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KUWAIT

Statement Circulated by H.E. Mr. Bader Abdulrahim
Acting Under Secretary of the
Ministry of Commerce and Industry

On behalf of the Government of the State of Kuwait and its delegation, I would like to extend my congratulations to His Excellency for being elected as Chairman of the Fourth Ministerial Conference of the WTO. I wish to include my congratulations to the distinguished members of your office, wishing you all success in your missions.

I would also like to thank the Secretariat of the WTO for its tremendous efforts in preparing for this meeting.

Lastly, I wish to convey my gratitude to the State of Qatar for hosting the conference and providing all the facilities for its success. This, without a doubt, will be a source of pride to the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

The State of Kuwait joined the GATT in the early sixties out of its strong conviction in the importance of international organizations and to complement the role of regional organizations in the process of trade liberalization. The adoption of the market economy has accomplished for Kuwait its aspirations, through the creation of various economic institutions with a broad set of activities.

The public supervision represented by the Kuwaiti parliament, with representatives of all Kuwaiti groups, are freely elected by the people which aims to realize their social and economic goals in the distribution of national wealth as well as services to all citizens and residents.

I do not wish to go into detail about what is included in the Doha draft declaration. I will leave it to specialists who have been working on the draft since the last Ministerial Conference in Seattle.

I am also certain that my views about the draft ministerial declaration in general will be shared by most member countries. However, I will concentrate on the following matters:

1. Implementation: We believe that it is necessary to adopt resolutions regarding implementation issues by establishing a mechanism that will put into action the commitments of developed countries. Specifically those relating to special and preferential treatment, transfer of technology, knowledge and market access for developing countries, and providing those countries with the necessary technical assistance in order for them to fully implement their commitments to the WTO.

2. GATS related negotiations: We see the necessity in implementing Article 4 of the GATS agreement relating to increasing the structural capabilities of developing countries in services, including improving access to information networks and the transfer of technology and knowledge.

Developed countries should not seek developing countries for full liberalization of its services sectors, which should only be done gradually and according to their development's capabilities.

3. Tariff reduction on industrial products: In any future negotiations relating to tariff reduction on industrial products, the reduction should be on the bound customs tariff and not on applied customs tariff. The reduction should be proportional to the economies of member countries.

4. New issues: Working groups that have been established after the conference in Singapore specializing in investment, competition and transparency in government procurement and trade facilitation should complete their work in studying and researching those issues in order to make the related articles more clear for developing countries.

5. Trade environment, trade and work standards: The Government of Kuwait respects all international agreements relating to environment and labour standards. We believe that there are specialized international organizations created for these issues thus it is not necessary to include them in the agenda of the WTO.

6. Accession facilitation: It is necessary, during this conference, to issue a decision that would make Article XII of the WTO Agreement relating to accession more transparent. It should include detailed directive rules and principles regarding the accession's negotiations in order to facilitate and accelerate the accession procedures of countries desirous of becoming members to the WTO. In this regard, I would like to mention the accession of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Its accession will be a big economic gain and a move forward for the WTO.

Kuwait would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the accession of the People's Republic of China to the WTO.

Finally, my delegation supports the request of the new WTO members, the Sultanate of Oman and the Hachemite Kingdom of Jordan, to give them more flexibility in the current and coming trade negotiations on the implementation of WTO agreements and the gradual liberalization of their markets according to their economics.

In conclusion, this meeting is taking place at the threshold of the Holy Month of Ramadan in which the most noble meaning of social Interdependence, elimination of social differences and the invitation to the wealthy to sympathize with the needy. We are seeking true globalization in order to realize most of it. At the end of the Holy Month of Ramadan, the wonderful succeeding celebrations call spontaneously for the elimination of differences. The birth of Christ, peace be upon Him, symbolizes the spirit of tolerance and interdependence. As the year ends with the arrival of a New Year, may God make it a stable and prosperous year for all of us and all of humanity.
