

Statement by Hon. Abdou Kolley, Minister of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration and Employment of The Gambia at MC9 of the WTO, Bali, Indonesia, December 3-6, 2013

Thank you Mr Chairman for giving me the floor to participate in the general debate. Let me first thank the Government and People of Indonesia for the warm hospitality in hosting the Ninth Ministerial Conference here in Bali. My thanks and appreciation also to the WTO Director General and staff as well as our negotiators for the hard work leading to our gathering here in Bali.

Mr. Chairman, Colleague Ministers, Director General, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:

When the DDA was launched in 2001, it brought a lot of hope for developing countries, LDCs and SVEs that the multilateral trading system will at last address our issues and concerns in a comprehensive manner. These hopes and aspirations have since been gradually fading away due to slow progress in reaching agreement on key development issues. A lot of goodwill is needed from all members, in particular developed countries, to effectively conclude and deliver on a round that is truly developmental. The recent proliferation of bilateral and plurilateral trade agreements, signed or under negotiation, should not and must not be substitutes to a multilateral trade agreement, thus it's time the DDA is concluded.

For The Gambia as an LDC, development is at the heart of our membership in the WTO and Bali cannot be considered a success if we cannot deliver on development, a central pillar to the work of WTO. On Agriculture which is important for the development of our economies as well as meeting the food security needs of our people, developing countries and LDCs continue to face daunting challenges from highly subsidized developed countries exports. While we continue to call for the removal of these competition distorting subsidies, and until that is achieved, work should be undertaken to develop special safeguard measures for net food importing developing countries, LDCs and SVEs to allow the application of predictable, transparent and flexible import and export taxes to protect producers and consumers in these countries.

Also, the finalization of work on the Special and Differential Treatment Monitoring Mechanism should be expedited to ensure that S&D is truly strengthened and made more precise, effective and operational. There is also a need for the expeditious and effective operationalization of the LDC services waiver to support the development of the LDCs. Development partners should therefore provide the LDCs with enhanced technical assistance and capacity building to improve their service exports. Aid-for-Trade remains an important mechanism to achieve these objectives and the EIF programme should continue to be supported and be extended beyond 2015 to support LDC trade development programmes.

Finally, although trade facilitation could be beneficial to all countries, it needs to be addressed holistically and in a balanced manner. While duty-free quota-free schemes abound, complicated and cumbersome rules of origin as well as other non-tariff barriers hamper the ability of developing countries, LDCs and SVEs to effectively make use of them. Thus in addition to much needed technical assistance for capacity building, deliberate efforts must be taken by concerned countries to address these real issues, if trade is to remain a core component of sustainable development.

Let me conclude by congratulating the new Director General Roberto Azevedo on his appointment and wishing him success in steering the affairs of our noble Organisation. I thank you all for your kind attention.