

UK intervention in World Trade Organization session on challenges facing multilateral trading system

The peaceful waters of Lake Geneva are far removed from the scenes of chaos and horror broadcast from Ukraine over the past months.

Yet, as we begin this, the World Trade Organization's 12th Ministerial Conference, the war in Ukraine should be uppermost in our minds.

Russia's invasion is a threat to our democracy and the rules-based order – the foundation of our free, fair and open trading system. Britain will always uphold the values of her people and her allies, she will protect Ukraine's democratic right to exist.

Britain believes that free, fair and open trade can prevent yet more lives being destroyed through developing a more sustainable, efficient and resilient food supply chain for the future.

To get on and do this, I am glad that the British-led Joint Statement on Open and Predictable Trade in Agriculture and Food Products has been endorsed by over 50 WTO members.

We must work together to learn the lessons of the pandemic, back business to continue to innovate and agree a substantive trade and health package so we are prepared for the future.

More broadly, Britain believes that the WTO has a crucial role to support the free and fair trade that will support developed economies to renew and developing countries to grow.

Beyond this Ministerial, we must unite to find a path to reforming the WTO and ensuring a fairer, more stable trading system.

The rules-based system relies on everyone playing by the rules. The WTO needs to root out those who do not.

This goes beyond economics. Britain will put the pressing need to protect the environment at the heart of this work. We believe that green trade has a powerful role to play in countering climate change, environmental degradation and biodiversity loss, whilst securing and generating economic growth.

Your Excellencies, we – together – face significant challenges but I am confident that the spirit to deal with them is strong.

It is through a multilateral rules-based system of free trade fit for the 21st century that we will address these obstacles and overcome them. This is why – together – we must redouble our efforts, put our divisions aside and harness the power of free, open and fair trade to tackle our modern-day

challenges.