



Council of the
European Union

006781/EU XXVI.GP
Eingelangt am 21/12/17

EN

15568/17

(OR. en)

PRESSE 71
PR CO 71

OUTCOME OF THE COUNCIL MEETING

3585th Council meeting

Foreign Affairs

Trade issues

Brussels, 10, 11, 12 and 13 December 2017

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OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

none

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- Where declarations, conclusions or resolutions have been formally adopted by the Council, this is indicated in the heading for the item concerned and the text is placed between quotation marks.
- Documents for which references are given in the text are available on the Council's internet site (<http://www.consilium.europa.eu>).
- Acts adopted with statements for the Council minutes which may be released to the public are indicated by an asterisk; these statements are available on the Council's internet site or may be obtained from the Press Office.

ITEMS DEBATED

11th WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

First set of conclusions

Meeting on 10 December 2017 at the opening of the WTO's 11th ministerial conference, the Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. Firm in the belief that trade contributes to creating wealth and jobs, the European Union is committed to an open and rules-based multilateral trading system, with a central role for the WTO. The EU supports an ambitious but realistic and balanced package for the 11th World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference (MC11) in Buenos Aires, and expects all WTO members to make a constructive and adequate contribution, fully reflecting their capacities. The EU will resist any attempts to undermine or weaken the multilateral system, including dispute settlement as one of its central pillars. The EU is ready to explore ways to strengthen the WTO, including its negotiating, monitoring and dispute settlement functions.
2. The Council supports a good substantive outcome on fisheries subsidies, which goes beyond illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU) and which includes clear disciplines.
3. The Council recalls that the joint EU and Brazil proposal on domestic support in agriculture, represents a reasonable and balanced approach to addressing domestic support and public stockholdings for food security purposes in a comprehensive manner. For the EU, domestic support in agriculture is closely linked to the question of public stockholding for food security purposes. The Council is ready to support reasonable and balanced outcomes in these areas, and to take into account requests of developing and, in particular, least-developed countries, without prejudice to current or future discussions on the EU's agricultural policy.

4. The Council is also attached to achieving progress at MC11 on e-commerce, domestic regulation in services, transparency and good regulatory practices concerning small and medium-sized enterprises, investment facilitation, as well as MSMEs (micro, small and medium sized enterprises) and export restrictions in agriculture. The Council also attaches particular importance to advancing discussion in the WTO on horizontal subsidies. The Council underlines in this regard the necessity to explore possible ways of advancing on these individual issues. In this respect, the Council welcomes joint statements by interested Members on these issues setting out the way forward with a view to deepening multilateral discussions.
5. The Council supports the Commission in its efforts to make the Conference a success and looks forward to good coordination between Member States and the Commission at MC11. The Council will assess the progress made with a view to reaching a balanced outcome in line with the conditions set out above. To this end, the Council looks forward to the Commission's proposals for EU negotiating positions on draft texts discussed within the WTO. It also looks forward to the submission by the Commission of the WTO negotiated texts for Council approval on behalf of the EU before their final adoption by the WTO bodies.
6. The Council welcomes and endorses the Joint Declaration on Trade and Women's Economic Empowerment to be made on the occasion of the 11th World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference."

Second set of conclusions

Meeting on 13 December 2017, the Council adopted the following conclusions:

- " 1. The EU remains committed to preserving and strengthening the rules-based multilateral trading system with the WTO at its core. To this end, the EU made a strong effort in the run-up to the Conference to help advance on key issues with the objective of allowing the WTO to develop further and play the part it should in global trade in the 21st century. The Council regrets that it was not possible to achieve an ambitious but realistic and balanced package for the 11th WTO Ministerial Conference.

2. Given the challenges that the WTO is currently facing, the Council welcomes the support for multilateralism and the central role of the WTO expressed in the Buenos Aires Declaration made at the opening ceremony of the 11th WTO Ministerial Conference, as well as in the Joint Ministerial Statement by 44 developing and developed WTO members on 11 December 2017. The EU will continue to explore ways to strengthen the WTO, including its negotiating, monitoring and deliberative functions, as well as the effective operation of the dispute settlement mechanism. In this regard, the Council considers that all vacancies on the Appellate Body should be filled without delay.
3. The Council believes that work needs to continue on issues of interest to WTO members. The EU has made proposals for reasonable and balanced outcomes at the Ministerial Conference on domestic support in agriculture and public stockholdings for food security purposes. The EU was also leading efforts towards a good substantive outcome on fisheries subsidies and domestic regulation in services, and regrets that progress on these issues has not been possible. In this context, the Council endorses the Ministerial Decisions presented to the Conference.
4. The Council also remains strongly committed to advancing in the WTO on other issues, such as e-commerce and SMEs, which are key for global trade. The Council welcomes the Joint Statement on Electronic Commerce, which the EU has actively supported. The Council also welcomes the Joint Ministerial Statements on the establishment of a WTO informal work programme for MSMEs (micro, small and medium sized enterprises), on investment facilitation for development, and on services domestic regulation. The EU will continue to promote further work in the WTO on investment facilitation, as well as trade and women's economic empowerment, MSMEs, export restrictions in agriculture and horizontal subsidies. In this context, the Council approved the draft Ministerial Declaration."

[WTO webpage on the 11th ministerial conference](#)

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED
