

Informal WTO Ministerial Gathering, Davos, 26 January 2018

Personal Concluding Remarks by the Chair, State Secretary Marie-Gabrielle Ineichen-Fleisch, Switzerland

In concluding this Informal World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Gathering – attended by Ministers and high officials from 29 Members representing a broad spectrum of the WTO membership –, and with warm thanks to all participants for their contributions, I would like to summarize my impressions from our discussion as follows:

- Ministers expressed their thanks and appreciation to the government and people of Argentina for an excellent organization of, and outstanding hospitality at, the 11th WTO Ministerial Conference held in December 2017 in Buenos Aires (MC11).
 - Ministers welcomed the fact that, in spite of challenging circumstances, some positive results were achieved at MC11. At the same time, disappointment was voiced about the lack of further convergence and outcomes.
 - With reference to the decision on Fisheries Subsidies, a need to complete the negotiations by 2019 was emphasized frequently.
 - Moreover, in many interventions, the adoption of Joint Ministerial Statements by groups of Members was referred to as a significant development at MC11. These notably include: Micro, Small and Medium-Sized Companies; Electronic Commerce; Investment Facilitation; Services Domestic Regulation; and Women and Trade. Proponents of these initiatives indicated that they would pursue the work on these issues in an open and inclusive manner, consistent with the spirit and principles of the WTO.
 - Beyond these outcomes of MC11, it was noted, from different perspectives, that the WTO is facing important challenges and that fundamental reflections, including at political level, will be required on issues where major divergences exist.
 - In many interventions, a need to preserve and enhance the functioning of the multilateral trading system and the existing WTO framework was emphasized – in particular: the work of the regular WTO bodies; and the WTO's dispute settlement mechanism, with particular concern being expressed about the situation of the Appellate Body.
 - Among horizontal challenges faced in multilateral negotiations, the question of how to take into account different and evolving levels of development of Members was highlighted.
 - Furthermore, a need to re-engage in negotiations on a range of longstanding issues relevant to Members was expressed by many participants, taking into account what prevented more progress so far.
 - Ministers reaffirmed their willingness to pursue their engagement on WTO and to address key issues. In this context, India announced that it will host an informal WTO Ministerial gathering on 19-20 March 2018 in New Delhi.
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