



**General Council
15-17 July 2020**

MINUTES OF MEETING

HELD IN THE CENTRE WILLIAM RAPPARD AND IN VIRTUAL FORMAT ON 15-17 JULY 2020

Chairperson: H.E. Dr. David Walker (New Zealand)

1 APPOINTMENT OF THE NEXT DIRECTOR-GENERAL – MEETING WITH THE CANDIDATES¹

1.1. The Chairman said that it was the first time that the General Council met in person since the outbreak of COVID-19 and he extended a warm welcome to the representatives and colleagues that were present in the room that day as well as to all those that were connected through the virtual platform. It was a real pleasure to see them all. He hoped they were all well and healthy.

1.2. The meeting of the General Council had been convened in accordance with the Procedures for the Appointment of Directors-General in WT/L/509, and its purpose was to enable Members to meet formally with the eight candidates that had been nominated for the post of the next Director-General. The nomination period had closed on 8 July and a consolidated list of candidates had been circulated on 9 July. The eight candidates that had been nominated were: Dr. Jesus Seade Kuri (Mexico), Dr. (Mrs.) Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala (Nigeria), Mr. Abdel-Hamid Mamdouh (Egypt), Ambassador Tudor Ulianovschi (Republic of Moldova), H.E. Yoo Myung-hee (Republic of Korea), Ambassador Amina C. Mohamed (Republic of Kenya), Mr. Mohammad Maziad Al-Tuwaijri (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia) and Dr. Liam Fox (United Kingdom).

1.3. He recalled that, on 1 July and on 10 July, he had sent communications to all Members setting out the modalities for the conduct of the meeting. Those modalities were the same as those applied in the DG appointment processes of Directors-General in 2005 and in 2013, when Members also had had multiple candidates – with some necessary adjustments related to the remote participation of delegations. He highlighted a few important points of those modalities which would apply throughout the two and a half days of the meeting. The scheduled meeting time for each candidate had been indicated in his communication of 10 July. The candidates would appear before the General Council in the order in which their nominations had been received.

1.4. He intended to start all the sessions of the General Council meeting strictly on time. He would therefore request all the representatives attending in person to be seated ten minutes before each meeting was scheduled to start. He would also ask that all delegations that participated remotely to be connected well ahead of the scheduled time. That was an extremely important aspect of the meeting. Members should ensure equal treatment for all candidates, and that the whole meeting ran smoothly. He very much counted on their cooperation in that respect.

1.5. All eight candidates were present in Geneva, and they would make their interventions in person from the Council Room. He was certain he spoke on behalf of all delegations in expressing great appreciation for their efforts and commitment to travel to Geneva to meet with the General Council in person. Each candidate would be invited to make a brief presentation lasting no more than fifteen minutes. That would be followed by a question-and-answer period of no more than one hour and fifteen minutes. During the last five minutes of the question-and-answer period, each candidate would have the opportunity to make a concluding statement if she or he so wished.

¹ The Airgram convening this meeting can be found in document WTO/AIR/GC/30.

1.6. The names of speakers for each question-and-answer period would be drawn at random from a box at the podium containing the names of all delegations who had indicated their wish to put a question to the candidate concerned. Eight boxes, one for each candidate, had been made available on 14 July to Members wishing to put questions to one or more candidates. Members had had the possibility to come physically to the WTO to include their names in the boxes or to indicate it by email if they so wished – and their requests had been duly recorded by the Secretariat. In order to make the fairest possible use of the time available, each Member whose name was drawn from the box would be allowed to ask one question only, with no follow-up questions allowed. That would be followed by a response from the candidate followed by the drawing of the next speaker.

1.7. For those delegations participating remotely, or wishing to ask the question remotely, if their name was drawn and if their delegation was called, they should click on the "Raise Hand" green button on the top of their screen. Once the Secretariat would see that, a message would pop up on their screen – they should click on "Video". After a couple of seconds, they would be streamed and then they could ask their question. Whether participating in person or remotely, questions should last no more than one minute. Other than questions, there should be no statements from delegations. He intended to exercise strict discipline with respect to time management and he would interrupt speakers after one minute. He would also urge Members to assist the process by not asking questions that could have already been asked. He counted on their cooperation so that the exercise could proceed smoothly.

1.8. If the number of speakers was exhausted before the one-hour and fifteen minutes time limit, he would ask if any additional delegations wished to put questions, giving priority to those who had not previously spoken. If, at the end of the time limit for the question-and-answer session, there were unfulfilled requests to put questions, he would indicate to each candidate the number of Members remaining on the list of potential speakers. He would briefly recall those modalities with each candidate with exactly the same introductory words. Each candidate would have the opportunity to meet with the Press in the WTO building immediately following her or his meeting with Members in the General Council. The press conference would be broadcasted live on the WTO website.

1.9. Following the Chairman's introductory remarks, Members in the General Council met with the candidates based in in the order in which their nominations had been received:

15 July

11:15 – 12:45	Dr. Jesus Seade Kuri (Mexico)
15:00 – 16:30	Dr. (Mrs.) Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala (Nigeria)
16:30 – 18:00	Mr. Abdel-Hamid Mamdouh (Egypt)

16 July

11:00 – 12:30	Ambassador Tudor Ulianoschi (Republic of Moldova)
15:00 – 16:30	H.E. Yoo Myung-hee (Republic of Korea)
16:30 – 18:00	Ambassador Amina C. Mohamed (Republic of Kenya)

17 July

10:00 – 11:30	Mr. Mohammad Maziad Al-Tuwaijri (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia)
11:30 – 13:00	Dr. Liam Fox (United Kingdom)

1.10. The presentations made by each candidate², as well as the questions and answers at each session, are recorded in Annexes 1 to 8 of this document.

1.11. In concluding the meeting on 17 July, the Chairman thanked all delegations for their participation in the meeting of the General Council to meet the candidates for the post of WTO Director-General. He was very grateful for their constructive cooperation which had allowed the meeting to run smoothly throughout the two and a half days. As he had noted at the end of each session, there had been several delegations who had wished to ask questions to the candidates and that had not had a chance to do so because their name had not been drawn. Each box had contained

² The candidates' presentations were subsequently issued in documents JOB/GC/233, JOB/GC/234, JOB/GC/235, JOB/GC/236, JOB/GC/237, JOB/GC/238, JOB/GC/239 and JOB/GC/240.

more than 50 names, reflecting the interest that Members placed in the exercise and it had been obviously not possible to cover all the questions in the allocated 75 minutes for each Q&A session.

1.12. The system, which had been based on past practice, had been designed to make the best and fairest possible use of the limited time for each session with the candidates. Delegations could wish to approach the candidates directly or through their respective Missions in those two months of Phase Two of the process which would last until 7 September. That was precisely the objective of Phase Two as had been foreseen in the Procedures. That Phase was the opportunity for the candidates to "make themselves known to Members and to engage in discussions on pertinent issues facing the organization". He encouraged all Members to make good use of that Phase and to continue to engage with the candidates after that General Council meeting.

ANNEX 1

Meeting with Mr. Jesus Seade Kuri (Mexico)

1. Presentation by the Candidate¹

Mr Chairman,

I would like to thank you and all the delegations for this opportunity to share my vision and commitment with the World Trade Organization and present the reasons for my candidature for the position of WTO Director-General.

With your permission, I shall use the Organization's three official languages.

Presenting my candidature to you is not only a huge honour, but also an especially emotional moment for me. I had the privilege of participating extensively in the complex and ambitious creation of the WTO,

- as a negotiator for my country;
- as a member of the successful facilitating team that, with Peter Sutherland, managed to salvage negotiations that were at a complete standstill; and finally
- as Deputy Director-General of the fledgling WTO.

These were the founding moments of this noble institution – moments of firm belief and of shared vision and keen determination as to how the WTO would contribute to both world governance and the development of many of the world's regions.

Much has certainly been achieved. The GATT, and subsequently the WTO, have played a central role in trade liberalization and in the establishment of rules, disciplines and understandings that have, over the course of three quarters of a century, enabled us to make significant progress in terms of global trade and the economic development of our peoples.

Looking to more recent times, the 2008 financial crisis, and now the economic scourge of COVID-19, have shown the multilateral trading framework to be a valuable stabilizing force. And even in the negotiations, the value of the results achieved in the areas of agricultural export subsidies and trade facilitation must be recognized.

Nevertheless, as Deputy Director-General, I experienced first-hand the high expectations that existed for the WTO, and it cannot be denied that the Organization's performance has fallen somewhat short.

To say that the Organization is going through a crisis is a big ***understatement***. Its credibility has been undermined by limited results in the negotiating pillar, which has always been at the heart of the system. And this lack of results has been compounded by the paralysis of the Appellate Body.

To add to this double internal crisis at the WTO, and on top of the very sad loss of human life we have recently experienced, the whole world is now having to address the severely negative impact of COVID-19 on trade, which, according to the WTO, **may fall by a third this year**. And we should not forget that even before the pandemic, international trade **contracted for the first time in 11 years**, reflecting to a large extent the serious trade frictions between its leading players.

For all of these reasons, extraordinary efforts are urgently required from all Members to restore and maintain the relevance of the WTO as the central pillar of a strong and inclusive system that is able to meet the needs of our populations, businesses and consumers, including in terms of development.

The WTO has been compared to a bicycle that toppled over because it stopped moving forward – a bicycle that fell over and broke. It now needs to be properly repaired, and **this requires the leadership of a senior mechanic, a director who, as a chief negotiator and later Deputy**

¹ The presentation is also circulated in document JOB/GC/233.

Director-General, played a key role in designing and ensuring the functioning of the apparatus in question.

If we are to repair the bicycle, negotiations must properly resume as a matter of urgency, and must cover not only issues already under negotiation, but also a balanced agenda of both 21st century issues and outstanding traditional issues, with all Members participating in this effort. It is also vital that **the strength and certainty** of the dispute settlement mechanism be restored. And lastly, discussions must begin to make the WTO more effective, transparent and inclusive.

In view of these challenges, if I have the honour of being appointed Director-General, I would, from the outset, embark upon the following plan of action:

1. **In the first one hundred days:** I would work closely with Members to
 - i. reach an agreement on fisheries subsidies;
 - ii. reinstate the dispute settlement system's body of second instance; and
 - iii. take proper steps to meet with political, business and opinion leaders, so as to rapidly put an end to the indifference and pessimism that reign regarding our great institution;and naturally,
 - iv. I would immediately begin working with Members to address the COVID crisis; the WTO must redouble its efforts to ensure Members know about measures that have been introduced in response to the pandemic and about the lifting of such measures. We must also find mechanisms that will help the countries most affected by the crisis to reintegrate themselves into international trade.
2. **Second phase – Working towards MC12:** While we are aware that no date has yet been set for MC12, it is important that we seek concrete outcomes between now and June 2021, both within the framework of joint initiatives and regarding issues that aim to ensure a more transparent and effective WTO. And, very importantly, we should at the very least establish a work programme at MC12 and resume discussions on issues in respect of which negotiations have been suspended.
3. Lastly, in the **medium and long term**, mechanisms must be introduced to modernize the Organization so as to prevent it from becoming obsolete and outmoded. I would seek to establish an informal dialogue on the Organization's weaknesses and the challenges it currently faces, through yearly forums or specialized meetings.

When I think about long-term expectations, however, I am convinced that they have been affected by the lack of meaningful results in the negotiations since the WTO was founded. Therefore, while we need to achieve results regarding 21st century issues, it is also very important to ensure that renewed energy is put into addressing traditional priority issues that form part of the sustainable development agenda.

4. I am also well aware of the efficiency and professionalism of the Secretariat staff. However, in all the seniors positions I have held, at both the WTO and the IMF, and as Vice-President of a large university in Hong Kong, China, I was always responsible for human resources. As Director-General, I would actively seek a balance between obtaining the greatest added value in the face of budgetary contributions from Members, and guaranteeing the presence of a highly qualified team committed to the success of the Organization and at the service of its Members.
5. Lastly, society demands that certain issues be included in our agenda – environment-related concerns, for instance; I will be in close contact with Members to ensure that these issues are incorporated into our work, as has already occurred with the trade and gender initiative.

Then, why me?

It has been said, and I concur, that the WTO requires a Director General with vision, leadership and political capacity. I could not agree more. Nonetheless, I am also fully convinced that, with the WTO in crisis mode, and for a DG **more involved** as some Members may wish to have at this point in time, it is **of the essence** that the DG has a solid command of the **arcane** world of the WTO and

trade negotiations; that he or she be aware and be sensitive to the reasons behind certain balances in the texts, and in command of the alternatives that may have been formulated or could be explored. In the absence of this fundamental sure-footedness on the WTO's inner workings, at the first serious discussion among senior trade negotiators, the new DG will quickly be marginalized and sidelined.

In this connection, please allow me to highlight the triple and perhaps unique participation I had in the creation of the WTO, as its:

- (i) Influential GATT Ambassador for Mexico and Chief Negotiator for the Uruguay Round;
- (ii) GATT Deputy Director General in the team called in to rescue the negotiations that were all but collapsed; and finally,
- (iii) Founding Deputy Director General of the WTO.

And I should mention two other central stages in my career that I had very much in preparation for this DG position, as:

- (iv) Senior Advisor at the International Monetary Fund where,
 - (a) I led and negotiated the write-offs of some 80% of the external debt of **fifteen African countries**; and
 - (b) also leading the work in support of three major countries in serious financial crises – Argentina, Brazil and Turkey, as well as extensive technical assistance to all developing regions.

These massive debt write-offs and giant financial support exercises were very challenging training exercises in top-level negotiations. Likewise, I more recently played the role of

Chief Negotiator of the Mexico-U.S.-Canada trade agreement that replaced the old NAFTA two weeks ago today, where under very difficult circumstances we achieved a magnificent agreement for my country and for the region.

This new North-American Treaty, together with the Agreement creating the WTO, must be the two most complex and ambitious trade instruments in force today. To have negotiated both of them gives me a unique experience that I will unequivocally put at the service of the WTO and its Members, to lead the reform this Organization needs as it moves forward.

All of these experiences, as well as my life as an academic in the UK and in France, in Mexico, in Hong Kong, China and in the PRC, makes me the international man that I am, fully multilingual, with a career spanning the four corners of the globe and a profound multilateral consciousness. Having contributed fundamentally to the creation of **our** WTO, my professional and personal commitment with this House is deep. This is why I am a candidate.

All along my career I have worked with Ministers and legislators, often Heads of State. I present myself to you with my fullest energy, passion and experience, at a difficult time for the WTO. My commitment is to achieve with you the reform and restoration of a WTO back at the centre of global governance for the benefit of world economic growth. **My solemn commitment to you is to be an effective DG and interlocutor, close to all Members north and south, east and west, and indeed fully equidistant from you all.**

Thank you very much.

2. Questions and Answers²

Q: One of the roles of the Director-General will be to chair the Trade Negotiations Committee. If you were to be selected as DG, how do you see your participation in being

² The following delegations also submitted their names to ask a question to the candidate: Afghanistan, Botswana, Brazil, Canada, China, Denmark, El Salvador, Estonia, Finland, Gabon, Germany, Guatemala, India, Italy, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Namibia, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Philippines, Poland, Qatar, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Chinese Taipei, Thailand, Turkey, United States, Uruguay and Zimbabwe.

directly involved in trade negotiations currently under way and in the future here at the WTO? (Colombia)

A: In my view, the WTO has evolved and the needs are not necessarily the same today as they were ten, fifteen or even more years ago. From what I have heard from delegations, there is a need for a Director-General who is more involved. I have been seated where you are in very difficult situations and in very challenging negotiations here at the WTO, and I understand very well this concept of a Member-driven process. I would never breach that principle. As the Chair of the Trade Negotiations Committee, I will be very respectful. I would also be an active participant who will contribute in two types of actions and that is to simplify processes and to offer ideas or alternatives in what is being discussed. The art of negotiations involves being very innovative and imaginative within the framework of what is being discussed. I will also invite participants to address what is being discussed directly and not to just be regurgitating statements that have been prepared weeks in advance. So, I will call for active participation from Members and I will participate by injecting new ideas in these issues – which will also involve the participation of Members.

Q: Concerning environmental issues, particularly on sustainability in terms of environment and climate change, how can we integrate these further in the work of the WTO? Do you believe that the multilateral trade rules can contribute to mitigating climate change? (France)

A: This is to be decided by Members. Clearly, there can be rules in these areas. There is a history of considerations in dealing with trade and the environment. This has made various Members a bit nervous and I will be very respectful in determining the limitations alongside them. These are very important issues and we need this to be a win-win situation where Members, generally speaking, will develop rules in this regard. I myself will be very interested in developing rules on addressing climate change and trade. However, it will be up to the Membership to decide on the matter. I do think that it is possible to have new and major outcomes. We need to remember that our societies need to pay greater attention to the environment and that there is work that can be done here.

