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HOLY SEE

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(Speaking as an Observer)

Allow me, first of all, to express my thanks and congratulations to His Highness Al Khalifa Al Thani and to the people of Qatar for the kind welcome and the excellent arrangements that have been made for us on the occasion of this Conference. My delegation's appreciation goes also to the Chairman of the General Committee and to the Director-General for their tireless efforts during the preparatory period.

The Holy See's hope is that this Fourth Ministerial Conference at Doha will be, and will be remembered as, the "development Conference" of the WTO.

The integration of the poorer economies into an equitable world trade system is in the interest of all. The enhanced development of the poorer countries is a contribution to global progress, international security and peace. In a globalized economy no one can be insensitive to the situation of those who are lingering on its margins. Inclusiveness is both a moral and an economic value.

Let there be no mistaking: the world needs a World Trade Organization. The poorer countries in particular need an equitable, rules-based system, in which they can participate in global trade on the basis of the highest achievable equality of opportunity. Both justice as well as long-term economic efficiency require such an aim of inclusion.

Trade liberalization can bring great benefit to poorer countries. Too often, however, this has remained just a theoretical, indeed even an ideological affirmation. For the future, the World Trade Organization must take greater stock of exactly how trade liberalization affects the poorer countries in concrete, verifiable terms, on a country-by-country basis. It must help identify the factors that still prevent developing countries from achieving the benefits they desire from participation in the global trading system. It must learn from and apply, as appropriate, the lessons of those countries that have managed to make trade work for development. It must apply policies that help redress the disadvantage that the poorest countries encounter. The Holy See welcomes the moves that have already been taken in this direction. Those moves must now be translated into enduring reality.

The WTO cannot exempt itself from examining its results in the light of the overarching development targets that the world community has set for the fight against poverty. These development targets are centred on the human person. It is the creative and innovative capacity of people that is the driving force of any modern economy. It is the lives of people, individuals and families, that are the victims of an economic downturn.

I wish to address just two specific trade-related questions that are of special interest to fostering human development for the poorest countries today. The first is the relationship between

trade rules, and especially intellectual property rules, and health. Governments have a primary responsibility to protect the lives and security of their citizens. The Ministerial Conference should give a clear message that there is nothing in the rules of the international trading system that should prevent governments from addressing urgent public health needs. Where flexibility exists within such rules, then there should be a concerted attempt to make that flexibility work fully, rapidly and in an unobstructed way.

The second area is that of market access for products in which the poorest countries have advantage. In international trade, as in any sector, rules are there in a special way to protect the weakest. Prolonged protectionism and other trade practices which bring disproportionate benefit to wealthier sectors of the world's economies cannot be the basis for an equitable rules-based system. Reform in the area of market access for the products of the poorer countries especially agriculture and textiles, cannot be put aside indefinitely, without causing irreparable damage the multilateral trade system itself.

A more equitable application of a rules-based global trading system is an essential dimension of development policy. The poorer countries will enjoy greater success in trade related questions if these are pursued within a broad understanding of development and solidarity. Technical assistance must be made available to facilitate implementation of existing WTO agreements, but also to improve the trading capacity of poorer countries. Access to medicine must be accompanied by programmatic investment in an effective health system. Market access must be accompanied by investment in the improvement in production methods and standards.

Clearly the WTO cannot take over all dimensions of such a wide development mandate. We must respect the limited trade related mandate of the WTO. But we must also remember that it is the same consensus of governments that act in other organizations, including those which aim at the protection of labour standards and the environment. Only a coordinated vision of development and structured cooperation between agencies will ensure the trade related and the development related goals proceed hand-in-hand. "The economy", Pope John Paul II reminds us, "is only one aspect, one dimension of the whole of human activity" and "economic liberty is only one element of human freedom". May this Ministerial Conference be the moment in which we shape trade policies that really become a driving force for the integral development of the entire human family.
