



PRESS RELEASE

ITCB ANNUAL MEETING OPENS IN HANOI

Inaugurating the annual session of the International Textile and Clothing Bureau (ITCB), the Vietnamese Industry Minister exhorted developing countries to close ranks to secure elimination of discriminatory restrictions facing their exports in the major developed country markets. "The textile and clothing industry plays a key role in the export structures of developing economies creating impetus for the process of industrialization", he observed. The Minister urged industrialized countries not to create obstacles to trade in a sector which was so vital to creating employment opportunities for poorer countries.

ITCB is a grouping of 25 developing countries and economies dedicated to securing the application of the same rules of multilateral trading system to trade in textiles and clothing as for any other industrial sector. It started its annual meeting in Hanoi 20 May 2002 at the invitation of the Government of Vietnam.

In his opening remarks, Mr. Stuart Harbinson, Chairman ITCB remarked that developed countries must understand that the Doha negotiating round was predicated on full delivery of the Uruguay Round legacy, in particular the commitment to integrate trade in textiles and clothing into the normal rules of the GATT. He cautioned against protectionist campaigns in the industrialized world seeking to undermine liberalization of trade promised in the sector.

Mr. Harbinson is the Permanent Representative of Hong Kong, China to the WTO and chaired the WTO preparations in the period leading up to the launching of the Doha Development Agenda. He remarked that developing economies could anticipate a major challenge by protectionist interests in the western countries to reducing high tariffs applicable to textile and clothing products. Quoting Bangladesh's example, which paid as much in US customs duties as France last year despite an enormous disparity in their trade volumes, Mr. Harbinson observed "a Development Agenda which perpetuated such anomalies would not be worthy of its name".

Hanoi, 20 May 2002