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BAHRAIN

Statement by H.E. Mr Ali Bin Saleh Al-Saleh
Minister of Commerce

Let me begin by joining others in thanking the people and Government of the United States of Mexico for organizing this Ministerial Conference in the beautiful city of Cancún.

I would also like to express our sincere thanks and gratitude for the warm reception and kind hospitality extended to us.

It gives me great honour to extend the greetings of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, King of Bahrain to President Vicente Fox, Government and people of Mexico.

We are gathered here to discuss the progress of the "Doha Development Work Programme", a programme we have agreed to follow, monitor, and implement over a period of four years. In this endeavour, we should not lose sight that the focus of the Doha Round is "development". We should work together to make sure that the world trading system embodied in the WTO, is more responsive to the hopes and concerns of developing countries.

The Kingdom of Bahrain is a small nation with a long history of strong commitment to free trade. Our policies, attitudes, and practices bear witness to this deep-rooted conviction. Being a founding Member of the WTO is a reflection of our natural attitude of integration and cooperation with the international trading community. Bahrain has its hopes, like others, not only to gain economic progress through trade, but also to achieve sustained development. We are working hard to make Bahrain a hub for trade and investment in our region, and we are also adopting policies to improve the already open environment for local and foreign businesses.

In parallel, we have submitted our initial offer in trade in services, which has been acknowledged by our partners as "broad and generous". We were among the few to submit such an offer, and we have committed ourselves to revise this offer to demonstrate its meaningfulness and also to further improve it. We are hopeful that these efforts on our part will be recognized and reciprocated by others when we submit our requests in goods and services.

I am quite sure that Ministers have come to this gathering with a desire for unity and cooperation and with a firm resolve to overcome the obstacles and disagreements that usually accompany negotiations. It is our duty to truly understand the various concerns and find compromises to potential problems.

Let me share with you our ideas on some of the issues before us.

First, let us admit among ourselves that we still need more time to absorb and digest the introduction of new areas of trade into the trading system. Let us not overload the boat unnecessarily at

this stage. Instead, we should all be convinced that they will bring benefits to all countries before we embrace them.

Second, the concerns of developing countries on implementation issues are very genuine. Implementation is the test of our real intentions. Let us work together to eliminate misconceptions and to achieve the objectives that we laid out in Doha.

Third, we are aware of the proposals and discussions in the area of industrial tariffs, an area of great importance to Bahrain. However, we do not believe that the current discussions take our aspirations into consideration. Negotiations should not lose sight of the interests and capabilities of developing countries. Studies have shown that developing countries have given more than their equitable share in trade liberalization. Therefore, developing countries should have access to developed markets, before they are asked to pay more in market access.

The Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain would like to emphasize the importance of speeding up negotiation on the accession of developing countries to the WTO, in particular the Arab countries and specifically for a major trading nation like the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. These countries should not be required to make more of a commitment than existing Members. On this point, I would like to take this opportunity to warmly congratulate the Governments of the newly acceded Members Nepal and Cambodia.

Finally on behalf of the Kingdom of Bahrain, I would like to repeat our thanks and gratitude to the Government and people of the United States of Mexico for hosting this Conference. We also thank the Director-General of the WTO and his staff, all Member countries and all the participating delegations for their contribution and valuable efforts to make this Conference a success.
