

General Council
9-11 December 1998

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**STATEMENT BY EGYPT ON STATE OF PLAY
IN ACCESSION WORKING PARTIES AT THE
GENERAL COUNCIL ON
9-11 DECEMBER 1998**

The following statement made by Egypt at the General Council meeting is circulated to Members at the request of that delegation.

Egypt has requested the inclusion of this item on the agenda to address one of the issues which have recently witnessed some deviation from what was agreed upon under the Marrakesh Agreement establishing the WTO.

Under the WTO Agreement, accession should be governed by a non-discriminatory, transparent and predictable process. However, our examination of the current accession process of 32 applicants, the majority of which are developing countries, leads us to conclude that the process is extremely difficult for most of these countries, particularly for developing countries.

On the basis of briefing provided to us by various applicants bilaterally in the informal meetings of developing countries or in working parties, we realized that unreasonable conditions are being imposed on most of the applicants. Some Members have requested acceding countries in their accession working parties to accept more stringent conditions and higher levels of commitments than it was required from current WTO Members, including the adherence to certain plurilateral agreements as a prior condition for their accession. Moreover, acceding developing countries are being asked to forego special and differential provisions that they would have normally been entitled to enjoy.

In this regard, the delegation of Egypt stresses that any applicant for the accession to the WTO Agreement should only be bound to the multilateral agreements resulting from the Uruguay Round within the framework of the single undertaking. The only difference in this regard should be limited to market-access commitments that are governed by bilateral negotiations.

Moreover, the applicants from developing countries should benefit from all the provisions reserved for developing countries in the various WTO agreements including the transitional periods granted to developing countries in this regard.

Furthermore, it is recalled that Article XII:3 of the Marrakesh Agreement establishing the WTO states the following, and I quote, "Accession to Plurilateral Trade Agreement shall be governed by the provisions of that Agreement". This clearly indicates that adherence to the plurilateral agreements within the WTO does not represent a precondition for any applicant to accede to the WTO Agreement. Delegations which continue to require the acceding countries to adhere to these

agreements should refrain from doing so. This represents a non-discriminatory treatment which is consistent with one of the basic principles of the multilateral trading system.

According to paragraph 8 of the Singapore Ministerial Declaration which stated that Members of the WTO will work to bring the applicants of countries wishing to accede to the organization expeditiously into the WTO system, and paragraph 7 of the Declaration of the Second Ministerial Conference held in Geneva in May 1998 which welcomed the progress made with the applicants currently negotiating their accession and called for the proceeding in the accession process as rapidly as possible, it is understood that WTO Members should assume their responsibilities in achieving this objective. Standards should be the same in examining the trade regimes of applicant countries wishing to accede to the WTO Agreement. Excessive demands should not be imposed and difficulties should not be created in achieving this objective. Through a consistent, non-discriminatory and fair manner, the work of all the working parties of the applicants should be accelerated, thus contributing to the universality of the multilateral trading system and the enhancement of the credibility of the WTO. Additional technical assistance should be earmarked by WTO to developing countries in the process of accession in order to enable them to proceed expeditiously in the accession negotiation to be full Member of WTO.
