

UK statement to the WTO Trade Negotiations Committee

Thank you very much Director-General for your summary and to the chairs of the negotiating groups for their updates.

I wanted to start by joining you, New Zealand Ambassador David Walker, and others in paying tribute to Mike Moore. He was the nearest thing we have had to a British Director-General for a long time, and we in the United Kingdom are very proud of him, and of his legacy here in the World Trade Organization.

With the kind permission of the Chair of the General Council, my Secretary of State for International Trade will be here to address the General Council tomorrow, and so I will keep my remarks today brief.

As Members will be aware, the United Kingdom has circulated a document contained in WT/GC/206, which sets out some of the implications of our departure from the European Union. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all Members, as well as you and your team in the WTO Secretariat, for all of the constructive support we have received in this process.

I would now like to say a few words about the United Kingdom's approach to the ongoing negotiations in which we are all engaged, and our ambitions for 2020 and beyond.

We agree with you, Director-General, that success at MC12 will be measured by the substance of what we agree. And as others have said, starting with the Swiss Ambassador Didier Chambovey, the principal metric of that success will be whether there is a fisheries deal, one that leads to meaningful reductions in harmful subsidies. The Chair, Ambassador Wills, set out the challenges and the way forward, and we agree with him. We need to move to a consolidated text by mid-March. Members need to examine their own long-held positions critically, exercise restraint, and rally around compromises instead of sticking to incompatible national positions. The dire conditions of many of the world's fish stocks dramatically highlights the need to deliver on this Sustainable Development Goal target. We stand ready in the UK, as do our ministers, to help the Chair and you get a deal across the line at Nur Sultan.

More broadly, as upcoming COP26 hosts, we warmly welcome other discussions in this House aimed at facilitating green growth and a more sustainable global economy.

On agriculture, I wanted to thank Ambassador John Deep Ford for his detailed report. The United Kingdom is committed to a fair and market orientated agricultural trading system, and we look forward to working with Members to address the challenges that we face and progress negotiations. We know how important this issue is for so many Members of this House.

Regarding your second tranche of issues for MC12, the United Kingdom has long supported the Joint Initiatives. They represent perhaps the most significant reform to the WTO in recent years. If they succeed, these initiatives will advance digital trade and trade in services, open up new opportunities for Micro, Small and Medium Size Enterprises, and facilitate global investment for development. But, in addition to that, they will strengthen the negotiating function of the WTO, upon which the health of the global trading system depends.

On wider WTO reform, the United Kingdom supports efforts to strengthen the rules on subsidies, we support efforts to improve compliance around transparency and notifications, and we do need to discuss questions around non-market policies and practices. The WTO cannot afford to ignore these issues.

Finally, allow me to turn to the dispute settlement system. We view a fully-functioning, compulsory, binding and impartial system, with two-tier review as crucial to ensure the rules that we have negotiated can be enforced. We are committed to finding solutions that all Members can support in order to reinstate a fully effective dispute settlement system.

By way of closing, Director-General, let me just reiterate that the United Kingdom stands ready to help, in any way you would find useful, to achieve a meaningful outcome at Nur Sultan that both reconfirms the WTO's central role, and opens up new opportunities and prosperity for our businesses and citizens.