



General Council
18 October 2018

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

HELD IN THE CENTRE WILLIAM RAPPARD ON 18 OCTOBER 2018

Chairperson: Mr. Junichi Ihara (Japan)

The Chairman and the Director-General bade farewell to Ambassador Evandro Didonet (Brazil), Ambassador Dato Mahdi Rahman (Brunei Darussalam), Ambassador Álvaro Cedeño Molinari (Costa Rica) and Ambassador Sabine Möller (Namibia) and expressed appreciation for their valuable contribution during their time as Permanent Representatives.

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1 REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE TRADE NEGOTIATIONS COMMITTEE AND REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

1.1. The Chairman recalled that the Director-General had convened an Informal TNC and Heads of Delegation meeting on 16 October where he had provided a report on his recent activities and consultations. The Chairs of Negotiating Bodies had also provided their reports on the negotiating work and fifty-five delegations had taken the floor.

¹ The proposed agenda was circulated in document WT/GC/W/750.

1.2. As had been announced at that meeting, the Director-General's report and the reports of the Chairs of Negotiating Bodies would be included in the minutes of the General Council meeting.² Statements delivered by delegations would also be included in the minutes under the current item unless indicated otherwise.³

1.3. The General Council took note of the report of the Chairman of the TNC and of the Director-General's report, and of the statements delivered at the Informal TNC and Informal HODs meeting on 16 October.

2 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BALI, NAIROBI AND BUENOS AIRES OUTCOMES – STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

2.1. The Chairman⁴ said that the item remained on the agenda to follow up on the decisions adopted in Bali, Nairobi and Buenos Aires and to do so in an inclusive and transparent manner.

2.2. On 12 October, he had held a meeting with the Chairs of Regular Bodies where they had heard updates on the work taking place in WTO Councils and Committees including with respect to the implementation of the Ministerial mandates.

2.3. Before moving on to his report, he took the opportunity to emphasise, as he had also done at the meeting with the Chairs, the key role that the regular work in the WTO could play in addressing various challenges the organization currently faced. In that respect, it was important to ensure that regular bodies functioned efficiently and were fully responsive to Members' needs. He believed that was crucial to improve the way the organization operated.

2.4. His report would focus on those areas where there were updates since his last report in July.

2.5. Regarding the Ministerial Decision on the Work Programme on Electronic Commerce, he recalled that, at the July meeting of the General Council, the Chairs of the four subsidiary bodies had reported on developments in their respective areas. In addition, South Africa and India had introduced a paper on the moratorium on Customs Duties on electronic transmissions. At that meeting, he had mentioned that he would consult Members on the way forward with regard to the moratorium. Since then, he had held bilateral consultations with some twenty delegations who had responded to his invitation. On the basis of the views expressed by delegations through those consultations, he intended to convene an open-ended informal meeting in late November. The details of the informal meeting would be communicated in due course. In the meantime, he welcomed any ideas and suggestions to make the discussion informative and useful to all Members and he remained open to meet with any interested delegation. He also recalled that the next review of progress of the Work Programme on Electronic Commerce would take place at the December meeting of the General Council.

2.6. Concerning some of the Decisions on Agriculture, at its recent September meeting, the Committee on Agriculture had adopted the report of its first triennial review of the Nairobi Decision on Export Competition⁵. With respect to the implementation of the Nairobi Decision by Members with scheduled export subsidies reduction commitments, Australia, Colombia, Israel, Norway, Switzerland and Uruguay had their revised schedules certified – while Canada, the

² The Director-General's report (also circulated in JOB/TNC/71) and the reports of the Chairs of Negotiating Bodies at the 16 October Informal TNC and HODs meeting are incorporated in the minutes of this meeting and are reproduced in Annex 1 of this document.

³ The statements at the 16 October Informal TNC and HODs meeting by the following delegations are incorporated in the minutes of this meeting and can be found in Annex 2 of this document: Canada; South Africa (African Group); Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela; Norway; Malawi (ACP); United States; Ghana; Mexico; Qatar; Brazil; Morocco; Cuba; Turkey; Colombia (Structured Discussions on Investment Facilitation for Development); New Zealand; China; Senegal; European Union; Zimbabwe; Australia (Joint Statement Initiative on Electronic Commerce); India; Republic of Moldova; Uruguay (Informal Working Group on MSMEs); Costa Rica; Republic of Korea; Chinese Taipei; Indonesia (G-33); Switzerland; Benin (C-4); Argentina; Chad (LDCs); Paraguay; Vanuatu (Pacific Group); Jamaica; Russian Federation; Oman; Japan; Uganda; Angola; Nepal; Trinidad & Tobago; Cambodia; Hong Kong, China; Panama (Article XII Members); Kenya; Egypt; Plurinational State of Bolivia; Ecuador; Singapore; Pakistan; Haiti (CARICOM); Nigeria; Afghanistan; Cameroon and Sri Lanka.

⁴ The Chairman's statement was circulated in JOB/GC/202.

⁵ This report was circulated in document G/AG/28.

European Union, South Africa and the United States had circulated draft revised schedules. Other Members with scheduled export subsidies commitments had also had an opportunity at that meeting to update the Committee on the steps taken to implement the Decision.

2.7. The Committee had also continued its review of the Bali Decision on TRQ Administration. Contributions from several Members, together with a background document on TRQ administration and fill rates prepared by the Secretariat, had assisted those discussions. The Review of the Bali Decision was expected to conclude in 2019.

2.8. On the LDC Services Waiver, at the meeting of the Services Council which had taken place the previous week, the LDC Group had introduced a communication titled "Possible Elements for a Review of the Operation of Notified Preferences" which suggested a number of elements that could be part of the review mandated by the relevant Nairobi Decision.

2.9. In the debate, delegations had offered their initial reactions to the communication and the LDC Group had stated its readiness to engage productively. The Chairman would be consulting with delegations on how to advance the process so as to fulfil the Council's mandate.

2.10. Regarding the Bali Decision on Duty Free-Quota Free market access for LDCs, Members would recall that it had not been possible for the Secretariat to prepare a report on DFQF market access for LDCs in 2017 due to divergent views expressed by some Members on its scope and coverage. The CTD Chairman had recently held informal consultations with the key delegations involved to see if positions had changed. Since that was not the case, it did not seem possible for the Secretariat to prepare the report. Nonetheless, the mandated annual review for 2018 would still be carried out in the next CTD meeting on 21 November, albeit without a Secretariat report.

2.11. Regarding the Bali Decision on the Monitoring Mechanism on Special and Differential Treatment, there was still no common understanding on how to proceed with the review of the Mechanism, which had been mandated to take place three years after the first formal meeting. The CTD Chair intended to hold consultations with Members to see whether a common understanding could be reached on the way forward.

2.12. On Aid for Trade, the CTD Chair had recently held informal consultations so that Members could provide their inputs on the draft Aid for Trade monitoring and evaluation formats, which would form the basis of the next Global Review. Substantive comments had been made, and it had been agreed that the Secretariat would update the formats accordingly. The revised monitoring and evaluation formats should be ready for Members' consideration by the next formal CTD Aid for Trade meeting in November.

2.13. Lastly, on the implementation of the Agreement on Trade Facilitation, ratifications currently stood at 139, covering nearly 85% of the total. There was progress also in the submission of Category A, B and C notifications which stood at 114, 71 and 60 respectively. More important than the numbers themselves was the fact that those figures showed a continued upward trend in terms of implementation of the Agreement.

2.14. The representative of the Central African Republic, on behalf of the LDCs, reiterated the LDCs' message regarding the implementation of Ministerial Decisions particularly those from Bali and Nairobi. The LDC Group needed decisions taken in its favour on DFQF Market Access, Services Waiver and Rules of Origin to be fully implemented. That was fundamental for the LDCs to better integrate into global trade and for achieving the goals of Agenda 2030. The LDC Group thanked those Members that had already notified the preferences that they had granted in keeping with the relevant decision especially those which had already integrated them into their legislation in the area of rules of origin.

2.15. Much however remained to be done to fully implement those decisions and for economic actors in their countries and the population generally to really feel the benefits that would come in terms of economic growth and of increases in exports and jobs. Following them up was therefore fundamental particularly through the relevant WTO committees and through technical assistance. It was necessary for Members to ensure that they did everything they could to raise awareness amongst their population. That was particularly important in Services.

2.16. The LDC Group had tabled a number of proposals in that regard throughout the year in the CRO and CTS, particularly with regard to the utilization rate of preferences and DFQF market access – through the use of the advantages that had been granted. The LDCs hoped that Members would support them as soon as possible to ensure that they could fulfil their potential in line with the Decisions taken in Bali and Nairobi, and to help them integrate further into global trade.

2.17. The representative of Malawi, on behalf of the ACP, thanked the Chairman for his report on the activities and efforts to implement the Bali, Nairobi and Buenos Aires outcomes. In addition to the elements the ACP had raised at the TNC and had been recorded under the first agenda item, the Group stressed that it was imperative that all Ministerial Decisions and Declarations be respected. Implementation of outcomes from those three Ministerial Conferences would be impacted as well by the questions being put forward concerning WTO reforms. The ACP therefore urged Members with proposals to make them clearly known to the entire Membership so that they could be examined in a transparent and inclusive manner and to enable those having a stake in the multilateral trading system to interrogate them and to assess the impact of such proposals.

2.18. The representative of Chad thanked the Secretariat for its support which was much needed to strengthen its knowledge and to help it to integrate into international trade. Members also needed good negotiating practices in the multilateral context. The cooperation between the WTO and Chad was very fruitful, vibrant and useful. It had contributed to the strategy for public-private partnerships, to capacity building in Trade Facilitation and in Aid for Trade. As a landlocked country, Chad had no access to the ocean which added another layer of difficulty when it came to both importation and exportation. Consequently, its government was deploying efforts to ensure that trade flowed freely through dry ports in neighbouring countries which had maritime access. Chad needed to be supported in that regard and the operationalization and implementation of the Bali, Nairobi and Buenos Aires outcomes would help strengthen that general movement. Chad needed the WTO to continue to support it in its work to identify and strengthen its competitiveness amongst business entities comprising a large percentage of its economy particularly with regard to the informal sector in Africa. Chad called on the WTO to continue its capacity building work particularly with the private sector to emphasise the transformation and diversification of resources, to step up work on boosting productivity and integrating women and the youth into the economy through job creation and SMEs and to make them more autonomous. The implementation of the outcomes from Ministerial Conferences would both help and strengthen them in moving forward in those areas.

2.19. The General Council took note of the Chairman's statement and of the other statements.

3 WORK PROGRAMME ON SMALL ECONOMIES – REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE DEDICATED SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

3.1. The Chairman recalled that in line with the agreement in the General Council in 2002, the Work Programme on Small Economies was a standing item on the agenda and the Committee on Trade and Development reported regularly to the Council on the progress of work in its Dedicated Sessions. In Buenos Aires, Ministers had adopted a Decision reaffirming their commitment to the Work Programme and instructing the CTD to continue its work in Dedicated Sessions under the overall responsibility of the General Council.

3.2. Ambassador Diego Aulestia (Ecuador), Chairman of the Dedicated Session of the CTD, recalled that, in the last General Council meeting in July, he had made a report on the 36th Dedicated Session on Small Economies of the CTD held on 7 June. In that Session, Members had continued their work on the background document prepared by the Secretariat (WT/COMTD/SE/W/34) regarding the challenges and opportunities experienced by small economies in their efforts to reduce trade costs, particularly in the area of trade facilitation, as mandated in the Ministerial Decision in WT/MIN(15)/40 adopted in Nairobi in 2015 and confirmed in the Ministerial Decision in WT/MIN(17)/63 adopted in Buenos Aires in 2017.

3.3. The discussion in the meeting had focused on the specific challenges derived from trade costs that SVEs faced and the most important sources of merchandise and services trade costs reported by them. The debate had been based on presentations by the WTO Secretariat and representatives from the Governments of Panama and Sri Lanka. He had also announced that there would be another meeting of the Dedicated Session later in the year.

3.4. The 37th Dedicated Session on Small Economies would be held on 1 November. Members would focus on best practices and policy approaches for addressing the challenges identified in the previous meeting. Speakers from SVEs had been invited to participate as well as representatives from other international organizations.

3.5. The representative of Guatemala, on behalf of the SVEs, said that, as had been mentioned, the dedicated session had held a first session in June entitled "Challenges Small Economies experience in their efforts to reduce trade costs, particularly in the area of trade facilitation". During that session, SVEs had shared their national experiences highlighting the difficulties that they faced when trying to reduce trade costs. It had been evident that although many of those challenges had also been experienced by many Members, some of them had been particular to the SVEs due to the small size of their markets and poor infrastructure, among others. On 1 November, there would be a second session on that topic which would be used as a basis for the challenges identified in the first session and would try to propose solutions to those issues, with particular emphasis on solutions at a multilateral level. SVE delegations would be actively participating during the session and would welcome other non SVE Members to share their views and experiences on the topic allowing different perspectives to be discussed. As a result of the session, the SVE Group would be preparing an outcome document that would be circulated among Members, and hopefully discussed in the near future.

3.6. The General Council took note of the report of the Chairman of the CTD and of the statement.

4 TWELFTH SESSION OF THE MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE – DATE

4.1. The Chairman recalled that, at the July meeting, the General Council had formally agreed that the Twelfth Session of the WTO Ministerial Conference would be held in Astana, Kazakhstan in early June 2020. At that meeting, he had also indicated that the exact dates would be communicated in due course so that efforts could be made to avoid scheduling conflicts with other major international events, to the extent that it had been possible. Further to that understanding, and upon additional consultations with the host country, he had circulated a communication to all delegations on 25 September, in which he had proposed the exact dates for the Conference. He therefore invited the General Council to formally agree on those dates, and that the Twelfth Session of the WTO Ministerial Conference would take place in Astana from 8 to 11 June 2020.

4.2. The General Council so agreed.

4.3. The representative of Kazakhstan thanked the Members for the flexibility they had demonstrated with regard to the dates of MC12.

4.4. The General Council took note of the statements.

5 HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABLE BLUE ECONOMY AND AFRICA E-COMMERCE WEEK – STATEMENT BY KENYA

5.1. The representative of Kenya, speaking under "Other Business", wished to share information on the forthcoming High-Level Conference on Sustainable Blue Economy slated to be held in Nairobi, Kenya on 26-28 November at the Kenyatta International Conference Centre. Following the announcement by H.E. President Uhuru Kenyatta during the third session of the UN Environment Assembly held in Nairobi in December 2017, Kenya was partnering with Japan and Canada to host the Conference – with Norway, the United Kingdom, the European Union, China, Portugal, South Africa and Fiji as co-sponsors. Kenya thanked those Members for their commitment and generous contribution aimed at ensuring the success of the Conference. Over 5,000 participants consisting of both State and Non-State actors from around the world were expected to participate. The Conference was the first global Conference on the Sustainable Blue Economy and was predicated on two conceptual pillars: sustainability, climate change and controlling pollution; and production, accelerated economic growth, jobs and poverty alleviation. The Blue Economy was an emerging concept which encouraged sustainable use of the oceans or blue resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods and jobs. It advocated the same desired outcome as the green economy, namely, improved human well-being and social equity while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities.

5.2. With the theme "Blue Economy and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", the Conference would focus on new technologies and innovation for oceans, seas, lakes and rivers, and the challenges, potential opportunities, priorities and partnerships. Ocean and marine issues including fisheries continued to generate a lot of interest and political momentum worldwide given the immense potential contribution of those resources to achieving sustainable economic growth, alleviating poverty and protecting the environment. In many countries, especially developing ones, the full potential of the oceans, seas, lakes and rivers however remained untapped largely due to inadequate financing, lack of access to new technologies and innovations, weak human and technical capacities and governance challenges.

5.3. The global narrative was clearly strong and consistent. Oceans and other water resources were key for driving sustainable growth and development and were central to achieving the 2030 SDGs. The forthcoming Conference presented a unique opportunity to initiate action-oriented discussions focused on the productivity and sustainability aspects of the blue economy. Topics to be discussed in that regard ranged from smart shipping, ports, transportation, employment, job creation, poverty eradication and the blue economy; cities, tourism, resilient coast and infrastructure; sustainable energy and mineral resources and innovative industries; ending hunger, securing food supplies and promoting good health and sustainable fisheries; management and sustaining of marine life conservation and sustaining sustainable economic activities; climate action, agriculture, waste management and pollution-free aquatic ecosystem; people, culture, communities and societies; and maritime, safety, security and regulatory enforcement, essentially the inclusive blue economy.

5.4. Kenya, Japan and Canada anticipated that discussions would lead to the identification of key opportunities and challenges for inclusivity and collaborative partnerships and projects and suggestions for the next steps moving forward. Aside from the main session, there would also be four other forums running concurrently – a business forum, a governors and mayors convention, a civil society forum and an academic and science forum. In addition, there would be exhibitions to showcase trade, investment and tourism opportunities in the blue economy sector as well as side events and seminars related to the blue economy.

5.5. The outcomes of the Conference would feed into future global blue economy dialogues including the 2020 UN Oceans Conference to be co-hosted by Kenya and Portugal and delivering on the need to merge on the sustainability and productivity pillars of the blue economy sector. The Conference was further expected to contribute to the development of policies, legislation, infrastructure and incentives to facilitate faster transition from carbon-intensive to carbon-neutral economies through the blue economy sector.

5.6. The preparatory process of the Conference was on course. Invitations had been extended to all 193 UN Member States, international partners of line ministries, over 500 international mayors and governors of ocean or sea-facing cities, local and international IGOs and NGOs, the academic and scientific community and the private sector. Over 130 governments had confirmed participation including one Head of State so far. Two important elements of participation were the following: first, facilitation of SIDS and LDCs. The Kenyan Government had secured enough sponsorship to facilitate the participation of all SIDS and LDCs desirous of a balanced representation of delegates drawn from the two conceptual pillars of the Sustainable Blue Economy Conference – namely the conservation and productive pillar. The sponsorship extended to delegates would comprise the following: in the productive pillar – one Minister, two technical officers/experts and one delegate from a civil society organization; secondly from the conservation pillar – one Minister, two technical officers/experts and one delegate from a civil society organization. Based on the foregoing, the Government of Kenya had mandated the UNDP to coordinate bookings both ticketing and accommodation for the delegates whose participation was being sponsored. Secondly, as some of the thematic areas to be covered by the Sustainable Blue Economy Conference fell within the purview of Geneva-based organizations to which permanent missions were accredited and in order to enrich their discussions, it had been decided that Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives based in Geneva be invited to attend the Sustainable Blue Economy Conference as part of their respective country delegations. In that regard, a note verbale would be circulated shortly by the Kenya Permanent Mission extending the invitation. Further information on the logistical and administrative arrangements could be found in a handbook on the website of the Sustainable Blue Economy Conference.

5.7. In conclusion, by hosting the Conference, Kenya affirmed its appreciation of the importance of conserving and sustainably using the oceans, seas, lakes and rivers and marine resources through enabling cooperation for shared prosperity. Kenya looked forward to welcoming everyone in Nairobi in November.

5.8. Kenya also shared information on the forthcoming Africa Regional E-Commerce Week scheduled to be held in Nairobi on 10-14 December. The event was jointly organised by UNCTAD, the African Union and the European Union and hosted by the Government of Kenya. It would be implemented in collaboration with the partners of the e-Trade for All Initiative under the theme "Empowering African Economies in the Digital Era". The Regional E-Commerce Week 2018 would examine ways to enhance the ability of African Countries to engage in and benefit from e-commerce and the evolving digital economy. It would bring together Ministers, other senior government representatives, the private sector, civil society and international organizations for a week-long dialogue to identify innovative ways for shaping the African digital economy. Due to the significance of the event, Kenya had considered it important to inform and invite everyone to participate. In light of the on-going e-commerce discussions at the multilateral level, participation in that event would assist them to gain further knowledge that could inform their discourse on that subject going forward. Once again, Kenya looked forward to welcoming all to Nairobi in December.

5.9. The General Council took note of the statement.

6 CHAIRMANSHIPS OF THE COMMITTEE ON TRADE AND ENVIRONMENT AND THE COMMITTEE ON TRADE AND ENVIRONMENT IN SPECIAL SESSION – STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

6.1. The Chairman, speaking under "Other Business", recalled that, at the July meeting, he had announced that he would conduct consultations to fill the vacancies in the Chairmanships of the CTE and CTE SS, following the departure of the respective Chairs.

6.2. He had already met on two occasions with the coordinators of the four broad groups, who had in turn been consulting with their respective constituencies. While a little more time was needed to finalise those consultations, he believed they could be very close to identifying possible Chairs for those bodies. He would also shortly send a communication to provide an opportunity to any interested delegation to come and consult with them on those two appointments.

6.3. He reminded all delegations that, at the next General Council meeting, and in line with the Guidelines for the Appointment of Officers to WTO bodies, he would make a formal announcement to begin the process of consultations for the appointment of officers to WTO bodies for 2019.

6.4. While they would begin the consultations early in January 2019, it was not too early for delegations – and the four group coordinators – to start thinking about that matter and to start their consultative process so that they could be in a position to present candidates as early as possible in January.

6.5. The General Council took note of the Chairman's statement.

7 STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN IN CONNECTION WITH ADMINISTRATIVE MEASURES FOR MEMBERS IN ARREARS

7.1. The Chairman, speaking under "Other Business", noted that the revised Administrative Measures for Members in arrears in WT/BFA/132 required that, at the end of each meeting of the General Council, the Chairman of the Committee on Budget, Finance and Administration should provide information with regard to which Members and Observers were under Administrative Measures. He invited the Chair of the Budget Committee, Ambassador Juan Aguirre (Paraguay), to provide the Council with that information.

7.2. Ambassador Juan Aguirre (Paraguay), Chairman of the CBFA, reported that the General Council approved the rules for Members and Observers subject to Administrative Measures and that those had been implemented on 1 March 2013. As required by the decision of the General Council, the Chairman of the CBFA would state all Members and Observers under all categories of Administrative Measures as of 17 October 2018.

7.3. There were 16 Members and 3 Observers under Administrative Measures. There were 6 Members in Category I: Belize, Congo, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Uganda and Zambia. There was 1 Observer under Category I: Somalia. There were 3 Members in Category II: Antigua and Barbuda, Cameroon and Guinea. There were 7 Members under Category III: Burundi, Chad, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania, Niger, Sierra Leone and Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. There were 2 Observers in Category III: Libya and Sao Tomé & Príncipe.

7.4. The Chairman said that he was required at each Council meeting to request Members and Observers in Categories II and III of the Measures to inform the Secretariat as to when their payment of arrears could be expected. Likewise, the General Council urged Members and Observers under Administrative Measures to liquidate their arrears.

7.5. The General Council took note of the statements.

ANNEX 1**THE REPORTS BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL AND THE CHAIRS OF THE NEGOTIATING GROUPS AT THE INFORMAL TNC AND INFORMAL HODS MEETING HELD ON 16 OCTOBER 2018****Report by the Director-General¹**

Good morning everyone. Welcome to this informal TNC and HoDs meeting.

As indicated in the convening notice, the purpose of our meeting today is for us all to update each other on the activities we have been engaged in and to discuss the way forward in our work. As usual, we will hear first from our Negotiating Group Chairs. Then I will provide an update on my activities. And then I will open the floor to delegations.

I met with the Negotiating Group Chairs yesterday morning. It is clear that the situation in some negotiating groups has not changed since the last time the Chairs reported to members on 24 July. In fact, some negotiating groups have not met and in a few cases, the Chairs have not held any formal consultations – despite indicating their availability to delegations. This has been for the simple reason that no papers or proposals have been presented or no new interest has been expressed in those areas.

Given this situation, and to ensure an efficient conduct of our meeting this morning, I think it makes sense to hear statements only from those Chairs that have updates to provide – that is, in the areas where there has been activity. Therefore, we will only be hearing today from the Chairs of Agriculture, Services, Rules, Trade & Development, and Dispute Settlement. For those groups where we won't hear reports, this does not mean anything other than that there has been no activity since July. So, let me stress that the Chairs' reports of 24 July remain relevant and that work in these areas will continue.

Regarding the chairmanship of the CTE SS, the GC Chair has informed me that he is conducting consultations. I understand that he will provide some more information at the General Council on Thursday. Now, let's hear from the Chairs.

[The TNC Chair gave the floor to the Chairs of the Bodies established by the TNC – Statements are reflected after the Director-General's report.]

Let me thank all the Chairs for their work. As ever, the Chairs and I remain at your disposal to assist you in any way that we can in our work ahead.

I will now turn to my own report. You have heard the Chair's statements. I note, in particular, the intensive work being done on fisheries subsidies by Ambassador Zapata and the Negotiating Group on Rules. Thanks to everyone for that. I think this an area where progress can be made. However, it is clear that in most areas, we are seeing very little progress. If you want to advance these issues, then you have to drive them forward. No one can do this except the members themselves. Importantly, we must keep up the pressure in the areas with specific deadlines, such as public stockholding and fisheries subsidies. We should be trying to keep up our momentum in all areas, and to make advances where we can. And I think this has to remain the case despite the other challenges which we see before us.

Let me now update you on my own activities since my July report. Again, the exchanges covered a variety of issues – ranging from negotiating work, on-going discussions amongst Members; to systemic concerns.

Specifically, my meetings included:

- The G20 Trade and Investment Ministerial in Mar del Plata, where Ministers discussed the current situation in global trade and issued a Joint Statement, which I am sure members have seen.

¹ Also issued as JOB/TNC/71.

- I was invited by the Industry Federation of the State of Rio de Janeiro for an event with business leaders and to the 17th International Arbitration Conference, where I spoke about the future of global trade and the nature of our culturally diverse Dispute Settlement Mechanism.
- I also attended the "Day of German Industry event" in Berlin. On the margins of this event, I conducted a bilateral meeting with Chancellor Merkel.
- I attended the 7th China Round Table on WTO Accessions in Kazakhstan. By invitation I also spoke at a High-Level Forum on Advancing Trade and Investment Facilitation for Development in Astana. And during the same trip, I held a bilateral meeting with President Nazarbayev, where I thanked him for his initiative to host MC12. I also visited the facilities where our forthcoming ministerial conference will take place and I was very pleased with what I saw.
- I was invited to the B20 summit in Buenos Aires and took part in a discussion on the "Present and Future of Multilateralism".
- And last week, I attended the fall meetings of the IMF and World Bank in Bali. I spoke at a joint WTO-IFC event on trade finance and I have to say that we're making progress on that front. And I participated in a number of sessions at a conference which the WTO co-organised with the IMF, World Bank and OECD on how global trade can promote growth for all. We also issued a new report, together with the World Bank and IMF on 'Reinvigorating Trade and Inclusive Growth'.

