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HONDURAS

Statement by H.E. Mr Oscar Kafati
Minister of Industry and Commerce

On behalf of my country, I wish to thank the Government of Qatar for hosting this Fourth Ministerial Conference.

The Government of Honduras, which I have the honour to represent, is very gratified to attend this Fourth Ministerial Conference, with an open mind and in the hope that the Conference will be the success we all want and will agree on provisions to ensure that commitments and benefits are shared equitably among all the Members of this Organization.

When it acceded to the GATT in 1994, Honduras undertook a number of commitments and obligations, which we have assumed responsibly. As a developing country, Honduras has done everything possible to pursue and achieve the goals of a free market and liberal trade policies; even so, the imbalance between rights and obligations under the Uruguay Round Agreements has resulted in an unfair distribution of benefits.

Accordingly, we consider that the time has come to adopt the relevant Decisions, so as to solve the implementation issues that have arisen since the Third Ministerial Conference, in Seattle. Three years of arduous work have gone by on this topic and the market access commitments entered into in Marrakesh have still not materialized, nor have the special and differential treatment provisions become binding. It is time to lay appropriate foundations for the next multilateral negotiations, which will be known as the "Development Round".

I cannot fail to reiterate my Government's gratitude for the good faith shown by Members in rectifying the mistake that excluded Honduras from Annex VII during the negotiations of the Uruguay Round agreements. It is also important for Honduras to see in the decision on implementation to be adopted at this multilateral Conference that a country leaves the list in that Annex when it has reached a real per capita income of \$1,000 in 1990 terms for three consecutive years. In addition, we support the procedures set out in document G/SCM/W/471 and endorse the concern of several countries with small economies, like my own, about obtaining a reasonable time-frame.

The establishment of the Dispute Settlement Body has been an achievement with which we should all express satisfaction. Compliance with and enforcement of the recommendations by the Panels is a commitment we must all make, but I should like to express my country's great disappointment that since the only occasion on which we have used this mechanism, our rights have still not been restored. Consequently, we consider it a priority to strengthen these procedures so as to guarantee for the weaker countries full use of their rights within this Organization.

We believe that this Ministerial Conference affords an opportunity to adopt the necessary decisions to rectify the asymmetries stemming from the implementation of the Organization's agreements, before embarking on any initiative to launch new negotiations with a broader programme.

Until the problems of access for products and sectors of interest to us are solved, we do not believe it appropriate for further obligations to be added to our participation in trade.

My Government is engaged in the current agriculture and services negotiations. As for agriculture, special and differential treatment must form an integral part of the negotiations, it being understood that such treatment should not be viewed in the same way as non-trade concerns, since the situation of the agricultural sector in developing countries is completely different from that in developed countries. Similarly, we should like a clear reference to be made to the "Development Box" and to the need to solve food security problems among the developing and least-developed countries.

As for services, we wish to reiterate that the purpose of the negotiations should be to increase the developing countries' share by liberalizing the sectors and modes of supply of major interest to those countries so as to ensure an overall balance of rights and obligations.

With reference to the Organization's future work, the negotiations on access for non-agricultural products must also ensure the elimination of non-tariff barriers and they must start after a detailed, consolidated study has been made of the past and future effects of tariff cuts on local industries and developing country economies.

We trust that one positive outcome of this Fourth Conference will be the adoption of a joint declaration whereby Members can take the requisite measures to promote the public health of their populations, as provided for in the TRIPS Agreement.

In connection with the work programme established for the issues of investment and competition, we believe that the educational and exploratory process must continue without prejudging the initiation of future negotiations.

We consider that the WTO is not the appropriate forum to discuss issues relating to trade and the environment and core labour standards. We do not agree with holding negotiations on these topics, since the result would be further disguised trade barriers and would cut down still more the market access opportunities for developing countries.

If the developing and least-developed countries are to be integrated in the multilateral trading system, the special and differential treatment provisions need to be effective and legally binding and, to this end, we support the idea of the General Council preparing a framework agreement on special and differential treatment which would be completed for the Fifth Ministerial Conference.

I shall conclude by emphasizing my belief that this Ministerial Conference affords a valuable opportunity to consider the various concerns and the various challenges faced by the multilateral trading system, and we should not forget that the principles that gave rise to this Organization recognize the prime objectives of "raising standards of living, ensuring full employment and a large and steadily growing volume of real income for all Members".
