

Republic of Turkey
Prime Ministry
Undersecretariat for Foreign Trade

STATEMENT BY TURKEY

MINISTERIAL MEETING OF STABILITY PACT WORKING GROUP ON TRADE LIBERALIZATION AND FACILITATION

Rome, 13 November 2003

Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure participate in this Trade Ministerial Meeting. Since June 2001, we witnessed substantial progress and achievement in fulfilling the obligations that are born from the Memorandum of Understanding. The first pillar of this process was the conclusion of the network of bilateral free trade agreements and this task has almost been accomplished.

In the near term, special attention will be paid to the full and efficient implementation of the bilateral free trade agreements. However, this meeting will give the necessary momentum to consider further areas to liberalise the trade for the long term.

In this process, Turkey fully supports your initiatives of trade liberalization in line with its policy towards Balkan countries. We are all aware that the regional economic integration has a direct impact on the stability of the region.

In this vein, as a candidate country for the full membership to the EU, Turkey is committed itself to the creation of an open and liberal trading system by signing free trade agreements with its neighbour countries. The Free Trade Agreements with Bulgaria, Romania, Macedonia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina are in force. The first round of negotiations were realised with Albania.

In this context, we would like to express our appreciation for the constructive role of Working Group on Trade Liberalisation and Facilitation in dealing with the regional integration. As regards the integration into the European structures, Turkey's participation in the Working Group meeting is a rewarding experience as well as sharing of its experience with South Eastern European countries.

Last but not least, as we declared during the Signing Ceremony of Memorandum of Understanding in 2001, there is still willingness to provide technical assistance to the countries in the region.

I would like to conclude by congratulating the Signatory Countries for making this process a success.

Thank you for your kind attention.