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STATEMENT OF THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE ON THE MINI-MINISTERIAL MEETING OF THE WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

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Negotiators of the member States of the World Trade Organization have reached the midpoint of the time they set themselves - with the end of the Mini-Ministerial Meeting at the end of June - to find an agreement in view of the closure of the Doha Round. The Pontifical Council of Justice and Peace proposes, with the following Declaration, to highlight the crucial nature of the present moment, to recognize the commitment shown by the negotiators and to encourage their future efforts.

The results of the Mini-Ministerial Meeting of the World Trade Organization (WTO), held on 29-30 June 2006, can only regrettably be characterized as a *deadlock*. This impasse, however, stands in stark contrast to the intensity of the commitment demonstrated by the negotiators and the WTO's staff, who had set out with a noble vision to conclude the Doha Round with a consensus. For this commitment - which is complex due to the objective difficulty to mediate between so many States with different interests and expectations - and for the hope it promises, the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace wishes, first of all, to express its appreciation.

The intensity with which negotiations are carried out is, in fact, proportionate to the value that must be the ultimate aim of the negotiation itself. That is to say, the achievement of greater justice, particularly "equity in trade relations" has been, and continues to be, a major concern of the Holy See. Pope Paul VI underscored the necessity of such equity forty years ago, affirming that: "Free trade can be called just only when it conforms to the demands of social justice." (*Populorum Progressio*, no. 59).

To realize this kind of justice in the rules of international trade, it is necessary to return to the spirit of Doha. Five years ago, the Doha Round opened a new horizon of hope in this field, successfully negotiating a declaration on development and the alleviation of poverty, with a specific commitment to improve the effective participation of the least developed countries in the multilateral trade system (Doha Declaration, numbers 2 and 3).

In his statement of 30 June, the Director General of the WTO said that the discussions between Ministers in the previous days had been "sobering". The weeks that negotiators now have to achieve an agreement which

integrates a positive and effective conclusion to the Round, is a unique opportunity; one that must be put to good use. Participants in the Meeting seemed to be aware of the daunting task before them. It is hopeful that the next G8 Meeting, which will take in a few days in St. Petersburg, will result in the political decisions needed to transform the technical steps in operational ones.

The particular urgency of this task cannot be taken lightly, particularly when one considers the fact that the effects of trade relations have serious consequences for human beings and on their dignity. This said, commercial negotiations should always take into account the impact of such negotiations upon the human family and the dignity of each and every human person.

Other criteria to be considered in this regard must include: (1) the imperative of transparency and "truth in numbers"; and (2) the guarantee of full participation of all member States in the negotiations.

The Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace wishes, therefore, that the parties involved in this delicate phase of negotiations stand together in a common effort of good will, and engage their capacity for imagination, courage, realism and purpose, all of which necessarily means taking into account the legitimate needs and demands of the other. Indeed, at stake in this process is the system of multilateralism itself, which the Catholic Church strongly supports. Only through this system, particularly in the field of international trade, can the human family avoid the ominous forecast which claims "the strong shall survive; the weak shall perish," as predictable consequence of bilateral agreements between the more powerful States. Ultimately, international trade negotiations must seek a fuller integration of North-South and South-South agreements, which are critical to a future full of hope. Without them the peace of the entire human family is at risk.

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