

Press Release on Development in the WTO Seventh Ministerial Conference

His Excellency Racheed Mohamed Racheed, Egyptian Minister of Trade and industry briefed the press on how the issue of development was addressed in the WTO Seventh Ministerial Conference, held in Geneva from 29th November to the 2nd of December 2009.

Mr. Racheed asserted that development remained as a core issue of the Conference although its agenda didn't include the Doha Development Round. He said that development acted as cross - sectional to all of the Conference discussions. The theme of the Conference circled around the Current global financial crisis and its impacts on the Multilateral Trading System (MTS).

The idea that developing countries and LDCs were the mostly affected by the crisis, and thus their needs should be prioritized, dominated the Conference, Racheed stated. The adverse effects ranged from increased unemployment to decline in investments and export figures in these countries.

All WTO Members agreed that quick steps need to be taken to face this crisis. Above all, they agreed that the conclusion of the Doha Round acts as a main tool for combating this crisis. However, the successful conclusion of this Round is contingent on the extent to which development is adequately reflected in the Doha results. Or else, these results could only aggravate the effects of the crisis on developing countries and increase their deprivation of the benefits of the MTS. In relevance, developing as well as many developed Members strongly objected the reinterpretation of the Doha mandate, or re - sequencing or reopening of the so far agreed modalities.

In addition, Members exchanged prospective ideas about strengthening the role of WTO in acing the crisis as well as preventing its repetition. The WTO's role in surveillance of the protectionism will be mainly directed against those measures adopted by developed countries. This is due to the fact that these targeted measures severely and irrationally contradict the WTO's developmental objectives.

Increasing the participation of developing and LDC Members in the MTS requires enhanced capacity building programs. A possible tool is the Aid for Trade that needs further effectiveness in supporting producers in developing and LDC Members in penetrating developed countries' markets. For this purpose, many of these countries expressed the inefficiency of the necessary energy and transport related infrastructures.

It was also asserted during the Conference that, coordination between the WTO and other intergovernmental organizations working on trade related topics, needs empowerment. Especially, because that many of these organizations deal with issues that are closely linked to development like food security, health and environment. This coordination aims at reducing the parallel efforts exerted in these organizations and which constitute an extra burden on developing countries and LDCs. It also aims at replacing the current forum shopping that is widely practiced by developed countries between these organizations, by an improved policy of mutual supportiveness among them.

Racheed concluded his remarks by reiterating that the overly politicized tone of the Conference only added to deep rooting development's position at the heart of the MTS. Accordingly, developing countries and LDCs should intensify their coordination in the coming phase to formulate a common vision about dealing with the different scenarios awaiting the Doha Round and the role of WTO in regulating the MTS.