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MADAGASCAR

Statement by H.E. Mr. Alphonse Randrianambinina Minister of Commerce and Consumer Affairs

It is a great privilege for me and my delegation to take part in this Third Ministerial Conference of the WTO.

I should like to convey to you my sincere congratulations on your election to the chair of this Conference. My delegation is convinced that your competence and professionalism will make an effective and fruitful contribution to the success of our work.

I should also like to express my warm thanks to the people and Government authorities of the United States of America for their hospitality and for the excellent organization of the meeting.

Madagascar has been a Member of the WTO since 17 January 1995 and has constantly shown its political determination to play an active role in the multilateral trading system and to participate fully in its functioning. Since it joined the WTO, Madagascar has made great efforts, respecting its global and specific commitments. Nevertheless, much remains to be done, in particular the gradual adoption of domestic laws that comply with the WTO's rules and disciplines.

My delegation is of the view that the Third Ministerial Conference of the WTO should convey to the world as a whole an encouraging and optimistic message reaffirming the confidence of all Members in the multilateral trading system.

It is convinced of the need to improve the system unremittingly so as to help Members become better prepared to face the challenges of the new millennium. It is not opposed to the initiation of negotiations, but considers that if development issues are not treated in a decisive and satisfactory manner with a view to an equitable sharing of the advantages of trade liberalization and proper recognition of the special and differential treatment in favour of developing countries, we should not be in too much haste to assume new commitments.

My delegation attaches high priority to the implementation of existing agreements and decisions, which have not been applied in a fair and balanced manner. The results achieved so far have not met the expectations of developing countries.

As globalization progresses, the gap between rich and poor countries and the marginalization of developing countries, especially the least developed among them, has become even wider.

To show our concerns, it is useful to stress that at present we are seeing:

- A reduction of the share of developing countries, particularly least-developed countries, in world trade;

- A decrease in official development aid, even though it is the major source of financial resources to offset the lack of foreign direct investment;
- The drying up of private capital;
- Fewer basic resources for intergovernmental organizations carrying out cooperation programmes to help poor countries.

The debt burden is a very serious handicap, taking up the resources available. My delegation welcomes the important measures taken, but considers that however notable and numerous they may be, they have not yet come up to our expectations. My delegation is firmly convinced that international cooperation would be strengthened by more far-reaching action such as the straightforward cancellation of the debt of the least-developed countries.

The difficulties faced by developing countries in implementing the agreements, whether the adoption of domestic legislation, notifications, supply constraints, the absence or inadequacy of financial support and infrastructure measures, the unsatisfactory application of special and differential treatment or the commitments made on assistance, etc., call for the adoption of a number of urgent measures at Seattle, including the following:

- Consolidated access to markets, free of duty and quotas, for all products exported by the least-developed countries as from 1 January 2000;
- The accession of least-developed countries to the WTO on a preferential and accelerated basis;
- Large-scale and predictable financing of technical cooperation under the regular budget as from the year 2000, while at the same time maintaining and encouraging extrabudgetary contributions;
- The improvement and effective and rapid application of the trade-related integrated technical assistance framework in favour of the least-developed countries;
- Putting into effect the special and differential treatment in favour of developing countries by extending the transitional periods and simplifying the notification formalities.

My delegation also supports the establishment of a WTO working group to consider the relationship among trade, development and the debt, together with the contribution the WTO could make to solving the debt problems of developing and least-developed countries.

In conclusion, at the dawn of the new millennium, the Ministerial Conference should provide the opportunity to reaffirm our collective commitment to strengthening international solidarity and cooperation, otherwise the danger of a rupture between the developed countries and those that are not developed will increase to the detriment of a truly balanced partnership that allows each partner to derive real benefits from liberalization and globalization with a human face, which we eagerly seek.
