

WTO 10th Ministerial conference, 15-18 December, 2015

Address by Mr Edgars Rinkēvičs, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia

Madam Chair, Excellencies, Distinguished delegates, Ladies and gentlemen,

First of all let me avail this opportunity to thank Kenya, in particular President Uhuru Kenyatta as well as Cabinet Secretary and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Amina Mohamed for hosting us in Nairobi – **and for the first time in Africa.**

Let me also thank the Director General Roberto Azevedo as well as the Chairman of the General Council Fernando de Mateo for their dedicated efforts in stirring the negotiation process.

The WTO 10th Ministerial conference in Nairobi marks the 20th anniversary of the organization. During this time, the WTO has become the backbone of the multilateral rules-based trading system, contributing to the strength and the stability of the global economy. The organization has been fundamental in setting trade rules and guarding their implementation,

thus ensuring transparency and predictability for stakeholders. Despite economic and financial turbulences, the share of the world trade in GDP has increased by 10% over the last two decades, it is a fact.

Moreover, the WTO membership is constantly growing. The organization has welcomed over 30 new members in the past 20 years, among them some of the world's largest as well as most vulnerable economies. That means there is continuous trust in the multilateral trading system. I am pleased to see the Republic of Liberia and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to join the organization, and I congratulate the Republic of Seychelles and Kazakhstan to their first WTO Ministerial Conference.

In the meantime, **we still have a lot to deliver and there is no time to be complacent**. We have gathered in Nairobi with the aim to advance on such significant issues as export competition in agriculture, transparency in WTO provisions, and specific issues for Least Developed Countries (LDCs). We hold collective responsibility to find constructive ways to deliver tangible and realistic outcomes on these issues, especially since they are essential for development.

At the same time we have to address the outstanding key issues and find a way to move forward, **reinforcing the credibility** of the organization and **its negotiation function**. The relevance of the WTO depends on how alert we are in response to the changing global business realities. **A new approach** is necessary to successfully advance the outstanding issues. I also believe, we should not hesitate to start discussing **new issues** in the WTO framework.

I applaud the achieved success with regard to the expansion of trade in information technology products since the original ITA in 1996 – that will add considerable value to the world trade. I also look forward to a positive outcome on the Environmental Goods Agreement (EGA) in the near future.

Dear Members,

The World Trade Organization is our strong asset. We should be responsible and bold in our decisions, and we should embrace the unique role of the WTO as the most inclusive framework for global trade

governance. Let Nairobi deliver meaningful results, and serve as a stepping stone for further global trade integration.

Thank you.