

**Statement of
H.E. Mr. Ramon M. Lopez
Head of the Delegation of the Republic of the Philippines
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Madame Chair, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

Allow me first of all to express our gratitude to the Government and People of Buenos Aires for hosting this important Ministerial Conference in this lovely country.

The Philippines remains committed to contribute towards the effective functioning and enhancement of the multilateral trading system under the WTO. Our agenda is clear, focused and consistent. President Rodrigo Duterte has placed singular importance in making Philippine economic growth more inclusive. He elevated this in APEC by advocating Inclusive Regional Cooperation among his fellow leaders. In ASEAN, our chairmanship focused on Inclusive Regional Integration. And here at the WTO, his directive is to ensure that Inclusive Globalisation is at the front and center of our agenda. Thus, it is important to ensure that in everything we do, there is conscious effort to empower and capacitate those who are weak and spread the gains to those who have less. We have to ensure that in Globalisation, everyone emerges as winners. No one should be left behind.

Inclusive and equity, however, hardly exist in Agriculture with the continued reluctance of a few members with large subsidy and protection entitlements in making real reform commitments. It is high time that members make bold contributions today, once and for all, to address these gross imbalances and inequities in agriculture. I therefore call on members to substantially reduce, towards elimination, trade-distorting subsidies by phasing out AMS and limit supports at the product-specific level.

Developing countries and LDCs must also be provided with an accessible and effective trade remedy tool, through establishment of a Special Safeguard Mechanism (SSM) that can protect their small and subsistence farmers from import surges and price depressions and shields them from subsidised exports. After more than a decade of negotiations for SSM and ministers' reaffirmation of our political commitment, developing countries and LDCs cannot get back home empty-handed once more.

On MSMEs, our economy is comprised mainly (that's 99.6%) of small enterprises that serve as the backbone and the prime mover of both domestic and regional growth. The decisions we make must therefore be effective and meaningful to them. In this regard, the Philippines supports the establishment of a work programme on MSMEs that would further enhance their ability to participate meaningfully in international trade whether directly or as part of global value chains. There must be more of competence and capacity building sharing. This work program should also look at the different characterisations of MSMEs at national levels to create the appropriate support and assistance for them. Let us work towards positive efforts such as aligning size definition to ensure that real MSMEs, particularly those in developing countries, secure a share in the growth in international trade commensurate with the needs of their development.

As an archipelagic state with the fourth longest coastline in the world and with coastal communities that rely heavily on the sea for livelihood and sustenance, the Philippines has a profound interest in fisheries. Consistent with the core principles of fairness, any multilateral outcome on fisheries subsidies disciplines must work to curb the subsidization of fishing activities.

E-commerce, on the other hand, is a powerful platform for job creation and development. It has the ability to enhance innovation, expand consumer options, bridge producers with users, and proliferate global connectivity. WTO members can

contribute towards enabling developing countries to take full advantage of the benefits of e-commerce and the digital economy by building on the several technical assistance and development aspects of the 1998 work programme. The Philippines also supports the two-year extension of the moratorium on the customs duties on electronic transmissions.

Finally, while challenges face the WTO and the multilateral trading system, the DDA remains as relevant today as it was 16 years ago. Each one of us here must preserve the basic principles and advance the objectives underlying the multilateral trading system.

In summary, the Philippines' priorities for MC11 are: 1) eliminate trade-distorting domestic support and export subsidies; 2) SSM for agriculture; and 3) a Ministerial decision on an MSME work programme that considers development levels. In addressing these, we will continue to uphold the DDA.

The Philippines is willing to make progress wherever possible based on common efforts and joins others in engaging constructively in all areas of WTO work to achieve concrete outcomes at MC11 that are beneficial to all Members, particularly for the developing and the Least-Developed Countries (LDCs). Empowering the least is the best legacy the current participants in the WTO of today can leave for the future generations.

Thank you, Madame Chair.
