

STATEMENT DELIVERED BY THE HONOURABLE RUFUS BOUSQUET

AT THE SEVENTH MINISTERIAL MEETING OF THE WORLD TRADE
ORGANISATION,
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I would like to begin by extending my deepest appreciation to the Government of Switzerland for hosting this important Conference in serene Geneva and also express my thanks to the Director General for his tireless work in the stewardship of the WTO and the DDA Negotiations over the past four years.

Ministers, Excellencies we meet at what can only be described as a major crossroads in the modern economic history of the world, where the economic architecture and main orthodoxies that presided over the expansion of global capital flows and international trade over the past two decades are now being called into question. The much-promoted Washington Consensus on economic and trade liberalization now lie exposed as a flawed thesis riddled with contradictions and inconsistencies.

The architects of the so-called '*new-economy*' designed a system structured on the tenants of economic liberalism, where open markets, privatisation and a general receding of the state were touted as a necessary precursor to poverty reduction, enhanced competitiveness and export lead growth.

It is in this context, Mr. Chair, that international trade had become an enabler of development and a harbinger of prosperity for developing countries. Chair, as you know, the relationship between development and the multilateral system has hit major roadblocks over the past 24 months. The economic crisis, with its roots in lands far away from the shores of Saint Lucia has turned the developmental hopes and aspirations of a people into deferred ambitions.

Mr. Chairman, the advocates of liberalism promised, that the liberalization of tariffs, the dismantlement of commodity regimes and adherence to the multilateral trading system would strengthen the ability of small economies to compete in a global economy. We were told that economic liberalization coupled with trade liberalization would unleash the latent economic potential of small vulnerable economies like that of Saint Lucia. Mr. Chair, despite swallowing the bitter pill of economic liberalization and despite our attempts to adhere to our obligations under the Marrakesh Agreement, we are still in search of the economic promise land.

Interestingly Mr. Chair, the global economic crisis has occasioned a rethink of the orthodoxy of the free market. With some of the apostles of economic liberalism now becoming disciples of state action in the economic sphere under the guise of stimulus packages and support.

Mr. Chair, it has been widely reported that some of the most fervent promoters of the free market, now apply robust, and sometimes trade distorting market interventions while their counterparts in developing countries continue to languish with surging unemployment, silent factory shells and anemic domestic sectors.

Mr. Chair, this begs the question: 'Do the rules of the multilateral system operate differently for small countries...than for the powerful?'

Mr. Chair again, while the promoters of economic liberalism and the multilateral trading system seem disposed to utilize any and all policy interventions to support critical sectors; the weak, mono-crop economies, dependent on crucial markets for their livelihood are sacrificed on the altar of supposedly sacred multilateral rules.

As we collectively look to the future, are – small - resource poor - developing countries required to sacrifice more? Will we continue to stare at the Doha Mandate without the requisite resolve to adhere to the development mandate

which promises all countries: big and small, rich and poor the opportunity to equally enjoy the fruits of the multilateral trading system.

Are all of our factories to grind to a halt, are our fertile fields to all go fallow and our farmers to grow poorer in deference to an ideology that even the authors reject when it is expedient to do so?

The Multilateral trading system can play a meaningful role in development if only we remain true to the founding principles of this august body. Will drafting the Marrakesh Agreement, the founders recognized that the field of trade and economic endeavour should be conducted with a view to:

- raising living standards;
- ensuring full employment;
- and [engendering the conditions to enable] large and steady growth of real income.

Finally chair, the role of the multilateral system in the current environment should support the developmental goals and aspirations and critically the needs of the smallest and most vulnerable!!! To this end, we call for the following:

- operationally effective special and differential treatment;
- additional and accessible resources under the rubric of Aid for Trade to attenuate against supply side constraints;
- binding commitments on the part of developed countries to provide capacity building support for the implementation of commitments to arise from negotiations on trade facilitation;

Above all, any meaningful, solution on bananas must take account of the developmental concerns of all ACP members and in particular the smallest and most vulnerable.

Mr. Chair, in concluding we believe that strict adherence orthodoxy **must** give rise to a pragmatic approach that takes account of the economic and structural limitations of all members!!

Mr. Chair – I thank you.