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Statement Circulated by The Hon. Dr. Emmanuel O. Udogu,
Minister of Commerce and Tourism

On behalf of the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, I offer you our sincerest and warmest congratulations on your election to the Chairmanship of this second session of the Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO). We are confident in your skills and abilities to steer this Conference to a successful conclusion. Through you, Mr. Chairman, we convey our gratitude to the authorities of the Swiss Confederation for the satisfactory arrangements made for our participation at this Conference.

We seize this opportunity, as we have on several occasions, to wholeheartedly pay deserving tribute to H.E. Mr. Renato Ruggiero, Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO) for his untiring and articulate advocacy of the merits and benefits of the multilateral trading system. In the past few years, the Director-General has initiated several creative projects in his search for the integration of developing and least-developed countries into the multilateral trading system. For these efforts, we salute the Director-General who has approached his duties as Director-General with an original vision which has emphasized the maintenance of the integrity of the trading system and the integration of the developing countries into the system. We also pay tribute to Ambassador John Weekes, Chairman of the General Council for his leadership of the Council since his election in the month of January, this year.

This is a historic moment in the evolution of the trading system anchored on the World Trade Organization. Trade liberalization, under the rules and disciplines of the multilateral trading system, has driven the significant increases in global and national incomes, wealth and prosperity, in the past 50 years. The benefits of the last 50 years have not, however, been limited to mere increases in economic prosperity. In addition, the world has also reaped the dividends of peace and stability in the system of international relations.

Nonetheless, there are challenges of the moment to the viability and integrity of the trading system. These challenges are to ensure the increase and sustainability of economic prosperity, a more even and equitable distribution of the benefits of the multilateral trading system, the reduction of marginalization and impoverishment in developing and least-developed regions of the world and, to that end, ensure the full integration of developing and least-developed countries into the trading system. In consequence, it is, therefore, an urgent necessity that the trading system is fully responsive and sensitive to the needs of all members of the trading system, both great and small.

Mr. Chairman, against the background of our experience at the WTO in its fourth year of existence, five key issues are of cardinal importance to Nigeria at this second session of the Ministerial Conference. First, re-emphasizing our commitment to the rules and disciplines of the trading system

and, to that end, underscoring our determination to implement our voluntarily undertaken contractual obligations.

Second, our concerns with the uneven distribution of the benefits of the trading system, the marginalization of countries and the slow pace of integration, the limited effects of technical assistance and the insufficiency of S and D provisions for addressing these problems. These problems and concerns are sources of instability to the structure of the trading system. They need to be addressed and properly managed.

Third, the urgent and vital necessity of strengthening the development dimension in WTO Agreements, in the work of the Secretariat, and in the multilateral trading system as a whole. The integration of the development dimension in the work of the WTO is based on the logic and the recognition that, although trade is the major engine of growth and prosperity, the relationship between trade and prosperity is not automatic unless this relationship is mediated by appropriate, creative and formally adopted and applied developmental policies. In this regard, the WTO should do more.

Fourth, greater reality and meaning have to be accorded to coherence in global economic policies pursuant to Article III(5) of the WTO Agreement. Beyond the maintenance of observer status at meetings of each other, the three Organizations namely, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (IBRD), and the World Trade Organization (WTO), should now commence in a deliberate and formal manner to address the problems of countries interactively and coherently as was envisioned in the Havana Charter. The response to the crisis in the currency and capital markets of South East Asia, the limited results of the delivery of integrated technical assistance to the least-developed and other Developing countries, and the continuing trade-related economic problems of many members of the WTO demonstrate very clearly the requirement for meaningful economic policy coherence by the WTO, the World Bank and the IMF for integrating trade, development and financial policies respectively. The search for this economic coherence may require the creation of a new over-arching institution.

Fifth, the urgent necessity for the Organization to assist African countries in developing capacity for effective participation in the dispute settlement system of the World Trade Organization, and to take appropriate measures to rectify the anomaly of the virtual absence of individual Africans as panellists in dispute settlement and in membership of the Appellate Body. Addressing this concern is all the more urgent in the light of the fact that panel rulings and Appellate Body decisions are now beginning to fill policy gaps and legal lacuna in areas where the membership have not been able to legislate or adopt policy, such as in the area of trade and environment, and other trade policy areas that may follow.

Reviewing the past and previewing the future, these, Mr. Chairman, are the central issues of importance for the Nigerian delegation at this session of the Ministerial Conference. Let me now address several concrete issues that bear on practical aspects of the trade policy negotiations at the WTO in the year under review.

