



2 August 2018

(18-4922)

Page: 1/2

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

Original: English

**STATEMENT BY DR ROB DAVIES
MINISTER OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY**

SOUTH AFRICA

On behalf of the South African delegation, I want to thank the Government of Argentina for generously hosting this 11th WTO Ministerial here in Buenos Aires.

MC11 is taking place at a time when the multilateral trading system is facing significant challenges. People across the world are demanding higher levels of more inclusive economic growth and are questioning whether organisations like the WTO are geared to delivering on this demand.

This we believe calls for a sober discussion on the role of trade in promoting sustainable development and inclusive growth. We must work decisively to create a multilateral environment conducive to support industrialisation, and the adoption of new technologies in a way that supports structural transformation and economic diversification. This requires preserving policy space for developing countries, especially African countries to pursue their development objectives and promote regional integration as a step towards more significant engagement with the global economy.

South Africa, like many other developing countries, has participated in WTO negotiations on the basis of the undertaking that we all made in Doha to place the needs and interests of developing countries at the heart of the work program. This focus, where trade serves development, remains at the core of our interest in the ongoing negotiations. Any agreed Ministerial Declaration at this Conference must make reference to the Doha mandate, even if it also recognizes the apparent differences amongst us on approach.

We have all observed the very real difficulties in the negotiations on almost all, if not all issues. This includes longstanding priority issues in domestic support, public stockholding, development and fisheries, amongst others. While we are disappointed at this state of affairs, we are prepared to continue to work on these remaining Doha issues next year. In saying this, I must indicate in unambiguous terms that South Africa has grave misgivings and we will not accept any proposals that would intrude into our national democratic processes to make policy or regulation in respect of services and beyond.

We have repeatedly stated that we recognize the rapid development of e-commerce but that this process is uneven across the globe. In such a context with many unknowns, with enormous risks as well as opportunities, we believe this is the time for sharing information and enhancing cooperation. Negotiations for rule-making are not appropriate at this stage. We are also not prepared to agree to introduce other, non-DDA issues onto the agenda.

Let me conclude by stating that South Africa approaches its engagement in the WTO on the basis of an understanding that outcomes here must support – or at least not hinder – Africa's overriding priority objectives for industrialization and regional integration. Africa has defined an agenda to shift away from an unsustainable growth path based on our historic, colonially defined position as

exporters of primary products and importers of higher value-added products. We need to add value to our raw materials, industrialize and diversify our economies in order to secure the future of our people and to contribute to the global economy more decisively. We expect work in the WTO to support those noble objectives.
