

WTO: 2006 NEWS ITEMS

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ACCESSIONS

Welcome Address by the Director-General to Viet Nam at the General Council meeting of 7 November 2006

Today is an important day for the WTO family: the arrival of Viet Nam as its 150th Member. As in any family, the arrival of a new member is both a moment of joy and celebration. Allow me therefore, on my behalf, as well as on behalf of all staff in the WTO Secretariat, to extend our warmest welcome to Viet Nam.

WTO membership is not only important for Viet Nam, but for the organization too. With Viet Nam joining in, we demonstrate to the world that the multilateral trading system continues to show its uniqueness, comprehensiveness and attractiveness.

Becoming a fully-fledged member of the family, Viet Nam will be able to benefit from the market access and global trading rules developed over the past 50 years. It will also be able to use the WTO Dispute Settlement to solve its differences with other members and fully participate in the on-going negotiations to design the trade rules of the future.

We would not be here today but for the courage and determination showed by the Vietnamese leadership. Eleven years ago Viet Nam embarked on a long trip towards the WTO. This trip was part of a wider opening of the Vietnamese economy under the Doi moi policy. WTO membership will help Viet Nam firmly anchor these reforms and use trade opening as an engine for economic growth and development.

I would like to have a special mention for my old friend, Minister Truong Dinh Tuyen, Chief Negotiator and Vice Minister Luong Van Tu and the entire Vietnamese negotiating team. Without their continuous efforts both at the negotiation table and at home, we would not be able to celebrate this historic moment here today. This is a good team. They are tough negotiators. They have a clear vision, they are determined and skillful, they are persistent even in most difficult situations. They deserve the respect of the WTO membership and the thanks of the Vietnamese people.

Although Vietnamese is not an official language of this institution, I would nevertheless like to conclude by saying XIN CHUC MUNG, congratulations.