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**Ministerial Conference
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**STATEMENT BY H.E. MR JEAN-LUCIEN BUSSA TONGBA
MINISTER FOR FOREIGN TRADE**

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

This twice-postponed session of the Ministerial Conference of the body for regulating and promoting international trade is taking place in an unusual context, marked by the war in Ukraine and the COVID-19 pandemic, which are adversely affecting international trade.

Growing protectionism and new joint initiatives developing in parallel with ongoing negotiations, in addition to the issues on the current negotiating agenda, requires a proactive commitment by all parties to overcome the impasse in seeking solutions to the main issues, which should lead to the elimination of global trade distortions.

At this point, it is worth recalling the persistent lack of consensus in negotiations on crucial topics since Bali, Nairobi and Buenos Aires.

Negotiations on the development of global value chains, preferential market access for least developed countries, the removal of non-tariff barriers in all their forms, and the elimination of export subsidies for agricultural and fisheries products should lead to consensus on trade promotion mechanisms.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo trusts that the expert level negotiations, to be continued by Ministers during the present session, will lead to suitable and consensus-based solutions that strengthen our trade order, in which the practice of free trade is guaranteed by fair, transparent, non-discriminatory and predictable rules, driving the growth of all economies, of developed, developing and least developed countries alike.

I take this opportunity to emphasize that my country supports the statements made by the representatives of the negotiating groups to which it belongs, and these statements constitute the positions that it defends in the negotiations.

A further issue of concern to me is the negotiating capacity of Members whose development levels and financial means vary.

For the sake of solidarity, I wonder whether now would be a good time for us to consider a solidarity mechanism beyond flexibilities in the rules that would facilitate the operation of permanent representations in Geneva and ease the contribution burden for LDCs in general, especially for those in Africa.

Indeed, this system, which the Democratic Republic of the Congo joined as an original Member, has aroused and continues to arouse interest in my country given the widely recognized advantages of the WTO, including: contributing to the maintenance of peace, peaceful and constructive dispute settlement, reducing living costs through trade liberalization, a wider product range on the market, increased income, and protecting governments against pressure.

To conclude, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is participating in the **Twelfth Ministerial Conference** with the firm intention of contributing, alongside the other Member countries, to the consolidation of the multilateral trading system and to the success of this session, with much stronger outcomes than previous sessions and brought to a close with a **Ministerial Declaration**.