Q: I would like to ask you about your further thoughts in relation to dispute settlement. What do you think is the importance of dispute settlement in trade agreements at whatever level around the world those agreements are made? What do you think the key elements are and how would you improve and restore a strong dispute process in the WTO? (Ireland)

A: I have my ideas about dispute settlement in trade agreements and about this institution. The connection is interesting. I am not sure what I can say about that connection but as I mentioned earlier, I just completed the negotiation of a major trade agreement linking my country with our two big neighbours to the north – the United States and Canada. It is an agreement that I am very proud of. This agreement includes a very powerful dispute settlement chapter which provides for State to State dispute settlement that had escaped the predecessor agreement. In NAFTA, there was supposed to be such a chapter – Chapter 20. Because of flaws in its design, it never came into effect effectively. In any event, the current one has it and the key characteristics of that will have to be that it is balanced, particularly in the way you conduct the work, and that its design is appropriate for a trilateral relationship. I choose panellists from your list and you choose panellists from my list which is not the case at the WTO where there is a different kind of situation to achieve neutrality – as neutrality can be achieved by different means. In any case, the system has to be neutral, balanced and binding, and we achieved all those characteristics. I will be respectful and will learn from you if and when I become DG, but as far as I know and as far as I read your statements and specialised articles by experts, I do not see much challenging of the DSU. I believe that the problems that exist concern the application of the DSU. Therefore, it is not surprising that the excellent work conducted by our Chairman has been largely a reaffirmation of key aspects of the DSU. In reaffirming, you are not just marking in yellow certain sentences in the DSU. You can accompany that, when this is adopted through a declaration or whatever, that adds emphasis or adds certain clarifications on how to do it. But I believe the DSU is not under threat. Nevertheless, there is a disconnect between the DSB as the ultimate supervisory body and the Appellate Body. The DSB is the supervisor but the Appellate Body is autonomous. So, how do you make sense of those two statements? The Chairman, in one of his recommendations, referred briefly to the need to articulate that oversight role and I think that is the crux of the matter. I have my ideas but maybe that is something that we can leave for another time.

Q: My question is related to the issue which deeply concerns my country, the Kyrgyz Republic, and includes some other countries due to their geographical characteristics. We all know about the position of the small economies which have no access to sea which face high transport costs due to their landlocked position making them dependent on other countries for transiting goods. In this regard, what is your vision as a candidate for Director-General on addressing the concerns of the small and landlocked economies and how could they fully integrate into the multilateral trading system? If you share the opinion that it is an important issue for the WTO, what concrete steps can you propose to address these problems? (Kyrgyz Republic)

A: That is a very important issue. Let me first tell you about a very important event that happened. When we went through all that agony to close the negotiations creating the WTO, after everybody had shaken hands and everything was done, the least-developed countries had not been as engaged as they might have wanted to be in the negotiations. After the whole thing was closed, I, as DDG responsible for development, received a copy of one letter from the coordinator of that group to the other Ministers denouncing the results saying that they could not meet the obligations. And then there was an onslaught of communications among them that prompted me to say that this is not the right way to start. So, I consulted with the Director-General, and then consulted with delegations, and we initiated a special negotiation for them that I was invited to chair. And in a few months, we reached port and we introduced the main flexibilities that exist now for the least-developed countries. That tells me that you do need to give special attention to particular groups of vulnerable economies. Yours is one – landlocked economies. There is the flipside of your economies that are also very vulnerable – the small island economies. And we also have the least-developed countries. So, there are at least three groups of countries that are vulnerable. How do you take these groups into account? Well, I use the analogy of a tennis championship. I believe the main story here has to be the main negotiations that involve the bulk of the Members – that involve the European Union, the Americas, China, India, Japan, Australia and New Zealand – that has to be met. If we do not reach agreement in that area, we are in trouble. So, we have to satisfy that. And you cannot create too much extra friction for that process by inserting too many concerns of interest to particular groups. The history of negotiations has been that 99% of our attention goes to what I call "centre court" – the centre court negotiations – which is the main negotiations. But I believe that we have not given enough attention to Court No. 1, Court No. 2 and Court No. 3 where you have to give specialised dedicated attention to the LDCs, the LLDCs, SIDS and SVEs. I believe you need to give special attention to them. We have had Working Groups, and forgive me if I am being unfair and there is perhaps a lot of very good work that is being done, it just does not reach me enough, but I believe that dedicated attention is necessary. As Director-General, I will certainly hope to meet at least once every couple of months with these groups to be in touch with what is happening and in supporting the work. And then when something needs to be brought to centre court, it has to be brought to some means of satisfaction. But dedicated attention is needed to your countries and to the other cases that I mentioned.

Q: You refer to an organization that has fallen short of high expectations. You refer to the term crisis. How do you perceive the WTO's image among the business community and the civil society on which you see a need to improve relations with these stakeholders? If so, what and how will you do that? (The Netherlands)

A: That is certainly an area of problem. I remember when we were negotiating in those days. We had strong favourable winds in the shape of a great deal of interest by the business community, civil society and politics more broadly than the negotiators. So, it was very common for myself as the Ambassador of a medium-sized delegation, the Mexican delegation, to have in my office a businessman from the United States or a legislator from the European Union (European Economic Communities as it was called then), and also on occasion whether from India or Japan. You did have a lot of interest in particular from the business community and also from political bodies and the civil society at large. And the favourable winds sometimes brought pressure, but they helped the process to reach port. I believe this has been the case since Day 1 of the life of the WTO that somehow disappeared. It has been my impression that perhaps that was one key ingredient that did not help negotiations from the beginning. I do know how to elicit this interest. I can tell you again, referring to the negotiations I just completed in North America, the same thing was true. We also did not have a lot of support from the business community and when things began to get very complicated because of the opposition party in one of the countries to the north of Mexico being in control of the Lord Chamber of Commerce and therefore ratification of what has been agreed becoming very much under question, I personally began to accept participation by our business

community in my country. Very quickly, we reorganised the excellent structures that the business sector had created 25 years earlier and then after a few months, between them and me and my team, we managed to awaken the interest in the participation of the business sector in the United States and in Canada. So, by the middle of 2019, you have a fantastic structure to the USMCA in the United States that we did not have at all for the previous 25 years. So, I do know to what extent one can have success in trying to elicit this kind of interest. That is the first answer. The second answer is that, just as in the old days, the friendly pressure by those groups help the negotiations. I believe that we now have in our favour the opposite – which is the fact that we are facing disaster or the fact that we are getting into such a tense relationship across the Pacific and to some extent also across the Atlantic. Amid all the major misunderstandings that exist, I think this is something that should also work to our advantage – to persuade people, business communities and governments that we need to address the issues. Otherwise, it could get worse. And then finally, I referred to this in my speech, in my 100-day commitment I said the third item was to take solid steps to begin to change the image of ineffectiveness that in good measure has developed by working with you to address the public at large and say that things are happening, we are moving, the negotiations are moving, the dispute settlement problem is being overcome and the WTO is important. So, I would very much think of being not on the road all the time, not at all, But certainly to make a reactive presence perhaps in Davos and in similar fora to be a powerful public voice working with you in support of a more positive, active image of this organization. It's needed.

Q: In your initial presentation, you mentioned that if you are elected as the DG, for the first one hundred days you will move the things and turn around the image of the WTO. In that context, you mentioned fisheries, dispute settlement and COVID-19 related issues. Could you elaborate your idea on how you would spend those first one hundred days so that we can get to know your future vision of the WTO? (Japan)

A: I hope I did not say that I would turn around the image but begin to address that problem and then work on that with a firmer step possible as we move forward. Resolving the issues on fisheries and the dispute settlement system – only Members can do it. What I will provide if I am elected is a forceful, active, good faith intermediation to try to get things moving. It is my impression that those two key areas – the fisheries negotiation has been on for ages and the dispute settlement system and AB problem that is very serious – it is my impression that, with good faith, those can be brought to conclusion. Now, how do I do it? Working with you. Meeting with the delegation involved individually and then collectively to see where we need to move, what do we need, and to try to identify the blockages and to try to contribute to overcoming those blockages. That is all I can say. That is for the delegations to do it. And then on COVID-19, I believe that it is good to hear that the trade policy review mechanism has been getting these types of information including on trade measures, both the trade restrictive ones and those that facilitate trade. That is very good and we can intensify that and we would probably make it more frequent. But I believe that in an emergency situation like what we have now, I will really engage in consultations to try to do more, to try to get an extraordinary emergency situation agreement with Members on a voluntary basis, perhaps for a proactive contribution of information. Because we may not know what to do with some of the information, but our business community will know very well what they can do with it. All the countries work with a small piece of the sausage called value chains and you control this section. And if your government decides to reopen a sector at one point, you really want to know whether what comes from the left or goes to the right can get in business. So, I believe that concentrating information on plans to liberalize to reopen is extremely useful to our business communities. So, I will try to start that and I will consult with Members to learn from this experience and develop perhaps a code of good practice so that the next time we have a collective emergency, we face it in a more organised way because all our emergency procedures in the agreements relate to a country having a problem. But this time, every country has it. So, we need to develop a more coordinated approach. That is what I think I will be doing.

Q: Secretariat support for Members is one crucial aspect in WTO institution building. While we see the importance of technical assistance extended in order to enhance Members' capacity to comply with the WTO Agreements, there is a lack of initiative by the Secretariat in providing analysis on current global trade and new trade agreement initiatives. This lack of initiative exposes the WTO's lack of leadership in this area compared to other international organizations. How can you improve the WTO Secretariat in order to maximize its role and function to better serve the Members based on your knowledge and experience? (Indonesia)

A: You mention two very important issues. The first relates to technical assistance which I think is extremely important. I was in charge of the area when I was here. Because of the scale of operation, I was in charge of huge technical assistance programmes around the world when I was in the IMF, so I have directed and personally engaged in technical assistance in Asia, Africa and Latin America. But the main issue you focus on is more on analysis by the Secretariat. I believe we have to be careful. We are an organization whose main business is negotiations so I would be very careful to have the Secretariat writing position notes. I do not think it is our business to do that. But at the same time, as I have said, I think the DG needs to be more engaged in developing ideas and so on. So, factual analysis, research and analysis by the Secretariat, profiling the issues without advancing particular solutions that may be favoured by one delegation but not the other one, I think it is appropriate to be careful. Let me give you one example. If you search Google, you can find a paper that was produced under my care when I was a DDG of GATT when we were closing the negotiations. In those negotiations, there was a mandate agreed that before the adoption of the final results, there will be a consideration by Members on the results reached from the point of view of developing countries. Some people favoured an extremely careful analysis to produce one page saying that this was good for everybody. I thought it was better to really study the issues in an objective way – not taking positions. And it was a 70-plus page analysis on what were the main results and what were the weighted average tariff concessions and things of that kind. Some people were very nervous, but I was convinced that transparency was the way to really overcome the extreme fear from many delegations that we were facing during that time. We had a very robust one-day debate around the paper that we tabled and it was all fine. And I think it has contributed to the conclusion. So, I would be in favour of transparency, but careful not to have the Secretariat and myself taking sides on particular issues being debated. That is a careful balance that I would be very attentive to.

Q: How, in your view, can plurilateral initiatives like the negotiations that are ongoing on e-commerce, investment facilitation or domestic regulation contribute to strengthen the multilateral trading system? I would be interested in hearing your ideas if you have some now on how plurilateral agreements could be best integrated into the WTO system? (European Union)

A: As you know better than I, that is a delicate question. I am aware that there are different points of view on the matter. Nevertheless, I really have to say that it is important to be as multilateral as possible. If there are plurilateral initiatives, I think it is vital that they should be open to everybody. At the same time, I often resort to history to better understand the present because without history, you do not know where you are going in the future. As I look at the history of the multilateral trading system, I think one of the most heroic, provocative moments was the one before the creation of the WTO – the Tokyo Round, when lots of issues that were giving rise to enormous tensions between countries were addressed through the creation of the famous Tokyo Round Codes. Some of them have only twelve, fifteen, eighteen participants but I believe that they opened the path to create rules in extremely difficult areas like Anti-Dumping and Subsidies. I think it was a great contribution to the advancement of the multilateral system. Nevertheless, having said that, when we came to the Uruguay Round, I think its number one result, the most important one, is the fact that it essentially created more or less common rules for everybody – the single undertaking, level playing field across the board with special and differential treatment provisions, essentially multilateralizing most of the obligations including the Tokyo Codes. So, it was good to create them and it was even better to make them fully multilateral later. Now, having gone through the Uruguay Round and into the WTO, the developing countries were not that directly involved in the previous history of the negotiations because many of the areas of interest to them were not there and at the same time their obligations were very soft because of Part IV – the Enabling Clause. And the fact that everybody is now on a level playing field where rules applied to everybody makes it vital for every delegation to be part of the progress which in turn makes achieving such progress more of a challenge as we have seen this last 26 years. I believe that it is again time to make progress with the plurilaterals. We need to welcome advancements in the system while being very careful that the plurilaterals should never be a means to exclude anybody because then I would not be in favour of it. The WTO is after all a Member-driven organization. The benefits being open to the extent possible are desirable characteristics. So, I will be careful but also consider that making progress must be the fundamental objective. We all know that the world in 2020 is not the world in 2000 nor in 1995. Things change. Issues change. The nature of trade changes. The actors in trade change. And you need to continue developing rules or become increasingly irrelevant. That is my approach.

Q: There are many challenges that the organization is facing in a highly uncertain multilateral trading environment. In light of that, notwithstanding the many tasks that the DG will have awaiting them on Day 1, what will be your number one and number two priorities should you assume office? (Barbados)

A: Thank you for offering me two priorities because I cannot choose one. I think there are two issues that have to be tackled that are fundamentally essential from day one. The first is to resume the path of negotiations. This is a path that needs to be engaged, needs to create confidence, needs to create more trust between delegations and that will be in itself reinforcing direction to become more relevant, more dynamic, more of a collective endeavour. I believe that in the 164 delegations, we need a 165th effective delegation which is a coalition of the negotiators whose job it is to see how to make progress taking everybody into account. For me, it should be as important, if I am the negotiator of one country, to make progress from others' point of view because it is the only way to make progress for myself. So, I believe that this kind of confidence and cooperation, connivance as we used to say in the old days, is central for the new dynamics that I hope you will inject. For that, the path of negotiation starts with fisheries and the other negotiations on the way and soon enough at MC12 an agenda of negotiation in selected areas. So, that is one top priority. The second one, which is equally important at this point in time, is the Appellate Body issue which is not a process. That is something to be fixed, but I hope it can be done. There are other things and there is no reason to exclude them on efficiency in the work. I think we can modernise the WTO. I believe COVID-19 is a terrible disaster for us – losing lives and trade. But if there is any kind of silver lining, it could be in relation to how good the work we can do by electronic means. If you come with a difficult question because your delegation has an important issue that you want to clarify in the TBT Committee or somewhere else, I do not think that it is very satisfactory to tell your Ambassador that the next meeting is in December. I think it should be possible to engage in business by some other means in a more agile basis. That would also be a third priority, less dramatically important than the first two. But I think modernising the practical work of the executive concerning transparency and efficiency should be a level 2 priority, whereas the first two would be on level 1.

Q: Today, the WTO is in crisis. COVID-19 with its diverse impacts on the socio-economic development of WTO Members have further added challenges to the functioning of this organization. The WTO has 164 Members. Their per capita income ranges from a low of USD 500 to a high of USD 100,000 and their nominal figures from USD 500 million to USD 21 trillion. They have diverse interests and expectations from the multilateral trade regime. In this context, what is your plan, strategy and vision to bring all diverse groups of WTO Members together and meet their expectations at the maximum possible level and in a just and equitable manner? (Nepal)

A: You are addressing a question that everybody should be answering. This is more or less what has to be our vision for the future of this organization – to be a global house of trade where the interests of all Members are taken care of and where suitable engagements, commitments and rules are developed that work for everybody, so that it fulfils the role that it is meant to fulfil. I have had a lot of experience on the ground. I have done close to 70 World Bank and IMF missions going to mainly developing countries, but also occasionally to Germany and to Canada and so on, and I have directly seen the power of trade in bringing people out of poverty and in bringing new hope to their lives. I really feel that everybody should seriously make this an objective. That, I think, requires – or at least would benefit enormously from – a healthy, universal, inclusive and balanced sustainable development sensitive organization. That is the way that I see this House going.

