

*Speech by Lillianne Ploumen, Minister for Foreign Trade and Development
Cooperation, at the 10th WTO Ministerial Conference in Nairobi, 16 December 2015*

Ladies and gentlemen,

Last week the world's eyes were on Paris. This week they're on Nairobi. In Paris, multilateralism produced results. It is our ambition that the same thing happens in Nairobi.

The world is changing rapidly. Whether it is on climate, migration, terrorism, or trade and investment. International markets expand fast, with global and regional value chains linking trade and investment. Trade barriers are hampering investment, while industry and services are rapidly becoming more integrated. Global value chains present new opportunities to join the international economy. But many developing countries – especially the least developed ones – are still struggling to find a way in.

Recently we agreed on the 2030 agenda for sustainable development, including the Sustainable Development Goals which will guide trade and investment the next 15 years.

The world emerging is increasingly complex and multipolar. We're more connected with each other than ever before. Converging towards multilateral solutions is getting more difficult, but multilateral cooperation has never been more important. When it comes to issues like sustainable development and extreme poverty, we need each other more than ever.

International trade has an essential role to play in all of this. If we're to achieve our goals we need effective, rule-based cooperation. That's why the Netherlands has always been a firm advocate of the WTO. And will remain so. The role of the WTO's in the international trade system is recognised by many others. This role can't be taken for granted. The multilateral trading system embodied in the WTO is very strong, however, lack of progress on the negotiating front can undermine the position of the WTO.

We've been negotiating the Doha development agenda since 2001. But we have little to show so far. This week the WTO ministerial conference is being held in Africa for the very first time. Marking a shift in the world's economic landscape. Being in Nairobi comes with a greater responsibility. Can we really afford to leave Africa and go back home without concrete results for this development round?

We've already tempered our ambitions. But we can't keep putting things off. So I call on everyone here to make sure we get results this week. On export competition. On a package for LDCs. On rules. And on the way forward.

Agreeing on the Doha issues is crucial. Agriculture remains extremely important, especially in developing countries. In many LDCs farming accounts for 60 to 70 per cent of jobs. The poverty-reducing effect of agricultural growth is 1.6 times that of industrial growth.

Agreeing on these issues is not enough. To keep the WTO as guardian of the multilateral system firmly in place we need to do more. We need to make sure the multilateral system keeps pace with what's happening in the real economy.

So let's use this week to create an ambitious Nairobi package. And let's agree to join forces and explore new ways of keeping the WTO and the multilateral system relevant for the next 20 years.

As I said, this week all eyes are on Nairobi. And Nairobi deserves the same praise as Paris.

Thank you.