

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

WT/MIN(01)/10
12 November 2001

(01-5691)

MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE
Fourth Session
Doha, 9 - 13 November 2001

Original: English

**ADDRESS BY HIS HIGHNESS
SHEIKH HAMAD BIN KHALIFA AL-THANI
EMIR OF THE STATE OF QATAR**

We are happy to receive you here in Qatar at the fourth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization, which is one of the most important international organizations established in the last Century.

The convening of your Conference in Doha at this juncture in particular has regional and international significance. Moreover, it opens for us many horizons to work for the consolidation of the world trade order by developing the fundamentals on which world trade must be based and elaborating the requirements needed so as to contribute more effectively to opening the gates of a world in which prosperity and stability prevail, and which enjoys communication and amity.

The multilateral trade system has, undoubtedly, contributed to the growth of world economy. It has also extended aid to a number of developing countries to boost their economic and social development, especially in the last two decades. However, the benefits were not uniformly spread, and have bypassed many developing countries. This can be seen if we look at income distribution across the world, which is still skewed in favour of the few in an unacceptable manner. Eighty per cent of the world population consume only 15 per cent of the resources of the world, while 20 per cent consume about 85 per cent of those resources.

If it is our goal that the WTO should be the engine which drives the wheel of economic development in the world, it must take full account of the needs and expectations of developing countries, the populations of which represent the great majority of the world's population. To achieve that, ministers must work to find an effective mechanism within the WTO which can provide a realistic prospect for these countries, particularly the least-developed ones, to contribute to developing the fundamentals of the trade system, and its interpretation within a context that fully takes into account the economic, social and technical parameters of these countries, which would in turn help them derive real benefits from this system in future.

This Conference is a favourable opportunity to welcome more than one billion people representing new members of the Organization, which is a significant step on the path to making it a global Organization.

The convening of this Conference in the Arab region is a reminder of the region's historic interest in trade, which goes back to several centuries before and after Islam, which was reflected in commercial exchanges both within and beyond the region itself or across the then existing civilizations in Europe, Africa and Asia. This deeply rooted historical commercial background of the Arab countries can serve, as well as benefit from, the world trade order.

This Conference gives the State of Qatar the opportunity to introduce itself and show that its economic system is open and flexible, falling in line with the overall objectives of the World Trade

Organization as characterized by freedom of trade exchange, guaranteeing of the prerequisites of fair competition and encouragement of foreign investment.

As for foreign investments, the State of Qatar attaches great importance to attracting them by providing a favourable climate and enacting encouraging, flexible conditions for overseas participation in the country.

Your responsibility today is great. The Fourth WTO Ministerial Conference coincides with a difficult period where several countries have seen their economies undergoing recession and slow down. You will be the focus of attention until a Ministerial Declaration satisfactory to all parties is issued; a declaration launching a fresh round of trade negotiations in Doha that reinforces confidence in the Organization, gives a strong impetus to trade exchanges, and at the same time gives a badly needed stimulus to the world economy.

The world is looking forward to a new round that would give prominence to development, consolidate the principles of justice and equity in the multilateral trade system, and open wide the doors of every market for the commodities of less developed countries and contribute to the flourishing of their economies.

In view of the many opportunities provided by this Conference, we hope that you would do your utmost to make it a success by adopting resolutions which will give the WTO future programmes aimed primarily at establishing dialogue of nations and peoples and consolidating the world trade order into one leading to peace and stability and securing prosperity for all.

A successful meeting will be the best possible demonstration that all nations, rich and poor alike, are working together for a better and more just world. It will show that cooperation and mutual understanding are the way to solve our problems.
