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## COLOMBIA

Statement by H.E. Mrs Marta Lucía Ramírez de Rincón  
Minister of Foreign Trade

Colombia warmly welcomes this Fourth Ministerial Conference at which, I am sure, there will prevail the constructive spirit that will enable us, on 13 November, to announce to the world the Qatar Round of Trade Negotiations.

Indeed, the historic developments we are now witnessing, and the circumstances of the global economy, oblige us today more than ever to join forces in the incessant struggle against terrorism, poverty, backwardness, lack of education and marginalization, and against the injustice of watching powerless as part of the world grows and develops at the expense of another part of the world. Now is the time for us all to move forward, to make progress, to achieve economic growth and through growth to secure genuine development.

To that end, no factor has greater potential for positively and favourably impacting all countries of the world than the growth of the world economy through an increase in world trade. And that is precisely what this conference is about: guaranteeing a short- and long-term increase in world trade. It is not through disguised barriers, safeguards, quotas or technical measures that we shall guarantee that the slowdown in the global economy will be as short in duration as we all hope.

On the contrary, now is the time to guarantee genuine access to all markets, fair and equitable access which serves to restore the confidence of economic operators in the world economy, which serves to restore the confidence of Members in this Organization, and which enables globalization to be perceived as an opportunity rather than a universal threat.

Now is the moment, therefore, to strengthen a multilateral system which, on the basis of the principle of special and differential treatment, will ensure that markets are opened fully and governed by trade rules, with the guarantee that international trade becomes the linchpin of sustainable development for all Members. A round that is to be characterized by the development dimension calls for political will and there can be no ambiguity about the mandate for the subsequent negotiations aimed at achieving fairness - a fairness that enables all to participate in the international market on an equal footing, under the same rules, but also under the same conditions.

How can we describe as fair a system of world trade in which a few rich and developed countries with large fiscal budgets - with which to subsidize their farmers - compete on equal terms with a number of poor countries with per capita income levels of barely \$5 a day? We must bear in mind that governments in the developing world do not have the fiscal capacity to subsidize farmers, but face all the difficulties pertaining to lack of physical infrastructure, inadequate education, uncertainty in the area of innovation and lack of technologies to make them truly competitive.

In this connection, the proposals and aspirations which, on behalf of the Colombian Government, I ventured to express two years ago in Seattle, are today more applicable than ever.

It continues to be necessary to effect far-reaching reforms in agriculture and to put an end to the discrimination to which that sector has been subjected for some time. It continues to be urgently necessary to take priority action on decisions for the implementation of the agreements. There continues to be an emphatic need to achieve special and differential treatment which is operational and binding. These are the clear signals which we in the developing countries are expecting from this meeting.

We are therefore convinced that the forthcoming trade negotiations must offer the less-developed economies sufficient leeway to implement domestic policies geared to development and to facilitate the diversification and growth of exports, while at the same time raising their levels of competitiveness.

Not for nothing did we request an extension of the transitional period to which we are entitled under the Agreement on Trade-Related Investment Measures, with a view to preserving one of the key instruments of our agro-industrial policy for an additional period of time. That was also our reason for obtaining an extension of the moratorium on the full implementation of the Agreement on Customs Valuation, with a view to enabling us to implement a more modern and flexible customs regime which would serve to improve the standards of efficiency in foreign trade transactions.

We welcome the balance achieved in the text of the Ministerial Declaration, which leaves room to accommodate the interests of all Members, and in this connection I extend my congratulations to both the Director-General, Mr Mike Moore, and the Chairman of the General Council, Mr Stuart Harbinson, for their leadership and their transparent and intelligent handling of the task of drafting both the documents concerned.

We regard the decision on implementation of the agreements and the mandates for the forthcoming negotiations as opening the way for the continued application of development policies, albeit without the ambitious aims we would have liked.

All our hopes are focused on the decisions to be taken in respect of implementation and the future work programme of the Organization, as a means for our developing countries to improve their position in the multilateral system and to secure the extra space they need to continue implementing development policies that will facilitate equitable growth.

In the context of the Agreement on Subsidies, it is necessary to give all developing countries enough leeway, without distinctions and arbitrary conditions, to take advantage of the transitional period to which we are entitled under Article 27.4. Current export promotion policies have no objective other than to stimulate economic development and raise the levels of employment and investment in all countries, more particularly the developing countries. We can ill afford discrimination among developing countries, especially since we are united by the same policy objective.

Central to the process we are initiating are the negotiations on agriculture. Colombia would have liked to see a mandate that called for the culmination of the reform process, in order to achieve an equitable and market-oriented system of agricultural trade. For this reason we launched an appeal from the Cairns Group for substantial reductions in domestic support which distorts production and trade, for the elimination of export subsidies and for substantial improvements in market access. We are prepared to work constructively to draft a text which addresses the policy management aspects required by our trading partners, but which also defines more clearly the degree of commitment to achieving the necessarily common objective of eliminating discrimination in agriculture.

The so-called trade remedies – a misnomer since they have no remedial effect at all, but jeopardize developing countries' access to industrialized markets – have become a veritable nightmare

for exports from the developing world. These measures of commercial aggression are widely used and misused in the developed world as the prescribed punishment for industries based on their conditions of competitiveness. Hence the advisability of clarifying and improving the disciplines of the Anti-Dumping Agreement, taking into account the requirements of the developing countries, and of calling for any amendment to those regulations to be effected on a multilateral basis.

Given our status as a developing country and despite the critical situation prevailing in the realm of public order, Colombia is more committed than ever to multilateralism.

Let me reaffirm how honoured I feel to be participating as a witness to an event of such historic importance to the world economy as the accession of China and Chinese Taipei to the WTO. I hope that we ministers assembled here will have the disposition and resolve required of us by the circumstances, in order to act not as witnesses but as key players in another historic event which will undoubtedly come to pass, namely the launch of the Qatar Round of trade negotiations.

This marvellous country and our excellent hosts, the Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Kalifa and our friend Minister Youssef Hussain Kamal, will always occupy a place in the fondest memories of our personal life and, we hope, in those of our professional life as well.

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