

**Statement**  
**Delivered by Dominica**  
**Also on behalf of St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines**  
**General Council Meeting**  
**December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2009**

**Agenda Item 5**

Thank you Mr. Chairman

This statement is being made on behalf of Dominica, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

We also welcome the new ambassadors who have joined this community.

First of all Chair, we would like to associate ourselves with the statement that has been made by Mauritius on behalf of the ACP Group of Countries.

I believe there is an adage that suggests that a good negotiation and agreement is one in which none of the parties leave the table being totally satisfied with the outcome that has been reached. No one gets everything they sought from the negotiations. Chair I am not certain that we are in a position to assess the just concluded agreement within the parameters of this maxim. We are after all not signatories to the agreement nor were we parties to the dispute resolution processes including the various Panels and Appellate Body proceedings and the Good Offices process of the Director General. We were simply, not at the table.

Chair we can say however and with little fear of contradiction, that the OECS banana producing countries, the Windward Islands, will be the ones most negatively impacted and injured by the just concluded banana agreement. That brings to mind another proverb which says that *when elephants fight it is the grass that suffers*. I am also not sure how well this analogy applies to this situation, because here, it is more than the grass that has suffered.

As the smallest and most vulnerable of the banana producing countries of the multilateral trading system, the Windward Islands have experienced a gradual and progressive deterioration of their banana sectors over the last two decades in terms of production, exports, employment, income earnings and foreign exchange receipts with each successive change in the EU market arrangement for that most ubiquitous yellow fruit associated with the banana dispute. This has impacted negatively on the food security, livelihood security, and rural development of our small island states not to mention the impact on the overall growth and development of the economies. The immediate and impending cuts that the agreement envisages will no doubt lead to further declines in the sectors. The pain has already been felt, and this will now only intensify that pain.

Chair, our people, in our small islands, deserves a good livelihood like all others in the multilateral trading system. It is most ironic, to say the least, that in the name of free trade, the freedom and right of our people to achieve and sustain a good livelihood, is now being undermined. It is understandable then when some of our constituents have asked what the benefits of being members of the system are.

It is for this reason Chair that while we will join with the Membership in noting this agreement we are unable to celebrate it.

From a systemic point of view, the fact that the agreement represents the resolution of the longest running trade dispute in the Multilateral Trading System is certainly to be acknowledged. However, that is the most we can do. Acknowledge it. We in the OECS remain committed to a strong and rules based multilateral trading system. But it must be one that is fair, balanced, and equitable. As the Minister from St. Vincent and the Grenadines said in his statement at the Ministerial Conference; at the end of it all, if we have learned one thing from this banana dispute, it is that the interests of the weakest and most vulnerable are not always safeguarded by the multilateral system. We can only hope that this systemic imbalance can be addressed in the near future. A good place to begin is with a conclusion to the DDA that among other things provides the necessary flexibilities for small economies like ours and delivers on the Aid for Trade commitments in terms of additional resources for trade capacity building. There is also need for some vital systemic reforms that enable the interests of all Members to be fully safeguarded and defended.

To conclude Chair paragraph 150 of the draft agriculture modalities text calls for long standing preference granting Members to provide targeted technical assistance, including additional financial and capacity building assistance to preference receiving Members within the context of preference erosion. There are also other instruments within which similar obligations are enshrined. We therefore look forward to the preference granting Members fulfilling this promise and provide the necessary support in a manner which enables our farmers, our farm families, our people, and our economies to adjust to the new circumstances.

Thank you.