

our
meeting in Harare, Zimbabwe from 8 to 9 April 1998, we jointly make the following statement on the occasion of the 2nd Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO):

1. We reaffirm the importance of the multilateral trading system, now institutionalized by the WTO, as a necessary framework for the beneficial conduct of international trade relations. Noting that the 2nd Ministerial Conference of the WTO takes place on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the multilateral trading system, we recall the noble objectives of the system of achieving higher living standards, and growth in production and trade in Member countries, according to their needs and different levels of economic development.
2. While acknowledging the system's contribution over the past 50 years to economic growth, we reaffirm the importance of a non-discriminatory, open, fair and equitable multilateral trading system (MTS). We recognize that the MTS presents many opportunities and challenges to developing countries. However, the declining share of African countries in international trade is a matter of grave concern. We also note with concern the continuing inequities in the distribution of benefits of the MTS among countries and regions. Consequently, we should reassess the performance of the system and our experiences in the last 50 years.
3. In particular, we bring to the 2nd Session of the WTO Ministerial Conference our heightened concern at the fact that our continent continues to be bypassed with regard to the benefits of the remarkable growth and greater global economic integration of recent years, and hence continues to experience marginalization from the

6. We commend the steps by several WTO Members, including the more advanced developing countries, in announcing autonomous market access offers to least-developed countries in the framework of the HLM on integrated initiatives for least-developed countries' trade development.

7. However, the market access offers that were made during the HLM were autonomous and non-contractual. Moreover, these offers require evaluation to determine the net effect on LDCs, individually and collectively.

8. We draw attention to the all but forgotten proposal of the Director-General of the WTO for duty-free treatment of products originating from LDCs. We urge the full implementation of this proposal. In this context, we welcome the report of the Director-General on the outcome of the HLM and follow-up to the integrated initiative.

9. Recalling that 33 out of the 48 least-developed countries are in Africa, we attach great importance to appropriate follow-up to the UNCTAD, WTO and ITC integrated initiative, including the provision of adequate budgetary and extra-budgetary financial resources for this purpose.

10. We further call for the following:

- The extension of the results of the HLM and the integrated initiative to all African countries;
- the provision of focused technical assistance to help African countries overcome their difficulties in implementing their obligations and exercising their rights in terms of the WTO Agreement;
- increased market access in areas of specific export interest to African countries; and
- measures to deal decisively with country-specific situations including - small and remote island economies, land-locked economies, low-income indebted countries and subregional constraints to supply response to improved market access.

11. We reaffirm our commitment to the achievement of the universality of the MTS as soon as possible. The rapid accession of countries seeking to become WTO members through a transparent

15. Whilst remaining committed to implementing our multilateral trade obligations, we underscore the difficulties we face in effecting the adjustments to our economies and policies required by these obligations. In particular, the institutions and human resources for trade administration in our countries have been severely stretched by the demands of implementing our obligations and exercising our rights in the multilateral trading system.

16. We are particularly concerned that the implementation of many of the vital provisions in favour of developing and least-developed countries in the various Agreements and Ministerial Decisions embodied in the Final Act of the Uruguay Round - such as the Decision on Measures concerning the Possible Negative Effects of the Reform Programme on Least-Developed and Net-Food Importing Developing Countries are either slow or remain to be effected.

17. We are equally concerned at the abuse of trade measures in such areas as anti-dumping, technical barriers, sanitary

25. We note that we meet at a time when the economies of a number of WTO Members are experiencing difficulties due to volatilities in financial and capital markets. This development, in addition to the persistence of the foreign debt problem and instabilities in commodity markets which continue to hamper stable and sustained growth in our economies, underscores the continued shortcomings in the global economy.

26. This underscores the imperative to give impetus to the