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**Ministerial Conference
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**PACIFIC MINISTERIAL STATEMENT FOR THE THIRTEENTH
MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE (MC13) OF THE
WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION (WTO)**

26-29 FEBRUARY 2024

The following statement dated, 27 February 2024, is being circulated at the request of the delegation of Fiji on behalf of the Pacific Group.

Re-affirming the importance of preserving the rules-based multilateral trading system to provide an open, transparent, inclusive, non-discriminatory, equitable and predictable system that promotes the interests of all Members, in particular the small and vulnerable Members such as least-developed countries (LDCs) and small island developing states (SIDS);

Recognizing the contribution of international trade as a vehicle to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, and the critical role of the WTO in delivering trade-related measures to contribute to solutions to global challenges severely impeding on the development aspirations of the Pacific region, including the impacts of climate change, natural disasters, pandemics and the slow economic recovery, and food and energy crises;

Re-affirming that climate change remains the single greatest existential threat facing the Pacific and **noting** the high-level endorsement by Pacific Islands Forum Leaders for the Pacific to elevate its sustainable trade and environment agenda;

Further noting the July 2022 and November 2023 Communiqués from the Pacific Island Forum Leaders, encouraging the conclusion of comprehensive disciplines on the remaining pillar of the fisheries subsidies negotiations on Overcapacity and Overfishing (OCOF) and provide appropriate and effective Special and Differential Treatment (SDT) for developing and least developed countries to ensure that WTO fully delivers on SDG14.6;

We the Ministers and Heads of Delegations of the Pacific Group met in Abu Dhabi on 24 February 2024 in the lead-up to the WTO Thirteenth Ministerial Conference (MC13) and agree as follows:

1. On fisheries subsidies,

- i. **Register** strong concerns and **remind** WTO Members that 84% harmful fishing subsidies go to capacity enhancing programs that contribute to overcapacity and overfishing, which lead to the continuing decline in global fish stocks;
- ii. **Underscore to** the WTO Members that, whilst the Pacific is committed to maintaining the good health of the region's commercial stocks, grave risks remain of allowing subsidized fleets into the region; and **call on** distant water fishing nations to remove subsidies to overcapacity and overfishing as reflected in Pacific Islands Forum Leaders 2018 decision;

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- iii. **Demand** that WTO Members deliver on their commitment in SDG14.6 relevant to overcapacity and overfishing (OCOF), and **call on** large subsidizers to refrain from introducing new such subsidies, and therefore **support** stronger disciplines that will result in the effective standstill and reduction of subsidies to OCOF by large subsidizers;
 - iv. **Support** the exemption of subsidies for fishing in adjacent and nearby waters due to the migratory nature of the region's tuna stocks;
 - v. **Also support** the menu of options approach on SDT to address developing and least developing countries' interests and the retention of the de minimis exemption for small fishing nations not less than 0.8% of global marine capture and exemption for small scale and artisanal fishing and differential licensing; and
 - vi. **Agree** that notification commitments should not be onerous for small WTO Members, and not be used as a condition for accessing SDT, and that any notification relating to access agreements must not disclose commercially sensitive information.
2. On Agriculture, **urge** Members to progress negotiations post-MC13 taking into account the SDT provisions, the development interests and food interests of developing countries and LDCs; **support** the commitment on food security for LDCs and net food importing developing countries (NFIDCs); and **also support** the extension of the Bali decision on public stockholding programmes to LDCs and NFIDCs based on products of interest to them.
3. On WTO Reform, **re-affirm** the need to improve the functioning of the WTO, ensure that WTO Reform is an open, transparent and inclusive process, and the need to restore a fully and well-functioning dispute settlement system that is accessible to all Members by 2024. This must include as a priority the restoration of the Appellate Body and ensure access to the dispute settlement system for small Members.
4. On Work Programme on Ecommerce and Moratorium, **support** the extension of the Work Programme and Moratorium to MC14 to enable Members to continue rejuvenating work on addressing the digital divide faced by developing countries and to assess the impact of the moratorium on revenue.
5. On Development,
- i. **Acknowledge** the need to make the rules-based system more equitable and accessible for Small Island Developing States in order for them to fully benefit from the opportunities created by the multilateral trading system and to facilitate their integration into the global economy.
 - ii. **Register** continued concerns that development, in particular, special and differential treatment (SDT) continues to be a divisive issue, and **strongly emphasize** the integral role of SDT in the negotiations, as a fundamental pillar of the WTO under paragraph 44 of the Doha Declaration.
 - iii. **Seek** a meaningful outcome on development particularly addressing the G90 proposals and address the development concerns of developing countries, including SVEs and LDCs. These proposals aim to promote economic diversification and enhance international competitiveness of developing countries by strengthening compliance with international standards.
 - iv. **Commend** the ongoing work in the WTO to find solutions to the trade challenges faced by Small and Vulnerable Economies (SVEs) and Small Islands Developing States (SIDS), from natural disasters and in attracting investment, and therefore **support** the re-invigoration of work under the mandate of paragraph 35 of the Doha Declaration to frame responses for the fuller integration of small economies like the Pacific into the multilateral trading system.

- v. **Urge** Members to establish an effective procedure supporting the smooth transition of graduated LDCs towards their new status, through extending the LDC-specific trade-related support measures over a reasonable period of time, and **seek** new measures to support LDCs' post-graduation.

6. On Trade and Environment, **support** the revitalisation of the work in the Committee on Trade and Environment as well as intensify discussions to find tangible and mutually supportive trade policy solutions that contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation, and environmental sustainability.