Q: How do you see the Selection of Chairpersons of WTO Councils and Committees? How do you see the ways that the WTO Secretariat hires its staff? (Chinese Taipei)

A: I suppose that you are talking about the convenience, the need, the healthy practice of rotation. As far as I can tell, I have not followed exactly who has been the Chairperson on each Council and Committee for the past 26 years, but I think it follows the practice of rotation. Such practice is healthy and I am very much supportive of it. Of course, it is the Members who elect them. They are not appointed by the DG. It is the Members who elect, but I think rotation is a good thing. Concerning the Secretariat, having a balanced Secretariat to the extent possible is important. Of course, the number one consideration has to be competence. The reality is we work in three languages, so a Member whose language is not one of the three WTO official ones may have some handicap because candidates from there may not be as fluent in English, French or Spanish – and within the three, probably the main working language is English. So, there is a bit of a built-in factor

that will favour somebody from, say, India, the United Kingdom or Canada compared to somebody from, say, Angola. I think that is a reality. I will not be disruptive of the number one criterion which is to hire quality staff and we have to try to have diversity, but at the same time we need to make an effort to have stronger representation from any background that is underrepresented and there are ways to do that, including hiring and making part of the package intensive language lessons for somebody who is already competent enough, but who could do more. Basically, I believe in essential parity, but within the reality of qualitative criteria.

Q: How do you see the WTO's role in the future after the establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area in the African continent which was set up to create advantages and privileges for African countries? Does the WTO have a role to play in promoting this free trade area on the African continent? (Morocco)

A: During my time in this organization, I was in charge of supervising all of the work concerning Article XXIV of the GATT. I know this dossier very well. Likewise, my country has done free trade agreements with about 50 countries. It has been a part of our culture. I have also been part of the academia and I know very well the research and the literature regarding this matter. I think that there is widespread academic opinion that provides that a free trade agreement created with the sole purpose of giving preferences exclusively to hamper and restrict trade is not positive. But we have here an agreement that has an objective to help the economies concerned to liberalize among themselves and create a better trading environment among them. I think this is a very good idea because all the African economies, even the largest ones such as Nigeria and South Africa, are relatively small. In this modern world, given the technology that we have got that is also cheap and available, you can import anything for instance from Chile, from Sweden, from China, and with this global competition, there is a natural preference for major countries. So, I think it is important for African countries to increase your scale. Therefore, with these FTAs, I think that this can be something very good in order to put you in a good position to create more investments. This could be Burkina Faso, for instance. You can really benefit from these kinds of agreements in order to have a more competitive market. This could be something very good. As DG, this is something I would fully support. I think we can certainly promote this. We need to look at what kind of assistance the Secretariat might provide. To a certain extent, it would be appropriate to provide some support for these kinds of agreements. Of course, we are not necessarily favouring any regional agreement over another, but we are in favour of this type of agreement.

Q: You were directly involved in setting up the GATT and transferring it into the WTO. In your opinion, what do you think you can draw upon from the end of the Uruguay Round and apply it to the current crisis? You have already mentioned a few examples. Could you give us some more? (Russian Federation)

A: I am not quite sure what examples I could add. But I do think that the key thing is that we need to be really determined and that we continue to move forward. We need good faith and we need to be able to draw cooperation among negotiators. We do have a basis in order to move forward and overcome past gridlocks. What we need is to have a first step. That is the most important thing. I am an engineer, so I would say that if you want to move, for instance, a bottle, you need a certain momentum. Once you start to move it, it will become easier. You need that dynamic and the same one applies to this organization. Once we start to move forward after that first step, I think things will be easier.

Q: What steps would you take to better orient the WTO to serve a global economy that is being technologically and digitally transformed? And in doing so, how would you ensure that the multilateral system also becomes more inclusive and supportive of minority and marginalised voices including women? (New Zealand)

A: There may be different aspects to your question. I believe that it is central for the organization. My vision is an inclusive, balanced organization. So, in terms of concrete participation, we need not only to be open to everybody, but to be proactive in taking care of the interests and the challenges pertaining to particular groups of countries. I already referred to the small landlocked economies, small island economies and LDCs. The organization should be proactive. Then you brought in the dimension of gender. Of course, it is very important. I believe that it is already part of our mandate. It comes from MC11. To promote this is very much a demand that the world places on us. We need to be responsive like with everything else within the main objectives of the organization to achieve good results for everybody, to search always quality and to be business oriented, but that is not in

the least in conflict with the promotion of a gender perspective. If I share with you the list of my team engaged in the negotiations with our difficult and challenging neighbours in the north, all my immediate team by happenstance are women – immediately working with me are three women and then my Director-General's undersecretaries, out of five that we have, there are three women, all three of them appointed by me. The two others are people who stayed from the previous administration. So, I believe that one can be and should be proactive in incorporating that dimension as well as the regional dimension mentioned. I believe that all of these are demands our society places on us, to which we need to be responsive. I will certainly hope to see that reflected in my Secretariat if I am elected including at the highest levels because there is a lot of room to move in this direction.

Q: A recent report by the WTO on COVID-19 and Trade in Services suggests that services trade would be key to global economic recovery in the wake of the pandemic. But we all know that African countries and many small economies are facing new challenges in linking not only to global value chains relating to trade in goods but also trade in services. So, what would be your proposals in addressing these challenges and how would you help these Members in better integrating into the multilateral trading system and in particular in the value chains in trade in services? (Mauritius)

A: Services is a very special kind of sector. In a way, it is a big challenge for the poorest economies, for developing economies generally and for the least-developed economies because there is a lack of development on the service direction. But at the same time, quite often it is a collection of sectors where it is easier to jump the obstacles and to move to the forefront. India has demonstrated that. It is a great exporter in services – being very much a developing country but has made formidable advances in services particularly in I.T. related sectors and so on. And this is the case for others as well. A lot of that has to pass through open policies in the direction of developing the services sector and also financial resources because of the need to have resources to invest, to educate and so on. So, this is one area that I think will benefit a lot from closer cooperation between this organization and financial organizations such as the World Bank and IMF to have a more concerted approach with the development of certain areas such as this. I believe the coherence mandate is very important, in particular, to bring on board the poor countries to be able to compete in the new economy, the economy of the 21st century and in particular in the services dimension. I think it goes through good agreements developed here, but at the same time good policies in the country and financial support from our sister institutions in a concerted way.

Q: The WTO consists of Members at different levels of development. How do you plan to facilitate consensus in relation to special and differential treatment given the different views in this regard? (South Africa)

A: This is an enormously important question and there are different points of view here. I tell you, whatever I say is qualified by the fact that I am profoundly aware of the fact that this is a Member-driven organization, everything has to be agreed. But nevertheless, I believe that any idea of reclassifying Members and to say a Member is no longer a developing country Member, it may be what anybody is suggesting, but any suggestion in this direction would not be productive because it has to be agreed and the negotiation to agree on any such reclassification would probably take longer than the Doha Round. In my opinion, what is appropriate is to examine the issue. At the same time, it is true that times have changed. The nature of engagement within these countries has changed. It is appropriate to reconsider what is the contribution that different countries can make. I would not imagine that a country like mine should be able to do the same things or have the same liberties, the same access to S&DT, as Angola or Honduras. The question would be, what is the contribution that can be made? I think the more pragmatic approach is what could be answered. Maybe we have seen some of that in the Trade Facilitation Agreement. Of course, the TFA is relatively easier. It is not a real negotiation area, but I think it shows the way on a more pragmatic approach to do this. The question should be: what contribution can be made on major issues by different countries? And then there should be countries where the issue is not even posed. There really are countries without that capacity. The other question that I would ask is: what is the need that countries have? And I think that, since it is something that has been agreed in the past, any clear need for special and differential treatment should be provided. I think that is the approach that should be at least the guiding light, not necessarily easily done but certainly easily said and hopefully a good kind of principle to try to apply and follow.

Q: The current situation in global trade raises a significant number of issues such as the current various areas of trade policy and growing contradiction in trade between specific Members and as a result, slows down the development of the trade system. As a possible Chair of the TNC and a DG, in which areas do you see necessity to concentrate efforts of the WTO Members? (Ukraine)

A: I already gave my ideas hoping that Members will agree with that. It is a Member-driven organization, but on areas where we already have negotiations on the way, I believe there is every reason to try to bring them to port. As to areas that pose a distinct major challenge to the organization such as the Appellate Body, we need to move on that. And then I would be consulting you and I will consult delegations on what could be that agenda. I would hope to have an agenda for negotiations to be agreed at MC12. I suggest that Agriculture is an obvious candidate. Maybe issues of green economy and development will be a candidate. Issues of transparency would be a candidate. But these are ideas that I would give no weight to at all unless they are supported by the Members. What I offer you is not those ideas but a forceful, honest Director-General that will mediate and work hard to identify issues and areas for solid advancement. I would not want to see an organization that is unable to negotiate and to make progress. Let us work together on identifying the key issues. Maybe some of those I suggested could be there, but it is for you to decide.

Q: As you know, a significant number of landlocked countries are faced with high trade costs. Statistics show that the trade costs for them are twice as high than the costs for other Members. Moreover, their participation in world trade is less than one per cent. So how can you strengthen the rights, especially the transit rights, for the LLDCs in the WTO Agreements and in the WTO structure in general? (Mongolia)

A: This is the issue that was asked before, so let me just re-state. I believe there needs to be a window and a table to consider the issues and ideas and to examine what might be appropriate in relation to the landlocked economies where those economies are sitting there alongside other Members, in particular the bigger Members. I would hope that the European Union and the United States would be sitting there together with other Members to identify what could be the issues. But many of the issues would probably be not only about trade openness and trade cooperation, but also questions of financing and access to natural resources and so on. It depends very much on your policies as well. There is no magic wand. But I think dedicated attention is all I can suggest and promise.

Q: How would you describe yourself as a manager? What kind of leadership style will you bring to the WTO? (Singapore)

A: I read somewhere that nobody can supervise effectively more than seven people. I do not know where the number comes from. But I very much believe in teams. You have to be a good centraliser – empower colleagues to do their job. I very much follow that kind of mantra. I believe in openness. I am very proactive. I will always be very energetic and passionate addressing the issues but working as a team. And I am fortunate that the Secretariat staff in this organization are highly dedicated and highly competent people. The DG works not only with staff, but also has a hybrid relationship with the Members. So, I would be very cooperative trying to maximize collective achievements through mutual leverage. That is my approach.

Q: Of course, there are benefits in the negotiations on e-commerce, fisheries subsidies and investment facilitation, but agriculture also plays a major role in the work of the WTO. What is your specific proposal to make progress in this area? (Costa Rica)

A: I agree with you. Agriculture is very important indeed. In talking about a future programme, I would be careful not to give too many examples because if we negotiate one or another issue, of course that will depend on whether the Membership agree and agriculture is part of that. Clearly, we need to reinvigorate these negotiations. It is a specific area where we should reach an agreement at MC12, but this would depend on how we would operate and how we would be very actively discussing this. We need to make progress in this area, as well as in many others in order to involve all Members. If I were to be DG, I will be as dynamic as possible in this process. I will remain impartial and the process will continue to be Member-driven.

3. Summing up by the Candidate³

I would like to thank all delegations, including those who wanted to speak and were not given the floor. Apologies for that. I also want to thank those who did not speak. Thank you all for your time and attention. It is a privilege. The questions were all deep and constructive. They certainly reflect the thematic diversity that I expected, the complexity that we face, this evident urgency to pave the road for progress for this organization that we all feel so strongly about. We need to leave behind narrow perspectives and think of realistic, mutually supportive ways of moving forward. It is necessary to move forward. It is necessary to accept that the world is changing, that a new opening is necessary, that new rules are necessary, that new commitments are necessary. There has to be a new spirit of dynamics moving forward. Of course, the future of the organization is subject to all kinds of international issues and considerations, including geopolitical ones. But those who participate, I believe, in this House should also add to any other perspective they have the banner, the flag of the importance of open trade, balanced trade, good-for-everybody trade that this House represents.

As I read carefully the speeches that were pronounced in 2013 by the candidates to be DG then, I find that many of the issues being discussed now are the same. There were concerns expressed then about the need to avoid the path of irrelevance for this organization and it really gives me an uneasy feeling that seven and a half years later, we may not even be in the same position, but slightly deeper into challenging territory. So, we really need to shake the tree and move forward, and I would be very much committed to doing that with you. I very much hope that is what you want to do. The organization is in urgent need for movement because the alternative is not that it will disappear. I do not think it will ever disappear because countries are very bad at closing organizations that do not work. I will not give you examples, but there are one or two somewhere. It never happens. But they do run the risk of being increasingly irrelevant. And this one cannot be exempted. We have not found a vaccine against COVID-19. And we have also not found a vaccine against irrelevance of an organization that does not create its own relevance through good work. And the cost of that is the cost of threatening mediocrity. So, I really would like to call on Members to refuse that, to say that trade is too important to risk that.

Let us move together. This is a great challenge for you, a great challenge for everybody. But on my part, if the Membership so decides, you will have in me an experienced, assertive, committed, passionate leader that will work with you, with each and every Member to make a change. It is not the time for impromptu leadership. It is the time for energetic leadership, leadership that can bring the kind of political dimension that you have always needed – and more so now – and at the same time have the knowledge essential for a leader that will be able to work with you on the issues. I offer exactly that. It is not the time for learning curves. It is time to get things done. And then we can worry about all the kinds of considerations when the skies are blue. The skies are not blue now. We are in a bit of a storm for this organization. We need a captain that will work with you, facing with enough expertise the threatening waves that may come from the right or from the left to make sure that we make progress straight ahead.

³ Under the modalities for the conduct of the meeting communicated by the Chair to all delegations on 1 and 10 July, each candidate had the opportunity to make a concluding statement during the last five minutes of the question-and-answer period if she or he so wished.

ANNEX 2

Meeting with Dr. (Mrs.) Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala (Nigeria)

1. Presentation by the Candidate¹

Thank you, Chair, for the opportunity to meet with delegations to talk about my candidacy for the post of WTO Director-General. I am here because trade is vital for a prosperous 21st century and the WTO is needed more than ever before. *Mais Monsieur le Président de Conseil, avant de prononcer mon discours, j'aimerais présenter mes sincères condoléances à quiconque qui aurait perdu un membre de la famille à cause du COVID-19 et pour ceux qui sont malades, je leur souhaite un bon rétablissement.* In my statement, I will be focusing on my motivations for becoming a candidate, as well as my vision for this organization.

Since the creation of the GATT in 1948, the growth of trade has gone hand in hand with the large expansion of the global economy that has resulted in increased living standards around the world and lifted hundreds of millions of people out of poverty in the developing world.

The WTO plays an essential role in world trade through mechanisms designed to foster transparency, predictability and stability in the MTS, monitor trade developments, promote exchanges and build trust. It also assists developing countries, especially the least developed and small economies, to boost trade through technical assistance and capacity building. Trade and trade policy have rightly become central to national development strategies.

In recent years, the multilateral trading system (MTS) has been going through difficult and challenging times. But, in my view, the world now needs, more than ever, a reinvigorated WTO.

The challenges facing the WTO did not start with the current pandemic. Since 1995, the negotiating function of the WTO has not produced many results and although there have been some successful agreements, key areas like agriculture remain stuck. The WTO appears paralysed at a time when its rule book would greatly benefit from an update to 21st century issues such as e-commerce and the digital economy, the green and circular economies. Issues of women and trade and Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are important to ensure greater inclusion. Bridging the digital divide to enable Least Developed Countries and other developing countries to participate will be key.

Transparency and notification are critically important for a stable, predictable, and fair MTS. Businesses, large or small, eschew uncertainty as this increases transaction costs. Improving compliance in transparency and notification may require Technical Assistance and capacity building for Members who lack resources to comply.

There will be a need to improve the functioning of the regular bodies by standardizing best practices. The Secretariat must be strengthened to enable it better support Members in negotiations, implementation, monitoring and dispute settlement.

Members' views differ on a number of fundamental issues, such as special and differential treatment or the need for the WTO to tackle new issues and develop new or enhanced rules to deal with SOEs and agricultural subsidies, for example. Trade tensions among the membership have flared up, threatening the fundamental architecture of the MTS. With all these, the WTO, unfortunately, is now perceived by some as an inefficient organization that has failed to keep abreast of developments in the global economy.

These challenges are unprecedented and have been exacerbated by the COVID crisis. As Chair of Gavi, I have the privilege of being in the frontlines of those working on accelerating tools to fight COVID-19. No one knows the trajectory of this pandemic. But one thing is clear, the negative externalities on the world's economy and society are profound and could linger on until the appropriate vaccines or therapeutics are found. Some policy responses, such as export restrictions to guarantee domestic access to food or medical supplies – can complicate, in the short run, efforts

¹ The presentation is also circulated in document JOB/GC/234.

to re-invigorate the WTO. Similarly, there is need to ensure that stimulus packages granted by some Members do not undermine their WTO commitments by distorting production and trade.

