



EU Statement at the Heads of Delegations meeting

Buenos Aires, Argentina, 13 December 2017

By European Commissioner for Trade Cecilia Malmström

11th Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organisation (WTO)

When I arrived in Buenos Aires, I listened to President Macri call on WTO members to show collective responsibility and to take pragmatic, even if small steps to reinforce the WTO.

We could and should have taken a real first step on an issue which connects the WTO with the Sustainable Development goals, fisheries subsidies. We could and should have taken long overdue steps in the direction of agricultural trade reform. And we could have initiated work on new issues of interests to so many members in this room, developed and developing alike.

Today, we have to face a simple fact: we didn't line up to President Macri's expectations. We failed to achieve all our objectives, and did not achieve any multilateral outcomes. The sad reality is that we did not even agree to stop subsidizing *illegal* fishing. I hope all delegations reflect carefully about the message this sends to our citizens, stakeholders and our children about the state of the WTO.

Luckily, we still have the WTO's current agreements, its structures of cooperation, and its invaluable dispute settlement system. It is a global public good, and the EU attaches enormous value to it. And in the coming months, we will do what is necessary to support it if it comes under further pressure.

But we have to recognise that this conference has laid bare, more clearly than ever, the deficiencies of the negotiating function of the WTO. And the fact that members are systematically being blocked from addressing pressing realities of global trade. Procedural excuses and vetoes from one member or another, and cynical hostage taking, have led to the sobering result of today.

But as you have reminded us several times, Chair, there is life after Buenos Aires. And the EU wants to thank you profoundly for your hospitality and for pushing us to have a much needed fundamental conversation here in Buenos Aires. A candid, political conversation about how to increase the WTO's ability to face the real questions of relevance to today's global trade. Leaving aside what we call "deliverables": this political discussion is the real issue. It will not stop in Buenos Aires. This is why the EU strongly supports the ministerial decision you have put in front of us which is a fair reflection of our exchanges this week and our collective interest in pursuing this dialogue.

And, I believe we have succeeded in changing the tone and orientation of our discussion about trade and development, moving beyond old ideological fault-lines towards actually addressing real development needs. You were right, and courageous in initiating this discussion, Chair.

Whilst not harvesting results, the EU and many, many others are resolute in their support for moving forward on key issues for global trade. This is the true meaning of the statements

that many countries, including the EU, have made on areas such as domestic regulation on services, e-commerce, investment facilitation – as well as supporting the integration of women and of small and medium sized enterprises in global trade.

Over the past few years the EU and many other Members, developed and developing, large and small, have worked very hard, in an inclusive and open manner, to advance multilaterally on these issues. These efforts have been systematically blocked. But now doors are being opened for new kinds of conversations, using the flexibilities afforded by the multilateral trading system. Moving forward with all interested members whilst ensuring the door remains wide open for all others to join.

I would like to come back to the discussion we had the other day about how difficult it is to have 164 "children" to agree on something. Susanna Malcorra as Chair of MC11 and Amina Mohamed as Chair of MC10 have been responsible, patient and supportive mothers to us. And they were preceded by many others. But when the children are past adolescence, time comes for each of them to take responsibility for their own actions. The WTO has now reached this moment.

I hope all Members will assume that responsibility in the life after Buenos Aires, and that by the time of MC12, we will collectively have charted a more productive path forward for the WTO.

You can certainly count on the EU to work in that direction.