We welcome the Report of the Director-General on the Outcome and Follow-up to the High-Level Meeting on Integrated Initiatives for Least-Developed Countries' Trade Development contained in document WT/MIN(98)/2. We are satisfied with the efforts expended by our distinguished Director-General, thus far. We strongly endorse the proposals contained in that Report in particular in paragraphs 5 and 6. Nigeria expresses the hope that the results of the High-Level Meeting for Least-Developed African countries will be extended to other developing African countries. Furthermore, we call on the Organization and the Secretariat to provide focused and targeted technical assistance to assist African countries in the implementation of their obligations in WTO Agreements, particularly in such areas as the Agreements on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS), Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), etc. In this regard also, the assistance to African countries and their continuing

integration into the multilateral trading system will be accelerated by increased market access in specific areas of export interest to our countries.

Nigeria like other developing countries is emphasizing the need for implementation of the existing WTO Agreements taking into consideration our experiences, difficulties, as well as aspirations. Implementation problems such as realigning national laws in line with the WTO Agreements, lack of technical expertise, lack of market access, imposition of tariff and non-tariff barriers, SPS considerations, problems of capacity building, among others are issues of concern to my country which should be addressed. Nigeria's position is that the above named implementation issues should be given greater attention rather than rushing into or undertaking new ones, without prejudice to the continuation of discussion of the Built-In-Agenda items.

Nigeria continues to attach importance to securing the inflow of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into our economy in order to increase the capital base, access to modern technology, and expertise, all of which are required for the country's accelerated economic development. This is why we have accorded great interest to the exchange of information and educational process that is taking place in the Working Group on Trade and Investment. It is our hope that work will continue in a paced manner, that the agenda will be comprehensive and balanced and will take account of the concerns of all countries and all interests, including those who consider that investments should undertake environmental impact assessments and be environment-friendly in order to ensure sustainability of trade and development.

The WTO will become universally relevant and central to global economic policy coherence when those countries which are undergoing accession negotiations become Members of the Organization. Therefore, it is necessary to accelerate these accession negotiations, applying the similar entry standards, rights and obligations to all applicants. In our view, it is necessary that the same standards, rights and obligations apply to all, taking account of the Organizations' positions on the need to recognize different levels of development. We urge that it may become necessary to establish standard time-frames for accession negotiations in order to ensure that such negotiations are brisk, businesslike and insulated from bilateral or international politics.

The past few years have seen the proliferation of Regional Trading Arrangements (RTAs), a phenomenon that gave rise to the establishment of the Committee on Regional Trading Arrangements at the WTO. There have been dual reactions of welcome to the establishment to the increase in regional economic arrangements and free trade areas as well as anxiety. While welcoming trade liberalization and the reduction of barriers to trade within defined economic spaces, there is also incipient concern that they should not become economic fortresses against those outside. This is why Nigeria has joined with those who uphold and underscore the primacy of the multilateral trading system over and above regional trading arrangements and free trade areas. Free trade areas must be complementary to, and be stepping-stones and not stumbling-blocks to the universal objective of a truly global multilateral trading system operating on the disciplines and rules of the trading system.

The trade and environment relationship have become a fundamental aspect of the work of the World Trade Organization. Furthermore of crucial importance, civil society at the global level and in many countries are subjecting the WTO to an environmental test both in the implementation of existing agreements and the negotiation of new ones as a determiner of according or withdrawing support to the Organization. Notwithstanding the peculiar contractual nature of the relations amongst countries at the WTO, the Organization must be sensitive to signals from the private sector and civil society at large.

Accordingly, there is a need to take account of environmental considerations in the formulation of trade policy. In doing so, the objective should be environmental protection, the pursuit of optimal policies of sustainable development and strongly resisting cases where environmental considerations

are used as non-tariff barriers. We welcome the work in the past three and half years in the Committee on Trade and Environment (CTE) in which Nigeria has participated most actively through the presentation of papers and formal reactions to proposals by other delegations. We urge the CTE to continue with its analysis of the complexities of trade and environment relationships with a view to proposing recommendations, at the appropriate time, for the consideration of the Organization as a whole, when found necessary.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, the purpose and the objectives of the WTO are clearly contained in the Preamble to the Marrakesh Agreement. Pursuant to that Preamble, Nigeria emphasizes the necessity of incorporating the development dimension in the work of the Organization and in the work of the Secretariat. If the Organization is relevant in directly assisting our countries to address the challenges to development, increase in employment, reduction of poverty, elimination of marginalization, and the pursuit of optimally sustainable development policies while, at the same time, accelerating the increase in our national incomes and prosperity, then our expectations of this Organization would have been met. The Organization has begun with assisting our countries in achieving these goals, but so much more needs to be done with creativity, with vision, and robust imagination.
