



NAIROBI FOURTH CHINA ROUND TABLE

WTO ACCESSIONS AND THE MULTILATERAL TRADING SYSTEM

HIGH LEVEL SESSION: INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND AFRICAN
PERSPECTIVES ON THE FUTURE OF THE MULTILATERAL TRADING SYSTEM

Opening Ceremony of the High Level Session

MONDAY, 14 DECEMBER 2015 AT 9:00

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS BY AMB. DR. AMINA MOHAMED, CABINET SECRETARY OF
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HE President Kenyatta,
Director General,
Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to Kenya for the Fourth China Round Table and the WTO's Tenth Ministerial Conference. I wish you all a productive and successful time here in Nairobi.

I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the Government of Kenya, to once again express my gratitude to the WTO Secretariat and the People's Republic of China for their assistance in organising this event – the Fourth China Round Table.

This Round Table is taking place at an important time for the WTO. As you know, MC10 is the first Ministerial Conference to take place in Africa and marks the organisation's 20th anniversary.

This year has been momentous for WTO accessions. From Africa, we welcomed the Seychelles as the WTO's 161st Member in April 2015 and will have the pleasure of doing similarly for Liberia in just a couple days time. I would also like to congratulate Kazakhstan and Afghanistan for successfully completing their respective accession negotiations in recent months.

The theme for this Round Table is "Domestic Reforms for Competitiveness and Deeper Trade Integration in the Global Economy, with the focus on Africa." Today's High Level Session will focus on the "African Perspectives" of the future of the Multilateral Trading System.

As governments, we do not undertake domestic reforms for the sake of reform itself, rather we do so to foster and support our country's economic development. Improving competitiveness and integration into the global economy are a means of delivering sustainable development and enables us to improve the quality of lives of our respective populations.

My own country, Kenya, has been a WTO member since its founding on 1 January 1995 and a contracting party of the GATT since 5 February 1964. Yet, we have by no means stood still since 1995. Development and domestic reforms are by their nature an ongoing and dynamic process.

When I addressed the 5th Global Review of Aid for Trade in July of this year, I emphasised that many domestic reforms, including structural reforms, must be accompanied by capacity-building for sustained growth and development - as often these reforms are neither easy nor straightforward. They require a far-reaching commitment from all levels of government, often going beyond the immediate concerns of specific accession obligations.

This is one of the fundamental lessons we have learned, collectively, from the results of WTO accessions. That is why the China Round Table process is so important to share experiences among African, LDC Members and Observers.

The first China Round Table on the African Continent is a unique opportunity to improve such understanding as well as providing a platform for the continued integration of Africa into the global economy.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In order to strengthen international trade in order to support sustainable development, efforts are needed to ensure the efficient use of domestic resources, building human capacity and strengthening national institutions.

In Africa, this also means that further emphasis is needed to provide a supportive investment climate which is able to integrate our Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) into global value chains. These enterprises play a critical role in job creation, poverty reduction and export diversification.

As global markets shift and new opportunities present themselves, we must continually adapt in order to achieve successful sustainable development outcomes. In Kenya, for instance, we have the Green Economy Strategy and Implementation Plan which has now become part of our medium-term plan for 2013-2017. In this vein, we are also working to improve e-commerce as part of Kenya's Vision 2030 which seeks to mainstream e-Trade within our overall economy.

I hope these discussions will prompt thinking about the opportunities and challenges that WTO membership presents for Africa, as well as the management of their participation in the WTO. To make the Organisation work, we – as Ministers – must engage and drive it forward to deliver the results we need.

Distinguished colleagues,

I must stress that, as the first WTO Ministerial Conference in Africa, MC10 underlines the importance of delivering on development outcomes in the WTO. But it is also a milestone in terms of the future of the Organisation. What we

are able to deliver in the coming days will be crucial to the role of the WTO as a forum for trade negotiations over the coming years.

I have been telling you, my distinguished colleagues, that I will do everything within my power to ensure that MC10 is a success, for Kenya, for Africa and for every WTO Member. Even if it means continuing the negotiations late into the night and confronting some of the most challenging issues in front of this organisation.

We cannot allow the WTO to lose its significance. At stake are important advancements in eliminating agricultural and fishery subsidies, measures to benefit the LDCs and enhancing the transparency function of the organisation.

However, the most important issue which must absolutely be solved is how do we the Members, reinvigorate the WTO's negotiating function.

The WTO is a system we have all invested in, both through the lengthy accession processes for those recently acceded Members and through the continued engagement of the founding Members.

Allowing the WTO to sink into irrelevance serves no one, least of all those most in need of economic development.

I urge all Members present to work with me, as Chair, this week for a successful and balanced outcome for MC10.

Thank you.