

## **AU Remarks**

### **Intervention (approx. 5 minutes)**

It is a privilege to be involved in this event representing a seminal moment for the WTO. I am sorry that I am unable to be there with you live.

Today, Members have come together to launch efforts to address issues vital to our future. Today, we jointly recognise that trade has an important role to play in environmental sustainability – and we demonstrate our readiness to take action.

We have been having a tough time at the WTO – the most recent postponement of MC12 was a setback. It would have been easy in the wake of the postponement to drop the ball on critical initiatives like this.

Instead, we rallied and have come together to drive progress and outcomes – to show the international community that the WTO is serious about contributing meaningfully to global problems.

I would like to congratulate my fellow Ministers on their resilience and effort.

Australia is a proud coordinator of the Informal Dialogue on Plastics Pollution (IDP) and I am honoured to have this opportunity to speak about the IDP along with my esteemed colleagues Minister Prado from Ecuador and Vice Minister WANG from China.

Before turning to the IDP let me say how equally excited I am about the launch of the structured discussions on environmental sustainability (TESSD).

Australia is a proud co-sponsor of the TESSD initiative. We are looking forward to working with Members to find trade enhancing ways the WTO can contribute to environmental sustainability including:

- Expanding trade in the environmental goods, services and technologies that are needed to support sustainability; and
- Working to address harmful agricultural subsidies – the global agriculture industry accounts for around 25% of greenhouse gas emissions. If we are serious about addressing the environment at the WTO we need to honestly address the climate impacts of agricultural subsidies.

Now onto the very significant problem of plastics - Plastic debris has been detected worldwide in all major marine habitats.

It is thought that every day approximately 8 million pieces of plastic pollution find their way into our oceans.

Scientists have even discovered microplastics embedded deep in the Arctic ice and scientific estimates suggest that by 2050 that plastics in our ocean will outweigh the fish.

It is clear that global trade plays a significant role across the entire plastic supply chain and plastic pollution is not a problem that can be solved by any one country.

We must work within the WTO system, to support and complement inter-governmental efforts to reduce plastic pollution - and consider how we can foster the right business environment to encourage new technologies to prevent pollution from entering our oceans.

I would like to thank China and Fiji for their leadership in starting the discussion on ***Plastics Pollution***.

The IDP has enabled trade policy specialists to work with environmental organisations.

And it has enabled developing and developed countries alike to work together on this serious problem.

I am pleased to introduce this Statement which recalls the Marrakesh Agreement responsibility for trade to contribute to sustainable development.

It recognises the impact that plastic pollution has on economies, the environment, and particularly vulnerable WTO Members, including developing countries and Small Island Developing States.

It sets out our commitment to share experiences and identify best practices to reduce plastics pollution through trade-related mechanisms and identify how we can shift away from environmentally harmful plastics products to alternative solutions.

And it recognises the role that technological development has in enabling the transition to greater sustainability.

Congratulations to all of the co-sponsors of the IDP and the other environmental statements. I'm looking forward to seeing what we can achieve in 2022.

*(Duration: approx. 5 minutes)*

*(Word count: 602 words)*