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A NOTE ON THE 5TH WTO MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE, HELD IN CANCUN, MEXICO

From the desk of the NACEN Coordinator

Introduction

The 5th Ministerial Conference of the WTO was convened in Cancun, Mexico on September 10-14, 2003. Guyana was represented among a Caribbean delegation which was comprised of several countries, most at ministerial level, as well as the CARICOM Secretariat and the Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery (CRNM).

In preparation for the Conference the CARICOM Council for Trade and Development (COTED) had convened a Special Session on September 1-4, 2003, in Georgetown to strategize and agree on a unified Caribbean approach in Cancun. Cuba and the Dominican Republic participated in that special Session of COTED. The COTED had also engaged in an exchange of views with representatives of a number of regional and international NGOs.

Structure of the Conference

Following the Doha Ministerial Conference in November 2001, delegations in Geneva were engaged in negotiations leading up to the Cancun Ministerial Conference. The Cancun Conference was, therefore, appropriately organized as a mid-term stocktaking of the Doha Development Agenda (DDA). In this regard, the Chairman of the General Council, in seeking to close off the discussions in Geneva and consolidate the divergent views of the WTO members on the various negotiating

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A CLOSER LOOK AT THE GUYANA- CHINA TRADE AGREEMENT

In fulfilment of its wide ranging objective in relation to Guyana's foreign trade pursuits, the Ministry of Foreign Trade & International Cooperation has successfully secured significant bi-lateral and multi-lateral trade agreements. International trade is critical to Guyana's economy and it is evident that every effort is being made by the Ministry to explore export opportunities for Guyana's exportable products.

In this issue of the MOFTIC Digest, we will focus on two of Guyana's trade agreements, i.e., *Guyana – China Trade Agreement and the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI)*. This is in an attempt to highlight their inherent long-term benefits for the country as a whole.

GUYANA – CHINA AGREEMENT

The trade agreement between the Government of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana and the Government of the People's Republic of China came into effect on September 17, 2001. This agreement will remain in effect for five years from that date and thereafter, the agreement shall automatically be renewed for successive periods of one year, unless terminated by either party.

With a view to developing and strengthening economic growth and trade relations on the basis of equality and mutual benefits, Guyana and China have consented to, *inter alia*, reduce and eliminate gradually all hindrances in the exchange of goods, provision of services and technical cooperation.

The agreement also provides for the granting of most-favoured –nation treatment by each party, in relation to the following:

- (a) customs duties, charges, taxes applied to importation or exportation of goods;

- (b) regulations, procedures, and formalities concerning importation or exportation of goods; and
- (c) administration formalities for issuance of import or export licence.

Further, the Guyana- China trade agreement allows for the conduct of trade using freely convertible currency, in accordance with the parties' respective foreign exchange laws and regulations.

Additionally, as a result of the signing of this agreement, both Guyana and China can facilitate exchange visits by trade and/or industrial delegations, fairs and exhibitions, for the purpose of commerce and trade.

Guyana and China forged formal diplomatic ties on June 27, 1971, and have over the years been maintained through contact in the political, diplomatic, economic and cultural arena.

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UPDATE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CARICOM SINGLE MARKET & ECONOMY

Free Movement of Nationals

At their 24th Meeting held in Jamaica, the Conference of Heads of Government agreed that the effective date for achieving **free movement of the five (5) categories of persons (university graduates, media workers, musicians, artistes and sports persons) would be August 1, 2003.**

The Heads of Government further agreed that **December 2003** should be targeted for the completion of work necessary for the smooth transition to the use of **ID cards for intra-regional travel.**

Proposed Establishment of the Business and Labour Advisory Committee (BLAC)

In keeping with the procedures outlined in the Manual of Administrative Procedures for the Implementation of the CARICOM Single Market & Economy (CSME), the Ministry of Foreign Trade & International Cooperation has been taking steps to have Guyana's Business and Labour Advisory Committee (BLAC) on the CSME constituted. It may be recalled that the Manual was adopted by Cabinet for national implementation.

(Copies of the Manual may be downloaded from the Ministry's website; www.moftic.gov.gy.)

The BLAC will be the forum for discussions among the social partners and will be made up of:

- Representatives of Commercial and Business interests
 - o Chambers of Industry and Commerce,
 - o Hotel and Tourism Associations,
 - o Commodity Boards etc.;
- Labour/ Labour Management Organizations
 - o Trade Union Councils
 - o Employers' Federations
 - o Other Labour /Labour Management Organizations
- Other interest groups
 - o Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) promoting social and economic development programmes;

- o Representation from Civil Society.

The BLAC will perform the following functions:

- Initiate proposals for discussions at the national and regional level.
- Discuss proposals and analyze these proposals in relation to their impact on various sectoral interests and develop positions.
- Make representation to Government on matters affecting their sectoral interests.
- Develop and initiate strategies for implementing decisions.

To date two (2) preparatory meetings have been convened in an attempt to establish and convene the Inaugural Meeting of the Business and Labour Advisory Committee on the CSME (BLAC).

The Ministry of Foreign Trade & International Cooperation wishes to encourage members of the private sector and the labour movement to become involved to establish Guyana's BLAC.

Upcoming Events

The Third Special Consultation on the CSME is scheduled to be held on October 30-31, 2003 in Barbados under the theme: **"Making the Region CSME-Ready by 2005"**. The focus of the Consultation will include:

- ? An assessment of the state of implementation of the various elements of the CSME.
- ? A review what of has to be done at the national and regional levels to meet the 2005 timeline.
- ? Identification of important issues that require resolution or renewed commitment of Member States;
- ? Secure inputs and reactions from stakeholders at the governmental and civil society levels on the approaches which are underway or proposed with a view to revising and sharpening approaches and strategy for implementation in accordance with agreed timelines;

The Consultation is open to participation from, not only Governmental agencies, but from non-governmental organisations, the labour movement, consumer associations, the media and other relevant interested organisations.

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issues for the purposes of the Ministerial Conference, forwarded on his own responsibility a draft text (Chairman's text) of the Cancun Ministerial Declaration. The draft Declaration [JOB(03)/150/Rev.1] was issued on August 24, 2003, and served as the basis of the deliberations at Cancun.

The Chairman of the Conference, in keeping with traditional practice under the GATT/WTO, organized the negotiations in the following five (5) Working Groups under the coordination of Ministerial Facilitators:

- (i) Agriculture – Facilitator/Singapore
- (ii) Development – Facilitator/Kenya
- (iii) Non-Agriculture Market Access (NAMA)–Facilitator/Hong Kong/China
- (iv) Singapore Issues – Facilitator/Canada
- (v) Other Issues – Facilitator/Guyana

The Chairman, at regular intervals, convened the Meeting of Heads of Delegation to allow the Facilitators to update the Conference on developments in the various Working Groups and seek further (political) guidance. Throughout the duration of the Conference an open Plenary was held to allow Heads of Delegation to make country statements (speeches). Guyana's statement was presented on the morning of day two of the Conference.

