

**Message from WTO Director-General Dr. Supachai Panitchpakdi to celebratory dinner in honour of Professor Jagdish Bhagwati**

When I was asked to submit a short message for this celebratory dinner in honour of Professor Jagdish Bhagwati, I must admit that I was at a total loss. Not because I did not know what to say but because nothing about Jagdish can be captured in just a few words. Professor Bhagwati is one of the foremost international trade theorists of our times.

We, in the WTO, have certainly been particularly fortunate to have had the services of Professor Bhagwati as Economic Policy Adviser to the late Arthur Dunkel during 1991-93, and then as External Adviser to my predecessor Mike Moore, and then to myself as a member of my Consultative Board. But Professor Bhagwati's greatest contribution to the WTO is not best seen in terms of his service to various Director-Generals but in his lifetime's work.

As an economist, Professor Jagdish Bhagwati's reputation and contributions rank among the most outstanding of our age. His work has spanned several decades and it has not only inspired academics and students around the world but has had a deep influence on government policies and thinking on trade policy and economic reform. He has carried out pioneering work in theoretical areas while at the same time has been most eloquent in bringing this knowledge to bear upon the most controversial policy debates.

As a teacher, Professor Jagdish Bhagwati should be proud that generations of his students have gone on to take up important policy-making positions around the world. Through his inspiring mentorship, they have carried forward the rationale of his economic thinking and put it into good practice. Several of Professor Bhagwati's students happen to be my colleagues and they have assured me that they could not have been blessed by a better or a more caring *guru*.

As a dear personal friend, Jagdish has proved to be a real supporter in good and bad times. Jagdish would pop up in Bangkok from time to time during the Asian financial crisis to give me valuable and comforting advice when I, as leader of the economic team, was trying to sort out the problems at hand. During my time at the WTO, Jagdish has again lent me a helping hand by accepting to be a member of my Consultative Board. I, personally, owe much to Jagdish and the other members of my Consultative Board for their insightful report on "The Future of the WTO". For that matter, the WTO has been particularly fortunate to have had the services of Jagdish since the time of my predecessors.

He is a staunch defender of the multilateral trading system and his views and writings know no fear nor favour. He is certainly a leading figure in the fight for freer trade and in this regard he has been as critical of the WTO and the trade policies of its Member governments as he has been of civil society when we have strayed from this path.

It suffices to conclude that I have appreciated and continue to admire Jagdish greatly as an economist of the highest distinction just as I value his friendship.