

**WTO MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE – PLENARY
SPEECH BY MINISTER FOR COMMERCE AND TEXTILES
PAKISTAN**

11 December 2017 Buenos Aires

Honourable Chairperson and Ministers, Distinguished Ambassadors, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen!

It is a unique privilege and honour for me to lead Pakistan at this 11th WTO Ministerial Conference. I wish to thank the host government of Argentina and the WTO for their impeccable organisation and hospitality at this event.

Colleagues

Global trade stands today at a crossroads. The World Economy is still sensing tremors of the decade old financial crisis. A negative sentiment has crept into the discussions of those that were once its strongest advocates. These trends are particularly damaging for developing countries that see opportunities for growth through access to global markets.

Almost two and half decades ago, when we built this organisation, two concepts were enshrined in the founding document – **multilateralism** and **development**. It is these two issues that also define the future of global trade and the WTO. Pakistan remains committed to these ideals. In our view, any decisions that isolate some members, or do not cater for the concerns and needs of developing countries, will be damaging and retrogressive. As we decide which direction to take at this juncture, we must take account of the tremendous amount of work we have done over the last two decades, and the lessons we have learnt along the way. We must not give up on the principles of differential treatment for those that are catching up and of the development agenda we mandated for ourselves.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The pace and elements of global economic engagement have changed. Today, we talk of the 4th industrial revolution, of digital trade and electronic flows, of micro and small enterprises, of facilitating investment, of sustainable resources and renewable energy. All these elements highlight challenges for developing countries – a very large segment of the poorest are still in digital darkness, smaller enterprises seek access to compete with larger ones, many face resource deficiencies while trying to catch up. It is, therefore, imperative that we tackle these issues head-on and find solutions that are inclusive, pragmatic and creative. This is only possible through empathetic dialogue that is aimed at hearing and resolving the problems of developing countries.

Moreover, Agriculture remains the lifeline for most economies across the globe. Food security and sustainability are one of the greatest challenges for the 21st century, and we must find ways to ensure that we work towards a common future that benefits our next generations. Here again, I would urge you all to follow an approach that is realistic and effective.

Excellencies,

Despite the difficulties, this organisation has served its membership well. It is one of the perfect examples of ‘learning by doing’ where developing countries are now much more active and robust in their engagement. A commitment to transparency, inclusiveness and effective resolution of disputes, has given it more legitimacy. We must use our gathering in Buenos Aires to underscore the importance and relevance of this multilateral system and strive together to make it stronger.

To conclude, Chairperson, we are at a moment of introspection and of looking ourselves in the mirror. Let us think together how we can best serve the interests of our people through this organisation. To my mind, only a recommitment to its fundamental principles and constructive engagement with an aim of helping developing countries can take us truly forward. We must foresee and work for a life after MC11 which is better than the life before it.

I thank you!