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JAMAICA

Statement by H.E. Mr Ransford Smith,
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We meet in Doha at a time of deepening pessimism and uncertainty regarding prospects for the global economy. This is highlighted in a new report from the World Bank which indicates that trade has undergone one of the severest decelerations in modern times – from 13 (thirteen) per cent in 2000 to 1 (one) per cent in 2001.

The recent tragic events in the United States have further dimmed the near-term prospects for the world economy. In Jamaica and in the CARICOM region, both the important tourism industry as well as other export industries have been affected adversely.

The WTO has an important role to play in ensuring that markets remain open and that the global economy is returned to good health. It has an important role, but the task of returning the global economy to vibrancy is one that must be shared among many actors and institutions at the national and global levels. This should not be forgotten, lest we expect too much of a single institution, the WTO, and take decisions here at Doha on a wrong or faulty premise.

Members of the WTO have gathered here to decide whether or not the present negotiating agenda of the Organization should be expanded. Proponents of an expanded agenda contend that increasing and deepening the pace of liberalization, including bringing new negotiating subjects to the table, will secure new benefits for the global economy and, in particular, for developing countries.

Jamaica is not persuaded of this.

The best interests of this Organization and its membership will not be served by simply expanding its work programme. The success or failure of this Fourth Ministerial Conference and, indeed, the quality and scope of the contribution that will be made by the WTO to recovery and growth in the global economy, will depend to a great extent on the Members of this Organization agreeing to a work programme in which development and development concerns are situated at the very core. In this context, we regret that the draft texts which have been presented to this Ministerial Conference, as the outcome of the preparatory process in Geneva, do not, in our view, sufficiently reflect or capture the positions and proposals of developing countries.

We now urge Members to move beyond "sloganeering" and to act decisively to place the development dimension at the centre of the structure of rules and disciplines, obligations and opportunities, that are part of the WTO.

This is particularly necessary as we contemplate, at this Conference, whether or not to expand the WTO's work programme.

The much-heralded gains from the Uruguay Round are yet to be realized by many Members of this Organization. Most benefits have gone to more advanced economies and to the few with the capability to take advantage of new opportunities. The recent World Bank Report on global economic prospects confirms this. Indeed, the Annual Report by the Director-General of the WTO for 2001 reveals that Africa's share of world merchandise trade has fallen by one quarter in the past decade. Although it might be noted that in this same decade the share of developing countries as a whole in global merchandise trade has risen by more than 6 (six) per cent, the fact is that in excess of 70 (seventy) per cent of this increase was accounted for by six or seven countries, not all of which were WTO Members.

It is for this reason that we believe that the WTO must make a concerted effort to respond more fully to the interests and concerns of its diverse membership. The very legitimacy of the Organization depends on this. We emphasize that there is no inconsistency between the commitment to an open, rules-based multilateral trading system and recognizing that there is a need to treat with the different circumstances of countries in a manner which avoids the "one size fits all" syndrome. Equal rules applied to unequal situations will not, and have not, yielded growth and development.

It is important to address through a development agenda, not only the nature and structure of the rules, but also the timing and sequencing of obligations entered into. For small and vulnerable developing economies, a core concern is the disjuncture between obligations undertaken and the onset of competitive pressures – which are immediate and near-term – and the opportunities, particularly regarding market access, which can only be taken advantage of in the longer term with improved supply-side capabilities. This is a primary cause of the mal-distribution of benefits in the multilateral trading system, including those which presumptively should have flowed from the Uruguay Round. This brings into particularly sharp focus the need for a broader conception of technical assistance and capacity-building in the WTO, and the need as well to take account of the varying capacities of Members. Much more needs to be done in this area but it would be remiss of me if I did not thank the Director-General and the WTO Secretariat for the initiatives that are being undertaken in regard to technical assistance and capacity-building. We are also cognisant of an acknowledge important bilateral initiatives in this area.

What are some of the issues we wish to see addressed at this Conference? I will cite a few. Many of these issues are contained in the ACP Ministerial Declaration, adopted in Brussels last week, and circulated to this Conference.

Firstly:

- We need to agree on a work programme to address the needs and concerns of small economies. The outcome in this area should include recommendations on concrete and specific measures that will reduce the marginalization of our countries.

Secondly:

- We need to take now the long delayed decision to grant the EC/ACP waiver request for the ACP-EU Cotonou Partnership Agreement. At a time when there is need to strengthen confidence in the multilateral trading system, the granting of the waiver is vital. We note that virtually all developing countries benefit from some preferential trade arrangement. The ACP countries have a legitimate expectation that a rules-based system will provide equitable benefits for all.

Thirdly:

- We need to agree on a package of implementation measures that is substantive enough to contribute to confidence-building, and which will make, importantly, a

meaningful contribution to redressing the imbalances deriving from the Uruguay Round Agreements.

Fourthly:

- We need to address the long-standing deficiencies relating to internal transparency, inclusiveness and organizational procedures. These matters impinge on legitimacy and credibility, which are extremely valuable institutional resources that are squandered only at peril.

Fifthly:

- We must adopt a work programme that is development-driven, and in this very important sense, will be also demand-driven, since most Members of this Organization are developing countries. The work programme must seek to redress past asymmetries in rules, disciplines and opportunities; recognize the limited capability of many developing countries to engage in new negotiating processes and to assume new obligations; and it should wisely acknowledge the already far-reaching scope of the existing built-in agenda, comprising negotiations on agriculture and services and various mandated reviews.

Sixthly and finally:

- We need to adopt a Declaration on TRIPS and Public Health which confirms that under the TRIPS Agreement Members have the flexibility to take measures to address public health concerns.

Before concluding I join other speakers in warmly welcoming the People's Republic of China as the 143rd Member of the WTO. We also welcome Chinese Taipei as the Organization's 144th Member. As trading power houses even before joining the WTO, we can expect dynamic and active roles from those two new Members.

May I also take the opportunity to thank the Government and people of Qatar and the city of Doha for their hospitality on the occasion of this Fourth Ministerial Conference of the WTO.
