

# WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

WT/MIN(03)/ST/110  
13 September 2003

(03-4901)

MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE  
Fifth Session  
Cancún, 10 - 14 September 2003

Original: English

## SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

Statement by H.E. Mr Ellsworth John  
Ambassador to the United States

St. Vincent and the Grenadines wishes to express its sorrow to the Government and people of Sweden at the tragic death of their beloved Foreign Minister Anna Lindh. She was well loved and respected by the people of her country for her genuine concern towards the improvement of her country's social and economic development.

This Fifth WTO Ministerial Conference is taking place at a time when the United Nations is about to meet in its General Assembly to address the challenges of regional conflicts, hunger, poverty and of course terrorism that threaten the very foundation of national and global security. It also comes at a time when the Caribbean region is challenged by the vagaries of the weather.

But it is not only the seasonal tropical storm that poses a threat to Caribbean small island developing states such as my country St. Vincent and the Grenadines. We are concerned about the possibility of sliding down the slippery slope of undevelopment even as other regions and countries discuss sustained economic growth and developed countries seek through multilateral institutions like the WTO to increase an already sizeable share of the global market and wealth. This concern is made real by multilateral rules and disciplines that are insensitive to the needs and nature of Small Island Developing Countries like ours. In this regard, we must point out that paragraph 35 of the Doha Declaration should be given full effect, for it must be recognized that despite its good intention there remain contradictions that must be examined so that the outcome of the work mandated therein is not prejudged.

The potential of this august body in terms of its ability to influence our economic and even political outcomes is profound. However, successive Rounds have failed to deliver sustained economic benefits and too many of our countries have been left in the margins of development. The mutually beneficial results promised in the Uruguay Round remain elusive to over two-thirds of the one hundred and forty-eight Members.

The second paragraph in the Marrakesh Agreement establishing the WTO gave recognition to an international trade system that is fair and equitable when it is "conducted with a view to raising living standards, ensuring full employment ... and steadily growing volume of real income". I highlight the word "conducted" because it must be understood that the Rules and Disciplines guiding these relations must give recognition to the levels of development of the constituents and that interpretations and operationalization of these rules and disciplines by all constituents must be in the good spirit of the initial intent. The widening economic gaps and progressive marginalization of the majority since the Uruguay Round must be addressed and adequately reflected in the Ministerial Statements coming out of this Fifth Ministerial Conference.

It is understood that many issues will continue to engage the attention of this Conference over the rest of its five day duration. We hope the following issues, which are of critical importance to us and of course the wider Caribbean, will be given due attention.

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These include:

- The structural disadvantages and vulnerabilities of small developing economies, in particular Small Island Developing States (SIDS)
- Work programme on small economies
- Special and Differential Treatment
- Trade Preferences
- Market access modalities
- Negotiations on agriculture

St. Vincent and the Grenadines therefore reaffirms the positions taken by various groups for the Fifth WTO Ministerial Conference such as the July 2003 Caribbean Community Declaration; and the Small Economies' Statement for the WTO Fifth Ministerial Conference; and the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group; ACP Trade Ministers Declaration adopted in Brussels, in August 2003; and call upon WTO Members to take actions necessary to address the issues and concerns raised in these Declarations.

At Doha, strong pleas were made for the recognition of the special needs and vulnerabilities of small island states. We ended up with the text on " Small Economies" in the Doha Declaration that was at best a modest compromise to gain the support of other countries, but it has been demonstrated time and time again we are not just small economies; we are small island states with peculiar characteristics, needs and vulnerabilities.

We are therefore disappointed by the lack of appreciation by some countries for the acute vulnerabilities of small island developing states and the consequent harmful implications of their actions as they pursue their claims through WTO dispute settlement; the insensitive manner in which rulings have been implemented disregarding their damaging effects on the livelihoods of thousands of farmers, agricultural employees and their dependents, as the ruling on bananas illustrates. The current dispute over sugar is another threat that could have extremely damaging economic and social consequences for small island developing countries in the Caribbean.

The particular structural disadvantages and vulnerabilities of small developing economies, in particular small island developing states (SIDS), must be taken into account in the formulation and application of multilateral trade rules as well as in the liberalization undertakings required of these countries, in order to avoid their further loss of market share and possible de-industrialization.

In the dismantling of tariffs, tariff escalation, non-tariff barriers and subsidies maintained by developed countries, the highest priority should be accorded to products of export interests to small island developing countries (SIDS) and LDCs, so as to avoid the unintended effects that such reforms can have on the export earnings of these countries. Adequate compensation mechanisms for these countries to respond to consequential losses, as well as measures to assist them in their diversification efforts should be devised. At the same time, these countries must not be confronted with mandatory tariff reductions obligations that could result in severe fiscal dislocation for already resource-strapped countries. Trade liberalization has been driven by the notion of a "level playing field". Mr Chairman, in Ancient Rome, the lions and the people met on a level playing field. We know what happened to those people. Let us not continue to relive that experience. Let us provide for balance in outcomes.

This Conference gives us the opportunity to refocus the activities and works in line with the Doha Agenda and to ensure that development becomes an operative word in the Doha Agenda.

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