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CHAD

Statement by H.E. Dr Ahmed Mahamadi
Minister of Trade, Industry and Handicrafts

It is an honour and a genuine pleasure for me to represent my country, Chad, at this Fifth WTO Ministerial Conference in this pleasant and friendly city of Cancún.

On behalf of my country, I wish to thank the Mexican authorities for the warm welcome my delegation and I have received since we arrived. I should like to congratulate H.E. Mr Luis Ernesto Derbez, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mexico, on his appointment to the Chairmanship of this august assembly. I also extend my congratulations to the Director-General of our Organization, Dr Supachai Panitchpakdi, his Secretariat and all those who have deployed considerable efforts to make this Conference a success.

As a mid-term review of the Doha Round of multilateral trade negotiations, this Conference in Cancún is a crucial stage in the process to ensure that account is taken of the legitimate concerns of the least-developed countries.

Chad therefore attaches the utmost importance to the outcome of our proceedings, which should lead to concrete results if we wish our Organization to maintain its credibility in everyone's eyes and especially those of the weakest.

My country endorses and supports the African Group's position on agricultural issues, namely:

- Broader international market access for African products;
- elimination of all measures leading to market distortions (primarily subsidies granted by wealthier countries to their farmers and exporters);
- recognition that cotton is a special and strategic product on account of its economic importance for our countries and its contribution to poverty reduction.

If there is one economic sector which is open to international competition and in which Africa has a distinct competitive advantage, it is the cotton sector. The countries of West and Central Africa (WCA) have invested considerable effort in making this a competitive sector in terms of cost, and the quality of our cotton is recognized as outstanding by the spinning industry worldwide.

Cotton plays a central role in West and Central African economies, accounting for more than 60 per cent of the countries' export revenue. More than 15 million people derive the majority of their income from cotton growing. It goes without saying that the present difficulties experienced by this sector have immeasurable repercussions on our countries' economic and social environment.

Despite its competitiveness and economic importance in WCA countries, the cotton sector of West and Central Africa is unquestionably in jeopardy, for it is suffering the impact of the export subsidies and domestic support granted by various WTO Members to their producers, contrary to certain provisions of the Doha Declaration. In this regard, Chad - as one of the signatory countries of the initiative entitled "Poverty Reduction: Sectoral Initiative in Favour of Cotton" – requests that a fair and equitable solution be found during this Conference.

We are convinced that it is here in Cancún that the international community will find an answer to the crucial problem of cotton subsidies. The Government of the Republic of Chad accordingly reiterates its support for the demands set forth in the Sectoral Initiative in Favour of Cotton document.

As regards other, no less vital issues, Chad:

- urges WTO Members, and particularly the developed countries, to translate into action the political will so frequently expressed in our various proceedings; the special and differential treatment (S&D) provisions should thus become mandatory and binding;
- urges fulfillment of the commitments contained in the Doha Declaration on TRIPS and public health, so as to allow our countries to take effective action to combat diseases such as HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and other infectious diseases;
- would welcome the strengthening of capacity-building and technical assistance in the sphere of those new issues known as the Singapore issues;
- attaches considerable importance to the Integrated Framework for Trade-Related Technical Assistance. Chad accordingly requests additional financing so as to enhance its capacity to offer the goods and services needed for its development.

Allow me once again to thank our host country for its warm welcome and to reiterate my own country's trust in our Organization. I would not conclude without reminding you all once again of the importance which our populations attach to a solution to the problem of cotton subsidies, for this will determine the credibility of our Organization.
