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ZIMBABWE

Statement Circulated by the Hon. N.M. Shamuyarira,
Minister of Industry and Commerce

It is an honour for me to address the Second WTO Ministerial Conference on behalf of my Government and country.

I would also like to extend, on behalf of the Zimbabwean delegation, our appreciation to both the WTO Secretariat and the Swiss authorities for the excellent facilities and organization of this Conference.

We recognize that this Conference is rather unusual in three aspects; it is taking place well before the two-year threshold; it is scheduled for only two days, and it coincides with a commemorative session of the GATT/WTO system. It would be regrettable however if these circumstances are used as excuses for us not to discuss issues of fundamental importance to our countries. In fact we would deplore all attempts to turn this Conference into a mere ceremonial occasion as this ignores and trivializes the very substantive and serious preparatory work that our countries have done prior to this meeting. In Zimbabwe's case this has included wide-ranging consultations within the SADC, ACP and OAU to consider the two main items on the agenda.

The question of implementing fully all the results of the Uruguay Round negotiations remains of primary importance, and is indeed the major priority and preoccupation of Zimbabwe. This is not only due to the complexity and the heavy burden of these agreements. We are particularly concerned that we still have to see the benefits that were expected to materialize following our acceptance of the WTO package. It is for this purpose that we continue to call for the speedy implementation of the special provisions in the WTO Agreements that are intended to promote trade and economic interests of developing countries as a means of tackling the threat of the increasing marginalization of our countries within the multilateral trading system.

We again emphasize the need for targeted and appropriate technical assistance to address Africa's difficulties in understanding and applying the provisions of the WTO Agreements. Such assistance should include advisory services, capacity building and training programmes to deal with supply-side constraints, lack of skills and resources to handle notification requirements and the enactment of the necessary trade legislation and frameworks.

Africa attaches, understandably, great importance to the implementation and follow-up of the decisions of the Singapore Ministerial Conference regarding the least-developed countries. These countries belong to a special, but deplorable category of the weakest group of developing countries. It is hence incumbent on all of us to take special measures to deal with their difficult situation.

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As a minimum, Africa calls on the WTO to fully