

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

WT/MIN(01)/ST/82
11 November 2001

(01-5666)

MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE
Fourth Session
Doha, 9 - 13 November 2001

Original: English

BARBADOS

Statement by H.E. Mr Erskine R. Griffith
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Barbados to the WTO

Allow me to commence by congratulating you on your well deserved election to this key position.

I would also like to take this opportunity to convey our sincere appreciation to His Highness the Emir and the Government and people of the State of Qatar for their gracious hospitality and for the excellent arrangements they have put in place for the efficient organization of this important conference.

Finally, I would like to commend and thank the Chair of the General Council as well as the Director-General and the Secretariat for their indefatigable work in the preparation of this meeting.

The Doha Ministerial Conference has already marked its place in history by formalizing the accession to the WTO of the People's Republic of China and of Chinese Taipei. We welcome these important developments as a major step in the strengthening of the universal nature of the multilateral trading system.

We who are gathered here in this beautiful city may earn *our* piece in history if we are able to achieve an outcome to our deliberations which will serve the wider interests of the global community and enhance the image of this Organization in the eyes of those who look at it in a critical way. Such an outcome would include the redressal and correction of the existing imbalances in the multilateral trading system and the attainment of a more equitable distribution of gains.

There is ample evidence to demonstrate that globalization, and the concomitant liberalization process that has been occurring as various countries move to re-position their economies, have yielded significant benefits. Indeed, since 1948, the world has witnessed an unprecedented expansion in trade. Not only has this expansion been huge, it has also been consistent.

Unfortunately though, the gains from this increased trade have been unevenly distributed. Thus, while the developed countries have experienced greater prosperity, most developing countries have benefited only marginally and sadly some have even regressed.

This unhealthy and unacceptable situation where the gap between developed countries and the vast number of developing countries seems to be growing wider despite the various reforms being implemented at the domestic or national level, must be of great concern to those of us who are genuinely interested in bringing about a more equitable world. Unless this trend is reversed, the very global economic stability which all of us so eagerly seek, will elude us.

In fact, I am convinced that the greatest threat to the survival of the multilateral trading system will not come from, anti-globalization demonstrations or from a global economic slowdown, but from a failure to seriously address the growing imbalances in the existing system and their adverse effects on developing countries. Any institution that repeatedly fails to deal with the pressing concerns of such a large part of its membership will have difficulty progressing.

If the assertions which have been made in the preambles to the GATT and the Marrakesh Agreement about the economic development of developing countries are to be realised, issues related to development and the contribution of international trade to that process will have to occupy a central place within the WTO.

In order to bring about a situation where a small developing economy like Barbados is in a position to secure a share in the growth of world trade which is commensurate with the needs of our economic development; we will require an outcome from this conference which will put in place effective and targeted solutions aimed at creating a fair and equitable trading system from which all countries will benefit, regardless of their differences in size, level of development or share of world trade. The problems that developing countries face will not be resolved merely by common rules which are uniformly applicable to all Members. Taken in such a context, special and differential treatment should not be regarded as a concession from developed countries to developing ones, but rather, as an important set of instruments deliberately designed to place the disadvantaged Members in the group in a position where they will benefit from participating in the trading arrangement.

Developing countries should not be placed in a situation where we are asked to accept additional obligations that will only exacerbate the imbalances already existing in the multilateral trading system. Rather, all Members should seek to consolidate, advance and effectively implement the work for which we have already crafted mandates.

For this reason, Barbados is fully committed to the Declaration made by ACP Ministers at their recent meeting in Brussels on 6 November. We also recall the priorities outlined by developing countries in the Declaration of the Group of 77 and China on the 4th WTO Ministerial Conference and endorse the Ministerial Statement made by Mauritius at this Conference on behalf of a number of small, vulnerable developing economies.

In conclusion, allow me to emphasize that we have no misgivings about globalization and liberalization *per se*. Of course we recognise that there are severe risks involved and possible negative outcomes, but we remain convinced that, properly managed and appropriately paced, globalization and liberalization can bring with them many opportunities. The challenge before us is to soften the adverse impacts while grasping the numerous opportunities being offered to advance our various economies. In fact, that in my view is the only way in which we can secure our future in this constantly changing world.
