

**STATEMENT BY DDG AGAH TO THE  
8<sup>TH</sup> ORDINARY SESSION OF THE AFRICAN UNION MINISTERS OF  
TRADE  
24 OCTOBER 2013**

Mr. Kebede Chane, Minister of Trade of the Republic of Ethiopia;

Madame Fatima Haram Acyl, Honourable Commissioner for Trade of the African Union;

Mr. Carlos Lopez, Executive Secretary of UNECA;

Dr. Mukhisa Kituyi, Secretary General of UNCTAD;

Madame Arancha Gonzalez, Executive Director of ITC;

Honourable Ministers of Trade;

Distinguished Ambassadors;

Delegates.

It gives me great pleasure to address the 8<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the Conference of African Union Ministers of Trade.

I am here today representing the Director-General of the WTO, Roberto Azevedo- who has been unable to participate in this meeting. This has been communicated to the AU Commissioner, Madame Acyl. Before I start with my formal statement, allow me to deliver, at the request of DG Azevêdo, a special message to you. It reads as follows:

**SPECIAL MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR GENERAL**

Honourable Ministers,

Please accept my sincere apologies that I cannot be with you today. As you know, negotiations towards an agreement for the 9<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference of the WTO are reaching a crucial stage. So instead of joining you today in Addis Ababa, I am working for you day and night here in Geneva; doing everything I can to achieve a successful outcome for Bali which has Africa's interests at its heart.

There are significant development issues on the table, which recognise the needs of developing countries and of the least developed countries. But I believe what is truly at stake here is not contained in the articles and declarations of whatever is decided in Bali. What is at stake is the future of the WTO and the future of the multilateral trading system itself.

I believe that this system serves you. Developing nations stand to gain the most from the multilateral trading system, and smaller nations, which have fewer options open to them, are particularly at risk if the system fails. So it is vital that we make it work. We have to make sure that the system can deliver for you.

Turning again to Bali, I want to echo the Director-General's message – success will depend on convergence and, therefore, on political will.

Let me now spend a few moments on the issues that WTO Members are dealing with for Bali.

On **Agriculture**, Members are working on ways to enable developing countries to respond to their food security needs.

I know that the need to preserve food security and the interests of Net Food Importing Developing Countries are central to the African Group's priorities.

The G-33 - of which some African Group Members are also a part - has led this discussion - and the parameters for a solution are developing.

Members are zeroing-in on what can be termed a "due restraint" solution - which will, on an interim basis, allow them to meet their food security needs, as the broader negotiations on agricultural reform continue.

I am aware that you have a deep interest in the longer term solution. But the logic of banking this solution now is compelling. We can then look towards a longer term solution, which I believe many Members are prioritizing for post-Bali work.

Members are also seeking to improve the administration of tariff rate quotas – which, we must recall, are a core tool in managing global agriculture trade.

In addition, Members are tackling issues around the 2005 Hong Kong Ministerial Decision to eliminate export subsidies by 2013.

The African Group has traditionally been an ardent supporter of agriculture reform and, in particular, of eliminating export subsidies to give a fairer chance to producers to compete.

I urge you to support this work, so that we can lay the foundation for a broader discussion that can hopefully address this issue in a more sustainable manner post-Bali.

Let me now turn to **Trade Facilitation**.

As you know, the numerous behind-the-border measures, bureaucratic hurdles, customs procedures, formalities and unclear rules governing various aspects of trade represent some of the key barriers to international trade.

Indeed, they are also identified as key stumbling blocks for priority action in the African Union's Action plan for boosting intra-African trade. A WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement is widely seen as positive in locking in the much needed reforms that will, over time, improve trade efficiency of all WTO Members.

I know you are concerned that the proposed Trade Facilitation Agreement should be internally balanced. And I urge you to engage on what a pragmatic solution might look like.



The fact that deliberations in the Monitoring Mechanism could result in recommendations, including for opening negotiations on S&D provisions, is important- giving you an avenue to correct inadequacies where they are found.

Finally, regarding the **LDC package**, Members are in the closing stages of considering the rules of origin proposal which sets guidelines to preference grantors that can be used in preferential market access to LDCs.

LDCs have also tabled their proposal on implementing the services waiver which details a post-Bali process that will kick-start the implementation process.

We have also been consulting on other issues like duty-free and quota-free market access and I am hopeful that we can have a result which adds value. I would encourage the Cotton 4 to make haste in sharing their positions with Members.

So that is where we stand today.

I know I do not need to reiterate the importance of this package or the urgency of the task at hand.

But let me repeat this point – the post-Bali agenda, which we all want to talk about, would be lost without Bali itself. We have to make this work.

Success in Bali is critically important in allowing the WTO to once again take its place at the centre of the world stage, managing global economic stability through setting and developing global trade rules.

We all know the alternative; regional trade pacts. But you would agree with me that a multilateral approach holds wider benefits for all. I believe that the interests of African countries are far better served by the multilateral trading system.

So we need a strong WTO, and an urgent step in ensuring this happens- is a successful outcome in Bali.

To conclude, Honourable Ministers, I urge you to throw your weight behind the success of Bali. The Director-General has written to all of you, seeking your political support for success in Bali. I am confident that you will respond positively to this call.

Thank you.