

Slovak Republic

Statement presented on the WTO 11th Ministerial Conference

Excellences, dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

At the outset allow me to express my sincere gratitude to our host for the excellent organization of the 11th Ministerial Conference. I hope that this nice venue will be conducive to achieving much needed consensus on best ways how to enhance multilateral trading system.

Over the last two decades trade and technology played key role in economic growth and unprecedented economic changes. Rapidly growing shift towards information-driven global economy, new technologies and production practices brings new challenges to which we have to adjust and adapt.

We also have to keep on our minds the impact that prospects for increased automatization, use of industrial robots and artificial intelligence will have on future jobs and development of adequate education. Adjusting to economic changes is becoming a key policy challenge not only for governments around the world, but also for the multilateral trading system as well as the WTO as a key international organisation dedicated to trade.

Slovakia, as a founding member of this organisation, and today as a Member of the EU, has been traditionally supporting the WTO as a key global forum for trade negotiations, for eliminating trade barriers, for establishing international trade rules, for monitoring trade flows and fair trade as well as for settling trade disputes.

Stable, predictable and transparent multilateral trading system based on WTO rules has always played an instrumental role for the development of the Slovak economy, which is highly dependent on foreign trade and access to raw materials and energy resources.

We therefore strongly believe that modernisation of WTO goals is crucial to maintain its prominent role and Slovakia supports many proposals going into the right direction, e.g. digital trade, domestic regulation in services, transparency and good regulatory practices concerning small and medium-sized enterprises and investment facilitation.

However, today we are also witnessing attempts to undermine or weaken the multilateral

trading system, including dispute settlement as one of its central pillars. Slovakia strongly believes that we collectively have to resist these attempts.

Another worrying trend is the rise of protectionism in many countries. Past experience has clearly proven that protectionism is an inefficient and very expensive way of protecting jobs and protectionist solutions do not reflect the nature of the modern economy and the international nature of production.

Slovakia supports an ambitious but realistic and balanced package for the 11th Ministerial Conference. We also believe that WTO members will be able to adopt acceptable outcomes on permanent solution on the issue of public stockholding for food security purposes and on fisheries subsidies at the end of this conference.

Let me reiterate, that active and constructive participation and strong sense of responsibility is needed from all WTO Members States, reflecting their respective positions in the world economy and their different capacities to contribute to the system.

We believe our collective wisdom will help us to agree on such a post-Buenos Aires working program that will preserve the WTO as a modern and functional international organization for developing, monitoring and enforcing global trading rules.

Thank you for your attention.