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ANGOLA

Statement by H.E Mr. Vitorino Domingos Hossi Minister of Commerce

I would like to start by expressing my deep gratitude to the Government and to the people of the United States, for the hospitality shown since the arrival of our delegation and for the support structures created for this historical WTO Ministerial Conference, on the brink of the new Millennium.

It is with special joy that I address this distinct Conference of Ministers and High Dignitaries of the country Members of the WTO, on this date on which, on the brink of the third millennium, were gathered here to debate and find solutions for the numerous economical and commercial issues included in our work schedule, of great interest for a future of prosperity that we want to share among all our countries.

The entry process of Angola into the WTO was initiated on 14 April 1995, with the signing of the Marrakesh Treaty. Angola is at the present date, going through a difficult period of transition to the economy market and understands that the liberal commercial policies can contribute to assure a healthy basis of growth and lengthy development of its economy and are an important element, if not fundamental, to the success of a program of structural adjustment, on which we are working with the cooperation of the IMF and the World Bank.

We think that the cooperation among the different intergovernmental Organizations should be strengthened, especially between the WTO, the IMF and the World Bank to assure some coherence on the elaboration of the economical policies, not only on a world-wide, and a continental level (regional and subregional), but also on each one of our nations, regarding the support to the underdeveloped countries a priority.

For this reason, our country has been developing a keen interest on the effective implementation of the work plan in favour of the countries mentioned before, that has as its main resource, the Technical Assistance Board, which we think could be enlarged to ensure a stronger support which would allow the effectiveness of the WTO's principles and rules.

On a broader fashion, the technical cooperation should help the subdeveloped countries, and in particular the lesser growing or in transition economies, on the process of implementing the resolutions established on the WTO's Agreements; it should also help those countries in order to allow them to effectively participate on the system of litigation's resolutions and on the multilateral negotiations of new issues, on WTO's grounds.

The international commerce has been growing steadily since the mid-eighties because of the significant contribution of these less-developed countries. However, on the contrary, African participation decreased from 5 per cent to 2 per cent since. Therefore, Africa has seen its share of the

international commerce recede over the last few years. The immediate conclusion is that our countries have not been able to take full advantage of the liberalization benefits, and have seen the gap that separates them from the developed countries growing wider, as well as the risk of marginalization, especially for the less-developed ones, being my own country one of them.

It was because of these very serious issues that during the Ministerial Conference of Singapore, the Ministers recommended the approval of the Plan of Action that I mentioned before, in order to improve the conditions of internal offer and the access to the markets and to encourage the expansion and diversification of the export of these countries.

Angola, although it has the potential to increase and diversify its exports, is still facing strong shortcomings on the offer field that handicap the effort of reviving its exports, a fact owed in particular to the situation of internal instability.

We do have now a new hope that we will overcome this obstacle soon and it will allow us to start a process of a broad economic recovery, including the issues of elimination of the macroeconomic handicaps and finding the right solutions for the existing problems, that will provide a stable ground for the recovery of the damaged infrastructures, the reassessment and stability of the populations, and to provide a healthy basis for the relaunch of productivity and to attract external investments and the transfer of new technologies.

We should recognize, however, that the internal political and economic stability, although important, is far from solving all the issues related with the loss of offer and the access to the markets.

We know that the Agreements of the Uruguay Round were discussed with very little participation of the underdeveloped countries and that they do not reflect clearly the "dimensional development" now claimed by these countries, including Angola. It has been said about this matter, that the "dimensional development" did not weigh enough in the multilateral agreements that came out of the Uruguay Round. Therefore, on the course of the preliminary meetings of the Third Conference, it was actively discussed a proactive agenda, that will substantiate the concerns and necessities of the undeveloped nations. So, we appeal to all nations and in particular to the most developed, to be more flexible on their evaluation of the proposals and suggestions approved at a regional and subregional level, providing a better opportunity to the growing economies to participate in the system of multilateral commerce.

And it is under this dynamic perspective that we consider necessary a broader perspective in applying the principle of the special and differential treatment, a larger technical assistance support, (including the financing of all the different programmes and a tighter cooperation among the nations, the government bodies and the international organizations).

On cooperation, we think it is crucial to carefully evaluate it from all its angles, shaping it accordingly with the Agreements. We also consider of great value to the subdeveloped nations the mechanisms of cooperation at a regional and sub regional level, as well as the initiatives of creating co-lateral partnerships between developed and less-developed nations – among which we highlight the United States initiative towards Africa and the relations established under the General Systems of Preferences.

On the concensus of the Convention among ACP-UE nations, it should be considered not only the different alternatives to the ACP agreements themselves but, also, to make more flexible the discipline rules of the WTO's agreements on this subject, considering the losses that its reversal would represent to the under-developed nations, on the short and long run.
