

**Remarks by Assistant U.S. Trade Representative Wendy Cutler**

**Opening Press Briefing – KORUS FTA 8<sup>th</sup> Round**

**Seoul, Korea**

**March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2007**

- Pleased to be here in Seoul for the eighth and what will be the final round of KORUS FTA negotiations.
- This is our fourth round in Korea, each held during one of the four seasons.
- Some of you may feel that, like the winter, these FTA negotiations have gone on a little longer than you expected.
- While it may not look like it today, spring is fast approaching, and with the spring, I am confident we will see our efforts in these negotiations blossom.
- As you know, we made significant progress during the 7<sup>th</sup> Round in Washington, D.C. – held just three weeks ago.
- Since then, there has been a lot of senior level engagement between our two governments on the FTA.
  - Trade Minister Kim visited Washington last week and met with Ambassador Schwab.
  - Secretary Paulson was in Seoul just yesterday, meeting with various high-level Korean officials.
  - MAF Deputy Minister Min and Amb. Crowder met in Washington earlier this week to discuss both agriculture market access and SPS-related issues.
  - Lastly, in preparation for this round, Amb. Kim and I met in San Francisco last week. We did a stocktaking of the range of issues remaining in the FTA and charted a path forward.
- These higher-level meetings have helped to set the stage for a successful round in Seoul. We will make every effort to resolve all the outstanding issues; of course, recognizing that a handful of remaining issues will be addressed during the remaining two weeks of March.
- There is no doubt that this final round will be the most intensive round of these negotiations. It will also be structured a bit differently, with regular meetings between the chief negotiators and the negotiating leads.
- So, we enter what will be a decisive week in the negotiations with optimism, determination, and focus. With this mindset, I remain optimistic that this deal can be done by the end of the month.