

and their limited capacity to implement resulting agreements. In this regard, they emphasized that the forthcoming trade negotiations take into account their proposals submitted to WTO in document WT/GC/W/251 and further agreed to keep under review the progress made in this regard. They further called for thorough consideration of problems of implementation of existing multilateral trade agreements faced by the LDCs with a view to adopting corrective measures, including binding provisions on technical assistance. In the provision of these measures, the LDCs should not be required to undertake commitments that go beyond requirements for compliance with existing obligations in the WTO Agreements.

The Ministers underscored the critical importance of UNCTAD's technical assistance in strengthening the capacity of the LDCs to formulate a positive agenda and strategies in trade negotiations that enable them to participate more actively and defend their interests in multilateral trade negotiations. They also welcomed UNCTAD's analytical work and capacity-building activities in the area of investment which contribute to the ongoing national efforts in LDCs for attracting investment, especially foreign direct investment. Ministers called on UNCTAD to continue such assistance in the above areas.

Acceleration of the process of accession of the LDCs seeking accession to the WTO is a matter to which the Ministers attached greatest importance. They viewed their accession as the first logical step in their integration into the global economy. They therefore called for the establishment of clear, simplified and fast-track procedures for the accession of LDCs that are not yet members of the WTO which allow for the completion of the process within one year following application. LDCs seeking accession should automatically have their status recognized and not be subjected to commitments which go beyond those of LDCs members of the WTO.

The Ministers noted with concern the slow pace of implementation of the Integrated Framework for Trade-Related Technical Assistance Activities and the lack of results from the round tables held so far for LDCs. They called upon bilateral and multilateral development partners to provide adequate resources to facilitate the implementation of various projects proposed by LDCs at round tables. The Ministers reiterated their call contained in their Seattle Declaration for an independent review of the Integrated Framework process with a view to reaching a common understanding on the objectives of the Integrated Framework, the institutional arrangements for its implementation, with clear benchmarks for its periodical review, and the expected outcome of the process and modalities for the mobilization of resources for the implementation of the various projects proposed by LDCs and by the core agencies in accordance with their respective mandates.

The Ministers stressed the importance of providing support to international organizations concerned with production and trade in commodities of LDCs, such as the International Jute Organization (IJO) and the Common Fund for Commodities (CFC).

The Ministers reaffirmed the commitment of their Governments to ensure effective and successful preparations for the Third United Nations Conference on the LDCs. In this connection, the Ministers welcomed the efforts undertaken by the UNCTAD secretariat in its capacity as the Conference secretariat for the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries aimed at ensuring adequate country-level preparations by the LDCs for the Conference. The Ministers expressed appreciation to the European Union and bilateral development partners who have provided resources for the preparatory process for the Conference. They called upon the World Bank, UNDP and bilateral development partners who have not yet done so to provide resources to the Secretary-General of the Conference to ensure the success of the preparatory process of the Conference at various levels. The Ministers viewed the Conference as an important event for the international community to chart and adopt a "Collective Vision for Joint