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MINISTER OF INDUSTRY AND TRADE**

**MOROCCO**

It is for me a privilege and a great honor to have the opportunity, on behalf of my country, the Kingdom of Morocco, to address this distinguished Assembly of the 13<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization, held in a brotherly country, the United Arab Emirates.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to my Brother, His Excellency Mr. Thani bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi, President of the Conference, for his hospitality and for the exceptional organization of this event.

My thanks also go to the Director-General of the WTO, Mrs. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala and her team for the excellent initiatives launched since she took office at the head of our Organization.

Our meeting takes place in a global context marked by instability and filled with a set of challenges related to food security, climate change and post-pandemic economic recovery, heavily impacting global trade, the multilateral trading system and vulnerable populations.

It is a rapidly changing environment, multilateral trade is called, more than ever, to play its essential role in reducing inequalities and supporting the economic growth of Members through global trade with precise and transparent rules.

To this end, Morocco reiterates, with conviction, the importance of a rules based multilateral trading system for global economic stability and resilience.

This Conference will see the accession of two new Members, namely the Union of the Comoros and Timor-Leste. In this regard, I welcome them to our Organization while congratulating my country, Morocco, and Portugal as respective chairs of the working groups for their accessions. These accessions undeniably attest to the credibility of this international forum and its global dimension.

Let me allow myself to focus on four fundamental subjects:

1. Agriculture,
2. Fisheries subsidies,
3. WTO reform, and
4. Plurilateral joint development initiatives.

**Regarding agriculture**, the global crisis we are witnessing today in terms of food security underscore the central nature of negotiations in this area. Our priority in this field is to achieve equitable development-oriented outcomes with solutions to the pressing problem of food insecurity.

Morocco remains convinced of the importance of adjusting imbalances in terms of domestic support and the special safeguard mechanism which must be flexible and effective, in favor of developing countries and Least Developed Countries.

Morocco, as a Net Food Importing Developing Country, joins those calling for flexibilities in the agriculture negotiations to ensure the food security of developing countries and reaffirming the importance of an immediate WTO response to the food security crisis to address the rising cost of food.

**Regarding fisheries subsidies**, Morocco welcomes the efforts made by Member countries at MC12, which led to a historic agreement on illegal fishing and overfished stocks, and reiterates the need to continue the efforts to achieve balanced disciplines on subsidies contributing to overcapacity and overfishing.

In this regard, my country reiterates its commitment and attachment to working with all WTO Members to conclude these negotiations and remains optimistic because it considers that it is our duty and our responsibility to preserve our common heritage of living marine resources for future generations.

To achieve this, the agreement must provide for special and differential treatment, taking into account the realities of the countries as well as the exclusion of artisanal fishing for developing countries and LDCs, even the socio-economic weight of this activity and its insignificant share in the subsidies granted to fisheries.

**As for the reform of our Organization**, I advocate for reaching a consensus on the points of contention concerning the various negotiations areas, while ensuring the preservation of the development dimension in future decisions.

It is in this spirit that it is so important to reaffirm the necessity of Special and Differential Treatment in matters related to WTO reform to guarantee our rights to promote our economic and commercial capacities for better integration in global value chains.

Improving the functioning of the WTO must take into account the need to preserve the fundamental principles of the Marrakesh Agreement establishing the WTO, while addressing the system shortcomings to the reinforcement of principles of justice and equity.

To this end, it is time to overcome the Appellate Body crisis with a robust and functional dispute settlement system to restore confidence in this institution and ensure its predictability.

**Regarding joint plurilateral development initiatives**, my country works alongside other Members to establish economic and social development levers that take into consideration the differences, needs and aspirations of each Member.

In this context, Morocco is pleased to be part of the Members of the joint initiative on investment facilitation for development, which is likely to create a more transparent, efficient and predictable environment to facilitate cross-border investment.

Regarding environmental issues, Morocco has always supported the various actions of the WTO, notably those included in the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, hence the importance for Members to rise to the challenge of plastic pollution and join the Dialogue on Plastic Pollution and Environmentally Sustainable Plastics Trade.

Allow me to conclude by reaffirming Morocco's deep commitment to the multilateral trading system embodied by the WTO and our willingness to work constructively with all Members to restore the central role of our Organization.

Finally, I cannot conclude without expressing the hope that this Conference in Abu Dhabi will be a complete success and mark a step forward for a fairer, more inclusive and equitable multilateral trading system.

**I wish all the best for our work and thank you for your kind attention.**

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