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OMAN

Statement Circulated by H.E. Mr Maqbool Ali Sultan Minister of Commerce and Industry

I am honoured to represent the Sultanate of Oman at the Fourth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization. My delegation and I are privileged and pleased to come to Doha – our second home – to participate in this important Conference. We wish to convey our profound thanks and deep gratitude to His Highness the Emir, the Government and the people of Qatar for the very excellent arrangements for this Conference and for the brotherly welcome and lavish Arab hospitality accorded to us.

The holding of this Ministerial Conference in the GCC region is a testimony to the important role and place of GCC in world trade and a recognition of the liberal and open trade regimes of GCC member States.

This is the first WTO Ministerial Conference that Oman is attending as a full Member of the WTO. I am grateful for the welcome extended to us as a new Member of the WTO. I take this opportunity to convey the sincere thanks of the Government and the people of the Sultanate of Oman to all countries who supported our accession to the WTO and who have extended a welcome to us. My delegation supports paragraph 9 of the Ministerial Declaration in attaching great importance to concluding accession proceedings as quickly as possible. The Sultanate of Oman strongly supports the very early accession of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The Sultanate of Oman has a long tradition in international trade. It is at the crossroads of world trade. It was thus natural that Oman should be part of the multilateral trading system which provides the framework for the conduct of world trade. As a Member of the WTO, Oman would strive to preserve and strengthen the multilateral trading system which has well served the international community for more than 50 years.

Despite its achievements, the multilateral trading system is not wholly fair and equitable for developing countries. The system has its inequities. As the representative of a country which recently completed its accession, let me say candidly that the accession process is introducing further inequities. That was our experience when we were made to undertake commitments far in excess of those undertaken by countries at a comparable or higher level of industrialization and economic development. Oman was also made to join the plurilateral agreements which have not been accepted by a large majority of WTO Members including some developed countries.

This conference will take important decisions on the future role and direction of the WTO. The Sultanate of Oman supports the role of WTO as a forum for trade negotiations. Whether these negotiations are in the form of continuing negotiations or as a new round and whether these are on the basis of a broad based comprehensive agenda or a smaller manageable agenda should be decided by a genuine consensus.

As regards negotiations on agriculture, industrial tariffs and services, Oman would like to make it clear that during its accession to the WTO, it had made extensive and far-reaching market-access commitments. Oman should neither be asked nor expected to make any further market access commitments on agriculture, industrial products and services. We have paid our price and should not be asked to pay a price again.

Let me conclude by saying that Oman strongly supports the objectives of the WTO and earnestly hopes that this Conference would result in further strengthening the WTO for the benefit of all its Members.
