

WTO 11th Ministerial Meeting, Buenos Aires

Plenary Session

Speech by Minister Pat Breen T.D.

Madam Chair, Director-General Azevêdo, fellow Ministers,

Ambassadors, ladies and gentlemen;

I wish to join with other delegations in thanking the Government of Argentina for inviting us to Buenos Aires, and for the generous hospitality offered to us and the superb organizational arrangements that have been put in place.

Ireland is one of the world's most open, export-based economies. We rely on external demand and access to international markets for sustainable and continued economic growth. Trade constitutes an ever increasingly important means of creating jobs and has been a key factor in Ireland's export led recovery in recent years. The more we trade together, the more prosperous our societies become. This has

been demonstrated in the recent annual report from the EU Commission on the impacts and benefits of Free Trade Agreements.

While the global economic environment has always been dynamic, change is happening now at a faster pace than ever before. Global value chains are becoming ever more interlinked; creating new trading patterns, and driving companies to become continuously more innovative and competitive. Environmental sustainability and global development issues are now central to the trade agenda. The digitisation of trade is revolutionising how people access and pay for goods and services, and how companies reach markets.

Ireland is embracing all these changes. We are moving rapidly towards a knowledge-based economy built on innovation and technology. We have developed an innovative business climate that is driven by cutting-edge information technology. We understand that our economic future is dependent on the successful digitisation of our

native businesses and Ireland is recognised as a digital front runner globally.

Among my current ministerial responsibilities are the EU Digital Single Market and Data Protection, so I know that E-Commerce is now a key driver of international trade policy. Digitisation is increasing on a vast scale. In addition to the difference it makes to our everyday lives, digitisation provides huge economic opportunities for all of us. It impacts every part of our economic development from regulatory frameworks and intellectual property rights to market access and trade facilitation. So initiatives designed to enhance how E-Commerce can grow trade, especially for SMEs, are important and must be embraced by the WTO and its member countries. We must also work together to ensure that all countries are provided with the technical assistance needed to gain fully from the changing global trade environment.

We believe that the WTO provides the essential framework to manage these extraordinary transformations taking place in world trade. The agreements and obligations overseen by the WTO are essential to the fair regulation of trade. They give our enterprises the confidence to develop new secure, open markets. Businesses gain from transparent, predictable and fair trading rules. The WTO must continue to adapt to the needs of its members and be responsive to global developments. This is what makes the Organisation vibrant, relevant and respected.

I hope that we here today will take a leadership role in promoting common solutions to the new challenges and opportunities brought about by the digital age. The work of the WTO on E-Commerce should be key to providing the means to increase global trade for all members. Ireland, as a member of the EU, will play its part in trying to achieve tangible results on this issue.

We must now be ambitious in our hopes and our actions; we must show resolve in looking to the future rather than restating the issues of the past. The decisions we make at this Conference must give the global trading system the necessary stimulus to grow our economies in order to create decent jobs and raise the living standards for the citizens of our countries. We should now all work towards a successful conference and support the WTO and the rules based multilateral trading system. Ireland looks forward to engaging in a constructive and positive spirit in these critical discussions, and to engaging with our electorates back home and with civil society generally on the benefits and opportunities offered by a fair, balanced and rules based multilateral trading system.

Thank You.