

**Statement by Executive Vice-President Dombrovskis**  
**at Launch Event for Joint Ministerial Statements on Environment, 15 December 2021**

Dear Dr. Okonjo-Iweala, Dear Ministers,

Let me start by thanking you all for investing your time and energy to make this event a reality.

The European Union is a proud co-sponsor of these joint statements. I hope many more will join us in the future.

Climate change and environmental degradation are among the greatest collective challenges we face as a global community. Every policy must do its part, and trade policy is no exception.

In the EU we are convinced that trade and trade policy have a meaningful role to play in tackling climate change and environmental challenges.

Accordingly, we have made climate action and sustainability a central part of our new trade strategy. And we are not alone, as many countries around the world are bringing forward strong policy initiatives.

But multilateral cooperation must also play its part. It makes sense that global trade rules help to provide a global response to this truly global crisis.

In this context, I welcome the fact that we are proceeding with these Joint Statements on climate and environment issues.

I believe the three statements represent an important milestone.

They send a strong political signal.

They are inclusive, representing all regions of the globe and all levels of economic development.

They take stakeholder views into account. Indeed, many stakeholders are participating in today's event, and I am certain their contributions will be very valuable.

So, let me address the three statements.

First, on Trade and Environmental Sustainability:

This statement outlines ways to enhance cooperation on trade-relevant climate and environment policies. This means tackling climate change while at the same time promoting sustainable supply chains and a circular economy.

I am particularly keen to explore how trade in environmental goods and services can support these goals.

This is an area where trade can really make a difference, by accelerating the uptake of climate-smart goods, services, and technologies.

Because every country and region must have a fair chance for green and sustainable economic transformation.

For this to happen, we will need to carry out preparatory work. The technical and regulatory details must be addressed properly.

Likewise, we must find ways to assess the environmental impact of products at all stages of the supply chain.

These are complex questions.

Ideally, all the building blocks should be in place by MC13.

This should put participants in a position to choose, by MC13, whether or not there is merit in starting and joining negotiations.

Second, on plastics:

We are committing to building a better understanding of the global plastics trade. This will help us to identify trade measures to reduce plastics pollution.

These efforts can inform the future negotiation on a Global Plastics Agreement. The EU is keen to launch these talks with other partners in the United Nations Environment Assembly next February.

Finally, on fossil fuel subsidies.

Tackling this issue is critical for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

I expect work on transparency will be the first step. This can anchor our work in the WTO and pave the way for future disciplines on subsidies.

To conclude, dear colleagues, these statements are only a starting point, and we have a long way to go.

But as we say in Latvia, a good start is already half the job<sup>1</sup>.

I believe that climate and environment issues must be tackled in a holistic way, not in silos.

As trade ministers, we have a shared responsibility in this respect.

I have recently spoken about the need for a Trade Ministers Climate Coalition.

I believe this could make a big difference in building political momentum, helping to support the work we launch today.

Finally, let me once again thank you all for the great efforts you have made. We are concluding 2021 on a very positive note. Let us pledge to make 2022 even better. Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> "Labs sākums jau puse padarīta darba"