



13 December 2017

(17-6901)

Page: 1/2

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

Original: English

**PACIFIC GROUP MINISTERIAL DECLARATION
DELIVERED AT WTO 11TH MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE
IN BUENOS AIRES ON 12 DECEMBER 2017**

The following communication, dated 13 December 2017, is being circulated at the request of the Pacific Group¹.

1. We the Ministers and Heads of Delegations of the Pacific Group met in Buenos Aires, Argentina on 09 December 2017 in the margins of the Eleventh WTO Ministerial Conference:
2. **Extend** our sincere thanks to the Government and people of Argentina for the warm welcome and gracious hospitality of this beautiful country.
3. **Recognize** that this Ministerial Conference is taking place in a period of growing challenges in the global economy and in particular, a step back from multilateralism is likely to put at risk the future of the WTO and its contribution to global economic prosperity.
4. **Re-affirm** the importance of preserving the rules-based multilateral system of the WTO that provides an open, transparent and predictable system that promotes the rights and interests of all Members, particularly the small Members, noting that the Pacific Group are Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and constitutes LDCs and SVEs, which attach great importance to trade as a vehicle to achieve robust development and enhance our integration into the global trading system.
5. **Acknowledge** the need to make the rules-based system more equitable and accessible for Small Island Developing States in order for them to fully benefit from the opportunities created by the multilateral trading system and to facilitate their integration into the global economy. The Pacific Group commends the ongoing work to address the participation of SVEs in global value chains and supports the continuing and re-invigoration of work under the mandate of paragraph 35 of the Doha Declaration to frame responses for the full integration of small economies like the Pacific into the multilateral trading system to facilitate their successful integration. Such work should try to holistically address the economic and environmental vulnerability of SVEs to trade given the threat of climate change.
6. **Express** disappointment at the unwillingness of some Members to address the development concerns of developing countries, including SVEs and LDCs across many areas of the Doha negotiations and in particular, on the development proposals submitted by the G90. These proposals aim to promote value-adding activities, economic diversification and industrialisation as well as to promote international competitiveness by strengthening compliance with international standards. The Pacific Group whose share of global trade averages 0.04% remains in the margins of the global trading system and look to flexible and equitable rules that will enhance their trade. The Pacific Group calls on members to engage constructively on these proposals to address the genuine development concerns of developing countries and LDCs.

¹ Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu.

7. **Express concerns** that development and in particular, the link between trade and development is now in question in the WTO. The Doha Development Agenda which was intended to deliver development benefits to developing countries and LDCs, remains elusive, despite the re-iteration at every Ministerial conference of the centrality of development and special and differential treatment as an integral part of the negotiations. The Pacific Group underlines the point that trade is not an end in itself, but a means to an end – that trade is a means to deliver development benefits, as enshrined in the Marrakech Agreement. This is also reflected in the SDG Agenda 2030 in which trade is not a standalone goal but an enabler or vehicle to achieve many of those goals. The Pacific Group renews the call for the WTO to ensure that the small and vulnerable economies like the Pacific are not left behind or left outside the multilateral trading system.

8. **Commend** the progress on the fisheries subsidies negotiations, noting the significance of this resource sector to the food, livelihoods and the economic development of the Pacific Group. The Pacific Group urges Members to bridge remaining differences on the proposed incremental outcome on the most destructive subsidies to fisheries resources being submitted to this Conference. Subsidies to IUU fishing fuels overfishing and subsidies to fishing of overfished stocks are both destructive to fish stocks and should not be tolerated. An outcome on these two issues would contribute to achieving the Doha as well as the Hong Kong mandates and the 2030 Sustainable Development Goal 14.6 which mandates the elimination of harmful fisheries subsidies by 2020. However the Pacific Group underlines that further negotiations on overfishing and overcapacity in the post-Buenos Aires work should provide appropriate special and differential treatment to enable Small Island Developing States to fully develop their fisheries resources in future and preserve the rights of coastal states to their resources as well as appropriate transition periods and implementation assistance.

9. **Express** concerns that the Geneva process has not been able to complete its work or agreed to any area in the core Doha issues for Ministers to endorse at this Eleventh Ministerial Conference. Ministers are now faced with the challenge of reaching consensus on many issues that are open ended and are plagued by huge divergences in positions. We urge Members to work together to bridge the gaps in their positions and show flexibility for the few issues that may be possible to reach agreement on at this Conference and leave others that require more time to the future work programme for post-Buenos Aires.

10. **Emphasize** the importance of continuing negotiations on the remaining elements of the Doha issues post-Buenos Aires to deliver development outcomes and that negotiations including on the core areas of Agriculture, Services and NAMA, should also provide appropriate and effective flexibilities for LDCs and SVEs. In addition, future work should include the continuation of the 1998 Work Program on E-commerce to address the digital divide and development concerns of developing countries and LDCs, as well as continuing discussion on how to facilitate the participation of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise (MSMEs) into global trade.

11. **Support** the Declarations made by the ACP and LDCs.

Buenos Aires, Argentina
12 December 2017
