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LESOTHO

Statement by the Honourable Mpho Meli Malie
Minister of Trade, Industry and Marketing

Allow me on behalf of the Government and people of the Kingdom of Lesotho, and on my own behalf, to express our appreciation for the kind hospitality graciously afforded us by the Government of the Republic of Mexico. The facilities afforded delegations surely immensely contribute to our discussions on substantive matters.

Cognizant of Article IV(2) of the Marrakesh Agreement establishing the World Trade Organization (WTO), which quoted in part, reads, "In the intervals between meetings of the Ministerial Conference, its functions shall be conducted by the General Council". We wish to emphasize the importance with which we view instructions of the Ministerial Conference. At the Fourth Session of the Ministerial Conference held in Doha, Qatar, specific work was mandated to various bodies of the WTO, with specific time-frames for that work to be completed. To our grave disappointment the time-frames were not adhered to. This trend is unacceptable.

We welcome the Decision of the General Council, upon recommendation of the Council for TRIPS, of 30 August 2003, pursuant to the mandate contained in paragraph 6 of the Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health. Further, we welcome the Chairman of the General Council's statement accompanying the Decision. For potential beneficiary countries like mine, this milestone decision was long overdue, especially because the work mandated in the Declaration to the Council for TRIPS was due to have been completed before the end of December 2002.

This Decision will go a long way in addressing our public health problems, in particular, pandemics such as HIV and AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. However, it is prudent to mention that the decision is temporary in nature. According to paragraph 11 of the Decision, the TRIPS Council should by the end of 2003, initiate work on the preparation of an amendment to the TRIPS Agreement, with a view to its adoption within six months. We earnestly hope that the time-frames contained in this Decision will be adhered to.

The Doha Development Agenda is a round of multilateral trade negotiations aimed at primarily, promoting economic development and poverty eradication in developing and least-developed WTO Members. As a result, the negotiation of negotiating modalities for agriculture is of paramount importance to us as agriculture is at the cornerstone of our economic development. The negotiations per the Doha Mandate as contained in the Doha Ministerial Declaration should be aimed at substantial improvements in market access; reductions of, with a view to phasing out, all forms of export subsidies; and substantial reductions in trade-distorting domestic support. These modalities for further commitments, including provisions for special and differential treatment, were to be established no later than 31 March 2003.

To this day, these modalities have not been established. We find attached to the revised Draft Cancun Ministerial Text what is termed a framework for establishing modalities in agriculture. The level of ambition in terms of the heading of the text is far below the Doha Mandate. Further, the level of ambition in the contents of the text calls for enhancement. However, we wish to welcome the efforts of various conglomerations of delegations in coming up with papers aimed at nudging the process forward.

Finally, with regard to agriculture, paragraph 4 of the above-mentioned Annex is a watered down version of what was contained in the revised Harbinson text for Least-Developed Country (LDC) Members. This is surprising as we were under the impression that the revised Harbinson text was acceptable in as far as it referred to LDCs.

The Doha Mandate with regard to Non-Agricultural Market Access (NAMA) was to enter into negotiations, by modalities agreed to, which shall aim to reduce or as appropriate eliminate tariffs, including the elimination of tariff peaks, high tariffs, and tariff escalation, as well as non-tariff barriers, in particular on products of export interest to developing countries. This area is of particular importance to my country, as we have a fledgling industrial sector, particularly in the textiles and clothing area. We are impressed with the progress in developing negotiating modalities for NAMA. The Annex B of the revised Draft Cancun Ministerial Text is largely acceptable.

In this context, we would also want to appreciate unilateral market access initiatives such as those offered by the United States, European Union, Canada and Australia, especially in as far as they refer to the LDCs.

The Doha Mandate on trade in services was that negotiations shall be conducted with a view to promoting the economic growth of all trading partners and the development of developing and least-developed countries. The progress in these negotiations is fine save that deadlines for initial requests for specific commitments and for initial offers, 30 June 2002 and 31 March 2003 respectively, were not strictly adhered to. We eagerly look forward to agreed modalities for the special and differential treatment of LDCs.

The Doha Mandate on special and differential (S&D) treatment was that all S&D provisions should be reviewed with a view of making them more precise, effective and operational. The Mandate in paragraph 44 of the Doha Declaration read with paragraph 12 of the Doha Declaration on Implementation Related Issues and Concerns fall squarely within the ambit of the Committee on Trade and Development. Work in this regard is proliferating to various WTO bodies. This is an issue of concern to delegations that are thin on the ground in Geneva like ours. We are unable to follow the issues in all bodies but would be able to follow them in the Special Session of the Committee on Trade and Development.

We are disappointed by the fact that the proposals around which there seems to be a convergence of views have very little if any economic value for the intended beneficiary countries.

We wish to welcome the Director-General's report on issues affecting LDCs. The integration of LDCs into the multilateral trading system is important if the multilateral system is to succeed and for the LDCs to be able to reap benefits of participating in it. Closely associated with this, is the simplification of accession procedures for LDCs, in this regard we welcome the Decision of the General Council of 10 December 2002.

We welcome the efforts of the WTO Secretariat with regard to trade-related technical assistance. My country was and is still beneficiary to this technical assistance. We also welcome the setting up by the Director-General of the Doha Development Agenda Trust Fund, and urge continued, and increased contributions thereto. The general comment would be that there should be close coordination with recipient countries on the areas and form of assistance to be provided. In order for

technical cooperation's relevance to be enhanced, the increased involvement of local consultations and regional trade organizations must be encouraged.

As we recall with profound sadness, the unfortunate events of 11 September 2001, allow me to reaffirm the commitment of the Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho to the fight against terrorism.

In conclusion I wish to reiterate my Government's unwavering support to the rules-based multilateral trading system and the completion of the Doha Round before the 1 January 2005.
