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WORLD TRADE REPORT 2003

New WTO Report Focuses On Questions of Development

The WTO Secretariat launched today the first edition of a new annual publication known as the World Trade Report. This report, conceived and developed by Director-General Supachai Panitchpakdi, is intended to make a contribution to the public debate on trade policy and the multilateral trading system.

"The *World Trade Report 2003* seeks to deepen public understanding of pressing policy issues," writes Dr. Supachai in his foreword to the Report. "The central focus of this year's report is development. By explaining the origin of this issue and others and by offering an analytical framework within which to address them, the Report aims to contribute to more informed discussion and a better appreciation of the options available to address policy challenges."

The 270-page report gives extensive examination to the Doha Development Agenda round of global trade negotiations and states clearly that these talks hold significant potential for raising levels of development in impoverished countries. This is particularly true with respect to negotiations on agriculture and non-agricultural market access.

"There is a powerful case to be made that enhanced market access for poor countries' products, and greater equity in WTO rules, can bolster development efforts," said Dr. Supachai. "This report argues forcefully in favour of an intensified engagement in the global trading system by all our Member Governments. Without this greater commitment and leadership from governments, there will be a tendency to postpone the difficult political decisions that must be taken if we are to have a successful Doha round and a stronger global trading system."

There are two sections to the report. The first section titled "Trade and Trade Policy Developments" focuses on three issues of topical interest: South-South trade; non-oil commodity markets; and regional trade agreements. On each issue, the Report analyzes developments over the last few years, highlights their implications, and draws a number of conclusions about the options facing governments.

The second section titled "Trade and Development" starts with a brief discussion of development and the relationship between trade and development, and goes on to analyze in depth how the Doha Development Agenda can contribute to growth and development in developing countries.

As governments formulate their positions in respect of the many issues on the Doha agenda requiring decision, Dr Supachai reminds negotiators that the effective pursuit of national interests requires joint action around shared objectives. "That means joint responsibility for an effective process of give and take," he writes. "Countries hardly ever obtain everything they want in negotiations, but it is deeply fallacious to see an outcome yielding no result as a better option than one that might require hard work and patience, but offers something to all parties."

This report may be purchased from the WTO Bookshop or through the WTO online bookshop.

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