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TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Statement by the Honourable Kenneth Valley
Minister of Trade and Industry and
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On behalf of the Government and People of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (T&T), I extend our best wishes to the Government and citizens of Mexico and commend you on the hosting of the Fifth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO). My delegation also extends its deepest appreciation for the hospitality as well as the efficient security and logistical arrangements provided.

As a Caribbean country, T&T remains committed to the multilateral negotiating process. We are also committed to the long-term objective of establishing a fair and equitable trading system. We share an explicit interest in the development of targeted and operational mechanisms which facilitate the strengthening of trade competitiveness in our economies and the crafting of specific measures which would allow for complementarity between WTO rules and our future trade liberalization initiatives. We advocate the creation of a greater sense of balance in global trade between developed and developing countries, thereby providing the requisite fillip to achieving the sustainable development of Caribbean economies and indeed all developing countries.

Thus we approach Cancún with optimism and enthusiasm.

In accordance with the Doha Development Agenda, the architecture of the post-Cancún negotiations must evidence deeper operational initiatives geared at safeguarding the sustainable development of small developing economies. It is also critical that the needs of developing countries be fully integrated into the Work Programme of the WTO.

Special and differential treatment (S&D) is a core principle for developing countries. Trinidad and Tobago considers and views with some measure of concern, the inability of Members to adopt a compendium of meaningful, targeted, operational and binding S&D provisions for developing Members. We consider S&D to be a cross-cutting issue, cutting horizontally along all areas of the WTO Work Programme and diagonally across the issues of (i) *market access*; (ii) *domestic support*; (iii) *export competition*; and (iv) *non-trade concerns* in the area of agriculture.

Special and differential treatment is the fulcrum that seeks to create a balance between industrialized and developing countries.

The failure of the Doha Development Round to generate the intended benefits to developing countries thus far, requires renewed effort at addressing the needs of small developing economies thus contributing to making the reform process gradual and sufficiently flexible for these Members.

We believe that the time has come to develop operational guidelines for the implementation of SDT provisions. Fundamentally, T&T supports a continuum rather than a "one size fits all" approach to the provision of SDT. We believe that differences in economic size; levels of development; production competences and resource endowment may be used in the stratification exercise.

Capacity-building, which is vital to developing countries, and, in essence, is at the heart of the concept of special and differential treatment, must go beyond mere technical assistance. It must include developmental and financial assistance targeted towards redressing our supply side capacity constraints and providing adjustment support.

Trade preferences also, are central to the concept of S&D. The crucial role that special long-standing trade preferences play in maintaining the viability and assisting in the development of Caribbean and other ACP States cannot be over-stated. Accordingly, it is imperative that this Ministerial recognizes trade preferences as legitimate instruments of development.

In the area of agriculture, we support the crafting of a new Special Safeguard Mechanism (SSM) for developing countries, the concept of Special Products (SPs) and re-formation of the "*Green Box*". With respect to the issue of market access for non-agricultural products, Trinidad and Tobago is of the opinion that any indiscriminate lowering of the industrial tariffs of developing countries, through the non-inclusion of the principle of "Less than Full Reciprocity", could serve to dampen the industrialization and upgrading processes being undertaken in many Caribbean countries, possibly leading to de-industrialization in some instances.

With specific reference to the Singapore Issues, the Caribbean is of the view that negotiations should not be launched in these areas at this time. Our preference is to use our limited capacity to participate effectively in these negotiations to advance progress in areas that are germane to developing countries.

In concluding, I wish to reiterate Trinidad and Tobago's commitment to establishing a fair, equitable and rules-based multilateral trading system and reaffirm our willingness to work with other WTO Members in the reform process. We will do our part to make the system more amenable to fostering true growth and real development.
