

APEC Ministers Responsible for Trade Meeting

Arequipa, Peru (17-18 May 2016)

Statement of the Chair on Supporting the Multilateral Trading System

1. The APEC Ministers Responsible for Trade, gathering for their 22nd meeting in Arequipa, Peru, recognize the importance of international trade as a key to job creation, sustained economic recovery, prosperity and development. They reaffirm the value, centrality, and primacy of the multilateral trading system under the auspices of the World Trade Organization (WTO).
2. Thus, Ministers highly commend the meaningful outcomes achieved at the 10th Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (MC10), held in Nairobi, Kenya. In this regard, they express their firm commitment to continue working towards strengthening a rules-based, transparent, non-discriminatory, open, and inclusive multilateral trading system as embodied in the WTO.
3. Ministers reaffirm that keeping markets open is essential for achieving a sustainable global growth. Taking into account current uncertainties and risks in the global economy, including the persistent weakness in global trade flows, they remain firmly committed to promoting free and open trade and investment among APEC Economies. Therefore they reaffirm the pledge made by APEC Leaders against protectionism through a standstill commitment which Ministers recommend to extend until the end of 2020 and to roll back protectionist and trade-distorting measures, which weaken trade and slow down the progress and recovery of the international economy. Ministers remain committed to exercising maximum restraint in implementing measures that may be consistent with WTO provisions but have a significant protectionist effect, and to promptly rectifying such measures, where implemented. In this context, they continue supporting the ongoing work of the WTO and other international organizations in monitoring protectionism within their existing mandates and commit to collaborate with them, including by encouraging transparency of trade policies in their respective constituencies and through the open provision of information, and called on other WTO Members to do the same.
4. Recognizing all elements of the Nairobi Ministerial Declaration, Ministers agree to play a constructive role in revitalizing and strengthening the WTO's negotiating function. They call on all WTO Members to actively participate, with a sense of urgency, in discussions to advance negotiations on remaining DDA issues, bearing in mind the centrality of development in the WTO's work. To this end, they encourage concrete proposals and the political will needed to reach a consensus to resolve these important negotiating issues. At the same time, Ministers welcome efforts by members to explore issues of common interest and importance to the global economy. There is a strong support to encourage all WTO Members to set the direction for future work together, in a spirit of solidarity and mutual trust, with a view to producing tangible outcomes in support of the multilateral trading system, including at MC11.
5. Ministers take note of the leadership of APEC Economies, with more than half of them having submitted their instruments of acceptance of the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA). The entry into force of the TFA by the end of 2016 would significantly contribute to the increase of global trade. Therefore, Ministers call upon the remaining APEC Economies as well as other Members of the WTO to make their utmost efforts to do the same as soon as possible.

6. Ministers reaffirm their strong commitment to advance reform of agricultural trade. They welcome, and commit to full implementation of, the Nairobi results on Export Competition. They will pursue further negotiations on agricultural reform of Domestic Support, Market Access and Export Competition, in accordance with the Nairobi Ministerial Declaration, and on Export Competition, Special Safeguard Mechanism for Developing Country Members, Public Stockholding for Food Security Purposes and on Cotton, in accordance with the Nairobi Ministerial Decisions.
7. Recognizing the importance of facilitating access to medicines as set out in the Paragraph 6 System, Ministers urge all WTO Members to accept the Protocol Amending the TRIPS Agreement. Entry into force of the Protocol would demonstrate the potential of the WTO to deliver practical, development-oriented outcomes.
8. Ministers recognize that bilateral, regional and plurilateral trade agreements play an important role in complementing global liberalization initiatives. In this context, FTA/RTAs should allow for the possibility for accession of additional parties based on negotiated terms and conditions with FTA/RTA participants. They also agree on the importance of the timely notification and thorough review of RTAs in order to ensure that they are consistent with WTO agreements and contribute to strengthening the multilateral trading system. Pursuant to the Nairobi Ministerial Declaration, APEC Economies will participate actively and constructively in all aspects of the WTO's work in connection with RTAs.
 - 8.1. Ministers welcome the conclusion of the WTO Information Technology Agreement (ITA) expansion negotiations. There is a strong support to encourage Participants to implement this Agreement according to the timelines agreed.
 - 8.2. Regarding the Environmental Goods Agreement (EGA), Ministers encourage participating APEC Economies to redouble efforts to complete negotiations as soon as possible.
 - 8.3. Ministers take note of the efforts to explore possibilities of factoring into the multilateral negotiations possible contributions by participants in concluded plurilateral ITA expansion and EGA initiatives.
 - 8.4. APEC economies taking part in these plurilateral efforts agree to work together to achieve broader participation in each agreement.
9. Ministers support and encourage technical assistance and capacity building activities to promote the effective integration of developing economies into global trade, including through the Aid for Trade Initiative. They further urge the WTO to continue its work in promoting inclusive and sustainable growth through various initiatives to increase the participation of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in regional and global markets. To this end, APEC will continue to supplement these initiatives including through the implementation of the Boracay Action Agenda to Globalize MSMEs.
10. Ministers recognize the role of trade as a catalyst for development, and the contribution that the WTO can play towards achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which set a comprehensive, universal and ambitious framework for global development efforts. In this context, and in keeping with the Nairobi Ministerial Declaration, Ministers reaffirm the commitment to implementation of the SDGs and will therefore support and engage actively in efforts within the WTO towards achievement of the SDGs related to its mandate, and they call on other WTO Members to do the same.