



Tenth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organisation

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NEW ZEALAND PLENARY STATEMENT

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Chair, Excellencies, Colleagues

It is my pleasure to address you as a group for the first time. At the outset, let me thank the Government and People of Kenya for their gracious hosting of this Ministerial Conference and for the hospitality that they have extended to us.

It must be clear to all of us that this will not be an easy week, and that the current situation is not an auspicious way to mark the 20th anniversary of the WTO. But, we are here, and we are working together to secure an outcome befitting that important milestone.

Despite the difficulties it has faced, the WTO remains New Zealand's number one trade priority. For a small, geographically isolated, trading nation like ours, nothing offers greater potential than the multilateral, rules-based, trading system. And, to be very clear, this system must include a negotiating function – whether it be one based on Doha or otherwise.

Drawing the curtains on the Doha Round could not mean that the Doha issues, or the problems that have impeded us, will go away. We cannot pretend, for example, that a system which allows some countries to maintain very high levels of domestic support, and border protection in agriculture, is a fair one.

Equally, as the global economy evolves, so too must the multilateral trading system evolve. This process of evolution must be reflected in the activities of the WTO. We must complete the 20th century agenda, but we cannot exclusively lock ourselves into that. Nor can we afford to pause, or rewind, the progress the WTO has made over two decades. That progress is more than implementing the WTO agreements, settling disputes and ensuring oversight of commitments. I refer here to the essential role that the WTO plays in progressing the trade agenda, and ensuring it adapts to meet the requirements of a modern world.

We have the opportunity, over the critical hours and days ahead, to demonstrate that the WTO can progress that agenda in several critical areas. Most significantly for New Zealand's economy, we are all working hard on a substantive and important outcome in export competition in agriculture. As President Kenyatta wisely observed yesterday, the agriculture negotiations are the ones from which developing countries can derive most gains, while also providing us with the best opportunity to address longstanding distortions.

In particular, we hope that we can achieve our long-held goal of finally eliminating agricultural export subsidies, as well as other measures on export financing and food aid. We also look forward to substantial outcomes for Least Developed Countries in a range of areas, and to the other elements of the Nairobi Package that are being progressed. New Zealand will continue to play its part in making this Conference a success.

As the Director-General has said, we know that the outcome of this Ministerial will not be comprehensive. But we can – and must – ensure it is credible. And what is credible is more than just agreeing on the lowest common denominator. It is achieving an outcome that is commercially meaningful, that can be implemented and respected, and which will act as a compass that can guide us in the next stage of our journey as Members of this organisation.

Thank you.