Here in Geneva, in addition to my frequent contacts with Members, I participated in several meetings and events including:

- the second Advanced Global Workshop on Government Procurement – which aims to disseminate information and foster dialogue on government procurement issues;
- I also participated in a meeting with WTO Commonwealth members to reflect on the way forward; and,
- I spoke at a workshop on Women in Global Value Chains, organised by the MIKTA countries together with the WTO and ITC.

I also conducted a range of bilateral meetings, including with the Prime Minister of Croatia, Andrej Plenković, who I was pleased to welcome to the WTO.

In addition, at the beginning of this month, we hosted the 2018 WTO Public Forum. With well over 2,000 participants and over 100 thematic events, we saw once again that interest levels in the WTO are very high. The importance that people attach to the trading system was evident during the discussions. I am proud that we showed ourselves to be an open, vibrant and forward-thinking organization, which is working to seek solutions to the many challenges that confront us today.

During the Forum we issued a number of excellent publications, specifically:

- The 2018 World Trade Report looking at how digital technologies are transforming global commerce and how we can use them to shape a more inclusive trading system for future generations.
- Our report on mainstreaming trade in the SDGs.
- And a joint report with UN Environment on making trade work for the environment, prosperity and resilience.

The Forum also demonstrated the high levels of engagement we are seeing from the private sector. Notably, the ICC and B20 brought forward their recommendations, leading on from the Trade Dialogues event earlier in the year.

Of course, all of this took against the backdrop of a rather uncertain and mixed global economic landscape. Trade tensions continue to escalate. The new tariffs announced this year cover

hundreds of billions of dollars in trade. Further measures have been proposed. And at present, continued escalation is a real possibility. I have warned before about the real threat to stability, jobs and growth should this trend continue. The effects will take time to filter through, but we are seeing some early warning signs. Indicators show that businesses are holding off on making job-creating investments and export orders are on the decline. We revised our WTO trade forecasts downward last month. We are now forecasting growth of 3.9% for 2018, down from 4.4% previously. The IMF made similar adjustments to its forecasts.

I should note that we have seen significant trade agreements being struck in recent weeks. I hope that we can take inspiration from this and pursue dialogue and negotiation to help abate tensions elsewhere. But, as yet, there are no clear signs that tensions are indeed abating.

So now let me turn to focus on our system – the WTO. One element which is at the root of current frictions is the argument that the trading system is allowing distortive trade practices to go unchecked – and that therefore the system needs to change. In this context, so-called WTO reform or modernization has increasingly been on the minds and in the speeches of many. It's clear that this discussion is gathering significant momentum, with more leaders becoming engaged and talking to each other about this. So, this is something we can't ignore.

Such a modernising effort is being seen as a way to ease some of the trade problems that some members have identified, and deal with some of the issues that they have put on the table.

A variety of initiatives and meetings are being prepared, and a range of priorities have been suggested by some WTO members. There are several perspectives being offered on what the priorities should be, and they include:

- resolving disputes and reaching agreements more rapidly and effectively,
- addressing a variety of trade distorting practices that are either not covered or are just partially covered by existing disciplines,
- avoiding protectionism and unilateral measures,
- advancing the current work,
- and improving notifications and transparency.

These are all important issues, and others may be brought forward – but precisely which issues are taken forward, and how, is for members to determine. Clearly this debate is gathering momentum but, again, I would suggest that there are also members who are not convinced that a reform is needed at all.

I have been invited to take part in some discussions on these issues. I am happy to do that – just as I am happy to attend any meeting to which I am invited by members. In attending such meetings, I am mainly in listening mode. My key impression is that these discussions are at a very early stage. It is too soon to say what would be covered by these discussions. It is also too soon to establish if or how they will advance and what fruits – if any – they might bear.

And let me say this: I don't think that anyone is talking about shaping a new 'package' or a new 'round'. It seems to me that this discussion is more focused on trying to fix some specific problems, where necessary as people identify, to help the system work better. Let me stress that this is just my impression. Proponents are the ones who would be better placed to provide clarity on this.

No doubt the conversation will continue. It is on the agenda for the Canada-organised meeting in Ottawa next week and, significantly, for the G20 summit in November.

So whatever members' positions may be on this subject, it is useful to make your voices heard – that includes here at this meeting. The forum provided by today's meeting has transparency and information sharing as its core objectives.

But of course, your comments do not need to be limited to this session only. I would encourage members to engage with each other and exchange views through a range of channels and formats.

The state of this organization is an issue in which everyone has an interest, so it is important for all members to engage – whatever your perspectives may be. As ever, I remain available for consultations with individual members and groups of members on this issue – or any other issue. I am here to facilitate whatever conversations members want to have.

Now let me move on to another critical systemic issue: the crisis in the dispute settlement system. We are now down to only three Appellate Body members – the bare minimum required to hear an appeal. I have no positive news to share here. We continue talking but I am not hearing anything new which would allow us to identify a way forward. I would note that already this year around 30 disputes have been initiated. This is the highest annual total for 16 years – and its only October. While this shows faith in the WTO, at the same time it puts additional strain on the system. More disputes would likely mean more appeals. You have all heard the warnings by Appellate Body chair Ujal Singh Bhatia. He has underlined very clearly the potential delays in processing appeals – particularly if the AB is less well equipped to deal with them. Such delays should not come as a surprise to members. We must continue working to resolve the impasse in the AB, and to maintain this essential pillar of our work.

Let me once again emphasise that any broader systemic conversations should not compromise other areas that members have been working on and are currently working on. Recent experience at the WTO has shown that we can make progress. We should continue our work in all areas of negotiations, and in exploring other issues to the extent that members wish to do so. On that point let me just say that I know work is continuing in the various Joint Initiatives. I leave it to members to update each other on this work as they see fit.

I will conclude now with a reminder and an appeal. Our trading system is not perfect – but it represents the best efforts of governments around the world, over many decades, undertaking painstaking work to construct what we have today. The system has real value in supporting stability, economic growth, development and poverty reduction. We cannot take it for granted. So, we must preserve what we have, and at the same time, we must ensure that we are responsive to the continuous evolution of members' needs. This concludes my report. Thank you for listening.

Let me remind you again that, as usual, unless you indicate otherwise, your statements today, the Chairs' reports and my report will all be recorded in the minutes of Thursday's General Council.

Reports by the Negotiating Group Chairs

1. Committee on Agriculture – Special Session²

I would like to make a brief report on the state of play in the agriculture negotiations.

During my last report to the informal meeting of the Trade Negotiation Committee on 24 July, I announced my plan to hold issues-specific agriculture negotiation meetings on a monthly basis. The schedule of these meetings was circulated to Members on 27 July.

As per the announced schedule I held a first set of thematic sessions dedicated to Domestic Support, Public Stockholding, and Cotton on 20-21 September. The sessions in October will be dedicated to Market Access and SSM, in November to Export Competition, Export restrictions, and in December to stocktaking and the way forward. Before the December break we will also return to some of the issues addressed in September and October.

The plan is that by December we can at least signal if not start a transition from situational analysis to position evaluation leading towards an assessment of opportunities for outcomes. I also intend to convene additional consultations in different formats when needed. The ultimate goal of these technical discussions is to help Members to take decisions grounded on solid information so that proposals can be more definitive in seeking common ground for an outcome.

I will now turn to the report on the three thematic sessions held in September.

² The report was delivered by the Director of the Council and TNC Division, on behalf of the Chair of the Special Session of the Committee on Agriculture and Sub-Committee on Cotton.

The First CoA SS meeting was dedicated to Domestic Support. Two delegations (Australia and Canada) responded to my request to make presentations on their new and existing submissions. Both presentations looked at the trade distorting domestic support and Green Box, but from different angles.

I am happy to report that I was very satisfied with the level of engagement. The session was focused and fruitful. I believe that we advanced our understanding of the evolution of domestic support; and appreciated the different approaches that can be used to analyse and interpret data with different conclusions being drawn. The divergent points of views generated a genuine debate and injected new energy into the debate on domestic support. There was also some increased flexibility to consider all proposals on the table. But we need more than energy and engagement to succeed, we need greater commitment to seek and find common ground on the issues.

No presentation or new submission was made in the meeting on Public Stockholding. The G 33 supported by many other developing country Members, called for a permanent solution to be found by MC12. Broadly, Members repeated known positions. One potential positive emerged and that was a greater recognition that "technical conversations" on PSH are needed. In sum, PSH remains difficult, with the difference in emphasis on the agreed mandate versus the need for such as solution.

Regarding the session that was dedicated to Cotton, I can report positive developments. First, there was a communication by the United States on the situation on cotton (JOB/AG/144), which will need to be discussed further. Second, the need for updated information and data on cotton Domestic Support was again stressed. The C4 reported on a recent questionnaire they circulated and on replies received so far from key cotton producers and exporters. The Secretariat might also help in the compilation of a common set of data to inform the negotiation. Third, some Members expressed their readiness to look into incremental options on cotton.

As next steps, I will continue to consult at all levels and on all themes during and in-between the monthly thematic sessions. My two current objectives are to i) continue to pursue the technical exchange that can help informing the negotiations and ii) facilitate a transition to a process whereby members can table probable options for incremental outcomes. This process shall be mainly based on Members' submissions and data transmitted by them.

This ends my report.

2. Committee on Services – Special Session

My report today will be brief.

Before the summer break, the Special Session had met to discuss a communication from four Members, which proposed that delegations engage in exploratory discussions on market access in the context of the mandate under GATS Article XIX.

At the last TNC meeting, I reported on the initial discussion of that proposal, and noted that I would aim to facilitate future discussions and would undertake consultations to help discern the best way forward. In September, I invited all delegations to contact me to share their views and, in the last weeks, I have consulted, in different formats, with a wide range of Members, who conveyed their different perspectives, sensitivities and interests. I will report on my consultations at an open-ended meeting of the Special Session [in early November].

Finally, on Domestic Regulation, the Working Party on Domestic Regulation has not yet met this year. Since the last meeting of the TNC, a group of Members has continued to hold open-ended meetings to continue work on the text of disciplines.

3. Committee on Development – Special Session

Members will recall that at the informal TNC/HODs meeting held on 24 July, I presented a detailed report on the consultations that I had undertaken in the first semester of this year. In that report, I listed the questions that I had asked to Members and also highlighted the main themes that had emerged in the course of these consultations. I had also announced that I would continue my

consultations with Members in various configurations and formats to narrow our focus and define our work methods for the CTD SS.

Accordingly, I have been consulting with the G-90 Coordinators ([comprising] the ACP, the African and the LDC Coordinators) in my quest for seeking clarity on the way forward including in trying to solicit views on various approaches that have been the focus of these discussions, in particular a case study methodology.

As of now, my consultations with the G90 Coordinators remain inconclusive. At our last meeting on 17 September 2018 the G90 Coordinators stated that they needed more time to consult with their respective constituencies.

My next meeting with Coordinators is scheduled for 19 October 2018.

I remain available for consultations with any interested delegations.

This concludes my report.

4. Negotiating Group on Rules

I would like to provide an update on the work of the Negotiating Group on Rules since my last report to the Heads of Delegation and Trade Negotiations Committee, in July.

At that time, the Negotiating Group was in the middle of its last cluster of fisheries subsidies meetings before the summer break, and was finalising the fisheries subsidies work programme for September through December. The aim of the meeting clusters held before the summer break was to engage on the negotiating issues on a conceptual, thematic basis, along with deepening Members' understanding of a range of technical fisheries issues.

The agreed work programme for September through December changes both the nature and intensity of the fisheries subsidies work. Four Incubator Groups, composed with a view to 'representativity', have been established, for brainstorming on ways to address particular issues and bridge specific gaps that have arisen in the negotiations. To ensure inclusiveness and transparency, the Incubator Groups brainstorm both internally and with visiting delegations. They then report back to the plenary, without filtration or judgement, all issues and ideas that have been generated and discussed.

The activities at each of the three meeting clusters, in September, November and December, include the Incubator Group work, technical sessions, text-based discussions based on the negotiating documents created in the lead-up to MC11, and completion of the technical streamlining of those documents. The experience with the Incubator Groups in the September cluster was positive. Members indicated that a brainstorming atmosphere was achieved, and that useful ideas worthy of further consideration were generated. At the request of Members, additional time will be devoted to this process during the November cluster.

The November cluster will run from 29 October through 9 November. The December cluster will run from 27 November through 7 December.

Although we are only in the middle of the current work programme, time is short given the end-2019 deadline to complete the fisheries subsidies negotiations. This means that the work in 2019 will need to be well structured so as to use the time effectively and efficiently. To that end, I will begin holding consultations immediately after the November cluster, with a view to developing a proposed 2019 fisheries subsidies work programme, for consideration and adoption by Members at the December meeting cluster. Finally, as the negotiations move ahead, I will certainly be turning to my Head of Delegation colleagues for your input and guidance at key moments.

As is evident from this and my previous reports to the Trade Negotiations Committee, thus far in 2018 the work in the Negotiating Group on Rules has focused exclusively on fisheries subsidies. That said, the rules agenda contains other elements as well, and the necessary space would be provided to fully air issues or proposals that might be put before the Group in any such areas.

This concludes my report. I look forward to continuing to brief the Heads of Delegation and the Trade Negotiations Committee at future meetings of this sort.

5. Dispute Settlement Body – Special Session

- Ongoing work

After the summer break, the group resumed focused work on 13 September 2018 with the opening meeting on Remand. Following that meeting, I circulated an indicative timetable of focused work until December 2018. In accordance with that timetable, I held Chair's consultations on this issue on 5 October 2018. Remand concerns the referral of a case from the Appellate Body back to a panel in situations where the Appellate Body is unable to complete the analysis. There are two alternative proposals before the DSB-SS, one by Korea, the other by the G 7 (Argentina, Brazil, Canada, India, New Zealand, Norway, and Mexico).

- Upcoming work

Before the end of the month, I intend to hold further consultations on this issue. I expect to conclude focused work on this issue in late November.

At our last meeting, we heard a statement from four Members making a call for urgent action by the DSB-SS. They proposed that the DSB-SS complete its discussion of the 12 issues under negotiation in January 2019 and make recommendations for action no later than March 2019. I intend to invite other Members to offer their views on this statement at our next open-ended meeting on 20 November 2018.

ANNEX 2**STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS AT THE INFORMAL TNC AND INFORMAL HODs MEETING HELD ON 16 OCTOBER 2018**

Following the Director-General's statement at the above-mentioned meeting, the statements made by Canada; South Africa (African Group); Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela; Norway; Malawi (ACP); United States; Ghana; Mexico; Qatar; Brazil; Morocco; Cuba; Turkey; Colombia (Structured Discussions on Investment Facilitation for Development); New Zealand; China; Senegal; European Union; Zimbabwe; Australia (Joint Statement Initiative on Electronic Commerce); India; Republic of Moldova; Uruguay (Informal Working Group on MSMEs); Costa Rica; Republic of Korea; Chinese Taipei; Indonesia (G-33); Switzerland; Benin (C-4); Argentina; Chad (LDCs); Paraguay; Vanuatu (Pacific Group); Jamaica; Russian Federation; Oman; Japan; Uganda; Angola; Nepal; Trinidad & Tobago; Cambodia; Hong Kong, China; Panama (Article XII Members); Kenya; Egypt; Plurinational State of Bolivia; Ecuador; Singapore; Pakistan; Haiti (CARICOM); Nigeria; Afghanistan; Cameroon and Sri Lanka are included below as part of the Minutes of the General Council meeting.

1. Canada

As we all know, the WTO is facing numerous challenges to ensure that the organization remains relevant for all of us. After all, it has been almost 25 years since the WTO was established and we need to ensure that the organization remains relevant in these changing times.

We are in a particularly fragile situation for global trade and the multilateral trading system, and Members should reflect very seriously on the indispensable role that the WTO performs in facilitating global commerce. The current climate in international trade should act as a reminder that there is tremendous value in a rules-based multilateral system and how well this system has served us since the GATT was established.

To be clear, the issues facing the WTO are not the result of the actions of any one Member, nor are they the result of any one specific factor. There are many reasons why the WTO finds itself in its current predicament – the pace of technological development; the perception that the benefits of economic growth are not being distributed equitably; political developments and decisions – these are just some of the contributing factors to the challenges facing the WTO. In order to respond to these challenges and to ensure the continued relevance of the WTO, collective action is required. Just as the causes of the current challenges facing the WTO are not the result of any one country, similarly no individual WTO Member will be able to resolve these issues by itself.

Canada would like to emphasise, once again, the importance for all Members to take action to strengthen and modernise this organization. That said, we want to stress that our efforts need to be pragmatic, realistic, and inclusive, and reflect the views and perspectives of all Members. Canada is ready to do its part.

As such, and as announced previously, Canada's Minister of International Trade Diversification, Jim Carr, is convening a small group of Ministers committed to the multilateral trading system, with the objective of identifying concrete and tangible ways the operation and functioning of the WTO could be enhanced and improved over the short, medium and long terms. We circulated a discussion paper in September as a sign of our commitment to proceeding in a transparent manner. The meeting will take place in Ottawa next week, and we very much intend for this meeting to be a catalyst for a broadening conversation, with a view to identifying potential paths forward. That is, we very much see the meeting next week in Ottawa as a discussion starter, certainly not the end of a process. We will report back to the Membership on the outcomes of the meeting as we continue to deepen the engagement of the Members on these issues.

While we continue to examine broader questions on the renewal of the WTO, it is important to note that Canada remains committed to advancing the WTO's negotiating agenda on all issues of interest to the Membership. It is important to address the core issues in areas such as agriculture and fisheries subsidies, as well as in other areas such as e-commerce, investment facilitation and trade and gender. As a collective Membership, we must ensure that the WTO's trade rules remain relevant and effective in the current context.

Regarding the agriculture negotiations, Canada's primary objective continues to be to develop new rules on agriculture domestic support that reflect current realities. To that end, Canada recently presented to the Membership a factual analysis on how domestic support has evolved since the launch of the Doha Round in 2001. We intend to continue playing a constructive role in the agriculture discussions by making technical submissions and presentations. We plan to do this because, in our view, if we are to make incremental progress in agriculture, more detailed technical and "without prejudice" discussions are needed to not only deepen our common understanding of the problems in international agriculture markets, but also help Members develop realistic options where Members' contributions to a solution are proportionate to their role in global agricultural trade.

We are encouraged by the recent discussions that have taken place through the incubator groups in the fisheries subsidies negotiations. These appear to have facilitated Members' ability to engage in a more open and productive dialogue, to find new solutions to some of the key stumbling blocks to an agreement. We fully support this process and urge Members to continue this positive level of engagement so that we can deliver on the mandate given to us by Ministers at MC11.

We are pleased to inform you that Canada will co-host, with Kenya and Japan, the Sustainable Blue Economy Conference on 26-28 November in Nairobi, and are also pleased to see Norway, Fiji, Portugal and the United Kingdom as co-sponsors. The Blue Economy Conference will help draw even greater international attention to the urgency of delivering on Sustainable Development Goal 14.6, and contribute to the momentum needed for a comprehensive agreement on harmful fisheries subsidies by December 2019.

Canada is encouraged by the fact that discussions are ongoing, and progress has been made to date, on the joint statement initiatives launched at MC11 with respect to e-commerce, services domestic regulation, investment facilitation, MSMEs, and women's economic empowerment. We want to stress again that these initiatives are important in ensuring our trade policies are not only relevant to today's global economy, but deliver inclusive results for all of our stakeholders. As such, Canada commends the MIKTA partners for holding a successful seminar on women in global value chains recently, in support of the Joint Declaration on Women and Trade.

This year's WTO Public Forum offered a prominence to digital trade. One of the conclusions that can be drawn from a number of panellists is that the digital transformation is already happening and will be affecting all aspects of our economies, our lives. Canada believes that the WTO has an important role to play in promoting open, transparent, non-discriminatory and predictable regulatory environments in facilitating electronic commerce. We welcome the progress made and encourage all participating Members to continue engaging substantively in the exploratory discussions of the Joint Statement Initiative on e-commerce. We also think that we need to transition to a more concrete phase, while maintaining and broadening the participation. Canada also welcomes constructive discussions under the WTO Work Programme on Electronic Commerce.

Finally, Canada remains very concerned with the impasse we have reached in the appointment of the Appellate Body members. The dispute settlement system remains an integral part of the organization and Canada urges the United States to join a consensus to begin a process to fill vacant Appellate Body member positions.

2. South Africa (African Group)

I make this statement on behalf of the African Group following our internal consultations in preparation for this meeting. First, we thank the Director-General for his report on the state of affairs in our organization and we thank the Chairs of the Negotiating Groups for their updates.

We all recognise the considerable difficulties in making progress in the negotiations. Nonetheless, in our Group consultations, there was a strong call to continue to pursue outcomes on the core developmental issues in line with the Doha mandate notably in respect to agricultural domestic support, public stockholding and fisheries subsidies.

At our consultations, the Group was advised of some positive developments in respect to the engagements on cotton, and we support further advances on this file. The African Group also underscores its continued commitment to an outcome on the G-90 SDT proposals. As such, we do not see a likelihood of consensus on proposals calling for graduation, case-by-case application of

SDT or further differentiation. We understand that any developing country Member can, if it so wishes, self-declare on whether it wishes to take up SDT treatment.

The Group took note of the recent papers on WTO reform. Our view, however, is that unless and until Members come to terms with the growing threat to the dispute settlement mechanism, not only existing rules but also any discussion of new WTO rules or reform will be redundant. It is more than illogical to be calling for new rules when existing rules are being circumvented and their enforcement undermined. The dispute settlement mechanism is the one key matter on which we need urgent engagement.

A few broad points emerged in our discussion on the papers calling for WTO reform. First, we note that these have no formal standing in the WTO and we are aware that discussions are being taken up in small groups and in the media but that most Members have not been engaged. In any case, given the far-reaching and sensitive implications of the proposals, our participation would require prior guidance from our political principals. Clearly, issues of consensus decision-making, plurilaterals, development, the role of the Secretariat, as well as new rules on IPR and subsidies are fundamental, affecting us all.

Second, it is inevitable that if discussions were to proceed, all Members' views and interests would need to be considered. I believe the Director-General made a similar point at the recent G20 meeting when he indicated that reform proposals cannot be in one direction. We should therefore anticipate that this discussion, if it moves ahead, will be informal and will not be straightforward. The African Group will not support any dilution of our core developmental negotiating mandates and objectives.

Third, there was a strong view in the African Group that any discussion on reform be preceded by a balanced and comprehensive assessment of the challenges facing the WTO. In this context, our Members noted the need to address the 'developmental deficit' in the WTO, particularly in respect of many Uruguay Round outcomes and provisions, as well as the challenge of inadequate inclusivity and inequities that have fuelled the backlash against trade and trade agreements.

As a footnote, we did not consider the recently released IGO Report by the WTO Secretariat, World Bank and IMF. Suffice to say that the Secretariat's stature is only secured when it maintains its international character and stands apart from the partisan positions of Members.

Africa remains marginal in international trade, and overly dependent on low value commodity exports and high value imports. We will insist that any reform in the WTO must support, not undermine, Africa's industrialisation and integration efforts.

In sum, if WTO reform is to proceed it will have to be directed at enhancing inclusivity both in terms of participation and in equitably sharing any gains from trade. Reform would have to be pro-development.

3. Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

We appreciate the Director-General's report and those presented by the Chairpersons of the Negotiating Groups.

We also appreciate the efforts made by the Chairpersons of the Rules Negotiating Group and the Committee on Agriculture in Special Session and the methodologies used, which, in our view, have been very useful in order to better understand the positions of Members in both negotiating areas and with which our country is committed. A sign of this commitment is our active participation in the "incubator groups" in fisheries subsidies.

We regret that we have not seen any progress in the area of trade and development, which, in our view, should be the central axis of our deliberations.

In this regard, we invite you to carefully analyse the Report on Trade and Development 2018 recently published by UNCTAD entitled "Power, Platforms and the Free Trade Delusion". It argues that trade has not served to promote widespread structural change in developing countries and has rather contributed to increasing inequality throughout the world. This report shows that economic power has been concentrated in a smaller number of large international companies,

which limits the potential of developing countries to benefit from their participation in the international trading system, as well as new technologies.

In this regard, we would like to quote the affirmation contained in the aforementioned report that it "effectively requires recognising that many of the rules adopted to promote "free trade" have failed to move the system in a more inclusive, participatory and development-friendly direction".

The problem, the report concludes, is not with trade as such but with how it is managed. Easy talk of a win-win world all too often ignores the general conditions required for broadly shared benefits and denies the realities of today's winner-takes-most world.

Faced with this reality, we need to remember that the Development Agenda remains a pending issue of this organization and therefore should be the basis of our future work.

Another issue that we also identify as a high priority is that related to the situation of the Appellate Body. Our delegation, together with a significant number of Members, co-sponsor a proposal that seeks to overcome the serious situation in which the Appellate Body finds itself and that endangers not only the organization's dispute settlement system, but also the multilateral trading system itself. We reiterate that the purpose of this proposal is to initiate, without further delay, the process of selection of vacancies for members of the Appellate Body, circulated in document WT/DSB/W/609/Rev.5, which is opposed by only one Member.

At the last meeting of the General Council, held on the eve of the summer break, my delegation was indicated as responsible for not agreeing to the regional consensus to fill the vacancy in the Chairmanship of the Committee on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures corresponding to GRULAC.

In this regard, we would like to reiterate that Venezuela deplores that countries that are part of the self-proclaimed "Lima Group" have adopted, on 8 August 2017, the "(...) decision not to support any Venezuelan candidacy in regional and international mechanisms and organizations".

It is in this context and for elementary reasons of reciprocity that our country at first did not offer its endorsement to the aforementioned candidacy. However, diplomacy took effect and the dialogue and understanding paid off.

Consequently, I am pleased to report that our country has decided not to oppose the aforementioned candidacy, reciprocally to a similar gesture of certain countries in the region with the candidacy of Venezuela to the Vice Presidency of the Trade and Development Board of UNCTAD.

We recognise that the candidate proposed by Costa Rica has extensive diplomatic experience and, with confidence, will successfully undertake this important responsibility.

Beyond the political differences – or of any other kind – that may exist in our region, Venezuela will always maintain a constructive spirit, so that the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean have a clear and strong voice in the multilateral forums, and contribute collectively to the forging of an egalitarian and equitable world.

At the last meeting of the General Council, our country was designated as an inactive member due to the delay in the payment commitments of the contributions.

In this regard, we would like to reiterate the denunciation made by our Head of Delegation at the Ministerial Conference of Buenos Aires, about the international economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed on our country by several Members of this organization. This unilateral and arbitrary blockade has brought as a consequence the closing of operations of traditional correspondent accounts with those that previously had been working and the discretionary operation by many others, which translate into serious difficulties encountered by our country in accessing its own income in foreign currency. This, in turn, also results in the difficulty of access to food, medicines, resources for productive development and payments of international commitments. These illegitimate coercive and unilateral sanctions against Venezuela violate International Law.

