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CRAFTS, AND SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES**

BURKINA FASO

At the outset, I should like to thank the authorities of the United Arab Emirates, in particular my counterpart, Dr Thani Bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi, for all the kind assistance and hospitality extended to my delegation and to me, and above all to congratulate him on the successful organization of this important decision-making forum of our Organization.

I should also like to congratulate the WTO Secretariat for the excellent preparation of our work.

The delegation of Burkina Faso supports the statements made by the Ministerial Coordinators of the groups to which our country belongs, including the Ministers of Chad, Djibouti, Cameroon, Botswana and Samoa in their respective capacity as spokespersons.

Global economic activity, which is expected to slow in 2024, the third consecutive year of deceleration, according to International Monetary Fund forecasts, will be marked by disturbances to fair trade that must be pre-empted or contained.

In this context, and now more than ever, the WTO must show responsibility and originality in meeting the challenges it faces as a body that promotes and guarantees a viable, fair and prosperous trading system for all. In these circumstances, trade should be a vehicle for raising people's living standards, especially for so-called "least developed" and "developing" countries.

It has to be said, however, that an objective and pragmatic review of the state-of-play in the Doha Development Agenda (DDA) negotiations, launched in 2001, offers only cautious optimism as regards the ability of our Organization to address these challenges effectively on its own without the support of Members.

We must therefore redouble our efforts and, with a strong political will and a spirit of shared responsibility, do our utmost to overcome the current difficulties, taking into consideration the priorities linked to the choices made by our countries to move towards self-sustaining and sustainable development models.

To that end, the "development" dimension, especially "endogenous development" based on people's legitimate and intrinsic aspirations, must be at the heart of our concerns.

In the light of the global economic slowdown, it is time to maintain the process of reform and liberalization of trade policies, to ensure that trade plays its full part in promoting economic recovery, inclusive growth and development.

This will be a practical way of fulfilling the commitments set forth in the Doha Declaration, which recognizes that **"international trade can play a major role in the promotion of economic development and the alleviation of poverty"**, as well as **"the need for all ... to benefit from the ... welfare gains that the multilateral trading system generates"**.

With this in mind, cotton is an ever more pressing issue for the WTO, to which the Organization must find a speedy and fair solution, or risk of losing its credibility. This matter has been pending since it was first raised in 2003, although we, the producing countries, remain very hopeful.

My delegation fully associates itself with the statement made by Chad on behalf of the C-4, calling for this issue to be resolved in accordance with the Hong Kong mandate, and on the basis of the work already carried out and consolidated in the various draft modalities.

On 25 January 2024, at the Eighth Ministerial Meeting in Koudougou, Burkina Faso, the Trade Ministers of the four co-sponsors of the Sectoral Initiative in Favour of Cotton (C-4) and Côte d'Ivoire reaffirmed their commitment to the multilateral trading system, with a view to finding a definitive solution to the issue of cotton. Like the representatives of other African cotton-producing countries, I should like to appeal, once again, to all cotton stakeholders to find a definitive solution to this issue. The resolution of this matter must be included among the priority issues to which urgent and immediate responses must be found upon the conclusion of our work.

Burkina Faso is of the opinion that the development of the cotton value chain in the C-4 countries and Côte d'Ivoire should be prioritized in order to give fresh impetus to this sector through a strategic partnership. In this regard, considerable resources must be mobilized to finance projects and programmes for cotton-textile value chain integration.

There appears to be increasing support among the Members of this Organization for the internal functioning of the WTO to be reformed or even for its scope to be expanded to include so-called "21st-century" issues.

For Burkina Faso, the first and real 21st century issue – the most urgent one, to which all efforts must be directed – is, and will continue to be, the Doha Development Agenda, the much-delayed conclusion of which is still pending. Moreover, any reform of the WTO should seek to consolidate the Organization's role as guarantor of trade beneficial to all Members, with clear and uniform rules that apply effectively to all and support the trade integration of so-called least developed countries (LDCs).

The task is an arduous one, yet the stakes require that we tackle it with courage and, above all, do our utmost to succeed.

Before concluding, I would like to urge Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) stakeholders to mobilize resources for the uninterrupted operationalization of the third phase, in order to consolidate the real gains made for the economic and social development of our countries through trade.

I should thus like to conclude my remarks with that call for action, while once again reaffirming Burkina Faso's commitment to fair trade and willingness to contribute to its consolidation.
