

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

RESTRICTED

WT/COMTD/LLDC/W/8

3 July 1997

(97-2789)

**Sub-Committee on Least-Developed Countries
Preparatory Session of the High-Level Meeting**

Original: English

STATEMENT BY ZAMBIA AT THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE
HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON INTEGRATED INITIATIVES FOR
LEAST-DEVELOPED COUNTRIES' TRADE DEVELOPMENT

I am delighted to note the progress that has been achieved to prepare for the High-Level Meeting in October 1997. However, having listened carefully to the other speakers, I have no doubt in my mind that many outstanding issues would continuously come up for further discussion and clarification as we push the process forward.

The reason for this consultative process is primarily driven by the complex nature of the issues to be handled during the October meeting, that would include the subjects of market access, and enhancing the supply capacity of the LDCs.

In paragraph 5 of the Singapore Ministerial Declaration the Ministers expressed concern that certain LDCs risked marginalization in the process of liberalization and globalization, and called for greater coherence in international economic policy-making for improved co-ordination between the WTO and other agencies in providing technical assistance.

The High-Level Meeting should, therefore, be seen in the context of the Plan of Action for LDCs, designed attenuate the economic decline of LDCs through measures such as duty-free access on an autonomous basis so as to improve their overall capacity to respond to the opportunities offered by the trading system.

I would like to believe that the High-Level Meeting should, therefore, seek among other things, to actualize the ideals of the Plan of Action for LDCs, and that is to assist these countries to expand and diversify their exports, including the creation of an enabling environment for investment.

The recognition of the process of globalization, and the need for the LDCs to adapt to this process, and not to resist the process, should be central to the results of the Conference. Hence, the packaging of technical assistance and autonomous market access initiatives should essentially lead to the adaptation and integration of these countries into the world trading system.

During the early stages of our preparations it was deemed efficient that the beneficiary countries take the initiative to prepare their needs for trade-related technical assistance, however, it was quickly realized that some of the countries did not have the institutional capacity to carry out such assessments.

It is good news, for that reason, to hear that the various cooperating institutions will assist in the preparations of individual assessments before October. The results of these preparations would determine, I believe, the quality of the roundtables.

Furthermore, considering that the High-Level Meeting derives from the Action Plan for LDCs, implies that the results or the package from the meeting should be applicable to as many LDCs as possible, especially those that have demonstrated their capacity to take the initiative. Therefore, the none participation of any individual LDC should be limited to the country's inability to absorb trade-related technical assistance or the anticipated autonomous market access provisions and not through a predetermined exclusionary process.

The logic to this perception is that the marginalization of LDCs in the global economy is intrinsically linked to their economic condition as they attempt to respond to the dynamic imperative of globalization and, therefore, the packaging of the anticipated results should be to arrest the decline of these countries in global terms. Because if we opt for a two-track approach the LDCs that are left out now will continue to decline. A good example is the existing ITC/WTO/UNCTAD integrated technical assistance programme for Africa, which is already in its second year with no sign for the second stage of the programme (new countries).

It is important to not that four African LDCs are already in this programme, and likely to be roundtabled in October. I suppose the notion of balance should be considered for the countries who are not included in this programme.