From the Bretton Woods Agreement, through the incorporation into the GATT and now the WTO, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, despite its critical and firm stances on world trade relations, which give preference to goods rather than to sustainable development, has always been diligent in meeting its obligations under the rules of this organization. However, the meeting that brings us together today does not, unfortunately, have a mechanism for penalising Members which adopt unilateral coercive measures that block the economic and social development of a sovereign country, as well as the proper honouring of all its international commitments.

To deal with this situation, the National Executive has launched a set of monetary, fiscal, tax, financial, commercial and social measures designed to revalue the national economy and to deal with the economic war. In trade matters, the decision to eliminate tariffs for agricultural inputs and capital goods stands out. I am also pleased to report that Venezuela is entering a new phase in which our national currency is backed by El Petro cryptocurrency which is based on Venezuelan oil. Despite the enormous efforts of some Members of this organization to break Venezuela's will, we are determined to move forward with dignity.

I would like to conclude by reiterating the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela's commitment to the multilateral trading system as the most appropriate way to correct, in a concerted manner, the existing imbalances in world markets, so that trade can really be an instrument of development for all our people. It is in that sense that we are willing to continue to work tirelessly and constructively.

4. Norway

We thank the Director-General for his report and the Chairs of the Negotiating Groups for their updates.

A rules-based multilateral trading system is fundamental to ensure that trade flows as smoothly, predictably and freely as possible. Norway strongly believes that it is in the long-term interest of all Members to protect and safeguard this system.

This does not mean that the system is perfect. The current system – with its strengths and weaknesses – is the result of more than 70 years of give and take between Members. It is the result of our collective successes – and failures. The system is our joint product, and it is our joint responsibility to improve what needs to be improved. The best way to protect the system is to improve it.

The most immediate threat to the rules-based trading system is the lack of respect for the rules. Norway's concerns about the damaging effects of increased protectionism, unilateral measures and escalating trade tensions are no less today than before the summer break. We urge all Members to respect their WTO rights and obligations also when they experience challenges, which in the short term may make it tempting to move into grey areas.

Secondly, the sharp end of the rules-based system is being undermined by the inability to fill the empty seats of the Appellate Body. Norway calls on all Members to agree without further delay to resolve this unacceptable situation.

Thirdly, Norway agrees that the rulebook needs to be updated. Members have different priorities in this regard. Some Members point to unfinished business, some underline ongoing processes, and some highlight new issues that are seen as the root cause of the present trade tensions. Addressing the various concerns of Members regarding gaps in the rule book is key to ensuring the continued relevance of the WTO.

We know that filling the gaps in the rulebook is extremely difficult. Our reflex will always be to seek multilateral solutions. If that is not possible in the short-term, Norway is prepared to explore alternative and more flexible approaches to obtain negotiated results.

We also need to give the development dimension sufficient weight and visibility. The dialogue started at MC11 needs to be reinforced in order to bridge the gap between Members' different perspectives on trade and development. We need to find a better approach, an approach that takes the different abilities of Members to contribute within each area of the negotiations into

account. Without a different approach, I am afraid that it will be very difficult to reach multilateral agreement on filling the gaps of the rulebook.

Regarding ongoing processes, we would like to highlight the negotiations on fisheries subsidies to implement SDG 14.6. Norway thanks the Chair of the Negotiating Group on Rules for his innovative guidance to engage Members in brainstorming in four so-called incubator groups to look for new ideas and approaches.

Different Members in a variety of configurations have started discussions on modernization of the WTO. This is timely and necessary, and Norway is grateful to Members such as Canada for having initiated such discussions. Key to success will be transparency, inclusiveness and taking the interests and priorities of all Members into account.

Status quo is not an option. In order to safeguard and strengthen the WTO, all Members need to demonstrate political will to make changes. Norway is ready to do its part.

5. Malawi (ACP)

Malawi takes the floor on behalf of the ACP Group. My remarks today will also foreshadow messages we expect from ACP Trade Ministers who will be convening in Brussels next week.

Let me start by thanking the Director-General for his latest report and his persistent efforts to advance the agenda of the WTO. We also wish to thank the Chairs of the Negotiating Groups for their work and leadership on the areas under their responsibility.

The ACP Group has actively participated in the Agriculture, Fisheries, CTS SS and CTD SS Negotiating Groups. This should be no surprise since as we have said in the July TNC meeting that our membership consists of predominantly LDCs and small and vulnerable States comprising 62 of the 164 Members of the WTO with other Members still in their process of accession. We have invested a lot in this institution even as we had struggled with the necessary policy flexibility and adequate capacity building to support our efforts in implementing WTO Agreements including the more recent Agreement on Trade Facilitation.

The ACP Group continues to work within the G-90 to consider our own approaches and priorities on SDT proposals and ensure that it remains a vital part of the negotiations. These proposals are unfinished business. They are not new negotiations but rather outstanding negotiations based on G-90 developing country and LDC proposals. The CTD SS should thus consider the G-90 SDT proposals first before any consideration of which developing country Members would be able to utilise the provision. The overarching question that remains is about the political will.

In Agriculture, while many ideas and proposals have been submitted and the ACP proposals remain on the table, we wonder if differences are narrowing and whether the concerns of the poorest and weaker countries with offensive and defensive interests in Agriculture would be prioritised. Certainly, Members must take steps to eliminate trade-distorting domestic supports that maintain gross imbalances including AMS entitlements, Cotton, and take decisions on food security and other areas of most importance to weaker developing countries and LDCs which deserves priority attention.

On Fisheries, we expect to meet the instruction of Ministers last year to conclude by the end of next year. However, we are concerned about the ideas or methods that will place the sovereign rights of our coastal island nations in peril while aiming to prohibit subsidies that contributes to depletion of our resources hence downgrading the objectives of SDG 14.6 which also highlights special and differential treatment that allows our food security and the sustainable development of our fisheries industries. We cannot support subsidies disciplines that make difficult for us to support our fisheries communities. We continue to engage with Members in the fisheries subsidies negotiations. However, we must have assurances that the momentum in the negotiations led by the ACP Group in the last few years does not result in setting out disproportionate obligations compared to the responsibility of subsidies to the behaviour of certain large industrial fishing nations that are depleting the fisheries sources in our exclusive economic zones and in the high seas in the absence of adequate stock management systems.

Regarding services market access, we have recently participated in the consultations held by the Chair of the CTS SS. We reiterate that the existing GATS structure in the mandate provide the framework for any Member to put forward their proposals or to pursue their interest in the CTS SS and the relevant services bodies. Most of our members comprise very small delegations and as such there is no need to support the introduction of a new layer or structure for discussions. We had stated at July this year that it was not the ACP Group that decided to take this in negotiations outside of the WTO. Many of our members have always expected balance throughout DDA negotiations under the DDA. We certainly have reached that our interest in Services is consistent with the right to regulate and other flexibilities for developing countries and LDCs within the bottom up approach of the GATS.

Talks of reform in the corridors are giving off an air of unstable ground especially as they appear to leave our large Membership off the sidelines. We are concerned if any proposals are designed to uproot the important structures of this rule-based multilateral trading system institution. As we redouble our efforts in the negotiations before us, we also wonder if such efforts will be undermined by the state of peril before us concerning the Appellate Body or the proposals proposing changes through the structures. At this juncture, the ACP Group puts priority support in the unblocking of the selection of AB Members. Without which, the system will not function therefore placing the merits of negotiating new rules into question. Developing countries including the ACP Group have been in the past tabled proposals on the reform of the WTO Dispute Settlement System by some of the Members now calling for reform blocked these proposals. Even though our concerns on the DSU will remain not addressed, we do not think blocking the whole system is the way to handle things. This is a negotiating forum. In that light, proposals from delegations such as Honduras and others are welcome. The ACP Group is considering its own interest in how we may participate moving forward. We therefore call upon your guidance during this critical and fragile phase in order to maintain a transparent, representative and inclusive discussion in the WTO. Any proposals for WTO reform must clearly set out reasons why this is considered necessary – how the reform takes into account the interests of the WTO Members especially developing countries including the ACP Group and how the reform will contribute towards the discharge of the DDA and other Ministerial Mandates. Inclusivity, transparency and the SDT for developing countries and LDCs are cardinal principles enshrined in the decision that must be adhered to.

6. United States

We thank the Director-General for his update. Today, I will limit my comments to a few broad areas of our work.

First, and as the Director-General emphasised in his remarks, we are hearing a great deal these days about reforming the WTO in order to increase its effectiveness and its relevance.

This is encouraging. In the relatively limited number of months since Ambassador Lighthizer addressed the need for reform in Buenos Aires, we have seen a considerable broadening of the recognition that this topic, in its many different components, requires our focused attention. The United States welcomes this more open and robust engagement on institutional issues.

While advancing a reform agenda will require time and some patience, we must avoid falling into the trap of letting talk and discussion become substitutes for concrete action.

As the reform dialogue unfolds, I would briefly recall the key areas of focus for the United States:

- First and foremost, this Membership must address the unanticipated challenges presented by non-market economies that also fail to respect basic principles such as non-discrimination, market access, reciprocity, fairness, and transparency. During our July General Council meeting, the United States welcomed the engagement on this critical question, and we will continue to explore constructive ways of drawing additional attention to it. As far as the United States is concerned, adequately responding to the challenges of non-market economies is nothing less than an existential matter for this institution.
- Next, we must redouble our efforts to bring greater accountability and improved performance to the organization's array of notification obligations. The United States, as the lead proponent for meaningful progress in this area, is not seeking punitive solutions

for their own sake. But if we really accept that there should be no consequences for wilful and repeated disregard of our most basic rules, we will not get very far, and the future of our negotiating functions and ongoing implementation work will be grim.

- We also need to ensure the day-to-day work of the WTO is taken care of. This means being good stewards of the regular committees that oversee implementation of the WTO Agreements. Some Members, including the United States, are looking at ways to improve the functioning of these bodies. But first and foremost, Members need to substantively participate in these meetings. We've noticed lately that the United States is one of the few Members substantively participating in the Committee on Regional Trade Agreements, the Working Party on State Trading Enterprises, the Import Licensing Committee, and a host of Accession Working Parties. Others need to substantively contribute.
- We must re-think our treatment of development in order to reflect current realities. We appreciate the leadership that one Member has already demonstrated, recently, in showing that impressive progress in development can bring a willingness to participate more fully in WTO negotiations. We hope for more such indications of leadership, and for creative thinking surrounding this difficult but crucial question.
- We must also seek new understandings to enable the pursuit of less-than-fully-multilateral negotiations while preserving the multilateral characteristics of the WTO.
- And of course we remain deeply concerned that the operation of WTO dispute settlement has gone far beyond the results negotiated as part of the Uruguay Round.

Again, the United States acknowledges that these are all thorny challenges. But the fact that a discussion about them is beginning to happen is positive.

Turning to a more specific and time-sensitive issue, I would like to say a brief word about our negotiations on fisheries subsidies.

We appreciate the efforts of the Chair of the Rules Negotiating Group, Ambassador Roberto Zapata, and thank him for the report he provided this morning. We are encouraged to have observed some useful brainstorming in the context of the procedural innovations tested in the most recent cluster of meetings.

Still, we clearly have much work to do if we are to arrive at outcomes that effectively respond to the challenges surrounding the global depletion of fish stocks. The United States will continue to participate actively and constructively in this effort. In doing so, other Members can expect us to continually remind them of the need to keep things as simple as possible, and of the reality that an agreement riddled with holes and exceptions will fail to serve its purpose and will ultimately be an embarrassment for this organization.

Other Members can also expect continued active engagement from this delegation in our discussions on agriculture, digital trade, and regular committee work. I am proud of the leadership the United States is bringing to some of the WTO's often-overlooked corners, such as the Triennial TBT review, the effort to ensure effective implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement, and work to increase the Membership through accessions. This workmanlike engagement across the range of our activities will continue to be a priority for the United States.

I thank the Chairman and appreciate today's chance to hear the views of all Members taking the floor.

7. Ghana

At the outset, my delegation would like to thank the Director-General and the Chairs of the various Negotiating Groups for the clear and succinct reports. I would also like to commend his unwavering fortitude in supporting Members' resolve to progressively pursue the work in Geneva despite the daunting challenges the multilateral trading system is confronted with today.

This effort and determination, together with those of all Members who participate actively and constructively in the negotiations, are critical if we are to have a revitalised, effective, reliable and

legitimate multilateral system that can stand against unbridled unilateralism and protectionism tendencies by some Members today.

Developing, least-developed countries, as well as other small and vulnerable economies are worried over the likely spill-over effects of these trade tensions.

The current escalation of trade tensions, which are unprecedented, should remind us of the value of the rule-based trading system, and how well it has served the globe since the GATT was established.

We must all acknowledge the fact that the WTO is invaluable in terms of global economic stability, and that the prosperity of every Member's economy depends on its sustainability and effectiveness. Any flagrant resort to unilateralism and protectionism as the first option would therefore be inconsistent with the foundation of the GATT and the WTO rules.

We must therefore put our shoulders to the wheel to find workable solutions to the challenges the WTO is currently facing.

Agriculture

Ghana commends the current work and momentum brought to bear on the discussions going on in the various meetings of the Committee on Agriculture in Special Session.

My delegation reiterates the importance it attaches to the agricultural sector in the provision of food security, poverty alleviation, enhanced living standards and livelihood empowerment of our people, and increased exports.

However, Agricultural trade still requires fundamental reforms in the area of correcting the Overall Trade Distorting Subsidies currently prevailing, as well as the elimination of harmful subsidies to ensure a fair global agricultural trading system.

A permanent solution to Public Stockholding for food security purposes would also be desirable.

On Cotton, we support the efforts of the Cotton 4 to create a level playing field through the elimination of harmful subsidies in the sector.

Regarding Fisheries Subsidies, Ghana once again reiterates her preference for the elimination of harmful subsidies that contribute to overcapacity and overfishing, as well as the tackling of the problem of IUU in the fisheries sector.

Development

Development is a critical issue for a large majority of the Membership of the WTO, particularly, developing and least-developed Members. Therefore, the provisions of Special and Differential Treatment for all developing countries and LDCs which are an integral part of WTO agreements need to be carefully preserved and protected in future agreements.

In line with Africa's "Agenda 2063: The Africa we want", which provides the framework for addressing Africa's specific challenges and the realisation of the African dream, as a prosperous continent based on accelerated, inclusive economic growth and development, Ghana will count on outcomes on Special and Differential Treatment that create policy space for its industrial policies to transform the structure of its economy.

Ghana is therefore implementing a ten point industrial transformation agenda to transform its economy into a more robust and modern one, to create decent jobs, increase incomes, and reduce poverty and thereby improve the living standards of its citizens.

E-Commerce

With regard to e-commerce, Ghana supports the strengthening of the 1998 Work Programme, in line with the African Group's position and the Ministerial directive in Buenos Aires, and welcome

the deepening of discussions and engagement under the Work Programme to understand the complex issues surrounding the debate on E-Commerce.

Ghana notes that while E-Commerce can bring transformational changes and opportunities in trade and investment, it also poses significant infrastructure, regulatory, and security challenges – the huge digital divide particularly, for developing countries like ours – a situation likely to prevent us from reaping the full benefits of the opportunities that e-commerce offers.

The WTO needs to address these challenges urgently and on priority basis, to prevent the creation of further asymmetries, disruption and widening of the digital gap between developed countries on one hand and developing countries and LDCs on the other.

Ghana therefore urges Members to reinvigorate work on the E-Commerce Work Programme with a view to building a foundation for our future work.

WTO Modernization/Reform

On WTO Reform, Ghana supports the view that there should be a deeper assessment of what is wrong before attempting to introduce any sort of reforms. In that regard, discussions aimed at ensuring that WTO rules remain relevant, inclusive, and developmental and also reflect the reality of the modern global trading environment would have Ghana's support.

Dispute Settlement Body

The situation in the Appellate Body, the result of the current impasse in filling up of vacancies, is now critical. If not resolved with a sense of urgency, my delegation believes that the Appellate Body will soon become dysfunctional and the dispute settlement mechanism, considered to be the "Jewel in the Crown", would be rendered redundant and ineffective.

While Ghana takes note of some Members' position on the need for reforming the Dispute Settlement System, this should not become the reason for paralyzing the Appellate Body.

We strongly reiterate the need to de-link the filling up of vacancies in the Appellate Body, from the purported need for reforms in the Dispute Settlement System.

To conclude, my delegation associates itself with the statements made by the African Group and the ACP Group.

8. Mexico

On behalf of my delegation, I would like to begin by thanking the Director General for his assessment of the current status of the work of this organization. We also thank the Chairs of the negotiating groups for their work and their respective reports.

We agree with the Director-General that our organization is at a critical juncture which, in our opinion, is due, among other things, to the following factors:

The first and most consequential of these factors is the situation faced by the Appellate Body, which now has only three of its seven members, and which therefore finds itself in an extremely fragile position. These are unprecedented circumstances, which, only a few months ago were utterly inconceivable, but which now threaten to become the norm. It is important for us to ask to what extent a system can continue to function and guarantee its users that its rules are being enforced effectively, when it is uncertain whether we will be able to exercise our legitimate right to file an appeal with the Appellate Body in order to settle our disputes.

The second factor is the trade escalation threat that is now becoming a reality. It seems that we have failed to learn from our past mistakes, and that we have forgotten a dark episode in the history of trade, which occurred almost a century ago, and which involved indiscriminate tariff hikes and retaliatory measures. It caused global trade to decline substantially in the 1930s, which had knock on effects.

It could be said that the situation today is different, as we now have a framework of multilaterally agreed rules. However, it appears that some of these rules are not being observed, or are being interpreted freely. This is placing strain on the multilateral trading system, which is likely to cause contractions and uncertainty in future trade flows, and as a result, may have an impact not only on the countries involved, but also on the world economy.

The third factor is the need for our organization to demonstrate sensitivity and respond to the demands of the current circumstances. It is therefore important to continue to make progress on issues such as fisheries subsidies, to engage in dialogue in joint initiatives, and to find creative ways to move forward with agricultural negotiations, among other matters.

In light of the above, it is necessary for us to look inwards and determine what we are doing right and what has given this organization its strength, in order to protect it, above all, from all situations. We also need to ascertain what is not working and what may need to be changed.

As part of this analysis, we need to identify the discussions on issues that may help to build political will, and create a suitable atmosphere in Geneva. In this regard, it is important for us to set aside the views that have been repeated for so long, and conduct a serious evaluation in the light of a situation that is clearly not the same as the one experienced two decades ago.

We therefore welcome the various discussions that are currently being held with the aim of introducing new ideas into the multilateral framework to address issues that have been raised for some time, such as the initiative recently introduced by Canada on exploring ways to modernise our organization.

At the same time, it is important to ensure that information flows between these discussions and broader configurations, in order to foster transparency and build trust among Members. This sharing of information will help us to identify collective solutions that will contribute to the development of assessments to distinguish between urgent and long-range issues.

It is important to rebuild trust in the system and more importantly, among trading partners, as we are certain that dialogue and negotiation are the only ways to ensure that this organization remains relevant and meets the requirements of the 21st century.

9. Qatar

We would like to first thank the Director-General and Negotiating Group Chairs for their respective reports on how things stand in the WTO, both in the negotiating context and in the current challenges facing the multilateral trading system. Qatar, as a small State which depends very much on the functioning of the multilateral trading system, would like to reiterate its commitment to the system. The rules-based framework of the WTO is the best suited platform to discuss and resolve trade disputes. Unilateral trade measures threaten to undermine the gains made by the system and threaten global economic development.

Qatar supports some of the different efforts to reform and rebalance the system. After all, this is what the negotiating function has set out to do with the Doha Round. We are following different proposals with interest. However, this must not be at the expense of a functioning dispute settlement system. The current impasse in the Appellate Body brings us dangerously close to paralyzing the dispute settlement mechanism. We urge all sides to find solutions before this eventuality comes to fruition.

However, there has been positive activity in other areas.

On E-Commerce, we find it important to continue the work we have achieved thus far in the thematic seminars that are taking place since MC11. The landscape in which global trade is being conducted is changing drastically with the use of technology and digitalisation. We are of the view that there is a key developmental component on this especially with regard to MSMEs utilising e-commerce to export their goods and services. Multilateral disciplines are imperative to guide and regulate the increasing influence of e-commerce on international trade. We support the continuation of the exploratory work and welcome new proposals in the group.

On investment facilitation, it is essential for us to continue to provide investors with efficient and streamlined rules and procedures to minimise potential obstacles when investing or establishing a presence abroad. Outcomes on investment facilitation will bring benefits of investment to society through a sound policy framework that promotes and enables sustainable development and responsible business conduct. The WTO is the only international organization that deals with intergovernmental trade relations in the fields of investment and trade. In the FIFD Group, we have developing and developed Members promoting discussions and generating momentum on this issue. Qatar recently participated in the Astana High-Level Roundtable on Investment Facilitation in Kazakhstan where discussions focused on the Eurasian perspective on Investment Facilitation. We would like to extend our gratitude to the Government of Kazakhstan for hosting this event. We look forward for this group to continue to engage with purpose and build on our broad discussions in Astana and over the past year.

10. Brazil

Deciding on the right messages for today's meeting was not an easy task.

The unprecedented challenges faced by the WTO and the multilateral trading system continue to deepen.

Brazil believes that current WTO rules provide us with a crucial framework for our trade policies and with remedies against illegal and unfair trade practices. As the Director-General said today, the system may not be perfect, but it has real value.

Despite the lack of clarity on where we stand and about the nature of some of the challenges we face, constructive engagement across the board, leaving behind our comfort zones and embracing a more systemic perspective of our national interests, is more important than ever. For this reason, I will not mention specific negotiating issues today.

Since Buenos Aires, and more clearly since the OECD Ministerial Meeting in Paris in May, we have heard calls for a "WTO Reform".

Brazil is ready to engage in conversations on ways to improve the WTO.

From what we have seen so far, some topics being proposed for discussion would be extremely complex. But we appreciate that the proponents see the WTO as the locus to discuss trade rules.

This so-called reform agenda should be a balanced platform to address our challenges on a collective basis and with a development dimension. We should remember that frustrations with the multilateral trading system are not new, and they are certainly not limited to the so-called "level playing field" issues. In due time, Brazil will come forward with our own ideas.

In any case, WTO foundational principles, particularly the MFN principle and national treatment, should be upheld. And a WTO reform agenda must work for all. Pending issues cannot simply be left behind and replaced by a view that now other issues take precedence.

We should also be clear that reforming the WTO requires in the first place a commitment to preserve the system. We cannot reform, or improve, what has not been preserved. Members must refrain from further actions that would inflict still more damage to the rules-based multilateral trading system.

Needless to say, inclusiveness is an indispensable pre-condition for a reform process to be successful. This is another way of saying that a "WTO Reform" must work for all.

We welcome the discussion paper that has been circulated to the whole Membership by Canada.

We also appreciate the many positive elements in the EU document regarding the dispute settlement mechanism.

For Brazil, the most pressing challenge is the need to overcome the deadlock in the dispute settlement system. Without an effective enforcement body, rules – those we have, or new ones – lose much of their meaning.

Brazil remains ready to engage on ways to address the concerns of any Member regarding the dispute settlement system. But we continue to believe that the link between Appellate Body issues and the selection process is not helpful.

In the middle of so much uncertainty, at least one point is clear for Brazil: an honest commitment to the WTO, on the part of all Members, is the indispensable premise for joint endeavours in this organization.

11. Morocco

We thank the Director-General and the Chairs of the negotiating committees for their reports and summaries.

My delegation will focus on making general comments on the issue of WTO reform.

We remain committed to the basic principles of the WTO. In this regard, it is sufficient to recall the two fundamental notions on which the WTO was founded:

- international economic cooperation is the best means of preserving peace;
- international trade is the best way to increase global prosperity and is one of the most effective means of combatting poverty.

Accordingly, we welcome the commitment demonstrated by most delegations to upholding the core values and key principles of the multilateral system and therefore to promoting more inclusive, non-discriminatory, fair, transparent and open rules.

This commitment is, in fact, based on three principles:

- Inclusiveness at the WTO is synonymous with consensus. We fear that, by attempting to impose new rules while disregarding this principle, our multilateral trading system will lose its credibility and, especially, its attractiveness.
- Fairness is also a principle which is important to us and to which we are strongly committed. We therefore call on you to duly observe the principle of fairness in a meaningful way, be it in the reform envisaged, or regarding the agreement on fisheries subsidies that is under negotiation. In terms of the reform, the application of this principle enables all Members to participate in the development of trade rules, as Ambassador Xavier Carim underscored in his statement on behalf of the African Group.
- The third principle that we would like to mention is that of flexibility. Certain reports published recently insist on the importance of this principle, and we share this view. We need a form of flexibility that would steer us away from some of our attitudes that are sometimes too self-seeking. Active flexibility that would enable us to move towards the achievement of win-win solutions. Flexibility that would consolidate the foundations of our system and remedy the injustices for which developing countries have paid a heavy price, particularly in agriculture. It should also free up opportunities resulting from fundamental changes in the world economy, and allow for structural changes to be initiated gradually, once again by consensus, for the benefit of all Members.

12. Cuba

We thank the Director-General for his report, and have taken note of the updates from the chairs of the negotiating bodies. We endorse the statements made by Malawi on behalf of the ACP Group and by Indonesia on behalf of the G-33.

As we have done several times before in this body, we reiterate our determination to continue working towards full compliance with the Doha mandates, which were agreed by consensus. In order to do this, we must revive the work of the negotiating bodies, taking advantage of the technical expertise acquired through years of negotiation.

We all acknowledge that agriculture is an essential topic, and results that take account of food security in our countries should be a priority for all of us. We are open to an incremental approach

that focuses on the most distortionary domestic support in order to correct the inherent imbalances in the Agreement on Agriculture, with priority for cotton. We firmly repeat that countries that have not contributed to the distortions in world agricultural trade do not have to limit their current policy spaces, aimed at guaranteeing food security, rural development and poverty alleviation, all of which form part of our commitment to fulfil the 2030 Agenda's Sustainable Development Goals.

The negotiations on Special and Differential Treatment must be activated in accordance with their mandate, using the G-90 proposals as a basis, and must ensure that the principle of special and differential treatment – which forms an integral part of the multilateral agreements of this organization – is respected and is not subject to reinterpretation.

The development dimension must be tangibly reflected in any outcomes produced by the WTO. We are concerned by those who seek to impose a particular way of viewing development that fails to take account of the economic difficulties and realities faced by the developing countries.

The Negotiating Group on Rules is practically the only WTO body that shows evidence of an interest to achieve outcomes for the Twelfth Ministerial Conference based on the mandate adopted in Buenos Aires. The work on fisheries must continue to be conducted in transparent and inclusive formats that enable all Members to present their interests. The importance of this mandate and the peremptory deadline by which it is governed must not result in an increase in the existing asymmetries. Special and differential treatment for the developing countries must be the subject of substantive and effective provisions.

