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MC10 OPENING SESSION
15 DECEMBER 2015

On behalf of the Government and People of Kenya, I welcome you all to Nairobi and to this Opening Session of the Tenth WTO Ministerial Conference.

Welcome to the Kenyatta International Conference Center (KICC).

I am highly honoured to acknowledge the presence of our host Dr. Uhuru Kenyatta, President of the Republic of Kenya, in the company of (a highly regarded honorary Kenyan), H.E. Madame Johnson Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia.

Since the start of the year, Members have worked hard to get to this point. Constituency groups have met in different regions. Either as Ministers, Ambassadors or Chief Negotiators, we have met on the margins of other meetings: Davos, the OECD in Paris, the Ten-year Review of A4T in Geneva, the WTO Public Forum, the G20 in Istanbul and of course, in the regular bodies of the WTO, the TNC and the General Council. We have made proposals, reviewed them, countered them, explored "landing zones" and, exchanged views. We have worked a "Facilitators Process" that came to an end in Geneva last week.

We know what is at stake? So, what is at stake here in Nairobi?

Let's face up to it. The WTO is the principal forum for trade negotiations that delivers the public good of non-discriminatory trade rules, and much more. It is a primary arena for international cooperation. Its credibility and capacity to deliver would be called into question, were we not to be successful in delivering "meaningful" outcomes in Nairobi.

The WTO, building on its GATT foundations, embodies the core values of openness, transparency, good governance and the rule of law. It is structured on the separation of powers: as in its legislative function through negotiations; its Executive Secretariat; and, in the judicial function pursuant to the Dispute Settlement Understanding (DSU). In other words, the WTO embodies modern democratic governance, in its structure, substance and, method of work.

Were we not to deliver, how would we, the champions of the WTO and the beneficiaries of the gains from trade, answer the sceptics and the opposition, frequently impervious to reason, who have always perceived the WTO negatively and wrongly, as a club where the agenda of the rich are set?

We need to exercise care and be mindful of what is at stake and what the WTO represents.

The existential rationale of the WTO is irrefutable. Its centrality in international trade relations cannot be substituted. If the rules-based multilateral trading system did not exist, we would have to create it. If it fails because of leadership deficits and inability to make rational choices, we would have to re-create it. We are dealing with the logic of history. The failed League of Nations

was substituted by the United Nations. If we are awkward and impractical and do not make the hard choices to renew the WTO and we lose it, we would have to re-create it and it would be infinitely harder to do so.

Apart from a weak global economy still dealing with the after-shocks of the global financial and economic crisis, we are faced with the risk of trade and economic fragmentation. Variable regional trading arrangements are useful and can generate welfare effects. They are complements to trade multilateralism, but not substitutes.

And if I may quote my friend and colleague USTR Michael Froman from his Op Ed in the Financial Times of yesterday, "Multilateralism still promises the greatest gains in theory"; and, I would to that "in practice as well".

The WTO represents something more and greater. In multilateral trade negotiations, parties are not just the like-minded – "like us". The world is not just composed of the like-minded. We reflect the rich and frustrating diversity of different priorities, different concerns and different approaches. This may not always approximate our goals, ideals, preferences and ambitions, but these are the cards that we have been dealt and which we must play.

In our diversity, we learn something more valuable. We learn to engage constructively, pragmatically and, realistically. We learn to construct a *modus vivendi* and a win-win for all. In our trade games, there are no winners that take it all. This is the immeasurable value of multilateralism.

So, this is what is at stake and what we have to address in Nairobi over the next few days.

But the odds are not stacked against us. To the contrary, I believe that the odds are in our favour. The results of year-long negotiations are not unfamiliar. Although they have been tough, there are self-binding commitments to success. The WTO has the full commitment of African WTO Members for a successful outcome. Our objective from this Nairobi Ministerial meeting is that it renews and strengthens the WTO. We would like it said that Africa restored to the WTO its élan, its capacity for trade rules and regulations and, its nimbleness in solving real world problems.

The outcome from Nairobi should modernize and update the WTO.

I would like to thank Roberto for his tireless efforts as Director-General to define the landing zones for a Nairobi outcome.

Over the next few days, as Chair of the Tenth Ministerial, I will work closely with him and Ministers, in different formats and configurations, to secure a meaningful outcome.

We shall do whatever it takes. Kenya and Africa are firmly fixed on ending 2015 on a high note for trade multilateralism. We ask the rest of the world to join us. With the support of the 162 Members of the WTO, I am hopeful that we shall succeed.
