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BOLIVIA

Statement by H.E. Mrs Ana María Solares Gaité Vice-Minister for International Economic Relations and Integration

I should first of all like to place on record our gratitude to the Government and people of Qatar for the organization of this Conference and, above all, the warm hospitality with which we have been received.

I would also like to highlight the efforts made by the Chairman of the General Council, Mr Stuart Harbinson, and the Director-General, Mr Mike Moore, and to congratulate them on their work.

The Fourth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization comes at a very difficult juncture in world affairs, at the beginning of a marked economic recession compounded by the regrettable events of 11 September, the full consequences of which we are as yet unable to gauge, either in economic, political or social terms.

Against that backdrop, the challenge before us is enormous, for not only must we preserve the system, the credibility of which was brought into question and diminished by the failure of Seattle, but we must also renew it so as to make it a factor that contributes to harmonious and increasingly convergent development of the world as a whole.

Aware of these pressing needs in the world order, Bolivia has come to Doha to support the start of the new phase in the WTO that should follow from the application of the programme of negotiations on which we will agree.

In this perspective, it is becoming clear to us that all countries agree that if we are not to repeat the mistakes of the last, unsuccessful negotiations, development must be placed at the very core of the multilateral trading system. We fully share and support this view.

We cannot help wondering, however, just how genuine is that level of agreement, for as soon as we turn to more specific issues and the consideration of concrete proposals to enhance the development of those countries most in need of it, many of these statements turn out to be inconsistent.

Bolivia is amongst those countries that consider it indispensable to take steps that do not further polarize development amongst the countries of the world. Failing this, tensions will be aggravated leading to uncontrollable reactions that will affect all countries in the long run.

In this connection, my country considers it a priority for all sectors involved in international trade to be treated in a balanced manner. We therefore cannot accept further delay in bringing agriculture under the rules and disciplines of the Organization.

We have stated and we repeat it. For us too, this sector involves other concerns and implications distinct from the merely trade-related aspect. These pertain to reduction of poverty, eliminating the conditions of extreme poverty in which Bolivians live in rural areas. The development prospects of this sector and its integration into international markets will also dictate whether we will be able to maintain the progress we have made at great sacrifice by eliminating coca leaf plantations. In this way we have made an appreciable contribution to humanity as a whole, as it has meant the removal from circulation of more than 220 tonnes of cocaine, which until recently were undoubtedly being distributed in the major capitals of the world.

For Bolivia, full compliance with the commitments assumed within the WTO framework is exacting a very high economic, social and political price. Nevertheless, this has not been matched by my country's participation in international markets, where it is facing considerable difficulties arising in large measure from non-compliance or "*sui generis*" interpretations in the application of Agreements. For this reason and because we believe that the only way to secure the credibility of the system is by complying with what has been agreed, we consider it of the highest importance for adequate treatment to be given to this sensitive topic at this Conference.

Moreover, Bolivia is one of the countries most convinced of the need to conserve and protect the environment. It was therefore one of the first developing countries to have an Agenda 21, with clear and unambiguous national rules, even to the detriment of exportation, which it so badly needs. Nevertheless, we are opposed to any attempt to utilize this issue for the purposes of market protection. We do not think it would be a wise decision to include it in the WTO agenda. There are other more appropriate and effective forums for this if the objective is really to take care of our planet.

I wish to underscore the importance of the declaration that we will approve in due course linking intellectual property and public health, as it will represent a meaningful legal instrument and a political message, giving a human face to the World Trade Organization. It is our hope that the terms on which we agree will be forceful in giving priority to health and human life over the interests of invention.

I cannot conclude without stating my country's special satisfaction at the accession of the People's Republic of China to the World Trade Organization, as it marks an historic milestone for that country and for our Organization. This means that only now can it really purport to be of global reach, with the inclusion of over 1,200 million inhabitants representing one-fifth of the world's population.

We must henceforth ensure that the WTO will also have a balanced global impact that benefits all countries equitably. This makes it necessary to distinguish between the various levels of developing countries and accord appropriate treatment to countries with small and more vulnerable economies.

It is our hope that the outcome of this Fourth Ministerial Conference will make it possible for the actions of a renewed and invigorated WTO to contribute to building a world that is fair, prosperous, united and based on solidarity, these being objectives of which we must be mindful, now more than ever.
