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KUWAIT

Statement Circulated by H.E. Mr. Abdul Aziz Al-Dakhil,
Minister of Commerce and Industry

First of all, I have the pleasure to extend to you, on behalf of the Government of the State of Kuwait my congratulations on your election as president to this conference. I wish you tremendous success.

Allow me to congratulate you on the 50th Anniversary of the establishment of the multilateral trading system.

I also would like to offer my congratulations to the officers, and to convey our gratitude to the WTO Secretariat for its strenuous efforts in the excellent organization of this conference.

It has been almost a year and a half since our first conference in Singapore, and two years since the 9th session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development in Midrand, South Africa. Many of the delegates here today might have participated in these conferences which have issued the Midrand declaration and the Singapore declaration, consecutively.

Upon reading the declarations of Midrand and Singapore, you get the impression that both are very optimistic, and that the developing countries and the least-developed countries can overcome their difficulties. However, in reality, many developing countries and the least-developed countries still face a lot of economic challenges. Among them the worsening of the socio-economic problems, the proliferation of poverty, and their inability to further develop management and technical systems. The economic situation in many developing and least-developed countries has deteriorated due to the increase in their external debts which have widened the gap between developed countries, developing and least-developed countries.

Our third Ministerial Conference will take place at the end of this century and on a brink of a new millennium. The State of Kuwait believes that globalization has become a historical destiny. The political and economic changes which took place during the past few years as well as the race of nations to form regional and international trading blocs, make us reconsider the ways we put into action the concepts and principles upon which the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade has been established 50 years ago. This is why the World Trade Organization, in its future endeavour, should review its mechanisms in order to keep up to date with new changes.

We call upon the World Trade Organization to adopt some measures we consider helpful to developing countries and least-developed countries in order for them to play their roles more effectively within the new international trading system. Among these measures are:

- To restrict the commitments required from the developing countries and least-developed countries to join the World Trade Organization, since the process for accession has become too long and tedious. These countries constitute the majority of the world both in terms of population and geography. These are the countries that possess the natural resources.
- To provide technical assistance and appropriate measures to developing countries and to least-developed countries in order to prevent the hardships of the implementation of the Uruguay Round Agreements. This can be done through changing and updating the infrastructure of these countries without affecting its national interests.
- To reduce the strict protective measures of developing countries by imposing excessive taxes like the carbon tax as an example. As well as the simplification of support measures based on transparency.
- To open markets for emerging industries in developing countries and least-developed countries which are based on natural resources and are occasionally considered to be the only source of revenue.
- To lower or eliminate the restrictions on technology transfer to developing countries and least-developed countries.
- To increase regional and international cooperation, through easier access for trade between South-South and the North and the South.
- To support the efforts of Chambers of Commerce and Industry in developing countries and least-developed countries in their endeavours to establish management and technical systems in a network of trade information.

We are members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, which was established in 1980, to embody the concepts and principles of a free market economy which our countries believed in since its inception which led naturally to the strengthening of the commercial ties with the rest of the world and the development of those ties in a coordinated fashion with the changes. This is why the joining of four of the GCC countries to the WTO came as the embodiment of its people's aspirations. In addition to Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, we are hoping that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Sultanate of Oman will do so in the near future, so this Organization can continue its journey in building a better partnership for development.

Kuwait has an unforgettable experience with globalization, the world's consensus and the respect of UN resolutions. Indeed, the range of economic development is measured by political stability and our respect for human rights. These matters are interdependent and complementary at the same time. In this respect, the State of Kuwait calls upon the international community, the name of humanity, to help us work on freeing our POWs and detainees which are still being held in Iraqi prisons.

I call upon you to help us in setting those prisoners free. There are still mothers in Kuwait shedding tears of sadness and mourning, and fathers awaiting their sons' and children's return.

May Peace and God's mercy and blessings be upon you.
