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BOTSWANA

Statement by the Honourable Jacob D. Nkate, MP
Minister of Trade and Industry

Allow me, on behalf of my delegation and on behalf of the ACP Group of countries to add my voice to those delegations who preceded me in sincerely congratulating you upon your election as Chairperson of the Fifth WTO Ministerial Conference. We fully recognize the enormity of the challenges you face in this position, given the critical stage of our negotiations. We are, however, confident that under your able guidance and leadership, our deliberations will reach successful conclusions. I also wish to express our profound gratitude and appreciation for the warm hospitality that has been extended to us by the Government and the people of Mexico since our arrival in this beautiful resort city of Cancún.

The Fifth WTO Ministerial Conference has special significance for Botswana and other ACP Member States as it marks the mid-term review of the Doha Development Round negotiations. This Conference provides us an opportunity to take stock of progress made in the negotiations since the Doha Ministerial Conference. Since the Doha Round is premised, amongst other things, on addressing the development needs and concerns of the least-developed and developing countries and facilitating their integration into the multilateral trading system, we reiterate our expectation that the interests and concerns of these countries should be at the centre stage of the negotiations.

The ACP Group and other developing countries are concerned about the slow pace of the negotiations and the numerous deadlines which have been missed. In this regard, it is a matter of deep concern to us that we have reached Cancún without having achieved a consensus on many critical issues. Unless we redouble our efforts and demonstrate an increased political will and commitment to accommodate each other's interests, we will not be able to meet the deadline of 1 January 2005 for the completion of this Round of negotiations. It is nonetheless our hope and expectation that during this Conference, we will gather sufficient courage and demonstrate enough political will to narrow our differences and move the Conference towards a successful outcome. Despite the set backs which we have experienced in these negotiations, we remain convinced that the multilateral trading system is credible and can produce concrete benefits for all the Member States. In this regard, we welcome the decision reached on TRIPS and Public Health.

As you are aware, Botswana is among the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa that have been hard hit by the HIV/AIDS scourge. I therefore, wish to applaud the Membership of the WTO for having resolved this long outstanding matter to allow those countries with insufficient or no manufacturing capacity in the pharmaceutical industry to effectively use compulsory licensing. But while we applaud this decision, we would like to urge that a long-term solution be initiated through amendment of the TRIPS Agreement.

I would like at this juncture to highlight some of the issues which are of fundamental importance to the ACP Group. In their Declaration on the Fifth Ministerial Conference of the WTO,

the ACP Ministers of Trade have outlined priority issues including agriculture, Non-Agricultural Market Access (NAMA), implementation issues, special and differential treatment, trade preferences and Regional Trade Agreements as well as expeditious implementation of work programmes for LDCs and Small Economies. This should include duty-free and quota-free market access for export products of LDCs.

The negotiations on agriculture are central to the success of the Doha Development Round. However, this is one area where the positions of Member States are still far apart. This reflects the importance of the sector to the economies of the Member States, both developed and developing. The ACP countries remain committed to the objectives of the Doha Development Round to further reform agriculture through reductions in domestic support, exports subsidies and improving market access. The modalities for the negotiations should also address non-trade concerns such as food security, rural development and poverty alleviation, trade preferences, the Special Safeguard Measures, Special Products, as well as the special needs of the Net Food-Importing Developing Countries.

On Non-Agricultural Market Access, the ACP position is that we should allow developing countries to liberalize at a rate that is suitable for their level of development, so as to minimize the adverse impact on revenues and local industries. Further, ACP States have historically benefited and continue to benefit from preferential trade schemes. It is therefore important that the negotiations on non-agricultural market access take fully into account the concerns on the issue of erosion of preferences. This is crucial in order to allow our economies to develop sufficient productive capacity.

The area of Special and Differential Treatment is one of the issues at the center of the Doha Development Agenda and is critical to the integration of the developing countries into the multilateral trading system thus enabling them to achieve their development objectives. Concessions to developing countries should cover not only market access, but also technical assistance, longer implementation periods, waiver of certain obligations and, in some cases, complete exemption from certain provisions of the Agreements. We are disappointed and concerned at the little progress that has been made in this area and we therefore call for acceleration of work on remaining proposals.

On Singapore Issues, while we appreciate the anxiety of some of the Member States to launch negotiations, we would like to plead for realism and pragmatism given the complexity of these issues and the limited institutional, human and technical capacities in most of our countries. It is our considered view that we should continue the clarification and study processes in these areas in order to enable us to have a deeper understanding and the requisite knowledge and much needed capacity.

We welcome the inclusion of the sections on the **Sectoral Initiative on Cotton and Commodity Issues**, as these are issues of special interest to some of the ACP States.

In conclusion, the ACP countries are appreciative of the technical assistance by the WTO, UNCTAD and other international organizations and donors for their continued support in addressing our technical capacity constraints. Technical cooperation and capacity-building are integral to our efforts to become more active Members of the WTO, and to effectively negotiate, monitor and implement WTO Agreements. We urge the developed countries to continue to support this process.

Finally, we are hopeful that this Ministerial Conference will not only take stock of progress since Doha, but that it will steer and redirect the course of negotiations towards achieving the objectives of the Doha Development Agenda. The successful conclusion of the Doha Development Round will go a long way in accelerating economic growth, alleviating poverty and integrating developing countries into the multilateral trading system. It is my fervent hope that we will endeavour to produce positive results which will help to enhance the credibility and viability of the multilateral trading system.
