

STATEMENT MADE BY H.E. MR. DARLINGTON MWAPE ON BEHALF OF THE LDC GROUP
GENERAL COUNCIL
22 FEBRUARY 2010

AGENDA ITEM 4

Mr. Chairman,

On Behalf of the LDC Group, I wish to commend the Director General for his first annual report for 2010 on the accession process to the WTO, contained in document WTO/ACC/13 dated 22 January 2010, which the LDC Group welcomes. The process of reporting on the status of accession to the General Council under the leadership of the Director General is an important and right step towards enhancing transparency on accession, which in our view should be continued as a standing item on the agenda of the General Council.

My I also take this opportunity to associate the Group to the statement made by Gabon on behalf of acceding developing countries.

The LDC Group is fully cognizant of the role of accession in strengthening the multilateral trading system through expanded membership and integration of countries with diverse experiences. The LDC group also view this process as a means of assisting the weak and vulnerable economies, especially the least developed among them to realize trade and development benefits from an expanded and consolidated rules based multilateral trading system.

Mr. Chairman,

As reflected in the Director General's Report, progress has been made in facilitating the accession process of LDCs including through the adoption of the 2002 guidelines. Other initiatives undertaken to facilitate and accelerate the process of accession include the facilitation of dialogue among members, hosting of high level conferences and meetings. While noting the progress achieved in various Working Party Meetings, with three cases nearing the completion of their accession process, there is still a considerable amount of work to be undertaken in terms of both process and substantive issues under consideration. Work on some cases such as the accession of Ethiopia has stalled due to the lack of agreement on who should chair the working party meetings. This we believe, is an issues that should be resolved as a matter of urgency. We therefore wish to call upon the concerned members to resolve this issue. As you can note from the DG's report, LDCs represents 47% of countries in accession, a figure, which is of great concern to us. The LDCs in accession are continually being subjected to a complex and prolonged process despite the guidelines adopted in 2002.

The LDC Group wishes to reiterate the call made by the Ministers during LDC Ministerial Conference held in Dar es Salaam and the seventh WTO Ministerial Conference held last December in Geneva, for Members to faithfully implement the letter and spirit of the LDC accession guidelines.

The Group has full confidence in the initiatives undertaken by the Director General and the Accession Division towards facilitating and accelerating the accession of LDCs and wish to see these initiatives further enhanced. The enhanced role of the Director General as facilitator is

particularly important for the expeditious and smooth accession of LDCs in the accession process.

Mr. Chairman,

May I also point out that coordinated and targeted technical assistance and capacity building is equally crucial to ensure the successful completion of LDCs accessions. LDC Group acknowledges the support provided by many technical assistance providers both traditional and non-traditional agencies, including WTO and UNCTAD.

The LDC Group equally welcomes the new initiative by the WTO, ITC, and the EIF Executive Secretariat, launched at the Seventh Ministerial Conference, to establish a framework for technical assistance and capacity support to the private sector in acceding LDCs, effective 1 December 2009. We look forward to seeing this initiative fully implemented very soon.

Mr. Chairman,

To conclude, the LDC Group wishes to reiterate the need for members to conclude both multilateral and bilateral consultations in respect of the three cases that are in an advanced state of maturity, namely Samoa, Vanuatu and Yemen in order to enable these countries accede to the WTO by the end of this year.

I thank you Chair.