

# WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

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**FIJI**

Statement by the Honourable Kaliopate Tavola, MP

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Minister of Foreign Affairs and External Trade

Whilst we are meeting here, the world is watching with much expectation to the outcomes of our deliberation. The success of the DDA can directly assist 300 million people in developing countries escape the poverty trap, including the citizens of my own country; a small island developing State that suffers from the smallness of its economies of scale, the tyranny of distance to its export markets and, for reason of geography and severe agro-climatic conditions, depends on a

the identified sectors do not necessarily reflect the developmental interest of small economies like mine. Any mandatory obligation is based on a fundamentally wrong assumption that all of the Members are equal in developmental status.

The equitable and fair application of S&D treatment principles would not require unreasonable tariff reduction from countries like Fiji. It will also expose the zero-to-zero approach as unfair and inequitable. We do not agree that small vulnerable economies should remove their low duties, because they contribute substantially towards customs revenue and have negligible impact on market access.

Fiji wants this Conference to agree that its infant and emerging industries should be treated with some flexibility in terms of leaving unbound some of the tariff lines relevant to products of special interest and which are directly linked to our development needs.

The implementation period for reduction in tariff, once the modalities are agreed, should be longer, for small island and developing countries, in the range of 10-12 years.

Since development is the core objective of the DDA, further liberalization should not result in countries, like mine, becoming worse off after the Round than before it. Solutions must be found to mitigate the negative impact of loss of market access, due to any erosion of preferential margins.

#### **GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TRADE IN SERVICES (GATS)**

Fiji supports greater effort to operationalize Article IV of GATS and to increase the participation of developing countries, through the liberalization of market access in service sectors and modes of supply of export interest to them, particularly Mode 4. Given the capacity constraint, evident in most developing countries to negotiate in this area, negotiations should therefore be conducted on the principle of progressive liberalization, at a pace commensurate with their level of development. In addition, balance should be maintained between market access negotiations and the multilateral negotiations in rule-making in services that would help create a more favourable framework for developing countries. This can provide higher level of comfort in negotiating market access commitments.

#### **SPECIAL AND DIFFERENTIAL TREATMENT**

S&D Treatment for developing countries is already part of the WTO Agreements and principles. It must be taken into account that it should be included in the schedule of concession and commitments, and in the appropriate rules and disciplines to enable developing countries to address their development priorities. Future work in this area must be dedicated to addressing the specific constraints of developing countries as agreed to in Doha.

#### **COMMODITIES ISSUES**

Fiji supports the mainstreaming of this issue in the Draft Ministerial Text. We agree that the Trade and Development Committee should be given new mandate to allow it to consider urgent cases such as the initiative for the cotton producers of West Africa.

#### **SMALL ECONOMIES**

It gives me great pleasure as the representative of Fiji to make this statement on behalf of Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Cuba, Dominica, Fiji Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Maldives, Mauritius, Papua New Guinea, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, Seychelles, Solomon Islands, Surinam, Trinidad and Tobago, and Vanuatu - comprising a group of small, vulnerable economies.

The following statement reflects the common challenges and objectives confronting our countries, and a restatement to this Conference for action to address them.

The full text of my statement has been circulated. Therefore, I only want to emphasize the key issues and concerns that the small vulnerable economies would like me to address.

We are concerned that little progress has been made on the issues of interest to us, and we call on this Conference to take the decisions necessary

technical assistance. This should be targeted at institutional capacity building in public and private sectors, the cost of representation to WTO, implementation of and adjustments relating to multilateral rules.

11. Agree to the adoption of Guidelines on WTO Accession Procedures for LDCs by the General Council but nevertheless express concern over the excessive demands made in the accession process for LDCs and small, vulnerable economies. We call on WTO Members to adhere fully to these guidelines and refrain from placing onerous demands on LDCs and small, vulnerable economies.

We look forward to continuing the Work Programme on small economies as mandated by Ministers in Doha and call upon Members for its completion, and to reaffirm their commitment to the Programme.

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