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INFORMAL MINISTERIAL MEETING VANCOUVER, NOVEMBER 23-24, 1995

CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT BY THE HONOURABLE ROY MACLAREN, MINISTER FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE

The two-day discussion among the eleven ministers and five senior representatives participating in these informal meetings has demonstrated the profound commitment we share to the World Trade Organization [WTO] and the rules-based trading system. Our frank and constructive exchange is one of several informal meetings involving WTO members in the run-up to the first Ministerial Conference of the WTO in Singapore in December 1996.

Ministers from Australia, Hong Kong, Hungary, Indonesia, Morocco, New Zealand, Norway, Singapore, South Africa and Thailand and senior representatives from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico and Switzerland discussed the challenges facing the WTO and the preparations for the first Ministerial Conference. The presence of the WTO Director General, Renato Ruggiero, added greatly to these discussions. We did not meet to come to decisions but rather to develop an understanding of what needs to be done to implement existing obligations and to identify new issues which should be discussed in the WTO.

The exchange began on the theme of domestic priorities: using the multilateral trading system to help governments and the private sector achieve their economic goals. While WTO members represented at the meeting are at different levels of development, we were able to identify areas where we share domestic economic goals. We recognize that increased trade is essential to the realization of these goals. We discussed the need to assist the least-developed countries including better market access by all WTO members in sectors where they are competitive.

