

**Expert Group meeting for Least Developed Countries
on the preparation for the
World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference,
Bali, Indonesia**

11 November 2013

Talking points

by

TESFACHEW Taffere
Director, Division for Africa, Least Developed Countries
and Special Programmes, UNCTAD

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Talking points:
Expert Group meeting on LDCs preparation
for the WTO Bali Ministerial

Excellency, Ambassador Seraphin Lissassi, Coordinator of the LDC Group at UNCTAD

Excellency, Ambassador Shanker Bairagi, Coordinator of the LDC Group at WTO (Mr Bhriugu Dhungana, Deputy Permanent Representative, Mission of Nepal)

Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests,

and Ladies and Gentlemen,

- It gives me a great pleasure to welcome you – on behalf of the SG of UNCTAD and on my own behalf – to this Expert Group meeting to exchange views on the preparations by the LDCs for 9th WTO Ministerial Meeting to be held in Bali, Indonesia. I guess this audience does not need reminding the significance of the forthcoming Ministerial meeting – both for LDCs and developing countries as a whole – and also for the credibility of multilateral trade negotiations, in particular the Doha Development Agenda.
- This meeting is – to a large extent - the result of exchanges we have had with the Coordinator of LDCs at WTO – Ambassador Shanker Bairagi – and subsequent developments at WTO, in particular in the last few weeks. The intention initially was to prepare a background document and organize a meeting to brainstorm on the key issues that LDCs need to pay special

attention in the negotiations prior to the forthcoming Ministerial Conference. But, as the negotiations started and LDCs began to articulate their positions and expectations, UNCTAD provided the necessary support to LDC negotiators - informally – and on key area where UNCTAD’s expertise and competencies are well established. Now that there is some clarity on expectations for Bali – and given that we have reached a delicate phase in the negotiations - we felt that it is an appropriate time and more constructive and useful to provide an opportunity for exchanging views with experts in the field on what is already on the table.

- Therefore, the purpose of this meeting is not to speculate on what will happen in Bali nor is it to provide magical solutions. The objective is to take stock - with the help of independent experts and in a small and more intimate environment – of the progress made so far in the LDC package and other related LDC issues, including issues that may require attention post-Bali.

- We are fortunate to have with us today external and independent experts with many years of experience and in-depth knowledge of the issues at hand. We believe that the value addition in this type of meeting comes from the exchanges that representatives of member States can have with specialists on the issues that are currently included in the LDC package. We have with us today Mr Craig Vangrasetk, a long standing friend of UNCTAD and author of the first history of WTO and Professor at the University of Harvard; we are also fortunate to have with us Mr Pierre Sauve, also a graduate of Harvard University, a former OECD Staff member and now a Director of External Programmes and Academic Partnerships, at World Trade Institute;

we also have with us Ms Natasha Ward, a member of the ACP group of experts and author of recent publication on the services waiver. To help us understand the view from preference-giving countries, we have two experts – Mrs Oksana Zikuna from the European Commission and Mr Liu Ping, a representative from the China Mission to the WTO.

- As you will have seen from the programme, this is a one-day meeting and it will focus on selected issues – rather than covering the whole range of topics discussed in the ongoing negotiations in preparation for Bali. For example, we will not address in detail the Trade Facilitation issue – not because it is not important -- to the contrary -- as you know, it has acquired prominence in the recent negotiation -- but because we felt that we can make the most out of this meeting if we concentrate on areas where UNCTAD's expertise can be maximized and where we know that external experts can be mobilized with short notice.

- UNCTAD has been assisting LDCs on Duty Free and Quota Free (DFQF) and Rules of Origin-related issues for many years. You may recall that UNCTAD was among the first international agencies that conducted studies and published reports advocating the adoption of DFQF market access with simpler Rules of Origin to facilitate the utilization of trade preferences by LDCs. Further studies and more detailed reports on the same subject were subsequently published by UNCTAD in 2003 and again 2008. These studies formed the bases for LDCs negotiations in various multilateral fora. For example, UNCTAD prepared the briefs on DFQF, Rules of Origin and Trade Facilitation that LDCs used to develop their negotiating positions prior to previous WTO Ministerial meetings.

- More concretely – thanks to the support provided by DIFID/TradeMark programme, UNCTAD has been able to provide advisory services to the LDC WTO Group in Geneva since the elaboration of the first proposal on the Rules of Origin presented by the LDC Group in 2006.

- I could go on highlighting UNCTAD’s contributions and the achievements so far -- but we are not here today to talk about UNCTAD or to look back but to discuss what is now on the table down the road – so to speak – and to reflect on the way forward from here. The only thing I wish to add about UNCTAD’s role is that there are a number of areas in the LDCs package where progress is less pronounced and where more work is required. I wish to give you my assurance that we will continue to do our best to support the LDC group in their negotiations. For example, the full implementation the DFQF commitment has proven to be divisive. Yet we are not convinced that all technical and legal instruments has been exhaustively tried to find a workable solution. This is an area where UNCTAD will continue to give greater attention and seek workable solutions to this dilemma. The operationalization of the services waiver is another area with a built-in agenda where UNCTAD experience on trade in services can surely be helpful. We intend, therefore, to intensify work in this area.

- Excellencies and ladies and gentlemen, let me stop here so that we move into the presentation on the challenges and opportunities in the LDC package for Bali.

- Thank you for your attention.