1. We reaffirm our strong commitment to the multilateral trading system, which promotes a rules-based, open, fair and non-discriminatory trade and has contributed to economic growth in WTO members. International trade is especially important in the current financial and economic crisis, when unimpeded trade flows are vital for the survival of businesses, including small and medium enterprises, and therefore for employment. We are concerned about the protectionist measures being adopted by some countries in response to the crisis, and acknowledge that WTO rules help contain such trends.

2. We reiterate our conviction that trade is an effective tool for development. The Doha Development Agenda is specifically aimed at increasing developing countries' share of world trade, stimulating their economic growth and contributing to their advancement towards attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. We recall that development should be at the heart of the process and therefore stress that it is important to take full account of the special needs and interests of developing and particularly the least developed countries (LDCs) in the negotiations and that special and differential treatment provisions should be made more precise, targeted and subject to periodic review. Trade openness has contributed considerably in the last few decades to enhancing developing countries' participation in the global economy.

3. In this context, we welcome the decision taken in June 2013 by the WTO Council for Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) to extend by an additional eight years the transitional period for the implementation of the TRIPS Agreement by the LDCs. This constructive compromise was the result of several months of intensive consultations among WTO Members and should help LDCs further integrate into the multilateral trading system,
taking into account their specificities. We hope that the same constructive spirit will guide both developed and developing countries in their search for a shared response to the challenges of globalization and the economic downturn.

4. The centrality of a multilateral approach to global trade liberalization is increasingly dented by the spread of plurilateral, regional and bilateral agreements and unilateral arrangements. The impasse in the Doha Round has likewise stimulated the interest of WTO Members in preferential trade agreements, which have proliferated in the past decade. While such agreements may enhance market openness in areas only partially covered by the WTO and may actually constitute a stepping stone to liberalization at the multilateral level, there must be coherence and convergence between preferential trade agreements and the multilateral trading system. We take note of the fact that a so-called "Really Good Friends" group decided last year to start negotiations on a plurilateral agreement on trade in services - an area in which the Doha negotiations did not bear fruit. A multilateral agreement on the liberalization of services remaining the ultimate objective, we are therefore fully committed to ensuring that the plurilateral approach does not constitute an obstacle to the conclusion of the Doha Round. We emphasize that a delicate balance needs to be achieved between negotiations on agriculture, non-agricultural market access and services.

5. We are convinced that the multilateral trading system should maintain its focal role, and therefore consider the outcome of the 9th WTO Ministerial Conference in Bali (MC9) to be of great importance. The conclusion of the Agreement on Trade Facilitation, one of the pillars of the Bali package, would bring significant economic benefits to all WTO Members. A satisfactory outcome of the negotiations on the G33 proposal on food security and other agricultural proposals, as well as on the development portfolio, would also be important deliverables for Bali. In the Agreement on Trade Facilitation, the inclusion of provisions guaranteeing an appropriate level of technical assistance and capacity-building for WTO Members that are developing countries and LDCs is crucial.

6. In terms of the post-Bali agenda, we hope to see substantive progress achieved in a number of key areas, including negotiations on trade in environmental goods and services, which could create a triple-win situation for trade, the environment and development. At the same time, we regret the suspension of talks on the revision of the WTO Information Technology Agreement.

7. We recognize that developing countries are not a homogeneous group. We support the WTO aim of ensuring that developing countries, in particular LDCs, can actively participate in trade liberalization negotiations in a manner that helps them adopt and implement agreements while benefitting from special and differential treatment. We also support the idea that such an approach should be maintained in all future agreements.

8. We believe that fair, open and balanced trade can act as an engine for growth and contribute to poverty reduction. However, for the benefits of trade to be available to the broadest possible spectrum of the population, targeted support measures are needed. In this regard, we note the discussions that took place at the Fourth Global Review of Aid for Trade, which examined how to use development assistance for connecting developing countries' and LDC's businesses to value chains. Aid for Trade must help these countries increase their productive and export-capacity potential, thus enabling them to compete more effectively within the multilateral trading system. We regret that, for the first time since the launch of the Aid for Trade initiative in 2005, the volume of commitments was reduced in 2011 due to the financial crisis, resulting in a lower level of support to large infrastructure projects, including in the transport and energy sectors.
9. We emphasize once again the need for a strong and effective parliamentary dimension of the WTO as a means of preventing the erosion of public support for open trade and in order to enhance the transparency of the organization. Parliamentarians, as elected representatives of the people, are fittingly placed to listen to and convey the concerns and aspirations of citizens, businesses and non-governmental organizations, and to ensure that the benefits of trade are clearly understood. Through various institutional mechanisms, parliaments are also responsible for effective oversight of international trade negotiations and for scrutinizing implementation of the commitments entered into by governments. To be able to perform their oversight duties properly, legislators need to have access to information on trade and to international trade events.