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Statement by H.E. Mr. Pierre-Damien Boussoukou-Boumba Minister of Trade, Supplies, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises, in Charge of Handicrafts

It is indeed a pleasure for me to be able to speak from this podium and, on behalf of the Congolese Government, to state my country's concerns. I should like to begin by paying a well-deserved tribute to the Secretariat of the World Trade Organization for their efforts in preparing and holding the Third Ministerial Conference. I would also like to thank the Government of the United States of America and the authorities of the city of Seattle for consenting to host this Conference.

This Conference is taking place in an international context marked by:

- The marginalization of developing countries;
- the unsuitableness of the Uruguay Round Agreements and other decisions;
- dwindling of investment in the developing countries;
- The emergence of new trade disputes such as those concerning sanitary standards, the environment, and trade-related intellectual property rights.

This meeting must therefore be taken as an opportunity to take a critical look at the first five years of implementation of the Uruguay Round agreements and to create the conditions for a real upturn in the economies of developing countries and for integrating them into the world economy.

As several delegations have stated before me, the negotiations now getting under way in Seattle should be aimed above all at development and the well-being of peoples.

The Republic of the Congo has always valued the commendable work done successively by GATT and the WTO in liberalizing trade.

But, more than ever, we must be realistic, united and trenchant, in order to take decisions that are even more effective and capable of producing the changes for which we are striving.

My country will support all moves and policies conducive to building the capacity of developing countries to stand on their own and to join in the concert of modern nations.

At all events, this Conference should make an in-depth analysis of the shortcomings observed in the implementation of the Uruguay Round agreements, so as to come up with decisions that will be beneficial to all.

The negotiations now starting must therefore be guided by transparency so that the various delegations can make commitments based on well-informed and fully understood conclusions.

Against this backdrop, provisions should be put in place to benefit developing countries, including:

- Maintaining and strengthening special and differential treatment;
- harmonizing WTO provisions with IMF and World Bank policies;
- stepping up technical cooperation in order to enable developing countries to enhance their capacity to generate the domestic resources needed for production and development.

More generally speaking, the Congo would not wish to see environmental policies and labour standards converted into new technical barriers to trade between the States.

Food security is also an ongoing concern of States that are highly dependent on the outside world. In this connection, the genetic engineering of foodstuffs being exported by some developed countries must not prove harmful to the health of the populations of importing countries. The recent examples of mad cow disease and of dioxin contamination have revealed practices that have been discredited and fully justify the fears of consumers.

I conclude by recalling that we all wanted these negotiations. Their success will greatly depend on the will and wisdom of all the participants. It is my hope that selfishness will not triumph over fairness and that international solidarity will contribute to the well-being of all peoples.
