



And tomorrow afternoon, you will take up the Accession of Yemen, which, once it has ratified its accession package, will bring the number of WTO Members to 160 – another sign of the continued belief and faith of the international community in the value of the multilateral trading system.

Let me also highlight here the WTO's success in addressing disputes amongst its Members through its Dispute Settlement Mechanism, which plays a vital role for enforcing trade rules. The system continues to be highly active, a sign of WTO Members' confidence in its effectiveness.

Furthermore, the Trade Policy Review Mechanism remains a cornerstone in the pursuit of transparency in trade policy and is highly appreciated by the membership, as also shown by the volume of activity in this area. A total of 20 Members were reviewed in 2013 and more are expected to be reviewed next year.

So, it is clear that this has been a period of intensive activity in the regular work of this institution. Allow me, therefore, to stress how important the regular, day-to-day business of this organization is, although it might not always be very visible or make the headlines. Regular WTO bodies oversee the implementation of existing WTO Agreements, and, I may add, of future agreements as well. They act as a forum for Members to discuss trade matters of interest to them. Their role in enhancing transparency through reporting and monitoring is essential, as is also their role in avoiding disputes. In WTO regular bodies, including the General Council, Members may raise new issues for consideration and discussion, thereby furthering the WTO agenda and making it more responsive to the new global challenges and to an ever changing trading environment. It is critical, in my view, to further strengthen the role of these bodies in the future.

As we turn to our discussions and exchanges over the next three and a half days, I wish to highlight that your statements will be invaluable in shaping the future work of this organization and in guiding your representatives in Geneva. Your statements will, of course, be in the official records of the Conference.

In closing, let me assure you that, as Chairman of the General Council, I will spare no efforts in assisting you, Mr Chairman, and the Ministers to make this Conference a success.

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