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UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA  
AND THE PACIFIC (UNESCAP)

WTO/ESCAP/ARTNeT Advanced Regional Seminar on Multilateral Negotiations in Services  
for Asian and Pacific Economies

19-21 September 2006  
Kolkata, India

**MESSAGE FROM MR. XUAN ZENGPEI  
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UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC AND  
SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC**

Excellencies, distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the WTO/ESCAP/ARTNeT Advanced Regional Seminar on Multilateral Negotiations in Services for Asian and Pacific Economies. At the outset, I express through Mr. Shri P.K. Das, Joint Secretary, Department of Commerce my appreciation to the Government of India, and in particular the Department of Commerce, for its cooperation with UNESCAP in this activity as well as other joint initiatives that have had productive outcomes under the trade and investment programme. I also thank local authorities' representatives as well as other dignitaries from the Government of India who have taken time from their busy schedules to share with us their insights on trade liberalization and rural development. Your personal presence here today is testimony to the importance that the Government attaches to the efforts to address these complex issues involved in reconciling trade and development challenges. It is also testimony to the importance of dialogue among economies of the Asia-Pacific region for the greater common good of mankind.

Excellencies, distinguished participants

Trade in services around the world grew steadily over the past 20 years. During the same period, it rose faster than trade in goods, with developing countries being significant contributors to this expansion. Currently, commercial services exports from Asia and the Pacific account for 20 per cent of world exports and the region is the second largest trader of commercial services in the world. Of course, India is one of the economies in the region that has ably captured to its advantage, improvements in global communications, computerization, and digitalization to develop outsourcing and off-shoring in services sector. These activities have generated more jobs and these jobs are well paid. In India, for example, women's income in outsourced medical record transcribing is estimated to be more than twice the earnings of a low-skilled industrial worker and about 8 times the earnings of an agricultural laborer.

But potential growth of services sector trade might be slowed by the apparent lack of progress in the current multilateral trade negotiations under the Doha Development Agenda.

What is at stake then? Trade remains a principal driving force in the development strategies of UNESCAP members and associate members. A successful conclusion to the Doha Round will lead to more trade – a situation in which every WTO member gains something - not only the large trading countries, but also developing countries, including LDCs and small landlocked economies. However, the benefits from liberalization in services trade are inseparably linked to benefits from liberalization on NAMA, agriculture and importantly from ensuring that development aspects remain firmly entrenched in trade talks. While there are wide differences in the negotiating positions of WTO members, there is also an increasingly evident resolve to eliminate these differences sufficiently to pave the way for the resumption of the Doha Round by the end of this year. This seminar as part of a continuing series of seminars is one valuable instrument, in clearing the obstacles on the road towards consensus and mutual benefit.

It also underscores the increasing need for consultations and dialogue based on sound policy analysis and research. UNESCAP, in partnership with WTO, and through ARTNeT funded by IDRC, seeks to meet these objectives. The programme has gained a regional reputation for excellence and it is now one of the flagship programmes of UNESCAP. In collaboration with WTO, UNESCAP is well placed to continue over many years in the future, to deliver such programmes in a cost-effective and highly focused manner. This work will continue for as long as our members recognize that the need for strengthened skills, knowledge and common understanding of the issues involved.

Before concluding, I wish to thank our long term partner in this activity, the WTO secretariat, represented here by Mr. Rudolf Adlung and Mrs. Mireille Cossy, for the excellent collaboration that has enabled us to more effectively meet the needs of our members and associate members. Special thanks are also extended to IDRC as well as WTO, for their steadfast support to ARTNeT which has contributed to the research and training network gaining rapid momentum.

Through our partnership we are building bridges between economies, between researchers and policy decision-makers which will contribute to greater prosperity and more justice for all. In this regard, let me also express gratitude to all distinguished participants for your commitment to this programme without which such partnerships would not be possible.

I wish the seminar all success.

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