As regards electronic commerce and domestic regulation in services, we do not support the plurilateral approach which continues to proliferate without any proper consensus. The work being done on both of these topics must be guided by their multilateral mandates which were agreed by all Members. There is plenty of work still to be done in this broader configuration. The first half of the year has produced little or nothing in this respect.

We know that the challenges facing us today are enormous, but a multilateral organization, however complex its work, must focus on the mandates that have been agreed collectively.

At a time when unilateral trade measures prevail, we need to preserve a system more deeply rooted in multilateralism, dialogue and cooperation.

13. Turkey

We thank the Director-General for holding this meeting and sharing information on his activities and the current the state of play in the negotiations at the WTO.

The role of trade is quite important for global recovery and growth and we believe that the WTO should remain as the leading forum for global rules-based trading.

Multilateral trade negotiations are in a difficult conjuncture and unilateral actions and the emanating risks outside the rules-based system have become more visible.

We are now almost one year on after MC11 with not much progress on crucial topics. Although we do not expect to advance on all outstanding issues, the fact that the negotiating function of the WTO is not performing well in key areas is particularly alarming.

We are still far behind on our commitments mandated in Ministerial Decisions. On top of that, we see neither a lively discussion on how to keep up our existing work nor an active engagement to reinvigorate the current negotiations in Agriculture, NAMA or Services.

Almost all Members are frustrated with the lack of outcome in multilateral negotiations. These frustrations may lead certain Members to introduce alternative agendas.

We agree with the fact that the WTO and the multilateral negotiations should adapt to current realities as well as the need to update ourselves to meet the rising challenges in global trade.

However, this should not further complicate the existing negotiating agenda, widen the gaps between the Members and aggravate the longstanding problems.

New agenda items should not be a replacement for our current work programme or the unfinished work.

We should embrace the different realities to better understand them and to develop tailor-made solutions for genuine problems we face in global trade. And this approach requires that the development dimension must still be the common thread that binds all the outcomes together.

Agriculture is one of the most sensitive and most critical areas in the negotiations. Almost all Members agree that the existing rules on agriculture trade need reform in one way or another, although with different perspectives.

However, a common understanding of the current problems in world agriculture trade is lacking.

We need to develop innovative, realistic and effective modalities to reform the current rules of the agriculture trade, in domestic support, market access and export competition. For this, we should define the common problems through different perspectives, understand the different realities among the Members, and recognise developing Members' rural development challenges.

On Fisheries Subsidies, Turkey continues to see these negotiations as one of the most important topics on our current agenda. We hope that the incubator group process will bring some new momentum to our work, and Members will shift gears into a more constructive mode. It is true that Members have not shown even an incremental progress to bridge the differences after Buenos Aires. Therefore, we do not have the luxury of time any more as we have to show our best efforts to deliver a meaningful and credible outcome on fisheries by the end of 2019.

On the current impasse in the selection process of Appellate Body members, let me once again underline our grave concern about the current situation. We are now down to three members. If we cannot solve the problem until 2019, there is the big risk of having no Appellate Body and losing the whole dispute settlement mechanism in the multilateral context. Therefore, we believe it is vital to enter solid discussions to overcome this crisis. Considering the urgency of the matter, any proposal to address the concerns on the working procedures of the Appellate Body should be discussed separately and should not prevent the Appellate Body to fully perform its functions.

Lastly, we welcome the work in the Informal Working Group on MSMEs and e-commerce and share the view that the discussions on those platforms, done in an inclusive and transparent manner, will help solidify the global architect of trade.

14. Colombia (Structured Discussions on Investment Facilitation for Development)

In keeping with the transparent and inclusive nature of the Joint Initiative on Investment Facilitation for Development – I wish to inform all Members about the latest developments in the structured discussions since my last report at the HODs meeting of 24 July.

Our most recent meeting, held on 21 September, focused on the third topic as identified in the Joint Ministerial Statement – namely the elements of an Investment Facilitation Framework that would: "enhance international cooperation, information sharing, the exchange of best practices, and relations with relevant stakeholders, including dispute prevention".

The meeting was well attended. Members from different regions and at different levels of development, as well as both signatories and non-signatories of the Joint Initiative, engaged constructively, and shared their experiences with the implementation of investment facilitation measures.

These discussions made it clear that many, if not all, participating Members are engaged in reforms to improve the business environment and to attract FDI. Many have already undertaken wide-ranging investment facilitation measures: domestically, for example by setting up online portals to ensure transparency in investment-related procedures, or designating a focal point to handle investors' complaints; as well as bilaterally and regionally, by including provisions on investment facilitation in their RTAs.

The September meeting followed our usual working methodology, namely: a detailed background Non-Paper as well as guiding questions shared in advance of the meeting – which were complemented by presentations made by experts. This time round by the ITC, the OECD, UNCTAD, and the WTO Secretariat.

As I already reported to you in July, participating Members agreed to entrust me with the compilation of a "Checklist of Issues raised by Members" under my responsibility as Coordinator. The checklist reflects possible elements of a framework for facilitating foreign investments raised by Members in the discussions. It doesn't provide a detailed explanation of the issues – rather, it simply organises them in a coherent manner. It is a 'living document' that continues to be updated after each meeting in light of Members' inputs.

Examples of elements most commonly mentioned by Members at the September meeting included: providing for regular exchanges of information and best-practices on investment facilitation measures among Members; and enhancing international cooperation for investment facilitation, notably through cooperation mechanisms between Members' investment authorities.

Based on the meetings held thus far, the elements in the Checklist are organised around four broad topics:

1. Elements aimed at improving the transparency and predictability of investment measures;
2. Elements aimed at streamlining and speeding up administrative procedures and requirements;
3. Elements aimed at fostering international cooperation, information sharing, the exchange of best practices, as well as relations with relevant stakeholders, including dispute prevention; and,
4. Cross-cutting issues such as, notably, the development dimension.

An informal summary of the September meeting and the latest update of the "Checklist of Issues" will be circulated under my responsibility shortly.

Also, let me remind delegations that relevant documents pertaining to the Structured Discussions are available online – on the Members' area of the WTO website.

Now please let me take this opportunity to share with you the information about our next meeting on 26 October, which is Friday next week. It will focus on a key cross-cutting theme, and core objective identified in the Joint Ministerial Statement: namely "facilitating greater developing and least-developed Members' participation in global investment flows". The meeting is taking place back-to-back with UNCTAD's World Investment Forum, which many of your high-level representatives and investment promotion executives will attend. I encourage them to also attend our meeting in the WTO.

To conclude, let me reaffirm my commitment, as the Coordinator, to keep this process open-ended, transparent and inclusive – and to engage with all Members to better understand your views and possible concerns. Thus, I wish to stress my availability to meet with each one of you – and extend my invitation to all delegations to get involved in the Structured Discussions.

15. Colombia

Colombia wishes to reiterate the importance of defending the rules based multilateral trading system. We are faced with a situation which poses challenges and difficulties for the delicate balance of the institutional architecture of world trade. In such times, we must leave behind extreme positions and think about the higher objectives that the system represents: economic stability, progress and peace. We invite you to make decisions with a view to the long term.

In recent years, it has become clear that improvements and adjustments need to be made in order to ensure the proper functioning of the organization. This also means that we have to work to provide new rules that respond to the changes, challenges and new global realities that we are

facing. This is a Member driven organization, and therefore, it is our task to protect and strengthen the system as we seek to bring it up to date.

Colombia is convinced of the need to address these challenges through a frank and constructive dialogue that ensures the continuity and steady improvement of the WTO as a key global public good. We are therefore willing to participate actively in the discussions on initiatives and proposals to strengthen the organization, taking into account that such discussions must represent the diverse interests of all Members, including the priority that must be given to resolving the current deadlock in the Appellate Body.

16. New Zealand

I would like to thank the Chairman for his report on his activities as Director-General and the Negotiating Chairs for their updates.

Firstly, in terms of the core negotiation agenda:

On Fisheries Subsidies, we are now only 14 months away from the 2019 deadline given to us by Ministers to conclude negotiations (consistent with implementing SDG 14.6). We were pleased to see that the first set of Incubator Groups was a constructive exercise. From our perspective, the Incubator Groups did their job in engaging frankly and in generating creative ideas. A key challenge however, as we look to take ideas forward, is ensuring that these are consistent with what Leaders and Ministers have told us to do. For example, any outcome that doesn't lead to a prohibition on subsidies contributing to IUU fishing, and certain harmful subsidies that contribute to overfishing and overcapacity will simply not achieve the mandate. I was reassured to hear our Chair report that he is looking to keep the Negotiating Group on track to deliver the required outcome in 2019.

On Agriculture, the WTO is the only organisation that can credibly do something about reducing the US\$620bn in subsidies and other distortions to global trade in agriculture. The playing field in agriculture is extremely bumpy. Again, I was encouraged to hear our Negotiating Group Chair envisages a possible way forward in this important discussion. We must look at the global picture, and find ways of reducing trade distorting support.

Secondly, as the global economy has evolved, we need to demonstrate the ability of this organization to respond to contemporary issues and challenges. The Joint Initiatives are important in this regard. As others have remarked this morning, the E-Commerce Joint Initiative process in particular is of key interest to business as was evident at the Public Forum. New Zealand is participating actively in support of this process moving to the next step. Also notable at the Forum was the strong interest in sustainability issues.

Thirdly, the systemic challenges facing the organization have been well highlighted for many months.

The Appellate Body situation is now truly at an impasse given we are now down to only three members. There is zero cushioning which means that we could see some appeals completely grounded at any point from now on, not merely at a certain point in 2019. We have long referred to this as an "impending" issue. Well now it is here and we need to discuss how to move forward to resolve it.

More broadly, there are now several WTO modernization discussions in play, with the objective of improving the system. This is to be welcomed. I have emphasised before how critical the rules-based multilateral trading system is for a small Member such as New Zealand. We are engaged in the Canadian initiative, which Canada spoke to this morning. We also take a close interest in other ideas and proposals which are being worked on by some Members, and look forward to engaging on those in due course.

Others have talked this morning about the 'keys to success' and there are many. But ultimately, if we are to be successful, there is no substitute for leadership and engagement – or as Mexico put it 'political will' – including from the large Members. The stakes are high. As the Director-General described, we are beginning to see the negative impacts from the current trade tensions. When the IMF and World Bank join with the WTO Director-General to warn of the consequences for the

global economy from developments in the trading system, we all need to pay attention. We have a collective responsibility to try to ensure those threatened consequences do not actually happen.

17. China

First of all, I would like to thank the Director-General for his briefing, and the Chairs of Negotiating Groups for their respective reports.

Though we had a Summer break, the trade tension has not come to a break yet, with the United States initiating further trade protectionist measures, including the imposition of 10% tariffs to \$200 billion worth of Chinese products in September.

I want to quote the words used by Mr. Rufus Yerxa, President of the US National Foreign Trade Council, in the Public Forum early this month: "I represent US-based multinational companies that are engaged in global commerce. Once I told a trade colleague in the US Administration that, the thought that we are going to address problems of 21st century economy, by trying to develop policies to protect 20th century industries, using a 19th century tool like tariffs, in pursuit of 17th century mercantilism, is going to lead to just an incredible increase of, not only the tremendous uncertainty to business, but the great tensions around the world."

It is very true.

By raising tariffs and erecting trade barriers, the United States is hurting its own companies, Chinese companies, companies of other countries, and the global industry as a whole.

Those measures have jeopardised the normal flows of trade and resources allocation across the world, disrupted the global value chain and the international division of labour, and upset market expectations and certainties. And because of the interconnections among countries through trade and economic links, they will also produce extensive negative spill-overs, and reduce the efficiency of the global economy.

Coming specifically to our organization, we regret to see that, as the US continues to block the appointment process, only 3 Members of the Appellate Body are left. The entire dispute settlement system is in severe crisis.

Ever since August last year, more than 100 WTO Members voiced serious concerns by means of joint proposals, joint statements or interventions at various occasions. Recently, the EU, Canada and Honduras put forward some concrete suggestions as well.

China appreciates those efforts, and calls upon WTO Members to earnestly abide by the DSU provision that "vacancies shall be filled as they arise", to initiate the selection process as soon as possible.

On Fisheries Subsidies, the form of "incubator-group discussion" is creative. We think this is a bottom-up approach as Members' interests and concerns could be covered and discussed in the process.

Just to highlight that transparency and neutrality are important. Information should be timely, fully and inclusively shared in the discussion. Particularly, developing countries' concerns should be duly taken into account.

On Agriculture, China echoes the statement to be made by Indonesia on behalf of the G-33. As the top priority, China firmly believes that Members should make concerted effort to reach a permanent solution on public stockholding for food security purposes and a special safeguard mechanism for developing Members as mandated. For domestic support, the reform must be in the right direction and the AMS of developed Members must be removed first in order to address the asymmetry and unfairness in agriculture trade rules.

On e-commerce and investment facilitation for development, as always, China supports to have the informal discussion under the multilateral framework, focusing on how to address the concrete concerns and practical difficulties of developing countries.

I would like to thank Ambassador Gonzalez for his introduction on the structured discussion of investment facilitation for development, and welcome broader participation of WTO Members in this process.

There are also many activities focusing on this important topic taken place in the past two months, including the successful Astana High Level Forum hosted by Kazakhstan. In those events, the role of investment facilitation measures in helping attract and retain FDI, fostering development, modernization and growth, were highly recognised. Interests and support for the ongoing efforts in the WTO regarding investment facilitation for development have been brought to a new level.

As announced by Ambassador Gonzalez, later this month, we will discuss how to facilitate greater developing and least-developed Members' participation in global investment flows. As the coordinator of FIFD, China sincerely hopes to see more Members, especially the developing ones, to participate in the discussions.

Last but not least, there are many informal discussions on the "WTO reform" in and outside Geneva.

Yes, indeed, the WTO is not perfect.

Hence, China supports necessary improvement of the organization and the multilateral trading system to keep pace with the times especially when its authority and effectiveness are being challenged and as it now faces an existential crisis.

I agree with what the Director-General just said that the purpose of the reform is to fix the specific problems, and make the system work better. We should be cautious not to undermine the core values and basic principles of the WTO such as non-discrimination, diminish the development right of developing countries, or weaken the spirit of consensus.

China believes that any kind of reform should be a mutual, comprehensive and gradual process, as it is a common cause of 164 WTO Members. No one can be left. No one can be singled out either. Particularly, developing countries' interests should be strongly voiced and fully reflected in this process.

18. Senegal

Let me begin by thanking the Director-General and all of the Chairs of the Negotiating Group for their respective reports.

It is a fact that little progress has been made in the different areas of negotiation, and Members continue to reiterate well known positions, reflecting the deep divergences on how to find lasting solutions to the remaining Doha Development Agenda issues or how to tackle the new challenges posed by digitalization and its impact on world trade.

In the negotiations and other discussions taking place at the WTO, it is essential to remember and take into consideration the principles and objectives on which our organization was founded. Indeed, our work must at all times be guided by inclusiveness, of which consensus based decision making is an essential component, and by transparency, equity, and above all compliance with the commitments undertaken. Development and the integration of the developing countries and LDCs in international trade and in global value chains must remain at the heart of the multilateral trade negotiations.

It is urgent and absolutely essential, in this connection, that solutions be found to the difficult issues of agricultural subsidies that distort the international market, fisheries subsidies, the implementation of paragraph 44 of the Doha Declaration, and improvement of market access for the products and services of the LDCs.

My delegation believes that for many developing countries and LDCs, tackling these priority issues, alongside the emerging world trade issues such as electronic commerce, would be a demonstration of the WTO's credibility and relevance.

In this context, we call upon Members to show greater flexibility and political will, firstly to revive the multilateral trade negotiations, and secondly to solve the question of renewing the members of the Appellate Body.

These two issues are keys to the functioning of our organization. The Appellate Body crisis unquestionably threatens the WTO's negotiating function and affects its stability, credibility and predictability. We need to deal with these matters urgently; we cannot afford to wait until this increasingly troubled institution has been reformed.

Regarding the informal work currently under way to reform the WTO, my delegation has taken note of the concerns raised by certain members, in particular as regards transparency and notifications, plurilateral negotiations and the approach to consensus, special and differential treatment, evaluation of the Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures in the light of over capacity problems in certain sectors, forced technology transfer, and the functioning of the Appellate Body.

We note that some of these issues are not new, and are of crucial interest to the developing countries and the LDCs. My delegation has already expressed its views on the importance of improving transparency in the implementation of Members' obligations and on the need to take account of the real constraints facing certain members in this respect. We have also stressed the need to preserve the necessary policy space so that certain Members of this organization could regulate certain activities or sectors or support the development of their production sectors in a context in which studies have shown that "trade finance represents one of the top three obstacles to exporting for half of the countries in the world".

My delegation calls for inclusive discussions within the relevant WTO bodies on all of these questions, in particular the Appellate Body issue, on the basis of concrete proposals, with a view to finding cooperative solutions to the problems and constraints facing certain members, in particular the developing countries and the LDCs.

Finally, my delegation endorses the statements made by South Africa on behalf of the African Group, Malawi on behalf of the ACP and the Central African Republic on behalf of the LDCs.

19. European Union

We thank the Director-General for convening this meeting today and for the debriefings regarding recent contacts. We were happy to hear the Director-General and many other Members underlining the great value of a rules-based multilateral trading system. However, what is plain for all to see is that the WTO is shaking in its foundations. We are witnessing trade tensions unprecedented in the history of this organization. But the recognition of crisis would not do. The problems would not go away in and of themselves. It is high time we go from observation to action. Status quo is not an option. If we do not act, we are on the road to abandoning the rules-based system in favour of power-based trade relations, where we know the weak will suffer.

We are particularly worried about the situation surrounding the Appellate Body. The blockage of appointments, hostage-taking of the dispute settlement system, and its eventual crippling cannot be accepted as a 'new normal'. We have listened to the concerns expressed and have set out a number of ideas on how to address them in our WTO modernization paper, which we published on 18 September. We are ready to engage in discussions with all Members to find viable solutions.

Of course, it is clear, that the Appellate Body situation is not simply an isolated incident. It is a reflection of a broader malaise in this organization linked to ineffective, outdated or insufficient rules on the one hand, and the lack of transparency and proper monitoring on the other. All of these issues need to be considered and addressed if we are to get out of our current predicament.

The EU's WTO modernization paper sets out our ideas on what is needed to fix the multilateral system. It is our contribution to the debate and we invite others to come with concrete ideas while welcoming those already made.

The European Union is firm in its belief that it will not be possible to exit the current trade crisis without addressing the distortions that have led to the increase in tensions in recent years. The key here is to update the WTO's rulebook on 'level playing field' issues and barriers to services and

investment that cripple the trading environment, and to ensure that Members take up responsibilities and behave in a manner commensurate with their size and importance in the trading system.

This does not mean that other issues should be forgotten. On the contrary, all issues of interest to Members need to be considered. There is good work taking place on e-commerce, investment facilitation, domestic regulation and MSMEs. Fisheries Subsidies talks have restarted although real negotiations have not yet resumed for which there is a clear need as time is ticking toward the SDG deadline. And there are several other issues.

It is incumbent upon all of us to come forward with fresh proposals and negotiate to equip the WTO with the rules it needs to stay relevant for the world economy of today.

We can collectively take a small step in the right direction already in the coming weeks by engaging in a constructive manner on the issue of improving the work of the WTO's regular committee. Here, a particularly important area of reflection is how to improve transparency and strengthen compliance with existing notification obligations. We look forward to engaging with the broader Membership on this issue.

Let me repeat once more that doing nothing is the surest way to the demise of the WTO and 70 years of work on the rules-based multilateral trading system. The EU has made and will further make proposals in various domains to shore up the WTO. We intend to engage with Members in various configurations over the coming month to pursue the WTO modernization debate.

20. Zimbabwe

Let me at the outset, thank the Director-General and the Chairs of the Negotiating Groups for the reports. Our priorities regarding the DDA negotiations are well known and so today I will just make short and preliminary interventions on the Appellate Body impasse and current proposals on modernising the WTO.

The Dispute Settlement System is under threat and at a high risk of collapse if Members do not resolve the issue of selection of Appellate Body members urgently. In this regard, we remind Members to be mindful of the serious repercussions that the current impasse will have on the functioning of the DSB and the credibility of the WTO. Rule-making in the WTO will lose purpose if the DSB is not functioning well. Let us therefore all commit ourselves to resolving this matter before the WTO renders itself redundant.

Regarding the recent proposals on WTO Reform, my delegation's view is that any such effort should be in line with the existing WTO mandates, be inclusive and should promote the development aspirations of developing countries. Furthermore, the reforms should strengthen the multilateral trading system as an inclusive, fair, and balanced and rules-based organization. An assessment of what is at stake in the WTO is necessary as this will provide an understanding of the challenges to be addressed.

I would like to underscore that the successful conclusion of the DDA remains a priority for many developing countries such as our own and in this regard, any proposed reform should not undermine progress in this round of negotiations.

Let me end by recalling the 2018 Trade and Development Report which alludes to the fact that trade has not brought about the anticipated development gains in most developing countries and that in such circumstances, these countries still need to preserve as well as expand policy space to promote industrialization. Therefore, any reform should not contain new measures that place limitations on the ability of developing countries to adopt trade-related development policies. Rather, the WTO has a big role to play in increasing policy space through Development Facilitation.

As I conclude, let me associate my delegation with the statements made by the ACP and Africa Groups, the G-33 and the C-4.

21. Australia (Joint Statement Initiative on Electronic Commerce)

I thank the Director-General on his activities and assessment of the challenges facing the WTO. I would also like to thank the Chairs of the Negotiating Groups for their updates.

I will first provide a brief report on progress in the Joint Statement Initiative on Electronic Commerce on behalf of the co-conveners (Australia, Japan and Singapore).

The e-commerce Joint Statement initiative has met six times since it was launched at MC11. Since my last report to this meeting in July, the initiative has moved to a new phase of work. In September, we commenced a deep dive into the issues raised by participants in their written submissions and presentations – focusing on: digital trade facilitation; market access; business trust; and transparency. Members shared examples of domestic laws and regulations as well as text-based examples of relevant provisions in regional and bilateral trade agreements. We will continue this phase of work on the remaining issues in further meetings this year. The next meeting, scheduled for 31 October and 1 November, will focus on: facilitating electronic transmissions; flow of information; consumer trust; and infrastructure gaps and the digital divide.

We have recently conducted Ambassador-level informal consultations on the initiative and next steps. We thank all those that participated in these consultations and extend an open invitation for further consultations with any interested Member.

The E-Commerce Joint Statement Initiative remains open to all Members that share the objective of conducting exploratory work toward future WTO negotiations on trade-related aspects of electronic commerce. Exploratory work under this initiative has been transparent and member-driven.

In order to enhance transparency, all documents related to this initiative, including submissions, presentations and meeting reports, are available to WTO Members online and I refer Members to these reports for further information.

22. Australia

Australia is increasingly concerned about escalating trade tensions and the impasse in Appellate Body appointments. Each of these developments on their own is of major concern, but together they constitute a severe risk to the multilateral trading system and to world trade.

As the Director-General noted recently at the Launch of World Trade Report, continued escalation of trade tensions risks having a major global economic impact.

As a strong supporter of the multilateral trading system, we believe we must work urgently to strengthen and modernise the WTO so that it is able to deal with these tensions. The future of the multilateral trading system – which is vital to global economic stability and to Members' collective prosperity – depends on us doing so.

Indeed, at the recent G20 Trade Ministers' meeting in Mar del Plata, Ministers agreed on the urgent need to "improve the WTO to face current and future challenges."

For Australia, this includes two important tasks:

- strengthening the functioning of the WTO, and
- updating WTO rules to reflect the reality of the modern global trading environment.

On the first task, in order to have a well-functioning WTO, we need a strong, effective, fully functioning dispute settlement system.

We are deeply concerned about the ongoing Appellate Body impasse and are committed to work, as a priority, to unlock the appointments process. We recognise the need for improvements to the dispute settlement system and ask all Members to join us and engage in good faith in this important effort.

We also need to improve the WTO's monitoring function and welcome the efforts of several Members to develop proposals on ways to improve the WTO's transparency and notification processes. We look forward to working closely with Members to take these ideas forward.

On the second task – updating WTO rules – there is a strong need for timely and pragmatic action to ensure the WTO rules remain relevant, including looking at those related to the causes of current tensions. Not to do so could lead to a further escalation in tensions.

We heard this message repeatedly during Public Forum week, particularly from industry. Indeed, the recommendations from the ICC and B20 underline the importance of the WTO rulebook equipping us to deal with modern trade issues.

For this reason, we joined the Joint Statement Initiatives on e-commerce, services domestic regulation, investment facilitation and MSMEs in Buenos Aires.

Each of these initiatives is a good example of new ways of working, allowing constructive engagement on issues of interest to Members and demonstrate flexibility and pragmatism.

Digital trade is growing rapidly and is transformative. It is an increasingly powerful economic enabler and provides new opportunities to access international markets for broad segments of society including women, MSMEs and rural entrepreneurs.

We are very pleased with the progress in the E-Commerce Joint Statement Initiative and the fact that participants remain focused on the goal of moving to WTO negotiations on e-commerce. It is important that we deliver outcomes in this area so that our businesses and consumers can fully capture the opportunities offered by digital trade as soon as possible.

We also stand ready to engage in discussions on e-commerce under the 1998 Work Programme, including on the customs duties moratorium.

Australia is also pleased with the ongoing engagement by many Members on Services Domestic Regulation. We have made substantial progress; are close to concluding text on core disciplines; and remain on track to deliver on the commitment under the Joint Ministerial Statement to conclude negotiations in advance of the next Ministerial Conference.

At the same time, we believe it essential that the WTO continues to focus on addressing important outstanding issues, including development issues.

On agricultural reform, addressing the high levels of global trade distorting domestic support must remain a priority. This is a common problem for us all, and deserves a common solution.

Australia, along with other Cairns Group members, has been working hard to provide the data and analysis to help us identify solutions to today's problems in agricultural trade. And we will continue to work to develop approaches that support the agricultural reform agenda.

We must also continue to press ahead with negotiations on Fisheries Subsidies in order to deliver on the commitment our Ministers made at MC11. And, like others, we were pleased by the positive and open engagement in the 'incubator groups' and welcome this approach as a useful new way of working.

Australia appreciates the efforts of several Members in recent months to drive forward work to modernise and strengthen the WTO.

In particular, we welcome the EU's concept note, the recent joint EU/Japan/US Trilateral Trade Minister's statement, and Canada's discussion paper on strengthening and modernising the WTO (JOB/GC/201), all of which outline important areas of focus.

In recent months, activity has begun on a number of these themes and Australia is an active supporter of this work.

Australia remains fully committed to the multilateral trading system, and resolved to work with all Members to improve and strengthen the WTO to ensure that it is fit to meet the challenges of today and capture the opportunities of the future.

23. India

We thank the Director-General for convening this informal meeting of the TNC and for his report and assessment as the Chair of the TNC. We also thank the Chairs of the Negotiating Groups for their reports.

