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Statement by H.E. Mr Richard Howard Moss Ferreira
Minister of Foreign Trade, Industry and
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Allow me, Mr Chairman, to congratulate you on your being appointed to head the Fourth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization. I am sure that with your able guidance this meeting will prove successful. I should like to say that my delegation is ready to extend the fullest cooperation in achieving the objectives fixed for this occasion.

Ecuador believes in the multilateral trading system and it believes that respect for the Organization's disciplines and standards is vital to the proper functioning of the entire system. In my country we believe that trade is a mainspring of development, and markets should function without obstacles so that trade is more dynamic and fosters freedom of initiative among entrepreneurs, competitiveness and the establishment of a climate of trust so as to attract national and foreign investors.

In this respect, our experience in international trade has been a positive one. Ecuador is one of the countries most open to international trade and the autonomous economic opening achieved so far has been fundamental in developing our country. Despite the high cost of the economic and structural adjustments that were required in recent years to overcome the deep crisis which started in late 1998, Ecuador has been consistent with its principles and has not altered the conditions or degree of openness of its market, thereby demonstrating its confidence in trade liberalization.

We reiterate our support for the current multilateral negotiations. However, in the belief that market forces tend to intensify the differences between the rich and the poor countries and cannot in themselves solve existing inequities, Ecuador considers that – especially in the negotiations on agriculture and services, but also in those on other topics – provisions on special and differential treatment should be applied in support of national development efforts and that other particularities, difficulties and limitations of the developing countries should also be taken into account.

In addition, as shown by several studies, the developing countries' capacity to use the rules of multilateral trade and turn them into concrete advantages has been limited by their institutional weaknesses and by weaknesses in infrastructure and training that could be improved with a substantial quantitative and qualitative increase in technical assistance, both by the WTO and by other international bodies in a position to provide it.

There are still a number of problems for which the solution is a matter of concern. Ecuador is an agricultural country, for which reason we consider it essential to achieve full integration of agriculture in WTO rules, the elimination of non-tariff measures and export subsidies, a substantial reduction in tariffs and tariff peaks, as well as tariff escalation, an increase in tariff quotas and

recognition of the asymmetries in the degree of development of Member countries, together with the need to eliminate poverty, especially in the rural sectors of developing countries.

We also emphasize the need to move ahead in acknowledging the rights to adequate protection of genetic resources, as well as traditional knowledge, innovation and practices and folklore.

Ecuador is especially interested in the WTO fostering the process of reforming the Understanding on the Settlement of Disputes, particularly in the context of the proposal we have submitted.

We must find a lasting and definitive solution to the external debt problem so that developing countries can release resources to increase their exports, make productive investments and also investments in infrastructure and education, thereby enhancing their competitiveness and bringing prompt connectivity with the computer age, before the digital gap becomes an insuperable gap. It is gratifying to see that our initiative has been taken up in the draft Ministerial Declaration to initiate the examination of the relationship between trade, debt and finance.

Lastly, we urge the Ministerial Conference to make the necessary efforts to find an acceptable understanding on the controversial topics we are dealing with, since it will be the best way of reducing poverty and helping to improve nutrition, foster education, facilitate the creation of wealth and create better opportunities for millions of human beings.

This would be the best way to reaffirm our commitment to create a world with greater equity, peace, safety and wellbeing.
