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Statement by H.E. Mr Isselmou Ould Abdel Kader
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Allow me first of all to convey my congratulations on your election as Chairman of this session and to express our sincere thanks to the people and Government of Mexico for the warm welcome and generous hospitality they have extended to us.

My country is gratified at the completion of the accession process of Cambodia and Nepal and welcomes them to the WTO.

Each new accession strengthens the universality of our Organization. This is a first, something that calls for special commendation, as these two new Members are the first least-developed countries to complete this stage since 1995.

No group of countries, however, stands in greater need of the support and assistance of the international community than do the LDCs, because of their vulnerability and the structural constraints they face.

It will be soon be 20 years since several Heads of State and Government met in this city now acting as our host, with the intention of weighing up ways and means to strengthen international cooperation and to foster development.

The meeting had at the time raised great hopes that ultimately led to insignificant results.

Today, it is no longer a few leaders meeting here in Cancún, but 146 States bound together under the Marrakesh Agreement stipulating that trade should be at the service of raising standards of living, ensuring full employment and expanding trade, taking into account the needs of developing countries, and particularly the least developed.

This commitment, however, still has not materialized, essentially because the multilateral trading system is still built on inequitable rules. The result is that this system, instead of helping to solve the problems and difficulties of the weakest States, makes for even greater marginalization.

We all recognized the reality of this situation in Doha by placing the focus of the present Round on development. But in actual fact, this dimension has not been taken into account.

Consequently, it is incumbent upon us at this Fifth Conference to clearly and solemnly reiterate our joint commitment to ensuring that the outcome of this Round will effectively contribute to the economic and social development of the countries of the South and to their integration in the multilateral trading system.

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Indeed, expanding trade cannot be an end in itself and it would be of value only if it contributed to economic and social progress and to the eradication of poverty.

We are meeting here in the WTO, but we are all members of the United Nations and thus bound by the Millennium Development Goals. Accordingly, we can make a significant contribution to the achievement of those Goals – as emphasized by the Director-General in his opening statement, by placing trade at the service of development.

The WTO's goals should be in harmony with those defined in New York, Monterrey and Johannesburg and take sufficient account of the needs and interests of developing countries and the necessity for them to fully benefit from the advantages of globalization.

Each of us here is both mindful of, and concerned about, the slow pace of the process embarked on in Doha, particularly the failure to respect the deadlines set in the various areas. Even the critical issue of intellectual property and public health – almost settled in Doha – was properly resolved only a few days ago.

This means that our present meeting is not a mere mid-term review of the process launched at the Fourth Session but a major stage which must, by precise instructions and strong signals, give fresh impetus to the process in hand.

In fact, the directions to be worked out in Cancún will determine whether or not the timetable established in Doha can be observed.

In this connection, a positive handling of some important issues, such as those connected with agriculture, market access and the Sectoral Initiative on Cotton which my country firmly supports, could have a significant impact on the course of the negotiations.

Adopting concrete measures at this meeting would certainly help to restore confidence in a rather gloomy world economic environment and help to allay fears among those who rightly condemn a potential drift in globalization that is not aimed at taking account of the legitimate aspirations of peoples.

Lastly, this means that the Conference now being held here in Cancún must lead to concrete results that will enable every country in the world, and particularly the most vulnerable among them, to benefit from the potentialities afforded by globalization and contribute to the advent of a more equitable, more stable and more mutually supportive world.
