

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

WT/MIN(99)/ST/126
2 December 1999

(99-5300)

MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE
Third Session
Seattle, 30 November - 3 December 1999

Original: English

SURINAME

Statement by H.E. Mr. Erroll G. Snijders, Minister of Foreign Affairs

We are meeting here today, as part of a process initiated years ago, to arrive at a new international trading infrastructure.

As many other developing countries, Suriname is taking part in the trade negotiations on the understanding that the ultimate aim of the international community is to restructure the contemporary international trading system, in order to enhance the capacity and ability of all its members in particular the developing countries, to participate effectively in such a system.

The meeting should recognize that trade policy can no longer be made in isolation from its wider context.

The Seattle meeting should address and take the appropriate decision on this matter, which constitutes a crucial aspect of the negotiations for the majority of participants in this international trading system.

My delegation is of the view that this meeting should seize the opportunity and become the gathering of Ministers in which the importance of the development aspects of the trade negotiations has been recognized.

Our efforts should be geared towards preventing the new trading system to encourage developmental inequalities, leading to social injustice, neglecting core labour standards and disregarding the human factor.

We must set the foundation for the proper implementation of the already agreed documents and chart the course for future negotiations.

Sustainable development must be placed at the heart of any future WTO trade negotiations and we ought to take that decision and make that commitment here and now.

On 25 and 26 November 1999 the Heads of State and Government of the ACP countries met in Santo Domingo and adopted the Second Declaration of ACP Summit. This document reflects the concern of the ACP countries with regard to the WTO arrangements.

My country would like to declare explicitly that it fully endorses the views and positions embodied in this declaration.

We therefore urge this august gathering to take into account and fully support the concerns of the ACP countries as reflected in this document.

Let me take this opportunity to remark that at this moment the international conditions for developing countries to enhance their competitive positions are far from favourable.

In this respect I would like to refer to the negative consequences of the debt burden, the reduction of official development assistance and the insufficient flow of foreign direct investments, while at the same time we experience a decline of market prices for raw materials which are being produced by developing countries. In addition hereto, we are facing a restricted access of agricultural goods from developing countries to world markets and an unfavourable competitive position due to subsidies, a problem which till now has not been properly addressed and for which we are asking serious attention. Fairness and transparency are in this respect urgently required.

Trade liberalization should be pursued progressively by giving adequate support to developing countries and by clear and unequivocal reaffirmation of special and differential treatments as a fundamental principle of the multilateral trading system.

The Government of Suriname has been actively engaged, from a national and global perspective, to realise an active and effective participation in the trading system of the 21st century.

Many adjustments to our national system have been made; which process is continuing while many measures remain to be taken.

The challenges which we face trying to keep up with the developments on the global economic field are first of all in formulating appropriate foreign and trade policies in accordance with arrangements which guide the globalization and trade liberalization process.

In the past years we have regretfully experienced that not much has been done to develop an effective programme of concrete measures to assist the countries with small and vulnerable economies to integrate into the multilateral trading system in order to address the constraints we are facing in this process.

Secondly, due to the far reaching consequences of this new global order, the following needs and demands can be seen as major challenges.

- The strengthening of the technical capacity of our human resources and the institutional capacity of developing countries in dealing with WTO regulations.

In this respect we recall the important role UNCTAD has placed in the past, and taking into consideration the role this organization will play in future developing matters, we strongly urge the WTO and the UNCTAD to increase their cooperation in order to contribute to an effective and enhanced support to the developing countries.

- Furthermore, the restructuring of our production system in order to enhance our competitive position and improve market access, for which the availability of capital and institutional strengthening is a pre-condition;
- the availability of financial resources under favourable conditions;
- the formulation of an adequate response to the debt problem;
- the continuation of trade preferences which are currently enjoyed by developing countries based on earlier cooperation agreements. In this respect we specifically refer to those under the Lomé Convention.

One of the fundamental working principles of our organization is that decisions are being taken on the basis of consensus.

Suriname, its Caribbean partners and other like-minded developing countries, will only contribute to consensus if the following basic conditions of cooperation in WTO will be part of our decisions.

This WTO meeting has to live up to the expectations of the vast majority of the members of the international community. It must lead to arrangements which are fair, transparent and contribute to securement of an equitable distribution of profits of world trade, uplifting the vulnerability of the developing countries, recognizing the special attention which the countries with small and vulnerable economies deserve, and prevent further marginalization of our economies.

This negotiating round must place development for all in the centre of our working programme and demonstrate a strong human dimension.
