

Mr. Chairman,

1. I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) at the United Nations. We fully align ourselves with the statement delivered by Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Mr. Chairman,

2. Trade remains the driving force towards growth and development of the world economy as international relations are driven less by political dynamics.
3. Globalisation has been accompanied by a rapid expansion of global trade and the structure of the global economy over the last few decades. Consequently, developing countries and in particular small island developing states (SIDS) including those in CARICOM, have not received the expected economic dividends emanating from trade liberalization to take full advantage of the positive spin-offs of this phenomenon, as their domestic production structures are often characterized by primary production and lack of diversification.
4. The difficulties faced therefore by these countries particularly as it relates to subsidies and other trade-distorting measures used by developed countries, non-tariff and technical barriers and scant regard for special and differential treatment for developing countries have only heightened the risk of marginalization of our countries.
5. The prospect of a global economic slowdown in 2008 which may trigger a concurrent decline in commodity exports from developing countries is likely to have adverse implications on economic growth of our economies.
6. Many CARICOM Member States have registered increasing trade deficits against the backdrop of increased imports given that most are net importers of merchandise goods, thus exacerbating their balance of payments problems. This is likely to further deteriorate with an expected slowdown in FDI flows.
7. It is against this backdrop that we underscore the importance of trade to efforts by CARICOM countries for wealth creation, poverty alleviation and the achievement of the MDGs and other development goals, including diversification of the economic base and entry into the value-added component of the production and supply chain.

8. We are therefore naturally quite concerned about the six-year stalemate in the negotiations in the Doha Development Round which jeopardizes the delivery of development promises for developing countries. Accordingly, the early conclusion and timely completion of the Doha round is critical and should ensure the fullest realisation of the development dimensions of the Doha Work programme.
9. We urge the major negotiating parties to demonstrate flexibility and engage constructively to facilitate early conclusion of the Round in a manner that places development at its core.
10. Within this context, it is our expectation that the development dimension of the Round will include inter alia, the following:
 - a. Increase in effective market access in areas of export interest to the region;
 - b. Genuine recognition of real asymmetries between developing and developed countries which are determined by several factors including the size of our economies, supply capacity as well as institutional and regulatory capacities;
 - c. Real sensitivity towards the adjustment concerns resulting from trade reforms and liberalization; and
 - d. Full support and adoption of the proposals tabled by the group of small, vulnerable economies.
11. CARICOM accords great importance to the creation of a viable, equitable, open, rule-based trade regime which recognizes the diversity in the levels of development and size of economies, underscoring the principle of special and differential treatment.
12. The need for improvements in the multilateral trading rules to enhance fairness and bring equity to the system through inter alia reduction and removal of trade-distorting agricultural subsidies, institutional and regulatory reform particularly in the field of services, must also be emphasized.

Mr. Chairman,

13. CARICOM member states which largely constitute small, vulnerable economies, cannot be expected to make concessions beyond their means and capacities in agriculture and non-agricultural market access (NAMA) negotiations which would jeopardise the livelihood of poor farmers, put at risk the viability of rural areas and exacerbate unemployment. This is particularly disconcerting within the context of the erosion of long-standing preferential trade arrangements for major exports.

14. Our Governments should therefore be allowed adequate policy space to align the multilateral framework of rights and obligations under the WTO with the objectives of national development strategies in an effort to preserve the benefits of long-standing trade preferences, safeguard livelihood, preserve tariff revenues and promote diversification and competitiveness.
15. By virtue of the size of our economies, CARICOM countries:
 - a. lack the level of competitiveness required to benefit from trade liberalisation, thus losing ground in domestic markets to foreign competition;
 - b. possess limited capacity to participate effectively in multilateral trade negotiations and therefore require trade-related technical assistance and capacity-building;
 - c. require increased international support for enhancing the capacity of our countries to realize sustained gains from international trade viz enhancing productive capacities, strengthening export performance and improving market access.
16. In light of the foregoing, we call for full implementation of the work programme to address trade-related issues identified for the full integration of SVEs into the multilateral trading system.
17. Notwithstanding success achieved by Caribbean countries in reducing their traditional dependence on agricultural production and diversifying the production structure towards other sectors including manufacturing and services such as tourism and financial services, many of our countries still rely heavily on agricultural commodities, (notably bananas and sugar) for employment, for securing livelihood, rural development and generating foreign exchange earnings.
18. I am however proud to report that most CARICOM countries have been moving towards a single market and economy which will serve as a platform for more effective insertion into the global economy and for achieving international competitiveness in the face of liberalisation, hence mitigating some of the constraints to sustainable development, reducing vulnerability and enhancing our resilience.
19. I thank you Mr. Chairman.