

African Group Statement Delivered by H.E. Nkopane Monyane Under Agenda Item 1 of the Meeting of the General Council 24th-25th July 2014

Thank you Mr Chairman for giving me the floor. Allow me to also thank the Director General for his illuminating report. I am delivering this intervention on behalf of the African Group. Allow me to further pay my respect to Minister Axel Addy of Liberia who is here with us today.

At the outset the African Group requests that the statements delivered, during the last TNC meeting and on the launch of the WTO's Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility two days ago, be included in the record of today's meeting. The African Group endorses the statements delivered by Uganda for the LDCs Group and Kenya for the ACP Group.

Turning to the substance of my intervention, the African Group would like share a number of its longstanding reflections with Members.

1. **The first point is that the `Development Dimension` must be at the heart of every negotiated outcome.** In this context, the launch of the Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility marked a recognition by the WTO of its share of responsibility, in particular, in following up on the implementation of the negotiated outcomes for the benefit of Developing Countries and LDCs. This is a welcome step particularly because it does not only respond to the call by Malabo Summit of the African Union for clear funding mechanisms, but also because it integrates development dimension into the heart of WTO's work.

Nevertheless, it is with great concern to note that since the inception of the DDA the prominence of development dimension has been gradually fading away with each passing WTO Ministerial Conference. The recent post MC8 oscillation of LDCs issues from being at the Centre of negotiated outcomes to being at the periphery of Members' priorities bears testimony to this fact. A paradigm shift is therefore necessary with a view to ensuring that the development dimension is brought back to the center of negotiations and that it underlies every negotiated outcome for the benefit of developing and LDCs Members, particularly the African Countries. In this regard, development is a baton that must be carried through and not be dropped along the race.

2. **The second point is that the mandate for the DDA negotiations must be fully respected and implemented.** For the African Group, the Doha Ministerial Declaration remains the custodian of both the guiding principles on the conduct of DDA negotiations and the share responsibilities to be shouldered by Members. Once again, the Group cautions against attempts to rewrite the Doha Ministerial Declaration under the guise of developing a DDA work program. The work program must be characterized by the principles of less than full reciprocity, special and differential treatment and single undertaking. These principles must remain indelible in as long as the Doha Ministerial Declaration continues to subsist.
3. **The third point is that the 2008 texts, in particular Rev. 4 of the Agriculture Modalities and Rev. 3 NAMA Modalities must be the basis for the negotiations.** On this score, the African Group joins the majority of the Members who share this position; needless to say, the Group is not in denial of the negotiation gaps that exist amongst Members. It will be inconceivable to expect a changed position in the absence of credible and convincing alternatives by Members who have questioned the validity and legitimacy of both Rev. 4 and Rev.3 texts. That said, the African Group took note of ideas flagged by some Members albeit leaving a lot to be desired owing to clear deficiency of concrete details and justification on what is being proposed. On the surface, these ideas raise some concerns as they seem to point to a low ambition outcome of the DDA negotiations. Some imply changing the rules of engagement on which market access negotiations and other pillars of negotiations have long been premised since the GATT days. The priority of the Group in this context is that the flexibilities captured in the 2008 texts must be fully preserved.

4. **The fourth point is that full priority must be given to Bali Outcomes where binding outcomes were not achieved.** Once again the African Group takes this opportunity to sound a clarion call to all Members to translate the commitment by Ministers in Bali into constructive engagement on non-binding Bali outcomes. The Group welcomes the submission by LDCs Group on Services Waiver Collective and entreats all Members to respond positively and meaningfully to this ground breaking initiative by the LDCs Group. By the same token, the need for a positive and meaningful response to other non-binding issues of interest to developing countries cannot be overemphasized.
5. **The fifth point is that forum Shifting remains a concern particularly to the extent that the DDA negotiations will be compromised.** This is still a grey area, yet it is clear that mega RTAs and plurilateral negotiations undertaken outside the DDA framework will inevitably have an impact on the DDA negotiations. Developments in these areas need to be monitored quite closely.
6. **The sixth point is that the integrity of the WTO as a forum for principles based negotiation must be preserved.** At every turn of negotiations it must be ensured that there is full inclusiveness and transparency. Falling short of this, suspicion and lack of faith in the consultation process will be the order of the day. We must therefore avoid preemption of negotiations at all costs; ensure that outcomes are fully negotiated and based on consensus. Adhering to these principles will be sine qua non to guaranteeing that every Member mirrors herself in the negotiated outcomes.
7. Last but not least, it should not elude us that international trading landscape is riddled with a specter of market imperfections some of which have been codified in the architecture of international trade rules. It is in this context that our Ministers judged it prudent that the DDA negotiations must result in overreaching reforms that will level the playing field, particularly in the area of agriculture. The existence of Non-Tariff Barriers is an area that is rendering securement of a significant market share in international trade by developing and LDC Members a red herring. An outcome in this area will go a long way in ensuring profitable participation by African Countries in international trade.

On another note, Chair, the African Group welcomes Yemen into the WTO family. It is with great pleasure to see Yemen finally taking up its rightful seat, following a long and difficult accession process. We further wish to welcome all colleague Ambassadors who have recently joined us in Geneva as well as wishing well all colleagues who will be leaving us shortly.

I thank you for your attention.