

The Joint Communiqué issued by the G7 Trade Ministers on 7 February 2024

We, the G7 Trade Ministers, met virtually on 7 February 2024 under the Italian Presidency. Reaffirming our commitment to G7 trade-related outcomes in previous years, we focused our discussion on the reform of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) with an emphasis on our work toward a successful Thirteenth Ministerial Conference (MC13) of the WTO.

We remain concerned by the protracted global trade impact and risks from growing systemic challenges, geopolitical tensions, rising inequalities and the climate crisis. This global fragility has been exacerbated by Russia's continuing war of aggression against Ukraine. There is also a negative impact from the terror attacks by Hamas and others across Israel and the ensuing conflict and deteriorating humanitarian crisis in Gaza, as well as from the persistent and destructive Houthi attacks on commercial vessels and international shipping lanes in the Red Sea, which are causing major disruptions to ports, trade flows and the global economy.

On the eve of MC13, we reaffirm our strong determination to seize this opportunity to boost the reform process of the Organization launched at the 12th Ministerial Conference (MC12) and to strengthen a rules-based, inclusive, free and fair multilateral trading system, with the WTO at its core. We are grateful for the presentation and insights on the road to Abu Dhabi provided by the Director-General of the WTO, who participated in the meeting.

Through our conversations, we recognised the very important role that a successful MC13 would play in responding to current global economic disruptions, trade frictions and other rising challenges that jeopardize global trade and inclusive growth. We therefore remain fully committed to deliver a successful Ministerial Conference and have instructed our representatives in Geneva to continue to engage constructively and encourage other WTO members to do likewise.

In line with MC12 Outcome Document, we confirmed our commitment to continue to pursue reforms to improve the WTO's monitoring, negotiating and dispute settlement system functions. We recognized the progress made during the ongoing discussions in Geneva. Regarding dispute settlement reform, we remain committed to conducting discussions with a view to achieving a fully and well-functioning dispute settlement system accessible to all Members by 2024.

As part of our effort to reform the WTO, we affirmed the need to strengthen the deliberative function of the WTO to launch forward-looking work and to properly feed into the discussions on contemporary key trade issues, including on areas such as the nexus between trade and industrial policy, trade and environment and trade and inclusiveness. We recognized that transparency from all Members is vital for the WTO's deliberative function to be effective. We therefore encourage all WTO Members to support the launching of deliberations on those issues at MC13.

In recalling the importance of the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies, adopted at MC12, we confirmed our commitment to resolve outstanding issues and finalize the negotiations for a meaningful outcome under Phase 2 of the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies at MC13. We also call on all WTO members to complete their respective acceptance processes, necessary for the entry into force of the Phase 1 Agreement.

We reiterated our support for a permanent prohibition of customs duties on electronic transmissions or, at least, for the renewal of the e-commerce moratorium at MC13 and, in parallel, we support the continuation of work under a reinvigorated work programme on electronic commerce with a development oriented and inclusive approach.

As a follow up to the Declaration on the Emergency Response to Food Insecurity, adopted by Ministers at MC12, we support an outcome at MC13 to address food security challenges through, inter alia, enhancing transparency and predictability of export prohibitions and restrictions. We also support a balanced approach in the area of agriculture.

We share the view that trade and consequently the WTO have a vital role to play in addressing the global environmental challenges including climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. We therefore intend to revitalise the activity of the Committee on Trade and Environment and support other ongoing work within the WTO, to enhance the mutual supportiveness of trade and environmental policies.

We welcomed progress towards MC13 on the Joint Statement Initiatives (JSI), including the conclusion of the text-based negotiations of the Agreement on Investment Facilitation for Development by the participants in that initiative. We underscore the importance of early completion of the certification procedure of the disciplines on Services Domestic Regulation. We are committed to working towards the conclusion of negotiations of the JSI on E-Commerce in a timely manner. We strongly support the swift integration of the negotiated outcomes of JSIs into the legal framework of WTO.

Finally, we recognised the importance of the development dimension of trade, and we will continue to help developing and least developed countries, in Africa and elsewhere, to better integrate into global trade. Therefore, we will support the continuation of discussions on development issues, including LDC graduation, with a view to making further progress at MC13.

We remain committed to the WTO's foundational objectives, including higher standards of living, full employment, increased production and trade, sustainable development and inclusive growth, and a protected and preserved environment. We believe that multilateral cooperation must be underpinned by fair competition, predictable rules and transparency. MC13 will be an important occasion for WTO Members to reiterate these objectives and make sure that the WTO delivers on them.

We will discuss MC13 outcomes and other shared priorities at our next meeting in Reggio Calabria.