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CÔTE D'IVOIRE

Statement by H.E. Mr Amadou Soumahoro
Minister for Commerce

On behalf of my delegation I should like first to join other speakers in expressing my profound gratitude to the Government and people of Mexico for their hospitality and for the excellent organization of this Conference which, we greatly hope, will endeavour to respond to the many challenges facing us.

I should also like to pay particular tribute to the Chairman of the Conference and to the Director-General of the WTO for the considerable efforts they have made in preparing this Ministerial Session.

The accession of Cambodia and Nepal to our Organization demonstrates the vitality of the WTO and the confidence we increasingly place in it. I warmly congratulate those nations and assure them in advance of Côte d'Ivoire's complete cooperation.

Doha left its mark on the history of the Organization by calling for, among other things, access to medicines and the progressive reduction and ultimate elimination of subsidies. My delegation regards these as significant advances for the developing countries, as an important step towards strengthening the universal character of a more equitable multilateral trading system profitable to all.

Meeting here in this magnificent city of Cancún for the Fifth Ministerial Conference we too must leave our mark on history, as long as we succeed in conducting a constructive debate that will lead to results that serve the broad interests of the world community and enhance the WTO's image. Such an outcome will, I am convinced, help to eliminate the existing imbalances between Member countries.

Again, how can we fail to wonder at the way some countries of the North do not fulfil their commitments under existing agreements? Export subsidies, domestic support, market access barriers – these are merely signs of the flagrant injustice suffered by developing countries.

The Sectoral Initiative in Favour of Cotton for the African-producing countries is a perfect example of the disarray in the countries of our continent. The Initiative is the outcome of hard thinking in our countries intended to make sure that the countries of the North are aware of their failure to respect their commitments. My delegation greatly hopes that, when its provisions have been accepted, the Initiative will break the vicious circle of poverty that clutches the continent and thus marginalizes it, leaving it on the sidelines of globalization.

Agricultural products, in addition to their commercial value, help to improve the population's living standard, regional balance and, more generally, the struggle against poverty.

As an agricultural country *par excellence*, as an exporter of such agricultural products as cocoa, coffee, cotton, bananas, pineapples, Côte d'Ivoire reaffirms its position regarding the removal of all kinds of subsidies on agricultural products.

With reference to trade-related intellectual property rights and access to medicines, Côte d'Ivoire welcomes the recent decision in Geneva on access to generic drugs for the poor countries. It is the first significant step in regard to trade-related intellectual property rights and public health and one that we fully appreciate.

However, it has to be recognized that it is a minimum agreement calling for caution. Côte d'Ivoire therefore appeals for international solidarity in coping with endemic diseases, and especially the AIDS pandemic, which threatens their very existence of whole nations. In this connection, I wish, on behalf of my country, to welcome the recent decisions on financial support in combating this scourge, even if the effort is still inadequate, in view of the scope of the devastating effects of AIDS in Africa.

It will be seen that the difficulties of the developing countries are not inevitable, nor are they a curse. They are the result of factors tied in with inadequate development policies, on the one hand, and on the other, a world order that pays little attention to the interests of the weakest. It is not idle to point out that Africa is weighed down by the burden of foreign debt that accounts for almost two thirds of the continent's GDP. This is compounded by debt servicing, which takes up a large part of constantly declining exports and so leads to suffocation. Moreover, Africa attracts less than 1 per cent of foreign direct investment, yet the yield on investment in the continent is one of the highest in the world.

Moreover, in view of the commitments it is called upon to make, Côte d'Ivoire is deeply concerned about the services balance of developing countries in general and the African countries in particular. My country reaffirms the need in these negotiations to respect the principle of progressive liberalization, the right of each Member to regulate its services trade in terms of its development objectives, in accordance with the provisions of the General Agreement on Trade in Services.

My delegation greatly hopes that our Organization will pay special attention to the principle of special and differential treatment, taking account of the level of development of some countries, for the purpose of saving certain sensitive sectors of their economies.

This Fifth Ministerial Conference in Cancún affords us an opportunity to judiciously adapt our Organization's decisions so as to respond effectively and equitably to the objective development needs of the weakest countries.

Like all countries in Africa, Côte d'Ivoire refuses to be placed on the sidelines as a mere supplier of commodities. We want more account to be taken of the concerns of our continent for better integration of Africa in globalization so that this will be translated into strengthened negotiating potential and the will to construct a coherent and dynamic whole.

For this reason, it is Côte d'Ivoire's ardent hope that products in early processing stages will be associated with market access.

In addition, Côte d'Ivoire calls on this Conference to consolidate the preferences obtained by developing countries in exports of certain products, more particularly, tuna, so as to strengthen a sector that is important for the industrial activity of a large number of our countries.

I should like on behalf of the people and Government of Côte d'Ivoire to express our warm gratitude to the international community for its solidarity and the steady efforts it has made to help my country to gradually break loose from the harsh crisis it has recently experienced, and despite

everything, my country undertakes to respect all its international commitments and to shoulder its share of responsibility in the concert of nations.

Côte d'Ivoire would like, through me, to reiterate its firm intention to work effectively for lasting growth and to combat poverty, two aims that are fundamental to the National Reconciliation Government.

I cannot conclude my remarks without paying my respects to the memory of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sweden, whose tragic death has been a matter of consternation for us here at the start of our work. On behalf of my Government, I wish to express our condolences to Sweden.

Lastly, I should like to say how much Côte d'Ivoire welcomes the holding of this Fifth Conference and expresses the hope that the development Round started in Doha will be completed on time, for the greatest benefit of the developing countries in general and the African countries in particular.
