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Statement by U.S. Trade Representative Susan C. Schwab on WTO Members' Approval of Vietnam's Terms of Accession to the World Trade Organization

WASHINGTON – U.S. Trade Representative Susan C. Schwab today welcomed WTO Members' approval of Vietnam's accession to the World Trade Organization with the following statement:

“The United States is very pleased by today's action in Geneva and welcomes Vietnam into the international trade community. The world will benefit from the inclusion of this rapidly-growing, dynamic economy in the rules-based trading system. We now call upon Congress to quickly pass Permanent Normal Trade Relations legislation that will permit U.S. businesses, workers and consumers to benefit fully from Vietnam's accession and to build deeper and stronger bilateral trade ties going forward.

The Agreement comes at an exciting time in the economic relationship between our two countries. Vietnam has clearly embarked on a substantial program of economic reform that is built on basic

rules of the WTO. I have been impressed with the strong efforts by the Government of Vietnam to ensure effective implementation of Vietnam's WTO commitments.

The agreed accession package reflects Vietnam's intentions to pursue liberalized trade, deregulation and expanded transparency. We look forward to building on the important achievements that will accrue from the accession and approval of its terms by Vietnam's National Assembly. Later this month, Vietnam will host the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Ministerial and Leaders' meetings where we look forward to celebrating Vietnam's WTO accession and starting a new chapter in our trade relations."

Background

Vietnam has been negotiating its terms of accession to the WTO since 1995. To complete its accession bid, Vietnam had to complete bilateral market access negotiations as well as multilateral negotiations on a Working Party Report and Protocol of Accession. As part of these accession commitments, the United States and Vietnam signed a bilateral market access agreement on May 31, 2006. Vietnam negotiated a comprehensive accession agreement and will implement its WTO commitments immediately, with few transitions. It has passed more than 80 laws to implement fully the agreements, including substantial changes to its regime on intellectual property rights protection. Vietnam will become a WTO member 30 days after accepting the agreement that WTO members approved today.

Vietnam will join 149 other members of the WTO. As a member, Vietnam will be governed by international trading rules and will provide greater access to its growing market of over 82 million people to all WTO members. Vietnam will also be required to enhance transparency in government processes and increase the economic freedoms of the Vietnamese.

USTR has been working with the U.S. Congress to enact legislation terminating application of Jackson-Vanik trade restrictions and pave the way for Permanent Normal Trade Relations (PNTR)

with Vietnam, ensuring that American companies and consumers are able to secure the benefits of Vietnam's membership in the WTO. Legislation to provide PNTR status to Vietnam was introduced to the U.S. Congress on June 13, 2006 and was approved by the Senate Finance Committee on August 1, 2006 on a strongly bipartisan basis.

Further details of the accession are available on the USTR website.

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