If all these challenges are to be overcome, it will require strong engagement and commitment from all WTO Members. This is the only way the WTO can produce concrete results, and better respond to the needs of Members of all sizes and levels of economic development. If selected, I consider that I am well placed to work with Members to address these challenges.

First, I am a strong believer in the role of trade and of the MTS to bring shared prosperity. I can bring a fresh pair of eyes to the WTO's challenges. Renewing and improving the organization will require recalling the core objectives and principles on which the MTS was built – the value of open trade, competition and non-discrimination, security and predictability of market access, and transparency. These principles have contributed to economic growth and development and will continue to do so if Members renew their commitment to them.

Second, confronting the challenges the WTO faces will necessarily require building trust among the membership. Current problems are not solely of a technical nature. If they were, they would have been solved long ago, given the technical expertise available among Members and in the WTO Secretariat. A number of these problems require political solutions, and deep experience in multilateral organizations, skills I would bring to the job.

Throughout my career, I have been involved in difficult negotiations with high political stakes, such as tough economic reform programs, including trade policy reforms in a variety of middle and low income countries, and debt relief negotiations with both the Paris and London clubs. I have brokered numerous agreements that have produced win-win outcomes. I have the skills to effectively engage governments and other stakeholders and build consensus around areas of common interest.

For me, trade is a passion and a mission. As a development economist, I have worked on trade policy issues during my 25-year career at the World Bank. As Finance Minister, the Nigerian Customs Service reported to me, which meant work on trade facilitation. Together with my colleague, the Minister of Trade, I worked on the ECOWAS Common External Tariffs. If selected as WTO DG, I would spare no effort supporting Members to build bridges and foster trust, diffuse political tensions, and encourage convergence. I would work hard to earn the confidence of all Members to help steer the organization towards increased relevance and efficiency.

Third, managing an international organization, including designing and implementing reforms, is a complex matter. I have a proven track record in carrying out successful reforms both at the World Bank and as Finance Minister in Nigeria.

My vision is of a WTO with Purpose where Members coalesce around the capacity of trade to help foster economic growth and sustainable development. A WTO with Trust where Members work in concert to solve problems. While a key objective of the WTO is the liberalization of trade for the mutual benefit of its Members, it appears that this very concept is now a divisive issue as a result of the perceived imbalances in the rights and obligations of Members and the perceived uneven distribution of the gains from trade. I would constantly remind Members about the value of the MTS and help energize them to work harder to overcome the challenges that have paralyzed the WTO over the years.

My vision is also of a rejuvenated and strengthened WTO that will be confident to tackle effectively ongoing issues such as the fisheries negotiations. With political will, outstanding issues of subsidies that lead to overfishing and unsustainable fishing can be concluded. Agriculture has complex moving parts on which substantial progress will need to be made, be it on domestic support, Public Stockholding for Food Security (PSH), Special Safeguard Mechanism (SSM), Cotton or market access. A rejuvenated WTO must also take on fresh challenges, such as ensuring optimal complementarity between trade and the environment and ensuring that WTO rules best respond to the realities of e-commerce and the opportunities and challenges of the digital economy. A refreshed WTO must find solutions to the stalemate over dispute settlement. It is clear that a rules based system without a forum in which a breach of the rules can be effectively arbitrated loses credibility over time.

We must have a WTO that works for the benefit of all Members regardless of size or level of economic development. LDCs and Small Vulnerable Economies (SVEs) should have opportunities to participate

in regional and global supply chains to enhance their presence in the trading system. We must be sensitive to the particular policy challenges that those countries face. A revamped trading system should offer opportunities for MSMEs to increase and diversify their market access, enabling them to generate employment and contribute to economic growth and sustainable development. It should also be responsive to the challenge of facilitating the greater participation of women in international trade, particularly in developing countries, where greater efforts should be made to include women owned enterprises in the formal sector.

Considering the plethora of challenges facing the global economy, including COVID-19 there is need for coherence in the policy responses of relevant international organisations, including the FAO, World Bank, IMF, IFC, the regional development banks and WHO and UN System. As noted by the G20 Eminent Persons Group, institutions sometimes work at cross purposes. If selected, I will deepen the working relationships with all relevant institutions to create synergies and coordinate support to Members.

The stalemate in multilateral trade negotiations has led many Members in recent years to embark on plurilateral negotiations to advance particular issues. The energy associated with those discussions has helped refocus attention on the WTO and would be best if these negotiations could produce outcomes that reinforce the multilateral trading system. Members have also entered into regional trade agreements to secure access to markets, tackle issues that are not sufficiently addressed in the WTO or that are not part of the multilateral rulebook. RTAs can complement multilateral efforts, and their success in tackling new and traditional issues should inspire WTO Members to do likewise. But despite their benefits, RTAs cannot be a perfect substitute for the MTS. In our times, countries cannot solely rely on trade agreements with selected partners. Technology and other innovations have reduced the impact of distance and the world is too connected. Companies, including MSMEs, are increasingly able to offer their products to consumers all around the world. By linking economies of the world through basic common rules, the WTO has a unique value added. The MTS also has unique challenges, but it merits our greatest efforts.

Let me conclude by reiterating the importance of the WTO at this critical and uncertain period. The WTO is needed to ensure that trade and global markets remain open and are further extended. Its convening power and ability to provide a unique forum where countries can come together around shared interests is still vital and, in fact, indispensable. If the WTO did not exist, we would have to invent it. Given the interconnectedness of the world's economies, a collective response to current and emerging challenges will always be stronger than individual responses. As we put it in my igbo language, Aka nni Kwo aka ekpe, aka ekepe akwo akanni wancha adi ocha (If the right washes the left hand, and the left hand washes the right hand, then both become clean). This is a call for collective action. The rules based MTS is a public good that underpins peace, security, stability and a chance for prosperity in the world. Every effort should therefore be made to safeguard, improve and renew it to enable it effectively address the challenges of the 21st century.

Excellencies, dear friends, I believe I bring exactly the right combination of skills and experience (public sector, private sector, international civil society, multilateral organizations and a worldwide network of contacts) needed to lead this organization in the future. Should I be elected, I would work with Members to prioritize delivering a successful MC12 with good outcomes on fisheries, agriculture and other areas. I would also prioritize updating the rulebook, unlocking the dispute settlement system, working on transparency and notification, enhancing the work of regular bodies, and strengthen the Secretariat. For me, it would be an honour and privilege to serve.

Muchas gracias.
Syeh syeh.
Arigato Gozaimashta.
Shukran.
Spaciba.
Thank you.

2. Questions and Answers²

Q: You mentioned that you have been a Board Chair of GAVI. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a very significant negative impact on trade and economies of all countries especially in the case of developing countries, LDCs and SVEs. What do you think should be done to ensure that these countries can rely on the multilateral trading system to help them move out of this crisis? (Afghanistan)

A: Probably the COVID-19 pandemic is one the most serious issues of our time. To answer your question, I think we have to look at it both from the short-term and the longer-term perspective. To aid the developing countries, the vulnerable economies and the world, we need to look at the short-term responses that have happened with COVID-19. Some export restrictions have been put by some on the export of medical supplies and even of food. So, first, it would be good to look at those in the short term if they are temporary, proportionate and transparent and if Members are fading them out as promised. Otherwise, we have to work to unlock such measures in order to make sure that medical supplies and food are available, especially to the food import dependent countries that will need access to them. This is also an issue in the longer term to ensure that while we make efforts to keep trade open for those countries that cannot manufacture their own medical supplies or equipment or their own food for them to be able to import essential items, we should balance it with the consideration of enabling those countries who want the ability to manufacture some of these things to do so. That is something we need to watch. But from where I sit, the issue of vaccines and making sure that that is available when a vaccine is proven and of quality, is critically important, especially for developing countries and vulnerable economies. So, in the longer term, we have to ensure that we have an open, flexible trading system that allows imports or exports of these medicines and medical supplies and vaccines to countries that cannot manufacture them. A second aspect of the impact of COVID-19 has to do with the world economy recovering from the deep recession that the world is going into. The IMF has forecasted that the world economy is going to contract by about 5%-6% and some of the vulnerable and small economies may contract even more. So, finding a means for trade to play the role it should to continue with its recovery efforts in these economies and the world will be vital. Making trade an instrument of economic recovery will be of great assistance, not only to developing countries and small and vulnerable economies, but to the world as a whole. It should be an instrument to help the world recover.

Q: The world economy has changed quite significantly in recent decades. The question is the challenge to the WTO in responding to the changed nature of the world economy. How do we ensure that the benefits of open trade are distributed equitably, particularly to meet the needs of developing countries, and how can we guarantee that that happens through negotiations in the period ahead? (Ireland)

A: The world economy has indeed changed and continues to change. If you look at the data, you will find that trade in goods have been declining in terms of its rate of growth, while that of services and data flow across borders have been growing exponentially. Digital trade and e-commerce have also become important. So, to respond to these challenges, I talked about the need to update the rulebook of the WTO to take account of these challenges of the world, be it for e-commerce and the digital economy, environment and climate change, women and MSMEs. We need to update the rulebook and facilitate the discussions to meet these challenges. In terms of LDCs, we need to make sure that the changing trading environment benefits them. Some of the provisions for LDCs in terms of Aid for Trade and EIF would, for example, be a means of supporting them to be able to strengthen their participation in the multilateral trading system, so that they could benefit from it. We need to pay particular attention to the needs of the LDCs – the most closely identified group of the WTO, in which there are 47 Members. The policy space for them to develop is particularly important, and strengthening them through Aid for Trade and technical assistance to be able to benefit from world trade is also very important and should enable them to increase their gains from trade. In addition to that, we should also look at issues of MSMEs that are quite common in these countries and try to see how we can support these and strengthen them both with policies behind the border, as well as outside to enable them to participate and benefit more from the world trade system. This would also help the LDCs.

² The following delegations also submitted their names to ask a question to the candidate: Barbados, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Denmark, El Salvador, Finland, France, Gabon, The Gambia, Germany, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Italy, Jamaica, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mali, Nepal, The Netherlands, Panama, Philippines, Romania, Russian Federation, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Chinese Taipei, Thailand, Turkey, United States, Uruguay and Zimbabwe.

Q: In your presentation, you touched upon your priority issues for MC12. If elected, what concrete steps will you undertake to ensure a multilateral outcome at MC12? (Kazakhstan)

A: MC12 is probably one of the most important things facing the WTO. From that perspective, it would be very important to have good outcomes from MC12 in order to show the world that the WTO is back, the WTO is rejuvenated, the WTO is relevant. I am afraid that if we do not have those kinds of outcomes from MC12, we will continue to have a view of the WTO, of an organization that is fleeting in relevance. I do not think that that is right because I strongly believe that the WTO is needed. So, I will be looking for issues where we could have successful outcomes where Members working together could agree. For instance, the fisheries negotiations have been ongoing and I hope that they will be concluded perhaps even before the end of the year or before MC12. It would be my hope and expectation that the remaining issues about subsidies, if you want to call them bad subsidies, that lead to overcapacity and overfishing would be agreed especially on how to deal with them, including what disciplines to put around them – and the issue of supporting small scale fisheries would also be agreed. With political will, I know we can do it. So, this will be a top priority. With respect to agriculture, if there cannot be agreement reached, I would hope that the discussions and conversations will at least move along. I know the issues of domestic support, PSH, SSM and other issues are topical, and I would hope that we will be able to move along on those and other areas, including market access. As I said, if not for an outcome, we must at least advance those discussions. I would also hope that we would be able to advance discussions on issues like MSMEs and women and trade. There are also some plurilateral negotiations that more than a hundred Members are participating in, like investment facilitation. I would hope that we could also advance on those negotiations. These are my priorities for MC12. If we could get those kinds of outcomes on fisheries, movement on agriculture, movement on women and trade, movement on MSMEs, that would be something that would show the world something new and something successful for the WTO.

Q: Could you briefly describe the WTO within four words during the four years of your leadership? (Ukraine)

A: I can only think of one word that reflects what I would want the WTO to be and look like within four years of my leadership – and that is "great".

Q: Many point to the lack of trust between, in particular, major players as one of the main reasons why it is difficult to create progress, in particular in the negotiating pillar, but also in the reform agenda in general. Do you see a role for the Director-General in addressing the trust issue between the major players? And if you see a role, how would you then approach that issue? What would be your contribution, and do you have experience in your long career that can be relevant to that task? (Norway)

A: I mentioned in my speech that the issues and challenges confronting the WTO are not purely of a technical nature because they would have already been solved if such was the case. So, the question about the political context is absolutely right. There has been a background from what I understand or can see of, maybe, lack of trust between major Members, but also, maybe sometimes, between developing and developed Members. I think the only way that I know to build trust is to find areas of common interest where there is interconnection that you can begin to build and bring the parties together. This is where the Director-General of the WTO, who has no direct power and can only work through influence with Members, can contribute. Influence can be proactive. You need an energetic, committed and proactive DG who can help do this and find those interconnections. Sometimes, when people seem to have disagreements, if you listen carefully, there are areas where they actually agree. And if you can begin to build on those areas and have some win-win results, that would begin to build trust. Talking about building trust, talking alone does not bring it. It helps but it does not bring it. You build trust only with action. So, we must find those actions that will help build trust. And it will take time, but we can do it. So, that is what I will do. With respect to the major powers, this is a very challenging issue because it is very political. But as DG, I would do my best. One of the things that I would try to convey to the major powers is that I think both are interested in a multilateral trading system that also helps developing countries and vulnerable economies that function for the whole world. I would seek to remind them that they had benefited from this in developing their economies and can still benefit again. I would look for those intersections where again one can begin to bring them together around common or shared interests

because I think there are some. Every Member is interested in a dispute settlement system that works, for instance. We must think of ways on how we can begin to build confidence and trust in some small actions leading to big ones between Members that can lead them again to begin to work together for the WTO. As I said, I had a long career at the World Bank as Minister of Finance. Using that, I have been able to establish bridges and contacts where I can reach levels where policy decisions are being made. If you need to solve this, you have to first work with the Ambassadors but you also have to reach those people who are making the decisions and be able to talk and to listen to them to understand what their issues are. That is the way you can see the interconnections that you can use to build bridges and then actually begin to build them. I believe I have the contacts in both powers to be able to do this. And this is what I would bring if I am elected to be the next WTO Director-General. There is no easy way in building trust, but I think it can be done. And the DG should actively and proactively work with Members to do this.

Q: Why do you think the WTO has struggled so much over the past decade to conclude substantive multilateral outcomes and what will you do as DG to change that? (New Zealand)

A: Some of what I said before lies at the crux of the struggle with negotiations. The issue of lack of trust among Members that has diminished over time has made it more difficult. When one side brings an issue, sometimes the other side thinks there is nothing in it for them. When that side brings an issue, the other side thinks they are doing this to stop my interests from being realised. It is a fundamental lack of trust that has led to struggles to complete or conclude negotiations. This is where one has to work really hard. As I said before, the only way to build trust is to find some common areas where Members agree. In the multilateral negotiations that is ongoing for fisheries, this has been progressing relatively well and I believe that it is possible to come to an outcome. I am hopeful that a successful outcome to this would then lead Members again to believe they can work together, that they can tackle some of the difficult issues, and that they can again reinstate their ability to negotiate. I think this is part of the issue. Perhaps in the past, there were some negotiations that did not go so well and trust was broken. That has fundamentally been the problem. There are issues under the Doha Development Agenda where Members did not agree and since then it has been quite difficult. Much as we talk of difficulty, I see light at the end of the tunnel. I am really hopeful that we are going to have those outcomes. With that, trust will begin to come back. As DG, I would actively, off the bat, start working hard with Members to make sure that we have such an outcome because it will be a bridge to better work together for negotiations.

