

Press Release

The Role of the African Group

In the Seventh WTO Ministerial Conference

On the margins of the Seventh WTO Ministerial Meeting entitled “WTO, Multilateral Trading System, and the Current Global Economic Environment”, to be held in Geneva during the period 30 November – 2 December, a coordination meeting was held for the African Group Ministers on the 30th of November under the chairmanship of Egypt, the African Group Coordinator.

During this meeting, which comes as a follow-up to the Informal African Trade Ministerial held last October in Cairo, Egypt, the African Trade Ministers exchanged views on the strong message that the African countries can present to the world to ensure the strengthening of the WTO and the Multilateral Trading system with the development perspective as the core. In this respect, the main priority for African countries is an early, fair, and successful conclusion of the Doha Development Round with a view to ensuring the integration of African Countries in the global economic environment, and alleviating the negative impacts of the global economic and financial crises on such countries.

To ensure a unified voice of developing countries during the conference, Minister Rachid Mohamed Rachid, Egyptian Minister of Trade, held a series of meetings with the different developing country groupings to coordinate their strong message that calls for translation of political

commitments and signals to conclude the Doha Round into action through flexible negotiating positions.

In this regard, the Communiqué issued by the Cairo Informal African Trade Ministerial and its annex were submitted as official documents of the conference. Furthermore, an action plan was prepared as a guidance for the African countries' participation in the 7th WTO Ministerial Conference in order to emphasize the guiding principles that the African Group views as crucial for reaching a satisfactory outcome for the Doha round with a development perspective. This is in addition to ensuring an early harvest for the issues of cotton subsidies' reduction and facilitating access of Least Developed Countries exports to the global markets, in addition to the operationalization of Aid for Trade.

Moreover, the African countries' proposals to strengthen the WTO were highlighted in the different conference sessions. Among such proposals was the systemic improvement of the process of accession to the WTO, in order to clear the current ambiguity in the rules surrounding the accession process which led to the delay of accession of nine African countries to the WTO and raised the cost of their accession.

Finally, it's important to highlight that Egypt's effective participation in the conference reflects the active role that it plays in pushing forward the African interests in the WTO and voicing the developing countries' unified message to the world.