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GUYANA

Statement Circulated by the Hon. Michael Shree Chan,
Minister of Trade, Tourism and Industry

At Singapore, I said then that Guyana is committed to:

- Promoting of an open, non-discriminatory, fair and equitable multilateral trading system that will enable countries - particularly developing countries - to improve their economic structures and enhance the living standards of their peoples through sustained economic development;
- improving market access for trade in goods and services;
- promoting and supporting policies, both domestic and international that make economic growth and environmental protection mutually supportive;
- fostering global economic policy-making that safeguards the vital interests of the small and vulnerable economies in the developing world.

Guyana wishes to restate these principles all of which express the very essence of the Uruguay Round Agreements as well as the objectives of the World Trade Organization.

Much have been achieved since Singapore - we have concluded Agreements on Basic Telecommunications and on Financial Services and have implemented the Agreement on Information Technology. Our dispute settlement system is functioning well but we have all recognized the need for improvement. We have expanded the membership of the WTO and are considering the acceptance of new members into the Organization.

These successes of the WTO are reflected in its significant contribution to economic growth, employment and stability within the framework of increasing trade liberalization and expansion of trade thus contributing to the improving of standards of living.

We have come a long way, but I dare to suggest that we still have a long way to go. For while at the global level the indicators are very promising, I submit that there is need for a closer examination of the impact of our policies at the national level, particularly the smaller economies.

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I refer specifically to my own country, Guyana - we have undertaken comprehensive structural adjustment programmes in collaboration with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. We recognize the importance of transforming our economy in order that we could take advantage of the opportunities afforded from the liberalization of the multilateral trading system.

Needless to point out, Mr. Chairman, Guyana continues to participate in the liberalization process despite the harsh realities which we sometimes face. We must take into account the delicate balance between human resource development on one hand, and democracy and economic growth, on the other hand.

Guyana's debt burden continues to be very severe. Debt servicing as a percentage of current revenues increased from 42.6 per cent in 1996 to 54.1 per cent in 1997 and is expected to further increase in 1998. Our balance-of-payments current account balance deteriorated by G\$10.2 billion from 1995 to 1997. We continue to experience a net outflow of financial resources. Subsequently, we welcome the initiative of the multilateral financial institutions regarding the HIPC countries and urge that every effort be made to ensure that the debt problem is eradicated.

Guyana submits that there is an interlocking relationship between the developed and developing economies. For while trade expands and standard of living improves in the developed world, it is the incumbent that developing economies experience similar improvements in the absence of which there is the likelihood that the people of the poor countries will resort to production and exportation of drugs to the developed countries. This we must prevent at all costs.

In conclusion, while we continue to construct a single global village, Guyana believes that we need to build a political framework that is underpinned by the rule of law, democracy and good governance that is all inclusive and consensual. This needs to be stated with firm political commitment.

Finally, I wish to join so many of my colleagues in congratulating you on your very able chairmanship and at the same time express my sincere thanks to the Government and the people of Switzerland for making our stay such an enjoyable and fruitful one.
