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CAMEROON

Statement by H.E. Mr. Maïgari Bello Bouba Minister for Industrial and Trade Development

Like the speakers before me at this podium, I wish, on behalf of the delegation of Cameroon, to congratulate Ms. Charlene Barshefsky on her election to chair the Third Ministerial Conference, and Mr. Mike Moore, Director-General of the WTO, on the excellent organization of the work.

I also take this opportunity to pay a well-deserved tribute to Mr. Renato Ruggiero, the former Director-General of the WTO, and to convey my sincere thanks to the American Government and the city of Seattle for the quality of their hospitality.

This Conference comes at a time when mankind is preparing to meet the new challenges being posed mainly by technological changes and globalization.

In this connection, I should like to say that my country, Cameroon, firmly believes in the need for an open, equitable and predictable multilateral trading system. Indeed this commitment that underpins the liberalization of the Cameroon economy initiated by His Excellency Mr. Paul Biya, President of the Republic.

Nevertheless, like most developing countries, Cameroon has benefited little from the Uruguay Round Agreements, as their implementation has pointed to the imbalances between the rights and obligations of Members.

This situation can be ascribed largely to the international context which is hardly favourable to developing countries, owing to the failure to abide by commitments made by developed countries and to observe provisions guaranteeing special and differential treatment for developing countries.

Hence, despite measures to guarantee better market access, developing country exports are still encountering protectionist barriers in the sectors of vital importance to our economies, such as agriculture, services and textiles.

In addition, there is the inadequacy, or even freezing, of technical assistance to enable developing countries to implement the existing Agreements and thus fully participate in the multilateral trading system.

In our countries, the public's fears and the adverse perception of globalization lie in the fact that the Uruguay Round has not produced the hoped-for beneficial effects on development, employment, social justice, environmental protection and debt relief.

It is therefore important for the Seattle work programme to clearly reaffirm the necessary interdependence between trade and development, trade and well-being, and trade and the environment.

The Uruguay Round was expected to be the liberalization round; the Millennium Round should be that of development and should restore genuine balance to North/South relations.

Some actions are imperative in this context, in particular:

- Extending of the transition period for the implementation of agreements and other legal instruments in force, with special reference to the Agreement on Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights and the Agreement on Customs Valuation;
- Increasing and budgeting funds earmarked for technical assistance to developing countries;
- Implementing the Marrakesh Decision on the Possible Negative Effects of the Reform Programme on Net Food-importing Least-Developed and Developing Countries;
- Greater consistency and synergy between international trade and financial policies, so that developing countries do not have to face cross-conditionality with disastrous economic ramifications;
- Greater transparency in the working methods of the WTO in order to guarantee the right to information and the effective participation of all Members in the organization's activities.

These priority actions will call for courageous decisions to be taken during this meeting. They are premised on success in overcoming our differences and achieving an equitable outcome.

That is our desire. It is also the hope of a large part of mankind.
