

# **Remarks by Deputy Trade and Investment Minister, KIM Young Sam**

*to the Plenary Session of the 11th WTO Ministerial Conference*

Buenos Aires, Argentina  
December 11, 2017

Good Afternoon! Madam Chairperson Malcorra, Director General Azevêdo, Ministers and Ambassadors, ladies and gentlemen! Let me first extend my deep gratitude to President Macri, the government and the people of Argentina for hosting the 11th WTO Ministerial Conference and providing their kind hospitality.

< Challenges facing the WTO and the need for change >

The WTO has played a crucial role in helping many Members trade their way out of poverty and pursue economic growth and development.

Despite its remarkable achievements, however, the WTO and multilateral trading system are today facing challenges of a nature and magnitude never seen before.

While the recent WTO trade monitoring report has shown a marked reduction in the number of new trade-restrictive measures, we also observe abuses of trade remedy, TBT and SPS measures for protectionist purposes. Moreover, the WTO's legislative function is in a continued deadlock, unable to reconcile divergent interests and sensitivities of Members.

In order for the WTO to overcome such challenges, it needs to identify a modus operandi that works in today's global environment.

## < Ways forward for the WTO >

First, the negotiating approach and agenda of the WTO need to adapt to a changing world.

It is no longer feasible for the WTO to reach a one-size-fits-all agreement among 164 Members at once. It would be more sensible to take a practical and multi-layered approach of seeking incremental progress.

In certain areas, swifter progress can be made through plurilateral negotiations, as seen in the ITA expansion two years ago. The TFA (Trade Facilitation Agreement) approach of allowing different implementation periods based on each Member's circumstances could be replicated in other multilateral negotiations.

On top of that, the WTO needs to embrace emerging issues to keep abreast of the changing global economy including the digital revolution. Otherwise, the WTO will lose its relevance and see these important issues be addressed and decided elsewhere.

In this regard, while continuing our efforts to advance outstanding areas including agriculture, fisheries subsidies, services and NAMA, we look forward to having fruitful discussions on emerging issues such as e-commerce, MSMEs and investment facilitation to give a clear direction on the way forward.

Second, the WTO has to contribute more to inclusive trade.

Our endeavors so far have been largely focused on trade liberalization. Consequently, we could neither successfully counter growing antitrade sentiments nor garner support for our work from those

people and Members who have not felt a fair share of the benefits from trade.

The WTO needs to pay more attention to discussions on safety net measures such as Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) schemes. At the same time, scaling up Aid for Trade to bolster supply-side capacity will help developing and least-developed country Members make the most of their integration into the global trading system.

Lastly, in this turbulent time for the multilateral trading system, it is all the more important for the WTO to preserve and improve its dispute settlement function.

WTO Members should promptly fill all the vacancies of the Appellate Body while continuing to work on improving the dispute settlement process to make it more efficient.

Winston Churchill said "Kites rise highest against the wind - not with it." Confronting a head wind, I hope this Conference in Buenos Aires will serve as a meaningful stepping stone to a stronger WTO responsive to the needs of all Members and their people. Thank you.