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MALI

Statement by H.E. Mrs Toure Alimata Traore
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First of all, I should like to congratulate, and above all thank, the authorities of Qatar for the impeccable organization of this Conference, their constant readiness to help and all the facilities given to the delegations. My thanks also go to the Director-General of the WTO, Mr Mike Moore, and all his team, who have done such sterling work for so many months to prepare this meeting.

The Ministerial Conference of the WTO is taking place in a special context, characterized since Seattle by a crisis of confidence combined with a security crisis. The tragic events of 11 September 2001 should incite the world as a whole to show greater solidarity among the international community in order to meet any adversity from wherever it comes. One of the major challenges facing the international community is of course the creation of conditions for balanced and equitable growth of the global economy.

This meeting, after the failure in Seattle, should provide an opportunity for the Member countries of the WTO to find ways and means to ensure equitable sharing of the benefits of the growth in trade. Despite the declared objective of liberalizing trade and enhancing economic growth, there are not yet any tangible results in the majority of developing countries. For them, trade plays a leading role in socio-economic development. In Mali, for example, the trade sector, including services, accounts for 36 per cent of its gross domestic product (GDP). It is one of the main sources of jobs and is thus a permanent and sustainable factor of economic growth. Development of this sector has been fixed as one of the priority objectives of the struggle against poverty.

Some initiatives in this respect have already been taken. We welcome those taken by the European Union, the United States and other partners on market access for developing countries.

For some of these measures, the implementation procedures should be simplified so that the expected objectives can be obtained, namely, greater participation in global trade for the beneficiary countries.

In other words, our Fourth Conference should lay down the bases for the sustainable development of all countries, particularly the least developed. In order to do this, we should like to put forward recommendations concerning some of the issues to be discussed.

With regard to market access, while it is true that efforts have been made regarding duty-free access, it is obvious that the expected results will not be obtained unless the offer exists. The inadequacy of the offer and its low level of diversification are a major obstacle to market access for developing countries, especially least-developed countries. The integrated framework put in place since the Singapore Conference constitutes a response to the concerns of the least-developed countries. It must be recognized, however, that its implementation has been weak. This is why Mali

hopes that the present Conference will take a decision on strengthening the action provided under this framework.

As regards agriculture, it is regrettable to see that the vast export subsidies and the domestic support given by certain WTO Members make agricultural products from developing countries uncompetitive. They therefore now constitute an effective barrier to market access by developing countries, despite the initiatives taken to facilitate access. The development of the agricultural sector, in which the majority of the labour force works in developing countries (in Mali, 80 per cent of the working population) is thus jeopardized.

Concerning the TRIPS Agreement, Mali obviously supports research programmes aimed at improving public health. It is important that, in the context of poverty reduction, the Members of the WTO should reaffirm that no provision in the Agreement prevents a State from taking appropriate measures to allow access to medicines at reasonable prices and to promote public health. This reaffirmation should be particularly clear and precise because, for developing countries, this is a problem of survival for populations facing numerous epidemics such as AIDS.

We welcome the principle of special and differential treatment for least-developed countries. In view of the mixed results of application of such treatment, the Conference should take a decision to review this treatment and take into account the specificities of these countries.

Finally, Mali supports an open international trading system that allows all the Members of the WTO to derive benefits from the growth in world trade.
