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TOGO

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For me, it is both a source of pride and a singular honour to have the opportunity to address this august assembly at the Fourth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO) on behalf of my country, Togo.

At this important Conference, I have pleasure in transmitting a message of support and best wishes for the Conference's success from H.E. Gnassingbe Eyadema, President of the Republic of Togo, as well as those of the Government and people of Togo.

It is also my pleasure to express warm gratitude and sincere thanks to the authorities of Qatar and the city of Doha for giving the WTO the opportunity to hold its Fourth Ministerial Conference in this beautiful country, and particularly to have shown all delegations such warmth and hospitality in this lovely city of Doha.

Bearing in mind the present extremely difficult international situation in which this global session is taking place, following the events in New York and Washington in the United States of America, Togo is warmly appreciative of the exceptional efforts made and the strong political determination shown by Qatar in order to make it possible to convene this Conference, which appeared to be in doubt.

My sincere congratulations also go to Mr Mike Moore, Director-General of the WTO, to Mr Harbinson, Chairman of the General Council, as well as to the personnel of the WTO's permanent Secretariat and the organizing committees in Geneva and Doha for the strenuous efforts made at all levels to prepare and organize this Conference.

For over five decades, the multilateral trading system in the GATT and then the WTO has constituted both an ideal for the international community and a process that must move forward and become even stronger.

It hardly needs to be recalled that, through this process, the international community's objective is to liberalize economic and trade activities by gradually reducing customs tariffs, lifting non-tariff barriers and harmonizing economic and trade policies and practices throughout the world.

These objectives are intended to reinforce the *rapprochement*, the complementarity, the interdependence and the solidarity of nations and their economies with a view to their harmonious and sustainable development, as well as to raise standards of living and reduce the disparities between the North and the South, characterized by plenty and social well-being on the one side and poverty and hunger on the other.

This is a noble objective. The principle is motivating but complex. It has advantages but above all disadvantages due to the disparities in the benefits derived from implementation. The industrialized countries benefit to the fullest extent whereas the developing and least-developed countries are gradually marginalized.

In order to be able to take advantage of the opportunities afforded by the new international economic and trade system, developing and least-developed countries need ongoing support.

The efforts these countries are making to become integrated in the multilateral system are daily negated by the divergent interests, relations of force and insidious protectionist trends.

The feeling today is that the hopes raised by the provisions in the Uruguay Round Agreements have not been fulfilled and that the implementation of the Agreements has on the whole been unsatisfactory.

Under such circumstances, developing and least-developed countries cannot be effectively integrated in international trade. The fair trading system which they ardently desire in the context of globalization appears further away than ever.

As far as Togo is concerned, no significant progress in its foreign trade can be expected. Despite the liberal trade policy and the various liberalization measures, the incentives and encouragement by the Government in recent decades, Togo's economic and trade expansion is still not conclusive.

Like many other poor countries, Togo is still crushed by its debt burden, poverty, endemic unemployment, the lack of infrastructure and basic equipment etc.

As you may imagine, Togo is here at this meeting to express its determination and resolution to support the just and realistic positions expressed by Africa, the ACP and least-developed countries, regarding the economic and trade issues being discussed here in Doha.

As several delegations have already emphasized, the concerns relate to questions of implementation, agriculture, special and differential treatment, capacity building, transparency in government procurement, the TRIPS, etc.

The message that we wish to transmit to this Conference regarding these concerns is not only a heartfelt appeal but also a warning, not simply as regards the situation of poor countries but also the future of the world as a whole.

In this respect, we call on our partners to pay close attention to the proverb which states that words are wasted on a starving man.

The recent developments in the international arena are portents that must be heeded.

They confirm, although it is hardly necessary, the idea that the survival of humankind as a whole depends on the way in which the world's affairs are managed.

It is quite obvious that, without minimum justice and equity, without a modicum of solidarity and willingness to share goods and well-being among all peoples and nations, there can be neither peace nor permanent happiness in this world, which is nevertheless the common heritage.

We all agree that the WTO is holding its Fourth Conference at a turning-point and that, after more than half a century, the international trading system is embarking upon the third millennium, without fulfilling the legitimate hopes of the poor countries. Despite this unsatisfactory situation, a

new round of multilateral trade negotiations is foreseen without any really clear idea of its contents or the agenda.

On this issue, the Togolese delegation hopes that, in a surge of genuine international solidarity, this session will take the necessary decisions because we all want to build an international trading system that is beneficial to all countries and provides justice and equity.

Allow me now to associate Togo with the congratulations addressed to the People's Republic of China on the occasion of its accession to the WTO. For my delegation, the accession to the WTO of a country that is a friend of Togo is not only welcome but is only just bearing in mind its economic importance in the world and especially its courageous people, which account for a large part of the world's population.

Togo hopes that the People's Republic of China, which has unceasingly defended the interests of developing countries, will continue to support the same cause in the WTO.

Togo remains confident that the spirit of Doha will be marked by mutual understanding and international solidarity so that the WTO's action can endure and be strengthened and the Organization can become a real catalyst for development that will not leave out any country.

It is my ardent wish that the work of this Fourth Ministerial Conference of the WTO should lead to positive conclusions that can dissipate the fears and renew the confidence and hope of countries that are economically weak.
