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NEPAL

Statement by the Honourable Purna Bahadur Khadka
Minister for Industry, Commerce and Supplies

(Speaking as an Observer)

I am honoured to represent His Majesty's Government of Nepal at this Fourth Ministerial Meeting of the World Trade Organization.

I would like to begin by expressing my sincere appreciation to His Highness Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al Thani, the Government and the people of Qatar for hosting this Fourth WTO Ministerial Conference and for the traditional and generous hospitality extended to us. I also wish to thank the Chairman of the General Council, Ambassador Stuart Harbinson, Director-General Mike Moore and the WTO Secretariat for their efforts in preparing for this Conference.

With warmest greetings from His Majesty's Government and the people of Nepal, let me extend to you, Mr Chairman, our congratulations on your unanimous election and best wishes for the success of this Conference. My delegation is confident that under your able leadership, this Conference will succeed in determining the course of the multilateral trading system on a more fair, just and equitable basis for the welfare of all, particularly the poor among the poorest.

The establishment of the World Trade Organization as a single undertaking governing the multilateral trading system is an important development in international economic relationship. The growing interest in the WTO, reflected in the large number of countries which have already acceded to it or are in the process of accession, is a demonstration of the faith on this Organization and its ability to secure a share of the benefits from the increasingly liberal international trading system in the rapidly globalizing world economy for all, including the small and the weak. But experience has shown that developing countries and in particular the least-developed countries have been unable to benefit fully from the emerging process of globalization. Increasing marginalization of the least-developed countries from the mainstream of world economy with a declining share in world trade, investment and output is a matter of concern for all. Hence meaningful integration of LDCs into the world economy has emerged as a major challenge as we meet at the Fourth Ministerial Meeting of the WTO at Doha. In this context we fully echo the views expressed by the honourable Minister of Tanzania, Coordinator of LDCs in the WTO, and the honourable Minister of Bangladesh, Global Coordinator of LDCs, on behalf of the least-developed countries.

Fully committed to a liberal economic policy and open trading regime, Nepal is one among the nine least-developed countries in the process of accession to the WTO. It has completed all the initial mandatory requirements including transparency in trade policies and commitments in goods and services sectors. Expectations of higher levels of commitment than those undertaken by the current LDC WTO Members, non-operationalization of special and differential treatment provisions in favour of least-developed countries enshrined in WTO agreements during the accession

negotiation, could render the accession process difficult for the LDCs. Here, it may be important to recall that not a single LDC has succeeded in acceding to the WTO since its establishment. It is our view that facilitating accession of least-developed countries that have completed the minimum requirements with commitments towards WTO provisions should be seen as a logical first step in integrating these countries into rule based multilateral trading

We appreciate the commitment made by our development partners in assisting the LDCs during the Third UN Conference on LDCs. With a view to contributing to the success of the WTO Ministerial Meeting here in Doha, LDCs Ministers met in Zanzibar and agreed on the Zanzibar Declaration with an LDC Development Agenda based on the Declaration and Programme of Action for the Decade 2001-2010 agreed in Brussels. My delegation hopes that this WTO Conference will endorse fully the Zanzibar Declaration and the Development Agenda.

I would like to underline that the principle of accession for the LDCs on terms and conditions consistent with their stage of development, commitments not higher than original LDC Members, a transition period commencing from the date of accession and an expeditious process of accession with necessary technical assistance is one of the issues agreed in Zanzibar. It is our view that unilateral trade liberalization measures undertaken by acceding LDCs should be recognized. Due consideration should also be given to existing preferences and concessions enjoyed through bilateral and regional trading arrangements.

Nepal has joined Trade Ministers of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) on WTO issues to complement participation in the multilateral trade system and strengthening regional cooperation. The Joint Statement of SAARC Commerce Ministers of August this year reaffirms the need of integration of developing countries and least-developed countries into the global economy.

Already this Conference has acquired a historical dimension as we welcome two new Members into the family of the World Trade Organization. We congratulate them. Nepal has historical, cultural and social relations with China. We have been a close witness to the unprecedented growth and prosperity enjoyed by its people during the last decades. China's entry is an important positive step towards making WTO a universal organization in the true sense.

We believe trade needs to be considered within a broader development context. Nepal hopes to achieve the development goals by integrating its economy into the multilateral trading system with commitment to the principles and provisions of WTO. We hope this Conference will succeed in mainstreaming the development agenda in international trade negotiations.
