

The much-heralded gains from the Uruguay Round are yet to be realized by many Members of this Organization. Most benefits have gone to more advanced economies and to the few with the capability to take advantage of new opportunities. The recent World Bank Report on global economic prospects confirms this. Indeed, the Annual Report by the Director-General of the WTO for 2001 reveals that Africa's share of world merchandise trade has fallen by one quarter in the past decade. Although it might be noted that in this same decade the share of developing countries as a whole in global merchandise trade has risen by more than 6 (six) per cent, the fact is that in excess of 70 (seventy) per cent of this increase was accounted for by six or seven countries, not all of which were WTO Members.

It is for this reason that we believe that the WTO must make a concerted effort to respond more fully to the interests and concerns of its diverse membership. The very legitimacy of the Organization depends on this. We emphasize that there is no inconsistency between the commitment to an open, rules-based multilateral trading system and recognizing that there is a need to treat with the different circumstances of countries in a manner which avoids the "one size fits all" syndrome. Equal rules applied to unequal situations will not, and have not, yielded growth and development.

It is important to address through a development agenda, not only the nature and structure of the rules, but also the timing and sequencing of obligations entered into. For small and vulnerable developing economies, a core concern is the disjuncture between obligations undertaken and the onset of competitive pressures – which are immediate and near-term – and the opportunities, particularly regarding market access, which can only be taken advantage of in the longer term with improved supply-side capabilities. This is a primary cause of the mal-distribution of benefits in the multilateral trading system, including those which presumptively should have flowed from the Uruguay Round. This brings into particularly sharp focus the need for a broader conception of technical assistance and capacity-building in the WTO, and the need as well to take account of the varying capacities of Members. Much more needs to be done in this area but it would be remiss of me if I did not thank the Director

meaningful contribution to redressing the imbalances deriving from the Uruguay Round Agreements.

Fourthly:

- We need to address the long-standing deficiencies relating to internal transparency, inclusiveness and organizational procedures. These matters impinge on legitimacy and credibility, which are extremely valuable institutional resources that are squandered only at peril.

Fifthly:

- We must adopt a work programme that is development-driven, and in this very important sense, will be also demand-driven, since most Members of this Organization are developing countries. The work programme must seek to redress past asymmetries in rules, disciplines and opportunities; recognize the limited capability of many developing countries to engage in new negotiating processes and to assume new obligations; and it should wisely acknowledge the already far-reaching scope of the existing built-in agenda, comprising negotiations on agriculture and services and various mandated reviews.

Sixthly and finally:

- We need to adopt a Declaration on TRIPS and Public Health which confirms that under the TRIPS Agreement Members have the flexibility to take measures to address public health concerns.

Before concluding I join other speakers in warmly welcoming the People's Republic of China as the 143rd Member of the WTO. We also welcome Chinese Taipei as the Organization's 144th Member. As trading power houses even before joining the WTO, we can expect dynamic and active roles from those two new Members.

May I also take the opportunity to thank the Government and people of Qatar and the city of Doha for their hospitality on the occasion of this Fourth Ministerial Conference of the WTO.
