

# WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

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## BARBADOS

### Statement by the Honourable Billie A. Miller Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade

May I congratulate you on your election to the Chair of this Third Ministerial Conference. I also wish to congratulate Mr. Mike Moore on his appointment as the second Director-General of the World Trade Organization. Finally, we wish to recognize the sterling contribution of His Excellency Mr. Ali Mchumo, Chairman of the General Council, to the direction and management of the preparatory process which has brought us to Seattle. I wish all three of you success in discharging your responsibilities, bearing in mind that we are not expected to complete the mighty task before us but neither are we at liberty to abstain from it.

Trade liberalization has not produced the expected economic benefits to Member States and in particular has failed to deliver to most, if not all, developing countries. The World Trade Organization has an obligation to examine why liberalization has not produced the expected results. Over the last two days we have heard a number of speakers supporting the call for a *new* round of trade negotiations. But, I would wish to support colleagues, and especially those from the Caribbean, who have sounded the shibboleth for the urgent need for review, and indeed repair and reform, of the multilateral trading system. The review process must harken to the concerns of the masses.

The nature and scope of trade liberalization must be re-examined to ensure that it is compatible with the development objectives of all members, regardless of their level of economic development. Trade liberalization must also produce concrete and equitable benefits to all of its participants. For it is now widely recognized that the benefits of the liberalization process have not been equitably distributed. Far from witnessing the progressive integration of developing countries, we are instead experiencing a trend of progressive marginalization. While we remain committed to the removal of barriers to trade, we must guard against the dangers of unbridled liberalization. Small developing economies like Barbados are at times left to wonder whether we are indeed equal stakeholders in this multilateral trading system.

Having dealt with the nature and scope, I now come to the pace of liberalization which must be managed so that all Members, especially developing countries, can adequately respond to the challenges it brings. Our failure to manage this process could have catastrophic effects on the development efforts of small and vulnerable economies.

In this respect Madame Chair, it is timely that we thoroughly examine the difficulties confronting a number of developing countries in the implementation of those agreements which we signed in Marrakesh. Too many countries are experiencing real problems with those contractual arrangements. Difficulties have manifested themselves in different ways. Marrakesh represented a single undertaking which meant that Member States had to accept all of the commitments in every single agreement irrespective of shortcomings and they are myriad. We are now facing the stark realities of implementation. The provisions of some of these agreements are such that a number of developed countries have found it possible to implement them in a manner that has been detrimental

to the interests of developing countries. We need only cite here the Agreements on Agriculture and Textiles and Clothing. Furthermore, the implementation process has placed enormous burden and strain on the limited financial, human and technical resources of developing countries, particularly the least developed, and the small and vulnerable economies. If these agreements are to be meaningful and if the World Trade Organization is to be a credible institution, there is urgent need to address and resolve their inherent difficulties.

Important as the new issues are to the international community, we have to be very careful of launching another round of negotiations before addressing the glaring deficiencies in existing agreements.

The blueprint which we are drawing up for the World Trade Organization into the new millennium must have development as its centre-piece. Let us not forget that the real focus of our efforts is the economic development of Member States which are all at varying stages in this process. Development is about people and the means by which we can provide a better quality of life for all. Our future work programme must reflect this political reality.

We must deliver. Our peoples are expecting it of us. The World Trade Organization cannot in a new century be meant to operate as an instrument of oppression.

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