

MC11 STATEMENT

BUENOS AIRES

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Minister Malcorra

WTO Director General Azevêdo

Ministers

Ladies and gentlemen

This is the seventh WTO Ministerial that I have attended and in many ways it is the most critical one.

Trade and multilateral cooperation both face serious headwinds today. In some quarters trade is seen as a zero-sum game.

Multilateralism is seen as weakening national sovereignty. Even worse, as the realm of the weak but not the strong. This Ministerial has the responsibility to set the record straight.

Trade and multilateralism are tools. Trade is a tool that can help us generate growth. That can help us create jobs. That can help us end extreme poverty. Multilateralism is a tool that can help us ensure this is done in a cooperative manner, maximising the benefits while minimising the cross-border frictions. How are we going to ensure marine fish stocks survive us if it is not through multilateral efforts to curb incentives to overfishing?

I have spent the better part of the two years since the 10th WTO Ministerial Conference advocating for the power of trade multilateralism.

Not only because I am convinced that it is essential that we keep the trade engine of growth humming.

But because this is the message that I have received from the people that I have met on the ground in your countries: they count on open, rules-based trade.

It is about the two businesswomen I met in Senegal a few weeks ago. Marième is a software engineer in charge of an IT services firm in Dakar. Aminata runs a mid-sized mango company outside the city. On the face of it, they're not much alike. But they both see exports as central to the future of their businesses.

It is about Rosalie, a weaver in Burkina Faso, who because of its exports of textiles to Japan can now send her children to school. Nabila in Morocco, whose revenues grew ten-fold after she started using e-Commerce to get her cosmetic products to Europe. It's Swaby in Jamaica who is adding value to his coconut agri-processing business through better quality standards. And

Mohammed in The Gambia, a young entrepreneur employing other young entrepreneurs by creating a scalable business through trade with West Africa.

For all these people and millions like them, trade is a path to larger markets, more competitiveness, value addition, and the creation of more and better jobs. And that has a great deal to do with you.

Trade is a viable growth strategy only because of the open global economy. The open global economy is, in turn, the product of decisions your governments took at home, and anchored here, in the WTO system.

By ensuring predictable and open markets you have given farmers from Kansas to Cordoba in Argentina the security to ramp up investment, because they can be confident their soybeans will not face unexpected barriers in overseas markets. Predictably open markets allow tech visionaries from Silicon Valley to Mumbai or Seoul to source components and services from around the world to transform ideas into affordable products and services.

Trade has increased purchasing power, made our countries more prosperous and broadened our horizons. That does not mean it is smooth sailing for everyone.

In too many places, the intertwined benefits of trade and technology have skewed towards the richest and best-educated citizens. This has helped give rise to the current scepticism about trade. If large numbers of people feel that the modern economy is not working for them, trade becomes an easy scapegoat.

The challenge before us is to make trade work for the 99%. To make majorities feel that the benefits and opportunities of trade far exceed the risks and vulnerability that come with it.

This is an agenda for all countries, for all of us in this room. While economic marginalization within developed countries is finally getting the attention that it deserves, too many least developed countries, small and vulnerable economies, small island developing states and landlocked developing countries remain on the margins of the global economy.

One part of making trade more inclusive is to ensure that businesses of all sizes – large but also micro, small, and medium-sized - are able to connect to value chains.

The WTO is helping on this front. The Trade Facilitation Agreement that you are implementing will reduce trade costs, yielding disproportionate benefits for MSMEs.

And the on-line Global Trade Helpdesk, which ITC has launched today together with WTO and UNCTAD will help businesses exploit the opportunities of more open markets building on your WTO notifications and trade data available in our organisations. A separate cotton on-line portal will bring together the full spectrum of trade and market information for the sector.

The WTO can help on this front. Countries can learn from each other's good practices to improve the effectiveness of inclusive growth policies. This is why many of you are supporting a declaration on trade and women's economic empowerment which we will hand over to the WTO Ministerial Chair tomorrow. Only one in five exporting companies is led by a woman. We surely can do better. And if we do so, our economies will grow more for the benefit of all.

The second part of the answer actually has little to do with trade ministries. It is much more about domestic social and educational policies and investments to equip people to acquire new skills and thrive amidst economic change.

International cooperation can help on both fronts. In a globally interdependent world where global problems need global solutions we cannot look inward.

In sum, we need to act on the supply side to enable businesses of all sizes to trade. Where the rules exist, uphold them. Where the rules need fixing, we should work together to fix them. Learn from each other. Above all, we need to work together. Abandoning cooperation would make all of us poorer. We must stand up for multilateralism. We must make trade great again.

I thank you for your attention.