

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

WT/MIN(01)/ST/36
10 November 2001

(01-5629)

MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE
Fourth Session
Doha, 9 - 13 November 2001

Original: English

EGYPT

Statement by H.E. Dr. Youssef Boutros Ghali
Minister of Economy and Foreign Trade

We meet here in Doha today to map out the future of the multilateral trading system. I cannot overstate the crucial importance of our task in this Ministerial. We should extend our most sincere thanks and appreciation to the Emir, Government and people of Qatar. The warm welcome and excellent arrangements are a tribute to Qatar's development and progress. It is our common responsibility to raise the performance of the global trading environment to a point where it can meet the rising hopes and aspirations of all our peoples for a better tomorrow.

Egypt has been at the forefront of developing member nations of the WTO calling for further reform and liberalization, out of the conviction that only through such processes can we truly assure the long-term viability of the multilateral trading system embodied in the WTO, this while unlocking the potentials of development and growth for all. Globalization and rapid technological development have established new dynamics for trade not foreseen or well understood during the Uruguay Round. These present new challenges to the multilateral trading system and require the further strengthening of global economic governance to manage its diverse consequences. With this in mind, it is vital that our system respond effectively to the needs of developing and least-developed members; to help them better integrate into our global economic fabric. We must not forget that only by addressing such needs can we attain the required consensus to move towards our common goals. Trade liberalization is a positive sum game, we can all win if we all try.

In our view, our future work programme should, therefore, focus on:

1. First and foremost, effectively enshrining a "Development Agenda" as the cornerstone of our work, particularly in those areas that represent a new departure within the system.
2. Create rules that do not impair the flow of trade; such a flow to be based on a level playing field, and in accordance to the comparative and competitive advantages of developed, developing and least-developed members alike.
3. Achieving serious and meaningful reform in all trade sectors, particularly those of current and potential interest to developing and least-developed countries; all with a view to improving market access for those countries to the markets of more developed partners.
4. Clarifying the "grey" areas left behind at the end of the Uruguay Round; especially in areas of Rules, SPS/TBT and the relationship between the TRIPS Agreement and secure access to public health. An early resolution of the proposed negotiations on Implementation Issues would be a signal in the right direction.

5. Strengthening commitments in the areas of capacity-building, technology transfer and special and differential treatment. A programme should be instituted – and financed – to support the task of raising the institutional capacities of developing and least-developed countries to the point that would help their speedy integration into the multilateral trading system.
6. Improve the management of decision-making processes within the WTO, while ensuring internal transparency and the "ownership" of all members of these processes.
7. Blessing regional integration schemes aimed at strengthening and amplifying both South-South and North-South trade and cooperation – while avoiding the fragmentation of the global trading system.

On a more detailed level, I believe that the outcome of our future work should achieve a number of important goals:

- (a) In Agriculture, we should aim for its full integration into the WTO framework.
- (b) In Services, the creation of opportunity in a wider spectrum of sectors; with special emphasis on sectors and modes of interest to the less-advantaged members.
- (c) In Non-Agricultural Market Access, tariff peaks, escalation, and non-tariff barriers should take precedence; while maintaining a fair and differentiated treatment for developing and least-developed members.
- (d) In the areas of Investment and Competition, study should focus on modalities and processes that improve FDI flows, at the same time maintaining flexibilities for developing and least-developed countries to pursue their national development objectives. In this regard, before we agree to negotiate, we should agree on what it is we want to negotiate.
- (e) On Trade Facilitation, a negotiated framework of general non-binding guidelines, coupled with a comprehensive and integrated effort in technical cooperation, financial support and human and institutional capacity-building.
- (f) On Labour Standards, we must reject, the use of labour standards for protectionist purposes. Hence, we reiterate the views expressed at the Singapore Conference that the ILO should remain the only organization in charge of this issue.
- (g) Environment must not be a tool for protectionism. Any discussions or clarification of existing environmental rules within the WTO must take special care not to provide the opportunity for any member for a return to trade protection.
- (h) We support the initiation of the work programme on S & D, with a view to making them effective, operational and binding to all concerned.
- (i) Last, but most definitely not least, we support the initiation of a serious programme of study to address issues of vital importance to developing and least-developed countries in the areas of debt and finance, transfer of technology and LDCs and small economies. We should target the initiation of negotiations in these areas to begin at our next meeting.

Let me welcome China and Chinese Taipei. It is a sign of the naturing of our global economy. That it will not note the absence of such a huge portion of humanity. From this day forward, the WTO will change. We congratulate ourselves.

I sincerely believe that the time has come for the WTO membership to move forward more than any time in the past, the world economy needs cohesion, it needs coordination, and it needs vision. We can deliver – Ladies and Gentlemen – we must deliver.
