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JOINT MINISTERIAL DECLARATION BY ALBANIA; ARGENTINA; AUSTRALIA; BENIN; CANADA; CHILE; COLOMBIA; COSTA RICA; CÔTE D'IVOIRE; DOMINICAN REPUBLIC; EL SALVADOR; GUATEMALA; HONG KONG, CHINA; ICELAND; ISRAEL; KAZAKHSTAN; THE STATE OF KUWAIT; REPUBLIC OF KOREA; KYRGYZ REPUBLIC; LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC; LIBERIA; LIECHTENSTEIN; MAURITANIA; MEXICO; MONTENEGRO; MYANMAR; REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA; NEW ZEALAND; NIGERIA; NORWAY; PAKISTAN; PANAMA; PARAGUAY; PERU; QATAR; RUSSIAN FEDERATION; SENEGAL; SINGAPORE; SWITZERLAND; CHINESE TAIPEI; THAILAND; THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA; TURKEY; UKRAINE; URUGUAY AND VIET NAM

DELIVERED ON 11 DECEMBER 2017

Revision[1]

The following joint communication, dated 19 December 2017, is being circulated at the request of the delegation of Switzerland.

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1. We, the Ministers from 46 developing and developed Members that are strongly supportive of the multilateral trading system, are concerned that the World Trade Organization (WTO) is facing challenges.

2. We reaffirm the principles and objectives set out in the Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the WTO and the centrality of the rules-based multilateral trading system.

3. We greatly value the WTO's framework of rules, which has helped to foster international trade and development, facilitated the peaceful settlement of trade disputes, and served as a bulwark against protectionism. This has contributed to the strength and stability of the global economy.

4. We recall the successful WTO Ministerial Conferences in Bali in 2013 and in Nairobi in 2015 and welcome the positive developments in the WTO since the Nairobi Conference. Notably, we welcome the entry into force, in 2017, of the Trade Facilitation Agreement and of the Protocol Amending the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights. We call on Members to further their efforts towards the full implementation of all Bali and Nairobi decisions.

5. We acknowledge the essential role of regular WTO bodies in ensuring oversight of the implementation of WTO agreements, and underline the importance of Members' compliance with notification obligations.

6. We note that the WTO's trade monitoring work contributes to the effective functioning of the multilateral trading system, by enhancing transparency of trade policies and practices of Members. In this context, we take note of the successful conclusion, in 2016, of the Sixth Appraisal of the Trade Policy Review Mechanism.

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[1] This revision adds Albania and the Kyrgyz Republic as co-sponsors.

7. We note that the WTO's Dispute Settlement Understanding has established and continues to offer an essential means for the settlement of disputes among Members that is unique in international agreements. We underline the importance of ensuring its effective functioning. In this regard, we call for all vacancies on the Appellate Body to be filled without delay.

8. We consider a productive negotiating function to be essential for the WTO to continue delivering meaningful outcomes for Members of all sizes and at all levels of development. In this regard, we note with concern the lack of progress in our negotiations since the WTO Ministerial Conference in Nairobi.

9. We welcome the accessions to the WTO, in 2016, by Afghanistan and Liberia and remain committed to further expanding the Organization's membership.

10. We note the major role trade can play in the promotion of sustainable development and the alleviation of poverty, as recognized in the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We underline the importance for all Members, and in particular developing and least developed countries, to benefit from opportunities that the multilateral trading system generates.

11. We reaffirm the central importance of development in the WTO. In this context, we underline the role of technical assistance and capacity building, including through the Enhanced Integrated Framework to support Least-Developed Countries' (LDCs) integration into the multilateral trading system. We also note the Sixth Global Review of Aid for Trade in 2017 and ongoing efforts to fully implement the Decisions taken in Bali and Nairobi for LDCs.

12. We note that the international trading environment continues to evolve with developments such as global value chains, use of digital technologies, and the pursuit of regional trade agreements, and recognize the need for the WTO to be responsive to these developments.

13. We confirm our commitment to a successful 11th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC11) in Buenos Aires and express our confidence in MC11 Chair Susana Malcorra and WTO Director-General Roberto Azevêdo. We call on all Members to safeguard the integrity of the open, rules-based multilateral trading system embodied in the WTO. We will continue working with all Members to address the challenges facing the organization to ensure its sound functioning.

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