

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

WT/MIN(98)/ST/68

18 May 1998

(98-2083)

MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE
Second Session
Geneva, 18 and 20 May 1998

Original: English

SUDAN

Statement Circulated by H.E. Ahmed Eltigani Salih,
(As an Observer)

On behalf of the Sudanese delegation and on my own behalf I wish to express our indebtedness to the Government and people of Switzerland for the warm hospitality that we have enjoyed since our arrival in Geneva. We also extend our deep thanks to Director-General of the World Trade Organization for his kind invitation to us and for the excellent preparations his able staff have made to ensure a productive and fruitful outcome for this Conference.

Today we celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the multilateral trading system. While we are committed to the ideals of WTO and the goals enshrined in the Marrakesh Agreement, we feel that the benefits for many African countries, especially the least-developed countries in this continent, from the WTO's Multilateral Trade Agreements are yet to be fulfilled. As African countries continue to be bypassed by the benefits of economic and trade growth resulting from the globalization of the world economy, we regret to note that with each passing day they become further marginalized.

This 50th Anniversary of the multilateral trading system should be an occasion for the international community, particularly our trade and development partners, for deep and genuine reflection on the challenges and obstacles that continue to stand in the way of Africa's active participation in global trade, with a view to strengthening the impact of the initiatives already taken in a way that will ensure timely and speedy implementation.

My delegation welcomes the High-Level Meeting on Integrated Initiatives for the LDCs' Trade Development, held in October 1997. We appreciate the great efforts of the WTO in collaboration with other international agencies in the convening of that meeting, the outcome of which we still look forward to being fully realized. We feel that a lot more needs to be done as regards the full and speedy implementation of the results and commitments emanating from the HLM, and this, we believe, will only be realized if the necessary adequate budgetary and extrabudgetary resources are made available. We call on the WTO and other trade-related agencies to assist us and the other LDCs in the convening of the country round tables to discuss how to implement the response of the six agencies to our trade needs list presented to HLM last year. We believe that these needs will only be of benefit to us if they are translated into tangible and action-oriented programmes.

LDCs' goods and products should receive free access in world markets as rightly proposed by the Secretary-General of the WTO in his inaugural speech. They should be relieved from the strenuous burden of foreign debts and from the hardships of structural adjustments. Furthermore, their capacity building efforts to compete should be strongly supported and developed.

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Sudan is currently exerting serious efforts to accelerate its accession process to the WTO. We believe that the WTO should attempt to work out measures to ensure facilitation of the accession of all countries wishing to join the multilateral trading system, especially the least-developed countries. Given our institutional and human resource weakness, we feel that special and more transparent treatment should be accorded to LDCs seeking accession, and that every effort should be made to ensure that they are not over-burdened with more obligations than those originally undertaken by WTO Member countries.

In conclusion, let me emphasize that globalization entails challenges and opportunities for all countries. It is necessary that we should endeavour to ensure that the benefits accruing from globalizations should be maximized to include those threatened by further marginalization, and that every genuine effort must be exerted to minimize the losses that might affect them.

There is an African saying that says: "Cross the river in a company, and the crocodile will not eat you". Let us hope that we will stand together to face the challenge of globalization in the next Millennium.
