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**REPORT OF THE JOINT CONFERENCE OF AFRICAN AND SOUTH
AMERICAN MINISTERS OF TRADE
17-19 JUNE 2008, MARRAKECH, MOROCCO**

Report of the Joint Conference of African and South American Ministers of Trade 17-19 June 2008, Marrakech, Morocco

Introduction

1. The Conference of Ministers of Trade from African and South American Countries was held in Marrakech, Kingdom of Morocco on 19 June 2008. It was preceded by the Joint Meeting of Senior Officials on 18 June and regional consultations on 17 June. This Conference is in line with the implementation of the Abuja Declaration and Plan of Action.

2. The Ministers seized the opportunity provided by this Conference to discuss the geo-political aspect of their trade relations. They reaffirmed a number of positions already defended at WTO and also ironed out their differences concerning some issues on which the two regions disagreed at WTO. Finally, they identified areas for cooperation and major actions to be carried out to strengthen trade as well as mechanisms for the development of this trade. The Conference was sanctioned by the adoption of a Declaration and Plan of Action.

Attendance

3. 65 African and South American countries participated in the Conference. The African Union Commission (AUC), the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) also participated.

Conduct of Work

4. 17 June was devoted to regional consultations. Each region was therefore able to consider the draft Declaration and Plan of Action in order to reach an agreement on observations on substance and form to be made.

5. On 18 June, the two regions met to share their observations. After intensive and fruitful discussions, the senior officials submitted amended documents to the Ministers.

6. The Ministerial Conference took place on 19 June. After the opening ceremony marked by the addresses of the Representatives of the Prime Minister of Morocco, Brazil and Nigeria, the Ministers held in-depth exchanges on the two draft texts.

Main Items Discussed

7. The Ministers dwelt particularly on the following issues:

WTO Issues

8. The search for common positions on different issues such as the liberalization of tropical products, compatibility of EPAs with WTO rules and preferences that have been granted to Africa for a long time were intensely discussed. Moreover, topics related to

market access for agricultural products, removal of subsidies, market access for non-agricultural products (NAMA), services, immediate operationalization with adequate means (grants) of aid for trade were addressed. The conclusion of the Doha Round together with its development aspect was discussed at length.

Global System of Trade Preferences (GSTP)

9. UNCTAD made a presentation on the Global System of Trade Preferences (GSTP) and felt that it was an excellent initiative for promoting trade among developing countries. The GSTP went through many stages before reaching its present finalization and many African, Latin American and Asian developing countries were able to adhere to it. It was pointed out that trade carried out within this framework represented a quarter of world trade. Its rules concern mainly the modification of concessions, rules of origin, conflict prevention and resolution. The ASA countries were invited to participate actively in the third round of negotiations.

The World Food Crisis

10. The representatives of the two regions stressed that this crisis resulting from the inadequacy of cereal stocks, the development of biofuels and the increase in the price of hydrocarbons should enable the international community to react fundamentally with a view to resolving the difficulties inherent in agriculture in developing countries put at a disadvantage by the effects of distortions caused by internal and export subsidies granted by developed countries to their farmers.

Commodities

11. The two regions agreed to intensify cooperation in the area of commodities, with a view to establishing mechanisms which will make it possible to create synergies in commodities production and trade.

12. They also agreed to exchange expertise, experiences and technology transfer in order to improve and diversify production, particularly food processing.

13. Lastly, they approved the principle of exchange of data on commodity markets for better management of price fluctuation, and monitoring production, supply and demand.

Businessmen's Forum

14. The Minister recommended the holding of a forum of businessmen from the two regions every two years, prior to the Ministerial Trade Conference which will be held alternately in Africa and in South America, with a view to seeking business opportunities and making use of existing potential in the two regions.

Support to LDCs and Landlocked Countries

15. The regions particularly underscored the need to support the LDCs, landlocked countries, vulnerable economies and small islands in their struggle for a fair and balanced international trade system that takes their concerns and peculiarities into account.

RECOMMENDATIONS

16. The Commission drew the attention of Member States to the need to immediately hold consultations with a view to proposing to the next ASA Summit in Caracas, the African country that would host the next Ministerial Conference in four years time.

17. The recent ASA meeting held in Brasilia from 9 to 12 June decided on the establishment of eight working groups, one of which would be on trade, investment and tourism. Morocco has already announced its candidature to chair this working group. African Union Member States are requested to prepare in order to decide on this candidature in Caracas.

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