

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

WT/MIN(99)/ST/144
2 December 1999

(99-5366)

MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE
Third Session
Seattle, 30 November - 3 December 1999

Original: French

DJIBOUTI

Statement by H.E. Mr. Elmi Obsieh Wais Minister of Trade, Industry and Handicrafts

I take this opportunity to thank the Government of the United States and the people living in Seattle for the very warm welcome and hospitality they have extended to us at this Ministerial Conference, despite some few problems that have been encountered.

I also thank the WTO for the preparation and organization of this major world conference.

The WTO, as an international agency, involves practically all countries in elaborating rules for world trade. From this standpoint, the multilateral trade system must be based on equity and justice.

The WTO should improve the economic and social well-being of mankind by eradicating from trade every form of protectionism and exclusion.

The developed countries, and particularly the least-developed, must find their proper place in the multilateral trading system.

Unfortunately, this is not the case today.

The mistaken and selfish implementation of the WTO rules by some Members lies at the root of the glaring and ever-wider disparities between the developed and the developing countries.

The developed countries draw benefit from the multilateral trading system, whereas the developing countries, and especially the least-developed, grow poorer, despite their good will and their efforts to liberalize their economies. Consequently, the developing and least-developed countries are being increasingly marginalized in the multilateral trading system.

This Third Ministerial Conference is intended to launch a new round of negotiations for the multilateral trading system and, therefore, it is essential to make the requisite adjustments so as to take account of the interests of all WTO Member countries, particularly the interests of the least-developed.

If the multilateral trading system is to be credible and equitable, it is essential to secure greater integration in world trade of the economies of developing countries, and more specifically the least-developed countries, along with effective involvement in the WTO system.

From this standpoint, account must now be taken of the concerns of the marginalized countries, particularly with regard to:

- Effective implementation of the Uruguay Round Agreements;
- implementation of special and differential treatment for the vulnerable economies;
- extension of transition periods for the implementation of WTO rules;
- increased official development aid;
- increased foreign direct investment in the developing countries, and particularly in the least-developed;
- institutional and human capacity-building.

Trade in services must have firm, appropriate foundations and equitable rules so that the developing countries can secure the advantages to which they are entitled.

Lastly, I should like to say that we must all act together to correct the mistakes that have been made and to lay the foundations for healthy cooperation in the multilateral trading system that will be of benefit to all countries without exception, on a basis of equity and justice for all.

The WTO will only be truly successful if all Members arrive at harmonious and sustainable development.