Caribbean Activity in Cancun

In Cancun the Caribbean delegations (CARICOM plus Cuba) met regularly for briefings and consultations as well as to refine the region's strategy in response to emerging developments during the Conference.

The Caribbean delegations were coordinated by Minister Clement J. Rohee, Guyana's Minister of Foreign Trade & International Cooperation, in his capacity as the Region's ministerial spokesperson on WTO matters. The Region's coordination was ably supported by other CARICOM Ministers who were specifically assigned to cover the region's interest in the following Working Groups: Agriculture (Belize), Development (Barbados), Singapore Issues (Jamaica), NAMA (Trinidad and Tobago) and Other Issues (St. Vincent and the Grenadines).

The Caribbean Group also consulted and maintained useful alliances with other like-minded countries and groups, especially the ACP, LDCs, the African Union and the G-21 group which included the larger developing countries such as Brazil, India, China, Malaysia and Indonesia, etc.

The Conference Outcomes

Throughout the negotiations in the various Working Groups most delegations, especially the main demandeurs on issues of major interest, maintained their previously held positions. This situation hampered any substantive progress or consensus to be realized on the key issues such as Agriculture, NAMA and the Singapore Issues. The disagreements which prevailed among delegations in the Geneva process overshadowed the deliberations in Cancun.

By mid-afternoon on the last day of the Conference the Chairman decided that the prevailing differences of positions among delegations did not permit a "successful" conclusion of the Conference, as a result of which a mutually acceptable Ministerial declaration could not be achieved. In this regard, at a final Heads of Delegation meeting on September 14th (final day) the Conference adopted a Ministerial Statement which stated, inter alia:

“...We have, indeed, made considerable progress. However, more work needs to be done in some key areas to enable us to proceed towards the conclusion of the negotiations in fulfilment of the commitments we took at Doha.

“...We ask the Chairman of the General Council, working in close cooperation with the Director General, to coordinate this work and to convene a meeting of the General Council at Senior Officials level no later than

THE CARIBBEAN BASIN INITIATIVE (CBI)

The Caribbean Basin Initiative, or CBI, is an inter-American Program that provides for the duty-free entry of merchandise from designated beneficiary Caribbean Basin countries or territories. The program is aimed at promoting economic development through private sector initiative in Central America and the Caribbean islands, by expanding foreign and domestic investment in non-traditional sectors, diversifying CBI country economies and expanding their exports.

The Caribbean Basin Initiative is the general term used to refer to the Caribbean Basin Economic Recovery Act of 1983 (CBERA), the Caribbean Basin Economic Recovery Expansion Act of 1990 (CBERA Expansion Act) and the U.S. – Caribbean Basin Trade Partnership Act of 2000 (CBTPA), collectively.

The major elements of the CBERA Act of 1983 are:

- (1) *Duty-free entry to the United States in perpetuity for a wide range of products manufactured in CBI countries as an incentive for investment and expanded export production.*
- (2) *United States Assistance to the region to aid private sector development by financing essential imports and by establishing development banks, chambers of commerce, skills training programs, industrial free zones, and other essential infrastructure.*
- (3) *Caribbean Basin country self-help efforts to improve the local business environment and support efforts by investors and exporters.*
- (4) *A deduction on United States taxes for companies that hold business*

conventions in qualifying Caribbean Basin countries to increase tourism.

- (5) *A wide range of United States Government, State Government and private sector promotion programs, including trade and investment financing, business development mission, technical assistance program and a United States Government special access program for textiles and apparel.*

- (6) *Support from other trading partners and multi-national development institutions, such as the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank.*

The Caribbean Basin Economic Recovery Act of 1983 was amended in 1990. This bill provides other benefits and provisions to allow for continued growth and diversification of Caribbean Basin economies. The new provisions address such areas as *duty reduction for certain leather-related products; scholarship assistance; promotion of tourism; and agricultural infrastructure support.*

In May 2000, the United States signed into law the United States – Caribbean Trade Partnership Act, or CBTPA. The CBTPA provides additional benefits to complement those provided by the Caribbean Basin Economic Recovery Act of 1983 and the Caribbean Basin Economic Recovery Expansion Act of 1990 (CBERA Expansion Act).

The CBTPA provides beneficiary countries with certain trade benefits similar to Mexico's under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). After 1994,
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were harming their trade. In fact, after NAFTA came into effect, exports from most of the CBI countries to the United States continued to grow, albeit at lower rates than Mexico's.

Under the U.S. - Caribbean Basin Trade Partnership Act, apparel manufactured in CBI countries from U. S. yarns and fabric, as well as non-textile products currently excluded from the CBI legislation, can enter the United States free of quota and duty. Eligibility of CBI beneficiary countries under the CBTPA depends on their stance on a number of issues important to the United States. These include: worker rights, intellectual property, environmental protections and cooperation against illegal drugs.

Further, the CBTPA encourages diversification of CBI countries' economies, an important element in economic development that reduces dependence on aid and discourages illegal immigration into the United States. This legislation sends a strong signal to the countries of the Caribbean Basin and throughout the Americas, that the United States remains committed to promoting trade-expanding policies.

Caribbean Basin Initiative duty-free treatment applies to products only if the following conditions are met:

- (i) *The merchandise is imported directly from a beneficiary country into the customs territory of the United States.*
- (ii) *The merchandise is produced in a beneficiary country, i.e., the goods are wholly the growth, product, or manufacture of a beneficiary country or the goods have been substantially transformed into a new and different*

product of commerce in a beneficiary country.

The twenty-four countries that currently benefit from the CBI program are: Antigua, Aruba, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, British Virgin Islands, Costa Rica, Dominica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Montserrat, Netherlands Antilles, Nicaragua, Panama, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent & the Grenadines, and Trinidad & Tobago.

The following areas represent success for U.S. and Caribbean Basin companies. They are labour-intensive, require indigenous Caribbean Basin resources, or both:

- Handicrafts, giftware, and decorative accessories
- Wood products, including furniture and building materials
- Recreational items, sporting goods, and toys
- Tourism
- Seafood
- Tropical Fruit Products
- Ethnic and speciality foods – sauces, spices, liqueur, jams, confectionary items, etc.
- Ornamental Horticulture
- Leather Goods
- Footwear

CBI countries declared that Mexico's superior trade terms

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December 2003, to take the action necessary at that stage to enable us to move towards a successful and timely conclusion of the negotiations. We shall continue to exercise close personal supervision of this process.

