

Chairperson,

Ministers,

Distinguished Delegates,

The first WTO ministerial meeting taking place in Africa is truly an important milestone for the WTO. I want to thank our hosts for their warm hospitality. I would also like to welcome new Members: Kazakhstan, Seychelles, the Republic of Liberia and Afghanistan.

It is my pleasure to outline Finnish views on global trade agenda. We are strong supporters of free, open and fair trade.

In Bali we agreed on the Trade Facilitation Agreement. This is a very important agreement for the organization and for its Members. There are only winners with this agreement – biggest winners are the developing countries. We hope that WTO members will ratify the agreement so that it can enter into force as soon as possible. Finalizing the ITA and EGA negotiations are also an important step, especially in the light of Paris climate agreement.

Today's global trade agenda is more complex than ever. Countries are negotiating bilateral, regional or plurilateral agreements in order to open new markets and promote their economic growth and employment.

Therefore, it is important to update the multilateral agenda in order to respond new challenges. In Nairobi we have an excellent opportunity to take decisions which give us possibilities to bring new items to the

agenda. There should be a process leading to negotiations on new subjects, either between all WTO members or on plurilateral basis.

As a Minister for Foreign Trade and Development, I can truly say that sustainable trade can be a powerful tool for poverty eradication. This was confirmed in 2030 Agenda. We can help developing countries to join global value chains through Aid for Trade.

Particularly least developed countries need Aid for Trade support to benefit from global trade opportunities. I am proud to announce that Finland pledged earlier this week ten million euros to the Enhanced Integrated Framework.

We work closely with Trade Mark East Africa and the International Trade Centre. I am also happy to announce a new project with the World Customs Organization. It is a three million euro project funded by Finland that will support trade facilitation in the Eastern and Southern Africa.

To conclude I would like to say a few words about gender equality, which is not only a matter of fairness and justice. It also makes economic sense. According to research and statistics, gender equality is smart economics: it can enhance economic efficiency and improve broad range of development outcomes. Economies are also larger and more versatile when both women and men participate fully as equals.

Only economies that make full use of all their talent will remain competitive and grow.

Agreement is possible. We can do it.