



13 December 2017

(17-6891)

Page: 1/2

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

Original: English

**STATEMENT BY H.E. MR FRANÇOIS-PHILIPPE CHAMPAGNE
MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

CANADA

Let me begin my remarks by extending my appreciation to our colleagues in Argentina for their great work in hosting this conference – the very first time that a South American country has done so. Congratulations for a great job! Our Conference Chair, Susan Malcorra’s leadership has helped us focus our efforts.

This Ministerial Conference marks the culmination of a busy period since MC10. Together, we’ve brought into force the Agreement on Trade Facilitation. We’ve agreed to implement an Amendment to the Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement. Also since MC10, we have seen new accessions to the organization and an expansion of members in WTO plurilateral agreements.

These accomplishments must be followed by clear and credible next steps as we move forward. The time is now to make trade more inclusive – we need to remind ourselves that trade and investment are first and foremost about making people’s lives better. This is the *raison-d’être* of the WTO – to provide a predictable rules-based platform for regulating trade between members. This is how economic actors such as micro, small- and medium-sized entrepreneurs (MSMEs), women and minority-owned businesses will be able to take advantage in a fair trading environment.

When the latest round of WTO negotiations was launched in 2001, the first I-phone would be still six years away, no one had ever heard of Facebook or Twitter and e-commerce was still fledgling. Today, it’s hard to imagine any part of commerce that isn’t in some way affected by the digital economy. Despite the promise of e-commerce as an enabler for MSMEs, women and other minority-owned businesses, supply chains and international markets, we cannot even agree to talk about this issue multilaterally in the WTO.

Leadership by WTO members is required to harness the incredible power of e-commerce along with innovation that MSMEs bring to bear into today’s global trading system. It is time to formally acknowledge the important relationship between trade and gender, a theme that is at the forefront of Canada’s progressive trade agenda. This includes the positive economic and social benefits we could all reap if women were able to fully participate in global commerce. Canada is proud to support the Declaration on Trade and Women’s Economic Empowerment and I call on all other WTO Members to do the same.

Our citizens expect the WTO to deliver outcomes in these areas. They also expect us to deliver outcomes on long-outstanding issues like disciplines on harmful fisheries subsidies and domestic support for agriculture.

Businesses and industry are looking for a commitment from us to eliminate unjustified non-tariff barriers to trade. In recent years, our industries have faced an increasing number of non-tariff measures, often in the agricultural sector, implemented and enforced by Members without scientific justification. This unpredictability which results from the proliferation of these measures inhibits trade for all WTO Members, discourages innovation, and increases costs to consumers. This is why Canada believes it is crucial to work collaboratively to reduce and eliminate these

unjustified non-tariffs measures and reaffirm our commitment towards science-based and evidence-based decision making.

To this effect, Canada continues to encourage Members to base their measures on scientific evidence, and to take into account the advice of the international standards setting bodies. Let us also have an honest and open conversation about the ways we could work together to improve the operation and functioning of the WTO. Canada continues to work with all WTO Members on constructive reforms to the organization – and will not engage in discussions on proposals that would be divisive or reduce the ambition or member obligations.

We need to take advantage of the hard work and efforts over the past year and continue to make progress. Canada will do its part in support of these efforts – we call on all other Members to do the same. So in conclusion, I look forward to working with you over the coming days as we advance issues in our common interest.
