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Statement by H.E. Mr. François Loos
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I should like to thank our hosts, the Mexican Government and the City of Cancún, for organizing so warm a welcome, thus providing us with the best possible conditions in which to take the decisions needed to ensure the recovery of the global economy - by implementing the courses of action laid down at Doha.

More than 20 years ago, here in Cancún, countries from the North and the South embarked on a dialogue for the purpose of building a more balanced world. Unfortunately, those ambitions have gone unrealized. The poorest countries have remained isolated from international trade and, consequently, from growth.

Our task here is therefore a historic one: that of charting a course that will enable us to complete the Doha Round. This is a time of political choices and we have a particular responsibility: to give fresh impetus to the negotiations in order to bring greater balance to globalization and to conclude within the time-limit set the round of negotiations we began at Doha.

In contributing to those objectives, France is guided by two principles: the choice of development as a priority and recognition of the diversity of societies in an open world.

1. France hopes that the Doha Programme will truly be a programme for development.

Our first task is to come to the rescue of the victims of the epidemics that are decimating peoples. The decision we have just taken to authorize access to medicines by countries that lack the capacity to manufacture them bears witness to our determination to succeed. That first decision was essential. It shows that the WTO is capable of going beyond the economic dimension for the sake of higher principles. It creates a right by recognizing an international public utility declaration.

On the occasion of France's presidency of the G8 this year, the President of the French Republic proposed an initiative in favour of Africa. Of all regions sub-Saharan Africa remains the most isolated from international trade, which is why France proposed according it preferential treatment in trade. The aim is to help the countries of the region to maintain and diversify their agriculture, better export their products and attenuate the fluctuations in the prices of raw materials which are destabilizing their economies. We must likewise maintain the trade preference regimes accorded to the continent. While recognizing that special and differential treatment is useful, we wish to go further: I hope that our Conference will be able to take ground-breaking initiatives to secure progress along this path. The cotton sector deserves special attention in this connection, being vital for farmers in many African countries.

2. It is not a matter of imposing a single development model, but of recognizing diversity of choice - a principle for which respect must be ensured within the multilateral framework of the WTO.

Trade is enriched by the diversity of our cultures. That diversity must be preserved, as cultural goods are unlike any others. Indeed, France has expressed the wish to see an international convention developed within the framework of UNESCO in order to embody that principle in law.

Moreover, in the realm of services, every State must be able to retain control over the commitments it makes, particularly in the areas of education and health.

Agriculture too reflects the diversity of our modes of development. The agriculture we have opted for in Europe is not limited to production: it constitutes a component of civilization, and geographical indications are an illustration of that fact. This does not imply adhering to the status quo. The European Union has accordingly reformed its Common Agricultural Policy. We await reciprocal efforts from our partners in order to reach a comprehensive and balanced agreement.

The Cancún Conference must enable us to make headway on the Doha Agenda as a whole: as well as the liberalization of trade, we must take into account the environment and the issues launched at Singapore, which can contribute to better world governance.

At a time when the world economy is showing the first signs of recovery, I hope that our Meeting will send out a signal of trust and cooperation to our fellow citizens. Let us not forget that, like domestic growth, international trade and the opening of markets remain a major source of wealth creation and employment which all of us need now more than ever.
