

STATEMENT

by ***Damdin Tsogtbaatar***,
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Mongolia at the

11th Ministerial Conference of the WTO,
Plenary Session

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Mr. Secretary-General,
Madam Chair,
Honorable Ministers,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, let me express my sincere gratitude to the Government and people of Argentina for hosting and organizing this important Conference.

The multilateral trading system is facing uneasy times. It delivered growth and wealth, but they were not sufficiently equitable and inclusive. However, what is surprising today is that the players that benefitted the most out of the free trade are now becoming more inward-looking. Mongolia is of the view that the only way out of the social and economic constraints experienced globally is through preserving and enhancing the multilateral trading system. This system with its special and differential treatment mechanism enhanced further can deliver both prosperity and equity.

The negotiations at the WTO must take into consideration the existing imbalance between the capacity of developed and developing countries. Hence, I would like to emphasize the need of developed economies to demonstrate flexibility and greater willingness to accommodate and recognize the special situation as well as the needs and challenges of the Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), the net food importing developing countries (NFIDCs), and the Small Vulnerable Economies (SVEs). Such approach is to guarantee Members fair access to the security of the rules irrespective of their size and level of development.

We believe that all the WTO members want to deliver on the core long-standing Doha negotiating issues. However, in addition to these issues, some members have been suggesting other issues. These include, *inter alia*, steps to support micro, small and medium sized-enterprises (or MSMEs), investment facilitation, trade finance, e-commerce etc. I would like to highlight the importance of enhancing multilateral work on these issues by using the opportunity offered at the 11th Ministerial Conference to take the necessary steps to revitalize the work in the WTO.

MSMEs, especially in LLDCs, face major hurdles in accessing financing on affordable terms. Adequate provision of trade finance could help them join markets and reap more benefits from increased trade.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The lack of access to the sea presents a set of challenges particular to the group of LLDCs. Above all, it often results in transportation costs that are higher than average.

I would like to call upon the constructive cooperation of transit countries for the effective and early application of the TFA disciplines that contribute to reducing transit time and costs, simplifying procedures and enhancing certainty in trans-border trade.

Mongolia, with the view to improve the access of its goods and services to its neighboring markets, has been collaborating closely with Russia and China. We will be soon launching a joint study on the FTA with the Eurasian Economic Union. Also we are elaborating on the development of economic corridor between China and Russia, through the territory of Mongolia, as an extension of the BRI of China.

I would like to highlight here that China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) could bring new opportunities to the landlocked developing countries along the BRI, which have been heavily penalized by distance from the main economic centers. I am positive that the initiative and efforts by China will play a prominent role in developing the countries along the Belt and Road, including Mongolia.

Taking this opportunity, I should also commend the ten countries that ratified the UN Multilateral Agreement on the Establishment of the International Think Tank (ITT) on LLDCs, which facilitated its entry into force on 6 October 2017. Herewith, I would like to urge the other LLDCs to do the same.

By noting that the ITT started active operations based in Ulaanbaatar since 2012 with the financial contribution provided by the Government of Mongolia, we invite the United Nations system, Member States, including development partners, and relevant international and regional organizations to support the international think tank, as it has started playing an important role in enhancing the analytical capacity of the LLDCs and provide home-grown research to cater for our specific needs.

Lastly, we propose to announce the group of LLDCs as a formal one. We call on the Members to afford a favorable consideration of this proposal.

Thank you very much for your attention.