Q: The world is facing the depressed recession likely to dwarf the 2008 and 2009 financial crisis. How do you see your role in facilitating a multilateral trading system that contributes to economic recovery and resilience? (South Africa)

A: This is the critical question of our time. How do we get the multilateral trading system to play the role it should play to aid economic recovery in the world? As I have said, there are short-term aspects of it and longer-time ones. In the short term, we must remove those restrictions that impede trade, so that countries will be able to have access to the supplies and goods they need to be able to recover. In the longer term, I believe that liberalization of trade is also important if trade is to contribute to lifting the world out of recession. As we see it, the world economy focused to contract by 5%, while trade, according to the statistics, I saw would contract probably by 18%. And this is deep, so we have to work hard to find those levels that will enable trade to contribute. Removing the restrictions and making sure they do not reappear in the longer term, liberalizing trade, working on new issues, energizing new issues that could lead to more trade in the world, being inclusive and working on MSMEs and ensuring that there are no unduly high tariffs against goods and services that will allow us to trade more in those items, would be positive contributions of the multilateral trading system. In addition, for LDCs and SVEs, we must also see how to support them with behind-the-border issues like investment in their economies, for them to be able to participate more and better to the multilateral trading system, because that is how they will come out of their current challenges. We must also look at the massive amount of stimulus liquidity that have been put in the economies for recovery. The stimulus packages are quite rightly done because we need that for the world economy to recover. But we have to make sure that they do not result in trade-distorting measures that can inhibit trade, that should help the world recover and that we phase out this liquidity and the stimulus in a good way that promotes trade and does not inhibit it. So, it is a basket of measures. Some of them are trade related while others are behind the borders to help countries because they need additional help and assistance for them to participate. If I were DG, I would do this by working very closely with some other multilateral organizations. I will work closely with the

World Bank and IMF to look for resources, including the regional development banks, so that if we want to increase and if we want trade to assist, we need to also look at what countries need for investment and for strengthening their ability to trade behind the borders. So, getting resources and working in a policy-coherent fashion with these organizations to help Members to better trade would be the kinds of issues that I would look at as the Director-General.

Q: In your view, what would be necessary to restore the functioning of a binding, two-step dispute settlement system in the WTO? (European Union)

A: The restoration of a binding, two-step dispute settlement system is one of the most fundamental issues that have to be tackled if the WTO is to be seen as continuing to function. You cannot have a rules-based organization without a forum in which disputes can be brought and settled. Otherwise, as I said in my speech, it loses credibility over time. So, it is absolutely essential that we work to restore this two-step system. I would look at some of the issues that different Members have with the dispute settlement system – be it the issue of the length of time it takes for the Appellate Body to come to some answer to, or resolution of, the cases before it, or the 90-day limitation, be it looking at mandates whether it is making judgments or reaching conclusions beyond the covered agreements that Members have reached. These are some of the issues that are being questioned. There are also some Members that feel that there are structural issues that inhibit them from participating in the two-step system. These are all the things that I will look at. There have been some arrangements like the MPIA that about 19 countries, including the EU, have come together to propose as an interim measure. There was also the Walker Process that has been undertaken and there are some elements and suggestions in there that we could build on to restore the two-tier dispute settlement system. Whatever we do about it, it has to come out as a system that is independent, impartial and that works within a specified mandate. It has to be a system that all Members can have confidence and trust in.

Q: In the context of the pandemic and the tensions between Members, what additional role do you think that the organization could play in the growing uncertainty in trade to show the added value of keeping a multilateral trading system? (Paraguay)

A: In the context of this pandemic, with all the uncertainty that it brings to the global economy and to the world, and in the context of the tensions between Members, I really do think that the organization, in order to show that it is relevant and that it can add value, has to have some wins that can demonstrate that the multilateral trading system is functioning, alive and well. There are two parts in this regard. If in the first part it would be necessary to have a good outcome on an area of negotiations that would materially improve trade for Members, such as in fisheries, and we can see that spur in trade. If we can support small scale fisheries within that which is important to many countries, Members and people around the world, including the common woman and man, will begin to see that the WTO is about people and it is for people. Therefore, they will begin to know the value that the multilateral trading system will have if we can have agreements that can lead us to increase trade in the world and use the multilateral trading system as an instrument to recover from this recession and this crisis. The WTO can be a part of that in spurring this and making sure that we come to either new agreements that can spur or liberalize trade or existing agreements that we can move in order for Members to be able to trade more. I think that will bring confidence. We need to take actions that will make the world and Members see that the WTO is alive, well and functioning – a rejuvenated WTO that is adding value to the multilateral trading system.

Q: Do you think that transparency and notification obligations concerning trade measures need to be strengthened? How can this be done? (Estonia)

A: This is an important question. Transparency and notification need to be strengthened. Transparency is one key factor that is essential in the multilateral trading system. If there is no transparency and Members are not notified ahead of time of actions in the trading system of Members, then this brings uncertainty. And uncertainty for business is not a good thing. As I mentioned, it makes transactions cost higher not only for Members but also for their businesses. I believe that this is a very important thing. But sometimes, Members do not notify, not because of lack of political will, but because they do not have the resources and the capacity to deal with notifications. So, we really have to look at it and understand why this is not happening in a Member's context. And if it is a question of that capacity, we build it. This will contribute to them being able to notify and will in turn strengthen the multilateral trading system and be encouraging to businesses. Currently, we are all looking at how to come out of this recession. So, WTO Members

need to do all those things that are helpful for this. For instance, when it came to the issue of export restrictions on food and medical supplies, notifications of a certain number of days to Members would have helped because one way that the WTO can contribute to economic recovery and to the multilateral trading system is to make sure that any restrictions on the supplies of medical equipment, vaccines included, and of food are removed. If there are going to be restrictions, those should be notified ahead of time and done in a transparent, proportionate and temporary manner, so that Members who need to get access to these can do so. They are all linked together: transparency, notifications, ability to generate trust that Members are acting according to the WTO Agreements and ability to increase world trade by doing all of these.

Q: What would you focus upon in your first 100 days as WTO Director-General?
(Australia)

A: In my first 100 days, should I be selected as Director-General, I would be very keen to get off the mark very quickly because there are a lot of things to focus on. Firstly, I would focus on how to deliver a successful MC12. That would be my topmost priority because it is linked to changing the image of the WTO and letting the world know that things can be accomplished. And then I would focus on those areas that are likely to be a win at the negotiations, like the fisheries coming to some conclusion on that. Other areas where we can move along such as agriculture, given its complexity might not lead us to an outcome, but we can advance on those issues. Another issue that I would also be keen to discuss at MC12 would be those linked to COVID-19. We have had a lot of questions on that. What does this mean for world trade? What does this mean for rules? How should we look at this for the future? This is not only going to be the first pandemic. There will be others. MC12 should focus squarely on how we do that and prepare the world the next time to tackle such an issue. I would listen carefully to Members. That is a priority for me. In order to understand what you need to do, you have to listen. What do Members want? And then, based on that, after MC12, I would prioritize renewing the negotiations and updating the rulebook along the lines that I mentioned in my speech, which include those issues for the 21st century that matter so much. I am also passionate about issues related to women and trade. I would like to see some movement on that, even if it is just discussions. We should also look at issues on MSMEs because they are the enterprises that create most jobs. I would also be very keen to work on the dispute settlement system. I would work with Members to see what we can do. We had a question from the EU about the two-tier system and how we would restore that. So, that would be a priority. What can we build on? What can get Members to work on this? If we are able to restore the two-tier dispute settlement system, it will send such a sharp signal to the world that the WTO is back and that is what I would like to see. On transparency and notifications, I really think it is important because it is what underlies the multilateral trading system. So, I would like to work on that. I have named three. I can round it up by saying that I would like to see how to strengthen the Secretariat to support the new rules and the way that the world is going to see if it is fit for purpose. That would be very important to me to see also if the Secretariat looks like all its Members, and if not, how do we make it so.

Q: How do you intend to balance the Director-General's different roles: the managerial role, the role of negotiation facilitator and the advocacy role? (Latvia)

A: This is what makes the job of the Director-General of the WTO very interesting because you have to learn how to balance those roles, but you have to play all of them. We have a very good Secretariat with very experienced staff. So, I would hope to be able to lean on them as well to help us see how we can facilitate and move along negotiations looking at areas where Members need more support, including analysis. So, I would depend on some of the resources that I have to some extent, because it is teamwork. I would do that in facilitating negotiations. On the managerial role, I would draw my experience as a Number 2 at the World Bank managing a very big staff. The World Bank has at least 12,000 staff. Since I was a Managing Director in charge of operations in several of the regions with a USD 1 billion portfolio, I would try to apply that experience to help me with the managerial tasks. On advocacy, I will be very keen. The WTO needs to change its image. I will also try to spend quite a bit of time on advocacy by talking about the values of the WTO and its purpose, about what the WTO can bring to the world, about the new ways the WTO is working, about the fact that it is tackling topical issues. I would be very keen to advocate that because this is an organization that matters. During my time at the World Bank, the WTO mattered and still matters. So, advocacy for it would be one of the things I would be keen on. I have been balancing these things in my career most of my life and I think it would be an honour and privilege to try to balance them for the WTO.

Q: In different fora for some time now, we have been discussing the reform of the organization, particularly given the challenges of the 21st century and now with the global pandemic. What would be your initial approach to the reform of the organization? How would it take place and how would you implement it? (Guatemala)

A: On the reform of the organization, there has been lots of discussions among Members from what I can see. When I spoke to Members, practically every Member talked about the need for reform. But what was not so clear was which reforms and their approach to the reforms. There are some differences in views among Members about which reforms and how to approach the reforms. Some Members feel that they may not even be participating in the discussions of these reforms, that they are marginalized. Given that situation, I would want to spend some time to really talk and listen to Members to understand what they believe about these reforms – which reforms they would like to see and how. And then I would try to be proactive in pulling that together to be sure that Members are on the same wavelength about which are the critical reforms and the sequencing of the reforms, because we cannot do everything at once. So, sequencing is important. From where I sit, I would think that there would be one or two that would be critically important to embark on as quickly as possible, and that would mean getting Members' views on those such as the dispute settlement system, which is where the world comes to have its disputes on trade arbitrated. When I speak to business people, this is one of the things they find so important in the WTO. So, I would be keen to know if all Members consider this as a priority, and then I would set about working with Members to see the shape of what the reforms to the dispute settlement system could be and how we would build on some of the issues or the processes, understand the disagreements that some Members have with the way it is functioning at the moment and see if we can build some agreement on how to proceed to reform it and to see that it is implemented. Again, the rulemaking system that I have talked about before is an important reform – making sure that the rulebook of the WTO is updated to reflect the way the world is going be it on e-commerce. In this regard, I would want to make sure that we bridge the digital divide for those Members that do not have that ability. In a nutshell, I will try to put together what I hear from Members on what they understand of reforms. I would then try to organize this in a sequenced fashion, giving priority to the top ones that I think are achievable and those that would also make the WTO looks like it is really producing results. And then I would try to work with the staff to facilitate the implementation of these reforms.

Q: The COVID-19 crisis has demonstrated the importance of e-commerce. As you have touched upon on your initial remarks, the WTO has been engaged in the negotiations in a plurilateral way with this subject. As you know, there are some difficult challenges we are facing. What kind of approach and efforts would you like to make for advancing this subject? (Japan)

A: The issue of e-commerce and the digital economy, as you rightly observed, has been demonstrated by the way the world has gone online during this COVID-19 crisis, be it for the purchase of goods and services, be it for education, among others. This is an area is here to stay in the world and I think will continue to be very important. But in trying to advance the negotiations, I would be very mindful of the concerns of some Members who feel that, in order to participate in discussions on e-commerce and the digital economy, they need to be able to do so. Perhaps this is one reason why some Members are not part of the plurilaterals. So, one way to advance that and make sure that these important negotiations move towards a multilateral track that can involve all Members, that can have MFN characteristics and that can allow Members to join when they can, would be to move it along in a direction that would be more comprehensive by looking at what are these challenges that some Members face and what their hesitations are in order to tackle those. There are Members who feel that they are not yet ready to participate, so they are hesitant about the gains they would derive from participating. Attending to those issues with Aid for Trade and technical assistance to get the digital infrastructure to these Members that would be required for their businesses and MSMEs to participate in e-commerce would be critically important. A few weeks ago, a friend of mine was in Rwanda and saw e-commerce in action with women in their cooperative who were able to sell 30 tons of coffee and make USD 4 a ton more than they would ordinarily have made, because there was no intermediary. And they did this online. So, this is the shape of the future. It is critically important that for e-commerce, we make sure the infrastructure is there, we make sure there is agreement to update the rules, so that this can become something that every Member can benefit from.

Q: As you know, the WTO is a Member-driven organization. You said that you would like to advance negotiations and be a very proactive Director-General. Do you think that proactivity is enough to advance the negotiations and resolve the problems that the WTO is currently facing? Do you have any other particular ideas as Director-General to bring those negotiations forward? (Mongolia)

A: That is a very critical question. The WTO is a Member-driven organization. It is the Members who decide how to move issues along. The Director-General does not have the direct power to do this and can only succeed through working with Members and helping to build consensus. I have been thinking about it. When you build consensus, that means that every Member is part of it. Every Member will have the incentive to implement it. So, we need to work harder to make sure that that consensus-building takes place. When I say "proactive", I do not mean that the Director-General takes over. No. I read somewhere that the Director-General is more like a butler who is there to make sure that Members are happy. Even a butler can be proactive. My proactivity relates to the fact that I would work hard with Members to overcome the difficulties that have lain in the way of consensus-building to advance negotiations. And we have talked about some of these before, including the fact that there is lack of trust. The Director-General can be proactive in trying to bridge these lines and help build and restore that trust. This is one way you can help Members to understand each other better, to be the one that runs between and carries the views and messages, to be the one that ensures that the appropriate analysis is done that can move negotiations along and to be the one that supports and bridges the gap. That would be my answer to your question – a proactive supporter to make consensus-building quicker, faster and with more deliverables.

Q: You have used more than once the expression "update the rulebook". One of those updates seem to be in the more permanent role of plurilaterals. How do you see that? What space you think they should have in the future reform process of the WTO? (Brazil)

A: This issue of the nature of negotiations, whether plurilateral or multilateral, is one of the difficult ones among Members. Multilateral negotiations are always preferable because they involve all Members and reduce transaction costs. However, under certain circumstances, if there is a need to move an agenda along, one could look at plurilateral negotiations as a means of doing that. But it would be in the hope that the plurilateral negotiations could move in a direction that would become multilateral, by ensuring Members can join when they are able to do so, and by ensuring there are MFN characteristics to it. That would be the way I would see it. Plurilaterals can help us not be stuck and move along on some important issues, but the objective is always to get to multilateral negotiations, or, if we cannot, to make sure all Members can benefit by being able to join and have the benefits of it when they can.

Q: In your presentation, you have addressed the issue of special and differential treatment. We know that there are different views on this issue. While some would argue that it is a treaty-embedded right, others view that such flexibilities should be given on a needs basis. How would you use your office as Director-General to reconcile these different interpretations of the S&DT principle and to ensure that some Members are not unduly penalized? (Mauritius)

A: The question of S&DT is probably one of the most difficult and divisive issues within the WTO. One has to tread with caution. There are three categories of Members within the WTO: developed, developing and LDCs. The 47 LDCs are clearly identified according to the UN criteria. There would not be much debate on S&DT for LDCs to enable them to strengthen their economies and advance. The debate comes when it comes to the category of developing country Members. As Director-General, to help move this along, I would work with Members to be very creative. I would look at building on agreements such as the TFA which found a solution where Members can decide how they would implement agreements, the pace at which they can do it and the capacity building and technical assistance that they would need to implement those provisions. A creative solution along those lines might be one way to begin to deal with this difficulty. There are other solutions. I am not saying that it is the only one. But that is the way my mind is working – a solution that allows Members in a creative fashion to deliver their commitments without the issue of categorization.

Q: As Director-General, what are your plans relating to empowering women in the future WTO agenda? (Malaysia)

A: Now you have touched on a subject that I am quite passionate about. As part of the WTO agenda, I was very excited when I saw the Buenos Aires Declaration on Trade and Women's Economic Empowerment. As WTO Director-General, I would seek to work with Members to advance those discussions and I would seek to mainstream the issue of women and trade across the work done at the Secretariat. In all the negotiations we do, we should look at whether we are empowering women and whether we are supporting them to participate better. There is the "SheTrades" initiative. We should think how we can use that as a means of advancing this objective. This is an agenda that would be exciting to move along and mainstream it in the work of the Secretariat and the negotiations, because women own 50% or more of MSMEs. Helping them to trade more will create more jobs and spur economic growth and sustainable development in our economies.

3. Summing up by the Candidate³

The nature of the questions that I have heard and the nature of the discussions give me hope. Members are clearly interested in a WTO that works, in a WTO that is different from what we have now, in a WTO that shows a different face to the world. I can see it and I can feel it. And if ever I am selected as Director-General, that gives me hope that there is a foundation to work on. Before coming in here, I have spoken to several Members, but I did not really know that. From listening to all of you and fielding your questions, I now know that there is a basis to work on. And I want to thank you for it.

And I really want to end where I began. Trade is very important for a prosperous and a recovered world in the 21st century. The WTO is at the centre of this. A renewed WTO is a mission that we must all undertake, and we need every Member, regardless of economic size, to participate in this. If we want the world to know who we are as the WTO, we have to commit. Having listened to you, I hear the commitment and I want to thank you sincerely for that.

