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VENEZUELA

Statement by H.E. Mr. Miguel Rodríguez Mendoza, Presidential Commissioner for International Economic Affairs

Like other countries, the delegation of Venezuela wishes to make a few remarks on the recent Ministerial Meeting of the Trade Negotiations Committee in Brussels.

We regret that differences over agriculture have paralysed the Uruguay Round negotiations. Agriculture is certainly a highly important issue for many countries, including many developing countries. Venezuela has made far-reaching changes in its agriculture sector and is aware that these changes cannot be maintained if the agricultural policies of other countries, and the distortions to which they give rise, are indefinitely maintained. Nevertheless, we believe that the question of agriculture cannot be dealt with at the expense of giving other subjects the attention they require, particularly the issues relating to market access and the strengthening of GATT rules and disciplines in areas of fundamental importance for the future of the multilateral trading system. In other words, we consider that the negotiations cannot continue to be the prisoner of disagreement over agriculture.

Venezuela focuses its present development strategy on the need to carry out a major alteration in the terms of its participation in the world economy. We joined GATT for that purpose. We did so with the expectation of gaining greater and more reliable access to world markets for our exports. It would be a great pity if the Uruguay Round negotiations broke down for good and thus forced us to recognize, barely four months after having become a contracting party, that we were mistaken.

For our country, the strengthening of the multilateral trading system is a fundamental issue, and in the final analysis the ultimate objective of the Uruguay Round negotiations. World trade should be carried out on stable and foreseeable foundations. For countries such as Venezuela, multilateralism is not one option among many. It is the sole legitimate option in the face of growing recourse to protectionist measures and bilateralism in the conduct of international trade relations.

It is therefore our hope that the Uruguay Round negotiating process may resume its course as rapidly as possible. We are not betting on the failure of the negotiations. Venezuela, like other developing countries, is prepared to assume its due commitments and make a positive contribution

to the successful outcome of the negotiations. For this to happen, however, it will be necessary to ensure full transparency in the process and effective participation by our countries in the negotiations.

Major changes have taken place recently. Democracy and freedom, fundamental aspirations for our peoples, are spreading relentlessly. Authoritarian political systems are giving way to governments legitimized by the will of the people. In this context, it is utopian to think that negotiations on the scale of the Uruguay Round can be conducted in closed circles and that its results can be made known to the vast majority of participants once agreements have already been achieved.

Venezuela will not give its consent to any agreement in which it has not fully participated, and trusts that in the consultations to be conducted by the Director-General, as decided in Brussels, these considerations will be taken into account.