

## Informal WTO Ministerial Gathering, Paris, 31 May 2018

### Summary of the chair, Minister for Trade, Investment and Tourism, the Hon Steven Ciobo, Australia

Ministers and senior officials from 28 WTO Members, representing a broad spectrum of the WTO membership, and the WTO Director-General, met in Paris on 31 May 2018 to discuss how to advance negotiations post MC11 and build greater resilience in the WTO trading system.

Ministers underscored the need to reinvigorate the WTO's negotiating function and ensure it continues to deliver meaningful outcomes that respond to current realities. Ministers committed to reaching an agreement on fisheries subsidies disciplines by the next Ministerial Conference and identified agriculture as a priority issue. In order to resolve current deadlocks in negotiations, a number of Ministers suggested that new approaches be explored. Ministers also acknowledged the importance of addressing trade and development issues in order to take negotiations forward.

A majority of Ministers welcomed the progress made following the adoption of Joint Ministerial Statements at MC11. This included increased engagement on electronic commerce; investment facilitation for development; micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs); services domestic regulation; and women's economic empowerment. Ministers affirmed the need for these Joint Statement Initiatives to be transparent and inclusive.

Ministers expressed support for the WTO rules based system, but acknowledged that it was under pressure. Ministers committed to work to strengthen the WTO to enable it to effectively address the trade challenges of today.

A majority of Ministers raised concerns over growing trade tensions, including unilateral actions and countermeasures. Ministers called on all Members to work within WTO rules and resolve differences through dialogue.

Ministers discussed the current impasse in the appointment of new members to the WTO's Appellate Body. Ministers also noted concerns expressed about the dispute settlement system and their willingness to work to find positive solutions.

Ministers emphasised the need for constructive engagement across the WTO's core functions including reinvigorating work in the WTO's regular bodies, and improving transparency and notification compliance.

The Director-General urged Members to show flexibility in order to overcome divisions across the negotiating function and encouraged further engagement and solution-finding approaches to address current challenges and help strengthen the WTO.