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GEORGIA

Statement by H.E. Mrs Tamar Beruchashvili
Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs

First of all, on behalf of the Government of Georgia, let me warmly welcome all delegates to the Conference and wish you fruitful and successful work during this very important gathering. It is indeed an honour and privilege to be able to represent Georgia at the Ministerial Conference as a recently acceded Member of the World Trade Organization.

Despite the political and economic difficulties faced by Georgia in the first few years of regaining independence, which are typical for countries with economies in transition, Georgia has managed to demonstrate to the international community that universal values such as respect for principles of a market economy, pluralistic democracy, and human rights including religious and ethnic tolerance represent Georgia's policy priorities.

The Government of Georgia believes that countries taking part in the processes of globalization must likewise enjoy its benefits. These processes should also serve to advance national interests, as well as capitalize upon the unique individuality of each. Thus, global economic integration should accelerate Georgia's economic growth and alleviate poverty.

It should be emphasized that Georgia is in favour of a progressive liberalization and considers it as a key principle for globalization, however, there are some concerns that my country wished to raise in this respect. Let articulate the basic elements of them:

First, I would like to express the concerns of Georgia, as a newly acceded country, regarding new negotiations commitments and their interaction with the commitments undertaken just recently during the accession process. It should be a well-known fact that newly acceded countries have made really substantive market access commitments, sometimes going far beyond those made during the Uruguay Round. Here, I would refer to the joint press release issued by the Ministers of recently acceded countries and circulated yesterday among participants of the Conference.

Second, Georgia strongly supports the establishment of a multilateral system of notifications and registration of geographical indications for wines and spirits and hopes that an appropriate decision will be made during the work of the Conference. Furthermore, Georgia is strongly advocating for the extension of the protection of geographical indications provided for in Article 23 of the TRIPS to products other than wines and spirits.

Third, Georgia, being committed to comprehensive negotiations in the sphere of agriculture, would seek the extension of the special and differential treatment for the countries with economies in transition as well, and its appropriate reflection in the Ministerial Declaration. This alongside with the developing countries would enable the countries with low income and at the same time being in the transition stage, to take account of their real transformation and development needs. We do believe

that small vulnerable countries in transition should be an integral part of the elements of negotiations in this field.

Fourth, I would like to draw your kind attention to the fact that some newly acceded countries with economies in transition, including ourselves, per capita income of which is less than US\$1,000 and their share in the world trade is very low, are suffering from the heavy burden of external indebtedness. Therefore, we have been seeking the fair reflection of our concerns in the Ministerial Declaration. Accordingly, alongside with the developing and least-developed countries, we would propose to include into the chapter Trade, Debt and the Finance wording that will enable the application of this clause to such countries like Georgia as well. As you are well aware, the countries I am speaking about are not classified in the category of either developing or least-developed countries, but in a real sense their macroeconomic parameters are much lower than many WTO Member developing countries.

And last, but not least: together with other low income economies in transition with a small share of world merchandise export trade, Georgia has to be included in the list of the countries eligible for extension of the transition period under the rubric of Article 27.4 of the Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures, currently applicable only for the developing country Members. We believe that common criteria and the methodology have to be applied to all Members regardless of their previous and current status.

Despite the fact that there are a very few countries like Georgia among the WTO Members, in our point of view, our modest requests have to be shared and accommodated as well. Now we all realized that the transition process, as it has turned out, requires much longer term, which needs very careful and intent look from global financial and trade institutions. The new WTO agenda for growth, development and prosperity through liberalization, has to help strengthen the beneficial connection between not only developing countries and the international economy, but also with active participation in this process of small and vulnerable countries in transition.

Georgia commends the efforts of Member States and the Secretariat to examine issues relating to the trade of small economies aiming at their fuller integration into the multilateral trading system. At the same time, with great satisfaction I would like to mention that the technical assistance and capacity building are defined as core elements of the development dimensions of the multilateral trading system, accordingly we strongly support the New Strategy for WTO Technical Cooperation for Capacity Building, Growth and Integration.

Before concluding, we do hope that at the outcome of this Conference we will be able to take maximum balanced decisions that will accommodate and reflect the real and actual concerns of all Member States.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to express our deep appreciation to you Mr Chairman, to the Chairman of General Council, the Director-General, the WTO Secretariat and the Member States for efforts and endeavours demonstrated in the whole preparatory process to this Conference.

Finally, let me express our thanks and the words of our profound appreciation to the hosts of this Conference, the Qatar Government, which has created and provided excellent conditions and facilities for our productive work and fruitful discussions that, we hope, will ultimately ensure the successful accomplishment of our difficult tasks.
