

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

WT/MIN(01)/ST/133/Rev.1
13 November 2001

(01-5780)

MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE
Fourth Session
Doha, 9 – 14 November 2001

Original: English

SIERRA LEONE

Statement by H.E. Mr Osman Kamara
Minister of Trade and Industry

Revision

Permit me first of all to thank our hosts, the Government and People of Qatar for their warm reception and hospitality. Many thanks also go to His Excellency Mr Mike Moore, Director General of WTO, Mr Harbinson, the Chairman of the General Council and the Secretariat of the WTO for their commitment and hardwork. On behalf of the Government and people of Sierra Leone, I welcome the Government of China, and the other new Members of WTO. It is hoped China's membership will strengthen the WTO and the multilateral trading system.

I would like to preface my brief remarks by drawing your attention to some of the stark realities of the multilateral trading system at the present time, from the perspective of yet another LDC emerging out of a decade of a murderous and internecine war of attrition, which has devastated our nation and dehumanized our people.

We are now implementing a DDR (Disarmament) Programme with success and have embarked on the war against poverty and deprivation.

In order to consolidate the peace and kick-start development, we must get our nation back to work and increase productivity.

The LDCs (about 49 countries) have a population of about 600 million. Most of these people live in abject poverty and deprivation. Our People are plagued by the horrible pandemics of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria to mention a few.

We have borne the brunt of globalization, and have been marginalized in the multilateral trading system. Our share of world trade up to quite recently was one-tenth of 1 per cent. World trade is predicted to increase by less than 2 per cent during the next two years. The events of 11 September shall further exacerbate an already deepening recessionary trend.

Having said this, as the most vulnerable players in the multilateral trading system and with the ever-increasing deleterious effects of unfair trade practices and globalization on our weak and fragile economies; I now make the following observations and recommendations;

During the Uruguay Round the developed countries had already brought in new issues.

- Intellectual Property Rights
- Investment
- Trade in services etc.

Some of these Agreements are already causing very serious problems, leading to implementation issues.

In spite of this, the developed countries want to introduce several non-traditional issues into the proposed New Round for negotiation like Investment, Competition, Government, Government Procurement, Labor/Social factors, Environment.

To a large extent, the implementation of these new issues at the present time will weaken our position, and impinge on our sovereignty. The Government will encounter severe difficulties in formulating coherent trade policies.

We suspect that the rhetoric of improving and energizing the multilateral trading system by introducing these new issues is a ploy to enable the big corporations of the developed countries free entry into our markets (without reciprocity) through trade, investment and participation in government procurement.

Furthermore, it is hoped that the labor and environment issues are not a means of creating new forms of protectionism. The WTO already has a lot of issues to address.

We propose that the developed countries demonstrate more commitment in reducing the marginalization of LDCs in order to make this Ministerial Conference in Doha a success.

Sierra Leone supports the proposal for a Development Agenda, which aims at prioritizing the needs of LDCs and other developing countries.

The Doha Declaration must include a firm commitment to development issues and palpable action aimed at addressing the problems confronting LDCs in the multilateral trading system.

We welcome the idea of a Special Ministerial Declaration on HIV/AIDS and pandemics and public health *vis-a-vis* the implementation of the TRIPS Agreement whose implementation so far smirks of double standards.

In recent years we have suffered from "de-industrialization" the process by which local industries and enterprises have closed down as they are made uncompetitive by imported goods. In the context of my country's reality where we are trying to create employment and get our people back to work you can envisage the damage this will do to us.

In conclusion we urge the developed countries to enhance and facilitate our participation in the work of the WTO through increasing technical assistance and boosting our technical capacity.

The issue of industrial tariffs concerning the Uruguay Round will cause severe problems in LDCs. This will involve the reduction of duties of locally manufactured products. Since tariffs in this sector are generally lower in developed countries, a new round of tariff cuts would involve new commitments by the developing countries.

I wish this Fourth Ministerial Conference every success.