India associates itself with the statement to be made by Indonesia on behalf of the G-33.

It is a matter of grave concern that the crisis facing the organization has deepened further with escalating trade friction and the Appellate Body now reduced to three members. This is seriously impacting the functioning of the dispute settlement mechanism of the WTO. With every passing day, we are moving closer to a trade war and complete collapse of the rules based system.

In these difficult times, let me put forward our views on a few important issues and some ideas on the way forward.

Appellate Body

The existential crisis facing the Appellate Body is our gravest concern. With only 3 Members left, its effectiveness is compromised, and with the continuing impasse, its future is a question mark. The looming paralysis and possible disappearance of the Appellate Body will be the death knell of the dispute settlement system, which in spite of its limitations, has served us well.

In this context, the topmost priority for the Membership needs to be to break the impasse in the filling up of the vacant positions of the Appellate Body members. A number of ideas have been floated to address the issues raised, and we are open to engage on any or all of them; and to focus our efforts on arriving at a breakthrough in this important area. A swift and independent, two-stage dispute settlement system is necessary, we believe, for fair enforcement of the rules of international trade and preserving the credibility of the WTO. Therefore, this needs to be at the top of the agenda in the coming weeks and months.

Effects of globalization

Today, we see a strong backlash against free trade and globalization, not only in developing countries, but also in the developed world. The reason for this is that trade has been less inclusive than promised and more disruptive than anticipated. Clearly, free trade has not led to inclusive development. The total exports of LDCs are still only about 1% of total exports; only 5% of the population in the developing world can buy products on e-commerce platforms due to the digital divide, manifested in limited broadband connectivity as well as low digital literacy. In India, a fledgling but vibrant electronics industry has been almost completely wiped out after joining the ITA-I in 1997, while in the last 8 years, our exports of goods as a proportion of GDP in percentage terms have reduced by a third. In the US as well, we hear of the grave crisis that the steel industry is facing, requiring resort to unilateral measures. Such consequences, and the policy responses which they invite, have the potential of derailing the growth in trade, and its consequential benefits like the jobs it creates.

Reforms

In this scenario, it is not surprising that reform is the flavour of the season and a number of ideas on reforms are being presented informally. We thank the proponents for their efforts and would like to engage with all of them. However, we would like to caution, that without a system of enforcement of existing rules, the appetite for making new rules or for reforms would be poor.

Some of the ideas on reforms being floated, in their breadth, novelty and potential impact are akin almost, to launching a new Round, even when we still need to address some of the Doha issues, build on the work done and harvest some outcomes. We have been proponents of reforms of the Uruguay Round agreements like the Agreement on Agriculture and believe, that though reforms may be necessary, and even help enhance the effectiveness of the organization, the need at this

time, is to follow approaches that build and enhance trust among Members, and provide a healing touch, rather than those that:

- may increase divergences or are divisive or
- freeze the inequities against the developing countries and LDC interests or
- perpetuate the monopoly of platforms and thwart competition or
- go against the development focus which is part of the basic structure of the organization or
- seek to dump principles of non-discrimination and consensus which have made the WTO inclusive or
- those that do not address the asymmetry of existing agreements or
- those that would compromise the ability of developing countries and LDCs to fight hunger and poverty which are still huge challenges for them.

Role of Secretariat

India is deeply concerned at the WTO Secretariat becoming a party to the recent report by international organizations on WTO reforms. No doubt the issue of institutional reform of the WTO is important for some Members. But this issue is best resolved by the Membership without the Secretariat offering its suggestions. If at some stage the Membership collectively and with consensus seeks the wisdom of the Secretariat on this issue, as well as any other issue, then we would certainly welcome the views of the Secretariat. In absence of any explicit request from the Membership by consensus, we expect the Secretariat to act with restraint in this matter so that the Member-driven character of the WTO is preserved.

We are also ready to work with Members to enhance transparency and effectiveness of the WTO. We have, in this context, brought up-to-date our subsidies notifications in the areas under negotiations – both Agriculture and Fisheries.

Negotiating Function

As far as the negotiating agenda is concerned, our priority for a package including Agriculture and Fisheries Subsidies is well known and has been repeatedly articulated. We consider these important areas of work. The mandate to agree and adopt a permanent solution for public stockholding for food security for all developing countries and LDCs needs to be implemented with urgency. I would like to state that attempts to seek justification for the need of a permanent solution for Public Stockholding on Food Security at this stage amounts to renegeing on the decision of Ministers. Further, we believe that the subsistence agriculture subsidies of developing countries cannot be treated on par with the huge trade distorting AMS available to developed countries. The per capita subsidy of US\$ 200 per year given by India to its farmers, cannot generate exports or distort trade. Similarly, the problem of unsustainable fishing has arisen due to over exploitation of oceans and huge subsidies to industrial fishing in a few countries. It certainly cannot be attributed to the less than the US\$ 1 per week given to 2 million subsistence fishermen in India. This support, however, is critical for their livelihood and, if withdrawn, will lead them to destitution. Thus, disciplines in this area need to preserve and protect schemes targeted at such marginalised groups and leave space for the development of their capacity to improve their lot.

E-Commerce

E-Commerce has created new and exciting opportunities in global trade. At the same time, it also poses significant infrastructure and regulatory challenges especially for developing countries which may lose out on these opportunities due to the huge digital divide. As the digital revolution is unfolding, there are still large gaps in our understanding on issues like effects of e-commerce on competition & market structures, issues related to technology transfer and the gaps in policy in this area in several countries.

Advance of digital technologies, automation and robotization will result in the loss of a large proportion of traditional jobs in the technology sector. Developing countries, like India, therefore, need to maintain policy space to formulate a policy on ownership, use and flow of data in sunrise sectors like cloud computing, data storage, hosting of servers as well as in big data analytics and M2M communication in the era of internet of things. We are, therefore, committed to reinvigorate work on the multilateral track, with its non-negotiating mandate, to understand these issues

better, which will build a strong foundation for the future of e-commerce, which, in turn, would benefit us all.

Conclusion

To conclude, in our view, the need of the hour is to engage constructively and collectively to address the challenges facing the organization which include unilateral measures, the crisis in the Appellate Body, rising tide of protectionism and the impunity with which some of the core principles of the multilateral trading system are being breached. To this end, India stands ready to constructively engage and will work to strengthen this multilateral organization.

24. Republic of Moldova

The Delegation of the Republic of Moldova commends the comprehensive and very useful report presented by the Director-General in His Excellency's capacity as the Chair of the Trade Negotiations Committee, as well as the reflections of other Chairs expressed today.

As a signatory of a number of Joint Ministerial Declarations in Buenos Aires, during the period following the last General Council, the Republic of Moldova continued to participate in the work of the joint initiatives.

In particular, as part of the Joint Declaration on Trade and Gender, the Republic of Moldova has organised in June the Workshop on Enhancing the Participation of Women Entrepreneurs and Traders in Government Procurement. We express our appreciation for the Director-General's participation at this event and for attaching great importance to the gender issue in the WTO system. We also thank the WTO's Intellectual Property Division, the EBRD and other WTO Member's active engagement in the discussion. The workshop was the first out of a series of events dedicated to trade-related gender imbalances and women empowerment after Buenos Aires. Dedicated discussions and experience sharing events are an important tool to promote the idea of inclusive trade and gender-sensitive policies in all the sectors and areas of economy.

In the continued negotiations on agriculture related aspects, the Republic of Moldova would like to reiterate the importance of the implementation of the Paragraph 31 of the Nairobi Ministerial Declaration and the commitments undertaken by all WTO Members to eliminate all types of agriculture subsidies, which is essential in mitigating the distortive effects in the agriculture sector and in advancing domestic reforms. We look forward to continue the negotiation process in the WTO regarding the public stock holding and special safeguard mechanism, by respecting the principles of inclusiveness, non-presumption, parallelism and transparency.

Regarding the negotiations on Agriculture, as a member of the Article XII Group, the Republic of Moldova would like to express its support for the statement delivered by Panama on behalf of our group and to echo the idea that we need to work towards reducing imbalances in the commitments undertaken by the Members of the WTO through a constructive negotiations process.

The principle of achieving a balanced outcome should guide our work in all the negotiating fora, in all the trade areas that are currently being negotiated, if we want to ensure a non-discriminatory trading system that will benefit all and will ensure a level playing field.

This means that we have to address the gaps that can be observed among the WTO Membership and work towards mutually beneficial outcomes in the field of the dispute settlement system, in order to avoid the impasse in the Appellate Body. As the Director-General mentioned today, our system is not perfect, but reflects our work, our commitments and our involvement.

On this and other topics, we look forward to continue our dialogue to make the multilateral trading system up-to-date and able to respond to the needs of a rapidly developing society.

We are pleased to observe continuous work of many Members in the furtherance of the Buenos Aires Joint Outcomes. I take this opportunity to thank Kazakhstan, for organising the Investment Facilitation Forum in Astana this September. The Moldovan delegation was pleased to participate in interesting and productive discussions on investment facilitation related measures, good practices, lessons learned and ways to move forward.

The Republic of Moldova is pleased to note the positive trend in TFA implementation. The active engagement with the notifications process that many Members have shown is commendable. At the same time, I would like to thank the Secretariat of the Trade Facilitation Committee for their work to compile and disseminate all the relevant information, and the Trade Facilitation Facility for organising a series of experience sharing workshops. The Republic of Moldova was pleased to participate last week in these workshops and share our state of play in the modernization of the transit regime and transit facilitation process.

The Republic of Moldova strongly believes that our communication and diplomatic skills will facilitate us to be open towards the initiation of a constructive dialogue which will bring a common result for the world trade system.

I am also pleased to announce that the Republic of Moldova will host the regional workshop on government procurement for Central and Eastern Europe, Central Asian and the Caucasus Countries next week, between 23-25 October in Chisinau. The workshop is organised in partnership with EBRD and the WTO Secretariat, with the participation of more than 25 countries and Deputy Director-General Alan Wolff.

We urge all Members to engage constructively with the view to ensuring an effective, relevant and operative World Trade Organization. We need to tackle the challenges before us and the differences through dialogue and serious engagement in order to avoid systemic blockages, market uncertainty and increase consumer and business confidence in international trade.

25. Uruguay (Informal Working Group on MSMEs)

I would like to start by commending the Director-General for his report and those of the various Chairs of the Negotiating Groups. As the general coordinator of the Informal Working Group on MSMEs, I would like to make reference very briefly to three activities that are linked to the area of our endeavour.

First, I would like to highlight that our group actively participated in the recent Public Forum. At that time, we were able to underscore the importance of technical assistance and capacity building. Without prejudging any further information that the delegations of El Salvador and the Philippines may wish to bring forward, I would like to point out that during this session, we focused on the main challenges that MSMEs are facing especially when it comes to globalising their work. We can confirm the very important role played by proper technical assistance and capacity building when it comes to the various efforts that seek to surmount the various barriers.

Second, I would like to point out that on 31 October, there will be a further session that will be held on the basis of the Work Programme that was sketched out in Buenos Aires. This will be under the leadership of Bahrain. We will be focusing on the proper use of the internet as a tool that is available to MSMEs making it possible for them to win over further international markets and get a foothold in them.

Finally, I would like to announce that we have a further channel of communication that brings transparency to our Informal Working Group. Here, I am referring to the newsletter focusing on the work that we carry out in our Informal Working Group to help MSMEs. As we see it, this communication channel will make it possible to have the proper dissemination of the work that is engaged by the Informal Working Group. This will make it possible to draw us closer to the private sector and other sectors that are taking interest in our endeavour and our work programme.

In concluding, I would like to recall that in our group, there are some 88 members, and we are open to input from the totality of the Membership of this organization. Transparency is one of the fundamental principles for the operation of our group. Furthermore, I would like to point out once again that our group is fully open to bring on board more members. We would also like to have inputs and comments from members and non-members alike.

26. Costa Rica

This is my last intervention at the TNC/HODs as I am terminating my post at the end of November and I will unfortunately not be present at this week's General Council meeting. For that reason, please allow me to share with you and colleagues a few words of farewell.

The last four years have been the richest professional experience in my life, in which I have developed a wealth of information, contacts and understanding of the world as seen through the lens of trade. I find multiple parallelisms between the realm of trade and the realm of peace, which is the lens I previously utilised to view and understand the world. Trade is one of the most tangible scenarios through which peace can be forged. In times of so-called "trade wars", what I see is an immense opportunity for peace through trade.

Among the wide variety of lessons I have learned during the past years, there are three particular ones I would like to share with you today.

The first lesson is that an organization like the WTO is a public good, and as such, it is not susceptible to the paradigm of disruptive innovation that has become dominant in the field of business during the last couple of decades. That innovation paradigm refers to "creative destruction", through which you destroy what already exists by creating something better, faster, cheaper to replace the status quo. With a public good this is hardly possible. Public goods are at the mercy of the tragedy of the commons, where ownership is diffuse, leadership is scarce, and there seems to be no sense of urgency. So, any attempt at disruptive innovation on a public good hardly illustrates creative destruction and feels more like destructive destruction. If we want to reform the areas susceptible of improvement, we must have a very clear collective sense of purpose, or why improvement is needed, a very clear collective vision about how these improvements would be implemented, and with a clear collective intention to create shared value, making sure every Member will contribute and be better off at the other end of the process than with the existing status quo.

The second lesson is that development must be intentional. There are no special formulas that can be copy-pasted from one country to another. A nation must show resolve to make progress through the firm aspiration of achieving prosperity for all its citizens. This means that, before development becomes a multilateral or plurilateral endeavour, it must first and foremost be a unilateral effort. It also requires sustained commitment through various generations of government officials to make steady – if slow – pace forward. Moving two steps forward and then one step back is all but ineffective. Also on development, you have heard me say many times that technology is today a great tool to help Members leapfrog their developmental challenges. Nevertheless, I have come to the realization that technology is merely a tool to scale up solutions and to make them cheaper. The trillion-dollar question is which solutions, for which problems, at which costs, for what benefits, do we want technology's leapfrogging effect. To illustrate, we have been speaking for almost three years about the Fourth Industrial Revolution, trying to identify what it means, what opportunities it brings, what pitfalls must be avoided. Meanwhile, more than half of humanity still lives in what could be considered as the clash of revolutions, still struggling to move on from the first industrial revolution, unable to fulfil the coverage of electricity – which was the promise of the second industrial revolution – while there are more than four billion people without access to ICT infrastructure – which was the promise of the third industrial revolution. So, as we speak about the wonders of artificial intelligence, albeit urgent and necessary, cannot overlook where more than half of us still stand in our path and pace of progress.

The third lesson is that context is everything. The context in which this organization turned the century was configured in the Doha Round. That agenda needs to be updated into the present context of geopolitical, socioeconomic and environmental constraints. Any topic discussed in this house should be tested regularly against two large contextual accelerations that have already started affecting every human activity and will do so in the immediate future: climate change and the recently mentioned fourth industrial revolution. Since the Paris Agreement, the world has been moving decidedly fast towards climate action. How this will affect agriculture, energy, transportation, manufacturing, or international investment, should be studied closely at this House. Coming back to the fourth industrial revolution, it is a series of disruptive technological innovations that are shifting long-standing paradigms: artificial intelligence, automation, robotics and the replacement of human labour; 3D printing and the replacement of large manufacturing, logistics and consumption trends; blockchain, and the fast, reliable and trustworthy cross-border movement of capitals without intermediaries; and quantum computing, the next generation of computing power and speed. This hopeful voice might seem contradictory with what I mentioned before regarding technology and development. But the truth, the fact, the reality, is that these transformations are happening, before our eyes, at a very fast pace, and this massive wave of change cannot be stopped or blocked or delayed or derailed, let alone by politics. Technology has been consistent bypassing any and all regulations that have become obsolete. This House should

take note, especially in its negotiating function. The next ten years will see accelerated penetration of these business trends in the entire universe of commerce and the question we must ask ourselves is how can the WTO influence them through the lens of trade.

I wish to conclude by thanking all of you for all the lessons you have taught me, for your kindness and constructive engagement in absolutely every interaction we have had. It has been an honour to represent my country, an exciting adventure to be here during these memorable years in the history of the multilateral trading system, and a sincere pleasure to have met you all.

May peace prevail in trade.

27. Republic of Korea

We thank the Director-General for convening this meeting and sharing his assessment on the current situation. We would also like to congratulate him on a successful Public Forum. This year's Forum provided a valuable chance to listen to the various opinions on the multilateral trading system and its future. In particular, the sessions were insightful in that it shed light upon a constantly changing world and how the multilateral trading system can maintain its relevance.

Just before the summer, Korea highlighted the huge effort of the WTO Members to deal with substantive issues in this ever-changing world. In this regard, the negotiations on fisheries subsidies is one area where a fruitful outcome can be anticipated. E-Commerce is another area of importance where we can expect good progress.

First, the negotiations on fisheries subsidies is keeping an exemplary track record by following its work programme under the stewardship of the Chair of the Negotiating Group on Rules. Korea has been working closely with other Members of the Incubator Group since last month, with a view to making a breakthrough in the negotiations. Korea sees much value in this new process, given that it provides Members with a good opportunity to see the old and contentious issues from a fresh angle. Korea will continue to play its part in this process, so that the Members will be able to achieve a meaningful outcome in the fisheries subsidies negotiations.

Second, active discussions under the Joint Statement Initiative on E-Commerce herald a positive result going forward. In this regard, we would like to express our appreciation to the co-conveners, Australia, Singapore and Japan, for their leadership. Korea will continue to participate in this exploratory work with a view to moving on to the negotiating phase sooner rather than later.

A couple of weeks ago, the world underwent another change, unfortunately a change which we, the Members, have constantly pointed out as a concern. Since 1 October, only three Appellate Body members remain incumbent, which is the bare minimum for the subsistence of the WTO Dispute Settlement System.

Korea has been calling to the attention of the Members that the problem of prolonged vacancy in the Appellate Body combined with the increase of protective measures would potentially create a fundamental crisis in the future of the multilateral trading system and the WTO. It is high time that we bite the bullet and seriously join our heads and hearts together to solve this problem.

Fortunately, many Members are engaging in such discussions in various groups and through different channels to find a solution. These Members are also exchanging views on how to modernise and update the WTO in order to restore its relevance. Korea, as one of the world's largest trading partners, is actively participating in these efforts. The Ottawa Ministerial to be held next week is another step in seeking a meaningful outcome in this regard. This initiative along with many others should converge in the end to reflect various perspectives and interests. Korea will continue to play a constructive role in this process and looks forward to sharing views with other interested Members.

The WTO and its Members have a lot of work at hand and this includes work in progress to receive 22 potential WTO Members. Although it will take a while, it could be an opportunity to provide fresh and positive input to the WTO and to show to the world that this organization is evolving in the right direction. At the last General Council meeting held in July, Korea was given the honour to

chair the Working Party on the Accession of Uzbekistan. We have been engaging in meaningful discussion with the Secretariat and will continue to provide updates on its progress, as needed.

It is no secret that WTO is going through a difficult time but it is also at an important juncture. Let me use this opportunity to encourage other Members to engage with each other and participate in the efforts to modernise and update the WTO with a realistic, pragmatic, and balanced approach.

28. Chinese Taipei

We thank the Director-General for updating us this morning on the current developments.

If we are asked to place all the possible approaches to the issue of international trade governance in order of importance, the Separate Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu sees the rules-based system of the WTO as being absolutely paramount. Indeed, we have always attached great importance to the multilateral trading system while we recognise that the WTO is not perfect as the Director-General and some Members said.

However, despite the fact that the rules-based system of the WTO has contributed to global economic stability, prosperity and development since its establishment twenty years ago, with the evolution of technology the world is changing rapidly. What concerns us most today, therefore, is the WTO's relevance to the world, both now and in the future. And, in addition, the ongoing blockade at the Appellate Body and the current trade tensions put extra strains on the WTO.

Ours is a very trade-oriented and open economy, so we are particularly worried about this situation. In our view, the WTO is in urgent need of modernization if it is to carry out its primary role of ensuring a level playing-field and fair trade for all its Members. We very much welcome the reform initiatives coming forward at the moment. We are ready to make our contribution to the reforms and will undertake all the efforts necessary to modernise the rules of the WTO.

On the subject of transparency, we believe that this too is a critically important element of the WTO's multilateral trading system. It is essential that the notification obligations ensure that transparency is a basic and natural part of the process, and is practiced by all. We encourage every Member to fully comply with their notification obligations, otherwise the whole system will simply fail. In our view, some Members' initiatives to improve notifications and enhance transparency will be a good start to strengthening the monitoring function of the WTO. We welcome the initiatives in this regard.

On Fisheries Subsidies, we commend the Incubation Group on its efforts. Bearing in mind the importance of the WTO's credibility at this time, we should all be making every effort to meet the only multilateral mandate that came out of MC11.

On the Buenos Aires "joint initiatives" such as on e-commerce, domestic regulation, MSMEs, and women's empowerment, we support all the on-going efforts and we remain totally committed to their work.

29. Indonesia (G-33)

First of all, I wish to thank the Director General for convening this meeting after the summer break, as well as for updating Members with his recent activities and for his assessment on the current situation. I wish to also thank the various Chairs of Negotiating Bodies for providing Members with the state of play of discussions in the respective negotiating areas.

I will be speaking first on behalf of the G-33 which will be followed by the statement of Indonesia.

On behalf of the G-33, I wish to reiterate the Group's views that Members must continue their work based on Article 20 of the Agreement on Agriculture and existing mandates given by Bali, Nairobi and preceding Ministerial Conferences.

In the post-Buenos Aires context, the G-33 supports the COA SS' way forward September – December 2018, a part of which, Members continue to discuss the issue of Public Stockholding for Food Security Purposes and Special Safeguard Mechanism in a more focused, substantive and more expeditious manner, as per the mandate.

It is the G-33's firm view that the establishment of a permanent solution for the PSH, and an accessible, simple and effective SSM, both volume and price based, remain to be the priority for the Group. Solutions for those issues are needed by majority of developing Members in this House to address persistent problems related to food security, livelihood security and rural development.

The G-33 remains committed to constructively engaged in any process deemed necessary to move the negotiation forward.

30. Indonesia

Indonesia fully shares the views that Members have to intensify their work in addressing various fundamental issues confronted by the WTO. After Buenos Aires, Indonesia has been following with concern the evolving developments that have hindered the multilateral trading system from working properly, such as Member's continued divergent views on how we continue our work in the negotiating areas; increasing unilateralism; and continued impasse in the selection of Appellate Body members. Indonesia would like to reiterate its view that it is Members' collective responsibility to address those challenges with a sense of urgency, to safeguard an open, predictable and rules-based multilateral trading system embedded in the WTO.

In this regard, let me share one of the main takeaways from the IMF and World Bank Annual Meeting that was recently hosted by Indonesia in Bali. During the meeting, the urgency to strengthen the multilateral trading system has been reiterated by many. Current trade tensions will only pose risk for global economy and create high uncertainty in global trading system. We should therefore work together to address trade tensions and increase our cooperation in improving the system.

Despite lack of political guidance from Buenos Aires and current uncertain political environments, work in Geneva shall be continued. Members should transform their political will to strengthen an open, predictable and rules-based multilateral trading system embedded in the WTO into concrete ways.

In continuing our work, unfinished work from Bali, Nairobi and Buenos Aires based on existing mandates agreed by Ministers and progress achieved so far, shall be immediately taken up. Indonesia believes that Members should also continue to use an incremental and pragmatic approach in addressing various issues that Members, particularly developing and least-developed ones, are confronting with.

Allow me now to offer Indonesia's views on some important issues, and how we can make progress.

On Agriculture, while fully supporting the G-33's views on PSH and SSM, Indonesia welcomes Members' contributions on several important issues. They reflect Members' great interest to move the Agriculture negotiations forward. While welcoming those submissions, Indonesia is of the view that any initiative shall be directed to address the imbalances and inequities inherited from the Uruguay Round and the specific needs of developing and least-developed country Members.

On Fisheries Subsidies, Indonesia commends the efforts of the Negotiating Group on Rules Chair to intensify work in following-up the Buenos Aires Ministerial Decision, with a view to agree by the next Ministerial Conference an agreement on comprehensive and effective disciplines that prohibit certain forms of fisheries subsidies that contribute to overcapacity and overfishing, and eliminate subsidies that contribute to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. We also note that the mandate urged Members to address the development aspect through special and differential treatment for the least-developed countries as well as developing countries. It is our view that the fisheries subsidies negotiation will need to include provisions on special and differential treatment.

On Development, Indonesia reaffirms its view that development elements have been integral parts of various WTO Agreements, with a view to, among others, assisting developing and LDC Members to reap equitable benefits from the multilateral trading system. Recognising this issue has been currently perceived by some Members as a hurdle in many areas of the negotiation. Indonesia suggests that Members need to intensify interaction in a more pragmatic manner to strike the right balance.

With respect to some "new initiatives", while considering their important role in current economic realities, Indonesia continues to uphold its view that Members should be open-minded and in an exploratory mode in continuing the conversations, with a view to improve their understanding. In those efforts, "development" and "special and differential treatment principles" must remain to be at the centre of our work.

Finally, please be assured of Indonesia's readiness to be actively and constructively engaged in any necessary process after the summer break, particularly in finding acceptable solutions that will address everybody's interests and concerns.

31. Switzerland

The WTO faces serious challenges.

The strong growth of the global economy is increasingly being overshadowed by risks that might slow down economic development. These include growing trade tensions.

Furthermore, the transformation of the modern economy by digital technologies will increasingly shape world trade in the future.

The WTO should be responsive to those and other relevant developments and continue to provide a negotiating platform to devise solutions to current challenges.

This is crucial in particular where the stakes are high and fully recognised by the international community as is the case of the negotiations on fisheries. It is therefore key to ensure the completion of these negotiations on time.

Furthermore, we consider that the Buenos Aires Joint Initiatives are valuable additions to multilateral efforts. They provide interesting avenues for the future of global trade rules.

Let me – apart from MSMEs and Investment Facilitation – highlight the Joint Initiative on e-commerce.

E-Commerce is a global phenomenon that calls for global governance. And part of this governance should be developed in the WTO context. Work on this issue is progressing well and Switzerland is willing to contribute constructively to the talks and to bring them to the next stage.

The escalating trade tensions are certainly a matter of concern to many. Protectionist measures are unlikely to produce any winner. The blockade at the Appellate Body is also putting the system under strain. It is important that the pending process to refill the vacancies at the AB be resumed without delay.

Several initiatives aiming at modernising the system show that Members are seriously preoccupied and looking for solutions. Even if their understanding of the situation and of the way out of the crisis may differ. In this context, four challenges seem to be paramount: first, improving the efficiency of the WTO monitoring function including transparency, notifications and the functioning of WTO committees; second, safeguarding and strengthening the dispute settlement system; third, modernising the Trade Rules for the Twenty-First Century; fourth, elaborating a new approach to trade and development.

