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(15-6631)

Page: 1/2

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CHAIRMAN, WTO GENERAL COUNCIL**

MC10 OPENING SESSION
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It is an honour to address you and to be part of the Tenth Session of the WTO Ministerial Conference. I also wish to extend my deepest gratitude to President Kenyatta and to the people of Kenya for your very warm welcome.

Kenya is a nation with a prospering economy in fast-growing East Africa. It has a young and vibrant population and serves as a hub for innovation. It is against this backdrop that we hold our Tenth WTO Ministerial Conference, the first of its kind in Africa.

I am especially delighted to be here in Nairobi. Being an embodiment of progress and hope, Nairobi provides a wealth of inspiration that will hopefully stimulate productivity and cultivate harmony in the next four days. This setting is thus fitting as the WTO marks an important milestone this year – its Twentieth Anniversary.

And as in all important anniversaries, a moment of reflection is required. This is more than a ceremonial occasion. This is a moment in which we should collectively look back and remind ourselves of the reasons why we are here – the reasons which underpin the creation of the multilateral trading system. A system which, together with the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions, emerged out of the tragedies of the Second World War, and of the Great Depression before then. Unlike these other two institutions, the GATT functioned as a temporary arrangement, sustained by the commitment of its contracting parties. It was this commitment which made it possible to create a system that functions on the basis of rules mutually agreed, **by all of its Members**. A system built on non-discrimination that functions in an inclusive and transparent manner. A system stacked towards the positive settlement of disputes, based on mutually agreed solutions. A system whose main objective is to contribute to sustainable development, raise people's welfare, reduce poverty, and foster peace and stability through international economic cooperation.

I ask you to tap on this reserve of commitment and preference for mutually agreed solutions when we are called to make tough decisions. Only on this basis were we able to craft this system, and only on this basis will we be able to take it forward.

The multilateral trading system that this institution embodies has had its fair share of challenges. Over the past two decades, the WTO has discharged its functions amid geopolitical shifts, financial crises, and economic downturn. Since the last Ministerial Conference, progress in multilateral trade liberalization has been nearly absent and slowdown in global trade has persisted. However, these challenges - which are not new to this organization - have not prevented the WTO from performing its duties.

The economic crisis of 2008, the effects of which are still evident, has not led to an outbreak of beggar-thy-neighbour behaviour. WTO rules and disciplines have inoculated us against this contagion. The WTO has proved to be the best insurance policy, the most effective guardian against protectionism.

For the past twenty years, this organization has been providing the common institutional framework for the conduct of trade relations among its Members. Trade monitoring in different WTO bodies continues to contribute to improved adherence to the WTO rules, disciplines and commitments. The dispute settlement system - one of the most active international adjudicatory systems in the world – continues to play a pivotal role in providing security and predictability to the multilateral trading system. Regular work in WTO Councils and Committees responds to Members' needs through the implementation of their respective mandates.

Since the last Ministerial Conference, the number of WTO Members has grown to 162 with the accessions of Yemen, the Seychelles and Kazakhstan. This week, we will also welcome the Republic of Liberia and of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. WTO Accessions are testimony that the organization does contribute to economic growth.

I urge you to consult the Annual Reports of WTO regular bodies that are before you for review. They underscore the invaluable role this organization plays.

And let me also note here that, in addition to the Annual Reports on WTO activities, the General Council has also agreed to transmit to this Ministerial Conference three draft decisions for your adoption: on TRIPS non-violation and situation complaints; on the work programme on electronic commerce and on the Work Programme on Small Economies.

Members have worked tirelessly in Geneva to make progress in other areas, as well as on a Draft Ministerial Declaration. The results of this work are contained in the draft Ministerial Declaration and in all the draft decisions discussed over several weeks in Geneva - which are in different degrees of finalization and circulated in different formats. They all remain on the table for your consideration, together with all proposals from Members which have been submitted for the attention of the Ministerial Conference.

During the next few days, you, the Ministers, will be called to take decisions on all these matters – and your decisions will determine the path of this organization for the future.

And at the WTO, we decide as **one** – with each Member's reasoning forming part of the voice of the whole. This is the WTO at its purest form. It is at these moments where our organization's purposes shine the brightest - bridging individual positions for the common good. And it is at this stage that a sense of collective responsibility towards the system that we embody must prevail.

As Nelson Mandela said when he addressed the Second Session of the Ministerial Conference "the success of the system agreed to in Marrakesh in 1994 will depend on the wisdom with which it is implemented and taken forward".

Let us therefore not forget why we have the WTO and work together in a common purpose. By anchoring our action in the founding principles of the system, we can properly address the issues most fundamental to each one of us.

I invite you all to be flexible and constructive. Kenya deserves it. Africa deserves it. We all deserve it. On my part, as Chairman of the General Council, I will spare no efforts, Madame Chairperson, to assist you, the Director-General, the Ministers and the Members in the task of making the Nairobi Ministerial Conference successful. And may we allow Nairobi, the "*place of cool waters*", to give us a new impetus in our work ahead. **ASANTE SANA!**
