

WTO Trade Negotiations Committee: UK statement

Thank you, Chair.

Chair, this discussion comes at the end of an exceptionally challenging year.

We still have a long way to go to defeat Covid-19, and there remain other threats to our collective prosperity and wellbeing.

The WTO has a crucial role to play and we must re-commit ourselves to delivering real progress. We need to cement the WTO's role as a forward-looking Organization able to deliver for 21st century enterprises and citizens, and able to deliver collective solutions to global problems – from the impact of the pandemic, to the enduring challenge of climate change.

Last month, the UK was pleased to co-sponsor the call for establishing an enhanced dialogue on trade and environment at the WTO. As host of COP-26, the UK is proud to take a leading role in tackling climate change. Working together, we can find ways to mitigate climate change, to protect our forests and oceans, and conserve biodiversity while promoting trade and economic development.

We are therefore exceedingly disappointed that, as we reach the end of 2020, we have not reached an agreement on disciplining harmful fisheries subsidies. As others have said, we have missed the deadline set by leaders under the SDGs.

The UK remains committed to the mandate and it will be essential that we return to our work next January with a sense of urgency, and with a willingness to find compromises to reach an outcome that is both meaningful and fair.

We remain optimistic that by maintaining our ambitious schedule of monthly clusters and with the dedicated leadership of Ambassador Wills, we can reach an outcome that will support a sustainable future for our oceans and for fishing communities around the world.

Chair, on a more positive note, the UK warmly welcomes the adoption of the MSMEs package, as a major milestone towards better integrating small businesses into global trade. We would like to put on record our thanks to Ambassador Cancela of Uruguay for his effective coordination of the group, culminating in the successful outcome last week.

This is an important file: 99.9% of all British businesses are MSMEs. We look forward to remaining an active participant in the work of the group going forward, including through our TAF2 project.

Making progress on the Joint Initiative on e-Commerce remains a priority for the UK. We have seen an acceleration of the use of technology this year, and

services, digital and data trade continues to grow. The UK submitted its own written text proposals in November, including on the cross-border transfer of information, on the location of computing facilities and on source code. The new consolidated negotiating text marks an important milestone in achieving our shared aim of delivering an outcome that benefits developed, developing and least-developed members.

We also welcome progress being made by the Joint Initiatives on Investment Facilitation for Development and Services Domestic Regulation. Trade, and the investment it brings, delivers jobs, better living standards, and higher wages at home. We have been working closely with other Members of the Initiative on Services Domestic Regulation, with the aim of finalising the draft Reference Paper by the end of the year.

To close Chair, I wanted to reiterate the importance of restoring a fully functioning dispute settlement system. Therefore, we look forward to continuing work with all Members, as well as the next WTO Director-General, to ensure that we do not become accustomed to the current impasse.

Thank you, Mr Chair and good evening everyone.