

**Statement of Separate Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu,
Kinmen, and Matsu
Plenary of 11th WTO Ministerial Conference
on December 11th, 2017
By H.E. John Chen-Chung Deng, Chief Trade Negotiator**

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen.

I must start by thanking the government of Argentina for its kind hospitality and for organizing this Conference. I am refreshed by the enthusiastic welcome in the famous "good air" and "fair winds" of Buenos Aires, and trust that we are ready to sail off together from here in the right direction.

Since TPKM became a Member in 2002, we have continuously and actively participated in the WTO. Along with all other Members, we have been supporting the non-discriminatory, ruled-based, transparent, development-conscientious, free and open multilateral trading system built to realize the aims of global economic integration and stabilizing the world trading regime. Once again, we stand on guard firmly to these values.

TPKM is thrilled to learn that the WTO's upward revision of trade forecast, which foresees stronger trade volume growth of 3.6 % in 2017 and 3.2 % in 2018. We believe that this reflects our recent achievement and efforts made in the WTO such as bringing into force and implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), the Protocol Amending the TRIPS Agreement, as well as the expansion of the Information Technology Agreement (ITA).

Facing the current global and regional economic challenges, TPKM strongly advocates that WTO Members shall pursue free trade to the fullest extent on a mutually beneficial basis for a better shared future. Bilateral and regional multilateral trade negotiations should be encouraged and expanded, allowing more members to participate.

TPKM plays an integral, indispensable role in the global supply and demand chains. We have always strived to share our economic development experience with fellow WTO Members, and looked

towards establishing free trade relations with trading partners and participating in sub-regional economic integration efforts such as the CPTPP and RCEP.

Here in Buenos Aires, we uphold and urge all Members to seize the opportunity to place micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) and e-commerce at the heart of the discussions and to conceive active responses to the present and the future challenges. The MSMEs need to be integrated into the global value chains and harness the opportunities in the digital economy era. It is imperative that the WTO make itself a pioneer and relevant to such a development.

I. On MSMEs:

Improving MSMEs' capabilities in international trade through a business-friendly regulatory environment worldwide is one of the most direct ways for the WTO to regain its relevance. It is especially meaningful in the context of a trade agenda focused on development.

MSMEs continue to be the backbone and one of the main driving forces of TPKM's economic development over the past half century. In 2016, the number of MSMEs reached a record level of 1.4 million and accounted for 97.73 % of all enterprises in Taiwan. In addition, 8.8 million Taiwanese working in MSMEs represented 78.2 % of our total employment, which is also a record high in recent years. These statistics clearly illustrates that MSMEs function as a stabilizing force in the labor market and a key driver of our economic development.

Through improving the transparency of regulatory measures, the access to finance, and continuous capacity building, we trust that the MSMEs worldwide better positioned in the global economy.

In this sense, TPKM proudly joined with other "Friend of MSMEs" to urge all WTO Members to continue discussions in all the areas mentioned above and examine the progress at our

next Ministerial Conference.

II. On e-commerce:

More than a decade of time has passed since we had the 1998 e-commerce work program. I would like to urge my fellow ministers to consider seriously on how we should go from here. It will be a pity if we fail to see the opportunities we have lost and continue on the debate of mandate. We are the ones who give mandates. We need an e-commerce Preparatory Group to carry out preparations for negotiations so as to salvage the credibility of WTO and our legacy as defenders of trade. We could not afford to lose another decade standing and talking.

TPKM recognises that digital economy is one of the most crucial drivers of global inclusive economic growth and plays a significant role in accelerating economic development, enhancing productivity of existing industries, cultivating new markets and industries, and achieving inclusive sustainable growth and development. We look forward to the final removal

of e-commerce trade barriers in all forms, before, during and after transaction. Respecting free flow of information, IPR protection, consumer protection, and privacy are equally important if we want to build up trust in our society. In this respect, TPKM has revised its Consumer Protection Act in 2015, Personal Information Protection Act in 2016 to make our society more “e-commerce friendly” and harness the potential of the digital economy and for the successful digitalisation of production and services.

While pleading to all fellow WTO Members, TPKM has already stepped up our efforts in domestic reforms in these areas. The most prominent examples are the Amendment of Fisheries Act, the Amendment of Regulations on the Investment in the Operation of Foreign Flag Fishing Vessels, and a brand new Statute for Distant Water Fishing by Taiwan Nationals in 2016. These three instruments now is our package to prevent overfishing and excess fishing capacity. In addition, TPKM now provides 60 days for comments when a proposed regulation is published in order to

increase the overall transparency in our trade and investment regime. As a result, we encourage all Members to show flexibility and take concrete actions to overcome the current impasse, and to safeguard these fundamentals of the WTO.

We meet at a time when the regional and global landscapes have experienced complex and fundamental shift with challenges and opportunities, and we believe every topic relates to each other. Let's remain an open mind to all of them and commit to work with one another towards a successful 11th WTO Ministerial Conference.

Thank you.