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I would like to start my statement by acknowledging that the Second Ministerial Conference acquires special importance, not only because it coincides with the 50th Anniversary of the multilateral trading system (MTS), but because it is a good opportunity for the assessment of the implementation of the Agreements under the World Trade Organization (WTO) since its entry into force in January 1995. In this context, we strongly believe that the full implementation of these Agreements is a necessity to ensure the credibility and the effectiveness of the multilateral trading system, as well as guaranteeing the integration of the developing countries in this system and avoiding their marginalization.

When we negotiated the Uruguay Round Agreements, signed in Marrakesh in 1994, it was our conviction that the full and faithful implementation of those Agreements is the only guarantee for maintaining and further enhancing confidence in the multilateral trading system; this fact was again emphasized in the Singapore Conference in 1996 which stressed the high priority of the effective implementation of the WTO Agreements in a manner consistent with the goal of trade liberalization.

After almost three and a half years of implementation, the question which imposes itself is: "Does the implementation process satisfactorily meet our expectations?" Unfortunately the answer is still difficult to be yes for many reasons:

- The abuse and unjustifiable recourse to anti-dumping measures by certain countries which negatively affect our exports;
- the remarkable use of technical regulations and standards as well as sanitary and phytosanitary measures in such a manner that constitutes barriers hindering the flow of our exports;
- the process of integration as provided for in the Agreement on Textiles and Clothing proved to be modest in terms of its effect to the liberalization of this sector and increasing the exports of articles of interest to us. This is in addition to the increasing tendency to the use of safeguards and anti-dumping measures against the exports of these items. It is worth noting also that the changing of the rules of origin and modifications in customs procedures as well as administrative practices have also disrupted access under this Agreement;
- the non-application of the provisions of the "Marrakesh Decision on Measures Concerning the Possible Negative Effects of the Reform Programme on Least Developed and Net-Food Importing Developing Countries", and the absence of sufficient measures pursued by developed countries, Food Aid Convention and donors, have contributed to further increase the burden of the negative effects of this programme represented in higher import bills of basic foodstuffs for those countries;

- the modest implementation of the special and differential provisions in favour of developing countries as provided in the WTO Agreements.

In this context, we would like to request that a separate part of the WTO annual report be devoted to follow up the status of the process of implementation in all areas under WTO with a view to assessing the difficulties and propose the recommendations for remedies.

Allow me now to touch upon some other important areas of interest to us, we look upon transitional periods and the enhancement of technical and financial assistance not only as vital and important elements to enable optimum implementation of the obligations under various WTO Agreements, but also to ensure the balance between the rights and obligations under those Agreements.

The review of the WTO Agreements must take into consideration the special and differential treatment in favour of developing countries as well as technology transfer as a vital element for development.

As regards the issue of trade and environment, we believe that its importance dictates further in-depth examination and analysis with a view of achieving objective of sustainable development, as called for in Agenda 21. We note the work done under the WTO Committee on Trade and Environment and the need of balance in addressing all issues under its work programme in particular the market access cluster issues which should be the core and the focal point of its deliberations.

It is not deniable that eco-labelling programmes and schemes can help in achieving consumer protection. However, we believe that they could adversely affect the exports of countries not in a position to meet the requirements of these programmes. It is our firm belief that international cooperation is the best solution to face environmental problems, and unilateral actions, extraterritorial measures, and trade sanctions will not help in solving environmental problems, rather it will create tensions and trade conflicts. Positive measures such as technical and financial assistance as well as transfer of sound technologies are crucial vehicles which could help us in adapting ourselves to pursue the environmental requirements and achieve their objectives.

As far as trade in services is concerned, Egypt is actively participating in the ongoing work in all areas under discussion in the WTO, Egypt submitted its improved offer in financial services, and is following with satisfaction the work under way in the area of professional services, the accomplishment of guidelines for mutual recognition agreements, and the expected agreement on disciplines. At the same time, we hope that the negotiations on the emergency safeguards can successfully be completed in its time-frame in view of the importance of this mechanism as a safety valve. We would also like to affirm that one of the most important sectors of our interest is the movement of natural persons, an area in which we have comparative advantage. Meanwhile, we do not benefit from the commitment made by developed countries under this sector due to their linkage with commercial presence or the unaffordable conditions accompanying those commitments. Therefore this area needs a constructive response on the part of developed countries in future negotiations to compensate the missed balance in the General Agreement on Trade in Services.