Notwithstanding this setback, we reaffirm all our Doha Declarations and Decisions and recommit ourselves to working to implement them fully and faithfully.”

The conference broke down around the discussions on the treatment of the four Singapore issues namely, Transparency in Government Procurement, Investment, Competition Policy and Trade facilitation. At a closed door session (Green Room) which the Chairman convened during the final afternoon with all major players/groups, the EU and Japan, mainly, insisted that agreement must first be reached to launch negotiations on at least two of the Singapore issues. The EU wanted Transparency in Government Procurement and Trade facilitation while Japan insisted on an agreement on Investment – before any consideration could be given to the other issues such as agriculture and special and differential treatment. Developing countries rejected this position outright and objected to the launch of negotiations on any of the Singapore issues. Further, the ACP Group, in collaboration with the African Union and the LDCs, called for a suspension of discussion of the Singapore issues (at Cancun) until the key issues of Agriculture, NAMA and Special and Differential Treatment are fully settled.

Key Issues – An Assessment

It was evident from the Geneva process that the key stumbling blocks (deal breakers) at the Cancun deliberations would be in the area of Agriculture, TRIPS and Public Health and the Singapore Issues. The slow and uneven progress in Geneva following the Doha Ministerial, underlined the difficulties that overshadowed the Conference at Cancun.

In keeping with the Doha Development Agenda (DDA), developing countries, overall, sought firm commitments from the developed countries on treatment of agriculture subsidies, preferences, TRIPS and Public Health and special and differential treatment. The developed countries (mainly the EU, Japan and the US) were not prepared to make commitments beyond “best endeavour” undertakings. The decision on the TRIPS and Public Health issue was reached on the eve of the Cancun Conference, after it was made clear by the LDCs and key developing countries that lack of agreement on this single issue could undermine the Cancun meeting.

On the other hand, the developed countries have demanded, as a trade-off strategy, firm and/or additional commitments from developing countries in such areas as the Singapore issues which, in the context of the DDA, are not part of the Single Undertaking of the agreements to be negotiated.

CARICOM's Response

In seeking to respond to the fluid situation at the Conference, the Caribbean, based on the strategy agreed by the COTED, articulated its position in its own right, as well as, through the alliances with other countries and groups.

? Agriculture

On September 8, 2003, the region tabled its specific proposals [Document WT/MIN/(03)/W/11] or amendments to the text on Agriculture in the Draft Cancun Ministerial Declaration. The Region's strategic approach on this matter was underscored by the following policy positions:

- (i) Greater policy space (post-Cancun) within which the region can exercise flexibility to support (national) development needs; and

(ii) Special provisions (considerations) for the small developing economies of the Caribbean in the areas of tariff reduction, strategic products (such as sugar), tariff bindings, revenue-dependency and preferences.

On September 12th (3rd day) the ACP Group, in collaboration with the African Union and the LDCs, issued a joint position on Agriculture [Document MIN(03)/W/17] in which the following is stated, inter alia:

“The AU/ACP/LDC countries are concerned that the Draft Ministerial Text and the relevant Annex on agriculture fall short of the objectives envisaged in the Doha Declaration for further reform of agricultural markets...We reiterate that, in accordance with the Doha mandate, S&D should be an integral part of all elements of the negotiations on agriculture...”

“We reiterate the vital importance of long standing trade preferences for AU/ACP/LDC states and call on WTO members to provide for the maintenance and security of such preferences through flexible rules and modalities based on development needs. Accordingly, we call for the Framework on Agriculture to incorporate... development of a compensatory mechanism to address erosion of preferences for these countries.

“The Draft Ministerial Text and its Annex have not fully taken into account a variety of developing and least-developed-country-specific concepts, such as the Special Products (SP) and Special Safeguard Measures (SSM), that are important to these countries. We insist that the proposed Framework on Agriculture should fully incorporate the[se] proposals...”

On September 13th (4th day) the Chairman of the Conference issued a revised text (second revision) of the Draft Ministerial Declaration and convened a Heads of Delegation meeting that evening to receive the comments of delegations. Most developing countries roundly condemned the revised text as one which was unbalanced and, in fact, worse than the previous draft.

CARICOM issued a full statement on the “revised” text, underscoring the fact that it was “not reflective of the expectations and interests of many developing countries and the spirit of the Doha Declaration. It falls short of the balance that the Caribbean requires as a satisfactory outcome to the Ministerial Conference and is not development oriented”. With respect to Agriculture, the CARICOM statement noted that the revised draft did not “represent an improvement in the overall balance of the commitments.

Few, if any, of CARICOM's proposals have been reflected in the revised document...It represents a reduction in the flexibility needed, particularly by small developing economies to address their rural development, food security and livelihood security concerns... Small economies must be given the policy space within which to support their development needs and safeguard their revenue base.”

? Singapore Issues

Arising from its deliberations at COTED the Caribbean Group anticipated the Singapore issues to be the “most divisive and politically sensitive” at Cancun. This divisiveness was evident in the draft Ministerial Text which was advanced by the Chairman of the General Council. The COTED's position was that the region was already overburdened with negotiations. The region has scarce resources and limited capacity to meaningfully undertake current negotiations, much less take on new issues. In Cancun the region was also concerned about the potential negative effects of these issues and saw problems of substance (in all four) – some key ones involving dispute settlement, infringement of policy space, as well as, the resources that would be required to meet these new obligations.

On September 12th the Caribbean collaborated with a large number of other like-minded countries (such as the LDCs and India, China, Malaysia and Indonesia and others) and despatched a joint letter to both the Canadian Facilitator on the Singapore Issues and the Conference Chairman also. The letter articulated the following joint position by the countries:

“...The issues are highly technical and complex and require much more analysis...Hence we note that there is no explicit consensus on the modalities for negotiation as per the Doha mandate...(and) are of the firm view that there is no option to pursue other than the continuation of the clarification process...”

On September 14th (final day) the Caribbean despatched a letter to the Conference Chairman and the ACP overall spokesperson (Botswana) reaffirming the position stated in the September 12th joint letter and further reiterated that the Caribbean “does not agree to the launch of new negotiations on the Singapore Issues, thus, there can be no explicit consensus on the modalities.”

It is important to note that the Caribbean scored several firsts at the Cancun Conference. First, in preparation for the WTO Conference, a Caribbean Ministerial Declaration was issued prior to Cancun. Second, the region crafted and co-sponsored a statement on behalf of “Small Economies”, highlighting small economy issues in a way not previously done. Third, selection of a CARICOM Ministerial representative, namely Guyana, as a Facilitator or “Friend of the Chair”. Fourth, CARICOM’s participation in the “Green Room” consultations.

