

Ottawa Ministerial on WTO Reform

On 24 and 25 October, 2018, 12 WTO Members were hosted by the Minister of International Trade Diversification of Canada at the Ottawa Ministerial on WTO Reform. At the meeting, Ministers worked to identify concrete actions to enhance and improve the WTO over the short, medium and long term.

The Ministers participating in the meeting issued a joint communiqué, wherein they expressed clear and strong support for the rules-based multilateral trading system and stressed the indispensable role that the WTO plays in facilitating and safeguarding trade. Firstly, concerned that continued vacancies in the Appellate Body presented a risk to the WTO system as a whole, the Ministers underscored the dispute settlement system as a central pillar of the WTO. They emphasized the urgent need to unblock the appointment of Appellate Body Members. Secondly, the need for re-invigoration of the negotiating function of the WTO was emphasized. In this regard they stressed on the need to conclude negotiations on fisheries subsidies in 2019 consistent with instructions from WTO Ministers at MC11. Thirdly, it was stated that the monitoring and transparency of Members' trade policies must be strengthened, as it plays a central role in ensuring that the WTO Members understand the policy actions taken by their partners in a timely manner.

The Ministers lastly pointed out that the current situation at the WTO is no longer sustainable. Therefore, the resolve for change must be matched with action: the fight against protectionism must continue; and the Members must be politically committed to moving forward urgently on transparency, dispute settlement and developing 21st century trade rules at the WTO.