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ZAMBIA

Statement by the Honourable Dipak Patel Minister of Commerce, Trade and Industry

First, let me express on behalf of my delegation, sincere appreciation to the Government and people of Mexico for their warm hospitality extended to my delegation and me since we arrived in this beautiful city of Cancún.

May I also take this opportunity to congratulate the Kingdoms of Nepal and Cambodia for their courage in joining the WTO. Further, I would also like to salute organizations, like UNCTAD, ITC and many others, world-over for their efforts to highlight the issues of world trade and poverty.

When the WTO was created through the signing of the Marrakesh Agreement in 1994, I was privileged to be my country's Minister of Trade. My country committed itself to supporting the ideals of the WTO for a better tomorrow for a least-developed country like mine – Zambia.

The realism after almost ten years from Marrakesh is that the rules of trade and development remain inequitable to the least-developed countries and developing countries.

In Zambia, the majority of our people who live under a-dollar-a-day deem that WTO rules and the positions being taken by the rich North are rigged in their favour and at great cost and pain for the poor.

Yet, Zambia, over a period of twelve years has liberalized its economy and moved ahead, hoping that fair-mindedness and sensibility will prevail. But it has not. We are now caught in a quagmire – on the one hand we have the likes of IMF, amongst others, prescribing conditions that remain far-fetched – a good example is when we the poor countries are being asked to reduce our tariffs and being told that the Bretton Woods institutions may provide us loans to compensate for revenue loss. Yet most of the poor countries are already debt-ridden and whilst the very slow process of debt dismantling is going on, we are asked to take on more loans. This limits even further our policy space of adjustment.

The current structure of the global trade regime is such that it cannot and does not provide us with significant opportunities to grow and develop at a pace that is vital. Despite efforts undertaken by my country in the past two decades to reform trade through the adoption of liberal policy measures, Zambia still faces a number of obstacles to attaining meaningful levels of development. Zambia's GDP is around 3 billion dollars. This amount is far less than what is spent by some countries in their weekly budgets. For this reason, my country is looking forward to a multilateral trading system responsive to the needs of the most vulnerable economies, especially in this round of negotiations.

The other issue of concern is transparency in the dealings at WTO. I do recognize efforts made in this regard towards an all inclusive process. However, the increasing tendency of issuance of documents on the responsibility of the Chairperson is worrying. It therefore becomes difficult for delegations to own such documents. It undermines the principle of a Member-driven process on which the WTO is premised. Why then are Ministers asked to preside over Ministerial Meetings, if we cannot set our own agenda?

Finally, I would like to add my voice, and that of my country, behind Kofi Annan's call for fair trade and fair play. We have for far too long discussed the issues of concern to the poor countries, we know the issues, the rich North cannot avoid the issues, but they continue to fail to discharge their moral global responsibilities.