Post Cancun: Issues for CARICOM/Guyana

The collapse of the Cancun Ministerial Conference does not mean the suspension of the negotiations. The negotiations will continue in Geneva with a view to concluding same by the 2005 deadline set at Doha. As such, CARICOM will need to remain engaged as fully as possible, especially in light of the other negotiations in which the region is currently involved. The region’s preparation for and active participation in the Cancun deliberations demonstrated very clearly how small states can, with appropriate technical preparations and alliances, affect the outcome of the multilateral system.

In the ACP Negotiations on Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) the Europeans can be expected to push the Singapore Issues in the EPAs. Three of these issues – Investment, Competition Policy and Government Procurement – are also part of the FTAA Agenda.

Importantly, however, the gap which exists between the US/Canada and Brazil in the WTO Agriculture negotiations is also present in the FTAA situation. The US/Canada position in the FTAA is that the agriculture issue on subsidy disciplines must first be settled at the multilateral level in the WTO in order for effective implementation or application to occur at the hemispheric level. The US/Canada argument is that unless the multilateral disciplines are first settled non-FTAA subsidizing countries such as the EU and Japan will be able to export to the hemisphere and avoid penalty under the hemispheric rules. CARICOM’s position in the FTAA on Agriculture is also at variance with that of the US/Canada.

At the FTAA level CARICOM has already articulated a position for a reduced agenda. In this regard, the general sense among FTAA countries is that any reduction of the agenda could be considered by suspending or deferring negotiations on those issues which are yet to be agreed or negotiated at the multilateral level in the WTO. This could easily include the Singapore issues (government procurement, competition policy and investment). This matter will be addressed as a priority issue at a meeting of the FTAA Trade Negotiations Committee, to be held in Port-of-Spain at the end of September. The FTAA Ministerial Meeting which will follow in Miami in November, will also be apprised of the matter.

The region should, therefore, seek to strengthen its involvement in the Geneva process. For Guyana, this would mean a more consistent participation at the level of both capital and the Embassy in Brussels.

The COTED had already agreed at its Special Session in early September, to convene another Special Session to prepare for the aforementioned FTAA Miami Ministerial Meeting. This Special Session is expected to take place in November. Consistent with the integral linkage between the FTAA and WTO negotiations and the immediate political focus of the upcoming FTAA Ministerial meeting, the COTED should undertake an indepth assessment of the impact of the outcome of the Cancun Ministerial Conference at the Special COTED Session (in preparation for the FTAA Ministerial).

HISTORIC DEAL REACHED AT THE WTO FOR DRUG IMPORTS

On 30th August 2003, and in the run-up to the Ministerial Meeting held at Cancun, the Council for TRIPS at the World Trade Organisation reached a decision on the implementation of Paragraph 6 of the Doha Declaration on TRIPS and Public Health. In so doing, the Council settled the one remaining piece of unfinished business on intellectual property and health, which had been left over from the last Ministerial Meeting held in Doha in November 2001.

Background

The genesis of the problem dates back to 1995, when the World Trade Organisation (WTO) was formed. One of the new areas which were brought under multilateral trading rules at that time was that of intellectual property. Thus the Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property (TRIPS) was signed as Annex 1C of the Marakesh Agreement establishing the WTO. It has been said that at the time of the negotiations leading on to the formation of the WTO, developing countries did not attach much importance to the issue of intellectual property. They saw it as a problem of the developed world which would not have much of an impact on their trade policies. Certainly, the magnitude of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in developing countries and the impact on it of the TRIPS Agreement was not foreseen at

the time. Developing countries therefore, signed onto the TRIPS without a full realization of the implications thereto.

The TRIPS Agreement

The TRIPS Agreement establishes minimum levels of protection that each Member has to give to the intellectual property of fellow WTO Members. The areas of intellectual property covered include copyright and related rights, trademarks, geographical indications, industrial designs, patents, layout-designs and undisclosed information. All WTO members are enjoined to give non-discriminatory treatment to the nationals of the other Members. They are also enjoined to give special protection to these rights.

The Problem

The section of the TRIPS Agreement, which impacts on public health is that on 'patents.' To be fair, there are certain flexibilities in the TRIPS Agreement namely compulsory licensing and parallel importing which can be used to protect the interests of public health. Therefore, subject to certain conditions, protecting the interests of the patent holder, governments can allow a competitor to produce a product or use the process under license. Parallel importing, whereby a product being sold cheaply

in one country is imported into another without the patent holder's permission is also permissible. Also exemptions for least developed countries on pharmaceutical patent protection had been extended until 2016. However, some Governments were unsure of how these flexibilities would be interpreted and how far their right to use them would be respected.

In particular, the problem arose of how to ensure that patent protection for pharmaceutical products did not prevent people in poor countries from having access to medicines, while at the same time maintaining the patent systems role in providing incentives for research and development into new medicines.

At the end of the 1990s, NGOs and civil society groups began to criticize major pharmaceutical companies manufacturing HIV therapies. Their main concern was the effect of patent protection on process and access to medicines. The developments which brought these matters to the fore were the dramatic rise in the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the attempt by pharmaceutical companies to challenge the compatibility of provisions in the South African Medicines Act with TRIPS and the complaint brought by the United States

licensing. In 1999, discussions took place in the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) in an attempt to address the relationship between medicines and the TRIPS Agreement.

At the WTO, the African Group (a group of African WTO Members) was the first to request action at the June 2001, TRIPS Council. This initiative launched a series of informal and formal TRIPS meetings dedicated to the issue of access to medicines in developing and least developed countries. The outcome of the process was the adoption by Members at the Doha Ministerial Conference of a Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health.

At Doha, the Member States agreed that the TRIPS Agreement should not prevent members from taking measures to protect public health. After noting the gravity of the public health problems in many developing and least developed countries especially those related to HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, the Ministers stressed that it is important to implement and interpret the TRIPS Agreement in a way that supports public health through the promotion of access to existing medicines and the creation of new drugs. They also underscored the ability of members to use the flexibilities which are built into the TRIPS Agreement including compulsory licensing and parallel importing.

However, one issue was left outstanding and that was how to extend the flexibility so that countries which are unable to produce pharmaceuticals domestically can import patented drugs made under compulsory license. This was referred to as the Paragraph 6 issue because it falls under that paragraph in the Doha Declaration on TRIPS and Public Health. Article 31(f) of the TRIPS Agreement requires products made under compulsory licensing to be 'predominantly for the domestic market,' thus limiting the ability of countries that can manufacture drugs to export and inversely limiting the ability to import by those countries that cannot manufacture drugs. Countries which are unable to manufacture medicines and thus wanting to import generics would find it difficult to import drugs under the TRIPS Agreement. The TRIPS Council was mandated to come up with a solution to the problem by 31st December 2002. The Council had been battling since 2001 to come up with a solution and the original deadline December 2002 was missed.

