

Joint Sustainability Event
Launch of the Ministerial Statement on Trade and Environmental Sustainability
Trade and Environmental Sustainability Structured Discussions (TESSD)
December 15, 2021, 09:30 – 11:15am

Good morning Excellencies; fellow Ministers, Heads of Delegations, Permanent Representatives, Delegates, Secretariat and stakeholders.

Thank you for joining us this morning on this historic and symbolic event.

Dear Friends,

1. November 17, 2020 marked a breakthrough in the history of this Organization. A group of willing, ambitious and forward-looking Members established these Structured Discussions in the middle of a pandemic, with the eyes of the world watching how the WTO was going to address environmental and climate issues, and with the impending concern on how we were going to build back greener, better and more inclusively after the COVID-19 crisis. The inclusive, open and flexible platform offered by TESSD to discuss these issues filled this space and provided this opportunity.
2. A year later, we face a challenging reality not only with the health crisis, but also the economic and social crises it has triggered; altogether with climate change and its long-term effects.
3. Yet, there is still hope and the trade community has stepped up. Today, for the first time at the WTO, three Member-led initiatives focused on trade and sustainability issues have come together as one and made it possible for a wide diversity of Members to collectively send the world the message, that now, more than ever, the Organization needs to address this agenda with compromise, responsibility and political will.
4. I am honoured to be part of this event, and particularly to launch, together with my co-convenor, the Ministerial statement on Trade and Environmental Sustainability.

5. This is a significant milestone for the multilateral trading system as there has never been a Ministerial statement on the environment. On this occasion, we have over 80% of the world's trade represented in TESSD and this is no small thing.
6. Our planet has raised its voice. There's no time to spare. The latest events have put into perspective the fragility of our natural resources and biodiversity. Climate shocks disrupt not only the way we live, but for our purposes, the way we trade. We know that climate change impacts the supply of essential goods, logistics and supply chains, agriculture and food - and crop - security. However, as policy-makers, we must acknowledge and address the ways through which trade can enhance mitigation and enable adaptation to these climate shocks.
7. Multilateral trade policy actions not only support economic recovery, lift incomes and incentivize investment. They can also support the global climate agenda, and sustainable development goals. In the midst of the global health crisis, the WTO must be ready to deliver concrete proposals for addressing climate change and other global environmental challenges through trade policies at the multilateral level.
8. The Structured Discussions' objective is precisely to be this platform of exchange and debates where we can reflect the experiences and realities of the Members, encouraging developing and least developed Members to play a primary role on the conversation, and in a collaborative exercise, build an agenda of trade and environment-related ideas and projects to incubate and develop.
9. Under this premise, we have been able to increase the number of cosponsors to 71 as of today, half of which are developing and LDC Members. This is proof of the inclusive and open character of these Discussions.

TESSD from Costa Rica's perspective.

10. As co-convenors, Costa Rica has worked tirelessly, together with Canada, to promote frank and transparent dialogues with Members and stakeholders. We have dedicated the last year to find common understandings among the diverse views and positions on the issues of our agenda, not only because it is asked from our role, but also

because, in our national capacity, this initiative is very relevant to advance our trade and environment interests.

11. Costa Rica's green trade agenda gist is the idea that trade must deliver sustainability, and in turn, sustainability must deliver trade. This virtuous circle must be the driver of development moving forward. That is the reason why we are founding members of TESSD and why we are part of the negotiations of an Agreement on Climate Change, Trade and Sustainability (ACCTS) with other five like-minded countries, covering disciplines on trade liberalization on environmental goods and services, ecolabelling, and harmful fossil fuel subsidies.
12. We expect TESSD to be a first step towards building the political will required for reaching consensus on the pillars that must guide the WTO's trade and environment agenda.
13. TESSD' work program also can positively contribute to implementing the Glasgow Climate Pact, particularly regarding ensuring *“just transitions that promote sustainable development and eradication of poverty, and the creation of decent work and quality jobs, including through making financial flows consistent with a pathway towards low greenhouse gas emission and climate-resilient development [...]”*¹.
14. To conclude, I want to thank each and every single cosponsor that has joined this trailblazing effort and encourage those who haven't joined to do so. We look forward to all the exciting discussions we will have in the coming year. There's plenty to do, but more importantly, there's plenty we CAN do.

¹ Glasgow Cover Decision