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particular, towards the developing countries. This would ensure equal opportunities for the different economic actors, the SMEs and the large groups.

- Secondly, the economic preferences of consumers often reflect choices by our citizens. These choices may differ from one country to another, for example, in the food safety area. The WTO has the responsibility of avoiding conflicts that could result from these differences by specifying or clarifying existing multilateral rules wherever necessary.

Moreover, negotiations should pave the way for progress on the dispute settlement chapter, to the benefit of all Members.

2. The WTO must also be an instrument at the service of sustainable development

The objective of sustainable development has been recognized and incorporated into the WTO ever since the Organization was created. The role of the State and of public policy is important in ensuring greater security and solidarity.

Development, promotion of core labour standards and environmental protection are key areas in which States and public opinion alike expect tangible results.

The question of development will be at the heart of the new round. Above and beyond the progress achieved in the discussions on implementation of the Marrakesh Agreements, access by the disadvantaged countries to developed country and emerging country markets is a priority. Europe has already taken steps to that end on behalf of the least-developed countries.

And we are faced with two other tasks: to give full meaning to the concept of "special and differential treatment" without creating a two-speed WTO; and to develop technical assistance in areas where it is crucial.

The WTO must contribute to social development by ensuring permanent dialogue with other international organizations, under the auspices of the ILO.

The WTO must contribute decisively to the regulation of international trade by clarifying the relationship between trade and environmental rules.

I would like to place particular emphasis on a matter of considerable importance, indeed a moral obligation: that of enabling populations that have been struck by epidemics such as AIDS to have access to essential medicines. France was behind the Global Health Fund launched by the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Let us add access to essential medicines. On behalf of the French Government, I call upon you to give all human beings the means to exercise, concretely, their basic right to life.

3. To fulfil these missions, the WTO must respect the principles of equity and transparency

Equity means participation by all. It requires transparency of procedures and negotiation methods. The WTO has achieved some progress since Seattle, and it must continue to do so.

Equity also means a comprehensive negotiating agenda: only through a broad approach can the priorities of each and every one of us be taken into consideration and a balanced result ensured.

Finally, equity means refraining from all pre-negotiation of results in certain areas. I am thinking, in particular, of the negotiation of the built-in agenda on agriculture and services, which

must be pursued on the basis laid down in Marrakesh, with due regard for the collective preferences of all Members.

Mr Chairman, Mr Director-General, distinguished colleagues, when we created the WTO in