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MYANMAR

Statement by H.E. Brigadier General Pyi Sone
Minister for Commerce

On behalf of the Government of the Union of Myanmar and on my own, I would first of all like to extend our sincere congratulations to His Excellency Mr Youssef Hussain Kamal on his election as the Chairman of the Fourth WTO Ministerial Conference. I am fully confident, that under your guidance, the Meeting will be able to achieve its noble objectives. I also wish to assure you the full cooperation of the Myanmar delegation in the deliberations ahead.

The Myanmar delegation would also like to express our appreciation to the Government of Qatar and Doha Organizing Committee in particular for the warm welcome and cordial reception accorded to us and for the excellent arrangements made for this special event.

The Myanmar delegation would like to take this opportunity to extend our heartiest thanks to the Director-General of the WTO and the Secretariat for their untiring efforts and hard work in endeavours to achieve the objectives of the Conference.

We have come to participate in this Conference with three main objectives namely:

1. To assess the implementation issues of commitments to the WTO Agreements and decisions.
2. To participate in the ongoing negotiations and laying down future work programmes.
3. To examine development of world trade.

In this context, the agenda for the Fourth Ministerial Conference has aroused the keen interest of all WTO Members. From the perspective of the developing countries, there are many who would prefer to ensure the enhanced implementation of the Uruguay Round Agreements, and advancement of negotiations on the built-in agenda through the mechanism of the WTO.

In this regard, consideration could be given to a "standstill" clause to avoid any new trade barriers while progress is being negotiated in the framework of the implementation issue and ongoing built-in agenda.

It is the belief of our delegation that the multilateral trading system has today gained greater significance in view of the present downturn of the global economy. The viability of this system is proven by the fact that the WTO membership has increased up to 142 countries. Moreover, it is also clear that the rule-based multilateral trading system has helped to increase world trade 16 times in half a century.

The benefits of the multilateral trading system, however, have not been felt evenly. A review of the world economic situation shows that many developing countries, particularly the least-developed countries (LDCs) could not reap the benefits of the economic growth and prosperity of the world economy during the last five decades.

The principles of reciprocity and mutual advantage which underscore the WTO system mean that a weak economy may not automatically receive the full benefits of the system.

There is, therefore, an urgent need to assist developing countries, especially for LDCs to integrate into the global economy to ensure a balanced distribution of the benefits of the multilateral trading system.

On the other hand, LDCs should also pool the resources and capabilities to overcome their difficulties and strive for the better future in the multilateral trading system.

Trade is a key engine for growth. However, the products of developing countries face many obstacles in entering the markets of rich countries. This is illustrated by the fact that the 49 LDCs representing 10.5 per cent of the world population, have less than 1 per cent of world exports.

It is also true that open markets can play an important role in lifting millions of people out of absolute poverty. Although the LDCs have achieved a certain measure of success, there is still a long way to go for these countries to fully benefit from the world trading system. A lot more needs to be done, both by the LDCs and the international community.

We, the Government of the Union of Myanmar, firmly believe in trade liberalization and we want free and fair trade in the world. Myanmar has been striving for economic development with all-out efforts through liberalization measures.

The results that have been achieved so far are encouraging. Yet, for further development of the economy, influx of capital, technology and access to international markets are essential pre-requisites. There still remains many potential areas of business with good prospects in the economy through effective utilization of existing resources and productive capacities.

In this regard, Myanmar development undertakings so far, have been implemented almost with a self-reliance basis. At the same time, Myanmar shall always be a friendly nation for fair and equitable business operation.

As a founder-Member of GATT and WTO, we attach great importance to the future work programme of WTO which can contribute to greater liberalization of the multilateral trading system and secure better opportunities for all countries.

It is our responsibility to develop and further strengthen the multilateral trading system in the family of nations.

Before I conclude, may I once again express our congratulations and profound thanks again to the Government of Qatar, for successfully convening the Fourth WTO Ministerial Conference.
