

**PLENARY STATEMENT  
BY MINISTER FOR TRADE & INDUSTRY (TRADE),  
SINGAPORE  
10<sup>TH</sup> WTO MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE  
15 - 18 DECEMBER 2015**

Madam Chair, Excellencies, Colleagues,

1. This year, we celebrate the WTO's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Over the last two decades, the WTO has provided leadership in creating a rules-based system for the conduct of international trade. The WTO has done well in many of its functions – implementation, transparency and dispute settlement. At this Ministerial held on the African continent, another first for the WTO, we have before us one clear priority – to ensure that the WTO remains a relevant and strong organisation for the next 20 years and beyond.

2. The WTO is not in a comfortable place today. 14 years after the Doha Round was launched, the differences on the core issues remain stark. Finding convergence amongst the Membership has been extremely challenging, not least because the trade-offs are fundamentally political. The much needed progress in trade negotiations is being made in preferential trade agreements outside of the WTO. In turn, this has reduced the margins for trade-offs in the WTO. We should acknowledge that the WTO's negotiating arm is facing grave challenges.

3. The 10<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference presents a critical opportunity for us as Members to do what is needed so that the WTO can perform the roles that it is set up to do. Members must provide direction on how the WTO can continue with multilateral trade liberalisation, and ensure that rules remain relevant to today's business realities. We cannot pretend that it is business as usual. Neither should we set aside our past work or the issues that remain important. It is for us all to show leadership. I believe we will need to dive deeply and courageously into an honest discussion on how to move forward over the next few days.

4. The challenge before us is to preserve and strengthen the system, and to collectively find ways to breathe new life into the WTO's negotiating arm. We can, and we must, leave Nairobi with a clear commitment to making sure this vital pillar of global economic governance remains relevant, dynamic and productive.

5. Thank you.