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GHANA

Statement Circulated by the Hon. Mr. Dan Abodakpi,
Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry

Let me begin by reiterating Ghana's unalloyed commitment to the underlying principles and practice of the open and multilateral trading system under the auspices of the WTO.

This meeting provides an opportunity for Members to share their respective evaluations regarding the implementation of the Uruguay Round results. The lessons drawn from such practical experiences should constitute the basis upon which to consider what range of activities, by way of future agenda, would be most effective to accelerate the achievement of the objectives the WTO has set itself.

For the WTO the focus of activities has been on the need to ensure openness of the trading system through adherence to the multilateral rules by Members. This is to ensure that derivation of benefits from the multilateral system is indeed enhanced and not impaired. This is accompanied however by numerous obligations.

The structural handicaps afflicting Ghana and indeed other African countries are well known. In a global economy still characterized by enormous inequalities and asymmetries, it is worthwhile reiterating that the African region is the weakest group of actors.

The obligations which an endeavour as complex as the Uruguay Round has placed on the countries in the African region has resulted in a further stress on the already limited resources of the region.

There is no doubt that despite our best endeavours, the fundamental problems and negative features of African trade continue to exist. Africa continues to grapple with falling productivity in strategic economic sectors particularly in agriculture and industry, weak export performance, negative balance of payments and increasing foreign indebtedness. This in spite of far-reaching trade and macro reforms in many of our countries. It is no wonder then that Africa's share of world trade declined steadily from 4.7 per cent in 1980 to its current low level of around 2 per cent. Indeed the gulf particularly between countries in Africa and the developed world in terms of production, technology and infrastructure continues to widen. With these apparent weaknesses in our economic systems, the primary preoccupation of the Ghana delegation is the search for a change that would inspire genuine competitiveness and equity in trade to facilitate our full integration into the multilateral trading system.

While it is important to ensure compliance with obligations under the various Agreements, it is equally important to ensure that all Members, particularly the poor and the fragile ones, are able to take advantage of the openings and trade opportunities thus created to positively transform their

economies. Indeed the fact that the African continent's trade performance continues to deteriorate should be of concern to all. An economically viable Africa performing its right role in the multilateral trading system will be mutually beneficial to all and serve as a big boost to global trade.

Ghana's optimism in the relevance of the multilateral trading system in creating and maintaining opportunities for sustainable development has been amply demonstrated through her active participation in the activities of the WTO especially the post Uruguay Round negotiations. This has been done notwithstanding her limited capabilities and resources. I am proud to mention my country's participation in the services negotiations in the areas of Basic Telecommunications and Financial Services. In both areas mentioned above, Ghana made substantial offers by way of schedules.

For us in Ghana, our capacity of participation in future negotiations will be greatly enhanced if the weaknesses in our trade structures are addressed.

In this connection we recognize the immense potential benefits that the Integrated Technical Assistance Programme jointly operated by WTO, UNCTAD and ITC offers Africa. The programme should at all stages of its implementation involve consultations with the beneficiary countries to ensure that it ends up in practical benefits to the target countries.

Without being exhaustive, the following are emphasized as areas of particular importance which should be adequately addressed in the programme by way of technical assistance.

(i) Private sector capacity improvement

The international trading environment has undergone tremendous changes particularly as a result of the Uruguay Round. Numerous changes have been effected to the ways of doing business. As the new market opportunities resulting from the Round are there to be seized solely by the private sector operators with little or no room at all for reliance on government handout, the development of the African private sector becomes imperative. There is the need for the private sector to be updated on the opportunities and changes resulting from the Round. A private sector component has to be made an important aspect of the programme.

(ii) Human resource training in trade policy

It is considered vital for additional action to upgrade the knowledge of African trade officials to enhance their effectiveness and to enable them live up to expectation regarding their enhanced role in the global economy.

(iii) Access to market information

As a result of the vigorous competition in today's trading environment, the availability of trade information and easy access to such information play an important role in a successful export trade. Lack of information about export markets has been a major constraint in the export efforts of African countries. Assistance should focus on both the development of efficient information base as well as how to access and utilize information.

(iv) Improvement or diversification of export base

A basic problem of most African countries including Ghana is that of limited export base. There is the urgent need to shift away from this rather unfavourable situation. It is important for specific programmes to be developed to address Africa's supply side needs to diversify the production base both horizontally and vertically to ensure its better response to market access opportunities.

Indeed, the numerous market access openings will be meaningless to Africa if she is unable to improve supplies to meet purchase orders. It is also considered important for research programmes to be developed for possible expansion of the end uses of products of export interest to African countries.

Indeed, globalization and liberalization are imposing additional strains on countries such as Ghana. However, we in Ghana see these difficulties as challenges which can be overcome, if the multilateral system adopts a cooperative approach towards the resolution of these problems. We therefore call on the developed world to avoid equivocation and ambivalence in ensuring a true open market regime.
