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Statement by the Honourable Ram Krishna Tamrakar Minister of Commerce

(Speaking as an Observer)

1. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Government of the United States of America as well as Director-General of WTO, Mr. Mike Moore and his team, for organizing this conference in this beautiful city of Seattle and extending generous hospitality to me and my delegation.

2. We uphold the view that progressive trade liberalization, the motto of WTO, encourages and enhances efficient use of available global and local resources, the ultimate asset of the "global village" created and preserved by our ancestors. Trade is not an end itself. It is a means to uplift the global standards of living. We believe that "globalization" should not be an instrument to exploit the global opportunities and resources by big business empires of developed countries at the cost of under-developed world. It should rather pave a highway for golden era of humanity and civilization, where traditional and modern knowledge, technology and resources flow for the good of all mankind.

Globalization must aim at freeing humanity from the state of hunger and poverty as well as from the fear of exploitation and war. The vision, mission and task of the "global village" would remain incomplete if we were unable to integrate all countries from the top of the world down to the ocean within the framework of multilateral trading system. This is possible with the establishment of an environment, ensuring fair and equitable distribution of gains that stem from the use of global resources.

3. In Nepal, we have a saying that prosperity comes with sharing and self-indulgence wanes. From the perspective of all the LDCs, the issue is of magnanimity, and not reciprocity. Thus, to assist in global prosperity, is not only a moral responsibility of our developed partners but it is at the core of their interests too.

4. As you know, Nepal, a least-developed and land-locked country, is also in the process of accession to WTO. However, the accession process has become complex, demanding and time-consuming. And, the continued exclusion has been depriving us from sharing the benefits of ever-growing international trade. Therefore, a fast track accession process for LDCs with liberal conditionalities, consistent with the trade and development needs is the need of the hour. LDCs should not be called upon in the accession process to assume obligations or commitments that go beyond what is applicable to the founder WTO LDC Members. As most of the transition period provided for developing and least-developed countries, which have either expired or are coming towards the end, I call for the extension of transition periods for acceding LDC countries by making them applicable for the date of accession.

5. We uphold the view that WTO Members should extend duty-free, quota-free markets for all the products originating in LDCs and apply standstill or roll-back to all contingency protection

measures that have adverse effect on market access for export products of LDCs. But, of course, market access is only one face of the coin. For meaningful and beneficial integration of LDCs into global economy. The more important face is the "supply capacity". It requires infrastructure development, both institutional and human, along with transfer of technology and investment. So, I call upon our developed partners to provide generous support to overcome supply bottlenecks of LDCs. Moreover, the speedy operationalization of the Integrated Framework for Least-Developed Countries' Trade Development and full and faithful implementation of the provisions of special and differential treatments of the various agreements would help uplift the small economies.

6. With regard to trade and labour standards, we endorse the commitments made by Commerce Ministers at the Singapore Ministerial Declaration. And for other issues, such as foreign direct investment, electronic commerce, competition policy, government procurement and environmental issues, we need in-depth study on their implications. We uphold that the issues of environment should not be affecting the trade of LDC countries. No country could meaningfully and effectively participate in the negotiation on issues that they do not comprehend well. Similarly, LDCs should be given more flexibility in the implementation of the provisions regarding intellectual property rights consistent with their institutional infrastructure, human resources and development level.

7. The burden of external debt continues to be one of the main obstacles to the achievement of the social and economic development objectives of LDCs. The outflows of a substantial portion of gross domestic product and export earnings to service debt have not only regressed the economic development but also put these countries on the verge of social and political turmoil. Therefore, I urge the developed countries to send a clear message from Seattle to cancel foreign debts of all LDCs.

8. I am confident that there is a lot we can do together to make a better future for mankind. Let Seattle lay a foundation based on a genuine will and commitment for prosperity of humanity as a whole in the 21st century.
