

**STATEMENT DELIVERED ON BEHALF OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF DOMINICA
AT THE TWELFTH WTO MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE
BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA**

**IMPLICATIONS OF THE PASSAGE OF HURRICANE MARIA ON THE MEMBER STATE'S ECONOMY
AND TRADE**

Thank you Mr Chairman.

Mr. Chair I take the floor on behalf of the Honourable Minister for Trade, Energy and Employment in the Commonwealth of Dominica, Hon. Ian Douglas, who unfortunately, due to State Affairs, could not be here in Buenos Aires.

On the 18th day of September, 2017, Dominica, an island which has prided itself as a premier eco-tourism destination in the Caribbean was ravaged by the Category 5 Hurricane Maria. What used to be known as “sleepy creeks” became raging torrents on the night this hurricane struck taking with them infrastructure, homes, lives and livelihoods. Such was and is the stark realities in the island of Dominica; an island left naked and exposed after one the most destructive hurricane seasons. The Prime Minister, Honourable Roosevelt Skerritt stated, in his address to the nation, on the occasion of the celebration of Independence Day (November 3rd, 2017), that the task to build back Dominica is “formidable” and lamented that Dominica has lost an estimated 224% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Based upon an initial assessment of impacts to each affected sector, Hurricane Maria resulted in total damages of EC\$2.51 billion (US\$930.9 million) and losses of EC\$1.03 billion (US\$380.2 million). Most damages were sustained in the housing sector (38 percent), followed by the transport (20 percent) and education sector (8 percent). The greatest losses were sustained in the agriculture sector, the backbone of the country (32 percent), followed by the tourism, a critically important sector (19 percent) and transport sector (14 percent).

According to the World Bank’s Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA), recovery needs for reconstruction and resilience interventions, incorporating the principle of ‘building back better’ where relevant and applicable, amounts to EC\$3.64 billion (US\$1.35 billion). The largest assessed needs are in the housing sector (39 percent) followed by the transport sector (22 percent).

In monetary terms our most important economic drivers Agriculture, Tourism, Fisheries and the Commerce and Micro Business sector were hardest hit. Agriculture suffered damage to the tune of EC\$ 149.23 million (US\$ 55.27 million); the Tourism sector suffered damages of EC\$ 54.40 million (US\$ 20.15 million); the Fisheries sector suffered damages of EC\$ 6.52 million (US\$ 2.41 million) and the Commerce and Micro Business sector suffered damage to the tune of EC\$ 190.08 million (US\$ 70.40 million).

Dominica also suffered damage to the Social Sector (Housing, Education, Health, Culture) amounting to EC\$ 1.199 billion (US\$ 444 million) and losses to that sector in the amount of EC\$ 112 million (US\$ 42 million). The Infrastructure sector suffered damage in the amount of EC\$ 826 million (US\$ 306 million); losses to that sector amounted to EC\$ 365 million (US\$ 135 million). Our forest, our great resource, or eco touristic magnet, suffered damages to the tune of EC\$ 80.24 million (US\$ 29.72).

Chair, most importantly, our ability to export in any capacity, has been significantly hampered; and the country's financial health is anaemic.

We are however resolute in our efforts to build back and to do so better; we have a nation to build and we shall do so. We are however mindful of the fact that we cannot do it alone; the assistance and compromise of our sister Member States of the various international and regional organizations, including the WTO, is paramount to our reintegration into the global and trading economy.

It is on this premise and at this juncture, that the Commonwealth of Dominica, in an effort to rehabilitate and to bestow relief on our citizens after this natural disaster that we call on Members to agree to the proposal put forward by the OECS for language in the Ministerial Declaration to take note of the destruction caused during this year's unprecedented hurricane season, and to acknowledge that reconstruction and recovery and redevelopment will take many years. We are request that during this time WTO rules and disciplines not stand in the way of reconstruction. We seek the full flexibility of the multilateral trading system to be deployed so that reconstruction measures taken by the affected Members will be considered compatible with the WTO Agreements."

The Government of the Commonwealth of Dominica wishes to reaffirms its full commitments to multilateral trading system and the WTO including its fundamental principles.

Finally I wish to thank the government and people of the Republic of Argentina for hosting this conference and for the warm hospitality they have shown our delegation and for the excellent arrangements made.

Dominica also wishes to associate itself with the statements made by Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis on behalf of the OECS, St. Lucia on behalf of CARICOM, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. We also associate ourselves with refer to the declarations issued by the SVEs and the ACP.

Thank you.

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