

IX WTO MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE
STATEMENT OF VICE MINISTER CARLO CALENDÀ

(BALI 4 December 2013)

Mr Chairman, fellow Ministers, Director General, distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start by thanking the Government of Indonesia for hosting the conference and for the excellent organization. I would also like to commend DG Roberto Azevedo for his tremendous efforts in leading us so close to reaching an agreement.

This 9th WTO Ministerial Conference is the last call for multilateralism. Unfortunately, a failure of this meeting seems approaching. Hence, it is imperative we are clear and straightforward in our statements.

The Italian government considers the so-called “Bali package” presented by Director General Azevedo a fair and balanced deal. Additionally, according to the majority of speeches made from this floor, this opinion seems to be widely shared.

The effects of a positive result are potentially very substantial, in particular because of the Trade Facilitation measures. This applies to all countries no matter what stage of development they have reached. And, within single countries, the main beneficiaries of this agreement are going to be SMEs, which are the backbone of a successful development strategy and a vibrant economic system.

Very good progress has been achieved both on the disciplines and the flexibilities/assistance for developing countries. A very limited number of issues still needs to be resolved, but clear landing zones are visible.

I must emphasize that given the nature of the measures concerned, a concrete and efficient implementation plan of the TF Agreement will be crucial to achieve all the benefits that it can bring about.

With regards to agriculture, the interests of developing countries were taken into account throughout the negotiations on the Bali package.

An interim mechanism for public stockholdings of agricultural commodities could provide flexibility for DCs food security policies.

Indeed on Food Security, Italy believes that a good compromise was achieved in Geneva. Nevertheless, as a member state of the European Union, we remain ready to continue discussions with other WTO Members as long as the fundamental architecture of the original compromise text is respected.

In the area of export competition we consider positively a political declaration of the Conference. By the same token, Italy appreciates the improvement of the Tariff Rate Quotas.

Also the longstanding request of DCs for the Monitoring Mechanism and the four decisions for LDCs could be an important part of the package.

Dear delegates,

Italy believes that there is no concrete reason that can possibly justify a failure of these negotiations.

We have entered a new phase of globalization, where benefits can be more evenly distributed across countries and also within countries. However, the magnitude of the changes in the last 20 years frightened millions of people also in Western countries. Protectionist and nationalist sentiments are coming back. The forthcoming European elections might see a large intake of political forces that represent such positions.

We all know that multilateralism is the most difficult decision-making process. Bilateralism and plurilateralism are more effective. After 12 years of stalemate in the DDA, we are all tempted to switch towards the easier path.

However, we should keep in mind that multilateralism is the only setting in which the uneven balance of power among nations is tempered by the need of reaching a large consensus. This feature of multilateralism is a crucial one if we want an increasingly balanced and fair international economic environment.

Globalization is an irreversible process. However, the pursuing of globalization can take different forms, and some paths can be very dangerous to cross. The fundamental call we have to take today goes far beyond food security and trade facilitation; it is really about which path to choose.

Let's take the right one.