



### AFRICAN GROUP DECLARATION ON WTO ISSUES

The following communication, dated 28 December 2018, is being circulated to the General Council and Trade Negotiations Committee, at the request of the delegation of South Africa on behalf of the African Group.

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**We, Ministers of Trade of the Member States of the African Union**, meeting in Cairo, on 12 and 13 December 2018, at the occasion of the 7<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the African Ministers of Trade (AMOT) in order to, amongst other things, review the state of play in the WTO negotiations, following the outcome of the Eleventh WTO Ministerial Conference;

**Took note** of the recent developments at the WTO since our last meeting on 18 September 2017, including the rise in trade protectionist measures that have been challenged as being in breach of WTO rules and principles, the Appellate Body impasse, and new negotiating proposals by a few Members that include calls to change the rules and procedures in the WTO;

**Took note** of the informal processes amongst groups of Members in the Joint Statement Initiatives on electronic commerce, investment facilitation, domestic regulation, and micro, medium and small enterprises and acknowledged that some African Group Members participate in these informal processes;

**Concerned** with the multiple difficulties and challenges faced by African countries who are in the process of acceding to the WTO;

**Acknowledged and welcomed** developments to achieve the objectives of the African Union's Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, through a rules-based governance system established by the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA);

**Reconfirmed** our pledge to work on supporting efforts in the Multilateral Trading System that promote and defend Africa's interests in line with the African Union's "Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want", and recognized the need to build coherence by ensuring that the African Group's negotiating objectives at the WTO fully support the AfCFTA objectives for continental industrialization, structural transformation and integration;

**Welcomed** the growing recognition of the importance of industrial policy for development;

**Agreed to:**

1. **Reiterate** our concern with the lack of progress on issues of longstanding importance to Africa;
2. **Reaffirm** positions adopted in the AMOT Ministerial Declaration of 30 November 2016, notably African Trade Ministers' commitment to meaningful outcomes on trade distorting domestic support, cotton, public stockholding for food security purposes, the special safeguard mechanism, and Special and Differential Treatment; and recognizing the challenges faced by NFIDCs and emphasizing that any outcome in agriculture negotiations shall accord flexibilities to address NFIDCs and LDCs particular situation;

3. **Recall and reaffirm** the importance of implementing WTO Ministerial, and General Council Decisions and Declarations adopted since Doha in 2001, that keep development at the centre of the work program;
4. **Reaffirm** the importance of the negotiations on fisheries subsidies and the need for Special and Differential Treatment for African countries to guarantee policy space necessary to strengthen their fishing industries and capacities for economic and social development;
5. **Reiterate** our concerns that the Aid for Trade initiative should contribute to meeting the objectives of trade-related capacity-building, overcoming supply-side constraints, infrastructure development, or facilitating the integration of developing economies, in particular LDCs in regional and global trade in ways that support their development. We call upon Members to strengthen and improve the Aid for Trade initiative so that it delivers real benefit to recipient developing countries and LDCs, and to avoid conditioning its implementation to the participation on negotiating new issues in the WTO;
6. **Commit** to strengthen in close coordination with Ministries responsible for Trade on our common positions and stay abreast of all developments at the WTO, and ensure that development remains an integral component of all negotiating outcomes for all African economies in line with the Doha Development mandate;
7. **Reiterate** our commitment in pursuing outcomes on Special and Differential Treatment in line with Paragraph 44 of the Doha Ministerial Declaration;
8. **Reaffirm** that Special and Differential Treatment shall be an integral part of all WTO agreements and future multilateral outcomes and shall be embodied, as appropriate, in schedules of concessions and commitments and in the rules and disciplines, so as to be operationally effective and to enable developing countries, in particular LDCs in Africa, to effectively address their development needs in line with Africa's industrial development priorities as encapsulated in the African Union's Agenda 2063 on structural transformation and industrialization;
9. **Invite** all WTO Members to extend to African graduating countries the existing Special and Differential Treatment measures and exemptions available to LDCs for a period appropriate to the development situation of those countries;
10. **Pledge** support to African countries in the process of WTO accession and urge Members to desist from making unreasonable requests on African acceding countries to extend any commitments made as a result of their membership to the AfCFTA or that are inconsistent with their levels of development;
11. **Underscore** that Africa's priority trade policy objective is the AfCFTA that will build a Single African Market for Trade in Goods and Services, and to ensure that WTO outcomes do not undermine those objectives;
12. **Re-commit** to a rules-based Multilateral Trading System that is fair, equitable, inclusive and development-oriented, and that prioritises Africa's interests;
13. **Reaffirm** the importance of preserving and adhering to the principles and procedures of the WTO as established in the Marrakesh Agreement. This includes: the architecture for Development and Special and Differential Treatment, for developing countries and least developed countries; the procedures and principles governing plurilateral agreements; a multilateral mandate is the necessary prerequisite to advance any negotiating proposal at the WTO; and the WTO Secretariat preserves its international stature and always remains above the partisan position of Members;
14. **Oppose** unilateral trade measures and call on WTO Members to refrain from any and all measures that undermine WTO principles and the rules based multilateral trading system;
15. **Urge** that priority attention is given to resolving the Appellate Body impasse and commit to work with all WTO Members to find mutually agreeable solutions, while preserving the essential features and integrity of the system;

16. **Insist** that any discussions on the future of the WTO shall include the views and interests of the African Group and address the core issues of development and inclusiveness;
17. **Instruct** officials to work towards a common position on WTO reform.

**ADOPTED BY AFRICAN UNION MINISTERS OF TRADE  
Cairo, Egypt, 12-13 December 2018**

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