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Statement by H.E. Mr D. Rodrigo de Rato y Figaredo
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As we meet here for the Fourth Ministerial Conference in Doha, I should like first of all to take this opportunity to express Spain's gratitude for the hospitality lavished upon us by the people and the Government of Qatar, and in particular the city of Doha. Choosing the Middle-East to host this meeting was a sound decision in Spain's view.

We also greatly appreciate the effort made by the organizers and the World Trade Organization, as well as the work of Messrs. Moore and Harbison.

This meeting is taking place in a context marked by three major events:

- A world economic slow-down which, for the first time in several decades, is affecting all the world's economies.
- Secondly, the terrorist attacks against the United States, in addition to involving a human tragedy, have undoubtedly heightened uncertainty and thereby further depressed the short-term economic outlook.
- And thirdly, after the Seattle failure it is more necessary than ever to launch a new round aimed at liberalizing trade and promoting development, bringing good tidings for all the world's citizens.

What sets the World Trade Organization apart from other multilateral organizations is that consensus alone produces results and is therefore the sole dominant force. Our decision-making system ensures the equality of the 142 Members.

The establishment of the WTO meant that it is now, together with the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, the third major pillar of the international economic system, playing a fundamental role not only as the forum of negotiations aimed at freer trade but above all because it has managed to create a world legal order for international trade. For Spain, the multilateral trading system has been the main engine of international trade liberalization, thereby boosting economic development and growth worldwide, since we believe that investment, together with trade, constitute the backbone of development.

I should now like to refer in greater detail to some specific aspects which, in my opinion, deserve to be highlighted at this conference.

For many months now, world society has been calling on governments for a clear response to the imbalances created by globalization for the less developed countries. Spain, together with the rest of the European Union, is convinced that free trade is an essential instrument, as well as a great

opportunity, for promoting development in a world of globalized markets. Spain therefore believes that it is quite right that the objective of promoting development should be the hallmark of the new round, and to that end the World Trade Organization does indeed need to be strengthened.

The entry of China and Chinese Taipei during this conference is an indication of the strength of free trade as a basic instrument for development purposes.

We agree with others that, alongside free trade, other issues such as the debt burden and suitable financial assistance should be part of a broad agenda for development, which all multilateral organizations will have to take duly into account.

The strengthening of this multilateral trading system and expansion of its liberalizing scope must ensure that the developing countries are more and more fully integrated into the multilateral trading system and obtain the benefits which it offers to all its participants.

In a broader context, Spain is making an active contribution to initiatives in favour of development. This refers in particular to debt forgiveness at multilateral level and bilateral debt relief; providing considerable resources through the EU, the multilateral financial institutions and bilaterally; as well as cooperation in disaster situations and, together with the institutions, bilateral financial support to countries in crisis.

We meet here in Doha to push forward new multilateral negotiations to overcome the differences which stopped us from achieving results in Seattle, with the launch of an expanded programme of negotiations which, along with a new work programme, constitutes a balanced agenda aimed at boosting the development of the poorer countries.

Strengthening the WTO will further contribute to creating a more peaceful and integrated international environment, something that is especially necessary following last September's tragic events: an environment in which all may reap the benefits of international cooperation, and specifically within the context of the multilateral trading system.

In the age of globalization our response must also be a global one, aimed at maintaining and boosting its vast potential for economic and social gains as well as for understanding between countries and people, while at the same time redressing its harmful effects on the less developed countries.

In order to achieve this, we will have to make progress, in working on the built-in agenda, in the negotiations on services and the progressive liberalization of international trade in agriculture, including non-trade concerns, such as rural development and environmental effects.

The negotiations on market access in non-agricultural sectors is another of our liberalization objectives. Here, owing to its specific features, the fisheries sector will need specific rules. In any case, this treatment must be set in the context of environmental conservation, so as to avoid exhausting fishery resources, and take into account compliance with the United Nations Convention on the law of the sea as well as international fishing agreements at regional level.

Another issue to which Spain attaches great importance concerns the needs of countries suffering from serious health crises and epidemics. We believe that it is essential to pay the utmost attention to this issue, ensuring that such countries can benefit from flexibility under the Agreement on Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights, in the interests of effective and immediate access to medicines for their populations. Stimulating innovation and research to develop new pharmaceutical products and improve existing ones is in everyone's interest and especially that of countries suffering from pandemics.

Measures for the implementation of the Marrakesh Agreements and the concerns aroused in that connection should have a key place in this conference. Spain is ready to give consideration to these concerns and find the most appropriate solutions to them.

In our interdependent world, the WTO, whose main sphere of competence is trade, cannot work in isolation but must continue its cooperation with other international organizations in order to coordinate their action and find a multilateral response to development.

The reply to the social criticism of our organization must be to enhance its transparency. We must respond to the information needs of our civil societies and answer their concerns. We must pursue our dialogue with them both within the WTO and in our own countries, improving transparency and welcoming the presence of the non-governmental organizations here at this conference.

I wish to conclude by saying that the Government of Spain considers that, in the current political and economic circumstances, it is essential to launch a new round of negotiations in order to improve the outlook for economic recovery and stand up to the temptations of protectionism which could spread throughout the world in this state of uncertainty.
