

**Statement to be delivered by Ambassador Colin Murdoch,
Antigua & Barbuda**

AT THE SEVENTH MINISTERIAL MEETING OF THE WORLD TRADE ORGANISATION,
2 DECEMBER 2009, GENEVA, SWITZERLAND.

Mr Chair

Director General

Ministers

Delegates:

Antigua and Barbuda joins so many other members in extending appreciation to the Government and citizens of Switzerland for so graciously hosting the Seventh Ministerial Conference of the WTO, which has been characterized by warm Swiss hospitality and commendable logistical arrangements.

Mr Chairman:

The road from Doha has been a difficult, and indeed a lengthy one, and we are still a long way off our intended destination.

The WTO promised us a multilateral trading system that is fair and balanced and where the benefits are more widely distributed. This is the promise of Doha.

If we are to assess, as we must, our success in establishing a multilateral trading system that is fair and balanced, then there is cause for concern. Antigua and Barbuda believes that there are clear and evident fault lines in the current international trade regime to which we subscribe.

The Doha Round was built on the core principle of development. Yet this core principle is honoured more in the breach than in the observance.

We now face a situation where even the largest players amongst us are questioning the gains to be received from this Round.

In the meanwhile, bilateral and regional agreements proliferate while the grand vision of Doha is left to wither on the vine.

Surely, for the small and vulnerable amongst us, these are worrying signs.

Mr Chairman:

The economic viability of Antigua and Barbuda resides solely in its ability to produce services and goods competitively. However, small and vulnerable economies face many constraints that impede their being able to reposition their economies to take advantage of new growth opportunities.

These challenges include small domestic markets, dependence on foreign resource flows of investment and remittances and susceptibility to external shocks, which now abound during the current international recession.

The Agreement establishing the WTO recognised that the multilateral trading system be conducive to raising living standards, ensuring full employment and to steadily increase the volume of real income.

The stark reality is that the progressive marginalisation and widening economic gaps of small economies tell a different tale.

Small economies like that of Antigua and Barbuda, and the wider Caribbean, require flexibility to implement the provisions and commitments undertaken under the WTO Agreements.

These flexibilities include effective and meaningful special and differential treatment; longer transitional periods; market access for products and services of particular export interest to our economies; and significant technical and financial assistance to implement these commitments.

Mr Chairman:

In recent years, Antigua and Barbuda has had to endure a long and arduous battle on the cross border supply of gambling and betting services with the United States. This process exposed the vast disparity in financial and technical capabilities available to the largest economy in the world and one the smallest.

Although the Panel and Appellate Bodies clearly ruled in our favour, the remedy available to the DSB highlighted the inadequacies of the current system that called on one of the smallest and most open economies in the world to impose trade sanctions on the world's largest economy.

Despite long bilateral negotiations that continue with the United States, this case remains unresolved.

More innovative solutions that fit the circumstances of the case, as well as the countries involved, need to be established. There are already several worthy proposals for reform of the WTO system, including proposals for monetization of available sanctions.

This emerging agenda is critical to the preservation of the right of meaningful access to justice for small and vulnerable states. Or more precisely, the right of access to meaningful justice.

Only when this reform is implemented by the WTO can this august body faithfully claim to meet the needs of ***all*** its Members.

Mr Chairman:

Over the last two days we have engaged on the overarching theme of this conference as well as by that of the two working sessions; we remain guided by the fact that the current global economic climate demands that the WTO delivers on its principles for all of its 153 Members.

We have heard the Declarations for a 2010 conclusion to the DDA, but we continue to assert that for the Doha Round to be successful, development concerns must be returned to the core of the negotiations.

Thank you Mr Chairman.