

## Informal WTO Ministerial Gathering, Davos, 24 January 2020

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

35 Ministers and high officials representing a broad spectrum of the WTO membership attended this year's Informal World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Gathering. In concluding and with warm thanks to all participants for their contributions, I would like to summarize the main points from our discussions as follows:

- Ministers stressed their commitment to a successful outcome of the 12<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference in Nur-Sultan (MC12). They expressed their resolve to preserve the credibility of the rules-based multilateral trading system. The need to reform the WTO and to improve its functioning was also widely acknowledged.
- Ministers emphasised the need to adopt by MC12 a comprehensive and effective agreement on fisheries subsidies consistent with the commitment made at MC11. Given the significance of these negotiations for sustainable development and the WTO, Ministers instructed negotiators to step up efforts to ensure the WTO delivers on the Sustainable Development Goal 14.6 and contributes to the long-term sustainability of global fisheries.
- Ministers recalled that the WTO dispute settlement system is a central element in providing security and predictability to the multilateral trading system. They therefore underlined the urgency of taking the necessary actions to restore a fully functioning dispute settlement system in line with its fundamental principles. Some participants indicated that they were working towards contingency measures that would allow for appeals in their trade disputes, in the form of an interim appeal arrangement, until the Appellate Body returns to be operational.
- Several participants addressed the diverse development levels of Members and how these should be taken into account in order to advance multilateral negotiations.
- Many interventions supported tangible headways in negotiations on longstanding issues relevant to a range of Members, including developing and least developed countries. Several participants called for further progress in agricultural trade policy reform at MC12. Among these, many wanted to address the issue of domestic support.
- Numerous interventions stressed the necessity to foster greater transparency of trade policy measures and to stimulate the deliberative function of the WTO. Several participants highlighted the importance of adapting WTO rules and commitments to today's realities.
- While multilateralism remains the preferred option, many considered that it is important to continue to apply new approaches that allow Members to pursue, in an open and inclusive manner, initiatives of interest to them.

- In this context, many Ministers welcomed the progress achieved in the Joint Statement Initiative negotiations such as on E-commerce, Investment Facilitation, Micro, Small and Medium-Sized Companies as well as Services Domestic Regulation. Some also called for an extension of the moratorium on customs duties on electronic transmissions, while others considered that they needed to deepen their understanding of these issues.
  - Furthermore, Ministers heard the reports on the work of the “Ottawa Group”, the JSI on E-Commerce and Investment Facilitation. The G20 Presidency made a presentation of the “Riyadh Initiative on the Future of the WTO”.
  - Ministers undertook to remain involved in the preparations for MC12 in order to advance key issues.
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