

Informal WTO Ministerial Gathering, Davos, 25 January 2019

Personal Concluding Remarks by the Chair, Federal Councillor Guy Parmelin, Switzerland

In concluding this Informal World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Gathering – attended by Ministers and high officials from 32 Members representing a broad spectrum of the WTO membership –, and with warm thanks to all participants for their contributions, I would like to summarize my impressions from our discussions as follows:

- Ministers recognised that 2019 would be a crucial year for the multilateral trading system. They agreed that current trade tensions and challenges should be solved by using increased cooperation and dialogue.
- Many expressed their resolve to work out satisfactory solutions for preserving the credibility of the WTO and enhancing its relevance.
- Ministers reiterated the importance of concluding the negotiations on fisheries subsidies by the end of 2019 consistent with the decision made at MC11.
- Ministers welcomed the process recently initiated to address concerns related to WTO's dispute settlement system. In this regard, they underlined the urgency of restoring a fully-functioning Appellate Body.
- Several statements highlighted the question of how to take into account diverse and evolving levels of development in order to drive forward multilateral negotiations.
- Many participants advocated for tangible progress in negotiations on longstanding issues relevant to a range of Members, including developing countries.
- Furthermore, Ministers heard the report on the Canadian Reform and Modernization Initiative backed by a group of like-minded WTO Members.
- The need to reform the WTO and to improve its functioning - also expressed in the latest G20 summit declaration - was widely acknowledged. At the same time, a variety of views on the content and modalities of such reform have been expressed.
- Numerous interventions stressed the necessity to preserve and step up the transparency and deliberative functions of the WTO and to adapt its rules to address present-day trade issues and challenges.
- While multilateralism remains paramount, some thought it will be important to be open to new ways of making progress that allow members to pursue initiatives of interest to them.

- In this context, many Ministers confirmed their intention to start negotiations on e-Commerce with the broadest possible participation. Some considered that they needed to better understand the issues at stake before taking further steps.
 - The importance of moving ahead in an open and inclusive manner with the other Buenos Aires Joint Initiatives was frequently mentioned. These initiatives cover modern economic issues such as Services Domestic Regulation; Investment Facilitation; Micro, Small and Medium-Sized Companies; and Women and Trade.
 - Ministers stated their willingness to stay involved and to advance key issues for strengthening the multilateral trading system and the WTO in the future.
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