

**Government of Tonga Statement MC10 Nairobi 17 December 2015**

**Minister for Commerce and Labour**

On behalf of the Government of Tonga, may I extend our sincere appreciation to the Government of Kenya and its people for organizing this important Ministerial conference.

May I also place on record Tonga's appreciation to our Advisors in Geneva, the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat Office, and the coordinators of the African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP), and

Tonga applauds the approach of the TFA which links implementation to the gaining of appropriate capacities.

We believe that where appropriate, future multilateral trade agreements should also adopt this approach.

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Please note that we are currently undertaking necessary measures at the national level to ensure our Category Commitments are notified as soon as possible with a view to ratification in the near future.

Given the importance of the fisheries sector for Tonga, our Government continues to promote sector growth in a sustainable way. Fisheries is critical for livelihoods and local food security for the majority of our people, many of whom are small scale artisanal fishermen and women.

We support potential outcomes on the elimination of capacity enhancing fisheries subsidies that have negative impacts on marine ecology, ecosystems, because these ultimately undermine our quest for sustainable development.

Our challenge here is to balance sustainability and trade concerns with appropriate flexibilities for small and vulnerable economies that lack the capacity and resources to provide harmful levels of support.

Turning now to Tonga's regional setting, we attach particular importance to achieving closer economic integration with our neighbours, as a complement to the WTO's global approach. We have ratified the Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement in goods and we are now preparing for its implementation. We are also planning to complete, by June 2016, our negotiations between our fellow Pacific Island Countries and Australia and New Zealand under a development-oriented PACER + Agreement.

Tonga feels that one cannot and should not separate the trade challenges at the multilateral level from those at the bilateral, regional and domestic level, but rather tackle them as an integrated package.

The linkage between the multilateral and regional level nm( )JTJ0#00#00P MCID 16>BC B1 0 0 1 2.024032

Our key interests would include but are not limited to: preserving the Agriculture and NAMA flexibilities; fisheries subsidies; and a work plan and approach to address, in a meaningful and systemic manner, the needs of small, vulnerable economies.

Tonga also wishes to support the positions of the ACP, SVE and Pacific Groups.