³ Under the modalities for the conduct of the meeting communicated by the Chair to all delegations on 1 and 10 July, each candidate had the opportunity to make a concluding statement during the last five minutes of the question-and-answer period if she or he so wished.

ANNEX 3

Meeting with Mr. Abdel-Hamid Mamdouh (Egypt)

1. Presentation by the Candidate¹

It is with a profound sense of honour, and pleasure, that I appear before you today.

I came to this building 35 years ago, as a young negotiator for Egypt to the GATT. That was in 1985. We were preparing for the most ambitious reform project in the history of the multilateral trading system – the Uruguay Round – which led to the creation of this organization.

The memories of challenges, faced by a developing country negotiator, struggling with others to navigate a way forward, come rushing back to me, with many memories of how much can be achieved by having a common purpose and building trust around it.

I then joined the GATT secretariat in 1990. For 27 years, I have served the multilateral system, rather than my country. Throughout my career, all the way from the Uruguay Round, to the creation of the WTO, to the Doha Round, and to this very day. I have all along first and foremost served the Members, and their pursuit of the common good. I have always had the collective interest of the Members and the common purpose of the system as my guiding stars for direction.

The Members – and their interest – is at the heart of this organization. Unlike other multilateral institutions, the WTO is not an agency tasked to execute programs or field projects. It does not distribute funds or mobilise resources. Without the interest of its Members, there is nothing for the WTO and the secretariat – including the DG – to uphold.

In fact, without a common purpose, the organization is lost.

You will hear from many that the WTO needs reform; or that the rulebook must be updated to be fit for the 21st century. Or that we need someone to bring us together again and for that, we need political leadership.

I think no one will disagree with that.

The truth is, that the consensus, our common purpose, has faded. One might say we are still in the same boat, but we are rowing in different directions. This will not hold. At some point, possibly very soon, if the situation is not corrected, the hull of the boat will break under the tension of differences.

I believe that this situation in the WTO calls for a different type of leadership.

This is not a statement about previous DGs, for whom I have utmost respect and appreciation. They have all been my colleagues and I learned a lot from them. This is rather a statement about the gravity of the current situation.

I recognize that I am in many ways an atypical candidate for the Director-General post. Trade ministers and the Ambassadors know me as a problem solver, their humble servant, and hopefully also their trusted friend, and the trusted person to go to for advice. This role continued and even grew after I left the WTO. They no longer seek the senior WTO Director but the trusted advisor.

Some might also be aware that I have chosen not to serve as a cabinet minister in the past. This is indeed true – and I believe it is also one of my strengths as a facilitator.

Indeed, the WTO needs political leadership. But political leadership is not always synonymous with ministerial leadership. A minister is, by definition, an "executive" that executes a policy agenda in the face of opposition and more often, in the face of other ministers in negotiations. The problem-solving techniques used are always based on a national position.

¹ The presentation is also circulated in document JOB/GC/235.

On the other hand, a WTO DG is by definition "an honest broker" who must not have an agenda of his or her own, and instead guide the Members on board to "row in the same direction". The DG's role is that of the facilitator, capable of solving complex negotiating problems with creative solutions.

A DG must listen carefully to all Members. Must also be perceptive and insightful and must have the ability to sequence a way forward through analysis, creative options, and the aptitude to IMAGINE what a possible outcome might look like. Of course, the way forward must be Member driven but without proper navigation we will not find our way together.

The DG must also steer the Members away from the rocky shores already encountered, of which there are many in our history. We simply do not have the luxury of time to waste on dead ends and repeating old mistakes.

My view of the problem

The critical importance of trade is now beyond debate, whether for growth, development, job creation, poverty reduction or World Peace.

And, remember, trade is no more about merchandise crossing borders. It's also about services and intellectual property.

The establishment of the WTO was no doubt the biggest achievement of the 20th century in trade cooperation, crafted from history and lessons learned and political will for change. None of the candidates will ever question that statement. Nor will anyone doubt that we are today in an existential crisis. I urge the Members to ask why we are in this crisis.

We must focus on the right questions to be able to see the way forward. For me, this should begin with how the WTO has fulfilled its functions. Also, how world trade has changed in the meantime. And finally, more importantly, what have we learned from the past 25 years.

In my view, over the past quarter of a century, the WTO has suffered from a chronic imbalance across all its vital functions. That is, dispute settlement, negotiation, and the transparency/deliberative functions.

In any legal system, there needs to be a balance between the "legislative" and the "judicial" functions. For the WTO, these are the negotiating and the dispute settlement functions. While dispute settlement gained strength due to the inherent automaticity of procedures, the negotiating function has broken down. This created an unsustainable imbalance.

At the same time, the international trade landscape has dramatically changed, and the WTO system has been unable to update its rule book. This caused unsustainable pressure on the dispute settlement function, which produced the current breakdown in the Appellate Body - as the saying goes; if you cannot negotiate, you litigate.

The third vital function is what I would call the transparency and deliberative function. Notification requirements must be fulfilled, but they also need to feed into the deliberative processes that help to verify compliance with obligations and, ultimately avoid disputes. As in the past, deliberations should also address newly arising issues that inform the negotiating agenda.

Here, I would like to stress the critical interconnectedness between these three functions. It is like a tripod; it must stand on three legs with balanced weight distribution. The system was designed to function with that kind of balance. That is why chronic imbalance is unsustainable.

A deeper look into the root causes of this imbalance would reveal that there are three cross-cutting phenomena that hinder the functioning of the WTO: leadership deficit, increasing complexity of trade policy and negotiating issues, and a fading vision of the common purpose behind the system. Over time, these phenomena lead to the unsustainable imbalance across the vital functions.

The universal disenchantment with the current situation must be turned into a major effort to understand "WHY" this is happening, why we are where we are today so we can see where we want to go. I would help Members unpack the issues to provide collective clarity about why we are in the same boat but not rowing in the same direction.

The world of trade has changed, and so have the dynamics within the Organization. Whereas the GATT started its journey in merchandise trade across borders, we have now expanded into trade in services and intellectual property. Today, the way we trade links goods, services, ideas, capital, and regulation. That requires a comprehensive and coherent approach by the WTO that leads to a "deal" that is truly inclusive of all sectors and interests of Members.

For example, I see the role that digitalisation has played for many industries, across the economy with technology-driven business models. At the same time, I also see the rising tide of legitimate domestic regulation in areas like privacy, consumer protection and cybersecurity. The interface between the two needs to be managed in ways similar to the approach that led to the SPS and TBT Agreements.

And to complete the picture of where we stand today, we must look at the COVID-19 pandemic crisis and make sure that we retain the lessons we are currently learning. The world will need a strong and stable WTO to support the post crisis economic recovery.

The way forward

We all talk about REFORM and I believe it is the responsibility of the Director-General, to enable you in an inclusive way to have the right "REFORM" discussion.

We also need to be clear on the nature of reform. Reforming the WTO is different from reforming other organizations. It is not about reforming administrative structures or allocation of resources to projects and programs. It is about reforming the TREATY itself, the enforceable contract among the Members, which is the WTO.

Well.....we know that this can happen only through negotiations among Members - an admittedly extremely complicated process.

Reforms will not result from any decision taken by the Director-General.

Guided by a common purpose, reform conversation must not simply aim to protect the WTO as it stands today, but rather to make sure it is fit for purpose, in today's world, for the next 25 years, and beyond.

While ensuring that the fundamental principles of the WTO and its purpose are preserved, reform conversations should not be about the "future of the WTO" but about "the WTO of the future".

Reform efforts must cut across all vital functions, but there are urgent priorities. The breakdown in the negotiating function paralyzes the ability to move forward, and to correct inevitable problems. We must renew Members' ability to come around the table and engage in productive discussions about the challenging issues. Without this necessary engagement, it would be exceedingly difficult to get anything done.

We also need to think of the negotiating agenda itself. The breakdown for the past 25 years leaves a backlog of negotiating files, starting with the Built in Agenda of Agriculture and Services which we started in 2000 and obviously never finished. Then came the DDA with other agenda items and we know where that stands today. More recently, other items have emerged as priorities for many Members.

The reality here is that ISSUES will not go away. On the contrary, they will multiply. As global trade evolves with new business models and regulators responding in different directions, the demand for negotiations will only rise.

For the immediate future, we need to set clear priorities. MC12 is around the corner and it needs to be a turning point in the direction of the WTO and take it on a different path towards "positive territory". I believe we need to do two things: 1) agree on a reform agenda and 2) achieve concrete progress on issues currently under negotiation.

On current negotiating subjects, fisheries subsidies come first as the one item expected to be concluded by the end of 2020. It is crucial for our future to have a successful conclusion of the fisheries subsidies negotiations.

There are also the Joint Statement Initiatives on e-commerce, domestic regulation in services, MSMEs and investment facilitation. These initiatives address pressing issues of importance to many Members and pose new challenges.

While these negotiating items are the ones currently "beeping on the radar screen", the reform agenda will no doubt identify additional items for negotiations.

The backlog, including Doha issues is still there. You will recall, in Nairobi, Ministers disagreed on the Doha framework as a basis for negotiations, but all agreed on the need to address DOHA ISSUES. Reviving the built-in agenda of agriculture and services must be a priority because WTO Members agreed on this, and it has not happened. Trade distorting subsidies, both agricultural and industrial, will also be a priority.

None of this would be easily agreed upon for MC12, but we must mobilize our good will and faith to move forward.

We must not allow our frustrations to lead our thinking process. We should enable our ambitions and aspirations to take the front seat and think about "the WTO of the future".

Frustrations are "rear-view mirror" images, aspirations are "windshield" view that looks at the road ahead.

My 35 years of experience in the system started with the biggest reform project in its history – the Uruguay Round. Of course, the situation now is vastly different.

Since then, global trade has transformed, and trading powers have evolved. The circumstances and dynamics have changed. But the skillset we require of the leadership: imaginative thinking, and the ability to come up with legally sound and enforceable solutions – remain the same. We can learn from the past, but I will ensure that we will not repeat it.

I share the universal concern about the sense of urgency. MC12 is our next landmark and we must start preparation yesterday.

I reiterate my utmost respect for previous DGs, all of whom were my colleagues. But the kind of leadership we need now is different. This is not a statement about previous leaderships but about the unprecedented situation we face today.

As I mentioned, the DG is not a typical "executive". His or her role in global trade and vis-à-vis Members is that of the HONEST BROKER and FACILITATOR that promotes like-mindedness by suggesting ways forward and providing options for solving problems. To fulfil that role, he or she must have two legs to stand on:

The first is authoritative knowledge of the system and long experience with its functioning, particularly negotiation. The WTO DG is perhaps the most technically and politically demanding position in the multilateral system.

The second is the trust of Members in his or her impartiality. The confidence in his or her character and sound judgement, particularly under the pressure of difficult negotiation, and absolute commitment to the neutral advancement of objective and collective interest.

I aim to provide the kind of leadership that matches the gravity of the crisis.

I will rely on my long and proven WTO management experience to make sure that the world class expertise that resides in the Secretariat is put at the disposal of Members to assist going forward.

I will stand my ground on the gender balance amongst the DDGs and senior members of the secretariat.

2. Questions and Answers²

Q: You just mentioned that you have ideas regarding MC12 and how to advance the WTO Agenda and WTO Work. Can you elaborate on these and what would be the main priorities you would focus on? (Switzerland)

A: MC12 should address the urgent priorities we have. I would classify those into two categories. The first category is the ongoing negotiations. We need to mark concrete progress in ongoing negotiations. We have negotiations on fisheries subsidies which are terribly important. It was more than an expectation that it should be concluded by the end of 2020 under the unforeseen circumstances we are going through now and the difficulty in negotiating in situations like this. I doubt very much that this would be the case. We need to look into a conclusion for fisheries subsidies negotiations by MC12. That would be a very important thing to mark down and put on the scoreboard of the WTO. The other thing is the joint statement initiatives which are open plurilaterals and they deal with important issues for many Members, from e-commerce to domestic regulation in services, to MSMEs, to investment facilitation and the rest. I am not expecting that these will be concluded by MC12, but I would certainly hope that by MC12 there would be a concrete progress marked in terms of what has been achieved by then and the way forward, and some vision about where this is going to go. If we can do these two things on the negotiations, we would mark important progress. The other aspect of MC12 is about the reform of the organization. And here again we are not going to agree on reforms at MC12, but what I would expect is to have a clear view, almost a roadmap if possible, about where the reform discussions are going – and here I mean two things: process and agenda. When I say agenda, I do not mean just a list of items, but rather one that has content that gives a sense of direction about where we are going with the different issues, because there are important issues that require conversations that we have not had so far. But if we can achieve that also at MC12 and come out with an agenda for the reform process, that would move the WTO into positive territory together with the outcome of negotiations on fisheries subsidies and the rest of it.

Q: The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the vulnerabilities and challenges that small island economies face in addition to the threat of food shortages, health and security which are real challenges during times of pandemic. In the WTO, there is the Work Programme on Small Economies which has undertaken some work in addressing the challenges of small economies in general. But then it merges small economies and small island economies which do not necessarily have the same characteristics of vulnerability. If you were elected to the post of WTO Director-General, how would you propose to work with small island economies in addressing their specific developmental needs through trade? (Mauritius)

A: My first step would be to try and understand what we have learned from the COVID-19 experience in relation to small island economies and small economies. My method of approaching issues or questions always puts as a first step a good diagnostic view of what problems we are trying to face or to solve. I note what you said about the Work Programme on Small Economies and the fact that it addresses small economies and small island economies together. What kind of distinctions should we be drawing based on our experience that we have gone through with COVID-19? There are old issues, of course, that will need to be addressed. This would be one of the work programmes and one of the issues in the WTO that need to be reactivated. What I refer to by way of the breakdown and the vital functions of the organization I think is relevant to many work programmes that we have adopted and have somehow not been effective because of the overall state of the organization. The WTO is facing the challenge of COVID-19, but the WTO had pre-existing conditions as well. That is leaving it with a huge challenge. I do not have a specific answer for your question about what exactly I would be doing with respect to small island economies, apart from saying with all honesty that we need to look at where are the most serious problems now as a result of the experience with COVID-19. I can be general with my answer and say that of course problems are problems of supply chains and that problems of supply chains concern two types of products: medical products and food products, and therefore what do we do about restructuring supply chains to reduce the risk of supply disruption? All these are general questions that are important, but they apply

² The following delegations also submitted their names to ask a question to the candidate: Afghanistan, Barbados, China, Costa Rica, Estonia, European Union, France, Gabon, Germany, Ghana, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kyrgyz Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Mali, Mongolia, Morocco, Nepal, The Netherlands, Philippines, Romania, Russian Federation, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine, United States, Uruguay and Zimbabwe.

almost to all countries. But what is specific to small island economies is something that I would like to look into much more deeply.

Q: Would you agree that there has been worrying signs of growing protectionism and recourse to unilateral measures over the past few years? What should the WTO and its Director-General do in response? (Denmark)

A: The short answer to your question is yes – there has been. The trade restrictive behaviour of Members – and I am not pointing the finger at any particular Member, as this is not something unique to one or two Members – is a trend that started way back at the time of the financial crisis. We started witnessing that trend and this backlash against trade liberalization and anti-globalization right after the financial crisis and when the financial crisis turned into an economic crisis. And then we have seen a lot of questions about fair trade and the behaviour of governments in relation to government support programmes which initially started with bailouts for the economic crisis, but then turned into continuing practices of different sorts. My answer to your question is that yes, there is that tendency. The situation now is not necessarily improving, although WTO data show also that there are some trade liberalizing and trade facilitating measures that are being taken, which is a very good sign and we have to know that these measures are also taken out of enlightened self-interest. The most important thing about those measures is that Members do the right thing because they realize that it is in their interest. Now, what would the Director-General do? Again, we are talking about a machinery that has broken down and the only way to address that kind of phenomena is to reactivate mechanisms in the organization that were designed specifically to address those situations. If the regular functions of the WTO in the Councils and Committees were actually functioning the same way they used to in the late 90s and before we launched the Doha Round, then you would see that all those issues would come before Members for discussions, and if there are no notifications, there will be counternotifications and there are provisions in WTO Agreements regarding counternotifications. You cross-notify a measure that another Member has taken, and you would ask questions. This was never actually seen as an act of animosity or anything. This is what the system is designed to do. That creates the kind of accountability that would make Members over time think twice about taking a measure that is inconsistent with the letter or the spirit of the agreement. I would say in all honesty that the answer to that question lies in fixing the system, so that it functions properly.

