

GENERAL COUNCIL

Meeting held on 1 March 1999

*Concluding remarks by Ambassador A. Mchumo, Chairman of the General Council,
on the Appointment of the next Director-General*

In concluding this meeting at which we have had such a useful discussion, let me share with you my understanding and my vision of how we should now proceed on this important matter in this new phase which is beginning today.

As I stated in paragraph 4 of my earlier statement¹, while building on the wealth of information we already have, the consultations in this new phase and from now on, will need to be more intensely focussed on building the necessary consensus around the most acceptable candidate. Ambassador Rossier's report will no doubt provide a basis for candidates and Members for further reflection on their positions and to draw the necessary conclusions. However it is clear that if we maintain the same approach as before, we may continue to obtain the same pattern of results without necessarily achieving the clear consensus that we need for the new Director-General to be elected. It is for this reason that I reiterate what I have already indicated in my earlier statement that from now on we need more dynamic interactions among Members and between Members and Candidates so as to bring about new situations which will lead to consensus.

For Ambassador Rossier and myself, we shall be endeavouring to forge such consensus on the basis of a combination of objective factors, the most important of which are the following:

- (a) the strength of support in terms of first and second preferences for the candidates as indicated in the previous phase of consultations and as it continues to evolve in the process of further consultations;
- (b) the extent to which a candidate enjoys least opposition or what you might call the extent of "tolerance" that a candidate enjoys;
- (c) The extent of the geographical spread of a candidate's support.

We believe that none of the above factors alone will bring the consensus that we are seeking and that it has to be a judicious combination of all of these elements. Indeed, the consultative process of this new phase must enable us to firmly establish the tradition that for the election of the Director-General of the WTO, there is no recourse to a vote by all of us or a recourse to a veto by any of us. We should all work towards consensus – without a vote and without a veto.

As repeatedly indicated before, it is Members who will bring about that consensus, and Ambassador Rossier and myself are here to manage and facilitate the process. For that reason and as already indicated in my previous statement, we shall expect Members to come to us for any useful information and on our part we may need to call on some Members to provide further clarifications as

¹ WT/GC/17.

necessary to arrive at a consensus. In that regard Ambassador Rossier and I shall be available every day from tomorrow Tuesday, 2 March until Friday 5 March to receive any useful information that delegations may wish to proffer. The Secretariat will be ready to receive from delegations indications of their preferences of the time they may wish to see us and the venue will also be specified. It should be clear that delegations need only come to see us if they have new or extra information that may be useful in our search for consensus. At the same time, either during these coming four days or immediately after, we may contact some delegations to seek for further clarifications from them and we hope those delegations will continue to give us their maximum cooperation as in the past.

Finally, as already indicated in my previous statement, we shall be reporting to the General Council as frequently as feasible if significant developments towards consensus – be they positive or negative – become apparent. As we undertake these final consultations, Members will take into account our common desire to finish this matter as soon as possible and certainly before the end of March 1999.
