

WTO, Singapore Ministerial Declaration (Adopted on 13 December 1996)

World Trade Organization

copy @ lexmercatoria.org

Copyright © 1996 World Trade Organization

Contents

WTO, Singapore Ministerial Declaration (Adopted on 13 December 1996) 1

Purpose 1

Trade and Economic Growth 1

Integration of Economies; Opportunities and Challenges 1

Core Labour Standards 1

Marginalization 1

Role of WTO 2

Regional Agreements 2

Accessions 2

Dispute Settlement 2

Implementation 3

Notifications and Legislation 3

Developing Countries 3

Least-Developed Countries 4

Textiles and Clothing 4

Trade and Environment 4

Services Negotiations 5

ITA and Pharmaceuticals 5

Work Programme and Built-in Agenda 6

Investment and Competition 6

Transparency in Government Procurement / Trade Facilitation 7

[minimizing the burden] 7

[50th Anniversary] 7

[Post Provisions] 7

[Post Clauses (If any: Signed; Witnessed; Done; Authentic Texts; [Post Clauses (If any: Signed; Witnessed; Done; Authentic Texts; & Deposited Clauses)] Deposited Clauses)] 7

Metadata 8

SiSU Metadata, document information 8

1 **WTO, Singapore Ministerial Declaration (Adopted on**
2 **13 December 1996)**

3 **Purpose**

4 1. We, the Ministers, have met in Singapore from 9 to 13 De-
5 cember 1996 for the first regular biennial meeting of the WTO at
6 Ministerial level, as called for in Article IV of the Agreement Es-
7 tablishing the World Trade Organization, to further strengthen
8 the WTO as a forum for negotiation, the continuing liberalization
9 of trade within a rule-based system, and the multilateral review
10 and assessment of trade policies, and in particular to:

- 11 - assess the implementation of our commitments under the
12 WTO Agreements and decisions;
- 13 - review the ongoing negotiations and Work Programme;
- 14 - examine developments in world trade; and
- 15 - address the challenges of an evolving world economy.

16 **Trade and Economic Growth**

17 2. For nearly 50 years Members have sought to fulfil, first in
18 the GATT and now in the WTO, the objectives reflected in the
19 preamble to the WTO Agreement of conducting our trade re-
20 lations with a view to raising standards of living worldwide.?
21 The rise in global trade facilitated by trade liberalization within
22 the rules-based system has created more and better-paid jobs
23 in many countries. The achievements of the WTO during its
24 first two years bear witness to our desire to work together to
25 make the most of the possibilities that the multilateral system
26 provides to promote sustainable growth and development while
27 contributing to a more stable and secure climate in international
28 relations.

29 **Integration of Economies;?Opportunities and**
30 **Challenges**

31 3. We believe that the scope and pace of change in the inter-
32 national economy, including the growth in trade in services and
33 direct investment, and the increasing integration of economies
34 offer unprecedented opportunities for improved growth, job crea-
35 tion, and development.?
36 These developments require adjust-
37 ment by economies and societies.?
38 They also pose challenges
39 to the trading system.?
40 We commit ourselves to address these
41 challenges.

42 **Core Labour Standards**

43 4. We renew our commitment to the observance of interna-
44 tionally recognized core labour standards.?
45 The International
46 Labour Organization (ILO) is the competent body to set and
47 deal with these standards, and we affirm our support for its
48 work in promoting them.?
49 We believe that economic growth and
50 development fostered by increased trade and further trade lib-
51 eralization contribute to the promotion of these standards.?
52 We
53 reject the use of labour standards for protectionist purposes,
54 and agree that the comparative advantage of countries, partic-
55 ularly low-wage developing countries, must in no way be put
56 into question.?
57 In this regard, we note that the WTO and ILO
58 Secretariats will continue their existing collaboration.

