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MADAGASCAR

Statement by H.E. Mr Maxime Zafera
Ambassador, Permanent Representative to the United Nations at Geneva

Allow me first of all to offer you my sincere congratulations on your election to the Chairmanship of this Fourth WTO Ministerial Conference. Your wisdom and experience will undoubtedly be instrumental in ensuring the success of our proceedings. You may rest assured of our full cooperation.

As to the debt problem, despite recent debt relief measures the debt burden continues to weigh heavily on the economic development of poorer nations. Purely and simply cancelling the debt of the least-developed countries would send a clear signal that the developed countries are firmly resolved to tackle development issues.

Madagascar wishes to take the opportunity afforded by this Conference to reaffirm its commitment to the multilateral trading system. Since it acceded to the World Trade Organization in January 1995, it has made every effort to honour its commitments as a Member of this Organization. Although my country is well aware of its limitations, it will spare no effort to continue working towards that goal.

At the time of its first trade policy review, in February 2001, Madagascar stated its determination to enter the market economy, by taking firm and resolute action to reduce poverty with the support of its various multilateral and bilateral partners.

On that occasion, the WTO Membership expressed satisfaction with Madagascar's economic performance and optimism regarding the country's economic future. It encouraged the country to maintain both the pace and the policy directions of its reform programme.

Following this review, Madagascar established a National Committee for the Follow-up and

In addition to these measures, a decision must be taken in favour of the accession of the least-developed countries to the WTO on a preferential and accelerated basis, with a view to promoting expeditious integration into the multilateral trading system.

Madagascar attaches particular importance to technical assistance and capacity-building problems and welcomes the recent developments in the implementation of the Integrated Framework, particularly the Pilot Scheme, of which it is a beneficiary and which it hopes will be extended to other least-developed countries in the near future.

My delegation fully shares the concerns voiced by the LDCs in the Zanzibar Ministerial Declaration, in particular the reaffirmation of the right to implement the TRIPS Agreement in such a way as to ensure that the drugs required to treat HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and other contagious diseases are readily available to Members.

Madagascar is of the opinion that the health sector should not be considered from a purely commercial point of view; rather, for the obvious reasons of fairness and ethics, a human perspective and approach is called for. Special provision should be made for medicines on the grounds of public health and to protect everyone's right to access to good quality, low-cost medicines.

My delegation also requests that the outcome of the Third United Nations Conference on Least-Developed Countries, hosted in Brussels this year, be taken into consideration in all future WTO programmes.

My delegation supports the establishment of working groups to examine the relationships between trade and finance, trade and transfer of technology and trade and debt, which could, moreover, come to be the WTO's contribution to solving the debt problems of the developing and least-developed countries.

In conclusion, I should like to add that, at this eventful dawn of the new millennium, this Ministerial Conference should prove an historic occasion that will enable us all to reaffirm our collective commitment to two watchwords: solidarity and cooperation. Concrete and effective international cooperation and a heightened sense of solidarity will enable WTO Members to pull together in a truly balanced partnership that leaves no room for divisions likely to fuel all manner of frustrations, but allows each and every one to derive real benefit from liberalization and globalization that lend a sympathetic ear to the least-favoured.
