

Reflections on the WTO Ministerial

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Backdrop of MC-10: There is no denying the fact that the World Trade Organisation (WTO), as the global body en-tasks to regulate and reform the multilateral trading system, is an important institution for the globalising economy of Bangladesh. Over the recent past, the Bangladesh economy has been increasingly exposed to the dynamics of the global economy and global trading system through a diverse range of transmission channels: export and import of goods and services, aid and foreign direct investment. The degree of openness of the economy, defined as share of export and import of goods and services in GDP (equivalent), has been on the rise at a significantly fast pace, from about 17% in the early 1990s, to 34% in early 2000s to more than 40% in recent years. If in the early 1990s Bangladesh's export earnings (from goods and services) and foreign aid was almost the same amount, in recent years the annual export figure was about fifteen times more than the aid that she had received in that year. Bangladesh can take genuine pride in the fact that it has been able to transform itself from a predominantly aid-receiving economy to a trading economy. Hence, for Bangladesh, the importance of trade-related issues, and of the WTO as the trade-rule making global institution, cannot be overemphasised. It is in this backdrop of growing importance of trade and trade-related issues that the decisions of the recently held (15-18 December 2015) tenth Ministerial Meeting of the WTO (MC-10) in Nairobi, Kenya, demands closer scrutiny from the perspectives of Bangladesh's concerns and interests. It will be pertinent to recall here that, in the context of the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA) in support of the

LDCs, adopted at the fourth global Summit in support of the LDCs held in 2011, world leaders had committed to make the global trading system work in favour of the LDCs to help attain the IPoA target of doubling LDCs' share in global export, and halving the number of LDCs, by 2020. We are also reminded that the recently adopted (September 25, 2015) Sustainable

MC-10 was indeed an excellent opportunity to keep the promise. And it is in this backdrop that the MC-10 outcomes ought to be judged, both in terms of the process and the outcomes.

Bali Package
As will be recalled, MC-9 in Bali, Indonesia (held in December 2013) had adopted the LDC package which included the followings: (a) commit-

2011 (at MC-8) by holding a High Level Signalling Conference, (c) set up a Monitoring Mechanism to strengthen enforcement and implementation of the Special and Differential (S&D) treatment provision of the WTO, (d) provide enhanced market access for export of cotton by cotton-exporting African LDCs, (e) make preferential rules of origin LDC-friendly, (f) enhance provi-

Bali package commitments, which the Ministers could then adopt in MC-10. **Post-Bali developments in Geneva**
In the event, the negotiations in Geneva did not live up to the expectations generated in Bali, at least from the LDC perspectives. No tangible progress could be made to take the Doha Development Agenda forward, particularly because of the irreconcilable differences between mainly the EU and USA, on the one hand, and the emerging developing countries such as India, Brazil and China, on the other. This was true for negotiations on both built-in agendas and new agendas in the Non-Agricultural Market Access (NAMA), Agreement on Agriculture (AoA with its three pillars of domestic support, market access and export subsidy) and also concerning other areas. As regards issues of interests to the LDCs, one notable achievement in Geneva was the TRIPS Council decision to extend LDC special treatment for an additional 17 years (till 2033) by extending the earlier waiver of fifteen years (2001-2015). Indeed, Bangladesh's negotiators in Geneva had played a decisive role in getting this extension, which has heightened interest for our country. The proposed High Level Meeting did take place in February 2015 in view of the Request List submitted by the LDCs. However, the Offer Lists submitted by the developed countries did not meet the expectations of the LDCs, and lacked concrete measures to facilitate export of services from the LDCs. LDCs also observed with apprehension how during the post-Bali phase many developed countries had put emphasis on negotiating among themselves to facilitate market access for particular products



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Development Goals (SDGs) had articulated the global commitment to successfully conclude the Doha Round negotiations and reiterated the commitment to double export share of LDCs by 2020, provide meaningful duty-free, quota-free market access and put in place simplified preferential rules of origin for the LDCs. In view of this,

ment to implement the Hong Kong decision as regards providing duty-free, quota-free (DF-QF) market access for all products originating from all LDCs in developed country markets and in markets of developing countries 'in a position to do so', through meaningful market access; (b) operationalise the services waiver granted to the LDCs in

tion of aid for trade and (g) put in place technical and financial assistance to support LDCs' endeavours to implement the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) adopted in Bali MC-9.

It was envisaged and expected that, in the post-Bali phase, through negotiations in Geneva, concrete progress would be made towards implementation of the

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