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MAURITIUS

Statement Circulated by the Honourable Rajkeswur Purryag,
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs
and International Trade

1. I wish to join the other delegations in thanking the Swiss authorities and the WTO Secretariat for hosting the Second WTO Ministerial Conference and, in particular, the events commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the GATT. Allow me also, to congratulate you on your assumption of Office and to assure you of my delegation's support in your, enviable yet delicate task.
2. This is the second time that we are gathered after our historic meeting in Marrakesh. In Singapore it would have been premature to make a reasonable assessment of the progress achieved since the conclusion of the Uruguay Round. We are now better placed to do so. Such progress needs to be gauged in the light of the core principles guiding the WTO process. Let us ask ourselves whether our target of "raising standards of living, ensuring full employment and a large and steadily growing volume of real income" has been attained. Whilst we acknowledge the role of the multilateral trading system over the past 50 years, we should ask ourselves whether the gains achieved have been spread in a fair and equitable manner.
3. We have committed ourselves fully to address the problem of marginalization of the least-developed countries and the risk which it represents for certain developing countries. We have also reaffirmed the importance of special and differential treatment for developing countries to enable them to integrate the multilateral system. Eighteen months later we note that these countries are still grappling with a lot of difficulties. Although some progress has been achieved in the launching of the Plan of Action for Least-Developed Countries, so far only very few trading partners have translated

including notification obligations.

guarantees that they can offer security and predictability to investors, local and foreign. The enabling conditions can only be secured through the continuation of mutually agreed, non-reciprocal preferential market access, particularly those contained in the Lomé Convention. Any disruption in the steady flow of earnings resulting from our export trade would seriously jeopardize our socio-economic development.

12. The credibility of the WTO rests on its capacity to treat all its Members fairly and equitably. It is not our intention to question liberalization within a rule-based system. But we have to formulate future rules that are realistic and adjust existing ones to address the concerns of all Members, particularly the vulnerable ones. Therein lie the credibility and the sustainability of the multilateral trade system. We are at the doorstep of a new millennium and our constituents expect us to lay the foundations of a just and fair society. Here at the WTO we should live up to these expectations. Otherwise future generations will hold us to task.
