

Member States look out for the Ongoing Discussions and Outcomes as WTO Gears Up for the Forthcoming Aid for Trade Global Review 2017, in the Wake also of the Upcoming WTO 11th Ministerial Conference

As Member States move towards higher levels of specificity in the process of their preparations towards the WTO 11th Ministerial Conference to take place from 11 to 14 December 2017 in Buenos Aires, Argentina, the Director-General Roberto Azevêdo has recently reported that a number of new papers and ideas are being put forward covering issues such as domestic regulation, trade remedies, services facilitation and investment facilitation, with other areas such as special and differential treatment and SMEs being in the pipeline. According to the Director-General the ongoing preparations should also include steps on development and in support of LDCs — as well as steps in those areas where action is mandated at MC11, such as public stockholding. He stated that the forthcoming Aid for Trade Global Review is likely to put a very welcome spotlight on some of these issues.

The Sixth Aid for Trade Global Review 2017 will take place from 11 to 13 July at the WTO's headquarters in Geneva. The theme for the present Review is “Promoting Trade, Inclusiveness and Connectivity for Sustainable Development”. By addressing the supply-side capacity and trade related infrastructure constraints of developing, and in particular least developed countries, Aid for Trade is expected to help promote trade, inclusiveness and sustainable development – and so advance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Review will also place a special focus on women's economic empowerment.

The Global Review which takes place biennially, in its previous Review that took place in 2015, highlighted how high trade costs slow growth and development by pricing many suppliers in developing and least developed countries out of global markets. The 2017 Global Review develops this theme further by extending analysis of trade costs into the area of digital connectivity. The Review will discuss the economic consequences of the digital divide and strategies to help policymakers, firms, women and SMEs to bridge this divide. One tool at the disposal of trade policymakers to reduce logistics trade costs is the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) that entered into force on 22 February 2017. The 2015 World Trade Report outlined the inclusive trade outcomes that may be achieved through trade facilitation reforms. This issue will be further examined during the 2017 Global Review.