



**General Council - Special Meeting
23 October 2023**

MINUTES OF THE MEETING¹

HELD IN THE CENTRE WILLIAM RAPPARD ON 23 OCTOBER 2023

Chairperson: H.E. Dr. Athaliah Lesiba Molokomme (Botswana)

1 DRAFT GENERAL COUNCIL DECISION ON EXTENSION OF UNILATERAL DUTY FREE AND QUOTA FREE PREFERENCES IN FAVOUR OF COUNTRIES GRADUATED FROM THE LDC CATEGORY (WT/GC/W/901) – COMMUNICATION FROM DJIBOUTI ON BEHALF OF THE LDC GROUP

1.1. The Chairperson referred to the annotated agenda² and the discussion at the Informal General Council meeting on 17 October. She noted that given the very busy schedule and that there was less than one hour for all formalities for this special General Council meeting and the opening session of the Senior Officials Meeting, this special General Council meeting would be short and to the point.

1.2. She then gave the floor to the LDC Group Coordinator, Ambassador Kadra Hassan of Djibouti, to introduce the draft decision put forward for adoption. She highlighted that as mentioned in the annotated agenda, and given last week's interventions, she did not intend to open the floor for additional statements at the meeting. She thanked Members for their understanding.

1.3. Ambassador Kadra Ahmed Hassan of Djibouti, the LDC Group Coordinator, delivered the following statement:

1.4. The LDC Group places on record our thanks for the spirit of consensus to support [WT/GC/W/901](#) as it is at the informal HOD held by you last week. Today we formally adopt the decision. The decision is an incentive to those Members providing unilateral DFQF preferences, to extend such preferences to Members having graduated from LDC status for a limited period of time after graduation.

1.5. The UN General Assembly resolutions on smooth and sustainable graduation unequivocally requested the trading partners of the LDCs and international organizations to support any LDC after its graduation from the LDC category.

1.6. All LDCs will graduate, sooner or later. We look forward to that. The main purpose of our Group's submission is to establish a smooth transition mechanism at WTO, which will provide predictability and certainty to help such countries graduate with momentum.

1.7. Graduation from the LDC category overnight will not fix the inherited challenges of the LDCs. The decision today on Annex 1 of the LDC Group proposal marks a first step and goodwill on the future of LDC integration into the multilateral trading system. For the first time, the WTO will have agreed on a decision of this kind, which will provide some measure of predictability and trust for those of our Members on the road to graduation.

¹ The proposed agenda was circulated in document [WT/GC/W/903](#).

² [JOB/GC/362](#)

1.8. We also hope that, what we are about to do with this decision on LDCs, we will be able to replicate and emulate for other decisions in the General Council and not wait for Ministerial Conferences to have agreements.

1.9. We also encourage Members to work constructively with us to positively consider our Annex 2 proposals on the LDC-specific provisions in existing WTO agreements, after graduation from LDC category. We must report back to the General Council by 30 November, as instructed to the LDC Sub-Committee.

1.10. Madame Chair, we again would like to thank you, all Members and the Director-General.

1.11. The Chairperson proposed that the General Council adopt the draft decision contained in [WT/GC/W/901](#).

1.12. The General Council so agreed.³

1.13. The Chairperson congratulated all Members, in particular, the LDCs on this successful outcome and expressed her appreciation to all Members, as well as the current and former LDC Group Coordinators, and the Focal Point for LDC Graduation, for their tireless efforts and pragmatism to bring this issue to a close. She noted that this was commendable and inspiring and hopefully put the work and discussions of the WTO membership at the Senior Officials' Meeting on a positive trajectory.

³ The decision was circulated in [WT/L/1172](#).