The Decision

On 30th August 2003, the Chairman of the WTO General Council, Carlos Peres del Castillo announced 'The Decision on the Implementation of Paragraph 6 of the Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health.' The Agreement allows any Member State to export pharmaceuticals made under

compulsory licenses within the terms set out in the decision. The decision is in the form of an interim waiver from WTO Rules until the end of 2003, at which point Members will begin work towards adopting it as a TRIPS amendment within 6 months. A drawn out debate is expected on whether to make the deal a formal amendment to TRIPS. For now, countries producing generic copies of patented products under compulsory licenses are able to export the products to eligible importing countries. The decision covers patented products or products made using patented processes in the pharmaceutical sector, including active ingredients and diagnostic kits.

All WTO Member Countries are eligible to import under the Decision but 23 developed countries are listed as announcing voluntarily that they will not use the system to import. These are Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom and the United States of America.

Another group of countries announced separately, that if they use the system, it would only be for emergencies or extremely urgent situations. These are Hong Kong China, Israel, Korea, Kuwait, Macao China, Mexico, Qatar, Singapore, Chinese Taipei, Turkey against Brazil, challenging the TRIPS and the United Arab Emirates, compatibility of its use of compulsory

A separate statement was also issued by the General Council Chairman. The statement said that members have a shared understanding on how the decision is to be interpreted and implemented. It says that the decision will be used in good faith to deal with public health issues and not for commercial or industrial policy objectives. It also emphasized that issues such as preventing the medicines from getting into the wrong hands or being re-exported into the developed countries are very important.

Post Cancun

The Decision of 30 August 2003 was welcomed at Cancun in the draft Ministerial Text released during the Conference.

However, in general the Decision has received a lukewarm response from developing countries' governments and public health activists. It has been

described as 'a gift bound in red tape,' which places certain restrictions on governments hoping to make use of it. Among other things, countries will have to specify the quantity of the drug needed, distinguish the product in terms of label, colour, shape and size and take steps to prevent the exports of the imported drugs to other markets, primarily those in the developed world.

The Decision is also criticized for constraining the business practices of generic companies by requiring two compulsory licenses when the mechanism is used. It has been charged that the Chairman's statement that the mechanism should not be used to pursue 'industries or commercial policy objectives' introduces a degree of uncertainty over the role that manufacturers of generics will play.

According to the organization, Third World Network, the ambiguity in the Agreement is a cause for concern. In

the past, constructive ambiguity in the texts of various Uruguay Round Agreements resulted in disputes at the WTO and effectively prevented developing countries from realizing the benefits which such agreements were supposed to deliver to them. Other NGOs have criticized the Decision for being contrary to the basic principles of the WTO and free trade.

Ultimately, the effectiveness of the Decision will be seen in its implementation. And of course it is hoped that Members will be able to agree on a workable amendment to the TRIPS to replace the Decision. This would ensure that the WTO can indeed as was said by its Director-General Supachai Panitchpakdi 'handle humanitarian as well as trade concerns' and that it is indeed fostering the development of the Member States through the promotion of effective public health, unhindered by technicalities in Agreements such as the TRIPS.

NEGOTIATIONS ON ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT WITH THE EUROPEAN UNION (EU)

African Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Council of Ministers met on September 30, 2003 in Brussels to review their positions of the state of progress of the ACP/EU negotiations and to prepare for the second encounter with their EU counterparts on October 2, 2003.

Apart from technical and dedicated sessions on specific technical issues,

ACP and the EU Ambassadors held eight negotiating meetings at their level since the launch of the negotiations on Economic Partnership arrangements in September 2002. The ACP in its mandate to negotiate, identified all the areas of common interests and concerns to be negotiated in Phase 1. However, the two sides had difficulties reaching

agreement on a number of issues in Phase 1 of the negotiations. Both sides recognised the need for further discussion in the area of market access on product coverage, length of transition periods, the sequencing of trade liberalisation in the agriculture sector vis-

fisheries, the scope and coverage of trade related issues; the sequencing of negotiations with WTO negotiations and capacity building in ACP states to deal with trade related matters, the need for additional resources above EDF resources and the non-inclusion of the non-execution clause in economic cooperation matters. Discussions will continue in the above areas at the "All-ACP" –EC level.

Despite the divergences in Phase 1, Phase 11 of the negotiations was launched. It will, therefore, mean that both Phases will be undertaken simultaneously. In accordance with the ACP mandate, those countries and regions that are ready to negotiate Phase 11 can proceed but are required to notify the ACP group of their configuration, structure, mandate and time-table for doing so. Central African and Western African states will launch their negotiations with the EU on October 4th and 6th, respectively. The Caribbean is yet to signal its readiness to negotiate Phase 11 with the EU.

To ensure compliance and in order to allow for transparency and to monitor the negotiations with the EU, the ACP has developed a follow-up mechanism within its camp and agreed on a similar mechanism with the EU.

At the ACP/EU level, there will be a three-tiered system. An ACP/EC Technical Monitoring Committee comprising of representatives from the different ACP regional groupings, the

ACP Secretariat, the Troika of the ACP committee of Ambassadors and the EC will ensure a free flow of information and promote dialogue between the different ACP regional groupings and between these groupings and the EC.

A Joint ACP/EC Ministerial Trade Committee (JMTC) will ensure mutual understanding of all parties and coherence in the negotiations and where appropriate, mandate technical groups to work on specific issues.

The ACP/EU Ministers will meet as appropriate to take stock and provide guidance on the negotiations.

Preparations are ongoing at the CARICOM level. Haiti and the Dominican Republic signalled their intention to join the Caribbean in Phase 11.

At the national level, Guyana is undertaking impact assessment studies on EPAs. This project is supported by the Project Monitoring Unit of the European Union in support of preparation of Economic Partnership Agreement. The consultants are engaging discussions with a number of government and private sector organisations.

THE ACP IN CANCUN

ACP Ministers of Trade met in Brussels from July 31 to August 1, 2003, to among other things, prepare for the 5th WTO Ministerial Conference

that was held in Cancun from September 10-14, 2003.

The ACP identified a single overall spokesperson the Honourable Jacob Nkate, the Chairman of the ACP Trade Ministers' Meeting and Minister of Trade and Industry of Botswana and reflected their common position in an ACP Declaration which formed part of the official documents circulated for the 5th WTO Ministerial Conference.

The ACP, the African Union, and the Least Developed Countries alliance of which 61 are WTO members along with the G21 countries represented a broad alliance that stood up against the various pressures from the large trade powers to defend their interests in Cancun.

