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SURINAME

Statement by H.E. Mr. Ewald C. Leeflang
Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Suriname to the WTO

Allow me to join the other delegations by expressing my appreciation to the Government of Singapore for the hosting of this important event and the facilities extended to us.

WTO is established as a universal system to liberalize global trade through the implementation of internationally agreed and accepted rules and obligations.

Suriname committed itself to integrate its economy in the new global system.

To this end our country is engaged in the process of adjusting its institutional and legal framework to the new reality.

We have to admit, however, that this endeavour cannot take place overnight but requires sufficient time and input of skilled manpower amongst other things.

We are aware that WTO is taking those facts fully into account and do hope that its system of technical assistance will prove to be strongly supportive hereby.

In order to appreciate fully the opportunities which the emerging global trading environment is offering to the economy of developing countries, it remains important not to discard the many challenges we are facing now.

With regard to the financial services we have to acknowledge that the different financial institutions in our country are still in a process of strengthening their domestic capacity to cope with liberalization. Assistance to become competitive on the international market is necessary. Special attention should be given hereby to the fact of growing technological development in this area, which can make the competitiveness of the domestic financial institutions illusive. The same is true in the area of telecommunication.

There is a great need for further study to establish the necessary legislation to prevent negative social and economic implications hereby.

In accordance with the WTO Treaty on the Protection of Intellectual Property Rights, an arrangement had been made concerning the protection of special plant varieties by Member countries through a patent system.

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For developing countries like Suriname it is important to derive the benefits from their natural resources.

To do this in a responsible way it is of great importance to establish cooperation agreement, to that end in order to exercise adequate control to prevent the illegal export of, amongst other things, genetic material from special plant varieties.

The full implementation of TRIPS Agreement requires time to strengthen the institutional capacity of the country.

With regard to trade and labour standards we share the view expressed by many other delegations that labour standards must be dealt within the framework of the ILO as the adequately competent body to deal with issues of this nature.

My delegation recognizes the relevance of the new issues, such as trade and investment, trade and competition policy.

Sufficient time is needed to analyse the complexity of those issues in order to better understand their impact on the global economy.

Suriname has in the area of government procurement very strict rules for public tendering which guarantee a high degree of objectivity and neutrality. We therefore welcome the establishment of a working group to study and develop multilateral tendering rules and guidelines.

Suriname is a member of CARICOM and the ACP group of countries. We consider our membership of both bodies essential for our integration within the global economy.

The market access to the EU and the related trade references under the Lomé Convention are for us indispensable opportunities to make our economy viable and competitive in the future.

We consider those provisions as important instruments in assisting our countries to become full partners in the international community.