As regards the future work in the WTO, we believe that our concentration should be on the issues under the built-in agenda (BIA) covering a number of agreements. The educative and exploratory process should continue in WTO, UNCTAD and relevant fora regarding subjects embodied in the Singapore Declaration in the areas of trade and investment, competition, transparency in government procurement and trade facilitation without prejudging whether negotiations will be initiated in the future.

Due to the fact that the vast majority of developing countries have export interest limited to certain sectors, we advocate that any upcoming trade negotiations take the form of sectoral ones. At

the same time, we believe that the next Ministerial Conference should take place in the year 2000, taking into consideration the limitation of human and financial resources of the developing countries and in order to provide enough time for the complete implementation of the present Agreements, and to fulfil the obligations under the built-in agenda.

Concerning the new work programme entrusted to WTO in Singapore, and with regard to trade and investment, the educational work in the WTO should emphasize interests and concerns of developing countries as recipient parties to the foreign direct investment which is essential to supplement domestic savings in order to strengthen the production bases and export capacities and help their integration in the world economy.

As regards trade and competition policy, it is our firm belief that fair competition and prevention of anti-competitive practices is a precondition for the multilateral trading system, and that national laws on competition are necessary at the national level which should be complemented by the international cooperation to curb monopolistic practices at the international level. The WTO working group should analyse the impact of anti-competitive practices on growth and economic development. We believe that the United Nations Set on Multilaterally Agreed Principles and Rules for the Control of Restrictive Business Practices is a good basis for shaping any disciplines in this respect.

With regard to trade facilitation. We acknowledge the importance of the simplification and coordination of trade procedures as a vital element to reduce cost and time of trade transactions, we strongly believe that exploratory and analytical work should continue to determine the added value that the WTO can present in this concern, making use of the work by other fora in particular UNCTAD, in addition to the recommendations of the UN Symposium on Trade Efficiency. We believe that completing the unfinished work in some of the WTO Agreements could enhance the achievement of the objectives of trade facilitation.

In this context we recognize electronic commerce as an undeniable phenomenon which needs further in-depth study and analysis to determine its definition, scope, implications, benefits, legal aspects, as well as the relationship between electronic commerce and the provisions of the Agreements under WTO, taking into consideration the developmental dimensions and limitations of capabilities of Egypt as a developing country to effective participation in this field.

Egypt welcomes the convening of the High-Level Meeting on Integrated Initiations for Least-Developed Countries in October 1997, and emphasizes the importance of the continuous follow-up of the pledges made by certain Members to meet the urgent needs of LDCs. In this regard, we commend the offers presented by some developing countries including Egypt taking into consideration the limited capabilities of these countries. We also call for developed countries to make meaningful commitments to LDCs covering them all.

Before concluding, there are two important issues which should be highlighted due to their close relationship with the structure and future of the multilateral trading system. The first is the increasing tendency towards the regional trade arrangements, we acknowledge the importance of those arrangements as long as they are compatible with the multilateral trading system and enhance the flow of international trade. However, we believe that this process should take into consideration that regionalism is not an alternative to the multilateral system.

The second is concerning the accession process to the WTO and its importance for achieving the universality of MTS through facilitating this process and ensuring the speedy, smooth, and transparent procedures avoiding discrimination against new applicants in terms of imposing additional obligations to which existing Members are not committed.

At the same time, we would like to reaffirm our clear position regarding any new conditionality or protectionist initiative such as labour standards, rejecting any linkage between trade and these standards, this issue is under the mandate of the ILO.

Let me conclude by confirming that as long as there is good faith and political will to serve "MTS" in order to achieve its objectives, this system will allow all participants to gain its fruits and benefits as an equitable mechanism based on openness and transparency.

Finally, I would like to extend our thanks and appreciation to the Swiss Government for its hospitality and the well-organized work which helped to the successfulness of such important events.
