

Informal Meeting of Ministers Responsible for WTO Trade  
Paris, 8 June 2017

Chairs' Summary

Ministers from Argentina and Australia co-hosted an 8 June 2017 Ministerial meeting of more than 30 WTO Members and the WTO Director-General. The meeting, coming less than six months before the 11<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference in Buenos Aires (MC11), offered Members an opportunity to share their views on the importance of the WTO, what might be achievable at MC11 and how to most effectively direct negotiators in Geneva.

Ministers unanimously reaffirmed the importance of a rules based multilateral trading system and the centrality of the WTO. Ministers noted areas where they felt the WTO was imperfect and in need of reform, while strongly reasserting its fundamental value as an institution. They noted important progress made at recent Ministerial Conferences in areas such as Trade Facilitation and Export (Subsidies) Competition in the agricultural pillar. Ministers stressed the importance of implementing these outcomes but also noted the breadth of work which remained unfinished.

While Members varied in their areas of emphasis and focus, there was a clear commitment to finding ways to achieve negotiated, multilateral outcomes through the WTO's negotiating function. Ministers were emphatic that any result had to be balanced, taking into account all sensitivities. Ministers reaffirmed the importance of development, in particular for Least Developed Countries, as a core of the WTO's work.

There was a call for realism and pragmatism in the lead up to MC11 and beyond. There would be benefits to making incremental but meaningful progress on issues where convergence appeared achievable in the limited time before MC11. Some Ministers suggested that in areas where new commitments were unlikely to find consensus, a work program outcome could lay useful groundwork for negotiations going forward.

A majority stressed the importance of achieving progress on the so-called Doha issues. There was also strong, but not unanimous, support for exploring outcomes in other areas such as e-commerce, investment facilitation and micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs).

An outcome on agriculture was identified by a number of Members as critical to any package at MC11, and agriculture was defined by some Members as setting the level of ambition for the Ministerial as a whole. Within Agriculture, Members pointed to domestic support, a permanent solution on public stockholding for food security purposes, cotton and a special safeguard mechanism outcome as areas of particular focus.

The Director-General emphasized the need for direct engagement and a clear message from Ministers. With less than two months remaining before the summer break, he urged Members to begin tabling textual proposals. All efforts needed to be made to ensure negotiations were close to completion before the start of MC11.

Ministers acknowledged negotiations in Geneva were not advancing at a sufficiently advanced pace and noted the Director-General's call for delegations to move toward textual proposals. Ministers called on all Members to intensify their efforts and show flexibility, noting it was a critical time for the WTO to demonstrate its continued relevance and ability to deliver outcomes.

Morocco reaffirmed its undertaking to host an Informal Meeting of WTO Ministers in Marrakesh, in October. This was welcomed by Members, with some suggesting this meeting could offer an opportunity to reassess which proposals were sufficiently advanced to be considered as potential deliverables for MC11.

The MC11 Chair, Ms Susana Malcorra, advised Members that she would be staying on as Chair of the Conference despite her recent resignation as Argentina's Minister of Foreign Relations and Worship. She would be closely engaged in the process including through convening comprehensive technical workshops in the lead up to MC11. These would map out progress, ambitions and sensitivities across all negotiating areas. Ministers warmly welcomed her continued engagement and expressed confidence in her leadership and that of Director-General Azevedo, ahead of MC11.