59 **Marginalization**

60 5. We commit ourselves to address the problem of marginaliza-
61 tion for least-developed countries, and the risk of it for certain
62 developing countries.?
63 We will also continue to work for greater
64 coherence in international economic policy-making and for im-

proved coordination between the WTO and other agencies in providing technical assistance.

16 Role of WTO

17 6. In pursuit of the goal of sustainable growth and development for the common good, we envisage a world where trade flows freely. To this end we renew our commitment to:

- 18 - a fair, equitable and more open rule-based system;
- 19 - progressive liberalization and elimination of tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade in goods;
- 20 - progressive liberalization of trade in services;
- 21 - rejection of all forms of protectionism;
- 22 - elimination of discriminatory treatment in international trade relations;
- 23 - integration of developing and least-developed countries and economies in transition into the multilateral system; and
- 24 - the maximum possible level of transparency.

25 Regional Agreements

26 7. We note that trade relations of WTO Members are being increasingly influenced by regional trade agreements, which have expanded vastly in number, scope and coverage. Such initiatives can promote further liberalization and may assist least-developed, developing and transition economies in integrating into the international trading system. In this context, we note the importance of existing regional arrangements involving developing and least-developed countries. The expansion and extent of regional trade agreements make it important to analyse whether the system of WTO rights

and obligations as it relates to regional trade agreements needs to be further clarified. We reaffirm the primacy of the multilateral trading system, which includes a framework for the development of regional trade agreements, and we renew our commitment to ensure that regional trade agreements are complementary to it and consistent with its rules. In this regard, we welcome the establishment and endorse the work of the new Committee on Regional Trade Agreements. We shall continue to work through progressive liberalization in the WTO as we are committed in the WTO Agreement and Decisions adopted at Marrakesh, and in so doing facilitate mutually supportive processes of global and regional trade liberalization.

Accessions

27
28 8. It is important that the 28 applicants now negotiating accession contribute to completing the accession process by accepting the WTO rules and by offering meaningful market access commitments. We will work to bring these applicants expeditiously into the WTO system.

Dispute Settlement

29
30 9. The Dispute Settlement Understanding (DSU) offers a means for the settlement of disputes among Members that is unique in international agreements. We consider its impartial and transparent operation to be of fundamental importance in assuring the resolution of trade disputes, and in fostering the implementation and application of the WTO agreements. The Understanding, with its predictable procedures, including the possibility of appeal of panel decisions to an Appellate Body and provisions on implementation of recommendations, has improved Members' means of resolving their differences. We

believe that the DSU has worked effectively during its first two years. We also note the role that several WTO bodies have played in helping to avoid disputes. We renew our determination to abide by the rules and procedures of the DSU and other WTO agreements in the conduct of our trade relations and the settlement of disputes. We are confident that longer experience with the DSU, including the implementation of panel and appellate recommendations, will further enhance the effectiveness and credibility of the dispute settlement system.

31 Implementation

32 10. We attach high priority to full and effective implementation of the WTO Agreement in a manner consistent with the goal of trade liberalization. Implementation thus far has been generally satisfactory, although some Members have expressed dissatisfaction with certain aspects. It is clear that further effort in this area is required, as indicated by the relevant WTO bodies in their reports. Implementation of the specific commitments scheduled by Members with respect to market access in industrial goods and trade in services appears to be proceeding smoothly. With respect to industrial market access, monitoring of implementation would be enhanced by the timely availability of trade and tariff data. Progress has been made also in advancing the WTO reform programme in agriculture, including in implementation of agreed market access concessions and domestic subsidy and export subsidy commitments.

33 Notifications and Legislation

34 11. Compliance with notification requirements has not been fully satisfactory. Because the WTO system relies on mutual monitoring as a means to assess implementation, those Mem-

bers which have not submitted notifications in a timely manner, or whose notifications are not complete, should renew their efforts. At the same time, the relevant bodies should take appropriate steps to promote full compliance while considering practical proposals for simplifying the notification process.