The alliance focus their position on the improvement of market access in developed countries and the removal of domestic support making particular reference to the agricultural policies of the countries in the North . The dismantling of these policies would go a long way towards solving the problems of developing countries' agriculture.

Some critics say "all is not lost": The feelings are mixed as to whether Cancun was a failure and should be regretted. The developing countries were strong in facing up to the trade powers but were disappointed at the end because nothing was able to be negotiated and obtained. Some critics say "all is not lost": The feelings are mixed as to whether Cancun was a failure and should be regretted. The developing countries were strong in facing up to the trade powers but were disappointed at the end because nothing was able to be negotiated and obtained. Some critics say "all is not lost": The feelings are mixed as to whether Cancun was a failure and should be regretted. The developing countries were strong in facing up to the trade powers but were disappointed at the end because nothing was able to be negotiated and obtained.

A meeting is scheduled for the WTO General Council in December 2003. It is expected that countries may be able to advance what has been agreed to and started at Doha and to make significant progress in the negotiations for the next Ministerial Conference scheduled for Hong Kong before the end of 2004.

AUSTRALIA/BRAZIL AND THAILAND CHALLENGE TO THE EU SUGAR REGIME.

At the request of Australia, Brazil and Thailand, a single Panel is being established to deal with the complaint taken to the WTO Dispute Settlement Body challenging the EU Sugar regime from which Guyana and other ACP

sugar producing countries benefit from preferential arrangements with the EU.

Discussions at the WTO on the composition of the panel are in progress. In the meanwhile, a number of countries have reserved their third party rights to participate in the panel proceedings.

BILATERAL COOPERATION

BRAZIL

NATIONAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE

The Minister of Foreign Trade and International Cooperation convened the Ninth Session of the National Coordinating Committee on October 6, 2003 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Takuba Lodge.

Among issues on the agenda were matters arising out of President Jagdeo's State visit to Brazil that pertains to the mandate of the NCC.

Preparations are also in train for the commencement of a Portuguese Language training Course to benefit Government officials involved in cross border relations with Brazil. The aim is to improve the efficiency of communication between Guyana and Brazil.

MALAYSIA

SCHOLARSHIP OFFER

The Government of Malaysia has invited Guyana to submit two nominations for scholarships for undergraduate and post graduate studies for the academic year 2004/2005. The Public Service Ministry is currently considering applicants.

CUBA

GUYANA-CUBA JOINT COMMISSION

The Joint Commission meeting is convened biennially to review the progress of the previous work programme and to propose views and exchange ideas to formulate a new work programme. Presently consultations have commenced for the convening of the twenty-second session of the Guyana/Cuba Joint Commission which is to be hosted by the Government of Guyana.

The health sector has been the principal beneficiary under previous work programmes. Projects have now been identified for the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Fisheries, Crops and Livestock and the University of Guyana.

It is anticipated that those projects not implemented in the last work programme would be carried over to the new work programme, in addition to other areas, which are of mutual interest to both sides.

Both countries have benefited from cordial relations over two decades and it is expected that the upcoming Joint Commission meeting will provide for continued mutual benefits.

TRAINING

Guyana is expected to benefit from training of two Guyanese technicians in Cuba in Micro Transplant techniques and Artificial Insemination techniques. The Ministry of Fisheries, Crops and Livestock is to benefit from programme.

INDIA

4th SESSION OF THE GUYANA/INDIA JOINT COMMISSION

Consultations for the convening of the fourth session of the Guyana/India Joint Commission are ongoing. It is expected that the Joint Commission meeting will be convened in July 2004 in Georgetown.

Agreements to enhance cultural and educational exchange were concluded during President Jagdeo's State Visit to India during the period August 24-28, 2003. The Department of International Cooperation is implementing and monitoring these projects.

DOUBLE TAXATION AGREEMENT AND BILATERAL INVESTMENT TREATY

A double Taxation Agreement and a Bilateral Investment Treaty is currently being negotiated between Guyana and India, to intensify cooperation between the two countries.

DEMONSTRATIVE VEHICLE

The Indian High Commissioner at a simple handing over ceremony on July 16, 2003 at the John Fernandes Wharf, handed over to the Honourable Minister of Foreign Trade and International Cooperation a Demonstrative vehicle which will provide training in the preservation of Agricultural Products.

The vehicle will be stationed at the National Agricultural Research Institute (NARI). Two experts are expected to be deputed shortly to provide training in its maintenance and utilization.

SEED PRODUCTION SPECIALIST

Dr. Kharb, Seed Production Specialist, was deputed to Guyana on June 03, 2003, under the aegis of the India Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme and is attached to NARI.

CHINA

CHINESE MEDICAL TEAM

An inspectorate team from the Jiangsu Province visited Guyana in August 2003 for an evaluation of the work and living conditions of the Chinese medical doctors.

During consultations with the visiting Chinese delegation, the Ministry of Health proposed an increase in the size of the next batch of medical doctors. This request is being considered by the Chinese Health Authorities.

MOCO MOCO HYDRO POWER STATION

Following a landslide at the Moco Moco Hydro Power Station the Chinese Government was approached for assistance in restoring power to the Moco Moco area.

The Chinese Economic and Commercial Counselor paid a visit to the Moco Moco area for additional information gathering as instructed by Ministry of Commerce of China. A Chinese team, to carry out a feasibility study, is being assembled and is expected within the next four weeks.

BERBICE RIVER BRIDGE

During President Jagdeo's State visit to China in March 2003, a proposal was made to the Chinese for assistance in constructing a bridge across the Berbice River. A briefing folder on the construction of the bridge was submitted to the Chinese Embassy in July.

The Department of International Cooperation facilitated the visit of two Chinese Trade and Investment delegations in July and August, respectively. A Chinese Fishery delegation is expected to visit Guyana October/November.

GUYANA INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE CENTER (GICC)

The geotechnical information for the construction of the GICC requested by the Chinese was submitted to the Chinese Committee. Exchange of Notes have been signed to facilitate the utilization of a 30 M RMB Grant for the construction of the GICC project.

BILATERAL INVESTMENT TREATY (BIT)

Inter-agency consultations were convened with public and private sector representatives to discuss the operationalisation of a BIT. A forum aimed at sensitizing the private sector is to be conducted in Demerara, Essequibo and Berbice.

BAMBOO CRAFT PROJECT

During the eighth session of the Guyana/China Joint Commission which was held in Beijing, China in March 2003, the Government of the People's Republic of China responded favourably to the Government of Guyana's request for technical assistance for the implementation of a Bamboo Craft project, proposed by the Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce.

Pursuant to Guyana's request, the Honourable Minister of Foreign Trade and International Cooperation and H.E. Song Tao, Ambassador of the Peoples Republic of China to Guyana, signed an Exchange of Notes on June 13, 2003, which facilitated the dispatch of a team of three Chinese bamboo craft technicians to Guyana for a period of one year and the provision of the necessary materials and equipment for the implementation of the project.

