



11. WTO-Ministerkonferenz, 10.-14. Dezember 2017, Buenos Aires

Schweizer Eröffnungsstatement, Plenary Session

11. Dezember 2017, Hilton Hotel - Room Pacifico A, 10.00 Uhr

- Mr. President
Madame Chair Susana Malcorra,
Distinguished Colleagues;
Director-General Roberto Azevêdo;
Honourable Delegates and Guests;
- Let me first express Switzerland's deep gratitude to the Government and people of Argentina as well as to you personally, Madame Chair, for hosting this eleventh WTO Ministerial Conference, and for the generous hospitality you are extending to us here in Buenos Aires.
- We are meeting in a challenging environment.
- The benefits of trade and of the multilateral trading system are being questioned.
- Trade tensions have been on the rise.

- Progress proved difficult to achieve in the negotiations leading up to this Conference.
- Madame Chair, the WTO has been key to the strength and stability of the global economy over past decades and to resist protectionism.
- There is a need to preserve this system, and to reinforce the WTO.
- This is Switzerland's top priority for this Ministerial Conference.
- Yet we have also come to Buenos Aires to contribute to concrete outcomes.
- Steps towards disciplines on fisheries subsidies would be an important signal to the world.
- We also have the opportunity to improve global food security by adopting stricter rules on export restrictions in agriculture.
- We hope this Conference will also inject fresh energy into the WTO's negotiations.
- Together, we should open doors for more workable approaches to issues where progress has been elusive for too long.

- At the same time, we should make sure that the WTO keeps pace with 21st century developments.
- In this regard, let me highlight the digital economy and e-commerce, the role of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, and the importance of facilitating investments.
- Madame Chair, Switzerland remains a firm supporter of multilateral progress – even in agriculture, where we have mostly defensive interests, including in domestic support.
- Yet the WTO requires a broader and more balanced agenda, and it must deliver for all.
- For Switzerland, Services, NAMA, Intellectual Property, Rules and Environment have to be on the agenda – in addition to the topics just mentioned before.
- Delivery for all must include compliance with rules and obligations by all Members, beginning with transparency.
- And the WTO needs a dispute settlement mechanism that has the support from the entire Membership. This crown jewel must be preserved.

- Madame Chair, Distinguished Colleagues, this morning Switzerland together with 44 Members published a joint declaration.
- In this declaration we express concerns about current challenges facing the WTO.
- And we underline the key role of the multilateral trading system for the global economy and for sustainable development as set out by the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
- I trust we can work together here in Buenos Aires to strengthen and to advance this pillar of global economic governance.
- Thank you, Madame Chair.