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**Ministerial Conference  
Eleventh Session  
Buenos Aires, 10-13 December 2017**

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## ELEVENTH MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

### CLOSING STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRPERSON

At this closing event of the eleventh Ministerial Conference I wish to begin by reiterating that it has been an honour to Chair these proceedings. I assumed this role with a great sense of responsibility, especially since this year marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Argentina's accession to the GATT.

This will be my summary of the main points that have emerged from the conversations and negotiations held over the three days of the Conference.

I submit this summary under my own responsibility and in my capacity as Chairperson of the conference. Though not exhaustive, it will – I hope – reflect the main points emerging from the work done during these days.

With this overview, I wish to begin building a narrative that brings the WTO closer to ordinary people.

The Conference opened with a strong demonstration of support for the multilateral trading system and multilateralism by the Presidents of Latin America. As stated in the declaration signed by the Presidents of Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Guyana, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname and Uruguay, the region "*[reaffirms] that multilateralism is the best way to take advantage of the opportunities and to face the challenges of international trade ... [and confirms] the importance of preserving and strengthening the multilateral trading system, including its dispute settlement mechanism, in order to promote the rules-based, open, transparent, inclusive, non-discriminatory and equitable trade embodied in the WTO, providing it with the tools it needs to face the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century*".

Allow me to recall President Macri's eloquent exhortation to balance national interests with our shared interest in the common good. As the Director-General has just eloquently indicated, we have not risen to the challenge of this call by President Macri.

In their statements to the plenary, Ministers also recognized the important role played by the WTO in promoting economic growth, employment and development; and they reaffirmed the principles and objectives established by the Marrakesh Agreements. They also recognized that the system is not perfect and that it is essential to strengthen the commitment to work towards its enhancement.

Important decisions were taken at this Ministerial for the integration of developing country Members and least developing countries in the international trading system, including a work programme on small economies and the establishment of a working party on the accession of the world's youngest nation, South Sudan, which we have just approved. It is highly noteworthy that countries emerging from situations of deep conflict see in the WTO an opportunity to consolidate their institutions.

Over the past three days, Ministers engaged intensively in trying to move forward in numerous areas of our negotiations: agriculture, special and differential treatment, fisheries subsidies, domestic regulation in services, a proposal on transparency in regulatory measures in NAMA, and e-commerce. Allow me once again to express my profound gratitude to the facilitators who

assisted the Director-General and myself and led the efforts to steer the negotiations and reconcile positions in each of those areas.

All Members worked hard and constructively to make progress in each area. Commitment and effort went into finding genuine solutions, but the results were not sufficient.

These efforts have borne fruit in the definition of parameters for our future work, with a number of specific decisions.

I would like to emphasize that after years of negotiation, in Buenos Aires we have for the first time taken a significant step forward with the decision on fisheries subsidies. A work programme has been adopted to continue the negotiations on fisheries subsidies, including renewed commitment to the implementation of existing notification obligations. Buenos Aires will no doubt be remembered as the Conference at which the fisheries negotiation was launched in earnest.

The decisions also include a work programme on electronic commerce.

There are some remaining topics, which our representatives should continue negotiating and on which there will be periodic reports to the General Council. *Members agreed to advance negotiations on all remaining issues, including on the three pillars of agriculture, namely domestic support, market access and export competition, as well as non-agriculture market access, services, development, TRIPS, rules, and trade and environment.*

We have received some specific requests from groups of Member countries. Allow me to mention the request on small, vulnerable economies, another from Article XII Members, another from graduated least-developed countries, Members that have suffered natural disasters, transparency in preferential trade arrangements, net food importing developing countries; if I have omitted anything please let me know, and it will be added forthwith.

We also had a large number of initiatives from groups of like-minded Members, aimed at addressing the broader challenges of international trade, in order to make international trade more inclusive. These initiatives included discussions on investment facilitation and the integration of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises into international trade. Attention was also drawn to the importance of continuing work on e-commerce.

I received the Declaration on Trade and Woman's Economic Empowerment and the recommendations from business leaders arising from the Business Forum.

At this point, I wish once again to thank the Director-General and my three Vice Chairs for their support and assistance in handling a very full and heavy agenda, with an unprecedented number of side events.

These side events included a parliamentary conference, a business forum, and a symposium on trade and development, among others. These events made it possible to expand the scope of the Ministerial to the public sector, businesses, civil society and academia. We truly took the Conference beyond the negotiating tables and that is the message we must transmit.

For the first time in the history of these conferences, we held a Ministers' dialogue session, which enabled us to confirm that there are many issues of shared interest that we have no opportunity to discuss in the context of the Organization's regular activities.

I think it highly important to emphasize that, throughout the process, we have been inclusive and have enabled everyone to participate. Personally, during the preparations for the Conference, I made an effort to approach everyone and listen to all their views, in order to understand their concerns and differences, and in particular to identify commonalities.

Members reaffirmed the principles and objectives set out in the Marrakesh Agreements Establishing the WTO. They pledged their shared commitment to the WTO's rules-based system, which is a key driver for economic growth, development and job creation for all Members.

They confirmed the principles of consensus, inclusivity and transparency and committed to working together to improve the functioning of the WTO and to ensure that it achieves its objectives for the benefit of all Members.

They reiterated the provisions of paragraphs 30 and 31 of the Nairobi Ministerial Declaration, committed to work towards more effective implementation and enforcement of WTO rules as negotiated and agreed by all, and stressed the importance of implementing Decisions by Members.

They welcomed the entry into force of the Trade Facilitation Agreement and supported its full implementation. They also welcomed the Protocol amending the TRIPS Agreement.

Obviously, there remain differences of opinion on the Doha Round and the Doha Development Agenda, which have hampered progress on issues that the developing country Members consider essential to achieving sustainable and inclusive growth.

The Eleventh Ministerial Conference has come to an end, but this is definitely not the end of our work. The decisions adopted in Buenos Aires will guide the work in Geneva during the coming years.

It has been noted on multiple occasions that the international trading system is at a crossroads. This makes it necessary to rekindle trust and find common areas for forward movement on outstanding issues.

We agreed in Buenos Aires that dialogue, and not just negotiation, is part of our work. We need to commit ourselves to consultative mechanisms through which to find solutions for forward movement in all areas of interest. All Members have a shared responsibility to provide that space for dialogue. Let Buenos Aires be remembered as the place where we initiated that dialogue. I urge you to continue working and engaging in dialogue, with the firm aim of ensuring that all the benefits of international trade reach all our citizens. This is what we agreed in the 2030 Agenda, where we pledged to leave no one behind.

At the conclusion of our mini-Ministerial meeting in Marrakesh, I said that "there is life after Buenos Aires". I confirm today that there is life after Buenos Aires. But it lies with us to give meaning and value to that life. Thank you.

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