Switzerland hopes that the various initiatives on WTO reform will converge under the WTO umbrella. We are pleased to participate in and to support the process coordinated by Canada. However, for any of those efforts to succeed, the reform endeavours shall be as inclusive as possible. Therefore, all major players will need to be at the table and willing to contribute their fair share.

32. Benin (C-4)

I am making this statement on behalf of the Group of the four co-sponsors of the Sectoral Initiative in Favour of Cotton (C-4).

The C-4 thanks the Director-General for his report on the status of the multilateral trade negotiations and for the information he has shared on the developments that have taken place since July.

We also thank the Chairs of the negotiating groups and bodies for the impetus they have given to our work.

We support the statements made by the African Group, the LDC Group, the ACP Group and the G-33.

On the subject of cotton, we would like to inform all Members that we have invited the main cotton producers and exporters to provide statistical data and trade information on their levels of domestic support for the period 2001-2017.

Responses from three Members, Brazil, the United States and the European Union, have provided some insight into the trends in domestic support for cotton production and the steps to be taken to properly follow through on the cotton mandate laid out in Geneva in July 2004 and at the Hong Kong, Bali and Nairobi Ministerial Conferences.

The Group thanks those three Members and invites the other Members concerned to provide their statistical data and trade information on cotton.

We would then be able to assess the levels of support provided and their impact on cotton production and exportation.

We note that Canada, Australia and the other co-authors of documents JOB/AG/138 and JOB/AG/143 had previously furnished information and data that were very useful for Members and that will help us continue our work and move it forward.

The constructive spirit prevailing during the efforts of the Quad Plus group on 20 September 2018 should be maintained.

The C-4 calls on all WTO Members to contribute so that we may achieve concrete and measurable outcomes on cotton by MC12.

33. Benin

In its national capacity, the delegation of Benin would like to make the following comments and recommendations regarding certain issues that WTO Members are currently working on or thinking over.

The dispute settlement system is a central pillar of WTO operations, and the Appellate Body crowns the entire legal and adjudicatory structure that implements the various WTO Agreements.

Having been accepted, seen and treated as such since 1947 – for half a century already – the dispute settlement system and the Appellate Body should not be weakened, but rather maintained and enhanced.

How can this be done?

By allowing them to continue their mission of handling the cases brought before them, on the basis of existing provisions, while we reflect on how to improve their underlying principles and rules of operation.

As the law only provides for the future, it is clear that the Appellate Body must continue to function on the basis of the provisions of the Dispute Settlement Understanding until a reform leads to new measures and provisions being formulated and introduced.

For this reason, the delegation of Benin would like to recommend that the current Appellate Body deadlock be resolved so that we can move beyond this state of immobility.

With respect to reform, the deliberations that this will entail should be organised so as to be transparent and inclusive, and the points and issues to be addressed should be identified and agreed on by consensus, with a schedule of work that should in no event take precedence over the negotiating issues of the Doha mandate or later mandates, or relegate them to the background.

My delegation will now comment on our work on special and differential treatment.

We can follow up on paragraph 44 of the Doha Ministerial Declaration of November 2001, which asked us to make the rules of the various WTO Agreements precise, effective and operational.

The delegation of Benin shares the view that WTO Members should take a leap forward and provide appropriate flexibilities for developing country and, in particular, least-developed country Members to take account of their needs, priorities and concerns in terms of trade, finance and development, and integrate the development dimension into the rules, principles and mechanisms governing international trade.

The delegation of Benin would like to thank and congratulate the Chair of the Special Session of the Committee on Trade and Development, Ambassador Yee Woan Tan (Singapore), for her commitment and readiness to facilitate efforts on special and differential treatment.

The delegation of Benin calls for renewed commitment from Members on this important issue and for further consideration of the proposals submitted, beginning with those submitted by the G-90, with a clearly laid out schedule of work and an approach that puts the substantive elements and arguments submitted by other Members side by side.

We look at our world and our planet and see two realities that must be recognised.

They are:

- technology, innovation, the digital economy and e-commerce;
- the disruptions and upheavals caused by climate change in our human and natural environments (cyclones, floods, heatwaves, etc., with millions of human lives lost in a number of countries and regions around the world). These have detrimental effects on our health, economies and societies.

With respect to technology, innovation, the digital economy and e-commerce, my delegation would like to highlight that they are the incontestable fruits of the process of change and transformation brought about by research, development and human intelligence, and we should seize their potential by making use of the instantaneity and the significant reduction, or elimination, of costs and distance that they offer to the majority of countries and people.

But we must also deal with the challenges that they still pose for developing countries and, in particular, least-developed countries, most notably in terms of the digital divide, the weakness of digital infrastructures and of related human and institutional capacity, the poor reliability and security of certain means of payment and digital platforms, loss of tax revenue, areas of flexibility in legislation, etc.

We must continue with consultations, the dialogue in progress and our exchanges of ideas and options on this topic, as there is no denying that it permeates our daily lives and will shape the future of our economies and therefore our own future.

This is the choice that the WAEMU countries, including Benin, made at a regional e-commerce workshop held in Ouagadougou from 9 to 11 October 2018, when they committed to identifying the activities to be carried out within WAEMU in order to harness the potential of the digital economy and e-commerce and to deal with existing challenges and constraints.

With respect to trade and the environment, which recent news from this summer and fall indicates we should be watching around the world, the delegation of Benin reaffirms that the two topics are interrelated and would like to recommend that negotiating efforts and deliberations at the Special Session of the Committee on Trade and Development take into account the consequences of climate change and disturbance on human activity, our economies and our societies.

Lastly, trade that is inclusive and an engine of growth, job creation, poverty reduction and sustainable development must fall within this vision and integrate the element of sustainability.

34. Argentina

We appreciate the Director-General's report and those provided by the Chairpersons of the Negotiating Groups regarding the current status of work in this organization. In the same way, we would like to acknowledge the work and thank the coordinators of the groups on MSMEs, Investment Facilitation, Electronic Commerce and Domestic Regulation for their respective reports.

On 14 September, the Ministers of Trade and Investment of the G20 met in the Argentine city of Mar del Plata, under the general objective of the Argentine Presidency to build consensus for a fair and sustainable development. In this context, it was reiterated that international trade and investment continue to be important drivers of growth, productivity, innovation, job creation and development.

The Ministers recognised the urgent need to discuss current developments in international trade and ways to improve the WTO to face current and future challenges. From the discussions held, the Ministers agreed to work together to improve sustainable economic growth, keep markets open, address economic development and revitalise the international trading system.

In accordance with the above, Argentina wishes to take this opportunity to reiterate its commitment to a rules-based multilateral trading system and to highlight the central role of the WTO as a natural institution to ensure transparency and stability in trade relations.

Undoubtedly, there are growing commercial tensions among some Members which must be resolved within the system of rules established by this organization.

Likewise, we are particularly concerned about the critical situation of the Appellate Body which currently only has three of its seven members. This body is an essential pillar of the dispute settlement system whose independence and impartiality must be maintained.

We recognise as a collective challenge to close the gap between the current multilateral regulatory system and the reality of the globalised international economy.

Therefore, we reiterate our country's willingness to work, in a constructive and inclusive manner, on the necessary initiatives that allow this organization to continue to play a central role in multilateral trade relations.

35. Chad (LDCs)

I thank the Director-General for convening this TNC meeting. I am taking the floor on behalf of the LDC Group.

The LDC Group wishes to express its appreciation for your report on discussions and activities in the WTO as well appreciation to the Chairs of the different negotiating bodies for their reports.

Since the resumption in September, our Group continues to advance its priorities and objectives in view of a better integration into the multilateral trading system.

In order to do so, we focus, among other things, on the concrete implementation of decisions taken in our favour during previous Ministerial Conferences. In this regard, our Group recently submitted a communication, on 2 October, regarding elements for a review of the operation of notified preferences as required under the Nairobi Ministerial Decision on Implementation of Preferential Treatment in favour of Services and Service Suppliers of Least Developed Countries and Increasing LDC Participation in Services Trade in WT/L/982. The group was encouraged by the notifying Members engagement on this communication in the Council for Trade Services last week and looks forward to working with all Members to initiate the review process in the nearest future.

Furthermore, our Group submitted a communication on rules of origin earlier this year, requesting developed and developing country Members to report to the Committee measures that are taken to implement the Decision, for the purposes of evaluation of the Decision's operationalization.

Beyond these issues, we also submitted a proposal to the TRIPS Council requesting better implementation of Article 66.2 of the TRIPS Agreement. We submitted a communication on the importance for developed country Members to make LDC specific reports, for purposes of clarity and better precision on incentives offered.

Also, our Group, in line with our LDC Trade Ministers Declaration adopted in Buenos Aires, has addressed the issue of graduation. In this regard, the group submitted a proposal in the Council for Trade in Goods and in the General Council on the need to rectify a technical oversight in Annex VII of the Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures and the Doha Implementation Issues Decision, on the possibility for graduating LDCs to continue to benefit from flexibilities contained in Article 27.2 of the SCM Agreement, as long as the country's GNI per capita does not exceed US\$1000. We urge all Members to give positive consideration to this proposal.

Regarding Agriculture, our group remains focused on the need to address domestic support that has distorting effects, and most especially for cotton. Also, we recall the importance of a permanent solution for public stockholding for food security purposes that takes into account the possibility of developing programs that are not yet existing in LDCs.

Regarding Special and Differential Treatment, the LDC Group continues to stress the need for the full implementation of Paragraph 44 of the Doha Ministerial Declaration. Fulfilling this mandate in our view would include Special and Differential Treatment provisions in the WTO Agreements that allow economic actors in our countries to grow local production capacities there by energising local, domestic and regional markets and our economies and ultimately improving employment and the quality of living for our people. The G-90 proposals on S&DT continue to provide the best basis for taking work forward in this regard. In parallel, we will continue making proposals in WTO regular bodies, in line with the objectives expressed by our LDC Ministers in Buenos Aires.

With regard to ongoing discussions on fisheries, the LDC Group is actively pursuing an effective advancement of negotiations towards a Decision by MC12 and seeks to defend its interests regarding a prohibition of illegal fishing, disciplines against overfishing, preserving our rights under the customary laws of the sea and favouring sustainable development.

Regarding WTO reform, the LDC Group is naturally concerned about the implications of such reforms as well as the situation facing the Dispute Settlement Body and at an opportune time will speak further on the issue but suffice it to say for now that any reforms must not undermine LDC interests and the principles of consensus, inclusiveness and the rules-based multilateral trading system.

36. Paraguay

I would like to thank the Director General and the Chairs of the Negotiating Groups for the reports they have presented us today which will help delegations outline and prepare for the work ahead. We are pleased to see that some of the discussions are moving forward and hope that Members can act and engage constructively in the upcoming months, so we can achieve meaningful results at the next Ministerial Conference.

With this aim, I would like to express the importance of departing from entrenched positions and repeated political statements and get into analysis based on data and evidence to help resolve the discussions, most notably in the Agricultural reform discussion.

Paraguay has always advocated for meaningful reforms in Agriculture and will continue to do so. I thank Ambassador Ford for his efforts towards this goal and appreciate the format proposed for the debate. We would also like to thank the delegations of Canada and Australia for the work they presented in the last CoA SS meeting, which provided interesting data to help further the argumentation in the domestic support pillar.

Though we believe addressing domestic support is very important in this debate, most notably given that in the current international context, some Members have been increasing the levels of support that lead to trade distortion. We are demanders of results in market access and cannot conceive a meaningful reform without progress in this pillar. In this respect, Paraguay will be presenting on JOB/AG/139, co-sponsored by Uruguay, at the next CoA SS meeting and hope Members can engage constructively in the upcoming debate.

Regarding Trade Facilitation, we would like to thank the Secretariat and the Trade Facilitation Facility for the excellent work in organising the last Committee on Trade Facilitation and the thematic Workshop on transit issues. We consider that both activities were a success taking into account the numerous experiences shared by Members on the progress made on the implementation of their commitments related to the TFA.

From the perspective of landlocked developing countries, trade facilitation and transit are of the outmost importance for overcoming the disadvantages our geographical condition presents and in advancing our objective to transform from landlocked to land-linking countries. This transformation will come hand in hand with actions directed to overcome the infrastructure gap and lack of connectivity LLDCs are bound to confront.

In this sense, we would like to congratulate the initiative to establish a Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility Grant Program, which will provide financing for the design and implementation of category C provisions. However, we need to stress the importance of sustainable funding as well as continuous technical assistance of the Secretariat to connect Members with donors and achieve 100% compliance.

Paraguay, as a landlocked developing country, has strived to incorporate concerns in its own proposal for a specific Work Programme for landlocked developing countries in the WTO with a focus on trade facilitation, trade in services, e-commerce, WTO Accession proceedings and Aid for Trade which are a very important toolkit of resources to assist and develop financial as well as technical assistance for these countries.

On systemic issues, we express our deepest concern regarding the current situation of the Appellate Body. We have now entered uncharted territory in the history of the organization with a fourth vacancy at the Appellate Body with the expiration of the term of Mr. Shree Baboo Chekitan Servansing last 30 September. This places an additional constrain on the world trade system and its ability to enforce its rules. Members need to find a negotiated solution to resolve the impasse in filling all vacancies and restore the Appellate Body to its full capacity. In this line, Paraguay welcomes the proposal circulated by Honduras (JOB/DSB/2), which addresses issues regarding Rule 15 of the Appellate Body Working Procedures for Appellate Review. The only way forward is constructive dialogue and real engagement from all WTO Members at the upcoming DSB meetings, starting with the one that will be held on 29 October, when this proposal will be further discussed.

Finally, I would like to express the willingness of my delegation to engage others with respect to their proposals and initiatives regarding a reform process of the WTO. We have taken note of the EU's proposal on the modernization of the WTO and we strongly encourage all Members to engage in a constructive dialogue and exercise aiming towards a meaningful reform. Paraguay will share preliminary comments with the entire Membership regarding this proposal in due course.

We strongly believe that discussions should be conducted in an open and transparent manner, where all Members have the potential to participate. We all have a role to play in the strengthening of a system that has delivered predictability and stability in global trade for seven decades.

Paraguay would like to see a more functional and stronger WTO, one that is able to produce and deliver better results and to ensure that international trade flows as smoothly, predictably and freely as possible.

37. Vanuatu (Pacific Group)

I am delivering this statement on behalf of the Pacific Group. Our Group also supports the statements made by the ACP and the LDC Groups.

Our Group wishes to express to the Director-General our gratitude for his comprehensive report and commend his tireless efforts to support Members in progressing our work. I also wish to thank the Chairs of the Negotiating Group for their reports and for their continuing efforts to try to help Members move the negotiations forward in these trying times. Trying times, because we are witnessing a declining interest in the mandated negotiations and a shift in the emphasis to areas that are not mandated, such as the new issues and more recently, the WTO reforms. There may

be some merit in these areas and we do not doubt their importance, but perhaps we should focus our attention to first delivering on the mandates we have.

In this connection, the Pacific Group has been working actively and constructively within the ACP and the LDC Groups to advance the negotiations on our priorities as mandated by MC11 and in the remaining Doha issues in line with Paragraph 31 of the Nairobi Declaration.

On Fisheries Subsidies, the Pacific Group reiterates the significance of this negotiation to our region. As Small Island Developing States, the fisheries sector is a critically important sector for our livelihood security, as well as our social, economic and sustainable development. The Pacific Islands Forum Leaders' ongoing commitment to the region's Blue Pacific of 2017 and their endorsement of the 2018 Commonwealth's Blue Charter reflect the value and identity we hold to reinforce our shared stewardship of the Pacific Ocean and its sustainable development. We therefore see that the WTO can contribute to that aspiration through disciplines on harmful fisheries subsidies.

In this regard, the Pacific Group remains committed to delivering on the MC11 mandate to conclude an agreement on Fisheries Subsidies in 2019 which is also in keeping with the deadline of SDG 14.6. The Group notes that the current text is heavily bracketed and much work remains to be done to bridge the divergences amongst Members including on fundamental issues. The Group therefore commends the work undertaken in the September cluster, and hopes that work in the remaining months of 2018 will complete the streamlining and move to a consolidated text, deepen the text-based negotiations and translate new ideas from the Incubator Groups to support text-based discussions. The Pacific has always maintained that they are not the cause of overfishing. Therefore, the Pacific Group further underlines that an outcome on Fisheries Subsidies must also respect the mandates of SDG 14.6 and MC11, to provide appropriate and effective special and differential treatment for developing countries, including preserving the sovereign right of Small Island Developing States over their national jurisdictions and support to their development efforts in line with SDG 14.7.

On Development and the SDT proposals of the G-90, the Pacific Group stresses the importance of these proposals in promoting value adding, economic diversification and industrialization of our economies. The Pacific Group encourages Members to find ways to address these proposals in a meaningful way to support and integrate the small and weaker Members like us that are already in the margins of the global trading system.

On Agriculture, the Pacific Group highlights the need to reduce agricultural subsidies that support imbalances in global agriculture trade and continues to support the ACP proposal as providing a way forward for discussions.

Finally, the Pacific Group expresses its commitment to the multilateral rules-based system of the WTO which provides predictability and certainty for all WTO Members. In recent months these rules have come under threat with the continuing trade tensions and counter-measures by major WTO Members as well as informal talks relating to WTO reforms. These developments could inadvertently adversely affect the trade of very small WTO Members like our Group and we encourage the Members concerned to find ways to urgently address these. Any discussions on WTO reforms should not leave anyone behind especially the small and weak.

38. Jamaica

I thank the Director-General for his report. I also wish to convey appreciation to the Chairs of the various Negotiating Groups for their comprehensive reports on their respective mandates.

Background

Developments within the multilateral trading system have presented unique challenges for the functioning of the WTO. Significant divergences exist among Members on very important issues, especially those relating to the successful integration of developing countries and LDCs into the global economy. Unfortunately, as a result of these developments, certain Members have resorted to using unilateral approaches to resolve issues that would more effectively be addressed through dialogue and diplomacy. Added to these developments, some Members are questioning the very ability of this organization to resolve these issues. The WTO has, therefore, found itself at a

crossroads, in which the way forward requires inclusive, open and constructive dialogue among its Membership. Jamaica stands resolute in its conviction that the WTO has the required framework and capacity to resolve trade-related issues of concern to the multilateral trading system.

Trade tensions

Jamaica attaches great importance to the preservation of the multilateral trading system. In this, we are fully cognizant of the fact that trade remains the key pathway to economic growth and, importantly, developing countries' ability to achieve the targets established by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which received the full endorsement and commitment of global leaders in 2015. We know from experience that the impact of trade measures on an unintended target can obliterate decades of progress made by our countries in the area of trade and development. Jamaica is especially mindful that apart from the direct impact on the Members and entities concerned, these measures have indirect and often unintended consequences on other Parties, with devastating consequences. Jamaica therefore supports the call for restraint and reason within the WTO and across the global trading system as we recognise that any escalation will undoubtedly have a de-stabilising effect on global trade and economic growth. The multilateral trading system remains particularly valuable to small, vulnerable developing economies, like Jamaica. It is within this context that Jamaica views unilateralism as a serious systemic risk to the sustainability and operability of the multilateral trading system.

Appellate Body Impasse

Jamaica remains concerned that, to date, we have not been able to resolve the impasse over the filling of vacant seats on the Appellate Body. Jamaica, like all Members, recognises the vital role played by the dispute settlement system of the WTO, the very foundation of this House, and urges that Members redouble their efforts to engage actively and constructively with a view to ensuring the prompt filling of the vacancies on the Appellate Body.

Doha Negotiations

With regard to the Doha Declaration, we take this opportunity to emphasise the importance of arriving at an outcome on Fisheries Subsidies by December 2019, guided by the Mandate issued by Ministers at MC11 in Buenos Aires. Any outcome agreement on fisheries subsidies should allow developing countries the necessary policy space to pursue the sustainable management and development of their fisheries sector, and not create unintended negative impact. Jamaica's participation in the negotiations is critical to safeguard the invaluable contribution of fisheries to national food and nutrition security, job creation and livelihood. During the negotiations, issues of importance to Jamaica are being reiterated. These issues include, coastal states' sovereignty and sovereign rights within their maritime space as enshrined in international law; appropriate special and differential treatment for developing countries and LDCs, and preservation of policy space to allow developing countries to support fisher folk in improving their competitiveness, fishing practices and value-added production.

Jamaica continues to cautiously follow and monitor the operation of the Incubator Group process. We firmly believe that the fisheries subsidies negotiations should be open, transparent and inclusive in order to promote the widest possible ownership of an outcome and that any form of deviation from these principles should be strongly discouraged. Jamaica pledges its cooperation with the Chair's initiative. We expect that the proceedings of the Incubator Group initiative would be open to continuous review and streamlining over the period of its operation, to ensure that it is fulfilling the agreed objectives. Jamaica looks forward to participating in a comprehensive review of the process no later than December 2018, with a view to determining whether the initiative is adding value to the work of the Negotiating Group. We should not hesitate to abandon the process at any time, if deemed necessary.

In the negotiations on agriculture, Jamaica attaches particular importance to outcomes on a Permanent Solution on Public Stockholding for Food Security Purposes, the Special Safeguard Mechanism and Domestic Support, and urges Members to show flexibility towards this end. Agriculture remains the key component of Jamaica's food and nutrition security, and has important essential linkages to other key sectors of the economy on which we depend for foreign exchange earnings, job creation and family welfare, and rural development and transformation. Hence, we have a special interest in stability and predictability in global agricultural trade. The negotiations

on agriculture are also particularly important to the implementation of goals number 1 and 2 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, to which all of our governments aspire.

Services make a vital contribution to Jamaica's economy, accounting for over 70% of GDP and 68% of our labour force. An outcome in the area of Services, including with respect to future work, will provide tangible economic benefits for developing countries like Jamaica. Jamaica is, therefore, disappointed with the pace at which discussions are progressing in the Special Session of the Council on Trade in Services.

On special and differential treatment, we must deepen our engagement in this very important area. The vital link between trade and development is indisputable. We must therefore show flexibility and a willingness to find solutions to the concerns of all Members, particularly those of developing countries and LDCs.

Way forward

The WTO remains indispensable to the multilateral trading system, the global economy and Members' efforts to achieve their national development objectives, as well as the targets of the UN sustainable development goals. As has been said in many fora, "if the WTO did not exist, it would have had to be created". Such an institution is worthy of being preserved, and strengthened, not re-invented. Like other organizations, the WTO is not perfect.

If we decide, however, to take another look at its structure, operation and rules, as well as the heterogeneity of its Membership, inclusiveness, transparency and a willingness to exercise flexibility must form the basis of such discussions.

We must build upon the achievements of the WTO, including the Trade Facilitation Agreement and the amendment to the TRIPS Agreement and constructively engage for the benefit of all, especially the most vulnerable. We must ensure that no Member is left behind.

In closing, Jamaica would like to express its support for the statement made by Haiti on behalf of CARICOM, Malawi on behalf of the ACP Group and Indonesia on behalf the G-33.

39. Russian Federation

I would like to thank the Director-General and the Negotiating Group Chairs for their updates on the state of play.

One month ago, the G20 trade ministers recognised "the urgent need to discuss current events in international trade and ways to improve the WTO to face current and future challenges". They recommended that leaders address these issues at the G20 summit in Buenos Aires in November.

Regarding the first part of this message, we fix the emergence of a new factor influencing world trade. I mean unilateral protectionist actions of a major WTO Member which are contrary to the rules of the multilateral trading system.

At a time when the largest architect, contributor and beneficiary of the system explicitly ignores the general rules of conduct, coordinated efforts of WTO Members are needed to restore the effectiveness of the organization and to minimise the damage caused by unjustified policies.

It is important that our efforts in Geneva be complemented by various international fora. At the G20 Ministerial Meeting in Buenos Aires, Russia suggested that the G20 Working Group on Trade and Investment could serve as a platform for collective decisions and recommendations on how to make the organization work efficiently through greater capital-based officials' involvement. With this in mind, I believe that our work on the future reform should include:

- addressing the policy of some Members of unilateral restrictive measures in violation of the provisions of the WTO agreements to safeguard the system;
- improvement of the functioning of the dispute settlement mechanism of the WTO, including the appointment of Appellate Body members;

- tightening control over implementation of Members' obligations;
- developing new multilateral rules in areas of e-commerce, MSMEs, investment facilitation and services.

Having said that, I would like to stress that Russia welcomes the idea of the WTO improvement. We call upon the proponents to act fast to submit their proposals for the consideration of the whole Membership.

While we examine the reform of the organization, Russia remains committed to advancing the WTO's negotiating agenda. By addressing core issues in Agriculture and Fisheries Subsidies, as well as in other areas, we will ensure that the WTO's trade rules remain relevant for trade in a globalised economy.

Russia welcomes the resumption of agriculture negotiations after the summer break. During the discussions on domestic support in September, Members were involved into deeper interaction with one another. In general, the level of engagement has been constantly improving since last year. We are looking forward to the meeting on market access next week, for which greater level of expertise will be needed.

We appreciate the incubator group process in the fisheries subsidies negotiations under the leadership of Ambassador Roberto Zapata. It proved to be very useful as it provides sufficient transparency for all Members. We should maintain the constructive attitude, while also keeping in mind that the results of our brainstorming exercise should eventually convert into tangible negotiating progress in line with SDG 14.6. Against this backdrop, I hope that after this autumn session, the process will shift gears to a higher mode, and the Group proceed with the future disciplines' architecture.

Russia plays an active role in substantial ongoing efforts under the Buenos Aires "Joint Initiatives" which we look upon as a valuable addition to the multilateral format. We are satisfied with high level of interest shown to e-commerce, domestic regulation in services, MSMEs and investment facilitation and inspire the Membership to engage more.

40. Oman

We would like to join other delegations in thanking the Director-General for his report. We associate our delegation with the statement that will be made by Panama on behalf of Article XII Members.

The WTO has gone through many ups and downs since 1995. From Seattle to Doha to Cancun, then Hong Kong, Geneva to Bali, Nairobi and Buenos Aires. There were times when some Members and civil society organizations thought that WTO is coming to an end. The WTO survived against all odds. Today, the WTO and the multilateral trading system are facing again new challenges. Some say this time it is more serious. It is about the ideology and not only about commercial interests. The basic principles of the WTO's establishment are challenged. The situation in the AB and in some pending issues is worrying so a discussion about WTO reform is welcomed. But it has to be a balanced, transparent and inclusive one. The discussion is going to be a very long, deep, and wide conversation that will have to cover priorities of all Members, and that will require a high level of political guidance and engagement. It will also need proper preparations to avoid repeating past mistakes. There will be a need to look at the current mandates, our achievements, our failures and then conduct an overall evaluation of the situation before we decide how to move forward.

Two tracks process will undermine the multilateral trading system. Protectionism is not the best way to protect any Member's interests. Consensus is the only way to protect the rights and obligations of all Members.

