



## **STATEMENT**

**BY HON VINCENT T. SERETSE  
MINISTER OF INVESTMENT, TRADE AND INDUSTRY  
REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA**

**AT THE  
ELEVENTH SESSION OF THE MINISTERIAL  
CONFERENCE OF  
THE WORLD TRADE ORGANISATION**

**12 DECEMBER 2017  
BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA**

**Madam Chairperson, Director-General Azevêdo, fellow Ministers, Ambassadors, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen;**

1. First and foremost, we wish to join others in expressing our gratitude to the Government and the people of the Argentine Republic for their warm hospitality and tremendous welcome.
2. Botswana continues to have complete faith in the relevance of the rules-based Multilateral Trading System and its contribution to global growth and stability as supported by the WTO and its rules-based system.
3. We regret **Madam Chair**, the stalemate in the negotiations and the very divergent positions which continue to hinder progress in Geneva. With that, we hold the **view that there is need to reach what has thus far been a very illusive balance** (my emphasis). That will enable us to advance our negotiations which are core to the very existence of the WTO.
4. **Madam Chair**, we are greatly disturbed by the lack of appetite, of some of our negotiating partners, to engage in some areas of the negotiations particularly the Doha Development Agenda. We would like to dissuade Members from any such precedent that does not stand to help anyone among us. We should at the very least be able to listen to each other, and reflect on the concerns/interests of all Members. In this way, the Republic of Botswana is willing to

show flexibility by way of listening to and deciding on a way forward in relation to engaging on the new issues of interest to some of our partners. **However**, priority should always be given to the Doha issues so that at the end of the day we achieve a mutually beneficial result.

5. Given the very limited time we have had in Buenos Aires and the difficult dynamics in the negotiations, the likelihood of coming up with tangible outcomes has looked more and more remote by the day. We believe that this Ministerial Conference should aim towards providing political direction and guidance to the technocrats on how to take the negotiations forward.
  
6. **Madam Chair**, it is of paramount importance that as we reflect on the outcomes of this Conference that we devote significant efforts towards agreeing on a future-oriented programme that will guide the work of our Organisation in all the substantive areas of negotiations. Maybe now is the right time to confront the issues hindering progress in an open and transparent manner. It is time to take stock and see whether our current make up and structure of doing things is responsive to the dynamic nature of our economies. Where found necessary, the Republic of Botswana will not hesitate in supporting any reforms that are found necessary to transform our Organisation so as to enhance the workings of the multilateral trade system hinged upon rules that are applied objectively taking into account the peculiarities of its Member States.

7. **Madam Chair**, it would be remiss of me not to reflect on the recent successes of the organisation despite the challenges we face. In this regard, we welcome the entry into force of the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation and the TRIPS Amendment. These instruments stand to address development concerns such as improving the trading prospects within and among developing countries, and providing legal certainty to accessing cheaper generic medicines that would ensure the sustenance of our public health programmes. It is on this token that, I would like to encourage their full implementation so that we realize their true benefit.

8. **Madam Chair**, as I conclude, I would like to wish you luck in steering this Ministerial Conference and hope for objective and progressive exchanges between Ministers.

I thank you! Muchos gracias!