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Statement by the Honourable Pehin Dato Abdul Rahman Taib Minister of Industry and Primary Resources

To begin with, I would like to thank you, the Government of Mexico and the people of Cancún for the warm hospitality and excellent arrangements for our meeting in this beautiful city.

I would also like to congratulate Cambodia and Nepal on the successful completion of their accession procedures and welcome them into the World Trade Organization.

On behalf of the Government of Brunei Darussalam and my delegation, I take this opportunity to convey our deepest condolences to the Swedish Government and the family of the Foreign Minister, Her Excellency the late Ms Anna Lindh, on her tragic demise.

At our last meeting in Doha nearly two years ago, we launched what has come to be known as the Doha Development Agenda. Since then, our Ambassadors in Geneva and trade negotiators have worked very hard under the auspices of the Trade Negotiations Committee and its sub-fora to deliver on the promise of a balanced outcome.

Despite some progress, consensus has largely been elusive. Nevertheless, I am happy to join colleagues in welcoming the Decision on the Implementation of Paragraph 6 of the Doha Declaration on TRIPS Agreement and Public Health. It is indeed a positive development which demonstrates that we have the political will to deal with the challenges faced in other areas.

This is an excellent and timely opportunity to strengthen the multilateral trading system and ensure its continued primacy.

Turning now to those challenges, I would like to share our views on some of the major issues in the Doha work programme.

With regard to the negotiations on market access for non-agricultural products, we acknowledge the ongoing work and we hope that the eventual result would be a balanced one. We also note that additional approaches, including sectoral elimination or harmonization, have been proposed. We are of the view that these should only be undertaken on a voluntary basis.

We also acknowledge the work undertaken by the working groups on the "Singapore Issues". Nevertheless, we are of the view that many substantive issues remain to be clarified. The clarification process should thus continue. In accordance with the need for "explicit consensus", the wide divergence of views precludes the launch of negotiations.

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Last but not least, we see the proposed Annex on Special and Differential Treatment as a package worthy for adoption. We look forward to work on the pending proposals being intensified and satisfactorily concluded.

A major test of the Doha Development Agenda is how it will deliver on its promise of increasing market access for the products and services of developing countries. Expectations were raised two years ago in Doha. My most sincere hope is that these be lived up to.

Globalization should not only mean that the markets of developing countries are opened to products and services from the developed countries. It should also entail the breaking down of barriers such as quotas and overly onerous health and sanitary regulations and technical obstacles that hinder the exports of developing countries to developed countries.

Technical assistance and capacity-building are also essential in this regard. Such activities, as the Doha Ministerial Declaration stipulates, should be geared towards assisting developing countries to draw on the benefits, not merely to implement the obligations, of the WTO agreements.

To conclude, our meeting here in Cancún is meant to serve as a mid-term review of progress in advancing the work programme agreed to in Doha. A spirit of pragmatism and flexibility will be necessary as we redouble our efforts to forge a consensus that ensures a successful outcome for all. I remain confident that this task, difficult as it appears, is not insurmountable.