12. Where legislation is needed to implement WTO rules, Members are mindful of their obligations to complete their domestic legislative process without further delay. Those Members entitled to transition periods are urged to take steps as they deem necessary to ensure timely implementation of obligations as they come into effect. Each Member should carefully review all its existing or proposed legislation, programmes and measures to ensure their full compatibility with the WTO obligations, and should carefully consider points made during review in the relevant WTO bodies regarding the WTO consistency of legislation, programmes and measures, and make appropriate changes where necessary.

Developing Countries

13. The integration of developing countries in the multilateral trading system is important for their economic development and for global trade expansion. In this connection, we recall that the WTO Agreement embodies provisions conferring differential and more favourable treatment for developing countries, including special attention to the particular situation of least-developed countries. We acknowledge the fact that developing country Members have undertaken significant new commitments, both substantive and procedural, and we recognize the range and complexity of the efforts that they are making to comply with them. In order to assist them in these efforts, including those with respect to notification and legislative requirements, we will improve the availability of technical assistance under the agreed guidelines. We have also agreed to recommenda-

tions relative to the decision we took at Marrakesh concerning the possible negative effects of the agricultural reform programme on least-developed and net food-importing developing countries.

38 **Least-Developed Countries**

39 14. We remain concerned by the problems of the least-developed countries and have agreed to:

40 - a Plan of Action, including provision for taking positive measures, for example duty-free access, on an autonomous basis, aimed at improving their overall capacity to respond to the opportunities offered by the trading system;

41 - seek to give operational content to the Plan of Action, for example, by enhancing conditions for investment and providing predictable and favourable market access conditions for LLDCs' products, to foster the expansion and diversification of their exports to the markets of all developed countries; and in the case of relevant developing countries in the context of the Global System of Trade Preferences; and

42 - organize a meeting with UNCTAD and the International Trade Centre as soon as possible in 1997, with the participation of aid agencies, multilateral financial institutions and least-developed countries to foster an integrated approach to assisting these countries in enhancing their trading opportunities.

43 **Textiles and Clothing**

44 15. We confirm our commitment to full and faithful implementation of the provisions of the Agreement on Textiles and Clothing (ATC). We stress the importance of the integration of textile products, as provided for in the ATC, into GATT 1994 under its

strengthened rules and disciplines because of its systemic significance for the rule-based, non-discriminatory trading system and its contribution to the increase in export earnings of developing countries. We attach importance to the implementation of this Agreement so as to ensure an effective transition to GATT 1994 by way of integration which is progressive in character. The use of safeguard measures in accordance with ATC provisions should be as sparing as possible. We note concerns regarding the use of other trade distortive measures and circumvention. We reiterate the importance of fully implementing the provisions of the ATC relating to small suppliers, new entrants and least-developed country Members, as well as those relating to cotton-producing exporting Members. We recognize the importance of wool products for some developing country Members. We reaffirm that as part of the integration process and with reference to the specific commitments undertaken by the Members as a result of the Uruguay Round, all Members shall take such action as may be necessary to abide by GATT 1994 rules and disciplines so as to achieve improved market access for textiles and clothing products. We agree that, keeping in view its quasi-judicial nature, the Textiles Monitoring Body (TMB) should achieve transparency in providing rationale for its findings and recommendations. We expect that the TMB shall make findings and recommendations whenever called upon to do so under the Agreement. We emphasize the responsibility of the Goods Council in overseeing, in accordance with Article IV:5 of the WTO Agreement and Article 8 of the ATC, the functioning of the ATC, whose implementation is being supervised by the TMB.

Trade and Environment

16. The Committee on Trade and Environment has made an important contribution towards fulfilling its Work Pro-

gramme. The Committee has been examining and will continue to examine, inter alia, the scope of the complementarities between trade liberalization, economic development and environmental protection. Full implementation of the WTO Agreements will make an important contribution to achieving the objectives of sustainable development. The work of the Committee has underlined the importance of policy coordination at the national level in the area of trade and environment. In this connection, the work of the Committee has been enriched by the participation of environmental as well as trade experts from Member governments and the further participation of such experts in the Committee's deliberations would be welcomed. The breadth and complexity of the issues covered by the Committee's Work Programme shows that further work needs to be undertaken on all items of its agenda, as contained in its report. We intend to build on the work accomplished thus far, and therefore direct the Committee to carry out its work, reporting to the General Council, under its existing terms of reference.

