

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS BY AMB. AMINA MOHAMED AT THE GENERAL COUNCIL MEETING ON 16 JULY 2020

Mr. Chairman, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,
(Monsieur le President, Excellences, Mesdames et
Messieurs) - optional

1. Let me first of all express my solidarity and support to all the people you represent as they work to manage and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences. I reach out particularly to those who have lost loved ones and friends.
2. It is an honour and a pleasure to be back in the WTO with you today and to be meeting with the Members.

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those who have worked to make it possible. I would also like to take this opportunity to recognize the outgoing WTO Director-General Roberto Azevedo for all of his hard work over the past seven years.

3. I am here to talk to you about how I would like to contribute to the WTO as Director General and, equally importantly, to listen to you and respond to your questions.

4. Let me start by setting out the three main themes of my vision for the WTO: Reform, Recovery, Renewal. The WTO needs urgent reforms so it can once again play its full part as an engine of growth, development and stability. Reform is all the more urgent because an effective WTO is needed to help create the conditions for a sustainable recovery from the economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic. And looking further ahead, the WTO needs to renew its

7. Now, COVID-19 is likely to trigger the most severe economic contraction since the Great Depression. No country is in a position to manage the COVID-19 crisis alone. That holds particularly true for trade, which is forecast to contract by as much as one-third in the worst-case scenario. History tells us how the stifling of trade through protectionist reactions made the Great Depression of the 1930s last longer and cut deeper. The GATT and subsequently the WTO were established precisely to prevent such mutually destructive behaviour.
8. It is our duty to make sure that the multilateral trading system is allowed to do the work for which it was established. Over the years since the founding of GATT, many more Members have joined the ranks of the multilateral trading system. Not only are there more of us, but we work today in a much more

13. Renewal has to start with facing up to the defects that have weakened the system in recent years: the inability to update rules to reflect the changing realities of how trade is conducted; the sterility of ideological standoffs; the retreat into defensiveness; and the sense of the benefits of trade not being equitably shared.
14. The WTO has to engage again in good faith negotiations, and this means openness to change and to new ideas, within a culture of inclusiveness and transparency.
15. Renewal should also build upon the WTO's core values and achievements. Trade has been transformational. It has helped to lift close to 1 billion people out of poverty and facilitated the attainment of higher living standards in countries at all levels of development. These successes were possible

because Members did not see trade as a zero-sum game. They understood that trade-offs were needed to produce outcomes. All Members should contribute to trade opening and facilitation efforts, especially those most in a position to do so.

16. Bilateral and regional trade agreements can bring important benefits, especially where

disputes. It is the transparency and monitoring of trade developments around the world. It is the support provided through technical assistance for developing countries, including the least-developed ones, that boosts their opportunities to participate in international trade.

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20. The WTO should give effect to its development objectives in a practical and enabling way, not forgetting its special responsibility towards its most vulnerable Members, particularly least-developed countries. It also needs to play its part in the important task of advancing the economic empowerment of women through trade.

21. I know that I have what it takes as Director General to help the WTO make progress on

means using every possible opportunity for building bridges among Members. It calls for someone who will work tirelessly to bring you, the Members, together to deliberate and converge on the issues facing this organization.

23. I have shown I can do this – the TRIPS amendment, the Expanded Information Technology Agreement and the Nairobi Decision on Export Competition in agriculture are just three examples.

24. As Director-General, I would use these proven skills to support you and work with you for the reform and renewal of the WTO. In me you would have a strong advocate for the value of the multilateral trading system and the need to make it more effective.

25. The role of Director-General carries few powers, but it can and should have a considerable positive

influence in moving forward the work of the WTO. If you choose me to be the next Director-General, I commit myself wholeheartedly to work collaboratively and inclusively – as I have always done – to make this organization work better for all its Members.

26. Thank you.

(Muchas gracias) - optional