

WTO 10th Ministerial Meeting, Nairobi

Plenary Session

Speech by Minister Damien English T.D.

Mr. Chairman, Director-General Azevedo, fellow Ministers, Ambassadors, ladies and gentlemen;

I wish to thank Kenya's Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Amina Mohamed for inviting us to Nairobi and providing both wonderful and efficient facilities in Nairobi.

Economic growth has been facilitated by progressive trade reform and we have witnessed how crucial this has been over the last number of years. International trade can play a role towards achieving sustainable, robust and balanced growth for all, leading to meaningful job creation. The WTO has a leading role in this by enabling trade opportunities for all.

The strength of the WTO lies in setting the rules that also help developing countries and least developed countries become embedded in the global trading system. All 162 members have a voice and everyone has a seat at the table at the WTO which gives it a uniqueness that is important to remember and protect. Of the

members, many are developing or least developed countries. Stimulating their economic development has a powerful impact on alleviating poverty and gives them enduring capacity to raise living standards and improve the lifetime opportunities for everyone.

Ireland is one of the most open economies in the world and we have undeniably felt the positive impact of trade liberalisation. Over the decades, we have continuously provided a bridge between the global markets and our entrepreneurs, by leveraging the advantages the WTO has given us. The growth in high technology and global value chains that has come with globalisation has its roots in how the WTO has helped influence and for the better, the multilateral trading system. Our economic developments and the prosperity of our citizens that has flowed from trade is due in no small part to the influence of this Organisation.

This week in Nairobi we have seen a landmark agreement eliminating tariffs on Information Technology products. This will help jobs in the sector, add to global GDP and benefit consumers.

It is clear that we all benefit from the WTO's activities. It is vital for us at this conference to reaffirm the central role of the WTO in trade and to actively push forward with a strong and committed agenda that works to strengthen this unique organization. There will be new challenges in the future that only the WTO can manage and address.

I hope that we can continue to work together to address the issues that will improve the welfare of developing economies. This week I have seen at first hand the challenges that still face our global community. Ireland is a proud and committed supporter of developing countries in Africa through our bilateral aid programme. Our programmes will assist and strengthen their capacity to grasp the opportunities presented by trade and investment.

I also hope that we can develop an agenda for the future addressing the new problems that restrict trade. The welfare of our citizens depends on a strong rules based system for global trade. This is both the proud legacy and the bright future for the WTO.