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Revision

My delegation much appreciates the opportunity to participate in the work of this First Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization, particularly as it is being held in Singapore, a country which offers the world an example of an enterprising people that prizes liberalism and open trade.

I would therefore like to thank our hosts for their warm welcome and excellent Conference organization.

May I also pass on to His Excellency the President of the Republic of Singapore, to its Government and to the people of this beautiful country the fraternal greetings of His Excellency President Abdou Diouf, President of the Republic of Senegal, his Government and the entire Senegalese people.

We can, I am sure, all agree that so far our experience of the functioning of the WTO has been rewarding and justifies an optimistic view of the future of the multilateral trading system.

Indeed, the two years since our Organization was established have been marked by the growth of trade liberalization and increasing recourse to the multilateral dispute settlement mechanism.

Senegal welcomes these important trends.

Like several other developing countries, Senegal has taken advantage of these last two years to undertake, in numerous sectors, an overhaul of its institutional framework, adapting it to the provisions of the Agreements signed at Marrakesh.

I take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the Secretariat of the WTO, as well as to our partners who agreed to support our domestic programme of change and adjustment. I would also like to reiterate our commitment to continuing along this path, being convinced that ultimately our country will be able fully to assume its responsibilities as a Member of the WTO and extract the maximum benefit from the opening of markets.

With the 50th anniversary of the multilateral trading system only a few months away, the WTO's First Ministerial Conference should send the world a clear political signal, coupled with a message of confidence in the system for which we have such great ambitions.

This, at all events, is the desire of my country which would like to take the opportunity to reaffirm its faith in multilateralism and its determination to work, in close cooperation with all the Members of the WTO, for the consolidation of a free and open trading system.

As part of this process, our Conference has a moral obligation to pay greater attention to the situation of the developing countries. These countries deserve to receive greater consideration, since any measure taken on their behalf would, in fact, be equivalent to strengthening the multilateral trading system.

In this connection, it behoves me to raise the concerns of my delegation with regard to the numerous difficulties encountered by the developing countries in fulfilling their notification obligations. While recognizing the importance of these notifications for the survival of the multilateral system, I remain convinced of the urgent need to reach an agreement on the steps to be taken to reduce the number of notifications, simplify the procedures and, at the same time, adopt appropriate technical assistance measures designed to support the efforts of all the Member countries in this field.

I also feel obliged to stress the need for scrupulous observance of the decisions taken in favour of the developing countries in the WTO. I have particularly in mind the decision adopted at Marrakesh, in April 1994, concerning the negative effects of the reform programme resulting from the Uruguay Round on the economies of net food-importing countries.

In any event, my delegation would point out that the WTO Agreements rest upon a delicate balance reflected in a complex system of mechanisms, rules and disciplines.

Developing countries such as mine made extraordinary efforts to help achieve this balance, convinced as they were that the new multilateral trading system would fulfil their expectations.

Today, despite some encouraging signs, everything seems to indicate that in making our choices for the future we should exercise more caution as regards the new issues to be brought within the sphere of competence of our Organization.

My delegation believes that diversity of interests requires the Members of the WTO to adopt an approach which is both flexible and based on consensus.

Thus, it would seem advisable not to systematically reject any discussion of new issues and, in particular, the question of direct foreign investment, considering that trade and investment are so closely linked. At the same time, however, we should not lose sight of the indissociable educational and progressive aspects of this important issue.

Senegal likewise reaffirms its total commitment to strict respect for the basic principles of human rights and reiterates its firm attachment to international labour standards.

However, we wish to make it quite clear that, in our view, questions of labour standards are the specific responsibility of the International Labour Organization.

Finally, my delegation is prepared to associate itself with any consensus on the important question of trade facilitation. We are among those who consider that the examination of this question by the WTO should be largely based on the related work done by other international organizations such as UNCTAD.

May I conclude by again stressing the historical nature of this First Ministerial Conference of the WTO. My country is hopeful that Singapore will be a decisive stage in the improvement of

economic and trade relations between our different countries with a view to raising their standard of living. As the third millennium dawns, this should be our priority objective within the WTO, since there can be no doubt that the future of our Organization depends on cooperation and solidarity among all our Member countries, whether great or small, rich or poor.