

PRESS RELEASE

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STATEMENT BY MIGUEL RODRIGUEZ

WTO DEPUTY DIRECTOR-GENERAL

At the end of his first week in office as Deputy Director-General, Mr. Miguel Rodriguez issued the following mission statement:

"I am conscious of the difficult tasks ahead of us all. The road to Seattle is still full of stumbling blocks. I did not come to the WTO to seek an early retirement. I came to make a contribution to the strengthening of the multilateral trading system. Being from a developing country and having devoted most of my professional life to working on trade issues, I am fully convinced that the development goals of our countries could be best served by a strong multilateral trading system. We need more rules not less. It is the effective implementation of all countries' commitments, not less compliance that will make the system work better.

"The WTO guarantees that it is law, not force that rules in international trade relations. If the WTO did not exist we might have to invent it. All countries should have a stake in making the system work. At the same time, to have a workable trading system the concerns of all participants, big and small, developed and developing, strong and weak should be fully taken into account. Otherwise, we may run the risk of losing legitimacy and, at the end, debilitating the system itself.

"I feel extremely happy and honoured to join Mike Moore and all the WTO staff, and look forward to working with them in this critical time. I am sure I will learn a lot from them all. Our task is very challenging. Just a few years ago, the Uruguay Round succeeded in fundamentally reshaping the multilateral trading system. The scope of the WTO is much wider than that of its predecessor, the GATT, and it deals more and more with policies and regulations. However, reshaping the system may be an ongoing and never-ending process as new rules and further adaptations may be needed for the WTO to keep pace with technological change and the accelerated evolution of the world economy."