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MALI

Statement by H.E. Mr Choguel Kokalla Maiga
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Allow me to begin, Mr Chairman, by thanking you and expressing my appreciation to the Director-General of the WTO for his consistent efforts better to integrate our countries in the world trade system.

I should like also to thank the Mexican authorities for organizing this Conference so well and for the facilities and attentiveness that my delegation and I have enjoyed since our arrival in this beautiful country.

May I likewise take this opportunity to convey to His Excellency President Fox and the Mexican people, warm and fraternal greetings from the people of Mali and from their Government and President, His Excellency Mr Amadou Toumani Touré.

My first point, which I make with regret, is that most of the commitments undertaken at Doha which were to culminate in a solution to the burning problems afflicting us, have not gone far enough towards meeting the great legitimate hopes they aroused among our peoples.

While aware of the relevance of all the subjects addressed in the Doha Programme, Mali attaches particular importance to developments in the issues that concern the agricultural subsidies granted by some developed countries, access to essential medicines, production capacity-building and market access.

We particularly welcome the inclusion in the agenda of this Fifth Session the item on the sectoral initiative in favour of cotton proposed by the four countries of West and Central Africa.

It seems appropriate to recall here that cotton has a strategic place in the development policies and poverty reduction strategies of our countries. As a demonstration of their resolve to join the world market and comply with WTO rules, our countries have undertaken the sometimes painful restructuring needed to adapt their rural economies to the demands of the market.

The cotton our countries produce is among the most competitive. It ranks among the best in the world in terms of quality, and its production costs are well below those of other producing countries.

If it were priced at its proper worth, our cotton would generate considerable income, enough to secure social well-being for millions of men, women and children, allowing them to eat their fill, receive proper care and go to school.

But the agricultural support and subsidies that some Members grant to cotton production directly affects plummeting world cotton prices, now at their lowest level for several decades.

These subsidies are without doubt harming millions of African farmers in the world's poorest regions, thus plunging millions of people into a more and more precarious situation.

For some countries, cotton is one of the only areas to yield them a direct, immediate and significant profit. If the problem of agricultural subsidies is not resolved by the WTO, one of the poorest regions of the world would be deprived of one of its rare comparative advantages in international trade.

That is why the Members of the WTO must come to a consensus on a clearly defined period for the phasing out of all domestic support and subsidies on exports of cotton. Their decision must be immediately applicable.

In addition, during the phasing out period they must decide to set up a transitional mechanism in the form of financial compensation for the loss of export income sustained by our countries.

TRIPS and public health is another of my country's major and present concerns.

With regard to public health, I should like to congratulate the WTO and the entire international community, particularly the United States of America, for the agreement on access by poor countries to essential medicines. It is an excellent demonstration of solidarity which has taken into account the whole humanitarian dimension of the issue.

It is nevertheless important that this agreement should be implemented within a time-frame that matches the acuteness of the existing problems. The developing countries that are to benefit from it will undoubtedly implement it in good faith.

With regard to the other aspects of TRIPS, particularly geographical indications, Mali would like to see the latter extended to other products. The protection of traditional knowledge is another of the concerns that should be taken into account.

Improved market access for our exports, which are affected by non-tariff barriers among others, remains a major concern for my country.

We believe that it is possible, within the framework of the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures and the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade, to produce standards which, while protecting consumers, are accessible to developing countries. Such a balance must be among the objectives to be attained in the negotiations.

Capacity-building for production in our countries must be envisaged promptly, by setting up adequate technical assistance.

May I remind you in this connection that the Integrated Framework for Trade-Related Technical Assistance to Least-Developed Countries, in which we have placed great hope, is lingering.

The multilateral agencies responsible for this matter should speed up effective implementation of the programme so that the least-developed countries have as many assets as possible in facing international competition.

As to services, Mali has no major objections to further market opening in this sector. But liberalization must be as consistent as possible with the principle of cultural diversity, and be accompanied by appropriate technology transfer to the benefit of the least-developed countries.

With regard to the Singapore Issues, my country is of the view that current circumstances do not as yet offer suitable conditions for the immediate launching of negotiations in the various areas. It

is therefore wise to undertake further clarification of the issues in the respective working groups. Lastly, Mali reaffirms its determination to play its part in the multilateral trading system and launches an appeal for international trade which is open, more flexible and focused on development, and thus of benefit to all.

In conclusion, I wish to associate myself with all previous speakers in wishing every success to our Conference.
