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**Statement by Minister of Government of the Republic of Cuba,
H. E. Mr. Ricardo Cabrisas Ruiz, to the International Meeting
for the 10- year Review of the Barbados Programme of Action
for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing
States.
Port Louis, Mauritius
January, 2005**

Mr. President,
Heads of Delegations,
Delegates and guests:

May my first words express our most heartfelt condolences to those countries that were hit by the seaquake on last 26 December. At this hour of human grief and immense suffering, the first duty of the international community should be to provide all support and assistance necessary to overcome this tragedy, while at the same time scientifically and seriously tackle the research and forecast efforts required for preventing or providing protection to the peoples. In this connection, I guarantee you that you can count on the full solidarity of the Cuban people and Government.

Ten years after the Barbados Conference, where we set out a group of major goals and objectives for the sustainable development of small island states, the challenges that our countries face are ever more complex. For instance, today the levels of poverty in 46 countries are more critical than in 1990; over one billion people in the world survive on less than one dollar a day; one sixth of the population has no access to water; over 850 million suffer hunger and malnutrition, around 100 million children in school age, of which 60 million are girls, do not go to school.

The process of neoliberal globalization has led, in many countries, to the reduction of their economic and financial ability to ensure the most elemental rights for their citizens. The failed formula of privatization has not narrowed the gap between the rich and the poor. On the contrary, the countries of the Third World pay the developed countries 100 billion dollars every year in trade tariffs, which is equal to twice the aid they receive from them. Official Development Aid only amounts to 0.22% of the GDP of the industrial world, that is, less than a third of what was pledged 34 years ago. For example, the United States of America, the world's most industrialized country, holds the sad record of lowest Official Development Aid contribution: only 0.11% of its GDP.

Our small island states' greatest limitation is directly linked with the lack of financial resources, which enhances their vulnerability. The trend of those resources coming from the international community, which was agreed upon in Chapter 33 of Agenda 21, is one of drastic decline. Further, the conception that prevails is a bilateral approach which is based, in many cases, on conditions that undermine the sovereignty and independence of recipient countries.

The ODA to SIDS has been reduced by 50% in spite of the fact that the economic situation of many of these countries has worsened due to the increase of natural and environmental disasters, which delay economic and social development and force to divert the limited available resources into rehabilitation and reconstruction. In the year 2004, for example, the devastating effects of hurricanes that ravaged the Caribbean and more recently the tsunami in the Indian Ocean have been observed.

In connection with the sensitive and important issue of prevention, out of every 100 dollars that are dedicated to disasters only 4 go to prevention, according to recent UNESCO data.

On the other hand, trade liberalization, which had been heralded to contribute to the acceleration of the world economy and the increase in living standards, has brought about results that are dramatically far from the anticipated expectations for 85% of humanity.

SIDS's share in world trade decreased by 50%, down to a 0.2% of world exports in 2000 from 0.4% in 1980, and trade liberalization has essentially constituted the unilateral elimination of protection instruments on the the part of the South, without the developed countries having reciprocated in the same level.

Commodities, whose prices have declined in the period and whose trade has been impacted due to the elimination of preferential trade agreements, continue to be the weakest link for 95 developing countries, including most of the small island developing states.

We reiterate the need that developed countries open their markets to the products of special interests to SIDS and that the vulnerability of these countries be truly acknowledged within the World Trade Organization through the adoption and implementations of fair rules of special and differential treatment.

Mr. President,

My delegation expresses once again its strong rejection to unilateral and extraterritorial measures against countries of the South which, in addition to violating International Law and the most elemental norms

of coexistence among States, hinder and limit the fulfillment of development plans and priorities of the countries involved and attempt against the realization of the development objectives adopted by United Nations international conferences and summits.

Cuba, a small island developing state, is subject to the most brutal and lasting economic, commercial and financial aggression ever known to history, which has been condemned expressly by the UN General Assembly for 13 consecutive times. However, Cuba has indicators in health, culture, education, respect for the environment, disaster management and social development that are the fruit of a sustainable development concept which has made progress in spite of such policy of aggression and blockade.

I would like to highlight the importance of cooperation between the countries of the South, in a spirit of solidarity and complementation. It is indispensable that we take concrete steps in this direction, also using our national experience and developing the necessary encouraging synergies.

Cuba reaffirms its disposition to share with the SIDS present here her modest capacities and the experiences acquired in important cooperation programs developed with several countries of the Third World.

Mr. President:

In spite of the international conferences of the 1990's, which supposedly were convened to try to solve the essential problems of the Third World, including those affecting the small island developing states, we are concerned to confirm that such difficulties not only are maintained but they are also worsened. Such a situation cannot and should not continue.

The results achieved in this meeting and their practical realization will largely depend on the political will of the international community as a whole, and especially the developed countries.

We hope that this meeting promotes new concrete, unconditional and objective formulas geared to solving our pressing problems of economic, social and environmental development. We cannot feel satisfied until we build a better world, which is possible, where solidarity, international cooperation between nations and, above all, respect and equality, prevail.

Thank you very much.