As an Article XII Member that made extensive commitments, Oman believes that we need to address the parity between commitments of Article XII Members and original Members especially developed ones in order to achieve a level playing field. Evaluating Members' commitments and filling in the gaps will be the first step forward towards improvement and correction of the system.

With regards to the ongoing negotiations, Oman would like to thank the Chairpersons of the various Negotiating Groups for their reports. We welcome the positive development in the area of fisheries subsidies negotiations, particularly the employment of novel ways to enhance Members' understanding of complex concepts. As a member of an incubator group, we are pleased to note that discussions in these groups generated a number of useful ideas and enhanced our understanding of Members' positions. Oman has important interests in the fisheries sector which is one of the main sectors that it relies on in its plan to diversify the economy. Members can continue to count on this delegation to participate actively in these negotiations and others.

41. Japan

Japan appreciates the Director-General's report and those provided by the Negotiating Group Chairs.

WTO Reform

I would like to start with a remark on WTO reform. Japan is deeply concerned by the recent escalating tensions surrounding international trade. We firmly believe that all trade measures should be consistent with the WTO Agreement. Having said that, we are all aware of the growing criticism of the WTO's failure to fulfil its intended role. So the key question now is not whether to reform the WTO, but how to reform the WTO.

In this respect, Japan welcomes the various initiatives toward WTO reform that have been proposed in different configurations. One example is the initiative led by Canada, whose efforts we highly appreciate. Japan intends to proactively participate in this initiative, and hopes to engage as many Members as possible in further discussions, thus ensuring transparency and inclusiveness for other WTO Members.

To further strengthen the WTO, in collaboration with the US and the EU, Japan will submit a proposal on strengthening notification requirements to enhance transparency for the purpose of improving the monitoring function of the WTO. We intend to further improve the proposals through consultations with the Members. To this end, we have already begun reaching out to Members.

In order for the WTO to remain relevant, we need to modernise it in response to today's changing environment and needs. "The World Trade Report 2018", published by the WTO Secretariat this month, has analysed the impact of digitalization on trade as well as its implications for the WTO. The report was most helpful to understand recent trends in trade, trade policy issues and the multilateral trading system, and Japan would like to compliment the staff of the WTO Secretariat on their dedicated work.

In the same vein, the Public Forum has not only demonstrated the high expectations of the business community toward the WTO, but also convinced us once again that the WTO must be capable of responding to the needs of the business community in order to remain relevant. In this regard, in addition to reinvigorating the 1998 Work Programme on E-Commerce, Japan intends to accelerate the exploratory work toward future WTO negotiations with the participation of as many Members as possible, while ensuring openness and transparency.

Japan notes that positive progress has been made in the active discussions that have been held in some of the other areas. For instance, on Fisheries Subsidies, we are encouraged by the collective effort being made by the Members in the aim of contributing to the sustainability of fisheries resources by harnessing trade disciplines as enshrined in target 14.6 of the SDGs.

Concerns about the Dispute Settlement System

Let me briefly turn to the WTO dispute settlement system. As we all know, as of 1 October, the number of Appellate Body members is down to three, the minimum number required for the Appellate Body to hear an appeal under the DSU. This is against the backdrop of an ever-increasing caseload that reached 11 appeals at the end of last month. Should the Appellate Body cease to operate, the entire dispute settlement system could be brought to a halt. In short, the WTO dispute settlement system is in a critical condition, and all WTO Members' serious engagement and collective actions are urgently required.

On that note, Japan is encouraged by the increasing engagement of the other WTO Members in our common endeavour to find a concrete solution to the challenge we are facing. Japan will continue to work with interested WTO Members to restore the proper functioning of the WTO dispute settlement system, including the Appellate Body.

42. Uganda

I would like to thank the Director-General for his report. My delegation also appreciates the Chairs of the different Negotiating Groups for their efforts to move the negotiating work forward.

At the outset, my delegation aligns itself with the statements made by South Africa on behalf of the African Group, Malawi on behalf of the ACP Group, Chad on behalf of the Central African Republic for the LDCs, and Indonesia on behalf of the G-33.

The WTO was created principally to ensure that trade flows as smoothly, predictably and freely as possible among its Members. True to that, the WTO, as for over two decades, provided an avenue especially for the resolution of trade disputes without resort to global war or violence. This same avenue has prevented protectionism with all its repercussions on the development and growth of various economies.

It is however important to stress that the many successes recorded by this organization over the period of time have not been by chance but rather by a great deal of and commendable respect for and careful observation of all rules pertaining to this organization by all stakeholders. Unfortunately, the smooth, predictable and free-trading environment that has been facilitated by this organization through its rules is being threatened by the actions of some of those that have benefitted from them the most.

Interestingly, it is puzzling that those Members who for long have opposed adjustment to the rules even in the face of clear Ministerial Mandates are now championing ideas for fundamental changes to the same rules in advocating for the new rules and reforms which will only result in further marginalization of some of our economies.

On the question of reform, I would like to assure that my delegation is not objectionable to the reforms per se. My delegation objects to any kind of reform conceived to meet individual, selfish motives. It has taken us about over seventy years to think about reforms of the United Nations. It is only now that we are trying to take measures to carry out some reforms. For the WTO, it is now about twenty years and we are talking of reforms. My delegation hopes that the reforms we want will be those that will help us accelerate the finalization of unfinished mandates of the DDA. For example, I would very happily hear about the reform which can enable us to know how best we can handle the SDT proposals which have alluded us for quite a long time. Any idea of reform that shall circumscribe the DDA's unfinished agenda will not of course be acceptable.

We cannot deny the fact that the benefits of multilateral trade have not been shared equally by all participating Members. Some of our countries continue to lag behind in the face of challenges arising from relatively small domestic markets with the high dependence on imported goods, technologies and management practices as well as general lack of the financial and human resources required to actively pursue the innovation in the midst of reduced development cooperation. The ultimate question for us is how to move up the global value chains or facilitate industrial enhancement.

In our efforts to address these challenges and answer these questions, my delegation attaches great importance to the WTO and the opportunities that it represents. This explains why we have consistently pushed for the preservation of policy space in negotiations. And it is in this spirit that my delegation has always questioned the essence of negotiating new rules when the enforcement mechanism of already existing rules is in shambles. Today, my delegation wishes to emphasise and put the same question to this Council for consideration.

In the same vein, my delegation continues to reaffirm all outstanding multilateral Ministerial Mandates and urge Members to pursue the full implementation of all decisions agreed to by all Members. In this regard, my delegation stressed the critical importance of full implementation of all decisions in favour of LDCs including Article 67 of the TRIPS Agreement which requires developed country Members to provide technical, financial cooperation in favour of developing and

least-developed country Members in order to facilitate the implementation of the agreement. Furthermore, we urge Members to give positive consideration to the proposal by the LDC Group on Article 66.2 of the TRIPS Agreement in the TRIPS Council.

Regarding the Ministerial Decision on the Implementation of Preferential Treatment in favour of Services and Services Suppliers of LDCs and Increasing LDCs' Participation in Services Trade contained in WT/MIN(15)/W/39, in order to achieve the most out of this decision, my delegation urges Members to move fast to initiate the process of review of the notified preferences in the CTS as mandated by the decision.

Similarly, my delegation recalls Paragraph 44 of the Doha Mandate to review the special and differential provisions with the view to strengthen them and make them more precise, effective and operational in the CTD SS.

Finally, my delegation would caution that inward-looking solutions are not the way for this great organization. Multilateralism must be strengthened to work and work for all. It is indeed insincere to castigate unilateral protectionist measures of one Member in one breath and at the same time advocate for a so-called flexible multilateralism all the while proclaiming a commitment not to leave anyone behind. Words must be followed by actions in the correct way and that is how we will ensure the trade benefits for all.

43. Angola

My delegation aligns itself with the statements made by South Africa on behalf of the African Group, Chad on behalf of the LDCs, and Malawi on behalf of the ACP Group.

I would like to thank the Director-General for his report on the state of the negotiations as well as the Chairs of the Negotiating Groups for their comprehensive reports.

May I emphasise that governments have the primary responsibility for national development. In fact, in some countries such as Angola, the government intervenes in the economy for example by trying permanently to target national resources from the low value-added sectors to higher productivity ones. It is therefore crucial to ensure the State's ability to promote development policies in the interest of its people.

We also consider fundamental the balance between our international obligations and commitments with provision of an adequate policy space guaranteed by special and differential treatment provisions. Political space is central to us developing countries as recognised in Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Agenda for Financing for Development and it allows us to define our national priorities according to our own interests while ensuring our active participation in the multilateral trading system.

We believe that the existing WTO Agreements characterised by benefit imbalance in favour of developed countries have not been truly able to cope with special needs of certain countries such as the LDCs. Existing provisions of SDT and future provisions strengthening them and making them more precise, effective and operational as mandated by Paragraph 44 of the Doha Ministerial Declaration partially attenuate the imbalance of existing agreements. Therefore, any reform of the multilateral trading system in this area must take into account of this reality and respect the mandate for the development of this negotiation round. As highlighted in the ACP Group's statement, we believe that the G-90 proposal on special and differential treatment should be given priority.

Finally, we call for an intensification of our negotiation work in order to achieve respective progress especially on issues crucial to development. In this line, we consider essential to fulfil the mandate of the Ministers to conclude the negotiation on fisheries subsidies by end of next year. For Angola, the negotiation must preserve sustainability, develop our fishing industry – mainly artisanal and for subsistence. We also believe that it is important that common ideas and understandings shared during informal meetings as well as during thematic seminars and workshops related to issues under negotiation are reflected in Member's position during the discussion of the text proposals.

Recent discussions in the CoA SS have shown once again that majority of Members consider the reform trade-distorting domestic support including the elimination of AMS entitlements for

developed countries as extremely important and should move to the phase of text-based negotiations as soon as possible.

44. Nepal

I thank the Director-General for his opening statement and briefing. I also thank the negotiating Group Chairs for their reports.

My delegation associates itself with the statement delivered by the Central African Republic as the coordinator of the LDC Group.

Rules-based international trade and the WTO system of global economic governance have contributed significantly to global economic growth, job creation and poverty reduction, and can further play a crucial role in achieving inclusive prosperity and development in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The LDCs, the most disadvantaged and least integrated economies among the WTO Members, are looking for more opportunities in trade in order to step up on the development ladder. However, the escalation of global trade tensions rising into trade wars and possibility of another round of recession have posed serious threats to the functioning of the multilateral trading system and severely impacted the interests of the poorer countries which are least integrated into the system.

The relevance and credibility of the WTO in an age of hyper globalization is not an issue to be questioned but in reality it is being severely challenged. Strengthening the WTO is extremely important for all WTO Members as it has far reaching implications in the growth and expansion of international trade, global economy and achieving the commitments of internationally agreed development frameworks such as the SDGs and the Istanbul Programme of Action for LDCs.

The LDCs, including my country, are faithful supporters of the rules-based multilateral trading system and it should deliver to them. The LDCs want our economic development to be inclusive and sustainable, enabled by more thriving trade, particularly export trade. We are however suffering from structural constraints, low productivity, low value addition and primary product traps in our export markets. As a shared responsibility, it must be acknowledged that the basic objectives of the Marrakesh Agreement establishing the WTO have not been materialised in the case of LDCs.

Without export promotion, increased productive capacity building, industrialization, diversification and structural transformation of the economy of the most disadvantaged group of countries, achieving globally agreed objectives and commitments would be a far cry.

Rapid advancement in science and technology, rise in digital trade, global value chains and services trade, and renewed interests in industrialization have brought with them new challenges and opportunities to Members commensurate with the level of their development. They need to be reflected in an inclusive manner in the revitalization of the WTO.

In this context, my delegation believes that strengthening the three pillars of the WTO system to render them fully functional in the interests of all Members is of vital importance. Strengthening the dispute settlement pillar by fixing the impasse in the WTO dispute settlement system should get our priority. Similarly, reinforcement of the negotiating pillar with a balanced approach between Doha and new issues in an open-ended and outcome-oriented manner is fundamentally important. Likewise, the transparency and monitoring mechanism has to be strengthened.

The second aspect is focused on the implementation of the past decisions and declaration in letter and spirit to deliver results. The LDC-related past decisions including DFQF, preferential rules of origin, preferential treatment to the services and services providers of the LDCs, technology transfer, among others need considerable focus for results on the ground. The international support mechanisms need to go hand in hand to intensify implementation.

Development should be at the centre of WTO revitalization and reform. The special and differential treatment should be an integral part of WTO rules to provide intended benefits, particularly to the low-income countries. Accordingly, the process of the WTO reform should be bottom-up, participatory and transparent. Such reform should support industrialization, job creation, export promotion, enhancing productive capacity and standard of living of low-income countries.

Finally, my delegation looks for a balanced, equitable and inclusive process in the interest of the LDCs in revitalising and taking the WTO and the multilateral trading system forward.

45. Trinidad & Tobago

We thank the Director-General for convening this meeting and for the report on his activities since we last met in this format. We again express our appreciation for this expression of transparency. I also wish to thank the Chairpersons of the Negotiating Groups for their comprehensive reports.

The positions of Trinidad and Tobago remain firmly aligned with those expressed through the groupings to which we belong. At this juncture, my delegation endorses statements delivered on behalf of the CARICOM, the ACP Group of States and the G-33.

As a Small Island Developing State, I must emphasise that development issues are crucial and remain of significant interest to my delegation and other developing countries. We are concerned that trade is not inclusive for all Members. We need to achieve progress under the Doha Development Agenda mandate and we must respect the centrality of development in the work of our organization. The importance of Special and Differential Treatment in economic development must not be challenged. All Members must give priority to this critical area. Provisions for Special and Differential Treatment are an integral part of the WTO Agreements and we hope that there will be more positive engagement from all Members.

In the area of E-Commerce, we recognise its potential as a driver for economic growth and we welcome the information sharing and exploratory discussions. While it is accepted that E-Commerce has the potential to enhance the competitiveness and efficiency of firms and also promote new economic opportunities, as a country we see the need to secure policy space to develop responses to digitization, data localization, data flows etc. We continue to work on implementing our legal and regulatory framework to encourage and protect businesses and consumers using E-Commerce.

We commend the work being done in the area of women and trade and congratulate the WTO on a successful, relevant and thought-provoking Public Forum.

In Agriculture, we have noted the direction proposed by the Chair of the Committee on Agriculture in Special Session, as presented for the period September to December 2018, and support the continuation of agriculture negotiations within the framework of addressing the needs of Small, Vulnerable Economies.

One area where we have seen some progress and engagement is in the area of Fisheries Subsidies negotiations. We would wish to see intensified engagement from all Members, mindful that appropriate and effective special and differential treatment for developing country Members and least developed country Members should be an integral part of the negotiations. We look forward to the incubator group process having a positive effect on our deliberations.

With respect to the grave situation facing the Dispute Settlement Mechanism with the ongoing impasse, we encourage Members to work together to achieve an acceptable outcome in the shortest possible time.

We have heard the informal calls from some quarters for reform in this organization and we would urge that any consideration of this idea must be centred on ways to meaningfully make trade inclusive for all Members, regardless of size or circumstance and thereby contribute to development.

Allow me to reiterate Trinidad and Tobago's commitment to a rules-based multilateral trading system that is predictable, transparent, consensus-based and which supports inclusive growth and development.

46. Cambodia

I thank the Director-General for his report and for his great effort to move the negotiations forward. I would also thank the Chairs of Negotiating Groups for their updates.

Cambodia associates itself with the statement made by Chad on behalf of the LDCs.

I would like to re-emphasise that my delegation strongly supports the WTO multilateral trading system. It plays a very crucial role in promoting economic development, creating jobs, reducing poverty and boosting growth of global trade.

As we are in the weakest group in this house, Cambodia counts on trade preference as well as special and differential treatment as important tools to reach our development goals. In this regard, my delegation urges Members to pay more attention to the submission of the LDC Group and call upon Members to speed up and fully implement previous mandates and decisions for LDCs particularly those Members who have been providing and notifying their preferential rules of origin, Services Waiver and DFQF.

On the way forward, we would like to request that any outcome resulting from WTO negotiations especially on the possible reform must be maintained and include the benefits and interests of the LDCs.

With regard to the dispute settlement system, my delegation appreciates Members for their efforts in the WTO discussion and negotiations. We support and encourage Members to find win-win solutions for the Selection of Appellate Body members without delay.

Finally, we look forward to working closely with all Members to achieve meaningful outcomes and to keep the well-functioning of this organization.

47. Hong Kong, China

I thank the Director-General and the Chairs of the various Negotiating Groups for the reports.

It is encouraging to see a lot of hard work being done to advance the Fisheries negotiations, both in terms of finding creative solutions through the incubator groups, and in terms of streamlining the negotiation text. Hong Kong, China is mindful that we have a deadline of 2019 to meet. We will continue to contribute to the negotiations and work towards this common goal.

Hong Kong, China is a well-known demandeur of Services negotiations. Together with other like-minded Members, we have been trying to advance the negotiations on Domestic Regulations, by intensifying text-based discussions and resolving differences, so that a more mature proposal can, in due course, be made available to the broader Membership. We also support the proposal jointly made by Chile, Panama, Mexico and New Zealand to reinvigorate Services market access discussions in the WTO. We believe the WTO has the capacity, and indeed, a need, to re-engage in market access negotiations, so that Members can continue to add value to their commitments.

At the same time, we are party to some of the Joint Statement initiatives which seek to address issues pertinent to trade in the 21st century. Thanks to the dedication and leadership of the coordinators, the exploratory talks on e-commerce are making good progress. Hong Kong, China has been an active participant and looks forward to the discussion entering the next phase when we will have greater clarity on what specific elements to work on as well as when and how negotiations will be conducted.

Apart from e-commerce, Hong Kong, China also supports the structured discussions on Investment Facilitation and MSMEs. Although I did not personally attend the High-Level Forum in Astana, I would like to congratulate Kazakhstan on the success of this event. Investment Facilitation, like e-commerce and MSMEs, are initiatives open to the entire Membership. Events like the High-Level Forum, the many sessions in the WTO Public Forum, and the upcoming e-commerce/MSMEs workshop on 31 October, all testify to the groups' rigorous outreaching efforts. Hong Kong, China encourages Members who have not yet participated in these initiatives to join us, so that you can also play a constructive role in shaping the multilateral outcomes.

Hong Kong, China engages in these negotiations and discussions with enthusiasm, not because we think everything is fine, or that it is just business as usual. No. We know the system is undergoing difficult times but it is precisely because of that that we have to keep the WTO going – keep the system valuable and relevant despite the challenges we face.

We have been talking about challenges for some time already. Have things improved since the summer break? Not really. Global trade tensions have not eased. Large-scale unilateral measures are still in force. Vacancies in the Appellate Body have only increased. This is deeply troubling. This is not right and cannot be the new norm.

Hong Kong, China insists that Members should take their WTO commitments seriously, and should not test the limits of the multilateral trading system with unjustified unilateral actions. The WTO is and must remain a rules-based organization. Obligations must be honoured and Appellate Body vacancies must be filled without further delay.

I am sure Hong Kong, China is not alone in wanting to preserve and strengthen the system. Many Members who have voiced concerns about the current situation and hope to find solutions through reforms share this aim.

If we recognise that the WTO is not perfect, that there is room for improvement and that any healthy organization has to constantly review its operations to keep up with the times, then we should be prepared to consider reforms with a positive attitude and an open mind.

The EU has put up a comprehensive proposal. Canada is leading a similar discussion. Hong Kong, China sees value in having all these conversations. There is an imminent need to introduce changes, to make the WTO more efficient, effective and relevant.

I do not intend to comment on the specifics here but I can share with you what Hong Kong, China believes is important in taking these conversations forward.

First, it is important that we build our proposals on shared values. Fundamental to this is our trust in multilateralism and our respect for international cooperation. We can call the WTO reform a success if it is achieved by all of us working together for the public good. It cannot be a success if we end up generating greater discord, division and mistrust.

Second, it is important that there is engagement across the membership, and that this is done in a transparent and inclusive manner. For an institutional reform that affects all WTO Members, we are accountable to the Membership as a whole, not just to Members who have particular concerns to address or particular interests to pursue. In defining our future partnership, every Member should have a say.

Third, it is important that we debate rationally, without prejudice and without coercion. Many of the reform proposals have far-reaching implications for the system and for its Members. If stakeholders are not truly convinced of the necessity and the merits of these proposals, it will be difficult to expect effective implementation down the road.

Now that the modernization proposals have been put forward, it is time for all Members to reflect deeply on them and try to work our way through. Hong Kong, China appreciates the efforts of the proponents, and will participate actively in the process.

48. Panama (Article XII Members)

I am speaking on behalf of the Group of Article XII Members.

Three months have passed since our last TNC meeting and our work as a Group has not stopped. We have continued holding meetings in an array of subjects with other Members including the participation of many Members in Astana last month at the 7th China Round Table. Our Group remains committed to strengthening the multilateral trading system and to a more open and balanced trade.

Wide gaps remain between the concessions made by the Group of Article XII Members and the original Members of the WTO. We must address these important differences to achieve a level and fair playing field for all Members.

Notwithstanding the individual positions of Article XII Members in the Agriculture negotiations, it is undisputable that no Article XII Member has nearly the same amount of entitlements in domestic support as the original WTO Members. The disparity in Agriculture Market Access is even more

striking. The average agriculture bound tariff of the original Members of 60% is four times higher than that of the Article XII Members.

We find analogous situations in Non-Agriculture Market Access. The average bound tariff of all original Members at 34% is three times the average of Article XII Members. In terms of bound coverage Article XII Members have 100% coverage. This is not the case for many of the original Members whose binding coverage average is 74.5%, and only 37 of the original Members have 100% coverage.

In Services, Article XII Members on average have commitments in 107 sectors, whereas the average original Member has commitments in 42. The average non-Article XII Developing Member has commitments in 44 sectors, and the average non-Article XII developed Members has 94. Article XII Members have also undertaken more commitments in virtually every subsector.

The data is clear. Article XII Members have made larger and more extensive commitments than the original Members. These gaps will surely widen as the currently acceding governments are asked to leap over an ever-higher bar of commitments in their path to WTO Membership.

We must continue our work to strengthen all sectors and pillars of our multilateral trading system and part of this work must address the imbalances in the commitments of all Members. This can only be achieved through the promotion of dialogue, inclusiveness and the sharing of information amongst the entire Membership. Our group stands ready also to promote the accessions of new Members in any way we can.

I take this opportunity to reiterate our group's commitment to a successful outcome in the ongoing negotiations to ensure fair play conditions for different groups of WTO Members.

49. Panama

Panama is ready to achieve extensive progress in the services and agriculture sectors under the integrated agenda, as well as in other areas such as e-commerce.

The negotiations on services are a neglected part of the built-in agenda of the WTO Agreements, which is why we are seeking, together with Chile, Mexico and New Zealand, to initiate exploratory discussions on market access.

In agriculture, in addition to adopting new disciplines, it is important for Members to work on the ground with existing disciplines. We feel that notifications and transparency in this sector are a high priority, and we have shown this through compliance with our notification commitments.

In the negotiations to eliminate fisheries subsidies, together with five other Latin American countries we have worked extensively on an equitable, effective and transparent proposal to establish disciplines on fisheries subsidies. We thank the Chairman for the work programme and for all his efforts to help narrow the gap between positions by introducing new ideas. Still, we must not leave aside the progress achieved in the negotiations as reflected in the discussion texts which are part of the Buenos Aires mandate. We believe that all efforts must focus on moving forward on the basis of those texts.

We are aware of the Members' interest and concern when it comes to addressing issues that would enable us to modernise and adapt our organization to current trends.

However, we must avoid repeating past errors: any initiative in favour of dialogue on improvement is welcome, and it is crucial that such processes should guarantee the participation of all WTO Members, without distinction as to their level of development and regardless of the size of their economy or their share in world trade.

Having said this, we reaffirm our readiness to participate in any discussions that will enrich and strengthen the multilateral trading system.

50. Kenya

My delegation associates itself with the statements delivered by Malawi, South Africa and Indonesia on behalf of the ACP, African Group and the G-33 respectively.

We thank the Director-General for his comprehensive report and the Chairs of various Negotiating Groups for their updates on the state of on-going discussions and consultations on various subjects, under consideration.

Kenya is concerned that increased protectionism by some Members and the current stalemate in the Dispute Settlement Body will have a detrimental effect on the multilateral trading system. We therefore urge all Members to engage constructively to unblock the current impasse in the DSB, to allow the process for the appointment of new Appellate Body members to commence.

We also note that little progress has been achieved in the negotiations since MC11. This is partly due to the entrenched positions of Members. However, we remain committed to constructive engagement with all Members based on the mandated issues.

On specific issues under negotiation, Agriculture is of key interest to Kenya. Domestic Support in agriculture is a priority for my Government and therefore we expect concrete results in this area. We are also looking forward to fruitful deliberations on the issue of Public Stockholding for Food Security that will lead to an agreement on a permanent solution without any further delay.

On Fisheries Subsidies, we are pleased by the progress made and commit to participate constructively in the negotiations to achieve a demonstrable outcome on Fisheries Subsidies in line with the 2019 Buenos Aires mandate and the 2020 deadline for SDG 14.6. An outcome on fisheries should contain tangible Special and Differential Treatment provisions that will support and facilitate current international efforts towards exploiting the "Blue Economy" for jobs and wealth creation. In that regard, we call upon Members to focus greater efforts on text-based discussions and finding ways of integrating the ideas generated by the informal Incubator Group discussions into the work process.

On Development, we note the concern about the lack of progress in the Special and Differential Treatment negotiations. This is an important area of interest to Kenya. Our position is that the G-90 proposals tabled in 2017 remain the basis for discussions. However, we are open to any proposals, suggestions and new ways that could help unlock the current stalemate. We therefore appeal for understanding and flexibility on the part of the Membership in order to realise real progress on S&DT to allow the most vulnerable Members to benefit from such provisions.

We further highlight the initiative by Canada, in which Kenya is participating, on building consensus on how to strengthen the WTO and modernise the trade rules to address the 21st century challenges facing the multilateral trading system. In that regard, we are of the view that it is important to seek ways to strike a balance on the process and approach to achieve the desired outcomes. We nevertheless maintain our position which is strongly in support of the multilateral approach that provides for inclusivity, transparency and is led by developmental concerns.

In conclusion, as has already been mentioned by the representative of Canada, Kenya will be co-hosting together with Canada and Japan, the Sustainable Blue Economy Conference in Nairobi from 26 to 28 November. The Conference is also being co-sponsored by Portugal, Norway, the United Kingdom, Fiji, China and the EU. This will be the first global conference on the sustainable blue economy which is expected to bring participants together to discuss ways of harnessing the potential of our oceans, seas, lakes, and rivers to improve the lives of all, particularly people leaving in developing countries, women and the youth. The Conference will also provide an opportunity to leverage the latest scientific advances and best practises to build prosperity, while conserving our waters for future generations.