The bamboo craft technicians arrived in Guyana on October 19, 2003 to assist in training of Guyanese in bamboo craft production. It is expected that the training sessions, which will be for local interested persons, will commence shortly.

CHINESE EXPERTS

A Chinese Table Tennis Coach and Martial Arts Expert arrived in Guyana on September 28 and October 1, 2003, respectively. They are both attached to the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports. The two coaches, with assistance of an interpreter, are expected to train Guyanese in their respective disciplines over a period of one year.

COOPERATION WITH INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

ORGANISATION OF AMERICAN STATES (OAS)

Guyana is expected to benefit from two project proposals submitted by the Ministry of Education under the FEMCIDI Programme. The two projects are:

- ? Development and Use of Independent Study Materials in Science
- ? Meeting Special Needs in the Classroom

Two representatives from the Department of International Cooperation were panellists of the interview committee for the OAS Placed Academic Studies and the Fulbright Ecology Scholarship Programme, conducted on September 17 and 18, respectively.

Guyana is also expected to benefit from two regional projects to be funded by the Inter-American Agency for Cooperation and Development (IACD). These are:

- 1) Caribbean Knowledge and Learning Network Project.

This project seeks to:

- ? Improve the relevance of tertiary education and training institutions by increasing the number of accredited tertiary education programmes provided by programmes recognised internationally for their excellence.
- ? Establish a knowledge and learning network to strengthen tertiary education institutions and to improve the qualification of teachers.
- ? Ensure the convergence of fragmented regional and international initiatives to maximize results in the area of tertiary and distance education.

- 2) Regional Satellite – Delivered Distance Learning for teacher Training, Education and Human Development in Rural Areas.

The general objective of the project is to improve coverage and quality of education by delivery of appropriate content via satellite, for both teachers and students.

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (ECLAC)

Mr. Raul Garcia-Buchaca, Chief Programme Planning and Operations Division, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, paid a visit to Guyana on October 1-2, 2003.

The purpose of his visit was to assist with the development of a strategic plan for the Department of International Cooperation. Mr. Buchaca paid courtesy calls on the Honourable Minister of Foreign Trade and International Cooperation and other key officials involved in International Cooperation issues.

VOLUNTARY SERVICE OVERSEAS (VSO)



Mr. Joseph Oyowo
Resource Mobilization Expert

Under the Voluntary Service Overseas Programme, the Department of International Cooperation is receiving the services of Mr. Joseph Oyowo, a Resource Mobilization Expert from Kenya.

Mr. Oyowo joined the department on September 8, 2003, and is scheduled to be here for two years. Mr. Oyowo's responsibilities include inventory and analysis of technical assistance and grant aid from donors to ascertain which and to what extent they can be utilized, matching offers with needs identified by government departments, agencies, local projects and organisations and increasing net-work of contacts for grant offers.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE (ODI)



Ms. Gayathri Radhakrishnan
Economist

MOFTIC Digest and the Ministry of Foreign Trade & International Cooperation wishes to express sincere thanks to Ms. Gayathri Radhakrishnan, ODI fellow, whose contract with the Ministry will end in October 2003. Ms. Radhakrishnan worked in the capacity of Economist from the Ministry's inception in 2001.

Best wishes "Gay" in your future endeavours.

**STATEMENT TO THE SITTING OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY HELD ON
OCTOBER 23, 2003 BY THE HON. CLEMENT J. ROHEE, M.P., MINISTER OF
FOREIGN TRADE AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION, ON THE 5TH WTO
MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE, HELD IN CANCUN,
MEXICO, ON SEPTEMBER 10-14, 2003**

Mr. Speaker,

The 5th Ministerial Conference of the WTO was convened in Cancun, Mexico on September 10-14, 2003.

Guyana was represented among a Caribbean delegation which was comprised of several countries, most at ministerial level.

In preparation for the Conference the CARICOM Council for Trade and Development (COTED) had convened a Special Session on September 1-4, 2003 in Georgetown to strategize and agree on a unified Caribbean approach in Cancun.

Cuba and the Dominican Republic participated in that special Session of COTED. The COTED had also engaged in an exchange of views with representatives of a number of regional and international NGOs.

The Cancun Conference was appropriately organized as a mid-term stocktaking of the Doha Development Agenda (DDA). In this regard, the Chairman of the General Council, in seeking to close off the preparatory discussions in Geneva and consolidate the divergent views of the WTO members on the various negotiating issues for the purposes of the Ministerial Conference, forwarded on his own responsibility a draft text – called the Chairman’s text - of the Cancun Ministerial Declaration. The draft Declaration was issued on August 24, 2003 and served as the basis of the deliberations at Cancun.

The Chairman of the Conference, in keeping with traditional practice under the GATT/WTO, organized the negotiations in the following five (5) Working Groups under the coordination of Ministerial Facilitators:

- (i) Agriculture – Facilitator/Singapore
- (ii) Development – Facilitator/Kenya

- (iii) Non-Agriculture Market Access (NAMA) – Facilitator/Hong Kong China
- (iv) Singapore Issues – Facilitator/Canada
- (v) Other Issues – Facilitator/Guyana

In Cancun the Caribbean delegation with Guyana as the Lead Spokesperson met regularly for briefings and consultations as well as to refine the region’s strategy in response to emerging developments during the Conference. The Caribbean Group also consulted and maintained useful alliances with other like-minded countries and groups, especially the ACP, LDCs, the African Union and the G-21 group which included the larger developing countries such as Brazil, India, China, South Africa and Indonesia, etc.

It was evident from the Geneva process that the key stumbling blocks (deal breakers) at the Cancun deliberations would be in the area of Agriculture, TRIPS and Public Health and the Singapore Issues, namely, Transparency in Government Procurement, Investment, Competition Policy and Trade facilitation. The slow and uneven progress in Geneva following the Doha Ministerial, underlined the difficulties that overshadowed the Conference at Cancun.

In keeping with the Doha Development Agenda (DDA), developing countries, overall, sought firm commitments from the developed countries on treatment of agriculture subsidies, preferences, TRIPS and Public Health and special and differential treatment. The developed countries (mainly the EU, Japan and the US) were not prepared to make commitments beyond “best endeavour” undertakings. The decision on the TRIPS and Public Health issue was reached on the eve of the Cancun Conference, after it was made clear by the LDCs and key developing countries that no agreement

on this single issue could undermine the Cancun meeting. On the other hand, the developed countries demanded, as a trade-off strategy, firm and/or additional commitments from developing countries in such areas as the Singapore issues which, in the context of the DDA, are not part of the Single Undertaking of the agreements to be negotiated.

