

Informal WTO Ministerial Gathering, Davos, 20 January 2017

Personal Concluding Remarks by the Chair, Federal Councillor Johann N. Schneider-Ammann, Switzerland

In concluding this Informal WTO Ministerial Gathering – attended by Ministers and high officials from 29 Members representing a broad spectrum of WTO's membership –, and with warm thanks to all participants for their contributions, I would like to summarize my impressions from our discussion as follows:

- Ministers highlighted the key role of the rules-based multilateral trading system in ensuring a stable and predictable framework for world trade. They stressed the importance of safeguarding the integrity and the benefits of this system and of further strengthening the WTO.
- Recalling the importance of trade as an engine for development and growth, Ministers stressed the priority of working towards further integration into world trade of developing countries, and in particular of least-developed Members.
- Ministers noted that protectionism was not the right answer to anti-trade sentiments and to concerns about technological change. Instead, trade should be made more inclusive and its benefits spread more widely.
- Ministers expressed their appreciation for the informal WTO Ministerial meeting organized by Norway on 21-22 October 2016 in Oslo, and the Chair's summary from those discussions.
- Ministers also expressed their gratefulness to Argentina for hosting the 11th WTO Ministerial Conference in December this year in Buenos Aires.
- Recalling the important outcomes achieved at the 9th and 10th WTO Ministerial Conferences in Bali and Nairobi, Ministers welcomed the imminent entry into force of the multilateral Trade Facilitation Agreement – a major result of MC9 in Bali – and reaffirmed their commitment to the implementation of all outcomes.
- Ministers underlined the need to build on the successes of the last two Ministerial Conferences and to deliver further incremental, yet substantive results at MC11 in Buenos Aires and beyond, with development at its centre. To this end, they expressed their determination to pursue their engagement and political support in the lead-up to MC11.
- Ministers undertook to mandate their officials to intensify their efforts in the different areas through a proposal-driven, inclusive, transparent and timely process.
- Further to the Oslo summary, issues most referred to by Ministers for further work in the lead-up to MC11 comprised:

- elements of domestic support in agriculture, including cotton;
- a permanent solution for public stockholdings for food security purposes;
- other mandated tasks from Nairobi;
- fisheries subsidies, in line with Sustainable Development Goal 14.6;
- domestic regulations and trade facilitation in services;
- special & differential treatment for developing countries and LDC issues.

Among so-called new issues, e-commerce was confirmed to be of particular interest to many Members, as well as micro, small and medium-sized companies (MSMEs).

Topics further referred to notably included:

- non-tariff barriers to trade;
 - investment facilitation;
 - issues relating to market access, rules and export restrictions.
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