

**Statement of H.E. the Deputy Minister for Economy and State Secretary for
Commerce**

Mr. Paulo Alexandre Ferreira,

at the 11th WTO Ministerial Conference

Buenos Aires, 11th of December 2017

Madame Chairwoman,
Director-General,
Colleagues, Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The world economy faces today new challenges. Our companies and citizens buy, sell, work and compete in a global context that is in a transition towards an ever more digitalized economy, with more integrated supply chains leading to deep technological transformations on the way how economic activities are carried out and economic agents interact among themselves. In this context, today a sustainable and rules based international trade system is even more vital in order to attract investment, foster economic development, create jobs and also for sustainable development.

WTO and the multilateral rules on trade have been, in essence, the response to protectionism which is still present today. But the world has evolved and also has global trade. We, as members of the WTO, need to respond adequately to these changes, cooperating so that there is a more equitable distribution of the overall gains from international trade, across our societies and among all members.

On the other hand, trade policy attracts nowadays more and more interest from our civil society. And we must not ignore that the voices against the perils of globalization and trade have become louder.

However, we should not fear globalization. On the contrary, we must create the necessary conditions in order to be able to contribute to its configuration, so that globalization can mean growth, development, integration of our economies and its citizens.

WTO should therefore continue its work, especially because the current times are difficult. We continue to need a strong trade negotiation forum that is able to provide a stable and predictable framework.

Portugal as a state and as a member of the European Union has always supported the role of the WTO in defining an open and fair global trade system. We believe that the challenges we face today can only be properly addressed by the work and achievements of the WTO.

The set of pillars of the multilateral trading system – the existing rules; the dispute settlement mechanism as well as the negotiating pillar – have to be supported and reinforced.

Although our bilateral and plurilateral trade agendas are relevant - Portugal remains interested in restarting the negotiations of the Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA) and the Environmental Goods Agreement (EGA) - the WTO should remain the backbone in setting the rules on the digital economy, services, investment and in addressing the concerns of SME's for their full integration in global trade.

The European Union and Portugal, as well as other Members of this organization, have worked hard to table concrete proposals on several areas such as Domestic Support in agriculture, Fisheries Subsidies, E-commerce, Domestic Regulation in services and Transparency.

Building on the results from Bali and Nairobi, I would urge my fellow partners to engage constructively in the discussions in the following days and to contribute to achieving substantial results.

We should leave Buenos Aires with our faith intact about the future of the multilateral agenda and with a strong compromise about the future work that should be fulfilled in order to better protect and reinforce the multilateral trading system.

We support a substantial Ministerial Declaration as well as an ambitious Working Plan for our future work at multilateral level. For my country, it is paramount to strengthen the credibility of the WTO and the role of the multilateral trading system.

Finally, I would like to thank the Chair of the Ministerial Conference for hosting us here, in Buenos Aires, and to the WTO Director-General for the intense work over these years.

I thank you very much.