



22 January 2020

(20-0582)

Page: 1/3

Original: English/French

**DECLARATION ON WTO ISSUES
TENTH MEETING OF AFRICAN MINISTERS OF TRADE
ACCRA (GHANA), 14 DECEMBER 2019**

The following communication, dated 21 January 2020, is being circulated to delegations at the request of the Delegation of Botswana.

We, the African Ministers of Trade (AMOT), meeting in Accra, Ghana, on 14 December 2019, on the occasion of the tenth AMOT meeting, in order, inter alia, to review the status of negotiations at the World Trade Organization (WTO) since our last meeting, held in Cairo, Egypt, on 12 and 13 December 2018;

Reaffirming our attachment to the multilateral trading system and noting that it crosses a crisis due to the rise and proliferation of unilateralism and protectionist trade measures that are, in essence, contrary to the rules, principles and mechanisms of the WTO, the erosion of the rights and benefits of Developing countries, the stalemate in the functioning of the WTO Appellate Body, and appeals to modify the rules and procedures of the WTO;

Acknowledging the importance of regional integration and commending the progress made in achieving the objectives of the African Union Agenda 2063: "The Africa We Want", including the entry into force of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) and **recognizing** the need to build coherence by ensuring that the African Group's negotiating objectives at the WTO fully support objectives such as continental industrialization, structural transformation and integration of the continent;

Having taken note of the informal processes initiated by Members, through joint Statement initiatives on Electronic Commerce, Investment Facilitation for Development, Domestic Regulation, and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, and recognizing that some Members of the African Group countries participate in these initiatives;

Stressing, however, that multilateralism remains the indicated and essential path to achieve inclusive and equitable development-oriented results;

Expressing concern about the various difficulties and multiple challenges facing African countries involved in the WTO accession process;

Reconfirming our pledge to work on supporting efforts in the Multilateral Trading System that promote and defend Africa's interests in line with the African Union's Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want;

Taking note of the outcomes of the African Group Retreat held on 23 November 2019 in Geneva.

Agree to:

1. **Recall and reaffirm** the importance of implementing WTO Ministerial, and General Council Decisions and Declarations adopted since Doha in 2001, that keep development at the center of the work program;

2. **Reiterate** our concern with the lack of progress in addressing issues that have long been of great importance to Africa, including in the area of agriculture the substantial reduction of trade distorting domestic support for agricultural products, including cotton, the Agreement on a Permanent Solution of Public Stockholding for food security purposes, the establishment of a Special Safeguard Mechanism; simplification of agricultural tariffs, underscore the importance of Special and Differential treatment to developing countries and acknowledge the need of LDCs and Net Food Importing Developing Countries (NFIDs) for further flexibilities to address their food security challenges compounded by climate change. In addition to the group's long-standing priorities on development, Duty free and Quota free market access, and preferential rules of origin for LDCs. **Urge** the membership to reach meaningful outcomes on these priorities by the Twelfth WTO Ministerial Conference (MC12).
3. **Reaffirm** and underline the importance of the negotiations on fisheries subsidies, and the need for special and differential treatment to be given to developing countries in order to ensure food security, protect the livelihoods of coastal communities and provide policy space to strengthen their fisheries industries and capacities for economic and social development for conclusion by MC12 and stress that the disciplines must be applicable to large scale fishing, target harmful subsidies that contribute immensely to overfishing and overcapacity;
4. **Reiterate** the need for the Aid-for-Trade initiative to continue to achieve its trade-related capacity-building objectives, removing supply-side constraints, developing infrastructure and facilitating the integration of developing economies, particularly LDCs, in regional and global trade, in ways that support their development. **Urge** Members to strengthen and improve the Aid-for-Trade initiative so that it truly benefits developing countries, and LDCs beneficiaries, by avoiding conditioning its implementation to their participation in the negotiation of new issues in the WTO;
5. **Acknowledge** the contribution of the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) Program to LDCs initiatives and efforts to build capacity on the export supply side;
6. **Commit ourselves** to strengthening our common positions and to keep ourselves informed of any developments in the WTO, and to ensure that development is an integral part of all the outcomes of the negotiations, in line with the Doha Development Agenda;
7. **Reaffirm** that Special and Differential Treatment (S&DT) is a treaty embedded right available to all developing countries and LDCs and must be an integral part of all WTO Agreements. **Reiterate** our commitment to seek meaningful outcomes on S&DT, in line with paragraph 44 of the Doha Declaration and all pertinent provisions of WTO instruments, which would provide the necessary flexibilities and policy space for the implementation of commitments made under the current and future WTO Agreements. **Commit** to work with all parties to ensure S&DT provisions are precise, operationally and effective and enable developing countries, particularly LDCs in Africa, to respond effectively to their development needs, in line with the priorities of industrial development, structural transformation and diversification as entailed in Agenda 2063;
8. **Pledge** support to African countries in the process of WTO accession and urge Members to desist from making unreasonable requests on African acceding countries to extend any commitments made as a result of their membership to the AfCFTA or that are inconsistent with their levels of development;
9. **Reaffirm** the importance of preserving and complying with the principles and procedures of the WTO as established in the Marrakesh Agreement; in particular: the architecture of development and special and differential treatment for developing countries and LDCs;
10. **Re-emphasize** that WTO inconsistent unilateral trade measures taken by some WTO Members that have disruptive effects on the proper functioning of the Organization and undermine the core principles that underpin the Organization and the multilateral trading

system, in particular non-discrimination, rules based and member driven negotiations, consensus, inclusiveness and equity, in particular;

11. **Reaffirm** that the discussion on transparency must take into account the capacity constraints of developing countries, in particular African countries, must be underpinned by a developmental and cooperative approach to incentivize countries to adhere to their obligations and must not add new obligations to Members that are not within the scope of the existing agreements.
 12. **Urge** that priority be given to resolving the impasse in the Appellate Body and **commit** ourselves to working with all WTO Members to find mutually acceptable solutions while preserving the essential characteristics and integrity of the system;
 13. **Reaffirm** that any debate on the reform of the WTO must include the views and interests of the African Group, and address the long-standing issues of interest to developing countries as entailed in the Doha Development Agenda as well as preserve WTO principles and pertinent instruments that promote development and inclusion.
 14. **Underscore** the importance of the integration of African economies and commend the vision and commitment of the Heads of State and Government of African Countries, translated by the launch in Niamey (Niger), 7 July 2019, of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which is a far-reaching project for the promotion of economic, commercial and social, regional and integrative development;
 15. **Stress** that the overriding objective of Africa's trade policy is a Free Trade Area capable of building an African common market for goods and services, and we must ensure that the outcomes of the negotiations in the WTO do not undermine these objectives;
 16. **Direct** the African Group at the WTO in Geneva to continue to ensure the necessary synergies with the relevant organs of the African Union, with a view to ensure WTO Agreements support African integration, in particular the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area with the WTO Agreements, in the different sectors and stages. **Call upon** the African Group to the WTO to implement effectively the outcomes of their Retreat held in Geneva on 23 November 2019.
 17. **Take note** of the progress report given by the Commission regarding the internal AU process in the endorsement of the African candidate for the position of the Director-General of the WTO and express the legitimate aspiration that the next WTO Director General be from Africa and;
 18. **Welcome** the renewal of application by the AUC, to the Chair of the General Council of the WTO and the Director-General of the WTO, requesting the granting of Permanent Observer Status to the African Union in all WTO bodies and **Call upon** all WTO members to support the African Union's efforts to secure Observer Status in the WTO.
-