

H.E. Darlington MWAPE

Ambassador, Permanent Representative (Republic of Zambia)

Sub-Committee on LDCs

Dialogue on LDCs Accession

5th. May 2010

Thank you **Mr. Chairman** for giving me the floor to share a few thoughts on LDCs accession process in my capacity as LDC Group Coordinator.

From the outset, I would like to reiterate the Group's confidence in the Director General and the Accession Division for the positive approach taken towards LDCs' accessions. This is clearly manifested through several activities undertaken in 2009.

As you all are aware, the First Dialogue on LDC accession held in May 2009 was a milestone development, convened with the excellent facilitation of WTO Secretariat and in particular the Accession Division Director and his team. The First Dialogue provided an opportunity to have focussed and dedicated discussions, in an open format on concerns experienced by LDCs in Accession. In particular, the dialogue provided LDCs in accession an opportunity to voice their concerns regarding the slow progress made in fulfilling the 2001 Ministerial mandate and the subsequent guidelines on LDC accession contained in the General Council Decision of December 2002.

Mr. Chairman,

I wish to state that acceding LDCs have shown willingness and commitment to constructively engage in such dialogues, with a view to truly integrate LDCs into the Multilateral Trading System. The LDCs have engaged in discussions on accession with a firm belief that all members are committed to facilitating the speedy and smooth

accession of LDCs. The Group therefore, has no doubt that regular dialogue on matters relating to LDCs accession to the WTO, will enable members to appreciate the difficulties encountered and work towards finding a workable solution to expediting the accession process of the 12 LDCs that are currently on the list of accession.

As a Group, we have elevated discussions on accession and have appointed a focal point in order to place more emphasis on this important issue, which affects one-third of LDCs.

The convening of the High level round table in September 2009 in Phnom Penh, Cambodia; the ensuing recommendations and action taken by the LDC Ministers in Tanzania; and the recognition of this matter during the Seventh WTO Ministerial Conference, bears testimony to the high priority attached to this matter.

We recall the remarks by the Director-General made in September 2009 during the High level Round table, where he encouraged the use of his Good Offices to facilitate the expeditious and smooth conclusion of accession processes. To this end, the LDC Group welcomes the first Director General's annual report on accession to WTO, contained in document WTO/ACC/13 dated 22 January 2010. The LDC Group considers this as a positive step and believes that the reporting by the Director General should be continued with a view to improving transparency on this highly prioritized issue. The LDC Group fully concur with the Director General's assessment on the significant increase in interventions and engagement on WTO accession in 2009.

Mr. Chairman,

Accession to the WTO is one of the fundamental issues critical to attaining the desire to bring about full integration and universality into the Multilateral Trading System. The LDC Group is fully cognizant of the benefits associated with integration and effective participation in the multilateral trading system. There is no doubt that bringing on board a group of countries which is currently marginalised would be a contribution not only to the growth and development of these economies, but an important cornerstone to the creation of a dynamic trading environment.

However, several difficulties have been encountered, including the slow pace at which members are implementing the mandate to facilitate and accelerate the accession of LDCs.

The LDC Group strongly believes that the General Council Decision of December 2002 imposes legal and moral obligations that are binding upon WTO Members and its institutions. The Decision contains important provisions on special and differential treatment in favour of LDCs which should be made operational by full and faithful implementation during the accession process.

It is disheartening to note that despite these guidelines, some members have continued to request for reform measures that are onerous and which go beyond the capacities of the countries concerned. The process employed is complex and prolonged.

So far, only 3 LDCs have acceded to the WTO since January 1995, these being Cambodia, Nepal and Cape Verde. The latter, has since graduated from the status of being an LDC.

Mr Chairman,

The LDC Group firmly believes that three (3) LDCs accessions are in an advanced stage of maturity to be concluded in 2010, namely; Samoa, Vanuatu and Yemen. On their part, they have made major strides to accommodate the requests of negotiating partners. The LDC Group therefore, calls upon WTO Membership to expedite the process of concluding these accessions, both on bilateral and multilateral tracks, before the end of this year. Concluding the three accessions would not only be an affirmation attached by our development partners to address LDCs concerns as a matter of priority but also a positive contribution to the forthcoming UN LDC IV Conference scheduled to take place in Turkey mid next year. To ignore this issue would practically mean the marginalization of ONE-THIRD of LDCs from the global trading system and condemning the masses to abject poverty. How else would the Membership

show commitment to resolving the concerns of LDCs as a matter of urgency than through tangible outcome emanating from the accession process.

Mr. Chairman,

Last but not least, The Group wishes to stress the importance of coordinated and targeted technical assistance and capacity building to ensure the successful completion of LDCs accessions. To this end the Group 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 1st. December 2009.

The Group also wishes to acknowledge the support provided by many other bilateral and multilateral partners to LDCs in accession.

We look forward to seeing this initiative fully implemented very soon.

I thank you.