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QATAR

Statement by H.E. Sheikh Hamad Bin Faisal Al-Thani

Minister of Economy and Commerce

First, I would like to express my appreciation to the Government of Mexico for hosting the Fifth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization in this beautiful city of Cancún. I would also like to congratulate you as the Chairman of the Fifth Ministerial Conference and your deputies for the outstanding preparations of this meeting. In addition, we welcome Cambodia and Nepal as new WTO Members.

It is an honour and privilege for the State of Qatar to participate in this event that will hopefully stimulate the progress of the Doha Development Agenda by bridging the gap between different trading blocs.

We believe that a successful conclusion to the Doha Round is very constructive for the global economy and will benefit all Members. Therefore, my country made a strategic decision to continue to work with its trading partners to ensure that the mission of the WTO is achieved and further reinforced, most notably for developing countries.

Promoting international trade has always been an essential part in our economic policy. As a result of Qatar's trade liberalization and economic reform, the annual report of the World Bank indicates that Qatar's openness index in 2002 was about 89 per cent, which is considered one of the highest in the entire world. While Qatar continues to promote international trade by making its market accessible to most foreign goods and services, we expect other nations to remove trading barriers on the goods that are vital to our economy, particularly on petrochemical related goods.

With regard to the impact of trade on the environment, Qatar has been promoting efficient, low carbon, and low pollutant-emitting fuel (such as natural gas). NGOs and environmental groups share Qatar's point of view that cleaner energies add value to the global environment. Therefore, we ask the WTO to define and classify environment-friendly goods and services including energy sources.

About two years ago the WTO hit a milestone by launching the Doha Round. The Doha Development Agenda aimed not only to remove barriers in highly protective economic sectors and to write new rules for globalization in areas such as investment and competition policy, but most importantly to help developing and least-developed countries. For example, the words "development" and "developing" were mentioned 63 times in the Doha Declaration.

My Government welcomes the adoption by the General Council of the decision on the implementation of paragraph 6 of the Doha Declaration on the TRIPS agreement and public health. At the same time, we believe that the WTO is facing a great challenge to successfully conclude other

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unresolved issues of the Doha Round such as market access to non-agricultural products, implementation of the agreements, negotiations of trade in services and differential treatment for developing and least-developed countries.

Because the coming rounds of trade negotiations involve advanced socio-economic topics, we ask WTO to continue providing technical assistance to the developing and least-developed countries. Technical assistance is vital in building developing nations' capacity to negotiate in trade rounds and to liberalize their economic institutions. At the same time, we advise developing countries to take WTO technical assistance very seriously as they add value to their expertise. For example, we in Qatar had benefited from regional seminars that covered various trading topics.

We also ask WTO Members to expedite the accessions process of other trading nations that seek to join the WTO. In particular we support the accession of Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Lebanon, Sudan, and Algeria. These countries are essential trading partners with almost all WTO Members. Besides, recent economic reforms in these countries have been very constructive and positive for the global economy. We believe that these countries are qualified to join the WTO without additional commitment beyond the provisions of the Uruguay Round Agreements.

Unfortunately, we find that regional governmental organizations from developing and least-developed countries are not given opportunities to participate in WTO activities. In particular, we ask the WTO to grant the League of Arab States an observer status. The League can be very constructive in enhancing the capacity of its members to reform their economic institutions and liberalize their trade policies.

At the end we wish the Chairman of this Conference and his associates the best of luck in coordinating the activities in this event, and we look forward to participating in making this important event a fruitful one for the global economy. Thank you for listening.
