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ZIMBABWE

Statement by the Honourable N.M. Shamuvarira Minister of Industry and Commerce

The Minister of Industry and Trade of the United Republic of Tanzania, Honourable Iddi Simba, has made a statement on behalf of SADC Member States. Zimbabwe fully endorses that statement and would want to stress a number of issues.

Six years have passed since we met in Marrakesh and founded the World Trade Organization. At that historic occasion we set parameters, goals and aspirations for the betterment of the world through trade. We believe that here in Seattle and on the eve of the new millennium, we need to look at the balance sheet and take stock of how we have done so far to achieve the Marrakesh objectives. This is the only basis from which we can go into the next millennium with a work programme that can make the WTO fulfil the noble goals that we set for ourselves at the inception of this Organization.

It is an undisputed fact that the general experience of developing countries like Zimbabwe in the implementation of the Uruguay Round Agreements has been disappointing. The widely touted benefits that were forecast at the conclusion of the Uruguay Round have not materialized. In fact, the economic situations of our countries have in many cases deteriorated, leading to further marginalization. It is therefore important that we relate the impact of the implementation of the Uruguay Round Agreements to the objectives of those Agreements.

Our problems are compounded by the double dilemma we face: on one hand, institutional financial and skilled human resource deficiencies that lead to weak capacities to utilise potential opportunities offered by global trade liberalization. On the other hand, limited market access in products of export interest to developing countries, which hampers our efforts towards diversification and industrialization.

Last year we met in Geneva to celebrate 50 years of the multilateral trading system. I observed then that developing countries did not have much to celebrate because the terms and trends of trade have not been in their favour. Furthermore the structural adjustment programmes that they have been pursuing has not led to any meaningful and sustainable economic recovery. In fact in our case, liberalization has resulted in de-industrialization, growing unemployment and deepening poverty. At the international level, we have witnessed the gap between the rich and poor countries widening. A mirror of this situation applies at national levels: the disparities between the "haves and the have-nots" in our countries is growing and posing a serious threat to social harmony and fledgling democracies.

This is the challenge that we face, and the logjam has to be broken. It cannot be broken if the WTO continues to ignore genuine calls for resolving the implementation question. It cannot be broken if the major trading partners lack the political will to redress current imbalances in the multilateral trading system. It also does not make sense to exacerbate it by adding new issues and

commitments onto the WTO agenda before implementation difficulties are resolved. Our countries will simply not cope, and the WTO may face the risk of polarization and loss of credibility as a universal institution intended to anchor a rules-based trading system for generating economic growth and improving living standards. Indeed this is a challenge that lies at the core of poverty eradication and it requires international cooperation and resources to help our countries improve their social and development services in such areas as education, training, skills and capacity building.

It is for this reason that we are saying the work programme to emerge from this conference should centrally address the trade and development issue. We will therefore have to use the development yardstick in considering and measuring which issues we have to take decisions on and give priority to at this conference. In this sense we are open-minded and trust that others will be similarly disposed in dealing with issues other than the mandated negotiations on agriculture and services.

The WTO has made progress in addressing the work programme arising from the Singapore Conference. There is nonetheless a need to carry further and substantially the educative process in the various Working Groups on such issues as investment, competition, trade facilitation, transparency in government procurement as well as with regard to trade and environment. This process should also include an assessment of the capacity needs of developing countries to implement any possible new multilateral rules in these areas and how these needs would be met.

The debt burden for developing countries and least-developed countries in particular, is an impediment to trade and development. There is need to look at how it can be alleviated so as to generate and accumulate capital and additional resources for development.

The issue of labour standards and its place in the WTO is frankly being belaboured. We had agreed in Singapore on a consensus *modus operandi*, which recognizes the ILO as the relevant and competent body, for dealing with this question. Until that route has been satisfactorily exhausted, Zimbabwe does not see any merit in including, let alone trying to make this an element of the work programme of this conference.

Developing countries hope that the Seattle Ministerial Conference will mark a new beginning towards a better trading future, and a trading system that will be truly multilateral and promoting the interests of all its members. We cannot and should not fail to address, in real terms, the issue of development. Let this conference make a difference.
