COMMUNIQUÉ - ARAB MINISTERIAL MEETING
NAIROBI, 15 DECEMBER 2015

The following communication, dated 18 December 2015, is being circulated at the request of the Delegation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on behalf of the Arab Group.

We, the Ministers and Heads of Delegations of the Arab Group, having met on 15th December 2015 in Nairobi, Kenya on the occasion of the 10th Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization;

We reiterate the common position adopted in our Ministerial Meeting held in Riyadh on 14 October 2014;

We regret that even after enormous efforts members could not finalize a package for this Conference. We recognize the divergences among Members on substantive issues but also appreciate the significance of the work produced since the initiation of the negotiations;

We recognize the importance of WTO for the multilateral trading system, and its significant role to the establishment of inclusive and dynamic economic and trade environment that could serve development and global economic growth;

We confirm our commitment to active participation in the WTO Tenth Ministerial Conference in Nairobi / Kenya, to ensure its success and to reach positive and meaningful results that will serve the interests and needs of Developing and least Developed members, including the interests and needs of the Arab countries; in order to contribute to a more solid, equitable and sustainable multilateral trading system;

We reiterate our full commitment to the Doha Ministerial Declaration to place the needs and interests of developing countries, especially the least developed ones at the heart of the negotiations, and the need of the negotiations to be inclusive and transparent to ensure consensual and satisfactory results based on full participation;

We reaffirm the centrality of the development dimension to the multilateral trading system. The system must be responsive to the needs and realities of developing and least developed countries;

We call upon WTO members to show the necessary political will and leadership to achieve progress in the DDA negotiations, which would lay the basis for a successful MC10;

We stress the importance of addressing the remaining issues of the DDA in the future negotiations. And emphasize that the negotiations must maintain the flexibilities and the special and differential treatment granted to developing and least developed countries, and take into account all the negotiating elements in an equal manner;

We recognize the extensive commitments made by Article XII Members "RAMs" during their respective accessions, and the need to give full recognition and proper consideration to their special situation in the negotiations;
We assert our continued and unwavering support for Palestine’s request for observer status in the General Council and its subsidiary bodies. While being mindful of the fact that the Government of Palestine practices trade regulation in all areas covered by WTO law, we encourage Members to provide a favorable consideration to Palestine’s request for observer status at the General Council. In order to improve the legitimacy and inclusive nature of the WTO, we are of the view that requests for observer status cannot be denied on the basis of political considerations;

We reaffirm the integrality and importance of S&D provisions in the WTO agreements, and agree that in line with paragraph 44 of the Doha Ministerial Declaration, all S&D provisions have to be reviewed with a view towards strengthening them and making them more precise, effective, and operational;

We stress the importance of reaching an effective solution to address the imbalance in the Agreement on Agriculture and the food security needs of developing and least developed countries. Also emphasize on the need for addressing tariff peaks and tariff escalations in Agriculture;

We reaffirm the support of the Arab League request for observer status in the councils, bodies and committees of the World Trade Organization and its Ministerial Conferences;

We reaffirm the need to consider a set of revised objective guidelines for granting observer status to all IGOs in the WTO, as well as in the ministerial conferences. We strongly stress the importance of adopting such guidelines as soon as possible to allow for a more conclusive engagement of all IGOs in all WTO activities;

We reiterate the importance of recognizing the Arabic language as one of the official working languages in the WTO, as it is the case in the United Nations Organizations. Arabic is one of the most spoken native language in the world; accordingly the recognition of Arabic as a WTO working language would facilitate the participation of governments of Arab States and would serve to promote awareness about the multilateral trading system in the Arab region;

We urge the WTO to facilitate and accelerate the accession of Developing and Least Developed Countries including Arab Countries. Also, call for the need to improve transparency and establish clear and specific criteria for the accession of Developing and Least Developed Countries, and grant them the right for special and differential treatment automatically upon accession;

We welcome the accession of Seychelles and Kazakhstan to the WTO and look forward to the impending accession of Afghanistan and Liberia this week. Each successful accession advances the truly global nature of the trading system and of the WTO;

We emphasize the importance of providing developing countries and least developed countries with technical and financial assistance and capacity building, to enable them to engage effectively in the multilateral trading system and contribute to the global economy;

We underline the importance of cooperation between the WTO and other International Financial Organizations towards effective implementation of the Aid for Trade initiative. In this regard, we commend the Aid for Trade Initiative for Arab States (AFTIAS) provided by the the International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation (ITFC), and stress the need for continued support to this important initiative as a tool to serve the trade in Arab countries and enable them to engage in the global economy;

We express our sincere appreciation to the government of Kenya and its people for their warm hospitality and for hosting the 10th WTO Ministerial Conference in Nairobi successfully.