

Joint Statement between Japan and the World Trade Organization

- Three Cornerstones for the Promotion of Free Trade -

22 May 2017

On 22 May 2017, H.E. Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan received H.E. Mr. Roberto Azevêdo, Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Tokyo. The Director-General also held meetings with H.E. Mr. Fumio Kishida, Minister for Foreign Affairs, H.E. Mr. Yuji Yamamoto, Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, H.E. Mr. Yosuke Takagi, State Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry and H.E. Mr. Motome Takisawa, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs. The Government of Japan and the Director-General discussed the need to promote free trade and to further strengthen the multilateral trading system.

1. The Government of Japan expressed that Japan, as a champion of free trade, was determined to continually promote free trade in cooperation with other countries. Director-General Azevêdo expressed his determination that the WTO will continue to fulfil its responsibility as the core organization for the multilateral trading system. They shared the recognition that the following three points were the foundation for the promotion of free trade, and reaffirmed their determination to strengthen their cooperation in delivering this message to the world.

(1) Free Trade as a Key Driver of Growth

- Free and fair rules-based trade is a key driver to achieve economic growth, prosperity of people and sustainable development worldwide.
- Given the highly developed global value chains, protectionism is not a solution and maintaining open market is essential to promote economic development and job creation.

(2) Achievement of an Inclusive Economy

- Appropriate policies are necessary in order to realize an inclusive economy while addressing the skepticism against globalization.
- Greater inclusiveness in the economy is a means to reduce inequality, promote gender balance and enable a positive cycle of growth and distribution.

(3) Further Reinforcement of the Multilateral Trading System

- The open and free rules-based multilateral trading system embodied in the WTO has been the foundation of vibrant and prosperous world economy.
- Various forms of trade liberalization can be a useful complement to the multilateral trading system, including plurilateral trade agreements, and other comprehensive, high-standard and balanced broad economic partnerships such as bilateral or regional initiatives.

2. The Government of Japan pointed out that, given the increasing concerns about the rise of protectionism and inward-looking sentiment around the globe, it was essential to further increase confidence in the multilateral trading system with the WTO at its core and thus to promote free trade, building on recent successes such as the WTO's Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) and the expansion of the Information Technology Agreement (ITA). In this context, the Government of Japan pointed out the importance of further contribution of the WTO to the achievement of inclusive economic growth through the revitalization and enhancement of its negotiation and monitoring functions, as well as by ensuring the enforcement of the WTO Agreements through the dispute settlement mechanism. The Government of Japan expressed its hope for the greater role of the WTO to this end. The Government of Japan underlined the importance it attaches to the early conclusion of Japan-EU EPA and comprehensive, balanced and high-quality RCEP and enactment of TPP as well as the need to move forward the Environmental Goods Agreement (EGA) and the Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA) towards an early conclusion.

Director-General Azevêdo thanked the Government of Japan for Japan's support for the multilateral trading system. He pledged that the WTO will continue to serve its Members to the best of its ability on all the points outlined, and that the organization will continue to support co-operation and collaboration among nations on trade issues in order to remain a key institution of global economic governance and support jobs, growth and development around the world.

3. The Government of Japan and the Director-General reaffirmed their commitment to further intensify their cooperation to achieve outcomes at the 11th WTO Ministerial Conference in Buenos Aires this December, building on the successes of the previous WTO Ministerial Conferences in Bali and Nairobi.