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## LESOTHO

### Statement by Honourable Mpho Malie Minister of Trade, Industry and Marketing

On behalf of my delegation, and on my own behalf, I wish to congratulate you and your Bureau for having been elected to steer the deliberations of this August body. I also wish to express our sincere gratitude to the people and government of the United States of America and the Seattle Host Organization for the warm reception we have received and excellent facilities which have been made available to us.

It is fitting that we have gathered here on the eve of the new millennium to take stock of our achievements since the Marrakesh Conference which gave birth to the World Trade Organization and also to map the way forward into the next century.

The establishment of a rules-based multilateral trading system was our major achievement in this century. The vision derived from the imperative that the economic interactions of the world must be governed by a system of rules and not just the interplay of economic muscle or military power.

Allow me at this juncture to highlight a couple of issues that are of paramount concern to my delegation.

It is our firm belief that the International Trading Community must intensify its effort to accelerate the integration of developing countries, in particular, the least-developed countries into the global economy. Conscious attention must also be paid to the African nations, most of which are least-developed. Otherwise, we will never enjoy full economic and social justice of the world.

The African continent, is abundantly endowed by nature; its opportunities are infinite and its potential boundless. However, these potential and opportunities are yet to be fully exploited.

We in Africa, are deeply concerned that our continent's share of the global merchandise trade has been steadily declining, from 5.9 per cent in 1980 to 4.2 per cent in 1985 and dropping further to 2.3 per cent in 1996. It is unacceptable that in this continent of about 700 million people, approximately 300 million people live in poverty.

As we are about to enter the new millennium, our continent faces the following basic and fundamental challenges;

- The need to embark on high impacting development programmes with the objective of eradicating poverty in a reasonable time-frame;

- The need to keep up with the momentum of globalization and liberalization of global trading markets in goods and services, within the framework of a rules-based multilateral trading system.
- And, the need to adopt new technological advances and realize their impact on comparative advantages of our economies.

We are mindful of the fact that in a world of unequal economic and political power, the creation of a leveled playing field where all actors are treated equally is indeed a difficult task. This is a challenge to all of us if liberalization and globalization of the world economy is the goal of the Multilateral Trading System.

We believe that the integration of African economics into the global trading system is not only an African challenge but also a moral duty of the International Trading Community. To this end, we wish to commend the Director-General, Mr. Mike Moore for setting as one of his main objectives to work towards contributing to the integration of the least-developed countries into the global trading system. Indeed, as he rightly pointed out to us during the recent conference of OAU/AEC Ministers of Trade held in Algiers, the world now exists polarized by poverty and opportunity, as it was once polarized by the Cold War.

It is our well considered view that in order to advance the integration of the developing countries, in particular the least-developed into the global economy, the following considerations should be made:

With respect to the implementation of the existing Agreements and Decisions;

- the implementation of the provisions relating to special and differential treatment by the developed countries in favour of the developing countries must be made in a manner which is generalized, non-discriminatory and non-reciprocal.
- And, close cooperation and working links between the IMF and the World Bank must be enhanced in order to enable the developing countries, especially the least-developed countries to develop trade-related human and institutional capacity in order to participate more effectively in the WTO and in the trade negotiations.

The importance of the technical assistance provided by the WTO for enhancing the capacity of the developing countries cannot be over-emphasized. We call upon members to commit themselves to making available the required financial resources necessary for meeting the needs of the developing countries. We further call upon members to strengthen the current funding mechanism of technical co-operation. To achieve this, technical cooperation must be financed from the regular WTO budget while voluntary extra budgetary contributions should continue to play an important role.

Closely related to the issue of technical co-operation is the Integrated Framework which was launched by the least-developed countries in 1997 following the High Level Meeting on Integrated Initiatives for the Least Developed Countries' Trade Development.

This was a sound approach, but in practice, it has not been successful due mainly to inadequate funding, implementation problems and poor coordination among the six core agencies. It is our firm belief that to revitalize this initiative, Ministers should mandate the General Council to review the implementation of the indicative and the review should be completed no later than July 2000. While still on the issue, I wish to commend the Director-General on his recent decision to appoint a special coordinator for least developed countries.

Another important consideration that must be made here relates to the proposal to extend bound duty-free and quota-free market access to all products originating from the least-developed and developing countries. We are aware that this is a big decision, which may present some problems for some Members, but we wish to appeal to them to muster their political will and make the right decision. This is a crucial issue for our economic development. In conclusion, I wish to address myself to the issue of a new round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations.

In our view the central challenge of the new negotiations is to ensure that issues of development are addressed decisively. Meeting this challenge will serve to strengthen the multilateral trading system, enhance its legitimacy and create a sustainable basis for a new round of global economic growth from which all WTO members can benefit. This Conference represents the opportunity to deliver the launch of new negotiations with the development objective at the center of our considerations.

In conclusion, it is our strong belief that we need to collectively embrace fully our shared and differential responsibility for global economic development. This rules-based system should be strengthened so as to allow us the opportunity to manage our globalized world economy.

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