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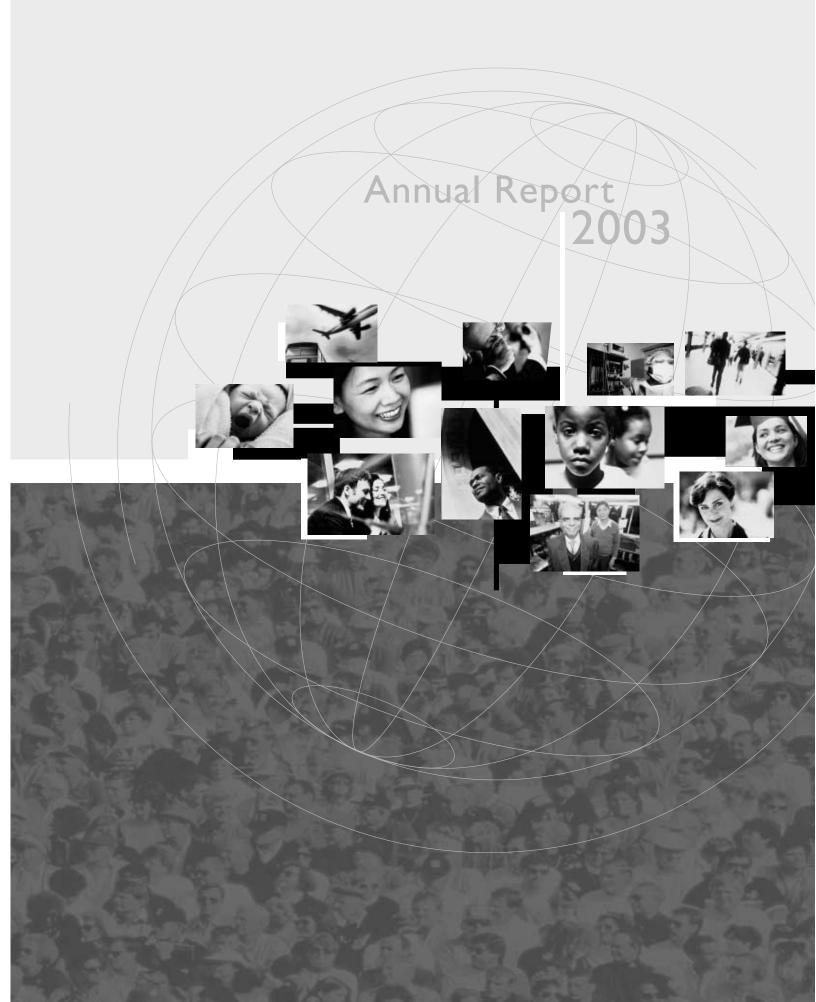
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Foreword by the Director-General

The increasing public interest in the WTO's work since its creation in 1995 has been matched by a growing demand for more information about the organization and the multilateral trading system. The WTO Secretariat has worked to meet this expectation by expanding its information activities to include a broader range of publications, an extensive Internet site and numerous outreach activities.

Our efforts to inform and to explain the role and work of the WTO draws on the unique expertise of the WTO Secretariat, presented through research reports, periodicals and annual publications. This year we are expanding our list of annual publications to provide three reports which will present detailed information on separate aspects of the WTO and its work. The current Annual Report will be published each spring as a guide and compendium on the institutional aspects of the WTO, its regular activities, the work of WTO Members, and the Secretariat's budget and staff. A new annual publication, the World Trade Report, will be launched this summer. Its purpose will be to research and analyse problems and issues which currently confront the global trading system.

In the fall of each year the WTO will continue to publish its detailed compilation of International Trade Statistics. These three annual publications will constitute a comprehensive review of trade issues, developments and initiatives for each year. We hope that they will contribute to the Organization's continuing efforts to work in a manner which is transparent, informative and in tune with the expectations of the public around the world.