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**Statement by Mr J S Deepak, Additional
Secretary of the Government of India
to the 111th Session of the
International Coffee Council
on 9 September 2013**

Mr Chairman,
Delegations of ICO Member countries,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is indeed an honour and privilege to participate in this meeting on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the ICO. Many thanks to the ICO, the Government of Brazil and the Government of Minas Gerais for having made this possible and for their warm hospitality.

As far as India is concerned, the coffee sector is extremely important. It is not about trade and commerce alone, or even about business. It is rather about the livelihoods of millions of low income and asset-poor growers who are dependent on coffee plantations and tens of millions more who make a living out of the processing and sale of coffee. The commitment of the Government of India to this sector is, therefore, absolute.

Cultivation of coffee in the Western Ghats in South India, which is one of the most eco-sensitive hotspots of the world, has helped to protect the environment. The traditional three-tier canopy of high altitude, shade-grown Arabica plantations contributes greatly to preventing environment degradation. To ensure that Arabica plantations are not replaced by other more commercially valuable uses, it is important that growers receive good prices. Since India exports three times more coffee than it consumes exports are critical to obtaining remunerative prices for planters.

Promoting added value in the coffee sector is also one of our priorities as it will increase the price of exports and consequent realization for all the stakeholders in the value chain.

Diseases and pests are one of the main reasons preventing an increase in coffee productivity. I would like to use this opportunity to convey our thanks to the Executive Director and the ICO for including India in the global initiative to fight leaf rust. Today we are in a position to control this disease. However, the challenge of the white stem borer, a pest that is endemic in Arabicas, especially in drought conditions, and has led to the disappearance of coffee from many South Asian countries, still remains to be overcome. I would therefore request the ICO to start an initiative to eradicate the white stem borer. This will have a very salutary effect on increasing coffee productivity in India.

Thank you for your attention.