

Statement by H.E. Mrs. Khemmani Pholsena
Minister of Industry and Commerce
of the Lao People's Democratic Republic
at the 10th WTO Ministerial Conference
Nairobi, 17 December 2015

Mr. Chairperson,
Honorable Ministers,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me first express my deep appreciation to the Government and people of Kenya and the organizing committee for the warm welcome and generous hospitality extended to me and my delegation, and for the excellent arrangements made for this Ministerial Conference, being held in the beautiful and vibrant city of Nairobi, Kenya.

The 10th Ministerial Conference of the WTO at its 20th Anniversary being convened in a developing country in Africa shows that the developing world fully recognizes the importance of trade for development and of the central role of WTO for a development conducive, fair and equitable global trading system. We owe the world and its citizen everywhere in the world, to show that WTO is alive and cares about all its members by making a credible step forward to the achievement of the Doha Development Goals.

In Bali, we were impressed and encouraged by the ability of the Ministers to overcome differences and to finish with a worthwhile Ministerial Declaration. As then, we have arrived here at a critical juncture. Like then, we have to leave Nairobi united to move forward the multilateral trading system.

Given the fact that the momentum created by Ministers in Bali did not lead to the expected constructive work, therefore, our first and foremost task here in Nairobi is to preserve the credibility of the WTO as the central organization that gives hope to all its members, specifically its lesser developed countries that trade is fair and promotes development. To do so, I think we can all inspire us from the experience of Bali to come to a fruitful Ministerial Declaration.

First, Bali was made possible thanks to the flexibility shown by all WTO members. As you remember, the TFA was made possible once all members were convinced that it is in their own interest to adopt those measures. We believe that the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) is exemplary in the sense

that (i) it fixes best practices for all members, but it allows members to adapt the speed of implementation to their own development needs and their own institutional capacities, especially LDCs, to integrate into the world economy.

Secondly, the issue of which members could benefit for the special treatment was addressed pragmatically: all developing members had the same flexibility, but those who do not need all the flexibilities voluntarily renounced to some of those flexibilities without prejudice to their rights and obligations.

We believe that such a pragmatic and flexible approach which respects the needs and capacities of all members may be a way to solve some of the issues we are facing here in Nairobi.

It is our firm belief that we cannot leave Nairobi without a Ministerial Decision that includes both (i) some concrete measures in favor of the LDCs and other lesser developed countries so that we can credibly show that the WTO members are sensitive to the pleas of its lesser developed members and (ii) a commitment to continue the Doha Development Agenda (DDA) within the inclusive and multilateral framework.

Nobody pretends that the decisions taken up today fulfill the mandate and objectives of DDA. We need to find a way to ensure that the interests of all members are recognized, that we find a practical and effective way to come to consensus decisions to achieve the development goals we have set out to achieve that respects the interests of all parties, least developed, developing or developed, small or big, weak or powerful members. Hereby, Lao PDR reaffirms our full support to the multilateral trading system.

Mr. Chairperson,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

For Lao PDR, we have made effort to do our part to implement the decisions taken in Bali: We have submitted the instrument of acceptance of the TFA and the category A notification. We stand ready to notify category B and C. We encourage all members to accelerate the internal processes so that the TFA can enter into force. However, it should be noted that implementation of the promises made to developing and to the least developed members in Bali has been slow; nevertheless, we all have the possibility to make up for this by transforming the best endeavor decisions into binding commitments here in Nairobi. I take this occasion to reaffirm our full support to the LDC Ministerial Declaration and hope we can all rally to implement the legitimate requests of the LDCs.

Lao PDR is worried about the lack of consensus achieved so far. However, there are sufficient elements on the table that will allow us to conclude this Ministerial Conference on a positive note. A failure of our Conference would undermine the credibility of WTO at its 20th anniversary. We all agree that WTO has proven to be essential for the functioning of a rule based trading system, which was essential of the development of all our members, developed, developing and least developed. We have a common interest and obligation to ensure that our institution can continue to play its central role of governance of international trade. I am convinced that all of us are fully aware of the historical importance of our work here in Nairobi and that we will all assume our responsibilities for the benefit of our citizen.

In conclusion, I would like to welcome our two new members, the Republic of Liberia and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Lao PDR looks forward to working closely with them in WTO.

I would also like to thank the WTO members for the replenishment of the EIF. We greatly appreciate that WTO Members realize the importance of aid for trade and the need to support us so as to take full advantage of the potential benefits and our full integration into the global economy.

I thank you.