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MADAGASCAR

Statement by H.E. Mr Maxime Zafera
Ambassador, Permanent Representative to the United Nations at Geneva

Allow me first of all to offer you my sincere congratulations on your election to the Chairmanship of this Fourth WTO Ministerial Conference. Your wisdom and experience will undoubtedly be instrumental in ensuring the success of our proceedings. You may rest assured of our full cooperation.

Allow me also to express our gratitude to His Highness Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani, the Emir of Qatar, to his people and his Government for their warm welcome and hospitality.

My delegation would also like to congratulate the organizers from the host country and the WTO Secretariat for the excellent arrangements to ensure that our work is done smoothly.

My delegation further welcomes the accession of the People's Republic of China to the WTO and China's first opportunity to take part in our work.

This Conference comes at a most opportune time, as the gap between rich and poor countries grows ever wider and the developing countries – in particular the LDCs – become increasingly marginalized, while the globalization process is well under way.

To quote but a few examples specific to Africa:

- Multidimensional poverty remains rife all over the continent;
- per capita income in Sub-Saharan Africa has shrunk by 10 per cent compared to the level in 1980, and the drop is even more significant if today's figure is compared with the level 30 years ago;
- economic growth is well below the 6 per cent objective set in the new United Nations Programme for Africa for the 1990s;
- Africa's share in global trade is still shrinking;
- the continent is hard hit by the erosion of official development aid, which now stands well below the target set by the United Nations.

Africa is the victim of overcautiousness displayed by private capital investment, which remains focused on a small number of countries.

As to the debt problem, despite recent debt relief measures the debt burden continues to weigh heavily on the economic development of poorer nations. Purely and simply cancelling the debt of the least-developed countries would send a clear signal that the developed countries are firmly resolved to tackle development issues.

Madagascar wishes to take the opportunity afforded by this Conference to reaffirm its commitment to the multilateral trading system. Since it acceded to the World Trade Organization in January 1995, it has made every effort to honour its commitments as a Member of this Organization. Although my country is well aware of its limitations, it will spare no effort to continue working towards that goal.

At the time of its first trade policy review, in February 2001, Madagascar stated its determination to enter the market economy, by taking firm and resolute action to reduce poverty with the support of its various multilateral and bilateral partners.

On that occasion, the WTO Membership expressed satisfaction with Madagascar's economic performance and optimism regarding the country's economic future. It encouraged the country to maintain both the pace and the policy directions of its reform programme.

Following this review, Madagascar established a National Committee for the Follow-up and Implementation of Multilateral and Regional Trade Agreements, in order to enable the country to derive the greatest possible benefits from the process. This Committee will contribute to the gradual framing of domestic laws consistent with the WTO rules and disciplines.

Since the last Ministerial Conference, the fact of the matter is that the situation of the developing countries, and in particular that of the LDCs, has hardly changed. This Conference must send a strong message to the world, not only by reaffirming the faith of the entire WTO membership in the multilateral trading system, but also and above all by working out practical measures designed to remedy this situation. In this connection, care must be taken to ensure that the consequences of the tragic events of 11 September 2001 do not become a source of further marginalization of the developing countries, and especially the LDCs.

My delegation wishes to reiterate the importance it attaches to development issues and the implementation of existing agreements and decisions. If these matters are dealt with in a decisive and satisfactory manner with a view to ensuring a fair distribution of the gains derived from trade liberalization, and provisions on special and differential treatment for developing countries are fully applied, Madagascar, although it is not a proponent of the launching of a new round of multilateral negotiations, will join the consensus that might emerge, while still holding the view that there is no reason to rush into new commitments.

In view of the implementation difficulties, compounded by supply constraints and inadequate infrastructure and financial support measures, my delegation calls on the Ministerial Conference to take all the immediate decisions in its power, such as the following:

- Market access, free of duty and quotas, for all products exported by the LDCs as from 1 January 2002;
- large-scale and predictable financing of technical cooperation under the regular WTO budget as from the year 2002, while at the same time maintaining and encouraging voluntary contributions;
- full and mandatory implementation of provisions on special and differential treatment in favour of developing countries.

In addition to these measures, a decision must be taken in favour of the accession of the least-developed countries to the WTO on a preferential and accelerated basis, with a view to promoting expeditious integration into the multilateral trading system.

Madagascar attaches particular importance to technical assistance and capacity-building problems and welcomes the recent developments in the implementation of the Integrated Framework, particularly the Pilot Scheme, of which it is a beneficiary and which it hopes will be extended to other least-developed countries in the near future.

My delegation fully shares the concerns voiced by the LDCs in the Zanzibar Ministerial Declaration, in particular the reaffirmation of the right to implement the TRIPS Agreement in such a way as to ensure that the drugs required to treat HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and other contagious diseases are readily available to Members.

Madagascar is of the opinion that the health sector should not be considered from a purely commercial point of view; rather, for the obvious reasons of fairness and ethics, a human perspective and approach is called for. Special provision should be made for medicines on the grounds of public health and to protect everyone's right to access to good quality, low-cost medicines.

My delegation also requests that the outcome of the Third United Nations Conference on Least-Developed Countries, hosted in Brussels this year, be taken into consideration in all future WTO programmes.

My delegation supports the establishment of working groups to examine the relationships between trade and finance, trade and transfer of technology and trade and debt, which could, moreover, come to be the WTO's contribution to solving the debt problems of the developing and least-developed countries.

In conclusion, I should like to add that, at this eventful dawn of the new millennium, this Ministerial Conference should prove an historic occasion that will enable us all to reaffirm our collective commitment to two watchwords: solidarity and cooperation. Concrete and effective international cooperation and a heightened sense of solidarity will enable WTO Members to pull together in a truly balanced partnership that leaves no room for divisions likely to fuel all manner of frustrations, but allows each and every one to derive real benefit from liberalization and globalization that lend a sympathetic ear to the least-favoured.
