

**STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER OF MINES, ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM OF
ZIMBABWE TO THE WTO REGIONAL SEMINAR ON TRADE AND
ENVIRONMENT FOR SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA,
HARARE, ZIMBABWE, 8-10 FEBRUARY 1999**

Submission by Zimbabwe

The delegation of Zimbabwe has requested that the following statement be circulated to Members of the Committee on Trade and Environment. This statement was made by the Honourable S. K. Moyo (M.P), Minister of Mines, Environment and Tourism of Zimbabwe to open the WTO Regional Seminar on Trade and Environment for Sub-Saharan Africa, held in Harare, Zimbabwe, 8-10 February 1999.

1. At the time of approval of the results of the Uruguay Round negotiations in Marrakesh in April 1994, the trade Ministers of the world took a decision to begin a comprehensive work programme on trade and environment in the WTO. Although the issue of trade and environment was not included for negotiation in the Uruguay Round, certain environmental concerns were nevertheless addressed in the results of the negotiations. The preambular paragraphs of the WTO Agreement include direct references to the objective of sustainable development and the need to protect the environment. The use by governments of measures to protect human, animal and plant life and health and the environment, and measures taken pursuant to multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) are explicitly taken into account in such agreements as the Sanitary and Phyto-sanitary Measures and Technical Barriers to Trade agreements. The UN Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 recognized that "an open, equitable and non-discriminatory multilateral trading system has a key contribution to make to national and international efforts to better protect and conserve environmental resources and promote sustainable development". Perhaps the greatest challenge lies in building a constructive relationship between trade and environment in the context of an open, equitable and non-discriminatory multilateral trading system. Such has been the occupation of the WTO's Committee on Trade and Environment (CTE).

2. It is in light of this background that I welcome this very important seminar. It is my sincere hope that the seminar will build and increase awareness on the interface between trade and environment. This seminar should also increase understanding of trade principles under the WTO and principles of multilateral environmental agreements. Seminars of this nature provide opportunities for dialogue and consultation regarding policies on trade and environment.

3. There is need to establish a correct balance between the pursuit of trade liberalization and development under WTO and the need for environment protection. The Rio Declaration reinforces this principle by recognizing that while it is necessary to provide proactive environmental protection, environmental standards adopted should take into account the environmental and developmental needs of each nation. There is general acceptance that trade policy instruments should not be used to

achieve environmental objectives. Such instruments are not the most efficient means of solving environmental problems since they do not address the core causes of environmental degradation. Indeed, it has been clear in the CTE discussions on trade measures applied pursuant to MEA's, that the preferred approach for governments to take in tackling transboundary or global environmental problems is co-operative, multilateral action under an MEA. At the national level, such problems can be tackled through domestic regulation. It is therefore in the interests of all countries, and particularly developing countries to call for the establishment of effective and cooperative intergovernmental mechanisms to deal with environmental problems. Such an approach will reduce the threat of multilateral solutions that clearly go against the principle of national sovereignty recognized by UNCED.

4. Although Article XX of the GATT allows a WTO member legitimately to place its public health and safety and national environmental goals ahead of its general obligation not to raise trade restrictions or to apply discriminatory trade measures, many developing countries are concerned that environmental issues may be used as an excuse for raising barriers to protect domestic production and other interest sectors. It is feared that such protectionism might thwart the developing countries drive for export led growth based on superior competitiveness in certain sectors. The spectre of more environment related trade disputes increases the likelihood of retaliatory and counter retaliatory measures, which would ultimately endanger the rules-based open global trading system. Developing countries, being the weaker members of the global village have staked their future on the survival of the multilateral trading system and it is therefore in their interests to fend off these risks.

5. The majority of developing countries have been pursuing trade and economic reforms in order to buttress their developmental efforts, and integrate themselves into the global economy and thereby get a bigger share of the benefits of globalization. These reforms have not been without social pain and other costs. However, developed countries and international financial institutions have always insisted that developing countries have no other choice but to pursue these reforms. The paradox is that these same developed countries are putting up trade barriers against developing country exports under the guise of environment protection, standards, or phyto-sanitary measures as examples.

6. Indeed the issues to be resolved in the CTE are many and complex. It is important that these difficult areas be kept under regular review. The participation of all member countries, particularly the developing countries in the CTE discussions can never be over-emphasized. Participation of developing countries must not only be seen in terms of facilitating attendance to negotiating or discussion forums, but must be made effective through the provision of technical assistance and information exchange seminars such as these.

7. We must be able to gain a sense of ownership in the outcome of the CTE discussions by contributing meaningfully to the creation of a constructive relationship between trade and environmental concerns. To quote from the first report of the CTE, "trade and environment are both important areas of policy-making and they should be mutually supportive in order to promote sustainable development".