Q: As Director-General, how would you manage a diverse, multicultural Secretariat and in particular ensure a respectful, inclusive and harassment-free workplace. How do you view the role of the Deputy Directors-General in this regard? (Canada)

A: You have just pre-empted one point that I was going to say in my final remarks. I am a great believer in gender equality and diversity of staff. I am a great believer in providing for the healthiest and happiest work environment possible. I know that I am at an unfair advantage speaking about that, because my years in the Secretariat, particularly in my sixteen years as Senior Director of the WTO, would testify how true and how sincere I am to those values. If I am elected or selected as Director-General, I would stand my ground very seriously on having more gender equality, starting with the level of Deputy Director-General and the rest of senior management, as well as the rest of the staff. In my years of Directorship of the Services Division, I was always somehow humoured to have a gender issue in my division, but it was in the opposite direction, in the sense that I had more women than men consistently. But my approach to this is that I am gender blind and nationality blind. I would go for diversity whenever that is possible, but I would have to make sure that competence and merit is the basis for selection.

Q: This organization is now 25 years old and the last multilateral agreement negotiated here successfully was in 2013. I am referring to the Agreement on Trade Facilitation. Since then, we have been unable to strike any multilateral agreement. Taking into account that one of the principal pillars of the reform discussed in the recent years was the updating of the rulebook, in your criteria, which elements of the rulebook need updating to adapt to the new global trade reality? (Paraguay)

A: In my view, the list is actually quite extensive. This system was designed with built-in negotiating mechanisms and the whole idea from the very beginning was that we will have a system that updates itself as we go. During the drafting of the WTO Agreement, and as you all know, I was the lead Secretariat person for the negotiation and the drafting of the Services Agreement from which I drew a lot of lessons which are relevant to today's problem. The only thing that was

predictable then was unpredictability itself, and therefore the solution for the rules for the future was to have a built-in negotiating machinery and mechanism that would allow us to update the rulebook. What areas? There are areas that have already been identified. I would start with what we identified: domestic regulation on services and agriculture, and industrial subsidies. We could also look at the area of digital trade and see how we need to update our rulebook. Here, I do not mean to get too technical, and forgive me for that, but there is an area of trade negotiations which is particularly sophisticated and complex. This is the area of interface between trade liberalization and market opening on the one hand, and legitimate regulation and non-trade areas that have a direct bearing on trade. We are starting to see this now, including in the area of digital trade. While technology has facilitated cross-border trade in unprecedented ways, the regulatory tide is mounting. With technology-driven, innovative business models, regulators are going to respond to new situations, and sometimes the responses are inherently restrictive. Look at areas of regulation like privacy, cybersecurity and online consumer protection, among others. And this is just one area. Think of financial services and electronic payments. We need to develop new rules on all these areas that have come to the forefront in recent years, not to set standards, because that is not the job of a trade agreement, but we need to set rules that would guarantee that regulators use the least trade restrictive means. This is the kind of complex trade negotiations of disciplines that I am talking about. The normative approach here is very similar to what we have done in the past with the TBT and the SPS. This is why we have those agreements. What we are facing now is exactly a similar challenge, but much more challenging because we do not have the benefits of internationally agreed standards like what we did with TBT and SPS. If we follow the international standards, you will be presumed to have followed the least trade restrictive means. So, we need to start a process of an even wider collaboration with other organizations in order to refine our rulebook in a way that it will ensure that regulators would behave in the least trade restrictive way, so that the WTO can continue its journey of progressive liberalization. There are examples that would extend beyond what I just said, but for the sake of time, these are the things I immediately think of. There are outstanding issues and there are new issues, and there is a long list of them.

Q: You were explaining that, occasionally, progress towards market opening comes into conflict with the vision of national legislation. I was curious thinking of this, and you are probably aware that there is a growing awareness in certain countries of sustainable development and sustainable trade. What is your vision regarding integrating sustainable and green development into a trade liberalization agenda? (Belgium)

A: This question has been with us for a long time and we have been struggling with it. Our thought all along since the Uruguay Round was: what could be the trade policy contribution to environment protection? The situation we are facing now is even much more pressing. The question here and the challenge from a trade policy perspective is not just how we provide policy space for environment protection, but even how we help develop internationally agreed standards for industrial behaviour in order to make a contribution to environment protection. The trick here is how do you do that from a trade agenda point of view without running the risk of having the agenda being hijacked by protectionist interests or running the risk of discrimination. The situation needs a much deeper look because we have not been working actively on it as we should have been. This is definitely one area that should be one of the priorities for the WTO. We are dealing with environmental issues in an unprecedented manner when we look at fisheries subsidies. One of the interesting aspects of that negotiation is that, while it is about subsidies, what we are trying to do here is to make an environment protection contribution through trade negotiations and a trade agreement. I do not think this was done before. That is why I think the fisheries negotiations are going to be terribly important, not just to bolster the credibility of the WTO, but also to create this precedent that the WTO and trade agreements can make a positive contribution within the space of environmental policies. There are so many other details that need to be looked at when we are talking about carbon taxes and how you deal with that: would it be by way of border adjustment or would it be through other means? What would be the optimal way to approach it from a trade perspective? That is a discussion that needs to take place in the WTO, and it is not taking place at the moment.

Q: Do you see scope for the WTO to enhance its cooperation with other international organizations with a view to addressing sustainability challenges? (Finland)

A: It is not that I see space, I see necessity. I think it is necessary and this is something that the Membership also of the WTO would need to mobilize their political will in the most effective way possible. As Director-General, I would be encouraging Members to do as much as possible down that

road. The way I see cooperation with other international organizations is that it has to be one of the priorities, and not just in the area of sustainability, but in many other areas as well. If the WTO and all its functions want to be relevant to realities in international markets, we have to realize that the interface between trade and other areas of policy is becoming more and more diverse. And for that, we need to have a certain degree of coherence about what the trade contribution can be, and sometimes not just a trade contribution to other policy areas, but also the interface with other policy areas that might have an adverse effect on trade. It is becoming more and more complex. How do we deal with that? The WTO does not have all the knowledge it needs in those diverse areas of policy and negotiations. That is why the WTO needs to consider as a priority the collaboration with other international organizations.

Q: Even though you are a long-time veteran from the WTO, as a candidate for Director-General, what would be your vision to underpin the greater inclusiveness, ensure the fairness and improve the transparency of the WTO in the future? (Chinese Taipei)

A: One of the urgent things that I would devote a lot of effort to as Director-General is to try as much as possible to raise the awareness of the Membership to this tight interconnectedness between the three functions. Your question relates to how the system is going to function and how do we bring more accountability into the system. This is not going to happen by an executive decision from the Director-General. This would have to be out of the conviction and the political will of Members to make the system work the way it is supposed to work. For years now we have been complaining about the underperformance of the system, whether it is with respect to transparency or negotiations or many other aspects. But it takes a collective effort. Without that collective effort, I do not think your question will have an answer that is effective enough – not from the Director-General and not from any single Member of the organization. So, the most urgent thing, the vision that I have for these types of problems, is to raise the awareness of Members. Those Members who care about the system, and I believe that we all care about the system, would want to make it work. And this is an important aspect of making it work. All the mechanisms that are designed can only work if Members actually participate. Remember that this organization is Member-driven, so Members would need to drive. There are certain things that will not happen unless Members collectively have the will to make the system work.

Q: One of the biggest challenges of this system is actually our difficulty in reaching meaningful results. If you look at your own career and the results that you have achieved or contributed to, what lessons from those successes do you believe might be of particular relevance to the role as Director-General? (Norway)

A: That is a very good question that provokes a lot of nostalgia in my mind. The reality is that, first of all, history does not repeat itself exactly the same way, but there are similarities with respect to the enabling factors that allow meaningful results to be achieved. Here I would go back to the common purpose behind the system for which we are all here, because if we do not believe in the common purpose then the question is, "why do we bother?" Let me also give you my thoughts about the phenomena that I have also witnessed over the past at least fifteen years in the system that have not enabled us to achieve meaningful results. There is – and forgive me for that – a leadership deficit in the sense of taking initiatives and driving them. This was one of the most powerful enabling factors in successful experiences. When I think of that, I think of the biggest reform project called the Uruguay Round. There was a lot of leadership. Leadership was not just from one or two Members. Even from a developing country perspective there was leadership. I was there. I started my first five years here as a negotiator for Egypt dealing with the new issues. Leadership is about thought, it is about engagement, and it is also about political commitment and political will. The leadership deficit is a problem because without that, there will be no fuel for any process to move forward. The second phenomena that I found also very challenging for trade negotiations is this increasing complexity of trade policy issues. I alluded to that in my answer to one of the previous questions. The problem of complexity is not that it is beyond the intelligence of the system or negotiators. No. It is because it needs different kinds of discussions that are not taking place. It needs the kind of multidisciplinary conversations that will lead us to pathways towards how we can achieve meaningful results on the trade policy side, which would deal properly with the interface with other areas of regulations. A lot of the problems that we are facing now in international trade are about behind-the-border regulations. The importance of border measures has been declining over the years. So that is the second phenomena. The third is: I feel that the common purpose has faded away. I do not see that we enthusiastically espouse the common purpose the way we did when we started the Uruguay Round. The Uruguay Round started because the GATT was facing this existential threat of sinking

into irrelevancy. But when you think about the transformative process that happened – that we transformed the GATT which was a tariffs agreement not even implemented on a definitive basis – to transform that into the WTO is like transforming a cottage into a mansion. There are enabling factors that led to that, but I will put leadership and commitment and also trust, and trust is important. Everybody is talking about trust, but how do you generate trust? There is a certain kind of leadership that generates trust which is about openness, about transparency, about inclusiveness, and also about clarity of purpose, again because if your purpose is clear, that helps a lot. It is also about empathy. We need to understand the political imperatives of each other. This is why I was saying in the beginning that the WTO needs a different kind of leadership now. I am not saying that Ministers actually cannot do it. No, not at all. What I am saying is that Ministers would need to adjust their mindset a bit from that of an executive from that of an honest broker or mediator or facilitator who builds bridges. We are not short of creativity, nor ideas, and we are not short of problems to solve, but I think it is just the will, the common purpose and generating trust.

Q: Today, you have given us a narration of your trade experience. What are the qualities that distinguish you from other candidates which allow you to believe that you will meet the challenges of an organization that is evolving, and how do you think you can ensure that you will meet those targets that you have set for yourself? (Panama)

A: The reason why I think this would be a job for me is that I believe very much in the nature of the honest broker in the function of the Director-General. The honest broker in view stands on two legs. The first leg is the authoritative knowledge of what the broker is brokering, because it is going to be very difficult to broker deals and agreements without being acutely aware of the ins and outs of the substance of what you are trying to deal with. This is terribly important. Even when you have conversations with political leaders, what kind of conversations are you going to have when you listen? Listening is the first step, but what do you do with what you listen to? How do you internalise the information? How do you analyse it? How do you provide insights about the problems you are listening to and be able to point at pathways and look at options for solutions? As I have said previously, just have an imagination to think of what an outcome would look like. This is the first leg for the honest broker to stand on, this authoritative knowledge. The second leg is the trust and confidence that Members will have in the honest broker. You cannot broker unless you are trusted. I have spent my 27 years in the system serving the Membership, as I said, and I believe that I do have the trust and confidence of the Membership. Trust also needs to be earned. It is not just something that you have. Over the years, I believe that I have earned that trust. It is not just trust in terms of the intentions, but also confidence and sound judgment in difficult times and in times of pressure, and particularly with respect to the negotiating processes. Trade negotiations are a very complex exercise in terms of substance and process. Facilitating that requires this kind of attributes in my view. I am not saying that this would be something that nobody else would have. I am saying that this is why I am here, and this is why I think this would be a job for me.

Q: If you are selected as Director-General, what concrete steps do you plan to undertake in order to secure multilateral outcomes at MC12? (Kazakhstan)

A: The first thing I would do is to start serious consultations "yesterday" about what exactly are we ready to achieve. This is where trust and confidence combined with the knowledge of the issues would come in. If we have a clear idea of what the priorities should be, if we have a clear idea about the common purpose around which we are gathering and if we realize that we are on the same boat but we need to row on the same direction, then that is what I would be consulting on with Members in order to arrive at MC12 with a roadmap for what follows. My hope would be: by MC12, we will register the conclusion of the fisheries subsidies negotiations and there I would, as Director-General, do everything I can to help the Chair and the negotiations to achieve that goal through any means that I have within the office of the Director-General. But I would also be consulting very closely with all Members to agree on what we can achieve and what we should achieve at MC12. There are low hanging fruits and there are things that can be agreed. There are things that are even backlogs of negotiations that have gone nowhere. Isn't it time now to start looking at what we can reboot by way of negotiations? Here, I would be interested in having not a launch of a big round, but an agenda that would have a balance of interests that would bring Members around the table. One of the mistakes that we have done before is that we adopt a comprehensive agenda and then we focus on one subject or two and then we lose the inherent balance of the single undertaking. I am talking obviously about the Doha Round. I have my views about why the Doha Round did not work, but this is not the question that you asked and I will not go there.

Q: The multilateral trading system has been in crisis for many years. This is also visible in the WTO. In the context of potential WTO reforms, what is your understanding of the so-called "new multilateralism"? (Poland)

A: I am not sure that I am familiar with the term "new multilateralism" in terms of what it would mean for the architecture of the system. I can speak of a revived multilateralism, but the whole essence of multilateralism is that we will have basic rules and fundamental principles that apply across the system to all Members in varying degrees, but it is one system that encompasses all Members at different levels. The fact that the system has been suffering, I think it is not new. I have heard a lot of things about the end of multilateralism, the difficulties that the whole concept of multilateralism is facing not only in the area of trade, but across many areas of international cooperation. When we say "new multilateralism", I would ask what would be the definition of that concept in terms of what it would mean for the WTO. I am not sure I answered your question properly, but I think that, if there are tendencies to think of different models, then the system is yours. It is driven by Members and I can give my opinion on anything you want me to give an opinion on, but I would want to understand more what it means.

Q: What will you do if you were appointed to ensure that the WTO is able to keep pace with the digital transformation, especially in terms of bringing more developing Members on board? (Singapore)

A: This is a very live issue in terms of its multifaceted nature, but also in terms of its rising importance, particularly with COVID-19, which as we all know has somehow accelerated the rate of digitalization, whereby what we expected to see in five years is happening in six months. The fact that this meeting is taking place the way it is taking place now, is just one sign of how digitalization has become a much more important factor in all our activities. Digital trade has been on the rise since we were negotiating the GATS Agreement. We had no idea about the dimensions it would reach, but the concepts were there. If we look at what is in the agreements, we will see that it is there. If you have an annex on telecommunications that guarantees access to infrastructure and networks, that establishes an obligation on Members to allow cross-border dataflows for the purpose of supplying services committed in your schedule, allowing exceptions also for such obligations in situations where you need to protect the secrecy or confidentiality of messages or information, there is a system there which foresaw what is coming, did not foresee the magnitude but saw the elements that were coming down the road. And when we look at the situation today, we need a lot of updating to the rules, but we also need to understand better the trade policy aspect of it, the benefits of market opening. This whole paradigm was based on the benefits that the liberalizing country would gain from opening up its services sectors. Your question is about digital trade and so often, when people hear "digital trade" they think of Amazon and online shopping, basically thinking about goods and merchandise that get delivered through online ordering. But actually the bulk of that is services, because, even when you are buying a good, you cannot buy it, you cannot sell it, you cannot move it unless you have the services backbone that concludes the transaction. What I think we ought to be thinking about is how the system should upgrade what is there by way of commitments in terms of market opening, because even for countries who want to upgrade their capabilities in e-commerce, they need to address the unfulfilled demand for certain services – be it electronic payments, expressed delivery, all kinds of services that are needed to conclude a digital trade transaction. This is not new. There is a lot of work that has been done on that, but unfortunately not enough in the WTO. This is one that I would be very interested in energising as Director-General. I would also look very carefully at the digital divide and what could be the trade policy contribution that can be made to the digital divide. COVID-19 has brought to the forefront the importance of digitalization, and this increase in digital activity has also revealed the gaps and the disparities between the digital readiness of countries. There are lots of developing countries and LDCs who are not capable of taking the benefits of this huge wave of digitalization. But what can we do about the digital divide? This is a terribly important priority in my view, and it is not just about providing resources to build physical infrastructure. It is much more than that. It is a multifaceted issue and it needs to be seriously addressed. The answers to the digital divide are not all in the trade policy agenda, but the trade policy agenda can make a tremendous contribution by way of how you liberalize open markets, and also by way of how you re-regulate your market in order to provide for the enabling factors for your market operators to be more competitive and more productive. We need to think about these things in a new way. We need to think about it in terms of collaboration with other international organizations that can mobilize resources. We need to think about it in terms of how those countries who would benefit, would liberalize the right way – what to liberalize, how to liberalize, under which conditions, what kind of regulatory reforms they need and what kind of assistance can be mobilized

to help them in their regulatory reforms. Here, I would think of the experience with the Agreement on Trade Facilitation of assisting Members to undertake regulatory reforms. All these factors need to be mobilized in order to provide for a package of an outcome that would effectively address this problem of the digital divide. As we always say, we should not leave anyone behind. These are daunting tasks, but the WTO has a huge role to play here. We need to mobilize those factors.

