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FIJI

Statement by the Honourable Kaliopate Tavola on Behalf of Small Vulnerable Economies

1. It gives me great pleasure as the representative of the Republic of the Fiji Islands to make this statement on behalf of the Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Cuba, Dominica, Fiji Islands, 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, Vanuatu - comprising a group of small, vulnerable economies. This statement therefore is a reflection of the common challenges and objectives confronting our countries and a restatement to this Ministerial Conference for action to address our concerns.
2. Members of this Body adopted a Declaration in Doha in November 2001, that we believe offered some hope to countries such as mine: small island developing states and other such similarly situated small, vulnerable economies. In paragraph 6 of the 1998 Geneva WTO Ministerial Declaration, Members expressed their deep concern over the marginalization of least-developed and certain small economies and recognized the urgent need to address this marginalization. Building on this at Doha, we agreed in paragraph 35 to a work programme that would frame responses to the trade-related issues identified for the fuller integration of small, vulnerable economies into the multilateral trading system.
3. The establishment of the work programme for the small, vulnerable economies was therefore a welcome and a much anticipated first step forward for us. It has already given us an opportunity to explain our unique economic and administrative constraints and to propose ways in which the rules-based system must accommodate and address the circumstances of all its Members, including the small, vulnerable economies. The outcome of the work programme should not be prejudged.
4. The WTO claims to be a multilateral trading organization, which addresses the circumstances of all its Members, and whose rules provide a balance of advantages for all its constituents. However, this is unfortunately not true for the small, vulnerable economies whose limited negotiating capital and small size limit their ability to cope with the complex multilateral rules, does not allow for effective bargaining to secure specific measures which address our development needs, and thus has prevented us from participating effectively in the negotiation of WTO provisions more suited to enhancing our welfare.
5. The discussions undertaken should have sensitized WTO Members to our unique circumstances. In addition, a number of regional groupings have adopted Ministerial Declarations for the Fifth WTO Ministerial Conference. We reaffirm the Dhaka Declaration of the Trade Ministers of Least-Developed Countries adopted in June 2003; the Mauritius Declaration endorsed by the Heads of State and Government of the African Union in Maputo, Mozambique, in July 2003; the Caribbean Declaration adopted in Montego Bay, Jamaica, in July 2003; and the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific Group Declaration adopted in Brussels, in August 2003. However, we are yet to see any substantive

responses to our concerns. We call upon WTO Members to take actions necessary to resolve the issues and concerns raised in these Declarations.

6. It is still difficult for the larger WTO Members to grasp how "small" our economies really are. Together, the small, vulnerable economies account for less than one per cent of total trade of all Members of the WTO family. This is a striking illustration of the fact that adopting effective measures to address the special needs and circumstances of small, vulnerable economies would have minimal impact on other WTO Members.

7. We are further concerned at the serious prob

flexibility shall be accorded to small, vulnerable economies to open fewer sectors, in line with their national development objectives and due account shall be given to their small service suppliers;

- (e) agree to continue the debate on the Singapore Issues in order to clarify the issues before any negotiations commence in these areas;
- (f) agree that improved disciplines in the Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures shall provide greater flexibility in the use of certain subsidies for small, vulnerable economies, particularly fisheries and agricultural subsidies, as these are a necessary tool to further their development;
- (g) agree that the process of clarifying and improving disciplines and procedures under the existing WTO provisions applying to regional trade agreements between developed and developing countries shall allow sufficient flexibility to take into account the differences in size and level of development of these countries;
- (h) urge Members to continue to work for WTO's Members' rights to protect public health and, in particular, to promote access to medicines for all;
- (i) while appreciating efforts by the WTO, UNCTAD, other international organizations, agencies and donors to enhance the capacity of small, vulnerable economies, call for further 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;
- (j) 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. Call on WTO Members to adhere fully to these guidelines and refrain from placing onerous demands on LDCs and small, vulnerable economies in the accession process.

11. We look forward to continue the work programme on small economies as mandated by Ministers in Doha and call upon Members for its completion by 1 January 2005 as recommended by the General Council. We call on Members to reaffirm their commitment to the Work Programme on Small Economies and urge them to adopt specific measures that would facilitate the fuller integration of small, vulnerable economies into the multilateral trading system in a manner that promotes their development.
