

# WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

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## COLOMBIA

Statement by H.E. Mrs Marta Lucía Ramírez de Rincón  
Minister of Foreign Trade

Colombia warmly welcomes this Fourth Ministerial Conference at which, I am sure, there will prevail the constructive spirit that will enable us, on 13 November, to announce to the world the Qatar Round of Trade Negotiations.

Indeed, the historic developments we are now witnessing, and the circumstances of the global economy, oblige us today more than ever to join forces in the incessant struggle against terrorism, poverty, backwardness, lack of education and marginalization, and against the injustice of watching powerless as part of the world grows and develops at the expense of another part of the world. Now is the time for us all to move forward, to make progress, to achieve economic growth and through growth to secure genuine development.

To that end, no factor has greater potential for positively and favourably impacting all countries of the world than the growth of the world economy through an increase in world trade. And that is precisely what this conference is about: guaranteeing a short- and long-term increase in world trade. It is not through disguised barriers, safeguards, quotas or technical measures that we shall guarantee that the slowdown in the global economy will be as short in duration as we all hope.

On the contrary, now is the time to guarantee genuine access to all markets, fair and equitable access which serves to restore the confidence of economic operators in the world economy, which serves to restore the confidence of Members in this Organization, and which enables globalization to be perceived as an opportunity rather than a universal threat.

Now is the moment, therefore, to strengthen a multilateral system which, on the basis of the principle of special and differential treatment, will ensure that markets are opened fully and governed by trade rules, with the guarantee that international trade becomes the linchpin of sustainable development for all Members. A round that is to be characterized by the development dimension calls for political will and there can be no ambiguity about the mandate for the subsequent negotiations aimed at achieving fairness - a fairness that enables all to participate in the international market on an equal footing, under the same rules, but also under the same conditions.

How can we describe as fair a system of world trade in which a few rich and developed countries with large fiscal budgets - with which to subsidize their farmers - compete on equal terms with a number of poor countries with per capita income levels of barely \$5 a day? We must bear in mind that governments in the developing world do not have the fiscal capacity to subsidize farmers, but face all the difficulties pertaining to lack of physical infrastructure, inadequate education, uncertainty in the area of innovation and lack of technologies to make them truly competitive.

In this connection, the proposals and aspirations which, on behalf of the Colombian Government, I ventured to express two years ago in Seattle, are today more applicable than ever.

It continues to be necessary to effect far-reaching reforms in agriculture and to put an end to the discrimination to which that sector has been subjected for some time. It continues to be urgently necessary to take priority action on decisions for the implementation of the agreements. There continues to be an emphatic need to achieve special and differential treatment which is operational and binding. These are the clear signals which we in the developing countries are expecting from this meeting.

We are therefore convinced that the forthcoming trade negotiations must offer the less-developed economies sufficient leeway to implement domestic policies geared to development and to facilitate the diversification and growth of exports, while at the same time raising their levels of competitiveness.

Not for nothing did we request an extension of the transitional period to which we are entitled under the Agreement on Trade-Related Investment Measures, with a view to preserving one of the key instruments of our agro-industrial policy for an additional period of time. That was also our reason for obtaining an extension of the moratorium on the full implementation of the Agreement on Customs Valuation, with a view to enabling us to implement a more modern and flexible customs regime which would serve to improve the standards of efficiency in foreign trade transactions.

We welcome the balance achieved in the text of the Ministerial Declaration, which leaves room to accommodate the interests of all Members, and in this connection I extend my congratulations to both the Director-General, Mr Mike Moore, and the Chairman of the General Council, Mr Stuart Harbinson, for their leadership and their transparent and internre less-oTD 0.05i -

