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QATAR

Statement by H.E. Mr. Youssif Kamal, Minister of Finance, Economy and Commerce

It is my great pleasure to be with you at the Third Ministerial Conference in Seattle. On behalf of the State of Qatar, I wish to extend our sincere and warm regards to all of you gathered here today on the occasion of the Third Ministerial Conference. I wish to thank also the Government of the United States of America for hosting this important Conference in Seattle and the organizing committee.

It has been almost five years now since the coming into force of the World Trade Organization (WTO), one of the most important and ambitious international organizations of the twentieth century. Its covered agreements negotiated in the Uruguay Round, extend to almost every aspect of international trade. Much has been done in implementing commitments ensuing from the Uruguay Agreements. Still more needs to be done in this respect.

Qatar has always had a liberal and open foreign trade policy. We have on several occasions declared our commitments to the rules of the multilateral trade regime. Today, once again, we reaffirm this commitment.

The success of the liberal trade regime as embodied primarily in the World Trade Organization depends not only on proper implementation of the rules, but also on the perceived fairness of the system by the participant. This in fact is true of any other legal systems.

The WTO accession process has of late become more cumbersome for new Members. While the WTO prides itself on striving to achieve universality, a truly universal character cannot be duly fulfilled with more than a quarter of all countries still at the fringes of the multilateral trading system and outside the World Trade Organization.

Qatar wishes to express its support for a speedy conclusion of negotiations for countries that are in the process of accession. We believe it is of utmost importance that countries which are in the process of accession be entitled to a fuller participation in the next round of multilateral trade negotiations. After all, participation in the formation and establishment of the rules is the best safeguard to their proper implementation on one hand, and to their perceived fairness on the other hand.

We also call on Members to adopt clear guidelines to govern the accession process and urge all Members not to impose tougher conditions than otherwise required under agreed WTO Agreements. This practice otherwise known as "WTO-plus" has been a major factor delaying the successful conclusion of accession negotiations on many developing countries, including Arab countries.

The multilateral trading system in its entirety will no doubt benefit from a more transparent regime not only in the accession process, but also in several other areas of the WTO that raise the issue of accountability and responsibility *vis-à-vis* the world community at large.

There are several provisions in WTO Agreements that speak of differential and more favourable treatment for developing countries. It is the view of many developing countries that several of these provisions require clarification and "operationalisation" in order to achieve their desired objective.

Furthermore, we urge member countries to increase the share of technical assistance in the current budget. While we believe that technical assistance is no panacea for development, it is an important tool for institution building and awareness raising as well as proper implementation of the various agreements. As a matter of fact, the full and faithful Implementation of the Uruguay Round Agreements remains a top priority for many developing countries. Here is thus the importance of technical assistance projects geared towards achieving such an objective.

Only once issues of implementation of previous agreements have been duly addressed that we could make headway in the negotiations of new rules and agreements.
