

Trade Policy review of Australia

05 March 2007

Statement by Pakistan

Mr. Chairman,

We join others in welcoming HE Mr. Christopher Langman, First Assistant Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, leading Australian delegation at their trade policy review. We recognize the efforts put in by the Secretariat in compiling all these documents for the Members convenience. We especially admire the analytical role of Ambassador SUN, who has efficiently made us voyage through the trade policy measures and practices of Australia.

The presentation made by the head of Australian delegation has been impressive. Consistency in their trade policy regime, unilateral tariff liberalization, diversity in products mix and markets, added focus on Doha development agenda, canalizing the experience of regional trade deals into multilateralism; and above all, transparency and accountability are just a few of the virtues we need to learn from Australia.

We are very much inspired by the steady economic growth of Australia across nearly all sectors of economy. As per the opening statement in the Secretariat's report, it is the high level of transparency, which is not only a hallmark in formulation and evaluation of Australian policies, but has also contributed greatly to its continued process of reform. The resulting rise in productivity and improved competitiveness of Australia's goods and services in world markets has enabled real GDP to grow at an annual rate of about 3.5% during the past 15 years, with substantial raise in per capita income rising to eighth place among OECD countries; and unemployment declining to just 4.8% in August 2006.

Mr. Chair,

We have traditionally good relations with Australia, though the trade has not grown much, hovering around half a billion US dollars per annum, with significant trade deficit, owing to various reasons. For example, even when

the average MFN tariffs are as low as 1.5% and 4.1% for agricultural and non-agricultural products respectively, we face pronounced tariff walls and non-tariff barriers on the products of our export interest. The applied tariffs on textiles, clothing and footwear are still maintained at 17.5%, which pose a challenge of competition to our exports against the imports from countries with similar level of socio-economic development indicators but enjoying zero duty and other preferential benefits. On the margins of Cairns Group meeting last September, we requested Australia to reconsider their preferential scheme to have WTO compatible, objective, transparent and non-reciprocal criteria. We are confident of Australia's thoughtfulness in this regard.

Our business community is also concerned with the stringent sanitary and phyto-sanitary standards in Australian market, thereby affecting our fruits, vegetables and other agricultural products.

In temporary movement of natural persons, we feel that despite having no country quota for skilled persons, the Australian visa control policy accords equal treatment to all, but less equal to some.

Mr. Chair,

We very much appreciate Australia's leadership role in the Doha Round. The contributive role of Ambassador Bruce Gosper and his able team has made a visible mark in all negotiating groups at the WTO. As a coordinator of Cairns Group, Australia has been in the forefront of pushing for an ambitious outcome for a fair and predictable international market for agricultural goods.

We have put some written questions to Australia; therefore we would not repeat them here. We would however like Australia to give due consideration to our specific concerns. With this, we wish Australia a successful trade policy review.