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GUYANA

Statement by the Honourable Clement James Rohee, MP
Minister of Foreign Trade and International Cooperation

On behalf of the Government of Guyana, I would like to congratulate the Government of Mexico for hosting this very important Conference at an extremely critical time in the multilateral trading system. I would also like to express sincere thanks for the warm welcome and courtesies extended to my delegation. I also recognize the enormous efforts and dedication of WTO Director-General Dr Supachai and the staff of the WTO Secretariat in the preparation for this Conference.

It is extremely crucial for Cancún to advance the Development Agenda which we established at Doha nearly two years ago. It will not be sufficient for us to simply reiterate the decisions taken then nor would it be acceptable to revise the levels of ambition of the Doha Development Agenda (DDA) in a manner that undermines the just concerns and interests of the developing countries, particularly the smaller developing economies.

At a minimum, we must pursue a positive and balanced agenda in which the special needs and interests of the small developing Member countries are comprehensively addressed. Based on the clear evidence and our experience since the establishment of the WTO, this Ministerial Conference needs to put the implementation issues, including the special and differential treatment matters, which we agreed to at Doha, on a fast track. Nothing less would be workable, otherwise we risk engendering greater imbalances in the multilateral trading system.

Initiatives being taken, as well as those already taken, by the small developing economies of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) to diversify and adjust to the changing global economic environment require the full support of the international community, not the least of which are our developed country partners. As such, the trade liberalization we commit ourselves to must strengthen the Development Agenda and lift our populations out of joblessness and poverty.

The economies of CARICOM are fully committed to a fair and balanced rules-based multilateral trading system. Fourteen of the fifteen CARICOM countries are Members of the WTO, with the remaining one currently pursuing Membership. These countries have all undertaken unilateral adjustments during the Uruguay Round and continue to do so under the WTO. These countries, which are extremely open and highly dependent on external trade, need the policy space to make the further adjustments for effective integration into the global economy.

My own country, Guyana, is confronted with numerous challenges as a highly indebted poor country (HIPC) in seeking to respect its obligations and pursue its rights under the WTO. We cannot over-emphasize the urgency, therefore, for the WTO to move quickly beyond the exhaustive clarification of particular difficulties facing small, vulnerable economies in the international trading

environment that has been taking place, to proposing and adopting specific recommendations and measures to ensure their beneficial participation in the WTO and the multilateral trading system.

We should conclude our deliberations in Cancún by first deepening and even expanding the development focus of the multilateral trading system. Admittedly, we have made incremental steps in the past few years and the road from Doha to Cancún, though rocky in many respects, need not remain that way. It calls for political will from all of us and we should respond accordingly.

Various assessments have been done and the conclusions are unmistakably clear: concrete progress has to be made on the Development Agenda of the multilateral trading system in advance of the next Ministerial Conference. This is not a call by governments only, but indeed the wider civil society. We cannot afford not to hear and act quickly.
