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TUNISIA

Statement by H.E. Mr Tahar Sioud
Minister of Commerce

I am especially pleased to see the splendid city of Doha host the Fourth Ministerial

On the same note, I would like to extend my warm congratulations to China on its signature, yesterday, of the protocol of accession to the WTO.

Tunisia is determined to contribute to the success of the Doha Conference and to help the emergence of a consensus on the issues raised by Member countries.

The interests of my country coincide exactly with the demands and concerns expressed by the African Group and the developing countries.

As regards implementation-related issues and concerns, the negotiating programme to be adopted must allow all developing countries to secure better access to the markets of developed countries, especially for goods and services that are particularly important exports.

The timetable for the negotiations must be compatible with the real possibilities of developing countries. The content of the programme should be consistent with the state of progress of the work under way in the various WTO structures.

Negotiations in the spheres of agriculture and services should also meet the aspirations of all while observing the provisions of the agreements and decisions already adopted.

The issue of health is of very special importance. The problems are crucial and pertain to access to medicines. This concerns all developing countries and not just one particular geographical area.

I would not like to miss this opportunity to lay emphasis on other issues of interest to my country, such as consistency in the drafting of world economic policies and the matter of indebtedness, which Tunisia had already raised during its presidency of the African Group in 1994. The same applies to the transfer of technology, including communications and information technologies.

The world has undergone sweeping economic changes, the effects of which are clear for all to see.

In parallel with the unprecedented advancement of world economic activity, which has undoubtedly improved mankind's standard of living, the first negative warning signs have appeared.

Many regions of the world are witnessing tragic situations on account of deepening poverty, mounting joblessness and the widening of the gap separating the rich and the poor of this world.

Tunisia is firmly convinced that human progress is an integral whole. It cannot be realized if the balance is broken, if there are widening gaps between the North and the South induced by two-track development in which vast regions are kept on the fringes of human progress.

