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NIGERIA

Statement by the Honourable Adamu Danjuma Idris Waziri
Minister of Commerce

On behalf of the Nigerian delegation to this Conference, I congratulate you Mr Chairman, on your election as the Chair of the Fifth Ministerial Conference. Let me also pay tribute to H.E. Dr Supachai, Director-General of the WTO and the Chairman of the General Council, Ambassador Carlos Perez del Castillo, for their efforts in the Geneva process, as well as for evolving an agenda which is placed before us for consideration. I also wish to express our sincere appreciation to the Government and people of Mexico for the warm hospitality given to my delegation since our arrival and for the excellent facilities that have been provided for the Conference.

The Fifth Ministerial Conference is important for a number of reasons. It is taking place at a trying period for the world trade and economy. My delegation strongly believes that this Conference is another opportunity for us to collectively look into the problems facing the multilateral trading system and proffer solutions aimed at addressing the challenges ahead. More so, the challenges and opportunities presented by the forces of globalization are so immense, such that they require concerted efforts to address them. It is, therefore, the view of my delegation that this Conference should not only find ways to address these challenges, but also help us in creating a system that is more transparent, fairer and equitable. This, we believe, would make the WTO an organization that is caring and responsive to the needs of its Members, particularly the most vulnerable among them. I therefore urge us all to find solutions to these problems and ensure that development, which is at the heart of the Doha work programme, is realized.

Agriculture is a very important sector for most developing countries. For Nigeria, it provides employment and means of livelihood for over 70 per cent of the population. It is in view of this that Nigeria places special importance on the negotiations on agriculture and therefore expects that the problems associated with global agriculture trade distortion would be addressed. Unfortunately, the agriculture negotiations have not made much progress since they were launched. I wish, therefore, to call on our trading partners to be more sensitive to our concerns by making efforts to remove export subsidies and domestic support measures, as well as provide real and substantial market access to products of export interest to developing countries. As part of special and differential treatment, it is important that the flexibility accorded to the developing countries should be made an integral part of all elements of the negotiations. It should also be precise and operationally effective to enable them to effectively address their development needs, including food, security, livelihood concerns and poverty alleviation. In this regard, we strongly support the establishment of the concepts of special products (SP) and Special Safeguard Mechanism (SSM) which are important to the reform process. We hope that this Conference will find ways to addressing these problems in a manner that will lead to real progress in the mandated negotiations on agriculture, in order to remove the inequalities in agricultural trade and make our export products more competitive.

Our expectation in the negotiations on services is to address and operationalize important provisions of the GATS, particularly the movement of natural persons (Mode 4). Other areas of interest include Articles IV and XIX of the GATS, which would enable developing countries to increase their participation and benefit from trade in services through progressive liberalization. The provision of technical assistance and capacity-building should be part of, and implemented along with the negotiations to resolve the lack of capacity of developing countries to benefit from the GATS. Furthermore, an assessment of the impact of past liberalization measures undertaken by developing countries on their economies should be conducted, to ensure that developing countries do not unduly undertake commitments that would adversely impact on their economies. In view of the growing importance of the services sector to our economies, we call on developed countries to facilitate the increasing participation of developing countries in trade in services.

On the Singapore issues, Nigeria acknowledges the useful discussions held so far in the Working Groups on Trade and Investment, Transparency in Government Procurement, Competition Policy and Trade Facilitation. No doubt, these are issues of interest to my delegation but the problem is that we are not ready for them yet. Therefore, our position is that further clarification should continue in the Working Groups to enhance understanding of the elements that have been identified and to facilitate the emergence of consensus on them before taking further decision on how to proceed. My delegation, therefore, calls for more time to fully understand the implications of these issues, including the implication of entering into multilateral agreements on them. In the meantime, effective and appropriate technical assistance with a long-term perspective should be provided to build our capacity on these issues, in order to facilitate an understanding of their development implications. Nigeria along with a number of other Members have submitted a set of elements for clarification which should guide the Conference in taking a decision.

Nigeria views with serious concern the lack of progress on development-related issues in the Doha Development Agenda. We are disappointed that not much has been achieved regarding implementation-related issues and concerns and special and differential treatment. It is regrettable that Members could not agree on these issues that are so critical to the participation of developing countries in the multilateral trading system. I, therefore, urge Ministers to give the necessary mandates and directives for further efforts and commitments in reaching satisfactory results on all these issues in the shortest time possible so as to give real meaning to the Doha Development Agenda. However, Nigeria is relieved that the issue of TRIPS and public health has finally been resolved. We call on Members to demonstrate the same strong commitment on the many remaining issues.

It is also the view of my delegation that the outcome of the negotiations on NAMA will achieve the major objective of the Doha mandate by addressing our concerns regarding the reduction of high tariffs, tariff peaks and tariff escalation for products of export interest to developing countries. In this regard, it is my delegation's expectation that the modalities for the negotiations will factor in the elements of less than full reciprocity and special and differential treatment, in order to achieve meaningful market access for developing countries. It is also our expectation that as part of ways of responding to the special needs and interests of developing and least-developed countries, the concerns raised about the loss of customs revenue as a result of tariff reductions, as well as the critical issue of erosion of preferences for beneficiary countries would be taken into serious consideration. My delegation, therefore, believes that any modalities which attempt to adopt a "one size fits all" approach, will not be in the interest of particularly developing and least-developed countries. While we welcome the efforts so far made in the areas of appropriate studies and capacity-building, we also look forward to the conduct of studies on the implication of liberalization measures in industrial products on the economies and development objectives of developing and least-developed countries.

On technical assistance and capacity-building, my delegation considers this issue to be a core element of the Doha work programme. Lack of capacity has hampered the effective participation of many developing countries in WTO activities. Effective technical assistance is required to enhance the participation of many countries, including Nigeria in the multilateral trading system and to

maximize their benefits therefrom. Such technical assistance should be targeted and result-oriented and must be based on the regular annual budget of the WTO.

Nigeria reaffirms its firm commitments to the principles and objectives of the multilateral trading system. In that regard, we have continued with the liberalization of the economy, which tempo has increased since the installation of a democratically elected Government in 1999. All key sectors of the economy have been privatized or commercialized, and government has greatly enhanced transparency in its running of the economy. In an era of increasing globalization, we continue to see the WTO increase in stature and importance. We believe that the WTO has the capacity to adequately respond to the yearnings of its Members, in particular the developing and least-developed countries, and in enabling them to draw meaningful benefits from the system. Therefore, as government continues to streamline its trade and economic policies in line with WTO rules and obligations, it is the expectation of our people that they will begin to see tangible benefits accruing from our belonging to the WTO. The WTO should therefore work assiduously to deliver on the gains of liberalization and more so, the promises of the Doha Development Agenda. It is only in doing this that the WTO can justify its claim that trade is the engine of growth and development, including its role improving the living standards of our people.

In conclusion, it is the view of my delegation that this Session will be useful in substantively addressing the issues on the agenda of the multilateral trading system, especially those of concern and specific interest to developing countries in order to truly place development at the heart of the Doha work programme. In addition, in order to complement the work being carried out in the WTO, we also call for enhanced coherence in the global economic policy-making to address issues like the cancellation of debt and the eradication of diseases and poverty, so as to improve the living conditions of poor people and make life more meaningful for all.
