

ADDRESS BY MINISTER ERNESTO ARAÚJO AT
THE OTTAWA GROUP MINISTERIAL
VIDEOCONFERENCE – WORLD TRADE
ORGANIZATION

MARCH 22, 2021

Thank you very much, Canada,

Thank you, Ms, Mary Ng.

Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala –

It is a pleasure to hear from you –,

Dear colleagues,

It is a huge pleasure to be here with you discussing issues of such relevance to the Multilateral Trading System at a moment where the Multilateral Trading System is more relevant than ever, where it can make a huge difference in favor of economic recovery and also in favor of freedom, democracy, and human dignity across the world.

Free trade must be an instrument for freedom. That is our firm belief. And we fully agree with the Director-General in affirming that we need to restore a sense of purpose to the WTO in accordance with its original vocation. Today, we must work towards solutions to fight COVID that do not imply the destruction of economies and the tearing apart of societies, and the WTO must be a part of those solutions. So I take the opportunity once more to congratulate Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala on this historic appointment. Be sure, Director-General, to count on Brazil's support for the preparation of the WTO Ministerial and in the years to come.

Brazil is strongly committed to the multi-lateral trading system and supports a reform

process to modernize and revitalize the WTO. We are ready to contribute with ideas and initiatives which stem from our unprecedented disposition for trade openness and our commitment to democratic and sustainable governance and market economy.

So, Madam DG, I was happy to see that you have included agriculture in a recent speech regarding priorities for MC-12. Brazil, as you know, is a key provider of sustainable food security for the world, and we need a trading system that favors food security providers, and not one that punishes them. Incidentally, Brazil is also an economy based on clean energy, with more than 50 percent of our energy coming from a clean matrix, and we need a trading system that favors countries with that profile, and not that punishes them.

So in that sense, on agriculture, Brazil understands that a result in domestic support, even if incremental, such as the "Framework" for negotiation currently supported by 20 Members, is essential for a successful Ministerial in December. Brazil is also working for a Ministerial Declaration in SPS to start discussions on transparency in applied agricultural tariffs through an open and flexible approach.

The conclusion of a fisheries subsidies agreement that can truly deliver on sustainability and trade is another priority for the MC-12. Brazil wants an ambitious outcome and has put forward a proposal to reduce and limit subsidies that threaten global maritime fish stocks. More broadly, Brazil believes that improving the existing rules on subsidies, both agricultural and industrial, is of utmost importance for ensuring a level playing field in international trade and eliminating distortions, such as overcapacity.

Madam DG, dear colleagues. Brazil is also fully engaged in various Joint Statement Initiatives (JSI) negotiations. We expect to achieve a balanced and meaningful outcome in services domestic regulation, as well as concrete progress in Electronic Commerce by MC-12.

Brazil is also one of the main proponents for an investment facilitation agreement. Our goal is to have an ambitious agreement that can be signed at the next Ministerial. Brazil hails plurilateral negotiations as an effective tool to advance rules and promote market opening in a flexible and progressive manner. As part of reforming the WTO, we should find a solution to integrate plurilateral agreements into the structure of the Organization.

It has been over one year since the Appellate Body has become non-operational. WTO Members need to break the stalemate regarding the WTO Dispute Settlement Mechanism. I believe, Madam DG, that you will play a key role in these efforts. Brazil supports a definitive, multilateral solution, including the unblocking of appointments of new members to the Appellate Body, as well as the preservation of two levels of “adjudication” and of the negative consensus.

The multilateral trading system cannot be effective if it is not transparent and well monitored. Transparency is a key element to building much-needed trust among WTO members. We are open to discuss ways to improve monitoring and transparency across all sectors, always bearing in mind the need to strike a balance between transparency goals and the burdens that new obligations impose.

To conclude my remarks, I would like to speak briefly about some of the areas that the Ottawa Group has identified last year, where concrete actions could be taken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

First, this group can go beyond transparency in Agriculture. Second, Brazil believes that the Declaration on Trade and Health proposed by the group is balanced,

comprehensive, and flexible enough to safeguard public health needs. If approved, this initiative could represent a meaningful WTO response to the current pandemic. To this end, we should focus more efforts on outreach activities. Finally, Brazil underlines the importance of reconciling intellectual property rights and the current public health needs.

In this sense, Brazil appreciates the promising lines of action detailed in the recent proposal from Australia, Canada, Chile, New Zealand, and Norway, among other countries, with the goal to enhance the role of the WTO in the global effort toward the production and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines and other medical supplies.

Thank you very much.

