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**Ministerial Conference
Thirteenth Session
Abu Dhabi, 26-29 February 2024**

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**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT ADOPTED AT THE FIRST MINISTERIAL MEETING OF THE
INFORMAL GROUP OF ACCEDING GOVERNMENTS (IGAG)**

ABU DHABI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES, 26 FEBRUARY 2024

Revision

The following communication, dated 26 February 2024, is being circulated at the request of the delegation of Uzbekistan on behalf of the Informal Group of Acceding Governments (IGAG).

We, the Ministers and Heads of Delegations of the Informal Group of Acceding Governments, issue this statement at the 13th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC13):

Recognizing the importance of the Informal Group of Acceding Governments (IGAG), established in March 2018, as a platform for knowledge, experience-sharing and coordination among acceding governments, as well as for dissemination of information on the latest state of play in different areas of work of the WTO;

Noting that the accession process has become lengthy and burdensome for acceding governments;

Recognizing that the majority of currently acceding governments are least-developed countries (LDCs) and/or fragile and conflict-affected states (FCS) which face serious challenges, and capacity and resource constraints in accession negotiations;

Emphasizing the key role of targeted technical assistance in advancing accession negotiations and ensuring that recently acceded Members can be effective participants in the WTO, including in the immediate post-accession phase, particularly LDCs and FCS:

1. *Welcome* the signing of the protocols of accession of two LDC and FCS Members, Comoros and Timor-Leste, which will contribute to achieving the overarching goal of WTO universality;
2. *Reaffirm* our commitment to joining the WTO and to the principles of openness and transparency, universality, and non-discrimination of the rules-based multilateral trading system;
3. *Urge* WTO Members to uphold the principles of rules-based multilateral trading system in the accession of the acceding governments;
4. *Urge* WTO Members and development partners to enhance the provision of coordinated and targeted technical assistance and capacity building to acceding governments, including through the strengthening of the role of the Coordination Group on Accessions-related Technical Assistance and the establishment of an accession-specific trust fund to support acceding governments' technical assistance needs;
5. *Call* on WTO Members to facilitate the conclusion of ongoing accessions on a non-discriminatory basis, including those of LDCs in line with the LDC Accession Guidelines (WT/L/508 and Addendum 1);

6. *Call* on WTO Members to give consideration to reviewing the procedures for the accession process as part of the WTO Reform discussion under the auspices of the General Council, with a view to streamlining, facilitating, and simplifying accession while ensuring the principles of rules-based multilateral trading system. We request the Group of Article XII Members to work with the IGAG in this regard;

7. *Urge* the WTO Secretariat to step up post-accession support to new Members, to ensure effective and full implementation of WTO accession-specific commitments, particularly in the context of LDC accessions;

8. *Call* on WTO Members to support measures to acceding Governments recently graduated from the LDC category. These measures can be the list of special LDC provisions in WTO agreements and related decisions and considered as part of the smooth transition strategy for LDCs;

9. *Commend* the Director-General for supporting the IGAG members and the valuable activities of the WTO Secretariat in providing technical assistance in its different forms and request for continued support of such activities;

10. *Welcome* the Director-General's country-specific approach and her personal engagement in accession files.
