

**STATEMENT BY HON. HARUNA IDDRISU, MINISTER OF TRADE
AND INDUSTRY OF GHANA AT THE NINTH WTO MINISTERIAL
CONFERENCE, BALI, INDONESIA, 3-6 DECEMBER 2013**

Mr. Chairman,

Director General of WTO,

Colleague Ministers,

Excellencies,

Distinguish guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure and honour that I address this august Conference. On behalf of the Government and people of Ghana, let me at the outset, express my appreciation to the Government and people of Indonesia for hosting the 9th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC9). This gesture reflects once again Indonesia's commitment to the cause of development and the multilateral trading system. We appreciate very much your hospitality and will take back to Ghana fond memories of our stay in Bali.

2. I also commend the Chairman of the General Council, the Director-General, the various Chairs of Committees, team of facilitators, negotiators from Member States and the WTO Secretariat for working hard in preparations for this Ministerial.

Mr. Chairman,

3. The importance of trade to the growth and development of any nation has been become unquestionable. Trade, certainly, has the potential of ensuring economic growth and lifting millions of people out of poverty. The aims of the Doha Round agreed at Doha in 2001 remain as valid as they ever were. We all know that the objectives it embodied -

growth, development, opportunity - are more vital than ever. As a result, the tremendous amount of work that has produced the various draft texts on the table has certainly not been for nothing.

4. Consequently, at the 8th WTO Ministerial Conference, we gave guidance to our Ambassadors and Experts to fully explore areas where it was possible to reach early agreements while taking steps to conclude the entire round of negotiations progressively. Our negotiators came up with some areas where agreements could be reached for early harvest in Bali. These areas include some aspects of Agriculture bothering on food security, the administration of tariff rate quotas and export competition; trade facilitation; some development and least developed (LDCs) specific issues.

Mr. Chairman,

5. The proposals on agriculture, especially on food security, were fully supported. The issue of food security is of a crucial interest to Africa. Africa is already challenged when it comes to food security as a result of factors such as undeveloped agricultural sectors, lack of support services, market access barriers, subsidies among others.

6. It is an acknowledged fact that effective trade facilitation reforms can bring about considerable benefits to countries. It is in this spirit that Ghana believes that although developing countries (DCs) are not the demandeurs of the Trade Facilitation in the WTO Doha Development Agenda negotiations, they remain positively engaged to reach a satisfactory and balanced outcome. Several countries, including Ghana, have unilaterally embarked on trade facilitation initiatives and so there is no doubt about how positively it can inure to a country. However, the

issue at stake is the binding nature of the agreement to be concluded at the WTO without an equally binding assurance that developing countries and LDCs would be provided with the required technical, financial, and capacity building assistance as enshrined in Annex D of the July 2004 Framework and Annex E of the Hong Kong Ministerial Declaration of December 2005. This demand is absolutely necessary and developing countries should continuously push for it since trade facilitation measures can be overly-burdensome financially.

7. The Doha Round has the potential to reverse the marginalization of LDCs and help them to meet the Millennium Development Goals. Issues of importance to LDCs, including duty-free quota-free access with flexible rules of origin, cotton and services waiver must be given priority in the continuing effort to advance the Doha Work programme. There is, however, the need for LDCs to first resolve their internal differences. This needs to be backed up with practical measures to enable LDCs to make use of new opportunities. In that regard, the Enhance Integrated Framework programme and public-private partnerships should be strengthened so that targeted programmes can be implemented to ensure that LDCs benefit from market access opportunities.

8. It is unfortunate that, despite the intensification of negotiations since the new Director General assumed office in September 2013, the early harvest Doha package for Bali also faced daunting challenges and could not be multilateralised as a stepping stone to conclude the Round. Members are urged to stabilize elements in the early harvest package in order to move the negotiations forward and not back track.

Mr. Chairman,

9. There is no doubt that the WTO is a great global asset. It has contributed tremendously to the expansion of the global economy since its creation in 1995. This is a system with three legs - implementing existing agreements, settling disputes and negotiating. As a forum for negotiating trade rules and settling disputes the WTO remains irreplaceable. Although implementing existing agreements and settling disputes are functioning quite well, there is a sense among many that the WTO has lost its negotiating way. How long can it stand on only two? The WTO's negotiating role has not only faltered but is gradually being weakened as the action has moved elsewhere leading to the surge in plurilateral, preferential and bilateral trade agreements. Dispute settlement has become correspondingly more dominant. And at the policy level an organisation once noted for a pragmatic and businesslike approach risks becoming a talking shop where delegations rehearse well-worn speeches because there is little incentive to do otherwise.

10. Reinvigorating the negotiating role of the WTO is crucial to the longer-term credibility of the organization. This is not to neglect all the other important work of the WTO, from resisting protectionism to building trade capacity in developing countries. This work is vital and it must be enhanced, in co-operation with other agencies. The central need, though, is to refocus on the areas where the WTO adds its unique value and which are badly in need of revival.

11. This situation can be turned around. The starting point is to refocus on the core mandate of the WTO and not reinvent it since it is in the Marrakesh Agreement. This is an organisation centred on trade. We

weaken it if we encourage mission creep or allow its focus to become blurred. Of course, the WTO exists in a wider context. That is why a system which works to break down trade barriers and open opportunities at a global level is so important. That is the asset we all have in the WTO and we must be prepared to invest time, energy and commitment in it. The reality is that we need a WTO that is capable of negotiating, and negotiating on issues that really matter. The WTO should be at the centre of international trade debate and negotiations because only the WTO is founded on the principle of non-discrimination in trade and only the WTO offers global rights – and obligations - to its members.

Mr. Chairman,

12. The responsibility for breaking the deadlock in the Doha Round negotiations does not lie with a few Members. All Members have to be prepared to make the necessary trade-offs if the Doha Round is to be concluded. Clearly the leading trading nations have a particular responsibility given their weight in world trade, but the WTO is about responsibilities - and opportunities - for all. It is imperative for all of us to ensure that the comprehensive Doha Round is concluded by the 11th Ministerial Conference (MC11) if we want the round to be still useful. We may all be eager to send a signal that the WTO is alive by agreeing to a decision. My only plea is that we send a signal that shows the WTO as being positively-alive and not negatively. And this positive signal can only be achieved if development remains at the centre of whatever package that the Doha Round would produce.

13. A successful conclusion to the Doha Round and a reinvigorated multilateral trading system would deliver opportunities to all participants, including the smallest, weakest and most vulnerable economies. The development imperative remains crucial. We must take a dynamic approach to fulfilling it, bringing developing and least developed countries fully within reach of the new trading opportunities that can help them to alleviate poverty and put their economies on the path of sustainable growth and development.

14. I would like to conclude by congratulating the Government and people of Yemen on its accession to the WTO as the 160th Member State and wish the country all the best in its integration into the multilateral trading system.

Thank you