47 **Services Negotiations**

48 17. The fulfilment of the objectives agreed at Marrakesh for negotiations on the improvement of market access in services - in financial services, movement of natural persons, maritime transport services and basic telecommunications - has proved to be difficult. The results have been below expectations. In three areas, it has been necessary to prolong negotiations beyond the original deadlines. We are determined to obtain a progressively higher level of liberalization in services on a mutually advantageous basis with appropriate flexibility for individual developing country Members, as envisaged in the Agreement, in the continuing negotiations and those scheduled to begin no later than 1 January 2000. In this context, we look forward to

full MFN agreements based on improved market access commitments and national treatment. Accordingly, we will:

- achieve a successful conclusion to the negotiations on basic telecommunications in February 1997; and 49
- resume financial services negotiations in April 1997 with the aim of achieving significantly improved market access commitments with a broader level of participation in the agreed time frame. 50

With the same broad objectives in mind, we also look forward to a successful conclusion of the negotiations on Maritime Transport Services in the next round of negotiations on services liberalization. 51

In professional services, we shall aim at completing the work on the accountancy sector by the end of 1997, and will continue to develop multilateral disciplines and guidelines. In this connection, we encourage the successful completion of international standards in the accountancy sector by IFAC, IASC, and IOSCO. With respect to GATS rules, we shall undertake the necessary work with a view to completing the negotiations on safeguards by the end of 1997. We also note that more analytical work will be needed on emergency safeguards measures, government procurement in services and subsidies. 52

ITA and Pharmaceuticals 53

18. Taking note that a number of Members have agreed on a Declaration on Trade in Information Technology Products, we welcome the initiative taken by a number of WTO Members and other States or separate customs territories which have applied to accede to the WTO, who have agreed to tariff elimination for trade in information technology products on an MFN basis as well as the addition by a number of Members of over 54

400 products to their lists of tariff-free products in pharmaceuticals.

- the work undertaken shall not prejudice the nature of the activity agreed upon (i.e. negotiation or review).

60

55 Work Programme and Built-in Agenda

56 19. Bearing in mind that an important aspect of WTO activities is a continuous overseeing of the implementation of various agreements, a periodic examination and updating of the WTO Work Programme is a key to enable the WTO to fulfil its objectives. In this context, we endorse the reports of the various WTO bodies. A major share of the Work Programme stems from the WTO Agreement and decisions adopted at Marrakesh. As part of these Agreements and decisions we agreed to a number of provisions calling for future negotiations on Agriculture, Services and aspects of TRIPS, or reviews and other work on Anti-Dumping, Customs Valuation, Dispute Settlement Understanding, Import Licensing, Preshipment Inspection, Rules of Origin, Sanitary and Phyto-Sanitary Measures, Safeguards, Subsidies and Countervailing Measures, Technical Barriers to Trade, Textiles and Clothing, Trade Policy Review Mechanism, Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights and Trade-Related Investment Measures. We agree to a process of analysis and exchange of information, where provided for in the conclusions and recommendations of the relevant WTO bodies, on the Built-in Agenda issues, to allow Members to better understand the issues involved and identify their interests before undertaking the agreed negotiations and reviews.

57 We agree that:

58 - the time frames established in the Agreements will be respected in each case;

59 - the work undertaken shall not prejudice the scope of future negotiations where such negotiations are called for; and

Investment and Competition

61

62 20. Having regard to the existing WTO provisions on matters related to investment and competition policy and the built-in agenda in these areas, including under the TRIMs Agreement, and on the understanding that the work undertaken shall not prejudice whether negotiations will be initiated in the future, we also agree to:

- establish a working group to examine the relationship between trade and investment; and

63

- establish a working group to study issues raised by Members relating to the interaction between trade and competition policy, including anti-competitive practices, in order to identify any areas that may merit further consideration in the WTO framework.

