



THE REPUBLIC

OF THE GAMBIA

MINISTRY OF TRADE, INDUSTRY, REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND EMPLOYMENT

STATEMENT

BY THE

**HON. MINISTER OF TRADE, INDUSTRY, REGIONAL
INTEGRATION AND EMPLOYMENT**

AT THE

11TH WTO MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA

10 – 13 DECEMBER 2017

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Minister Susana Malcorra, Chairperson of the MC11

Director-General,

Colleague Ministers,

Ambassadors,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

First, let me congratulate the Government of Argentina for hosting this 11th WTO Ministerial Conference as well as thank them for the warm hospitality accorded to me and my delegation since our arrival in this beautiful city of Buenos Aires. I would also like to congratulate Mr. Roberto Azevedo, Director-General, on his re-election, and wish him another successful tenure in steering the affairs of the WTO.

The Gambia remains committed to an inclusive, open, and transparent multilateral trading system as it remains our hope for a better life for all. Although not perfect, the multilateral trading system remains an important rules-based system where both developed and developing countries have equal rights.

Chairperson, as a new government emerging from 22 years of dictatorship and self-isolation, the Government of the Gambia has embarked on a comprehensive economic reform to re-integrate itself into the global economy by improving its business environment to promote and facilitate trade and investment. The Government recently adopted a new National Entrepreneurship Policy to support the

development of MSMEs which constitute more than 70% of our economic operators and contribute more than 60% of employment in the economy. We have also concluded a comprehensive Investment Policy Review with the support of UNCTAD. Also, the Gambia is committed to advancing gender equality, and youth and women empowerment as well as creating a policy environment to unleash their potential.

The Gambia is among the countries that have ratified the trade facilitation agreement and remains committed to the multilateral trading system as we believe it is the best option to foster global trade and development. Development must remain an integral part of multilateral trade for us to deal with poverty, employment, food security and global security.

Chairperson; 16 years ago a Doha Round of trade negotiations was launched in Doha in November 2001 with the aim of achieving a major reform of the international trading system. The mandate of negotiations including agriculture, services and intellectual property had raised our hope and confidence in the multilateral trading system because it incorporates a development package for developing countries. However, the outcomes of successive negotiations on the DDA continue to dash our hopes as it is yet to deliver on the development we hoped for.

We hope that the outcome of this 11th Ministerial Conference will rekindle our confidence in the multilateral trading system. The conference is already clouded with uncertainty as the negotiations package is not yet clear, in format and content.

I am sure with concerted efforts and commitment we can achieve something. Negotiations on Domestic Support, Special Safeguard Mechanism (SSM) Market Access and public stockholding for food security purposes are on-going at the WTO. Reducing trade distorting domestic support that mainly developed countries give to their farmers remains a main obstacle for agricultural development in developing countries as such supports results in imbalances in the international markets which affects farmers. We therefore urge members to achieve progress in the negotiation in these areas.

My delegation supports the reforms on Agriculture more especially on domestic support and safeguards. We also support the current GATS framework that provides member states freedom to regulate their services sector. The current proposals on domestic regulation pose regulatory burden to regulators and also reduces policy space for countries.

We strongly believe that Special and Differential Treatment should remain an integral part of the multilateral trading system to support structural transformation, diversification and industrialisation in

developing countries. We therefore urge Members to take special consideration of the needs of developing countries, particularly LDCs, in relation to development. As an LDC, development is at the heart of our membership in the WTO, and we will continue to focus our efforts in achieving a balanced outcome in the negotiations.

Aid-for-Trade remains an important area for us given its strategic role in supporting the development of trade-related capacities in our economies. The results of the Sixth Global Review of Aid for Trade in July 2017 are reassuring, and we urge development partners to continue according priority attention to LDCs.

We recognize the importance of the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) in the advancement of our development agenda, especially on trade mainstreaming, and the creation of jobs for the poor and vulnerable, including women and youth.

I am honoured to inform you that for the first time in the history of the EIF, a hard infrastructure project was implemented – an ultramodern airport cargo complex built in The Gambia. The project’s objective is to promote trade facilitation and improve service delivery at Banjul International Airport.

Finally, we take note of the efforts by some Members to advance discussions on emerging and pertinent issues such as MSMEs,

investment facilitation, and e-commerce. However, The Gambia supports the African Group Position that Members should seek to reach a consensus on outstanding issues before embarking on new negotiations. Thus, discussions on these new issues should remain informal.

Madam Chair,

Let me conclude by thanking the Government of Argentina for hosting this 11th Ministerial Conference.

We look forward to a successful outcome which will primarily seek to address the outstanding DDA issues.

Thank you for your attention.