

**STATEMENT OF THE ASEAN ECONOMIC MINISTERS ON THE SELECTION
OF THE NEW DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE WORLD TRADE
ORGANIZATION**

6 March 1999, Phuket, Thailand

The ASEAN Economic Ministers expressed their concern over the postponement of the selection of the new Director General of the World Trade Organization (WTO) to the end of March 1999.

The Ministers noted that the current Director-General's term is scheduled to end in April 1999. The Ministers agreed that the selection process must be completed in time and that it was in the interest of the WTO and its membership that a timely decision be made on a new Director General.

The Ministers re-affirmed their support for H.E. Mr. Supachai Panitchpakdi, Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand. The Ministers stressed that, among all the candidates, Deputy Prime Minister Supachai Panitchpakdi enjoyed the broadest support and is uniquely able to bridge the interests of the different regions of WTO membership. At this crucial juncture when WTO members face the challenge of the next millennium and have to conduct intensive preparations for the next Ministerial Conference, there is an urgent need for new and effective leadership to lead the WTO.