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**EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
Twelfth Ordinary Meeting
25 – 29 January 2008
Addis Ababa, ETHIOPIA**

EX.CL/395 (XII)

**REPORT ON THE STATUS OF TRADE NEGOTIATIONS
IN THE WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION**

REPORT ON THE STATUS OF TRADE NEGOTIATIONS IN THE WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

1. The Doha Round of WTO Negotiations, which commenced in November 2001, intensified after the issuance of the Draft Texts of modalities in Agriculture and Non-Agricultural Market Access (NAMA). At the Doha Ministerial Conference, it was agreed that Agriculture and NAMA constitute the two major components of the Doha Round in which a development outcome is essential for the overall success of the Round. Although negotiations in both areas have been intensive, there are several issues on which WTO Members are yet to come to an agreement.

2. The issues of concern to African countries which are yet to be fully and satisfactorily addressed in the negotiations on Agriculture include those relating to Special Products, Special Safeguard Mechanisms, Cotton, Commodities, Tariff Escalation, and Long-Standing Preferences and Preference Erosion. In NAMA, concerns remain on the issues of less than full reciprocity and adequate flexibilities for developing countries and Small and Vulnerable Economies (SVEs). The ambitious tariff cuts that have been proposed in the modalities would not only create adjustment problems in terms of revenue loss but also limit the policy space for developing countries to promote their domestic industries. Also, the agreed principle of less than full reciprocity in the reduction of commitments has not been given adequate attention.

3. Guided by the Common African Positions on the DDA and the AU Summit Declarations on the WTO negotiations, the African Group, in alliance with other Groups of developing countries in the WTO, has continued to insist on transparency and inclusiveness in the negotiating process and on development remaining at the centre of the negotiations as agreed in the Doha Ministerial Declaration. While agreeing that progress in Agriculture and NAMA negotiations is sine qua non for the successful conclusion of the Doha Round, the Group has reiterated the need to address development concerns in other areas: Special and Differential Treatment and Implementation Issues; Services, including the effective implementation of GATs provisions on improving market access in Modes 4 and 1 and sectors and modes of export interest to African countries; Trade Facilitation; and Rules, including the provision of flexibilities to developing countries, such as non-reciprocal commitments, when concluding regional trading arrangements with developed country members (e.g. EPAs with the EU).

4. There is a widely shared feeling within the WTO that securing agreement on the modalities for Agriculture and NAMA by early 2008 is critical for the conclusion of the Doha Round. As a consequence, negotiations have witnessed a higher level of intensity in recent weeks. While the conclusion of the Round by the target date is an objective worth pursuing, the position of the African Group is that substance and the extent to which outcome of the negotiations reflect the development dimension of the Doha mandate is a better determinant of progress than any arbitrary time frame or deadline. The Commission will continue to coordinate the efforts of African negotiators in the WTO negotiations and monitor the progress of the negotiations in accordance with the mandate given to it by the AU Summit.

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