64

65 These groups shall draw upon each other's work if necessary and also draw upon and be without prejudice to the work in UNCTAD and other appropriate intergovernmental fora. As regards UNCTAD, we welcome the work under way as provided for in the Midrand Declaration and the contribution it can make to the understanding of issues. In the conduct of the work of the working groups, we encourage cooperation with the above organizations to make the best use of available resources and to ensure that the development dimension is taken fully into account. The General Council will keep the work of each body under review, and will determine after two years how the work of each body should proceed. It is clearly understood that future negotiations, if any, regarding multilateral disciplines in these areas, will take place only after an explicit consensus deci-

sion is taken among WTO Members regarding such negotiations.

66 **Transparency in Government Procurement / Trade
Facilitation**

67 21. We further agree to:

68 - establish a working group to conduct a study on transparency
in government procurement practices, taking into account national
policies, and, based on this study, to develop elements
for inclusion in an appropriate agreement; and

69 - direct the Council for Trade in Goods to undertake exploratory
and analytical work, drawing on the work of other relevant international
organizations, on the simplification of trade procedures
in order to assess the scope for WTO rules in this area.

[minimizing the burden]

70 22. In the organization of the work referred to in paragraphs 20
and 21, careful attention will be given to minimizing the burdens
on delegations, especially those with more limited resources,
and to coordinating meetings with those of relevant UNCTAD
bodies. The technical cooperation programme of the Secretariat
will be available to developing and, in particular, least-
developed country Members to facilitate their participation in
this work.

[50th Anniversary]

71 23. Noting that the 50th anniversary of the multilateral trading
system will occur early in 1998, we instruct the General Council
to consider how this historic event can best be commemorated.

[Post Provisions]

***[Post Clauses (If any: Signed; Witnessed; Done; Authentic
Texts; & Deposited Clauses)]***

Finally, we express our warmest thanks to the Chairman of the
Ministerial Conference, Mr. Yeo Cheow Tong, for his personal
contribution to the success of this Ministerial Conference. We
also want to express our sincere gratitude to Prime Minister Goh
Chok Tong, his colleagues in the Government of Singapore and
the people of Singapore for their warm hospitality and the excellent
organization they have provided. The fact that this first
Ministerial Conference of the WTO has been held at Singapore
is an additional manifestation of Singapore's commitment to an
open world trading system.

72

Metadata

SiSU Metadata, document information

Document Manifest @:

`<http://www.jus.uio.no/lm/wto.ministerial.declaration.singapore.1996/sisu_manifest.html>`

Title: WTO, Singapore Ministerial Declaration (Adopted on 13 December 1996)

Creator: World Trade Organization

Rights: Copyright (C) 1996 World Trade Organization

Publisher: SiSU `<http://www.jus.uio.no/sisu>` (this copy)

Date: 1996-12-13

Topics Registered: World Trade Organization:declaration;international economic law:declaration

Version Information

Sourcefile: wto.ministerial.declaration.singapore.1996.sst

Filetype: SiSU text 2.0

Source Digest: SHA256(wto.ministerial.declaration.singapore.1996.sst)=-7e267c39edb0943821caee7b8e5fd79c6cbe0d26488ef3e793a1ad63b41ad033

Skin Digest: SHA256(skin_lm.rb)=5acda64a9532f9ef6b71693da2b471d4-efac2f23a8499e68de066eec8ea9b8e9

Generated

Document (dal) last generated: Tue Sep 21 18:23:21 -0400 2010

Generated by: SiSU 2.6.3 of 2010w30/3 (2010-07-28)

Ruby version: ruby 1.8.7 (2010-08-16 patchlevel 302) [i486-linux]