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Thank you for the honour and opportunity to address you and to be part of this Sixth Session of the WTO Ministerial Conference in Hong Kong, China.

On behalf of the WTO membership, I would like to express sincere gratitude to the authorities of Hong Kong, China for undertaking the monumental task of hosting this Ministerial Conference. This meeting is auspicious. It takes place in a truly great trading city. Hong Kong, China shows with outstanding clarity the benefits of trade. It seems to me that this is the perfect "launching pad" for the completion of the Doha Development Agenda (DDA). In the past few months, global attention at numerous international meetings has been sensational and unprecedented. Every serious organization has underlined the importance of the DDA and this Hong Kong Ministerial meeting. Every serious organization has recalled the purpose of the DDA – to expand the trading opportunities of the multilateral trading system as broadly as possible, and especially to the weakest, the most vulnerable, and the least-developed countries, who – as we all know – so badly need the boost that improved trading opportunities can give to their prospects for poverty reduction, sustainable growth and, indeed, development. To do any less, at this meeting, is inconceivable and would be a collective wrong, at its severest, against the cause of poverty reduction and development. All serious delegations now must lead – here and now – to achieve the goals we have set for this meeting. The business of this Ministerial meeting is serious.

The Doha Trade Round is, at its core, a development agenda. Development considerations, therefore, must, be at the centre of negotiations. This explicitly involves significant improvements in market access across all areas of the negotiations; reviewed, clarified and balanced rules; and strong commitments on aid for trade.

Clearly, for market access, the most important development component is in agriculture and cotton, non-agricultural market access and services as well as in other negotiations under the Single Undertaking. As such, the challenge for the membership on access to markets is clear – these are the areas where we need to make urgent substantive progress in order to deliver on development. At the same time, we need to bear in mind that trade reform is long-term reform, requiring patience, trade-offs, pacing and sequencing.

Technical assistance, capacity building and Aid for Trade are also vital to developing countries to utilize the trading opportunities that will emerge. More specifically to overcome constraints in infrastructure, improve product quality and develop the necessary link to international supply chains.

As this Sixth Ministerial Conference begins, we still have considerable grounds to cover. There are significant differences in positions on some key issues in agriculture, NAMA and services. However, I believe that Ministers, with some political will, can move us closer to our collective goal of finishing the Round before the end of next year. It was right to frame this Sixth Ministerial as a

Negotiating Conference. But, this Ministerial Conference is also about a critical need for collective leadership on the DDA and a collective commitment to a successful outcome. It cannot be otherwise. Once upon a time, there was unfortunate celebration when Ministerials failed. Certainly not now, not here, and not on the DDA. The WTO membership and the international community look to trade Ministers to make this meeting count. I am convinced that we all share a determination to strengthen the multilateral trading system. This is the moment to do so. The trading system is much more than trade, as we all know. It is also about peace and security. In negotiating the micro details, we also need to keep our eyes on the big picture. Because the Doha Trade Round is an integral part of the global agenda, it is essential that we lay the groundwork for the completion of this Round by the end of next year, as we edge ever closer to the time-frame of 2015 set for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

I have the honour to report to you, Ministers, that Members have worked assiduously in Geneva to prepare for this Conference. Based on the "bottom-up" approach and in full respect for transparency and inclusiveness in every aspect of the process, the preparatory process culminated in a unanimous agreement to forward the Draft Ministerial Text to Ministers as a basis for their reflection and negotiation. I think I can speak also for the Director-General when I say that we are indeed proud of the achievement by Members on the Draft Text, so far. In spite of some wide differences in positions on the substance of that text, the need to present Ministers with a workable basis for their deliberations and negotiations was considered paramount by Members. Mr. Lamy's energy and commitment are legendary. I now have seen it first hand and at close quarters. At the risk of embarrassment to him, I pay tribute to him for his single-minded dedication to the Doha Development Agenda and in his search for convergence. I would also like to thank Minister John Tsang, Chairman of the Conference, for his support throughout this year. His gentle but firm encouragement was felt by all of us and we are grateful for it.

One week ago, Members took two historic decisions. First, they decided to amend the TRIPS Agreement, making permanent the 2003 August Decision on patents and public health. Second, Members also agreed to extend the transition period for LDCs' implementation of the TRIPS Agreement. While success on these two Decisions seemed, at times, to be elusive, compromise and the common determination of Members prevailed.

Part of the challenge that our Organization faces is that our temporary set-backs are publicly magnified and our successes are unheralded. Nevertheless, what matters is that we must continue to chalk up our gains, to forge ahead collectively. And I believe we can do it again here in Hong Kong, China.

As we turn to set our minds to the hard negotiations that will follow in the next few days, I urge individual delegations, as well as different groupings, to begin to explore the compromises that must be made, in order to achieve sensible outcomes that will provide impetus for the completion of the Round. The spirit of compromise and flexibility emerged in Geneva in the last few weeks of negotiations. This made the Draft Text before Ministers possible. I am hopeful that this spirit will pervade our work here as well. We require the leadership of Ministers. We all know that there is no credible alternative to the rules-based system. I am convinced that we can share the determination to strengthen it. There is no better way to demonstrate this commitment than to act decisively at this Ministerial Conference.

On my part, as Chairman of the General Council, I will spare no efforts, Mr. Chairman, to assist you and the Ministers and the Members in the task of making this Conference a success.
