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UGANDA

Statement by H.E. Brigadier Moses Ali Second Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Tourism, Trade and Industry

This is a great opportunity for all of us to shape the future. What we decide here will determine world trade for the next millennium.

Globalization is not only a necessity but it is inevitable. However, for this to be meaningful, interests of all countries especially the least developed that are most vulnerable and usually voiceless must be given the opportunity to meaningfully participate in the global economy.

Uganda is committed to the objectives of the multilateral trading system to strengthen our participation in the global economy. Our commitment to this objective had led us to implement a wide range of social and economic reforms. Far-reaching changes in our trade, financial reforms and fiscal regimes have helped to establish an enabling environment for expanding trade and for attracting new investments.

The benefits of these reforms, however, have been slow to materialize. We continue to be dependent on primary commodities for export earnings, a large share of which goes to service our external debt. The burden of servicing our debt continues to distort our development priorities, limiting our ability to manage our own hard earned resources.

As we try to improve the world trading system, let us not forget that the contribution of this system to trade expansion and development of developing countries will remain limited so long as we do not resolve once and for all the debt burden of least-developed countries.

We in Uganda are conscious of the fact that the benefits of various WTO Agreements are contingent upon the implementation of assumed obligations and commitments.

Despite our meager human and administrative resources, we have made strenuous efforts to comply with the requirements of Membership in the WTO. We are therefore all the more concerned that the implementation of agreed commitments by our trading partners has been unsatisfactory.

We therefore wish to make the following proposals:

1. We urge the developed countries to completely eliminate, and prohibit in the future, all remaining export subsidies. The export taxes that seem to be applied in a sporadic and distortive manner on specific agricultural products. Such protectionist measures must be eliminated.
2. Developed countries must take seriously the needs of least-developed countries. They should provide bound, duty-free, quota-free access to all products originating from LDC.

3. The capacity of developing countries to negotiate, to implement agreements and to take advantage of the agreements reached must be increased.
4. Developed countries need to assist least-developed countries in enacting and strengthening of anti-dumping laws.
5. We need an extension of the transitional period to enable us to comply and allow us to be in a position to benefit.

Uganda welcomes the initiatives under way to further improve market access. In the interest of transparency and predictability we believe the new market access measures must be bound at zero duty, and cover all products of export interest to economies such as ours. We, however, would like to be assured that non-trade matters such as those advocated in the name of environment and labour standards do not nullify the benefits of more open markets.

We in Uganda have paid a heavy price in terms of lost markets and investment opportunities as a result of arbitrary application of sanitary and phytosanitary measures as well as technical barriers to trade.

Measures to protect the environment through eco-labelling, packing requirements and so-called green taxes and charges act directly on the costs of our exports or impede access to markets.

I would like to express our appreciation to the international community for the technical assistance that has been extended to us meet our WTO obligations. Technical assistance must however go beyond the objective of making countries like ours WTO-compliant. In particular, improved quality of assistance to strengthen our institutional, human and supply capacities should be placed high on the agenda of WTO.

May I conclude by warmly thanking our hosts, the city of Seattle and the Government of the United States, for their warm hospitality and the efficient services provided to us in conducting this important meeting.