In seeking to respond to the fluid situation at the Conference, the Caribbean, based on the strategy agreed by the COTED, articulated its position in its own right as well as through the alliances with the ACP Group, the African Union, the LDCs and the G-21.

On September 8, 2003 the region tabled its specific proposals for amendments to the text on Agriculture in the Draft Cancun Ministerial Declaration. The Region's strategic approach on this matter was underscored by the express need for greater policy space within which the region can exercise flexibility to support national development needs. Six areas of key interest to the region were identified: special and differential treatment; preservation of preferential trade arrangements; measures to address special needs including special products, a safeguard mechanism and exceptions to tariff liberalization; formula for tariff reduction for both agricultural and non-agricultural market access; trade capacity building, especially technical assistance; and exclusion of the Singapore issues.

On September 13th, following the Chairman's presentation of a revised text (second revision) of the Draft Ministerial Declaration, most developing countries roundly condemned the revised text as one which was unbalanced.

CARICOM issued a full statement on the "revised" text, underscoring the fact that the text was "not reflective of the expectations and interests of many developing countries and

the spirit of the Doha Declaration. It falls short of the balance that the Caribbean requires as a satisfactory outcome to the Ministerial conference and is not development oriented... Small Economies must be given the policy space within which to support their development needs and safeguard their revenue base."

It is important to note that the Caribbean scored several firsts at the Cancun Conference. First, in preparation for the WTO Conference, a Caribbean Ministerial Declaration was issued prior to Cancun. Second, the region crafted and co-sponsored a statement on behalf of "Small Economies", highlighting small economy issues in a way not previously done. Third, selection of a CARICOM Minister, namely the Minister of Foreign Trade and International Cooperation of Guyana, as a "Friend of the Chair". Fourth, CARICOM's participation through Guyana and Jamaica in the "Green Room" closed door consultations.

Mr. Speaker,

The collapse of the Cancun Ministerial Conference does not mean the suspension of the negotiations. The negotiations will continue in Geneva with a view to concluding same, hopefully by the 2005 deadline set at Doha. As such, CARICOM will need to remain engaged as fully as possible, especially in light of the other negotiations in which the region is currently involved. The region's preparation for and active participation in the Cancun deliberations demonstrated very clearly how small states can, with appropriate technical preparations and alliances, affect the outcome of the multilateral system.

THE FIFTH MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE OF THE WTO CANCUN, MEXICO, SEPTEMBER 10-14, 2003

STATEMENT BY THE HONOURABLE CLEMENT J. ROHEE

On behalf of the Government of Guyana, I would like to congratulate the Government of Mexico for hosting this very important Conference at an extremely critical time in the multilateral trading system. I would also like to express sincere thanks for the warm welcome and courtesies extended to my delegation. I also recognize the enormous efforts and dedication of WTO Director General Dr. Supachai and the staff of the WTO Secretariat in the preparation for this Conference.

It is extremely crucial for Cancun to advance the development agenda which we established at Doha nearly two years ago. It will not be sufficient for us to simply reiterate the decisions taken then nor would it be acceptable to revise the levels of ambition of the Doha Development Agenda (DDA) in a manner that undermines the just concerns and interests of the developing countries, particularly the smaller developing economies. In other words, levels of ambition must be tempered with existing socio-economic realities obtaining in each country.



Minister Clement J. Rohee

At a minimum, we must pursue a positive and balanced agenda in which the special needs and interests of the small developing member countries are comprehensively addressed.

Based on the clear evidence and our experience since the establishment of the WTO, this Ministerial Conference needs to put the implementation issues, including the special and differential treatment matters, which we agreed to at Doha, on a fast track. Nothing less would be workable, otherwise we risk engendering greater imbalances in the multilateral trading system.

Initiatives being taken, as well as those already taken, by the small developing economies of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) to diversify and adjust to the changing global economic environment require the full support of the international community, not the least of which are our developed country partners. As such, the trade liberalization we commit ourselves to must strengthen the development agenda and lift our populations out of joblessness and poverty.

Mr. Chairman,

The economies of CARICOM are fully committed to a fair and balanced rules based on multilateral trading system. Fourteen of the fifteen CARICOM countries are members of the WTO, with the remaining one currently pursuing membership. These countries have all undertaken unilateral adjustments during the Uruguay Round and continue to do so under the WTO. These countries, which are extremely open and highly dependent on

My own country, Guyana, is confronted with numerous challenges as a highly indebted poor country (HIPC) in seeking to respect its obligations and pursue its rights under the WTO. We cannot overemphasize the urgency, therefore, for the WTO to move quickly beyond the exhaustive clarification of particular difficulties facing small, vulnerable economies in the international trading environment that has been taking place, to proposing and adopting specific recommendations and measures to ensure their beneficial participation in the WTO and the multilateral trading system.

We should conclude our deliberations in Cancun by first deepening and even expanding the development focus of the multilateral trading system. Admittedly, we have made incremental steps in the past few years and the road from Doha to Cancun, though rocky in many respects, need not remain that way. It calls for political will from all of us and we should respond accordingly.

Various assessments have been done and the conclusions are unmistakably clear: concrete progress has to be made on the development agenda of the multilateral trading system in advance of the next ministerial conference. This is not a call by governments only, but indeed the wider civil society. We cannot afford not to hear and act quickly.

Thank you.

<http://www.moftic.gov.gy>

The Ministry of Foreign Trade and International Cooperation's website <http://www.moftic.gov.gy> provides valuable information on economic and trade related issues at the national, regional and multilateral levels.

It also has are a multiplicity of linkages:

G o v e r n m e n t a g e n c i e s :-

R e g i o n a l O r g a n i z a t i o n s :-

M u l t i l a t e r a l w e b s i t e s :-

The site is designed to be supportive to importers and exporters as a channel of doing business with Guyana. It provides information on:

T R A D E A G R E E M E N T S O F W H I C H G U Y A N A I S A P A R T Y

R E V I E W O F G U Y A N A ' S F O R E I G N T R A D E 2 0 0 1 / 2 0 0 2

M O F T I C ' S D I G E S T

L I N K S T O E X P O R T / I M P O R T M A R K E T I N F O R M A T I O N F R O M A L L O V E R T H E W O R L D .

Any comments and/or suggestions should be forwarded to admin@moftic.gov.gy

external trade, need the policy space to make the further adjustments for effective integration into the global economy.



Minister Rohee presenting the 2nd Edition of ***Review of Guyana's Foreign Trade 2001-2002*** and 1st Edition of ***MOFTIC Digest*** to representatives from the Private Sector and government agencies at the launching of the Digest on 20th August 2003 at the Foreign Service Institute.