We will share more information about the Conference later this week.

51. Egypt

Egypt would like to associate itself with the statement of South Africa on behalf of the African Group, and would like to thank the Director-General and the Chairs of Negotiating Groups for their efforts and updated reports.

- Egypt considers that the well-functioning of the WTO Dispute Settlement System – including of its Appellate Body – is a key priority for the multilateral trading system.
- We stress on the importance of transparency, inclusiveness and building trust regarding any calls or initiatives. More importantly, is the need for proper policy space and effective treatment to address the developmental needs of developing countries.
- Egypt reiterate its continued openness and willingness to engage with the Director-General and all esteemed Members, collectively and individually, to discuss our fundamental priorities and concerns.

One Final note and Announcement

From 11-17 December, in collaboration with the African Union and the African Ex-Im Bank, Egypt will host The Intra-African Trade Fair, the first of its kind in Africa, that provides a platform for sharing trade, investment and market information and enabling buyers and sellers, investors and countries to meet, discuss and conclude business deals.

Analysis by the African Ex-Im Bank shows that one of the main reasons why intra-African trade is low at around 15% compared to Europe (59%), Asia (51%), and North America (37%) is because of lack of access to trade and market information.

An African Trade Ministerial Meeting and Intra-African Trade Finance and Payments Conference will run alongside the Exhibition.

Egypt welcomes everyone to join and participate in these important meetings.

52. Plurinational State of Bolivia

We would like to express our sincere thanks for the report submitted.

While we welcome the optimism and enthusiasm demonstrated to ensure that the WTO continues to make progress, we consider that we are now witnessing one of the most critical moments since the establishment of the organization.

The critical juncture at which the WTO finds itself is due, among other factors, to the obstruction of the mechanism that ensures the authority of trade rules. We consider that we must prioritise discussions on resolving the Appellate Body issue.

The delicate situation faced by multilateralism with regard to addressing world trade challenges was not caused by institutional weaknesses in the organization or intrinsic shortcomings in the agreed system of trade rules, but rather by attitudes favouring plurilateral discussions that exclude countries representing the majority of the world population and those representing populations with the greatest needs.

Ten years ago, the President of Bolivia, H.E. Evo Morales Ayma, sent a letter to this organization and reminded it that, "The respect for and the peaceful and harmonious complementarity of different cultures and economies are essential to save the planet, humanity and life."

Making trade a plurilateral matter means revisiting the ghosts that threaten global peace and the system of trade rules.

We have always criticised the imbalance in the organization caused by trade rules that have not taken into account the situation of developing countries. However, this does not mean that we could agree to eliminate multilateralism.

Our criticism of the WTO's historical debt regarding development has no connection with the implementation of ideas that are not conducive to fostering consensus and the participation of all Members. We consider that multilateralism is the only path to building a fairer global society.

The Doha framework must be the substantive basis of the organization's work in order to achieve results which are balanced and which meet the development needs of its Members.

53. Ecuador

We thank the Director-General and the Chairs of the different negotiating bodies for their reports on the current state of play in the discussions.

I would like to begin this statement by emphasising the importance that Ecuador gives to the multilateral trading system as the cornerstone of international relations and, therefore, of negotiations in this organization.

Many developing countries have expressed their disagreement with some of the outcomes of the system, such as the regressive impact on income distribution, the scant consideration given to development and the lack of compromise demonstrated by various Members in response to efforts to move forward with issues on the Doha Development Agenda. However, we have not dismissed multilateralism. We have participated actively in the different negotiating committees and processes, and have promoted an agenda that would resolve the issues faced by developing and least-developed countries.

My country has been a Member of this organization since 1996. At that time, we acceded to an organization founded upon the adoption of decisions by consensus and the provision of benefits to developing countries in particular.

It is for this reason that we are now deeply concerned by the proposals that seek to change the rules of a game that we have been playing for over 20 years. Changing conditions that, at the minimum, seek to ensure a level playing field for developing and least developed countries is not acceptable by any standards.

We are also concerned by the emergence of a narrative which describes the existence of 164 Members as a "problem". In this regard, we kindly draw your attention to the recent report published by the IMF, World Bank and WTO Secretariat which not only reflects this stance, but also appears to legitimise it. The Secretariat plays a fundamental role in this organization and we must preserve its independence and protect it from any pressure that may exist.

In any case, we remain concerned that there are positions – even though they exist in the informal space that we occupy today – which seek to change the navigation chart of the WTO without first addressing the most serious issue in this organization, which is the progressive paralysis of the Dispute Settlement Body. I cannot overstate the importance of this Body for small economies, which enables them to address issues with their trading partners. We cannot hope to radically change the pillars of the system when, even as we speak, the dispute settlement function is under serious threat and is becoming gradually weaker.

In this regard, we fully agree with the countries that consider that we must initiate, without delay, the process to appoint the Appellate Body members and unblock the procedure, before substantively addressing the observations made by one Member on the functioning of the Dispute Settlement Understanding.

Lastly, our negotiating positions are well-known. The reform of the agricultural sector is a promise which has been made to developing countries by the multilateral trading system since before the Uruguay Round, and which has been renewed in the Doha Development Agenda and the outcomes of the succeeding Ministerial Conferences. Ecuador is participating with interest and openness in the analytical exercises based on the figures submitted by several Members. However, we hope that we will soon be able to begin negotiations on the basis of the concrete proposals that have been placed on the table, in order to make use of the time remaining before the Twelfth Ministerial Conference.

As regards the negotiations on fisheries subsidies, Ecuador considers that it is necessary for Members to determine which approach to take (list versus effects) as soon as possible, with a view to promptly initiating the negotiations on the basis of document 274. The disciplines must take into consideration the specific realities and needs of all Members, particularly those for whom, like Ecuador, fishing is a development tool and an opportunity to improve living conditions for individuals, mainly those with limited resources and whose livelihoods depend on this activity. The disciplines must therefore clearly contain elements for the protection of small scale fishing, as well as special and differential treatment, thus protecting the necessary domestic policy space.

54. Singapore

Singapore reiterates our call for the majors to find ways for mutual accommodation that are WTO-consistent to de-escalate current trade tensions which show little signs of abating.

We appreciate the Director-General's untiring efforts in the interest of the system, particularly in these difficult times. The professional and quality work of the Secretariat, including its useful analytical reports, contribute immeasurably to our deliberations.

During the Conference in Bali on 10 October, jointly organised by the IMF-WB-WTO-OECD, the Director-General said that "(t)he trading system is not perfect – but it represents the best efforts of governments around the world, working together for 70 years, to find ways to cooperate on trade issues. (...) The system has real value. So we have to keep working at it."¹

There are signs that Members are indeed "working at it". Various conversations to strengthen the WTO are taking place, such as at the G20;² the trilateral meetings of the EU, Japan and the US;³ the joint EU-China working group on WTO reform; and the Canada-led initiative, which Singapore is participating in. The EU has released its concept paper on "WTO Modernization". A new Global Dialogue on Trade platform⁴ was launched by the ICC, the WTO, the OECD and regional development banks for multilateral institutions, think tanks and businesses from around the world to get in on this debate.

Within the WTO, reform was a key topic for discussion at the Public Forum, and at recent meetings of the Informal Group of Developing Countries, and the WTO Commonwealth Members Caucus. Honduras has tabled a paper at the DSB on "Fostering a Discussion on the Functioning of the Appellate Body". We look forward to more of such proposals to facilitate the WTO Membership's focused engagement in understanding the various issues at stake and developing solutions to them. All Members have a role to play, though the majors have a particular responsibility in leading and proposing feasible and pragmatic solutions.

Singapore recognises that the rules-based multilateral trading system, embodied by the WTO, is facing critical challenges that are either longstanding or new. We therefore welcome any good faith discussions, including those conducted in the various small group initiatives as they could be more efficient. However, we also recognise that for any solutions to be considered legitimate, they must have the participation and endorsement of the wider Membership. This is one of the reasons why Australia, Japan and Singapore, as co-convenors of the joint statement initiative on e-commerce, have emphasised openness and transparency in the exploratory work with a view to future negotiations.

For the preservation of the system and the global public good, Members need to think longer term, and not only short-term expediencies and the pursuits of narrowly defined national interests. Being open to exploring fresh ideas and approaches which are presented in good faith is key if we want to see breakthroughs on core areas, including for fisheries subsidies, agriculture, development, and emerging issues. We reiterate our call for the selection process to fill the Appellate Body vacancies to proceed immediately and unconditionally.

¹ Speech by DG Roberto Azevedo, IMF-WB-WTO-OECD Conference "How Global Trade can Promote Growth for All", 10 October 2018, Indonesia.

² "Ministerial Statement", G20 Trade and Investment Ministerial Meeting, 14 September 2018, Argentina.

³ "Joint Statement on Trilateral Meeting of the Trade Ministers of the United States, Japan, and the European Union", 25 September 2018, US.

⁴ "Unique Business Initiative to Support Reform Process of Multilateral Rules-Based System Launched", ICC, 10 October 2018, Indonesia.

55. Pakistan

We thank the Director-General and the Chairs of various Negotiating Groups for their reports.

On systemic issues, Pakistan would like to express its concerns on the continuously escalating trade tensions and unilateralism between major trading partners. Such developments not only threaten the multilateral trading system, but also hurt development efforts of developing countries by disproportionately affecting the poor and vulnerable.

The global economy can ill afford a trade war which has the potential to blow into a global crisis. Members must make efforts to de-escalate tensions and promote global economic recovery, and not go against it.

The WTO's dispute settlement mechanism is a highly effective and technically sound system which adjudicates on technical matters without impacting political relationships between Members. Along with its Appellate Body, it is an excellent mechanism for addressing the recent trade tensions. Particularly, for small and vulnerable countries, the DSB presents an opportunity to redress their concerns in an amicable manner. We must make efforts to safeguard this system along with other fundamental pillars of the multilateral trading system.

Discussions on the reform of the WTO are gaining currency. We must ensure that the proposed attempts at reform do not tilt the balance of rules and obligations against development and developing countries. Fundamentally, while contemplating new rules, care should be taken to address the pending agenda of the WTO *vis-à-vis* developing countries and no new rules should be developed which would make it more burdensome for developing countries to achieve their objectives of sustainable economic development in their countries.

Regarding ongoing negotiations, Agriculture reforms is a priority for Pakistan and we expect substantive results in this area. We would like to express our satisfaction over the process being followed in special sessions currently. We expect that the future discussions will be transparent and inclusive as well. In our opinion, we should first discuss the existing asymmetries in the agriculture agreement and try to remove them. For us, trade distorting AMS is an anomaly and should be eliminated. In our view, if we could successfully eliminate these glaring anomalies then we would be able to create a conducive environment for a further look into possible reforms based on current trends.

Pakistan is also concerned with the demands for equal contributions by all Members irrespective of their level of development. We cannot simply ignore the principle of Special and Differential Treatment for all developing countries particularly for LDCs and NFIDCs. It is a basic pillar of the multilateral trading system – one that symbolises the WTO.

Pakistan believes that an outcome on cotton is vital for improving the credibility of the multilateral trading system. We achieved some success in Nairobi but more must be done to address distortions to trade caused by government support programs to cotton producers specially in developed countries. In our opinion, we should start by reduction in the trade distorting cotton specific domestic support in the form of AMS with the aim of eliminating it completely.

We are satisfied with our progress so far on Fisheries Subsidies in the Negotiating Group on Rules. We would like to particularly appreciate the Incubator Group process followed in the last cluster. Many interesting options came out of these brainstorming sessions which in our view will help to break the impasse in the future. We will continue to participate constructively in the upcoming work in the fisheries subsidies clusters.

On E-Commerce, Pakistan wishes to continue its positive engagement in the multilateral Work Programme mandated by the Ministerial Decision in MC11. Pakistan believes that only a deeper understanding of the issues in a multilateral setting will give true dividends in this area. Pakistan also feels that the issue of the moratorium deserves further discussion on both aspects, i.e. customs duties and the scope of electronic transmissions.

Pakistan has been engaging in the initiatives on MSMEs and Investment Facilitation, and will continue to follow them keenly with a hope that they feed positively back into the multilateral system.

To conclude, Pakistan wishes to stress on the importance of constructive engagement to ensure that the multilateral system stays alive for developing countries' development needs.

56. Haiti (CARICOM)

I am delivering this statement on behalf of the CARICOM Group.

The CARICOM Group would like to thank the Director-General for his report and also for his update on the state of play of the negotiations and other activities. The CARICOM Group would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Chairs of the Negotiating Groups and congratulate them for their reports.

The CARICOM Group believes that the WTO is facing unprecedented challenges and some Members are attributing these challenges to the need for the WTO to revise its rules, operations and institutional framework in pursuance of relevance. The CARICOM Group, acknowledging the importance of the WTO to the multilateral system, stands ready to actively engage in inclusive and developmental discussions.

The CARICOM Group reiterates its concern relating to the difficulties of the Appellate Body in replacing members. While the rules of procedure of the AB should not be abused, the continued blockage of appointments will undermine the viability of the system with major consequences for the entire multilateral system.

The CARICOM Group reiterates its concern about the climate of tension brought about by the implementation of new trade restrictive measures. This may negatively impact global economic growth and severely affect the most vulnerable Members, including CARICOM members. Thus, the CARICOM Group encourages all Members to show restraint and political will to find a solution to their differences.

The CARICOM Group recognised with interest, the concern of most Members on e-commerce. It therefore encourages the Secretariat to take the necessary measures, to assist developing States, in order to help them to address their shortcomings in this area.

The CARICOM Group stresses once again that it is paying close attention to the negotiations on fisheries subsidies, given its importance of the ocean's resources for food security, job creation and living conditions in the region. The Group is pleased to contribute to the implementation of the mandate given by Ministers at MC11 in Buenos Aires to reach an agreement in 2019.

The CARICOM Group reiterates its desire to see some significant headways in the area of market access. Given the importance of trade in services for the Caribbean region, the CARICOM Group is considering how to be more engaged in order to better defend the interests of its Members.

The CARICOM Group is still preoccupied with the lack of progress in the S&D negotiations. It reiterates its call for the implementation of Paragraph 44 of the Doha Declaration, which would make the S&D provisions more precise, more effective and more operational.

The CARICOM Group encourages all Members to fulfil their obligations, by informing us about all measures taken to create more transparency within the World Trade Organization. This would, in effect, facilitate a better functioning of the multilateral trading system.

57. Nigeria

Our delegation would like to thank the Director-General for convening this important meeting, ahead of the General Council. We believe this meeting would enable us to collectively reflect and address the challenges facing our organization. We thank the Director-General for the comprehensive report on the state-of-play and the frank assessment on the challenges facing the WTO, although daunting, but not insurmountable. We are also grateful to the Chairs of the Negotiating Groups for the hard work and the updates provided to us on their respective work. Both reports provide food for thought and strong basis for our renewed and focused engagement. There is no doubt that these are extraordinary times for the WTO as an institution for public good, and for all its Members as stakeholders. Therefore, we cannot afford to be passive. The flip side of the crisis is the opportunity it presents, for the Membership to be creative, adaptable, develop new

attitudes and appetites. We value the role of the multilateral trading system, both as a negotiating forum for trade rules, and its dispute settlement and functions.

The overall objective of Nigeria's membership of the WTO is to ensure that our country actively participates and fully benefits from the organization by promoting a more diversified and rules-based economy. Nigeria aims to effectively ensure a fair and equitable rules-based multilateral trading system, as well as securing platform for the domestic policy reforms, that would increase our country's benefits in the international trading system. Therefore, our belief and expectation, is that the WTO Rules would foster Nigeria's trade and development objectives. As the discussions evolve, as we redouble our efforts, and in light of the ongoing consultations in our capital, we wish to briefly share Nigeria's perspective of general nature.

First, on the negotiating front, we note the progress of work, although uneven in different areas, as reported by the Director-General and the Chairs of the Negotiating Groups, and would like to underscore the importance of sustaining the momentum, without backtracking.

Second, outcomes in Agriculture, as the centrepiece of the Doha Round, across the three pillars, are essential, especially to correct the existing imbalances, including trade distorting domestic support. A significant reform is needed, if we are to pursue the long-term goal of establishing a fair and market-oriented agricultural trading system.

Third, Development, Cotton and LDC issues must remain central in our work. Special and Differential treatment must be integral part of the various pillars under negotiations.

Fourth, the process of progressive liberalization in services, and future discipline on domestic regulations, should be consistent with GATS Article VI.4, and should also recognise and accord due respect for national aspiration, level of development, and the size of the economy of individual Members. In this regard, we need an appropriate balance between ensuring transparency and predictability of our regulatory regime, and the right to regulate, including introducing new regulations so as to fulfil national policy objectives. Nevertheless, we are open to a robust Domestic Regulation Discipline that recognises our level of development, regulatory and institutional capacity.

Fifth, on a positive note, the Rules negotiation on fisheries subsidies remains a bright prospect, with incremental progress and renewed technical engagement. We welcome the innovative "Incubator Groups" process introduced by the Chair, in response to the calls by Members to shift gears and intensify discussions. This process must be inclusive, transparent and connected to the work of the Negotiating Group, and must add value to the work of the Negotiating Group, particularly, streamlining the negotiating text.

Sixth, we must prevent the escalation of trade tensions amongst major Members, because it has direct and spill-over impact on the entire Membership.

Seventh, we welcome the ongoing discussions regarding the Buenos Aires joint initiatives, as active participant, we note with encouragement, the level of engagements, as part of confidence building exercise, particularly, the transparent and inclusive approach to all the discussions. We must redouble our efforts to ensure that the WTO is responsive to the needs of the entire Membership, and of an evolving global economy. Permit me to reiterate that Nigeria is implementing a bold plan for structural transformation to industrialise as well as diversify its economy. The "Smart Nigeria Digital Economy Project", is Nigeria's response to an area of intense economy and technological activity by Nigerian youths, where there is a growing pool of talent. Therefore, it is our collective responsibility to ensure that trade rules contribute to narrowing the digital divide as well as enable our MSMEs to be globally competitive by facilitating their participation in global trade. The Presidential Enabling Environment Council was inaugurated in July 2016 as the present administration's flagship initiative, to reform the business environment, attract investment and diversify the economy in order to reduce our country's overreliance on oil. Through systematic changes, we are repositioning regulations as facilitators of business, and are steadily improving transparency and efficiency of service delivery by the public sector.

Eighth, investment attraction and facilitation are key priorities for Nigeria, for growth and diversification. However, the ongoing dialogue on this topic should be designed and managed in such a way that is open and engages all WTO Members and without prejudice to the final

outcomes. On MSMEs, we support the ongoing dialogue led by Uruguay and others. Our objective is to facilitate and sustain a vibrant MSMEs sub-sector that will be a driver of national economic growth and employment.

Ninth, given the fact that we are all at different levels of development, different and competing commercial interests, as well as different comparative advantages, there is the need for elasticity in the structure of the WTO, in order for the organization to cope effectively with the diversity of the Membership. In this regard, we have the collective responsibility and obligation, not to allow the WTO to falter, particularly, at this challenging period, when it is more needed than ever before. To contribute to solving the problems of its Members, Nigeria believes that our principal objective at this critical moment is to work together to strengthen and preserve its dispute settlement, faced with unprecedented crisis of legitimacy. Nigeria therefore urges all Members to constructively engage and find ways to overcome the impasse as a matter of urgency.

Finally, Nigeria considers the WTO as an indispensable multilateral institution. As a result, we must collectively take necessary steps to make it function effectively including its ability to respond to the needs and aspirations of its entire Membership. In this regard, if the reform efforts are to be successful, leadership and flexibility will be required. Discussions must be inclusive, transparent, and the expected outcomes must be beneficial to all. While we see value in such open and frank discussions. The discussions should not in any way distract us from our negotiating agenda, a task that must be accomplished. We need to maintain a sense of urgency on all issues especially areas such as public stockholding for food security purposes and fisheries subsidies, with specific deadlines. At the appropriate time and after stocktaking, we would need to prioritise our work on a sequential basis with incremental progress. Nigeria remains willing and committed to working closely with all Members, towards advancing the negotiating agenda, and also open to discussions on WTO reforms and modernization, relative to our capacity and level of development.

58. Afghanistan

My delegation appreciates the Director-General's report on activities and discussions at the WTO as well as the reports of the Chairs of the Negotiating Groups.

As the latest Member of the organization, Afghanistan supports inclusive, open and transparent consultations and discussions to advance its priorities and objectives in view of better integration into the multilateral trading system.

Afghanistan as the coordinator of the G7+ WTO Accessions Group calls upon all Members to support the accession of current acceding States specially the fragile and conflict-afflicted countries in order to facilitate their desire for peace, prosperity and stability through trade and development.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank the Governments of Kazakhstan and China and the WTO Secretariat for organising the Seventh China Roundtable.

On substantive issues, Afghanistan associates itself with the statement delivered by the LDC Group.

59. Cameroon

We express gratitude to the Director-General and the various Negotiating Group Chairs for their reports. We also welcome those delegations who have taken the floor to express their views on the issues particularly with regard to the challenges faced by the WTO.

We associate ourselves with the statements made by the African Group, the G-90 and the ACP Group.

Our statement will look at the principles that underpin this organization and look at how certain issues are undermining our current attempt at talks.

We need to recognise that the organization is no longer meeting the standard set by its founders. International trade challenges have grown. Some solutions have been found to current problems. Discussions have also stretched to other issues that have arisen. We welcome all of those parties

who over the years have contributed to maintaining applicable rules. There has been some positive synergy as we have seen in Agriculture, Trade Facilitation, Intellectual Property and Services, to name a few. Cameroon remains committed to fulfilling its obligations in all of these areas.

However, over the years, parties have also progressively come to terms of the fact that the WTO cannot be a panacea to all economic problems or global issues for that matter. Furthermore, we have seen that the rules that were laid down that give practical fair rules to all – both developed and developing Members – have come under pressure. And today, Members are no longer pretending that we can meet or create a perfect organization. It is far from it. It is also inevitable that the WTO cannot be held responsible for all the ills faced by global trade. There are those views put forward by some countries on WTO reform.

We acknowledge the legitimate right of any party to suggest ways in which this organization can be further strengthened in order to promote fair and mutually beneficial trade between all Members. Therefore, we thank the said countries for sharing their views on these matters. It is also worth noting that the reform of the WTO will be an urgent matter for several delegations. Developing countries have taken note of the practices of other countries and that with regard to the rules that they agreed to.

In Agriculture, we will continue to follow negotiations and we are also looking at how current efforts are not meeting our expectations. We support a multilateral, inclusive discussion here at the WTO which is underpinned by consensus. My delegation is also of the opinion that this approach should not be seen as a handicap to finding agreements that meet the needs of all countries. We need to accord more flexibility to developing countries in their economic growth in line with infrastructure, economic and other challenges they face. Without that, we will not be able to overcome the disparity and inequality that exists.

It is in this spirit of mutual advancement that we come to the table to think about how we can strengthen the WTO. Consequently, Cameroon stands ready to assume its responsibility when it comes to the time that we need to lead these discussions forward. We therefore also call on other parties to bear in mind that the questions related to development, equity and fairness are things which needed to be given due attention. This is part of the legitimacy of the organization. It is for developing countries to find responses to the challenges that have been mentioned.

This debate is based on the assumption that we will reaffirm our commitment to the system as it is and that we will continue to adjust in the future that this organization requires – that we first consolidate and enforce the existing rules. It is only by doing so that we shall build enough trust to engage parties in a cool-headed reflection on how best to address the new challenges faced if need be. It is therefore paramount to take appropriate steps to ensure the smooth functioning of the dispute settlement mechanism. The foreseeable risk happening to this key organ of the WTO must further vindicate those who argued that this institution is not inclusive and only safeguard the interest of some Members. We want to reiterate the readiness of Cameroon to find in liaison with all interested parties a consensus on this pressing issue and avoid paralysing the Appellate Body.

It is also worth noting that the DDA needs a full conclusion without undermining its foundational issues. This is not an issue of status. It has never been questioned in this organization. It is more a question of clarity and fairness in the adoption of rules. We are trying to build mutual confidence to try to enter into negotiations without any a priori suppositions but that involves avoiding the current bodies from falling into jeopardy including the dispute settlement mechanism. We cannot reject ideas nor can we turn away from them because they cannot meet our needs. It is also essential for some particularly when it comes to things such as digital trade that we recognise the importance of such an instrument in international trade. But developing countries lack the infrastructure tools and regulation to be able to ensure that they will find a suitable place within this. This is the same in many other areas. We need appropriate measures to be taken so that the debates in these issues are inclusive and respect the rights of every party. We need to take the time necessary to gradually meet the needs of all parties and do so by consensus. This needs to be done in an inclusive manner and it needs to be relevant to the organization and its work. This is before we start thinking about the vast reform program.

We are sure that Members will be able to rise to the challenge. There is no doubt that they are determined to work together in good faith to strengthen the organization and to ensure that it has modernised rules. Our delegation stands ready to work constructively with all parties without any

exception so that we can work on achievements for the organization and to further improve it as we move forward.

60. Sri Lanka

At the outset, let me convey my delegation's appreciation to the Director-General and the Chairpersons of the respective Negotiating Groups for their reports.

As stated in my previous statement at the last TNC held on 26 July, we all are going through a challenging period. This has reflected in the rule-based multilateral system and also in the global trading environment. It has been further aggravated by the decline of global investment by 23% as reported by UNCTAD. Today, UNCTAD reported that the global FDI level fell by 41% in the first half of 2018.

Escalating global trade tensions has brought many challenges in particular to small economies. My country, as a small and vulnerable economy and as a net-food importing developing country, is going through adverse experience in high-import based domestic inflation and local currency depreciation against US dollar.

Sri Lanka is a great believer of the multilateral trading system. The current systemic issues that brought uncertainty to the multilateral rules-based system are of great concern to us. My delegation believes that the significant changes taken place in the global trading environment should adequately reflect in the rules-based multilateral trading system without affecting its fundamental principles that we all negotiated and agreed to preserve. We also believe that any such reflection in the multilateral rules-based should be able to maintain the fundamental focus on trade and development. While accepting the need of reforms to the multilateral trading system on current realities, such reforms should not lead to dilute development needs of developing countries.

With regard to the ongoing fisheries negotiations at the Negotiating Group on Rules, I appreciate the role of Ambassador Roberto Zapata as the Chair. We believe that the process introduced including incubator groups will facilitate broader understanding on the issues at the table and aligning proposed disciplines with the objectives of SDG 14.6. Since we have a definite deadline for completion of our negotiation, my delegation believes that we need to intensify our engagement for a final outcome. Sri Lanka has, as a country, introduced many initiatives in disciplining IUU fishing and conservation and management of fisheries resources. We will continue to share our experience with Members.

With regard to Agriculture negotiations, we do hope that Members would be able to present a reasonable outcome for endorsement by Ministers at MC12. In this regard, my delegation associates with the statement made by Indonesia on behalf of the G-33.
