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**Ministerial Conference
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**ACP GROUP MINISTERIAL DECLARATION ON THE
ELEVENTH WTO MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE**

The following communication, dated 24 October 2017, is being circulated at the request of the delegation of Guyana on behalf of the ACP Group.

We, Ministers of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States responsible for WTO trade matters, meeting in Brussels on the 20 October 2017 to, among other things, review preparations for and provide political guidance on ACP Group interests at the Eleventh WTO Ministerial Conference to be held during 10 to 13 December in Buenos Aires, Argentina;

Recalling the commitment to the developmental mandate and issues adopted at Doha in 2001, and the outcomes of the Ministerial Conferences in Hong Kong in 2005, Geneva in 2011, Bali in 2013, Nairobi in 2015 as well as the General Council Decision adopted on 1 August 2004;

Noting the commitment of all Members to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 and the recognition of trade as an important vehicle in the social, economic and environmental dimensions of the SDGs;

Concerned that the challenges of job creation, poverty, inequality and exclusion across the global economy have not been overcome, and that new risks to an inclusive multilateralism that supports development are emerging; and that the rules-based multilateral trading system could be undermined;

Recalling and reaffirming all of the ACP agreed Declarations and positions on WTO matters, adopted since 2001, for previous WTO Ministerial Conferences and the respective outcomes of ACP and G90 Trade Ministers meetings;

Emphasizing the need for priority attention to be accorded to Least-Developed Countries (LDCs);

Noting that within the ACP Group of States, developing countries include, but are not limited to, Least-Developed Countries (LDCs), Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Small Vulnerable Economies (SVEs), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), Preference Dependent Economies (PDEs), Net Food Importing Developing Countries (NFIDCs), Low Income Countries (LICs), Middle Income Countries (MICs), Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC), Heavily Indebted Middle Income Countries (HIMICs), limited commodity exporting countries, and countries in war, post-conflict, and post-natural disaster situations;

Further concerned about potential erosion of gains made as a result of graduation of some ACP States from LDC status;

Emphasizing the need for the WTO to ensure that its rules, on a priority basis, enable, and do not inhibit, least-developed countries and developing countries from pursuing policies to achieve industrialization, structural transformation and diversification of their economies, in order to raise the standard of living of their population and integrate into the multilateral trading system on a sustainable basis.

Further emphasizing the need for targeted and sustainable financial, technical and capacity building assistance programmes to support the ACP Group of States to implement their agreements, to manage the reform process, and to be able to benefit from opportunities presented, thereby facilitating their strategic integration into the multilateral trading system in a manner that advances their development;

Recognizing that in the post Nairobi period considerable efforts have been made in Geneva by Members to find ways to advance negotiations as called for in paragraph 33 of the Nairobi Declaration:

1 11TH WTO MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

We reaffirm that the ACP Group of States will continue constructive engagement with WTO Members in the pursuit of a meaningful developmental outcome at the Eleventh WTO Ministerial Conference (MC11) in Buenos Aires and call on WTO Members to take all decisions, including on a Ministerial Declaration, through a transparent, inclusive, and consensus-based Member-driven process. We look forward to effectively and constructively participate in these deliberations of the Ministerial Conference and hereby adopt the following common positions in the context of the forthcoming Eleventh WTO Ministerial Conference in Buenos Aires:

Decisions in Buenos Aires

On the DDA

1.1. We urge Ministers in Buenos Aires to deliver on decisions in keeping with the DDA and, in accordance with paragraphs 31, 32 and 33 of the Nairobi Declaration and other Ministerial Declarations and WTO mandates focused on:

- Fisheries subsidies disciplines in line with the ACP proposal TN/RL/GEN/192;
- Agriculture, notably on domestic supports, as set out in Rev 4;
- Special Safeguard Mechanism;
- Special Products;
- Cotton in line with the C-4 proposal;
- A permanent solution to Public Stockholding including for future programmes, without onerous conditions;
- Special and Differential treatment proposals submitted in accordance with paragraph 44 of the Doha Declaration.

1.2. Regarding services, any decisions or outcomes should adhere to the GATS framework and principles of progressive liberalization, the right to regulate, and the positive list of commitments and limitations that are consistent with the development needs and capabilities of developing countries, and include agreed flexibilities in favour of developing countries, including LDCs and SVEs; any outcomes on mandated domestic regulations negotiations, should ensure reduction of barriers to qualifications of ACP services suppliers and recognize that developing countries have full discretion to determine whether disciplines are necessary, while preserving their right to regulate, to pursue their development policy objectives.

Standing Agenda Items

1.3. We support a decision at MC11 to extend for two years current practice of not imposing customs duties on electronic transmissions, and to continue the existing electronic commerce work programme. We call on Members to give dedicated attention to issues raised by developing countries, particularly least-developed country Members and least connected countries, regarding the building of capacity to close the digital divide, promote digital industrial policy in order to promote inclusive development through electronic commerce domain.

1.4. We also call on WTO Members to agree in Buenos Aires to the moratorium on the application of Subparagraphs 1(b) and 1(c) of Article XXIII of GATT 1994 on non-violation and situation complaints (NVCs) to the TRIPS Agreement.

1.5. We reaffirm Paragraph 35 of the Doha Ministerial Declaration and paragraph 41 of the Hong Kong Ministerial Declaration on the small economies work programme, and paragraph 26 of the Nairobi Ministerial Declaration that due regard be given to the priorities of SVEs in all areas of the negotiations to ensure their further integration into the multilateral trading system.

Least-Developed Countries

1.6. We reaffirm paragraph 24 of the Nairobi Ministerial Declaration and emphasise the need for binding decisions on LDC Group proposals and where already agreed or relevant recognizing LDC concerns in other MC11 decisions.

Regular work of the WTO

1.7. WTO mandates in areas of interest to the ACP Group of States, in particular the development component should continue to be pursued in the relevant WTO bodies beyond MC11.

Accessions

1.8. We welcome the recent accession to the WTO of the ACP State Liberia since the last Ministerial Conference.

1.9. Acceding ACP States should make concessions commensurate with their size and development needs and current WTO rules and standards. In this regard, we urge the implementation of the General Council's Decision of 25 July 2012 on Accession of LDCs operationalising the 2002 LDCs Accession Guidelines.

LDC Enhanced Integrated Framework

1.10. We urge donors to improve on pledges made to Phase 2 of the EIF in Nairobi and to come forward with substantial pledges in Buenos Aires.

Aid for Trade

1.11. We call on donors to continue to support the trade capacity building efforts of ACP Members and Aid for Trade assistance should be in the form of new funding, without diverting from existing bilateral assistance in other areas.

New Issues

1.12. With respect to any new issues, paragraph 34 of the Nairobi Declaration should be respected.

Post-MC11 Work

1.13. We call upon Members to reaffirm in Buenos Aires the Ministerial declarations and General Council Decisions relevant to all WTO mandates; and to take concrete steps to conclude the remaining issues in the DDA, keeping development at the centre of the work program.

1.14. We urge the Eleventh WTO Ministerial Conference to give due consideration to this present ACP Declaration.

Brussels, on 20 October 2017
