

United States Senate Committee on Finance
Senator Chuck Grassley of Iowa, Chairman

For Immediate Release/Saturday, Dec. 17, 2005/Contact: Jill Gerber, press secretary for Chairman Grassley, jill_gerber@finance-rep.senate.gov, Hong Kong cell phone 6779-2533

Grassley Calls WTO Draft Lacking, Urges More Ambition from U.S. Trading Partners

HONG KONG -- Sen. Chuck Grassley, chairman of the U.S. Senate Finance Committee, the Senate committee with legislative and oversight jurisdiction over international trade, made the following statement on the draft ministerial declaration circulated at the World Trade Organization Ministerial this afternoon. The draft ministerial declaration is expected to be the subject of lengthy discussions and possible revisions – maybe even around the clock -- as the ministerial enters its final day.

“My initial reaction to the draft declaration is that these talks still have a long way to go. The draft doesn’t seem to move the talks forward much on agricultural market access. The text is still vague on this issue. We all know that improved market access for agricultural products is at the heart of the Doha Round, but this text just punts on improvements. I’m also very disappointed that the text still doesn’t provide an end date for export subsidies. The failure to set this date shows lack of ambition in this text.

“Market access, for both developed and developing countries, is what these talks are all about. The United States already has shown its willingness to make tough decisions such as proposing cuts in its domestic support to obtain better market access. I don’t know how many times I can say it, but it’s time for our trading partners also to show leadership in these negotiations. If they do, there’s still hope for a breakthrough in the Doha Round.”

(Background: Under the U.S. system, the President negotiates trade agreements but the Congress must pass legislation implementing those trade agreements, so approval by the Congress is necessary for the United States to implement trade agreements such as a Doha Round agreement. The Congress also is responsible for legislation granting Trade Promotion Authority to the President. Trade Promotion Authority significantly expedites the United States’ ability to negotiate and implement trade agreements. A longtime outspoken advocate for American agriculture and free trade, Chairman Grassley farms corn and soybeans with his son in Butler County, Iowa.)