

STATEMENT OF THE MINISTER OF TRADE FOR THE REPUBLIC OF VANUATU

Madam Chair

Honourable Ministers of Trade,

The Director-General of the WTO,

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

It is with great pleasure that I make this statement. On behalf the Government of Republic of Vanuatu, I wish to thank the people and the Government of Kenya for the warm welcome and gracious hospitality extended to us since our arrival in this magnificent country and for the excellent facilitation of this Ministerial meeting.

Madam Chair, the multilateral trading system is at a crossroad, with the membership divided on how to proceed as regards the Doha Development Agenda. The multilateral trading system has served us well since its inception in the 1940s and it is in the interest of the global community, to do whatever is necessary to strengthen and make it more responsive to the needs of all Members, particularly small and vulnerable states which continue to operate at its periphery and are yet to derive significant benefits from it.

As one of the recently acceded WTO Members, this is the second Ministerial Conference that Vanuatu is attending. In joining the WTO and, as an LDC, Vanuatu had the expectation that it would enhance its performance in the multilateral trading system. As such Vanuatu urges all Members, particularly the leading trading nations, to exercise the necessary flexibility to make it possible for the Doha Round to be

concluded as soon as practicable. Abandoning the Doha Round is not an option for Vanuatu and the multilateral trading system and must not be undermined at this meeting. In that regard, Vanuatu associates itself with the statements made by the Pacific Group, the LDC Group and the ACP Group. We need, as an organisation, to reflect on the reasons for the current blockage in the Doha negotiations and try to deal with them as effectively as possible. The consensus principle requires the concerns of all Members to be addressed, otherwise the blockage will continue and through our actions we will weaken the multilateral trading system.

We believe that as a small vulnerable country and an LDC, our interests should be adequately taken into account so that we can have the opportunity to meaningfully participate in global value chains. Our aspirations should not be undermined by the rigid positions taken by leading trading nations in these negotiations. The development dimension must be an integral part of any agreement that we come up with in these negotiations.

As a recently acceded Member, Vanuatu congratulates Afghanistan and Liberia for completing their accession to the WTO.

At this Ministerial meeting, achieving consensus on the LDC and development-oriented issues would send a positive signal to the international community that the WTO takes seriously the concerns of LDCs. The fifty LDCs account for only 1.24 per cent of global merchandise trade underscoring the need for positive measures to be adopted to reverse their marginalisation in the multilateral trading system. Adopting the LDC package at this meeting will be a step in the right direction. Vanuatu also expects the adoption of a post-Nairobi Work Programme that would lead to the speedy conclusion of the Doha Round with development at its core.

Vanuatu wishes to underline the importance of the provision of adequate technical and financial assistance to LDCs. In that regard, it acknowledges the support it has

received from the EIF and urges donor nations and organisations to continue supporting this invaluable programme. Vanuatu welcomes the pledging of about USD90 million by donor countries earlier this week.

I thank you.