

**Geographical indications' day
10 and 11 June 2003, Geneva**

**Reception of WTO GI-Friendsgroup Members
and their producers on the evening of 11 June,
starting 18.00 h, buffet reception with GI products**

Opening and welcome by

Mr Luzius Wasescha, Ambassador,
Delegate of the Swiss Government for Trade Agreements (confirmed)

and Ms Amina Chawahir Mohamed, Ambassador,
Permanent Representative of Kenya to the WTO
(not yet confirmed)

Warm welcome to all attending tonight's event;

Particular welcome and thanks to the 60 [definitive Teilnehmerzahl werden wir Ihnen noch bestätigen] producers from Africa, Asia, North and South America and Europe, presenting and offering their GI products tonight to the audience of WTO Delegations, the press and other interested audience;

Thanks also to the Canton of Geneva and other donors who have generously supported this event and producers' participation;

The large number of producers present at the GI Days and their origin from countries, developing and developed alike, from four continents, send a strong signal to the world of the interest and importance they share for GIs as a tool for promoting their products on the national and international market;

It is the evidence, that GI is not a tool from the past, but one of the present and for the future.

At a time of crucial international trade negotiations in the framework of WTO, which also deal with the more effective protection of GIs, it is important to have such a meeting with those directly concerned, in order to realize that GIs are not just an issue of legalistic international negotiations. In fact, technically speaking, it is the easiest possible negotiation: you take Art. 23 of TRIPS and delete the words "wine and spirits" and you made it. GIs are a real life, three dimensional issue and a real life interest to real people, in developing countries and developed countries alike;

Looking at the delicious buffet that has been prepared by producers for tonight, I might say that GIs are also one of the more pleasant negotiating files that I have followed throughout my career;

The two GI days which come to an end with tonight's reception, have provided participating producers from countries all over the world with the opportunity to exchange views and experience in workshops and seminars. They have learnt how to even more successfully use GIs for the promotion of their products in national and international trade;

However, I suppose that also concerns were shared as regards problems they meet in international trade with free-riding by competitors on the reputation of their products and geographical origin;

Another troubling development is that today, successful GIs become generic due to widespread usurpation by producers and products not having the same quality and the relevant geographical origin.

Certainly, producers can try to address such problems by better co-ordinating themselves in defending their interests;

In this respect, I welcome and congratulate the producers here present for having formally created today a Network of Geographical Indications' producers called 'ORIGIN'. Such a forum will allow exactly for the increased co-ordination among interested GI producers and will with its activities help others not yet so familiar with GIs to understand their benefits. I look forward to learn more about 'origin' in a short presentation given in the course of this evening by producers' representatives. In any case I wish 'origin' the best of luck for a successful future;

Having mentioned 'origin' and the activities producers can undertake themselves to make better use of GIs, it is state authorities and governments which have to create a legal framework and economic regulatory environment conducive to the use and prospering of quality GI products;

In this respect, adequate and effective protection of GIs at the multilateral level is a key prerequisite that producers feel comfortable to make the necessary efforts and investments to create a quality product and to build-up the reputation of their origin as a geographical indication;

The GI-Friendsgroup of WTO Members tries to achieve in current WTO negotiations that such effective protection in the WTO/TRIPS Agreement is available to all GIs and all products. They do this by advocating 'extension', i.e. the extension of the additional protection today provided by the TRIPS Agreement only to GIs for wines and spirits to GIs for all products;

Also, a meaningful multilateral register for the notification and registration of GIs will facilitate and thereby improve the international protection of GIs. However, the negotiations of such a register are far from being

accomplished. WTO Members will have to make additional efforts to fulfil their mandate in time;

GIs have an important role to play in today's globalizing trade;

Especially for developing countries or small countries like Switzerland, which cannot compete with the benefits of 'economies of scale' like other WTO Members can;

GI products are anchored in particular places or regions, they display specific qualities or other unique characteristics which are due to the geographical origin of that product;

The promotion of GIs and the production of quality goods contribute to social and economic dynamic of many regions across the world, favour diversification of production, create jobs and livelihoods and thereby help avoiding rural exodus and desertification;

Also traditional quality production in the industrial sector can greatly benefit from the value a geographical indication adds to a product which better meets consumers' demand of origin and quality;

As such, a better protection of GIs is a highly important contribution of WTO to the preservation of natural resources and traditional economic activities, whether agricultural or industrial;

At a moment in time, where a lot of criticism is voiced from non-governmental side against the multilateral trading system as only favouring the big and the mighty, a commitment to a better protection of geographical indications could proof this prejudice to be wrong;

But now let us enjoy the company of all the producers united here tonight from all over the world and their

products to get into this “third dimension” of GIS that I mentioned at the beginning of my welcome introduction.
