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GUYANA

Statement by the Honourable Clement James Rohee, MP
Minister of Foreign Trade and International Cooperation

On behalf of the Government of Guyana, I would like to congratulate the Government of Qatar for the excellent work they have done in hosting this very important Conference, particularly in these difficult times. I would like also to express my sincere thanks for the warm welcome and hospitality extended by the people and Government of Qatar. It would be remiss of me if I neglected to express my appreciation to the WTO Director-General Mike Moore and the staff of the Secretariat for their unrelenting efforts in organizing this Conference.

Our encounter at the last WTO Ministerial Conference in Seattle in 1999 raised a multitude of critical challenges for the WTO and the multilateral trading system. The journey from Seattle to Doha, has been preoccupied, and rightly so, with the quest for pragmatic responses to the onerous issues which have emerged, especially in relation to the global inequities and inbuilt disadvantages militating against the progress of developing countries generally and small, vulnerable developing countries in particular.

While there is little doubt that the Uruguay Round of trade negotiations provided for a most comprehensive and far-reaching trading agreement, the impact on many vulnerable developing countries has been disastrous. More specifically, the distribution of benefits from the multilateral trade liberalization process is clearly in favour of the developed countries. The developing and least-developed countries have suffered from a high degree of marginalization and have been, greatly constrained in their efforts to implement and benefit from the provisions of the WTO Agreements. Such marginalization should be addressed and a concerted effort should be made by the global community to redress this situation by instituting programmes of assistance for capacity building and institutional strengthening. The developed countries should also make a firm commitment to implement the provisions of the Agreements, which provide support to developing countries and grant them much needed time to improve their global competitiveness.

On this essential issue of support for developing countries and the necessity of adequate time to improve competitiveness, I must emphasize the critical importance of the waiver application for the ACP-EU Partnership Agreement. The ACP Member States including Guyana, are greatly concerned over the prolonged delay in the consideration and approval of this request and it is our sincere hope that this untenable situation will be expeditiously resolved. At the recently concluded ACP Ministers of Trade Conference in Brussels on 5-6 November, the Ministers discussed this issue at length and incorporated our concerns in the Declaration of ACP Ministers of Trade on the 4th WTO Ministerial Conference which also encompasses the position of the ACP on all the major WTO issues of interest to our Group. We urge that the issues raised in the Declaration be carefully examined and the concerns articulated therein be taken into account.

If we are to achieve a positive and balanced agenda, particular attention, should be given to the special needs and interests of developing and least-developed Member countries in all trade negotiations and liberalization processes. Every effort should be made to implement fully the existing

WTO provisions on Special and Differential treatment for small, vulnerable developer economies, especially in the areas of anti-dumping, sanitary and phytosanitary measures and technical barriers to trade.

We urge that the TRIPS Agreement be implemented to allow countries to address the grave public health crisis faced by numerous developing and particularly least-developed countries in order to ensure access to affordable medicines. A commitment to this effect should be made at this Conference. We are not prepared to leave this to the vagaries of private sector priorities and the WTO Dispute Settlement processes. Governments must implement their public health obligations to their populations. To do otherwise will be a sacrifice on the altar of the WTO. We will not do this.

This Ministerial Conference should agree as an overriding priority to put implementation issues on a fast track. Nothing less would be acceptable, otherwise, we would be merely perpetuating the spirit of Seattle and thereby continue to undermine the multilateral trading system. If we cannot have past undertakings of the developed countries implemented, our people will consider us gullible if we accept future undertakings from them. We are not gullible.

My country, as a Member of the WTO, would like to contribute constructively to a restoration of confidence in the multilateral trading system, but this cannot be achieved if the Uruguay round provisions are honoured in the breach. We are not opposed to the concept of negotiations, but we simply cannot negotiate a text that is stacked against the interests of developing countries. We have not come to Doha as spoilers or obstructionists. We approach Doha in the same way as we approached the Uruguay Round which is in good faith, believing that there is something to be gained from the multilateral trading system. However, we will not repeat the mistakes of the past. We do not want to dominate, neither do we not want to be dominated. We worked just as hard after Seattle, in fact, we worked even harder but when we see that there is minimal progress on the implementation issues, we feel a sense of being cheated.

We all debate upon the vagaries of trade liberalization and globalization, and the integration of our economies into the global trading system, yet we fail to recognize the interaction between trade liberalization and globalization. Those who suffer from delusions of grandeur about the benefits of globalization and trade liberalization must ask themselves about the millions of voices who remain unconvinced about these twin processes. There continues to be a growing disconnect between our intentions and what we are delivering. We have valid expectations now as we had when we participated in the Uruguay Round. While we have persistently worked to open our economies on the one hand, on the other, the industrialized states have conversely failed to open up their markets.

A final warning. Nothing can be agreed here except by consensus. There is a suggestion that some wish to repudiate the principle of consent. That would be the end of the WTO. I counsel against any such instinct.

I must seize this opportunity to extend my sincere congratulations to the People's Republic of China on their historic accession to the WTO. The Government of Guyana looks forward to working closely with China in the WTO forum in seeking to make the multilateral trading system a fair and equitable system.

The WTO system must work for all of us on an equal level. The problems and concerns of developing countries are real and our developed country partners must measure up to their commitments and undertakings to provide support, including special and differential treatment and structural adjustment assistance for our economies. The WTO must be mandated to address this as a matter of priority and such a mandate should come from Doha.
