principles of the WTO.

We have had four Working Party meetings and rounds of bilateral negotiations with our main trading partners so far.

The last meeting of the Working Party on the accession of Kazakhstan to the WTO was held in July. At this meeting significant progress in the area of legislative reform by Kazakhstan was noted. Between the last two Working Party meetings 14 priority and significant laws in the area of foreign trade were adopted, including: the Customs Code, the Patent Law, the Law on Standardization, the Law on Certification, the Law on Anti-Dumping, the Law on Unfair Competition and others. By the end of this year the following laws are planned to be adopted; on Commercial Secrets, on Integrated Circuits Rights Protection and some others. The adoption of these laws will address the remaining discrepancies in the legislative base of Kazakhstan with regard to WTO requirements.

One of the most important results of the last meeting of the Working Party was the recognition on the part of members of the Working Party of the necessity of intensifying bilateral negotiations on the conditions of market access of goods and services to Kazakhstan.

The Government of Kazakhstan hopes that WTO Members would take into account the evolving economic situation in Kazakhstan, associated with comprehensive reforms and structural

adjustment, while negotiating import tariff concessions in agriculture and industry, domestic support in agriculture as well as market access in services.

Kazakhstan is ready to become a fully-fledged Member of the WTO, assuming the observance of the balance of interests, costs and benefits of WTO membership. The prospects for development of the Kazakhstan economy in many respects depend on overcoming crisis situations in certain industries, structural reorganization and completion of reforms. Therefore for Kazakhstan it is extremely important that WTO Members refrain from requesting from Kazakhstan overly rigid and excessive commitments, as compared to the obligations of existing WTO Members, so that Kazakhstan can provide necessary levels of tariff protection for sensitive sectors and develop the infant-industry sectors of its economy.

It is also very important for the economy of Kazakhstan to receive the right to appropriate transitional periods for tariff reduction on industrial and agricultural products; for the reduction of support measures in respect of agricultural production and export; and during the implementation of TRIMs and TRIPS provisions.

Agriculture in Kazakhstan is in a critical situation. There are severe climatic conditions; there is an absence of direct access to major seaports; there is a necessity to develop rural areas where more than half of the country's population lives. All of these make it vitally important to preserve in future internal measures of support for agricultural goods producers at appropriate levels, comparable to the level of many WTO Member countries.

The process of accession and eventually participation in the WTO as a fully-fledged Member require professionally trained national experts. In this regard Kazakhstan is grateful to the relevant WTO Members and the Secretariat, as well as to other relevant international organizations for providing technical assistance in the course of accession to the WTO. Such assistance has included:

- Training of national experts, organization of seminars and workshops on the multilateral trading system, including dispute settlement, anti-dumping measures, subsidies and countervailing measures, intellectual property rights protection, rules of origin, etc;
- active participation of Kazakhstani officials in the WTO Special Trade Policy Course.

We hope very much that such assistance will be continued and intensified in the future.

We intend in addition to actively use technical assistance provided by other relevant international organizations.

In view of the new multilateral trade negotiations, Kazakhstan would like to thank WTO Members for opening them for acceding countries. The Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan will make every effort to participate in these negotiations. We are of the view that Kazakhstan should be able to become a WTO Member during these negotiations.
