

Statement of Norway
State Secretary Morten Høglund
WTO 9th Ministerial Conference (MC9)
Bali, 4 December 2013

Mr Chairman, Ministers, Excellencies – Ladies and Gentlemen,

May I start by thanking Indonesia for hosting the Ministerial Conference. I would also like to thank the Director General and all Members for the work and efforts made over the last few months. It has been a truly multilateral endeavour, transparent, with participation and contributions by all. Some by showing restraint, leaving their aspirations and proposals for a later date. Others by moving out of their comfort zones in search of compromise. Many by standing up for the Multilateral Trading System, making clear that we cannot subject ourselves to the consequences of failure.

A few issues remain unresolved, requiring political solutions by Ministers here and now. A vast majority of Members, developed, emerging, developing and LDCs, have clearly expressed their support for a Bali package.

The decisions we need to take in the next few hours are important to members for various reasons. But the main point is that it brings us back to the multilateral negotiating table.

When the package is done, we need to look, with fresh eyes, at what can be realistically and usefully achieved.

That does not mean discarding our foundation.

The WTO captures our common desire to work towards freer, fairer and more open world trade. We stand by the Doha mandate. The texts from 2008 may no longer be the basis for negotiations, but they remain a source of inspiration. Good ideas will not run away. But the WTO must respond to current challenges. Otherwise, new initiatives will be pursued elsewhere, eroding the primacy of the multilateral trading system.

Nor does it mean abandoning our commitment to development.

Development remains at the heart of this organisation. Norway donates 6 million US dollars to the WTO Trust Funds. In addition, we are ready to pledge 5 million US dollars in fresh funding to support the implementation of an agreement on Trade Facilitation.

Finally, it does not mean surrendering our ambitions.

We should multilateralize bilateral and regional commitments. And we should revert to the core elements of the Doha Development Agenda, including market access, subsidies and rules.

With a decision in Bali, the negotiating arm of the WTO will start rebuilding its credibility. There is a lot of work to be done. Multilateralism will never be easy. Only by producing results, will we be able to convince our stakeholders, once again, that the WTO is a forum where their hopes, interests and aspirations can be realised. We should not allow ourselves to rest; we have many years of catching up to do.
