an update on the administration’s negotiations with Armenia for its accession to the WTO. In his letter, Trade Representative official Richard W. Fisher indicates that the United States strongly supports Armenia’s WTO membership and its integration into the world economy.

Quoting from Mr. Fisher’s letter, “Armenia has made impressive progress in economic reform and transition to a market economy under very difficult economic circumstances. We believe that Armenia’s implementation of WTO provisions will facilitate further progress towards increased investment and economic growth and that its acceptance of WTO market access commitments will foster Armenia’s further integration into the global trading system.”

Madam Speaker, the letter goes on to state that, “In the last year, Armenia has made substantial progress in its negotiations to complete the accession process, both with the United States and with other WTO members. Market access negotiations on tariffs, services, and agricultural supports are very close to completion, and Armenia has reported that its efforts to enact legislation to implement WTO provisions are also in the last stages.”

Mr. Fisher notes that WTO delegations will meet in July to further assess Armenia’s progress, and that the administration shares the goal of many of us in Congress that these negotiations be completed as soon as possible.

Madam Speaker, this is certainly very encouraging news. Since achieving its independence about a decade ago, Armenia has sought to integrate its economy with its immediate neighbors, as well as with the larger world. While Armenia has achieved strong bilateral ties with the United States, Europe, and other regions of the world, unfortunately achieving economic integration in its immediate neighborhood has proven more difficult, through no fault of Armenia’s, I should add.

Armenia’s neighbors to the west, Turkey, and to the east, Azerbaijan, continue to maintain devastating economic blockades. Armenia has sought to normalize relations with its neighbors, but has been snubbed.

Still, despite the isolation imposed on this small landlocked Nation by hostile neighbors, Armenia endeavors to become an integral part of the world community through a range of international organizations, including NATO’s Partnership for Peace program and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the OSCE, among others.

What Armenia needs most is economic development. Membership in the WTO will help Armenia attract investment and reach new markets under a predictable international framework.

Madam Speaker, economic development for Armenia over the longer term will be based on that Nation’s ability to establish trading networks, attract investment, and enact the kinds of free market economic policies that foster sustained prosperity.

Armenia’s elected leaders know this, but in the shorter term, Armenia still needs the kind of assistance that a great Nation like the United States can provide. In the immediate years after independence, as Armenia coped with the effects of blockades and the destruction wrought by a devastating earthquake, there was a crying need for direct humanitarian assistance. In the years since, the thrust of assistance has shifted to development aid.

In order to help Armenia achieve self-sufficiency, the United States must continue to provide developmental and humanitarian assistance. We must also use our influence to bring about regional integration and confidence-building measures that will help Armenia and its neighbors achieve stability and become full-fledged members of the emerging global economy.

We must also do more to resolve the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict, recognizing the legitimate security and self-determination needs of the Karabagh people. This will create the kind of stability that lends itself to economic development.

Madam Speaker, I just wanted to say lastly this evening that I am encouraged by the support that the administration has demonstrated in helping Armenia’s accession to the WTO. I will keep the pressure on the administration to help in other areas through direct assistance and in fostering regional stability. That will make this anticipated accession to the WTO meaningful in the lives of the people of Armenia.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. Biggert). Pursuant to clause 12 of rule 1, the Chair declares the House in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

Accordingly (at 11 o’clock and 32 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. Dreier) at 12 o’clock and 10 minutes a.m.