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GRENADA

Statement by H.E. Mr. Denis G. Antoine Ambassador to the United States

I bring greetings from the Prime Minister, the Government and People of Grenada, and my Minister of Trade.

I am honored to address this eminent body. This Third Ministerial Conference is very significant for Grenada and other developing countries of the Caribbean Community. The outcome of our discussions will affect our trading system for most of the new century.

The decisions we make will have an effect on the lives of millions of people, and therefore the welfare of our citizens must be the central focus of our deliberations, especially those of poor and powerless small island nations.

As we begin this new era of global trade we observe emerging trends in the international economy that may not be necessarily comforting to the smaller economies of our region. We are small open and extremely vulnerable economies, which are exposed to trends of globalization and trade liberalization on an unprecedented scale.

We will not debunk every economic argument on the benefits of globalization and free trade. However caution must be exercised, by instituting the necessary safeguards to protect small island economies like Grenada's, from harmful measures. The political will must also be demonstrated by developed nations, to assist the less developed to prepare the necessary infrastructure, to boost capacity to benefit from the process of liberalization.

We must remain conscious that the powerful and emotive forces that turn the wheels of change may not be entirely sensitive to the problems that characterize our region and the smaller states in general.

The WTO ruling on the EU banana regime is still a major concern to our farmers. How can we convince our people that the WTO will benefit them? The Windward Islands export a mere three per cent (3%) of the total volume of banana export to the European Union, yet we stand to lose everything. The impact for the small economies of the Eastern Caribbean will be devastating.

We are concerned that development and poverty eradication - leave out the rhetoric - are no longer a part of the real agenda of our international community. The Lomé Convention once hailed as a model for relationship between developed and developing countries is rapidly being transformed into an agreement more concerned with the benefit of the developed partners.

The fact that the implementation of existing agreements has revealed serious imbalances prejudicial to the interest and expectations of developing countries requires that these imbalances must be redressed.

In spite of progress made in tariff liberalization, developing countries agricultural exports continue to experience obstacles in the form of tariff peaks and tariff escalation, which inhibits market access.

I wish to address the issue of special and differential treatment. It is my view that the special and differential treatment provisions in the Agreement on Agriculture have been inadequate in dealing with the particular position on agriculture of the economies of developing countries.

My Government also identifies sectors such as telecommunication, offshore finance and professional services as offering promising possibilities for the development of our nation,

In this context we support the call that under the GATS special consideration be given to the needs of small vulnerable developing countries.

Enhancing and improving trade-related technical cooperation, to strengthen and build our institutional capacity must be a key element in making the development dimensions of global trade a reality.

Positive measures designed to ensure that developing countries and especially the least-developed secure a greater share in the growth of international trade commensurate with their economic, social and development needs, in order to avert total marginalization.

I thank you very much for the opportunity to address this Conference.
