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Joint declaration by President William Jefferson Clinton and European Commission President Romano Prodi

William J Clinton

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1. President Clinton and President Prodi held a wide-ranging discussion on 27 October about the prospects for launching a new Round of trade negotiations in the World Trade Organization (WTO) next month at Seattle. There was an essential overlap of interests and a desire to collaborate closely to bridge remaining differences.

2. They recalled the EU-U.S. Bonn Declaration of June 1999, where we agreed that "together we can advance our shared values, our common security and our mutual prosperity more effectively than either of us alone. Together . . . we can face . . . the complexity of ensuring that democracy and free markets improve tangibly the lives of people in a rapidly globalizing world."

3. Mindful of the essential role played by the multilateral trading system in supporting over the last 50 years the greatest economic expansion in history and more recently in containing the adverse impacts of economic downturns in Asia and elsewhere, the two leaders agreed to strive to secure agreement in Seattle to launch a new Round of global trade negotiations.

4. Their discussions concentrated on the possible topics for a new Round and how to provide momentum for a successful launch at Seattle. Not only agriculture and services, but a number of other issues need to be included, to meet the U.S. and EU's respective interests and those of our partners, but also to ensure that the WTO continues to be a leading part of the solution to the problems that will confront the global economy in the next century. In this respect, they discussed topics such as comprehensive market access; greater coherence in international economic policy making to complement and enhance the work underway in the Bretton Woods institutions and other UN agencies; government procurement (including transparency and market access); foreign direct investment; electronic commerce (including extension of the moratorium agreed last May); competition; trade facilitation; trade-related intellectual property rights protection (TRIPS); technical barriers to trade; and the issue of early agreements, provisional where necessary. While differences remain between the United States and the European Union as to the most appropriate scope for the forthcoming negotiations, both sides agreed to continue to take forward their discussions in a constructive spirit in forthcoming weeks.

5. The leaders agreed that the new round had to be definitively different in content and process from its predecessors. For example, we had to take into account the rapid advances in technology, particularly related to electronic commerce. They agreed on the goal of better addressing the social dimensions of trade by promoting a substantive dialogue with our partners, involving the WTO and the ILO, although we still differ on the modalities. The dialogue would include an examination of the relationship between trade policy, trade liberalization, development and fundamental labor rights, so as to maximize the benefits of open trade for workers. The two leaders also agreed that the new round should enhance the potential for positive synergies between trade liberalization, environmental protection and economic development.

6. But the agenda for the new Round also had to address the needs and interests of all our partners. Although major players in the world economy, the U.S. and EU needed to do more than in previous Rounds to work with all our partners in the VTO system. The new Round should offer major opportunities to the developing countries, strengthening their role in the world economy. Particular attention needs to be paid to the least developed countries. Their concerns and interests should be fully taken into account, including through specifically targeted, enhanced, and effective market access and capacity building.

7. An additional important new element was to make the multilateral trading system as responsive as possible to all our citizens. The two leaders agreed to work vigorously to assure the public that the trading system and the WTO as an institution works in the broadest interests of everyone–and to ensure that this remains the case. Both leaders renewed their commitment to the WTO Dispute Settlement System, and agreed that WTO decisions should be respected and implemented. The leaders also anticipated ratifying at Seattle a package of improvements to the Dispute Settlement Understanding. Additionally, they agreed to work towards enhanced transparency in the WTO decisionmaking process.

Washington, D.C., 27 October 1999