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SWAZILAND

Statement by the Honourable Abednego Mandla Ntshangase
Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade

I have the honour and pleasure to address this august assembly. I wish to begin by joining all previous speakers in congratulating you upon your election to the chair of this meeting. On behalf of my delegation I wish to thank the Government and the people of Qatar for the warm welcome and hospitality that have been accorded us since our arrival in this beautiful city of Doha. I wish to commend the Government of Qatar for the excellent arrangements and facilities that have been put at our disposal for this meeting.

I would like to make some comments on a few issues. In as far as implementation issues are concerned, my delegation is of the view that this is very important. Therefore, the lack of meaningful progress under this item is rather disappointing. It is in this regard that the remaining issues on implementation need to be resolved amicably before the next session. Developed countries have not implemented some of their Uruguay Round obligations; implying that some of the benefits accruing to developing countries are yet to be realized. Developing countries themselves also have some obligations which they are not able to discharge due to lack of capacity. It is therefore my view that financial and technical assistance should be made available to developing countries to assist them to understand and implement their commitments under the Uruguay Round. Furthermore, developing countries, including the least-developed countries, require technical assistance to help them understand issues being negotiated at the WTO, as well as to develop local capacity to formulate the trade-related policies.

My delegation is aware that some Members have proposed new issues for negotiation. However, I am of the view that on the Singapore and new issues, the work programme under way should continue and studies be carried out so that developing countries, in particular those who do not have permanent missions in Geneva, would fully understand the issues before embarking on full-scale negotiations. Consequently, my view is that the Singapore and new issues should be discussed during the next Session.

On mandated negotiations, my delegation wishes to comment on the Agreement on Agriculture. In most developing countries agriculture is the backbone of the economy. It accounts for the largest share of gross domestic product, job creation, export and foreign exchange earnings required to finance development activities. My delegation is of the view that the Agreement on Agriculture should include non-trade concerns such as the promotion of rural development and food security. In developing countries, including in my own, the majority of people live in rural areas, therefore development of rural areas is a priority if grass root poverty is to be alleviated and eventually eradicated. Also, the issue of food security needs to be addressed since a number of developing countries are net food importers.

In conclusion another issue of importance is special and differential treatment. Since it is a core principle of the WTO, I am of the view that it should be incorporated into future WTO agreements and rules. We therefore request the developed countries to seriously commit themselves to ensuring that special and differential treatment provisions are meaningful, operational and responsive to development needs of developing countries. Furthermore, the provision on special and differential treatment of developing countries should be legally binding and enforceable; otherwise it would be meaningless.
