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BURKINA FASO

Statement by H.E. Mr. Abdoulaye Abdoukader Cisse Minister for Trade, Industry and Handicrafts

On behalf of the Government of Burkina Faso and in my own name, I should like to convey to you, Chairperson of the Council, my congratulations on your appointment to this office and above all on the skill with which you have always guided our work.

I should also like to congratulate Mr. Mike Moore, the new Director-General of the WTO, on his election to the post, as well as the new team of collaborators he has just appointed. On behalf of the Government of Burkina Faso, I should also like to thank Mr. Mike Moore and our colleagues from the countries which supported our candidature for the honour and confidence they have shown in our country by appointing one of its citizens, Mr. Ablassé Ouedraogo, as a Deputy Director-General of our Organization. I wish the new team every success in the daunting but noble mission with which it has been entrusted.

I should like to express my gratitude to the people and Government of our host country, the United States of America, for their warm hospitality in this magnificent and beautiful city of Seattle.

Our Third Ministerial Conference is taking place at the end of the century and the dawn of the new millennium. It is important to recall the fundamental principles clearly set out in the preamble to the Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization. Reading this preamble, it is quite clear that the intention of the negotiators was to utilize trade as a tool for sustainable development, for raising living standards and expanding production, while at the same time taking into account the needs of developing and least-developed countries. The WTO must ensure respect for this fundamental principle. The truth is, however, that many countries are still facing numerous economic challenges, including the exacerbation of socioeconomic problems, increased poverty, as well as the inadequacy of their human and financial resources and institutional capacity to implement the Uruguay Round Agreements.

In many of these countries, the economic situation has worsened as a result of the increase in the external debt, which has widened the gap separating them from the developed countries.

I welcome the steps taken by the international community to cancel the multilateral debts of the highly indebted poorest countries, which number 41, 33 of them in Africa. My country is glad to be included in the list of those benefiting from cancellation of the debt.

In Burkina Faso, we are certain that globalization has now become part of mankind's history because it has an impact on many daily economic activities.

As a founding Member of the WTO, Burkina Faso will abide by the rules of the multilateral trading system.

Regional economic integration is a matter of ongoing concern for us in economic integration groupings such as the WAEMU and ECOWAS so that our people can benefit from globalization.

We call on the World Trade Organization to adopt the following measures to help the least-developed and developing countries to play a more effective role within the new international trading system:

- Invite trade partners in developed countries to give effect to the commitments on special and differential treatment in favour of developing countries, notably in the areas of services and agriculture;
- Demand that developed countries continue to abolish agricultural subsidies;
- Require the effective application of Article 10 of the SPS Agreement and Article 11 of the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) as part of the special and differential treatment;
- Reinforce the overall coherence of the WTO's policies and those of the Bretton Woods institutions in relation to the implementation of trade, monetary and financial policies;
- Demand totally free access to markets for least-developed countries and more flexible criteria on rules of origin;
- Ensure that environmental and social standards do not become disguised forms of protectionism;
- Demand that application of Article IV of the General Agreement on Trade in Services go hand in hand with the removal of obstacles caused by the many restrictions on the movement of persons from developing countries.

I hope that the new round of multilateral trade negotiations soon to be launched will take place under the sign of development and the struggle against poverty. It is unacceptable that, of the 6 billion people on our planet, over 3 billion must live on less than \$2 per day.

It is time for us to look together at the ways and means that will allow us to attenuate the marginalization of a certain number of countries, most of which are to be found in the southern hemisphere. Globalization must not be synonymous with impoverishment; on the contrary, the emergence of large regional economic groupings should be the foundation for unification and prosperity that allow mankind to realize its full potential.
