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BURUNDI

Statement Circulated by H.E. Mr Grégoire Banyivezako,
Minister for Trade, Industry and Tourism

and the The Republic of Burundi would like to express its warmest congratulations to the World Trade Organization on the 50th Anniversary of the signing of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade.

On the occasion of the Second WTO Ministerial Conference, Burundi wishes to make a few proposals for inclusion in the Organization's future work programme.

The proclaimed objective of the multilateral trading system has always been to raise the standard of living of the peoples of the world through increased trade, improved incomes and creation of more jobs. A quick evaluation of the 50-year-old multilateral trading system shows that the main objective is far from being reached in many countries of the world. The measures taken to help these countries achieve this objective with the introduction of Part IV of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and the conclusion of the Agreement Establishing the WTO have not produced the desired results.

Additional and substantial measures need to be taken to help developing countries in faced. The measures taken to assist these countries should give due priority to a global approach with respect to their development needs, encompassing increased domestic and external supply, marketing, strengthening of human resources and national institutional frameworks.

To this end, a multilateral work plan should be drawn up with the aim of solving all developmental problems, i.e. external debt, government development assistance, investment, transfer of technology and know-how and the cultural and political specifics of each country.

If no steps are taken in this direction and poor countries continue to be marginalized at the current rate, then we need to fear the outbreak of social unrest in the poor regions, which might call into question the achievements of the current multilateral trading system.

Burundi, a Member of both the UN and the WTO, has been a victim, since 1996, of a complete economic blockade on the part of some of its neighbours.

Yet, Burundi is neither guilty of any international breach within the meaning of the UN Charter, nor responsible for any violation within the meaning of the WTO Agreement. This blockade has brought to nought all the Burundi Government's efforts to achieve the objectives and ideals set forth in the UN Charter and the WTO Agreement. Indeed, the people of Burundi are no longer able to enjoy their

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basic rights, such as the right to food, health, education, employment, freedom of movement and establishment, etc.

The countries responsible for the economic blockade, which they wrongly term economic sanctions, justify the blockade as being their reaction to the change of government in Burundi in July 1996. Now, the aim of this change in government was to preserve the most basic human right, i.e. the right to life, which the genocide tolerated by the previous regime violated on a massive scale.

The countries behind this economic blockade believe that their action will help the Burundi people to solve their domestic problems.

The Burundi Government wishes it to be perfectly clear that the blockade cannot constitute a remedy to Burundi's domestic problems insofar as it denies the Burundi people enjoyment of their basic human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to life.

Worse yet, this blockade contributes to wrongfully enriching a privileged few in these countries while their own populations are totally deprived, as what little trading existed has now become impossible.

This is why Burundi makes an urgent appeal to neighbouring countries which are still applying this blockade to rethink their position. In so doing, they will contribute to the restoration of stability in Burundi and in the African Great Lakes subregion.
