

# PRESS RELEASE

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## WTO ADOPTS WORK PROGRAMME FOR LDCS

The World Trade Organization's Sub-Committee on Least-Developed Countries agreed yesterday (12 February 2002) on a work programme for least-developed countries. The work programme, based on instructions from the Doha Ministerial Declaration, will support LDCs' efforts to accelerate their trade development.

"I welcome the adoption of the work programme for the LDCs," said Mike Moore, WTO Director-General. "In the Doha Development Agenda, it was clear that the meaningful integration into the Multilateral Trading System and the global economy of the LDCs, the non-residents and other capacity constrained countries, is the greatest challenge that faces the WTO. The adoption of this work programme sends a powerful and positive message from the Membership of the WTO that the Doha Development Agenda was not just words but that we intend to implement it seriously."

The work program contains seven broad elements:

- (1) **Market access for LDCs:** Trade can be a powerful factor for growth and poverty reduction in LDCs. Improved market access is therefore important and will depend on all WTO Members who can give better access;
- (2) **Trade-related technical assistance and capacity building initiatives for LDCs:** The Doha Declaration establishes a firm basis for increased and targeted assistance for LDCs to enable them to participate fully in the WTO;
- (3) **Providing, as appropriate, support to agencies assisting with the diversification of LDCs' production and export base:** Measures taken within the mandate of the WTO in support of Agencies assisting to enhance LDCs' trading capacity are needed to address supply constraints and make full use of the improvements in access opportunities;
- (4) **Mainstreaming, as appropriate, trade-related elements of the LDC-III Programme of Action:** Follow-up is needed to take account of the commitments made in May 2001, in Brussels, at the Third UN Conference on LDCs;
- (5) **Participation of LDCs in the Multilateral Trading System:** Work in the WTO has to be further responsive to the needs and particular constraints faced by the LDCs.

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Many LDCs are also non-residents or have capacity-constrained missions. Measures taken to increase their participation are therefore important;

- (6) **Accession of LDCs to the WTO:** Only 30 of the 49 LDCs are currently Members of the WTO. In the Doha Declaration, Ministers have called for measures to "facilitate and accelerate" LDCs accession to the WTO. Nine LDCs are currently at various stages of their accession process and work should be focused on supporting these acceding countries; and
- (7) **Follow-up to WTO Ministerial Decisions/Declarations:** action and follow-up is required to take account of the commitments made in Ministerial Decisions/Declarations.

END