

MINISTERS NOTED THAT THERE HAVE BEEN ENCOURAGING PARALLEL DEVELOPMENTS IN OTHER INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS.

THEY WELCOMED THE PROPOSALS AND ANALYSIS WHICH WERE PROVIDED BY AUSTRALIA'S PRIME MINISTER AT DAVOS, SWITZERLAND, IN JANUARY AND BY CANADA'S MINISTER FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE AT THE MEETING HOSTED BY THE NEW ZEALAND GOVERNMENT AT LAKE TAUPO IN MARCH. THESE INITIATIVES HAVE GIVEN CONSIDERABLE IMPETUS TO THE TRADE REFORM DEBATE.

MINISTERS WELCOMED THE WIDE AND GROWING ACCEPTANCE OF THE URGENT NEED FOR REFORM AND IN THIS CONTEXT, WELCOMED THE FAR-REACHING OUTCOME OF THE RECENT OECD MINISTERIAL COUNCIL MEETING IN PARIS IN WHICH AGRICULTURE FEATURED PROMINENTLY. THEY NOTED THAT THE OECD COMMUNIQUÉ CONTAINED AN IMPORTANT SET OF PRINCIPLES ON WHICH AGRICULTURAL REFORM IN ALL COUNTRIES COULD BE BASED. MINISTERS AGREED THAT EARLY ACTION WAS NEEDED TO DE-ESCALATE GLOBAL TENSIONS IN AGRICULTURE.

THEY WELCOMED THE EXPLICIT RECOGNITION BY OECD MINISTERS THAT EXCESSIVE SUPPORT POLICIES ARE AT THE ROOT OF THE DISTORTIONS WHICH PLAGUE AGRICULTURAL TRADE. THEY SAW THIS RECOGNITION AS A MAJOR STEP IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF POLITICAL WILL ESPECIALLY AMONG KEY OECD COUNTRIES, WHICH IS NECESSARY IF THE RHETORIC OF AGRICULTURAL REFORM IS TO BE TRANSLATED INTO CONCRETE COMMITMENTS TO IMPROVE ACCESS AND PROGRESSIVELY PHASE-OUT ALL FORMS OF SUBSIDIES WHICH ADVERSELY AFFECT TRADE.