

# Statement of U.S. Trade Representative Michael Froman to the Opening Plenary Session of the 9th Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization

Bali, Indonesia

\*As Delivered\*

"Good morning. Mr. Chairman, Mr. Director-General, fellow Ministers, Ambassadors, ladies and gentlemen:

"First, we would like to thank President Yudhoyono and the people of Indonesia for their warm welcome to this beautiful place.

"By the time we leave here this week, the WTO will have entered a new era – one way or another.

"After two decades of collective frustration, a deal is right in front of us. The first multilateral agreement since the creation of the WTO is not just within reach; it is at hand, if only we take hold of it.

"We have traveled a long road together since December 2011, when WTO Membership acknowledged the need for fresh, credible approaches to trade liberalization. And there has been a renaissance of activity in Geneva since.

"It's inspiring to look at the number of people in this room today, to think about the great community of effort which has labored to produce the texts that emerged from the process in Geneva managed by Director-General Azevedo.

"Texts. Not ideas or concepts. Texts, representing hard-fought compromises among partners. On food security, TRQ administration, export competition. On trade facilitation. And on development and LDC issues.

"By definition, no country has gotten everything it wanted. This package is certainly not all that we hoped to get out of a multilateral trade negotiation, but we respect the process that brought us to this point. The United States has negotiated hard, but we've also been flexible. We've made our fair share of compromises, and we stand by everything we agreed to with others.

"Together these texts are greater than the sum of their parts. Greater, because if Ministers can agree this week, we will have proved to a skeptical world that the WTO is a vital, vibrant institution, capable of producing important results for trade and development, worthy of our future confidence, attention and resources.

"Yet all of us know that we are perilously close to a different path. And that path leads to failure.

"Over the past few weeks in Geneva, we have careened closer to disaster on multiple occasions. Yet at each moment of crisis, the vast majority of the Membership pondered the consequences of failure, pulled back from the brink, and pulled together instead.

"Most of us understand all too well the consequences of failing to pull together now. Let us not sugar-coat reality: leaving Bali this week without an agreement would deal a debilitating blow to the WTO as a forum for multilateral negotiations. And if that happens, the unfortunate truth is that the loss will be felt most heavily by those Members who can least afford it.

"But colleagues, we can avoid this outcome for all of us and for the institution of the WTO.

"We have before us a moment as full of potential as any in the history of this body. It is a moment in which we can realize that even though no one will get all that they want in a Bali agreement, we can, in fact, have an agreement that serves us all.

"Three days from now, we can gather in this room as Ministers, having done no less than revitalizing the multilateral trading system. At this moment, though, we cannot take success for granted. But just as surely, we can choose success together."