

Libreville 2000

Meeting of African Trade Ministers

13-15 November 2000

FINAL COMMUNIQUE

We, the African Trade Ministers, meeting in Libreville, Gabon, from 13 to 15 November 2000;

Aware of the profound changes that are taking place in the global economy and their implications for African countries, and of the efforts that are required to adapt the economies of our countries in order to pursue sustainable economic growth and development with a view to eradicating poverty;

Recognizing that international trade contributes to economic growth and development;

Considering the limited participation of African countries in the global economy and multilateral trading system;

Having in view furthermore the very low level of intra-African trade;

Considering the difficulties encountered by the African countries in implementing the agreements and rules of the WTO;

Guided by the Algiers and Cairo Declarations of African Trade Ministers;

1. Reaffirm Africa's commitment to working in the framework of the multilateral trading system for a significant and equitable place in international trade;
2. Call on the WTO to play a more active role in this process by adopting and implementing a special capacity-building programme financed by its regular budget, and likewise encourage donor countries and institutions to supplement these efforts with additional financial contributions;
3. Reaffirm the African position, as already defined at the Algiers and Cairo meetings, which identifies development issues as the key challenge to be addressed by the multilateral trading system. Future multilateral negotiations must, therefore, be suitably prepared and take into account the development dimension, on an urgent basis, and include the following:
 - structural adjustments requiring developed economies to reduce a range of protection and support measures to inefficient industries;
 - a balanced and broad agenda accommodating the concerns and interests of all African countries;
 - addressing the implementation issues, in particular the commitments in favour of developing countries;
 - addressing imbalances arising from the Uruguay Round Agreements; and

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- taking into account the trade and finance needs of developing countries.
 - 4. Stress the need for a coordinated approach to negotiations in the WTO and the upcoming negotiation under the Cotonou Agreement, which sets out a new trade arrangement between the ACP countries and the EU, and encourage such an approach;
 - 5. Encourage the African countries' efforts to strengthen and revitalize the subregional economic organizations, which are an essential instrument for the development of intra-African trade;
 - 6. Urge the WTO to cooperate with the other multilateral finance and development institutions, including the World Bank and the IMF, in order to achieve greater coherence in accordance with the Marrakesh Agreements;
 - 7. Call for duty-free and quota-free access to all developed-country markets for products of African origin. In that regard, we welcome the new Partnership Agreement between the ACP and EU. We also welcome the efforts by the United States under the African Growth and Opportunity Act and urge that all opportunities be explored to ensure that all African countries and products benefit from the Act;
 - 8. Call for the immediate implementation of G-7 measures to cancel part of the debt of all African countries and invite other creditors, including the financial institutions, to take similar measures so as to generate surplus resources for technological investments geared towards international trade;
 - 9. Call on the international community to take action for the effective establishment of a World Solidarity Fund aimed at reducing poverty in Africa and world-wide;
 - 10. Emphasize the need to make trade a priority in the national development policies of our respective countries through better coordination at the national level among the various actors involved;
 - 11. Request the acceleration of the implementation of the Integrated Framework for Trade-Related Technical Assistance for least-developed countries by improving the mechanisms for implementation and follow-up and the allocation of sufficient resources;
 - 12. Call for the streamlining and facilitation of the accession process of African countries, non-Members of the WTO, on terms compatible with their level of development. In this regard, we call for sufficient and adequate technical and financial assistance to these countries;
 - 13. Have noted the high quality of the work carried out in the Libreville Meeting workshops and request that the results of the work be published as the Libreville Proceedings.
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