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ZIMBABWE

Statement by the Honourable H.M. Murerwa Minister of Industry and International Trade

1. Let me begin by thanking the Emir, the Government and people of the State of Qatar for hosting this Conference and for the warm welcome and hospitality extended to me and my delegation since our arrival. Allow me also to take this opportunity to welcome the People's Republic of China into the WTO. We keenly await the accession of more members to make this a truly universal Organization.
2. Our Conference is taking place against the background of a global economic slowdown. We reaffirm our commitment to a rules-based multilateral trading system. The challenge that we face is to adopt pro-growth and pro-development policies.
3. Whilst trade liberalization can play a positive role in correcting the current economic slowdown, such liberalization should be managed in a way that achieves the meaningful and equitable integration of developing countries into the multilateral trading system.
4. It is commonly acknowledged that trade liberalization under the Uruguay Round Agreements has not brought meaningful benefits to a large number of developing countries. In addition, implementation of the Uruguay Round Agreements has highlighted imbalances and asymmetries in some of those Agreements that need to be urgently redressed. Such redress should place development at the centre of WTO activities.
5. Further, our experience with trade liberalization under the structural adjustment programmes has not achieved the intended result. Imports have grown faster than exports creating balance-of-payments problems. Local production has failed to compete with subsidized imports leading to losses of domestic and third markets. FDI has proved illusory and ODA has been steadily declining. In most instances, this has led to policy reversals.
6. It is for this reason that we propose that any agreement to engage in negotiations in the area of non-agricultural market access should be made conditional on the completion of a study process which should include a detailed analysis of the effects of previous and future tariff reductions on our industries.
7. Agriculture plays a key role in the economy of Zimbabwe and most developing countries in terms of its contribution to GDP, export earnings, employment creation and as a source of livelihood for the vast majority of our populations. Negotiations in this area should have a strong development focus. In this regard, we urge this Conference to accept our proposal for a Development Box which is a facility designed to allow developing country governments to provide adequate resources to low income and resource poor farmers as well as promoting food security.

8. Tariff peaks and tariff escalation in developed country markets have compromised the comparative advantage and potential for the industrial development of many developing countries. High sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) and technical barriers to trade (TBT) measures have also proved to be major non-tariff barriers. High levels of domestic support and export subsidies by major developed countries have had a very negative impact on the production and marketing of agricultural products from developing countries. Coupled with falling commodity prices, the situation of most developing countries continues to be gloomy.

9. We urge for caution in the evolution of multilateral rules in the area of investment, competition, transparency in government procurement, and trade facilitation (the so-called Singapore issues). We are concerned that multilateral rules in this area would impinge on our sovereignty and domestic policy options. We need to fully understand the implications of such rules on our economy. We are totally opposed to plurilateral approaches as they would create different classes of membership for our Organization. It is for this reason that we believe the educative process should continue in the relevant working groups which should submit a report for our consideration at the Fifth Ministerial Conference. The working groups should also consider options including the desirability or otherwise of negotiations; the continuation of the study process; or the closure of the study process and the ending of further discussion of the issues in the WTO.

10. Whilst we recognize the importance of environmental protection, we are however opposed to the use of environmental measures for protectionist purposes. In this regard, our position is that work in the Committee on Trade and Environment should continue and an appropriate report should be submitted for our consideration at the Fifth Ministerial Conference. We are also opposed to the introduction of core labour standards into the WTO.

11. The eyes of the world are set on Doha for this Conference to adopt a bold Declaration on TRIPS and Public Health which states in clear and unambiguous terms that "Nothing in the TRIPS Agreement shall prevent members from taking measures to protect public health." In the face of high mortality rates due to HIV/AIDS, malaria, TB and other epidemics and pandemics afflicting people mostly in developing countries, this Declaration should send a clear message that the TRIPS Agreement is not part of the problem but part of the solution. Indeed, the sanctity and value of human life should be given due prominence and reverence by the TRIPS Agreement and the WTO. We owe it to our people as governments that care that we should reach a common understanding on this life and death issue.

12. This Conference should also send a strong political signal on the need to urgently address cross-cutting issues relating to Special and Differential Treatment as well as Technical Assistance. These are critical issues in the fight against the marginalization of developing countries with a view to facilitating their equitable integration into the multilateral trading system. In this regard, there is need for an early decision on the operationalization and binding of Special and Differential Treatment provisions in the WTO Agreements. My delegation fully supports the proposal for the early conclusion and signature of the proposed Framework Agreement on Special and Differential Treatment.

13. Whilst welcoming the voluntary offers by some Members to finance WTO Technical Assistance activities, we believe that such assistance should be centralized in the WTO Technical Assistance budget.

14. Finally, we urge Members to desist from creating new bodies in the management of the Work Programme we are establishing at Doha. In our view, negotiations and other work in the Work Programme should be conducted in the existing bodies of the WTO under the supervision of the General Council. We also emphasize the importance of ensuring maximum transparency and the effective participation of all Members in the negotiations.

15. The credibility of the multilateral trading system depends on how the system protects and promotes the interests of all its Members. Doha offers us the opportunity to adopt the necessary decisions and work programme to bring fairness and equity to the multilateral trading system. Let us all pledge to make a difference by adopting a Development Agenda that aims to raise the standard of living of all people and to launch the 21st century into the era of development, peace and prosperity.
