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MINISTERIAL MEETING OF SMALL, VULNERABLE ECONOMIES

Hong Kong, China, 14 December 2005

Communiqué from Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Fiji, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Jamaica, Mauritius, Mongolia, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago

The following communication, dated 14 December 2005, is being circulated at the request of the delegation of Barbados.

COMMUNIQUÉ

1. We, the Ministers of the small, vulnerable economies in the WTO reaffirm the importance of paragraph 35 of the Doha Ministerial Declaration to which all Member States of the WTO agreed and urge that the discussions during the 6th WTO Ministerial Conference take full account of the characteristics and structural problems of small economies and reflect the interests of these economies in the decisions taken.
2. We recognize the cumulative and interrelated nature of the problems and characteristics of small, vulnerable economies such as a minimal share of total world trade; physical isolation, geographical dispersal and distance from the main markets; high transport and transit costs; small, fragmented and highly imperfect markets; minimal or no export product diversification; dependency upon very few export markets and lack of adequate market access opportunities; high degree of vulnerability; low competitiveness; considerable difficulties to attract foreign investment; and susceptibility to natural disasters.
3. We reaffirm our commitment to the WTO as the multilateral organization where trade-related responses to the problems of small, vulnerable economies should be considered. In accordance with the Doha mandate the membership shall meaningfully address the trade-related issues identified by these economies and adopt appropriate and sustainable solutions by the end of December 2006.
4. We highlight some of the key expectations of the small, vulnerable economies in the Doha negotiations. Small, vulnerable economies have issues of substantial interest in the agriculture negotiations in terms of market access, including special flexibilities. Considering the key

contribution that agriculture makes to the livelihood and food security and rural development of small, vulnerable economies, these countries consider that Special Products (SP) and the Special Safeguard Mechanism (SSM) are crucial for the development of their agricultural sectors.

5. In the NAMA negotiations, small, vulnerable economies should make a contribution commensurate with their small share of world trade. Tariffs serve multiple purposes in small, vulnerable economies and therefore tariff reductions must be compatible with sustainable trade reform and liberalization programmes. Special and differential treatment and less than full reciprocity are integral and cross cutting elements of the NAMA mandate. The flexibilities which are adopted for small, vulnerable economies must respond to their specific circumstances.

6. Special priority should be accorded to the services sectors and modes of export interest to the small, vulnerable economies, in order to promote the development of their services sectors so that they can contribute more substantially to employment creation, revenue generation and overall growth.

7. The particular concerns of small, vulnerable economies in all areas of the rules negotiations should be taken into account given the need to allow small, vulnerable economies to better respond to the requirements of their small business sectors. The contribution of the fisheries sector to some of these small, vulnerable economies is crucial to their trade and economic development objectives.

8. The specific needs of the small, vulnerable economies should be addressed in the trade facilitation negotiations, especially considering the geographical constraints of the landlocked and island small economies. In this regard appropriate technical assistance and capacity building programmes should be provided for these economies.

9. In accordance with paragraph 38 of the Doha Ministerial Declaration and in view of the limitations in the institutional capacity of small, vulnerable economies, priority shall be given to the provision of enhanced and targeted capacity building.

10. We reaffirm that for the Doha Round to be truly a development round the concerns of all developing countries have to be considered and solutions found to address their specific circumstances. The small, vulnerable economies expect that their concerns will be accorded appropriate and meaningful treatment to ensure that their Work Programme is fully implemented, its objective realized and that sustainable measures are adopted to ensure that the development priorities of these economies are not compromised and that the benefits of the multilateral trading system can be shared by all.

11. We believe that the 6th WTO Ministerial Conference is being held at a critical moment when the need to fully integrate development concerns is paramount. It is important that from both a substantive and a procedural perspective the concerns of the small, vulnerable economies are fully respected. The decisions taken at this 6th WTO Ministerial Conference shall specifically chart the way forward for the small, vulnerable economies in the Doha negotiations and in the Work Programme and also reaffirm the membership's full commitment to engage on this issue to ensure the realization of the mandate.
