

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF PORTUGAL

Statement of H.E. the Secretary of State for European Affairs of Portugal,
Mr. Bruno Maçães, to the 9th Ministerial Conference
of the World Trade Organization

- Bali, 5 December 2013 -

Mr. Chairman,
Mr. Director-General,
Colleagues,
Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all allow me to express my sincere gratitude to the Government of Indonesia for providing us the possibility to gather in this most hospitable of places, to welcome the most recently acceded WTO member Yemen and to thank the Director-General, for his tireless efforts in a most decisive moment in the life of this Organization. Robert Azevêdo has been both inclusive and energetic, a leader and a firm. Obrigado, Roberto.

In the last two years, we have witnessed substantial progress in the recovery from the global financial crisis, in spite of persistent risks, such as sluggish and uneven growth, high unemployment rates and food price volatility.

The contribution of trade for this improved state of affairs cannot be underestimated, especially for the creation of business confidence, the curbing of protectionist trends and the identification of new avenues to return to the path of economic stability. Trade is at the very core of our national growth strategy. An ambitious and fair agreement in Bali is a priority for Portugal.

Upholding the multilateral trading system is essential for both equity and efficiency reasons and the WTO, - with its normative dispute settlement and monitoring mechanisms - continues to play an indispensable role in this regard.

On the normative side, however, the deadlock on the DDA negotiations continues to curtail WTO's ability to respond, in an effective manner, to some of the most pressing challenges that the MTS faces today.

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The DG said yesterday that negotiating has been something like pushing a giant rock up a steeply hill. We should be under illusions that things will remain as they are. Rather, whatever progress we have achieved will be reversed. If we fail to reach an agreement here, things will move backward - and quickly.

There is wide, - I would say unanimous consensus on the need to reach an agreement this week. Portugal and the European Union support the general package that is on the table. It shows balance and it offers the necessary level of compromise. It also results from an open and transparent dialogue. Let us not waste this historical opportunity. We shall undoubtedly regret it.

Portugal sincerely hopes that the 9th Ministerial Conference becomes a turning point in the way we do business in the Organization. The World needs a strong and effective WTO, equipped with the necessary tools to ensure that, in the future, communities worldwide may continue to reap the benefits of international trade.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.