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MYANMAR

Statement by H.E. Brigadier General Pyi Sone
Minister for Commerce

On behalf of the Government of the Union of Myanmar and on my own, I would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to the host country, Mexico for the excellent arrangements made for this important Ministerial Conference. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your election and to assure you that the Myanmar delegation would give full cooperation in the forthcoming deliberations.

We are all aware that trade growth is a key factor for the economic development and poverty reduction of developing countries. Particularly for the Least Developed Countries, increasing market access and supporting a strong rules-based trading system are crucial for the enhancement of trade growth. Although the total trade of the Least Developed Countries rose in the last financial year, it did not dramatically change their situation, as they were able to make only a marginal contribution towards overall world trade.

With the view to expanding trade and economic development of the Least Developed Countries of the WTO, developed and developing countries should support and encourage the trade growth of the Least Developed Countries without seeking reciprocal treatment. Although WTO is finding ways for the trade growth and economic development of Member countries, harmful practices such as economic coercive measures, trade sanctions, linkage to trade preferences, development aids or debt relief initiatives are being used by some major developed countries are contrary to the multilateral trade rules that negatively affect the socio-economic lives of the people and also slow down the development process. We strongly believe that developing countries have the right to choose the path of development in accordance with their national priorities and objectives.

Agriculture sector which constitutes more than seventy per cent of LDC's exports is the backbone of LDC economies. However, the share of agricultural export in the world declined from 12.1 per cent in 1990 to 9.1 per cent in 2001. This decline means that the market share of LDC's major products in world trade is downsizing, instead of increasing. Therefore, the Myanmar delegation would like to support the text of the Dhaka Declaration that "Developed Countries shall provide duty free and quota free market access to all imports from all LDCs" and which "is not nullified by non-tariff measures" put under the category of special and differential treatment.

In the Services Negotiations, Myanmar received several requests for initial offers in key services sectors. Although we have tried our best to give initial offers and participated in some of the negotiations by sending capital based experts, we are not in a position to participate regularly in the long process of negotiations.

Due to these reasons, the Myanmar delegation would like to suggest that, "Members shall provide technical and financial assistance for LDCs' participation in the negotiation round when Member countries make the requests to LDCs for initial offers in the service sectors".

Technical cooperation and capacity-building are core elements of the development dimension of the multilateral trading system. For LDCs to increase their trade-related supply capacity and effective participation in multilateral trade negotiations, it is vital to receive technical cooperation. It is regrettable that the Least Developed Countries are facing serious supply side constraints to reap the benefits from Preferential Scheme and to participate actively in the current Doha Round negotiations.

Regarding the Singapore Issues we are not in a position to follow the negotiations in detail and therefore are not yet in a position to evaluate the implications or impact of these issues. In the context of Trade and Investment issue, most of the LDCs were unable to attract Foreign Direct Investment although they have adopted measures to liberalize investment regime. Therefore, Member States need to develop tools to help LDCs to overcome these barriers.

Trade and Competition Policy issue is also being debated between Developed and Developing countries. Since LDCs are not familiar with the enforcement of Competition Laws and Policies, assistance in this field is needed for formulating national competition laws and establishing requisite institutions.

On behalf of the Myanmar delegation, I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to the Heads of Delegation of the Kingdom of Cambodia and Kingdom of Nepal for their accession to the WTO.

Before I conclude, Myanmar delegation would again like to thank the Director-General of the WTO, the Organizing Committee and the host country, Mexico, for hosting this conference.
