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UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Statement Circulated by H.E. Mr Fahim bin Sultan Al-Qasimi
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The Fourth Ministerial Conference, in Doha, is an opportunity to assess the achievements of the Organization's first six years. Though the implementation of many WTO Agreements has been satisfactory, there also have been cases where difficulties and concerns arose. In this regard, it is important to note that the implementation of some of the Agreements has caused serious concerns to developing countries, including difficulties, imbalances and inequities. We note, however, that the implementation issues have been exhaustively addressed in an intensive and dedicated process, and all WTO Members now understand how central this issue is for the credibility of the multilateral trading system.

We fully understand Members who stand ready to launch new and wide process of negotiations and we are conscious that the WTO is a forum of negotiations. However, we believe that developing countries must know where they stand in terms of implementation of the existing Agreements before to embark on further commitments. In addition to the implementation efforts, current negotiations on agriculture and services constitute a heavy agenda for many developing countries in which human resources present insufficiencies and constraints.

While noting the importance of the rule-based system, which is a central element of the multilateral trading system, it should be underlined that the special and differential treatment must remain an integral part of our legal system. Therefore additional efforts should be undertaken in order to make special and differential treatment provisions mandatory and operational. In this respect, it should be recognized that the major concern of the developing countries over the application of special and differential treatment is lack of clarity regarding the manner in which various S & D provisions should be implemented.

With regard to the "unfinished business" of the Uruguay Round, the UAE reaffirms its commitment to modernization and liberalization in all sectors currently under WTO Agreements. We continue to pursue the implementation of our market-access commitments as defined in our schedules and we continue also to pursue comprehensive and coherent legislative reform at the national level. At the same time we call for additional efforts aimed at reducing tariff peaks and tariff escalation, which continue to constitute serious obstacles for the exports and affect the diversification of the supply side of many developing countries.

The UAE accords a great importance to the protection of the environment and sustainable development. We support the work undertaken by the Committee on Trade and Environment, which serve the purpose of raising awareness on the synergies between trade liberalization and the promotion of sustainable development. We call for continuing this work and for further analysis on the relationship between trade liberalization and the Multilateral Agreements on Environment.

As for the social clause, the UAE has no difficulty whatsoever with the question of observance of core labour standards. We have subscribed to a substantial number of international labour conventions that deal with these very important issues. But we believe that the International Labour Organization, and not the WTO, is the appropriate forum to address the issue of compliance of core labour standards.

The United Arab Emirates notes with satisfaction the accession of new Members during the last two years and we congratulate particularly Oman and Jordan. The accession to the WTO of new Members is of great importance for the universality of the multilateral trading system. Therefore, the UAE calls on WTO Members to spare no effort for an easy accession of the candidates to the World Trade Organization and supports an early accession of Saudi Arabia.

With regard to the so-called new issues, the United Arab Emirates believes that the valuable work in the areas of investment and competition policy interrelations should continue in order for developing countries to get more awareness on these issues. We support the work undertaken in this respect by the working groups and we believe that further steps could be reached.

The United Arab Emirates supports the work programme undertaken by the WTO in the area of electronic commerce and we believe that the Members could adopt the status quo until next Conference regarding the levying of customs on electronic transactions.
