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H.E. Mr. Crawford FALCONER
Chairman
Committee on Agriculture in Special Session
World Trade Organization
Rue de Lausanne 154
1211 Geneva 2

Excellency,

On behalf of the ACP, I would like to express our appreciation for your leadership in guiding the membership towards a positive outcome in the Ministerial Conference in Hong Kong in December this year.

The ACP has been engaged constructively and in good faith in the negotiations. The Group will continue to do so and support your efforts in forging consensus on a text for decision by Ministers in Hong Kong. But, the ACP is of the view that political ownership of both the process and the outcome of the negotiations are critical to achieve such a consensus.

The ACP is increasingly concerned, however, that many issues of interest to the Group have not received the attention they deserve, especially those related to the Special and Differential Treatment (SDT) provisions for developing countries. This concern is exacerbated by the unrealistic ambition in market access called for by some players in the negotiations, the most recent example being the 28 October proposal of the EU Commission.

Many issues of vital importance for the ACP have been left behind, namely, protection of our domestic agriculture, LDCs, the implementation of the Marrakech Decision on NFIDCs/LDCs, Special Products, SSM and Longstanding Preferences.

Preferences constitute a vital concern for the ACP. The Group will not be able to join a consensus decision on agriculture modalities unless the erosion of preferences is effectively addressed through concrete and meaningful measures to smooth the impact of reform on the preference-receiving countries.

The Doha Declaration and the Framework Agreement of 2004 provide the legal underpinnings for addressing the issue of preference erosion, as agreed by all WTO members. As modalities on the core elements of the market access pillar are defined, members need to reflect with the same level of specificity, and building on the legal texts, the elements for addressing preference erosion and other elements of SDT of fundamental concern to developing countries.

Negotiations have entered a critical phase. We strongly believe that only a bottom-up approach that incorporates the concerns and views of all members can lead to a legitimate outcome to be endorsed by the membership in Hong Kong. We encourage you to follow this approach. The ACP stands ready to support you in this endeavour.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Yours sincerely,



Shree B.C. Servansing
Ambassador & Permanent Representative of Mauritius
ACP Group Coordinator
Geneva.

Cc:

Mr. Pascal Lamy
WTO Director-General

The Chairman
WTO General Council.