

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

WT/MIN(01)/ST/79
11 November 2001

(01-5673)

MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE
Fourth Session
Doha, 9 - 13 November 2001

Original: English

NIGERIA

Statement by the Honourable Mustafa Bello
Minister of Commerce

Let me, on behalf of the Nigerian delegation, join the other speakers before me to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your election. I must also pay special tribute to H.E. Mr. Mike Moore, Director-General of the WTO and the Chairman of the General Council, Mr. Stuart Harbinson, for their efforts at evolving a multilateral trade agenda that addresses the concerns of all Members. I also wish to express our sincere appreciation to the Government and people of Qatar for the warm reception accorded my delegation and for the excellent facilities that have been provided for the Conference in this beautiful city of Doha.

2. The Fourth Session of the WTO Ministerial Conference is taking place at a time when the greatest challenge confronting the WTO is the need to reassure all that the multilateral trading system intends to and can operate equitably and fairly to promote prosperity for the generality of the world's populations. The 4th WTO Ministerial Conference is also timely as it affords the WTO yet another opportunity to convince the forces of protesters against globalization that have become a normal sight at economic gatherings since Seattle two years ago of its good intentions. It is for these reasons that my delegation believes the WTO must be seen to be fair to all, since no system, however rule-based, can command the respect of all unless it is also regarded as equitable, fair and just. I would, therefore, urge you, as I did in Seattle, to give this issue the urgent attention that it deserves so that we can both individually and collectively ensure that the system works for all.

3. Developing countries are under increasing pressures as a result of the poor performance of our national economies, arising from the asymmetries associated with the process of globalization and the imbalances inherent in the Uruguay Round Agreements. There is therefore an urgent need to address issues relating to capacity-building, supply-side constraints as well as market access in sectors of export interest to developing countries. In that regard, we welcome the initiatives by both the European Union and the United States under the ACP-EU Cotonou Partnership Agreement and the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). My delegation therefore calls on all Members to amicably consider and approve the waivers necessary to secure these trade preferences.

4. Nigeria remains convinced that the time has now come for the multilateral trading system to decisively address issues of development and ensure that they form the centre-stage of any future WTO programme. We firmly believe that this can be achieved through committed measures to facilitate the integration of developing countries, particularly African countries into the global economy. It is therefore important that the implementation issues be fully addressed and resolved at this 4th Session of the Ministerial Conference at Doha. Equally important is the need to make the special and differential treatment provisions of the WTO mandatory and binding so that African countries can derive the expected benefits from the multilateral trading system.

5. It is also my delegation's view that the following elements should be addressed towards achieving a development agenda. An area of utmost importance to developing and least developed countries of Africa is agriculture. Indeed, 70 per cent of the poor and 95 per cent of the extremely

poor live in rural areas. Under these circumstances, we expect the mandated negotiations for the continued liberalization of trade in agriculture to address the particular problems of predominantly agrarian and net-food importing developing countries. The crucial question here is market access free of all forms of TBTs. Equally important also is the dumping of cheap subsidized agricultural products in our countries. My delegation therefore calls on our trading partners, while preserving the existing preferential schemes, to also commit themselves to the reduction of subsidies, elimination of tariff peaks and tariff escalation, and disciplines to prevent the abuse of, sanitary and phyto-sanitary measures, technical barriers and environmental requirements.

6. On services, we call on the developed countries to facilitate the increasing participation of developing countries in trade in services and the expansion of our service exports including, *inter alia*, the strengthening of our domestic services capacity and its efficiency and competitiveness. This will, no doubt, require flexibility and concerted efforts to promote the development of services sectors of interest to developing and least-developed countries of Africa and others.

7. For obvious reasons, we are not able at this point in time to negotiate another round of tariff reductions in industrial goods. Many of our countries have been experiencing negative consequences as a result of the various liberalization measures we undertook under the Uruguay Round negotiations and from autonomous liberalization within the Structural Adjustment Programmes of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Capacity utilization has fallen considerably and the adverse effects of unemployment are evident in all our countries. My delegation, therefore, considers it necessary for the WTO to conduct a study on the implications of the existing liberalization measures on industrial products and the development concerns of developing and least-developed countries of Africa and others.

8. It is also common knowledge that Africa is the region worst affected by HIV/AIDS, and that the TRIPS Agreement presents difficulties for access to essential medicines to combat this pandemic. Together, HIV/AIDS and other diseases like malaria and tuberculosis are killing more people in Africa now than those killed in the first two world wars. To adequately confront the issue, my delegation is convinced that TRIPS should in no way be a barrier to addressing this critical situation in any way possible. Therefore, nothing in the TRIPS Agreement should prevent our countries from taking action to address public health.

9. Regarding the new issues, let me reiterate our expectation that the educational process in the Working Groups should continue. Apart from the fact that the investment regimes in our countries are already liberalized without any significant inflow of foreign direct investment, the Singapore mandate clearly stated that any decision to enter into negotiations on these issues should be by consensus. As at now, there is no consensus to negotiate on these issues. My delegation is also not inclined to agreeing to any unilateral or plurilateral decision on these issues. Moreover, since the principle of a single-undertaking was introduced into the WTO, we cannot backslide by accepting any opt-in/opt-out conditions. However, if we cannot reach a consensus on these issues, it is only logical and reasonable that the multilateral trading system remain inclusive and collectively binding.

10. In conclusion, it is our strong belief that while we need to collectively embrace the obligations in the WTO, it is also important to recognize that this should be through our differential capacities. To achieve this, my delegation would like to re-emphasize the need for greater cooperation between the WTO and the other multilateral finance and development institutions in order to achieve greater coherence in global economic policies. We also call for the full implementation of measures to cancel the debt of African countries, so as to generate surplus resources for a more effective participation in international trade. Our position is based on the fact that all the existing Agreements recognize our relative capacities and developmental limitations.
