

**STATEMENT BY HON. RISHAD BATHIUDEEN**  
**MINISTER OF INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE OF SRI LANKA**  
**At the 10<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference – Nairobi, Kenya**

Madam Chairperson,  
Director General / WTO,  
Excellencies, Distinguished delegates,

I wish to make this statement on behalf of Hon. Rishad Bathiudeen, Minister of Industry & Commerce of Sri Lanka, who could not be present here today due to urgent circumstances.

I consider this conference as a historic moment as it is the first WTO Ministerial to be held in Africa. I convey my sincere thanks and appreciation to the government of Kenya, in particular, Hon. Amina Mohamed, Kenya's Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs and International Trade and her team for the great hospitality they have been extending to us since our arrival.

The international trading environment continues to evolve and brings us formidable challenges as well. However, the slowing phase of international trade in recent years is a matter of concern for many countries, particularly those who have high degree of openness to international trade.

The role of rules based multilateral trading system led by WTO has become more and more important and relevant in particular to small and

vulnerable economies such as Sri Lanka in supporting their integration into the world trading system. In this regard, I wish to emphasize attention of WTO for necessary assistance to be extended to Small & Vulnerable Economies such as Sri Lanka particularly in the areas of Air for Trade, Transfer of Technology, Trade Facilitation, Trade Finance and Capacity Development. I am confident that such assistance will bring positive gains and facilitate their way for better integration to the world trade.

As per the economic development vision of the Unity Government led by HE the President Maithripala Sirisena and Hon Prime Minister Ranil Wickramesinghe, Sri Lanka considers international trade as the engine of its economic growth. The country's geographical location, conducive business environment complemented with a knowledge-based society have offered competitive strengths to its trading partners. Trade liberalization policies adopted by Sri Lanka since 1977 were complemented in establishing multilateral rule-based trading environment.

After 30 years of terrorist conflict in the country, Sri Lanka is driving its economy ensuring participation of affected communities in the economic development initiatives. The growth strategies are therefore, aimed at participatory approach to sustainable development creating opportunities for international trade. In this direction, the potential contribution that SMEs' could make through their involvement in the global value chains is a key factor for success.

Sri Lanka places its highest importance to the WTO-led multilateral trading system and the current ongoing negotiations on the Doha Development Agenda. Sri Lanka therefore, looks forward to successful conclusion of DDA after Nairobi.

I wish to take this opportunity to convey the appreciations of the government of Sri Lanka to His Excellency Roberto Azevêdo, Director General of the WTO for all his hard work and the excellent leadership. We have no doubt that he would continue to explore every possible avenue to make the MC 10 deliverables a reality.

Finally, once again stressing Sri Lanka's belief that the World Trade Organization remains the premier negotiating forum to improve multilateral trade rules, I wish you all success in your deliberations.

THANK YOU.