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DECLARATION OF THE TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD ON THE THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF UNCTAD

presented by the President of the forty-first session of
the Board to the Bureau and Coordinators

Since its creation 30 years ago, UNCTAD has made a major contribution to international cooperation for development. Its role has evolved in response to changing needs and circumstances, while preserving its development mission enshrined in General Assembly resolution 1995 (XIX). UNCTAD VIII marked a turning point in the institution's history. The Cartagena Commitment launched the Partnership for Development and set in motion a wide-ranging process of adaptation to new realities. This process encompasses a comprehensive policy reorientation and an improved capacity for conceptual innovation, far-reaching institutional reforms and more efficient working methods. Member States conducted a Mid-term Review of the implementation of the Cartagena Commitment and initiated further changes designed to make UNCTAD more responsive to their needs and thereby better placed to make a tangible contribution to growth and development. They look forward to continuing and further improving that process at UNCTAD IX.

Past achievements should encourage UNCTAD to pursue its development mission with new vigour at a time when long-standing problems are being compounded by new ones. Among the major sources of change is the intensifying process of globalization of economic activity and of interdependence among countries and between sectors of the world economy, and its implications for sustainable development. This offers opportunities but also presents challenges. A growing number of developing countries have been able to seize the opportunities arising from these phenomena and have registered rapid economic and social progress, including through greater reliance on market mechanisms and better management.

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Those developing countries with weak economic structures and burdened with such constraints on development as debt overhangs, commodity dependence, natural disasters and political strife, continue to lag far behind the mainstream of global economic activity.

Each State and society has the primary responsibility for its own social and economic development. However, the globalization process has reduced the autonomy of governments in the conduct of national economic management, and is creating challenges and opportunities for the systems, structures and arrangements that underpin international economic relations. This requires appropriate efforts to overcome difficulties in adapting national and international structures to the new international economic environment. Furthermore, the internationalization of financial, product and service markets, coupled with rapid advances in information and communication technologies, represents a growing challenge to the competitiveness of countries and firms. Some of these factors risk accentuating the trend towards a world economy in which a large number of developing countries, particularly the least developed among them, will be unable to keep pace and may continue to be locked in a vicious circle of poverty, underdevelopment and environmental degradation. The international community should therefore take appropriate action in support of the weaker economies in the Spirit of Cartagena.

A fresh vision of development able to deal with these challenges is therefore required. Implementing such a vision will require a strengthened cooperation for development between developed and developing countries. It will also call for an integrated approach to issues in the fields of trade, finance, investment, services, technology and environment.

UNCTAD can make a valid contribution to a better understanding of the contemporary development problems. As the most appropriate focal point within the United Nations proper for the integrated treatment of development and interrelated issues in key areas, and particularly since the incorporation within it of programmes relating to transnational corporations and to science and technology, UNCTAD is well placed to conduct a systematic exploration of the interlinkages between economies, sectors and issues and to promote consensus for the adoption of appropriate policies. UNCTAD will also have an important role in undertaking policy analysis on the impact of the Uruguay Round Agreements and on new issues as they come to the fore of the international trade agenda.

Member States reaffirm their commitment to the primary development objectives of UNCTAD and undertake to reinforce their political support for the institution and for its important role, as a member of the wider United Nations family, in strengthening the global Partnership for Development by addressing the economic and development problems of all countries, particularly of developing countries.