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CAMEROON

Statement by H.E. Mr Maïgari Bello Bouba
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And so we meet again, this time in the lovely city of Cancún which, together with the Government and all the people of Mexico, is hosting this session of the WTO Ministerial Conference, convened at regular intervals in order to take decisions on the multilateral trade agreements for which the Organization is responsible.

Before dealing with substantive issues, allow me to express my gratitude, and that of my delegation, to you, Mr Chairman, and to the Government and the people of Mexico, for a warm welcome and for all the facilities provided to ensure that our stay in Mexico is an enjoyable one and that our work is completed successfully. I have no doubt that, under your wise guidance, this Conference will live up to the task set us by the WTO.

I should also like to pay tribute to H.E. Mr Carlos Pérez del Castillo, Chairman of the General Council, and H.E. Dr Supachai Panitchpakdi, Director-General of the WTO, for their tireless efforts and unceasing personal devotion in the search for solutions and areas of common ground in response to the problems facing all of us at the WTO.

It is thanks to their dedication, and their determination to understand and reconcile the concerns of Member countries, either through our plenipotentiaries in Geneva or in contact with our capitals, that you have been able to provide us with a framework for these negotiations.

In spite of missed deadlines and opposing views that have too often prevented us from seeing eye to eye on issues of vital importance, the boost you have given us today has opened up encouraging prospects for the remainder of this negotiation process.

However, there is clearly a long way to go to find appropriate solutions to the problems we face, with a view to ensuring our smooth and progressive integration into the global economy. This is particularly true of key sectors such as agriculture, upon which a country like mine, and so many others in the developing world, depend for most of their subsistence, not to mention their wealth. Nor can we overlook issues such as special and differential treatment, implementation, market access for non-agricultural products, to mention but a few.

Understandably, we are deeply concerned about the future of bananas, Cameroon's second largest export, in view of the looming uncertainties of a constantly changing common organization of the market. Today, my Government has been able to assess the risks arising in that context. We urge the WTO to give serious consideration to the case of endangered ACP agricultural products, and particularly ACP bananas.

My delegation cannot fail to join in the calls made by speakers for the various groups of States concerned for the needs of our countries to be taken into account at long last, as we strive for development and prosperity through a trading system based on a better regulated, fairer, more equitable partnership of benefit to us all.

If, in all probability, we cannot expect to see firm and precise commitments made at this session, presumably we can at the very least renew our commitment to the programme set forth in Doha, and to the whole of the Doha Agenda, with all of its ambitions, while giving ourselves the necessary time to agree on better means and the time-frame for implementation.

At a time when the gap between rich and poor countries only continues to widen, and when the list of least developed countries, instead of getting shorter or even disappearing, only continues to swell with new arrivals, the credibility of our Organization depends upon its capacity to provide practical, concrete and realistic solutions to the problems it faces, problems which affect the lives of the vast majority of people on this planet.

My delegation offers you its full support in this noble task.
