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DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Statement by H.E. Mr Hugo Guiliani Cury
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This meeting is being held at what is a difficult time the world over. Nevertheless, we are here to participate constructively in the World Trade Organization negotiations. However, if we think back to past events and then consider the present situation, we have to admit that the Organization still lacks equitable solutions for the developing countries. This is clearly making it lose credibility in the eyes of many countries. If the outcome of the Doha Ministerial is to be successful, it must, of necessity, be understood that multilateral trade has to operate as a two-way system.

The draft Ministerial Declaration which is being presented in Doha promotes issues of interest to developed countries and leaves those raised by lesser-developed ones unresolved. For example, in the case of agriculture, no mention is made of the need to abolish tariff peaks, tariff escalation, subsidies or export credits. Nor has the proposal to create a development box, put forward by several countries, been taken into consideration.

The question of implementation has been discussed at length without any immediate solutions to the large number of problems pending. In this respect, we note that they have been included in the mandates for future negotiations.

Special and differential treatment will not form the subject of negotiations and it has been considered preferable to keep the matter under review, without undertaking to develop an understanding that would make it binding.

Nor is there a proposal to set up working groups to examine the relationship between trade, debt and finance and between trade and transfer of technology, as our countries have requested.

The Dominican Republic has opened up its economy and, as a result, enjoyed strong growth averaging 8.5 per cent over the last ten years – the highest in Latin America. Within this strategy, one of the sectors displaying the greatest momentum is the free-trade zone export sector. The following figures highlight its importance in our economy:

- Exports by this sector in 2000 totalled US\$4.8 billion, or 83 per cent of total exports;
- this sector accounts for more than 20 per cent of all jobs in our economy.

Can a country undertake to dismantle its economy's most dynamic sector which, in just a few years, has come to generate 83 per cent of its foreign exchange earnings? Can a country abruptly close down a productive sector which accounts for more than 20 per cent of all jobs in its economy? I personally feel that this is impossible and it is this very impossibility which dictates our standpoint, one shared by many other countries which, to a greater or lesser extent, are in the same situation.

How then can we possibly be expected to dismantle, no later than 2007, a sector which has proved the best instrument we have ever had in terms of attracting foreign investment, diversifying exports, creating jobs and preventing the flow of migrants from the Dominican Republic to the United States? We reaffirm here the need to extend, under Article 27.4 of the Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures, the transition period for free trade zones until 2018.

The message that we wish to put across is a clear one:

For the Doha Ministerial to prove successful, the World Trade Organization must appropriately address the concerns of developing countries and, at the same time, tackle the protectionist pressures which still prevail in developed countries.

In such a delicate and politically sensitive situation as this, the Dominican Republic will be unable to join any consensus to launch a new round of negotiations unless it is granted the time-frame that it, along with a large number of countries, has called for.
