

**STATEMENT BY HRH PRINCE MOHAMED BOLKIAH
AT THE 9TH WTO MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE
4 DECEMBER 2013, BALI, INDONESIA**

Thank you Mr. Chairman, and my congratulations on your election.

As usual, we have had a wonderful welcome in Bali, so many thanks for all your hard work and our great appreciation to President Yudhoyono for his fine opening address.

Also, our very best wishes to Director-General Azevêdo and our warmest greetings to our new members: the Lao People's Democratic Republic; the Republic of Tajikistan; and to the Republic of Yemen who are joining us today. It is a pleasure to be working with you.

Our job as Ministers every two years is supposed to be quite straightforward. We are here to express approval or disapproval of the organisation's work.

Our last meeting in Geneva, however, was anything but straightforward. It left us feeling very frustrated. As countries and regions, we were moving ahead bilaterally, regionally and internationally but we needed an agreed global framework for our work and expected the WTO to provide it.

But it could not.

This was very disappointing in our own region. We had targets for a strong level of regional integration in trade and we wanted to give our people the chance to move beyond national interests. Hence the frustration two years ago.

At this meeting, however, our mood is different. We are not trying to do too much. We are concentrating on a smaller package. We have seen good progress and we want this to continue.

So we thank you very much for last Saturday's press statement. It was very positive and I think it summed things up very well. As it said, "if we can endorse the Bali package, it will make some very "necessary breakthroughs".

The main one for us is the Agreement on Trade Facilitation. This will increase capacity building, reduce the costs of doing business and encourage governments to provide top-class infrastructure.

So, we fully endorse the package and all that it offers to members, no matter what their size, status or special needs. It will make our people more confident, too. They will start to see the WTO as far more than endless negotiations. They will feel that their voices and concerns are equally heard and I think that's very important.

Our people are watching the changes taking place in their lives. They understand them but, at the same time, they are fearful about the future and their place in it.

So, I hope we can take a big step this week towards allaying those fears. After all, Mr. Chairman, the twenty-first century is neither new nor mysterious now. It is time to give it shape and direction. And the Bali package can do precisely that.

Thank you.

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