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BARBADOS

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Almost two years ago, we the Trade Ministers met at Doha and agreed upon the Doha Development Agenda. That agenda not only embraced a broad and balanced Work Programme, but also incorporated an expanded negotiating agenda and other important decisions and activities, which we considered necessary to addressing the challenges confronting the multilateral trading system.

We have not only failed to meet the many deadlines of the Programme, but have also lost the very development dimension of the agenda. Barbados contends that our failure to restore this development dimension to our negotiations could seriously undermine our efforts at establishing a multilateral trading system that is fair, balanced and that provides opportunities and benefits for all countries, developed and developing alike.

We were assured that trade liberalization under the aegis of the World Trade Organization would have provided concrete benefits to all countries, especially the developing ones. Almost a decade since the establishment of this Organization, we find that a number of developing countries have not yet realized any such benefits. Indeed, some are worse off today than they were at the beginning of 1995. The benefits of free trade have not reached them, but are skewed in favour of developed countries.

In the area of services where many of our countries were expecting to reap tangible benefits, expectations have not been realized. The regulations and combined strategies of developed countries have militated against our efforts to exploit the opportunities in this significant area of economic activity.

What is more, new international developments and countries' preoccupations with them, are forcing responses that have the potential to develop into non-tariff barriers to our exports. This is increasingly being felt by a number of developing countries, which are forced to comply with oftentimes onerous requirements. The World Trade Organization has a duty to bring this matter under its surveillance with a view to ensuring that no new non-tariff barriers emerge.

The agenda which we agreed upon at Doha was intended to address some of the difficulties faced by countries like ours in the Caribbean, by emphasizing the development dimension of international trade. It was precisely for this reason that Ministers included on the Doha Development Agenda, areas of critical importance such as special and differential treatment, small economies, and capacity-building.

Special and differential treatment must be given practical expression not only in our rules and regulations, but in the programmes and policies that we adopt for developing countries. Furthermore, it must not be seen merely as giving differential time periods between developed and developing countries to implement agreements and decisions. Rather it should be used as an instrument for

fostering development in the beneficiary countries and facilitating their smooth integration into the global economy. Failure to recognize special and differential treatment in its true context is to ignore the plight and fundamental constraints facing our countries, and to deny us the right to participate meaningfully in the new world economy that we are seeking to fashion.

There is a group of developing countries to which I would wish specially to draw this Meeting's attention. I refer to small economies like those in the Caribbean that have to participate in the new multilateral trading system and comply with its rules and regulations, like all other countries. These small economies face a number of unique constraints which need to be addressed in an effective manner.

Ministers at Doha agreed to the establishment of a Work Programme to examine issues related to the trade of small economies, and to frame appropriate responses. We were to receive at this Conference specific recommendations for action coming out of that Work Programme. Regrettably, there was little progress in this area in Geneva, due in part to the intransigence of a number of countries. This situation is unacceptable and must not be allowed to persist. Too much is at stake for millions of our peoples, and our development hopes and aspirations are being frustrated. We face the spectre of marginalization by a multilateral system that is supposed to provide benefits for everyone.

We must be untiring and decisive in addressing this issue and must give clear directions as to the way forward.

The baton of development has been dropped since we left Doha. We need to pick it up and resolutely finish the race. Cancún provides the opportunity to do so. Ministers, let us put development back at the centre of our negotiating agenda.