Q: In the pandemic situation, the WTO is being put in the category of some kind of comorbidity. I am referring to pre-existing conditions. I am referring here about the Agreement on Agriculture such as the issues relating to high per capita subsidies, food security and public stockholding. You mentioned the role of the Director-General as an honest broker. How do you plan to broker a deal in removing the asymmetries in the Agreement on Agriculture? (India)

A: The only way to reform the treaty is through negotiations. As Director-General, I would mobilize not just the goodwill of the parties to negotiate, but also the creativity in terms of putting together a negotiating framework and a negotiating agenda. There are some intractable issues that are difficult, but so important. They are difficult to address on their own. That brings me back to the previous question by Norway about the enabling factors. What were the enabling factors in the past? One important enabling factor was the balance in the negotiating agenda. One of the important mistakes that we did in the Doha Round was that we adopted a Single Undertaking – a big agenda with an inherent balance – but we did not actually act upon it. We spent almost fourteen years obsessed with agriculture. It was not until 2008 when we had the Signalling Conference on Services and we had tremendous progress in agriculture and NAMA modalities. And we started having a package across the market access negotiating triangle. But I look back and I compare with the enabling factors of the Uruguay Round and ask why the Uruguay Round worked. It was so tremendous and colossal in terms of an achievement. It is because of the inherent balance. The grand design of that deal was agriculture and textiles in return for services and TRIPS. But then, when that agenda was adopted, progress was balanced. We did not leave anyone behind. We did not focus on one and leave the rest behind. What we did in Doha was different. It was agriculture, agriculture, agriculture. I was watching the mini Ministerials to see what they are saying about other things. All the discussions were about agriculture. Sometimes they did not even get the time to talk about non-agricultural market access and tariff reductions. That was the reality. So, you cannot have an agenda that actually lacks balance and expect progress. The question here is, if I may put it in a sort of very primitive way: where are the trade-offs? It is one thing to say that we want progress on that file, and it is another to say that we need progress here and try to find a way to package this. Again, I am not necessarily advocating a big round, but I am advocating balance. There has to be balance in negotiations. Why did we even leave the built-in agenda? We finished the Uruguay Round saying we will come back in five years to negotiate on agriculture and services, because there was a certain design behind that. These are two huge files that we put only on the right track. We said: "ok, that's the achievement in the Uruguay Round. We come back in five years, meet you around this table where we will start access negotiations and the rest of the agenda – domestic regulation, agriculture access, subsidies and the rest of it." So I go back to the enabling factors question and say that what I would do as Director-General is to try and put together a balanced negotiating project that would allow for real progress, and not just looking at the problem and pointing fingers at each other. We really need conversations that are less politicized, less emotional, more evidence-based and more knowledge-based and generate more trust. I think if you have one, two and three, trust would come. So, that would be my approach to that problem.

Q: If there ever was a time that the focus and importance of vulnerability to small island developing States, particularly those in the Caribbean and the Pacific, in light of recent global events and the need for continued policy space in the advent of climate change and natural disasters and its impact on trade, I think that time is now. How do you see the organization moving forward to ensure that small island developing States are able to effectively build robust trading economies in light of that reality? (Barbados)

A: This reminds me of the earlier question by Mauritius. My answer will be very similar. There is a lot to be looked at in detail. There are basic factors which I would immediately think about. It is how to provide those economies with the enabling factors to bolster their competitiveness and productivity. Here, I would think immediately of infrastructure and services. The reason why I always think about services is not because of my dark past in the services world, but because I believe that a strong services sector is the backbone of economic and social development. If you do not have a strong services sector, you cannot have a strong manufacturing or agriculture sector. I always give

the example of my beloved first home country, because my second home country is Switzerland, which is Egypt. Not many people know that Egypt is number six worldwide in producing fresh vegetables. It is a surprise. This is according to the Economist Intelligence Unit. But why is that tremendous production capacity not reflected proportionately in Egypt's export performance? It is because growing tomatoes on the field is one thing, and putting them on the shelves of a supermarket is another, and between A and B we have a services value chain. That is a whole area of policy and regulation and market opening that I think we need to pay more attention to. And the fact that the built-in agenda of the services negotiations that started in 2000 – that is twenty years ago – and has not gone anywhere today, made governments and policy-making machineries in capitals just forget about this file, that there is something called trade in services and there ought to be a service economic policy that has certain coherence that puts all services sectors with a certain sense of backward and forward linkages. That would be something I would point at and say how can we help – by way of consultations, capacity building, but also in terms of sincere and frank conversations.

3. Summing up by the Candidate³

My concluding statement will not take five minutes because some of the points that I had in mind to throw at you now were already taken up by questions, to my delight. The only thing that I would end up with here is to say that let us not focus on the future of the WTO, but let us talk about the WTO of the future. The profound thought behind this is that I believe that the future is actually very demanding and the WTO needs to shape up. It is for you. I am here because I am passionate about it and because I believe in the values of the system.

The other thought that I would leave with you as well - and this is the thought that I lived by with my family, my friends, professionally, and I believe that it is true also for the relationships with countries – is that I always believe that happy and successful relationships do not really depend on how much we agree on, but they depend a lot more on how we deal with our differences. And how we deal with our differences is going to be key for the future for any relationship. The way I see us dealing with our differences is (a) by mutual respect, (b) by sincerity, (c) by empathy and also by being pragmatic and trying to put ourselves in the shoes of the other side. And also, the way we deal with our difference, in my view, for the WTO would add another element which is: our solutions need to be multilateral. Even big bilateral problems should be resolved in the WTO and we should always look at the WTO as part of the solution and not part of the problem.

With that, I end my concluding remarks and I thank you very much for your attention. I am deeply honoured and happy to have had the opportunity to be with you today.

³ Under the modalities for the conduct of the meeting communicated by the Chair to all delegations on 1 and 10 July, each candidate had the opportunity to make a concluding statement during the last five minutes of the question-and-answer period if she or he so wished.

ANNEX 4

Meeting with Ambassador Tudor Ulianovschi (Republic of Moldova)

1. Presentation by the Candidate¹

Ambassadors, delegates, members of the Secretariat,

It's good to be back in Geneva and see so many familiar and friendly faces. Many of you know me as the Moldovan Ambassador to the WTO, others may know me as Moldova's Foreign Minister. But all of you know me as a firm believer in the multilateral trading system and a person fully committed to the work and objectives of the WTO.

I have a diplomatic and political career of over 16 years. This experience helped me develop a particular set of professional skills and networking, which I believe make me suitable for this job.

Throughout my diplomatic career, I have participated in negotiations on bilateral, regional and multilateral levels with countries from all of the continents. I have always advocated for free, fair, inclusive and transparent trade.

What I bring to the table is my political experience as a Minister and my diplomatic and negotiating experience as an Ambassador to the WTO.

For my role as the future DG of the WTO, I bring a 3D vision and approach:

First D is Direct Access to Ministers and political decision makers – in my capacity as a recent Minister dealing with Ministers.

Second D is Dialogue and discussions with Geneva based Ambassadors – in my capacity as former Ambassador to the WTO – I was in your shoes and fully understand the process of work, its challenges and the potential efficient and effective solutions.

Third D is Driving the work of the WTO Management and Secretariat, so it can better and more efficiently serve Members' needs and continue bringing its contribution to a better system for all Members.

The experience of working shoulder to shoulder with you, as the Moldovan Ambassador in Geneva, has allowed me to gain sound knowledge on the current negotiations in the WTO, their challenges and opportunities. This understanding of the issues will further enhance my convincing capacity when dealing with Ministers, with a view to reach political decisions.

While in Geneva, I was also involved directly in consensus-building during negotiations as chair of various United Nations and WTO bodies, including Chair of the Balance of Payments Committee of the WTO.

As President of the Trade and Development Board, the highest-level body of UNCTAD, I led negotiations on revitalizing the intergovernmental pillar of UNCTAD within the broader UN reform process, with a view to bridging the developmental gap.

I had also the privilege to be involved as one of the 4 Geneva based facilitators for the negotiation of the MC11 Ministerial Declaration. Back in 2017, before MC11, and after, I was also an active supporter, like many of you, of a multitude of new initiatives which later contributed to the reinvigoration of various group discussions and negotiations within this House.

In these experiences, I have developed a network of decision makers from the technical to the high political level, having earned the reputation of a credible negotiator, capable of technical negotiations and political talks, with a view to identifying creative solutions for consensus building and being result-oriented.

¹ The presentation is also circulated in document JOB/GC/236.

We are all witnesses of the fact that the WTO is facing unprecedented challenging times being at the cross-roads.

The system requires a fresh/new, innovative, pragmatic, pro-active approach from Members, supported by a strong political will together with the relevant expertise, with a view to being able to strengthen the system, by **1)** reinvigorating the negotiations within the multilateral trading system as to achieve new meaningful outcomes, **2)** safeguarding and improving the WTO's two-tiered dispute settlement system **3)** improving compliance with notifications obligations, as well as in general, improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the WTO's monitoring and transparency function.

All of the Members agree that we need the WTO and all of us agree that efforts must be taken to ensure that this organization remains reliable, relevant, responsive and able to deliver the expected outcomes for the benefits of all.

In this context, Members collective efforts must be oriented as to support the system and find common ground and necessary flexibilities in order to overcome the current difficulties and work together on the relevant reformation of the WTO.

I believe that doing nothing or staying passive is not an option and the risk of not acting is not for the WTO itself, but it is for its Members and billions of people, who deserve to continue developing, benefiting from open markets and trade.

The WTO is one of the most complex organizations in the world today, and it's one of the most needed as to ensure open, predictable, inclusive, rule based multilateral trading system, as well as - to address global inequalities and bridge the gap between the least developed, developing and developed countries.

Everyone can be great because everyone can serve for a better system but serving and leading have a different approach especially when it comes to the tangible and concrete results.

Leading and serving for concrete results require a political experience and strong skills of an efficient facilitator who can rapidly build bridges and lead toward a win-win solution for all the parties involved.

Leading the most important organization in the trade field in an era of a global economic and pandemic crisis would be a very daunting task for anyone, it has several important current issues and opportunities that need to be dealt with head-on political level discussions, using existing expertise and combining it with new and innovative approaches.

What can be measured can be managed. If you try to solve all world's problems in one take it will less likely work.

That is why, the future Director General needs to take action with a view to bringing Members to the negotiating table, with the goal of focusing on achieving results and score some important wins - for the credibility of the negotiation function of this organization and re-create an atmosphere of trust among Members.

STRATEGIC VISION AND STEPS

WTO is a member-driven organization where decisions on rulemaking and implementation have to be made by the Members. However, in order to make progress there is a need to have a viable forum for negotiations where Members can meet to discuss and reach consensus. On a more conceptual level, we need to think of modernizing the global trade agenda, upgrade it so it responds better and faster to 21st century challenges.

At the strategic level, the future Director General should bear in mind four strategic priorities:

1. Engage in every effort to stop any deterioration or decline of the multilateral trading system;
2. Focus on smaller, incremental gains;
3. Get negotiations started again in the WTO;

4. Bring members together and come up with a long-term vision for the WTO.

In terms of immediate priorities for the future Director General of the WTO, the following should be considered (including in the preparation process for MC12):

1. Efforts to reactivate the Appellate Body, to ensure a prompt resolution of trade disputes;
2. Build upon the progress achieved already on the fisheries subsidies negotiations and strongly support Members to achieve a negotiated text by MC12;
3. Facilitating dialogue with Members regarding on-going negotiations on the remaining and other important issues.
4. Further encouraging and supporting discussions on new and existing Joint Initiatives, particularly: on Electronic Commerce, Investment Facilitation for Development, Domestic Services Regulation, as well as the dialogs of the informal group on MSMEs and SMEs and others.
5. Promoting negotiations of new commercial disciplines and address issues of the digital environment and new areas of intellectual property.
6. Dealing with the trade-environment nexus, including by supporting Members efforts and discussions to create a circular economy, addressing plastic pollution and other various trade and environment initiatives.
7. Ensuring further promotion of transparency and necessity of withdrawal (as soon as feasible and possible) of trade restrictive measures imposed in the context of COVID-19. Seeking ways and examining roles of existent programs (Aid for Trade, Enhanced Integrated Framework, the International Trade Centre, the Standards and Trade Development Facility) in supporting post pandemic economic recovery of some of the developing and least-developed countries.
8. Promotion of the transparency principle and the importance of compliance with notification obligations.

Dispute Settlement

The reform of the dispute settlement mechanism and particularly the reform of the Appellate Body will be one of the main priorities for the next Director General. This process needs to be open, inclusive and constructive. We need to find a way for all members to accept a two-step binding independent Dispute Settlement system.

I believe that the issues and concerns were clarified by the members already and now they have to be addressed.

I am aware of the on-going consultations on this important matter among the Members. In my opinion, there is a general common understanding on fundamentals of the DSU, which is already a good start.

The least a DG can do is to facilitate discussions among Members to agree together on how to move forward and eventually agree on a roadmap and mechanisms – "agree on how to agree" on this sensitive but crucial issue and devise a process of further engagement to reach an acceptable solution.

COVID-19

We understand that the COVID-19 pandemic had, has and continues to have a negative impact on citizens across all parts of the world and all sectors of the economy: demand has dropped, supply chains were disrupted, investments are put on hold. There are certainly lessons to be learned from this unprecedented situation. But one thing is clear: COVID-19 has highlighted the interconnectedness of global economies, trade and societies.

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, transparent, efficient information-sharing is crucial for traders and governments and as I have seen during current pandemic - WTO Members, with the assistance of the Secretariat, reacted promptly by commendably notifying the export restricting measures imposed in the context of pandemic, as well as by joining a series of initiatives supporting open and predictable, non-distorted, facilitated trade (including in agri-food products and medical supplies), well-functioning of supply chains, statements highlighting the importance of MSMEs in

these unprecedented times, on the facilitation of the flow of goods and services as well as the essential movement of people, etc.

I believe that providing timely transparency with respect to trade and trade-related measures taken or withdrawn in the context of the COVID-19 crisis was of critical importance and relevance. Members need to seek further monitorization of these measures on an ad hoc basis, *stressing that trade restrictive emergency measures aimed at protecting health, shall be imposed only if deemed necessary... and these shall be targeted, proportionate, transparent and temporary, not create unnecessary barriers to trade or disruption to global supply chains, and be consistent with WTO rules.* In the same time, it's necessary to continue to advocate for withdrawal of such measures as soon as situation improves.

In the same context, the WTO should continue to join efforts of international organizations as WB, IMF, OECD, FAO, WFP, WHO to analyze the impacts of COVID-19 on global agricultural supplies, distribution chains and agri-food production and trade, as well as on seeking ways and examining roles of programs in supporting economic recovery, particularly of the developing and least-developed countries.

Digital trade has proven to be a critical issue in the current crisis and its development would contribute to building resilience and crisis response in the future. In this process we have to be fully aware of the issue of capacity and we need to make sure that this process should be inclusive. However, I do believe that WTO should be modernized in the digital world.

International rulemaking through the WTO on e-commerce cannot wait any longer. Digital transformation became a necessity following COVID's wake up call.

It's also important to be fully aware and correctly assess the preparedness of the Least-developed countries and developing countries and their needs in this process, with a view to provide targeted assistance to build capacity and assist countries to fully integrate into the global trading system.

Functioning and Management of the WTO

Let me now turn briefly to the fact that the Director General is the chief manager of the Organization and in this capacity, I would always be a promoter of competence and rewarding merit.

Additionally, as member of International Gender Champions, I am a strong proponent of women empowerment and if I have the honor to be your DG, I will openly and sincerely encourage gender diversification, including at the level of DDGs, with high professional credentials.

I was fortunate to get to know first-hand the workings of the Secretariat of the WTO and, most importantly, to appreciate the professionalism, expertise and dedication of this cadre of public servants. It would be a great honor to lead this remarkable group of people in a new capacity, while making sure that this very high caliber group of professionals remains motivated and engaged in serving Members.

To conclude, there were always big expectations for the WTO to deliver, which became even more nuanced in the context of the negative consequences of the global pandemic and economic crisis.

That is why, MC12 is the next clear and crucial deadline for us – as keepers of the multilateral trade system – to make sure that we send a clear signal to the world and to our nations:

WTO Members have regained the sense of purpose and direction, managed to rebuild trust and are going to negotiate and deliver results that the world urgently requires.

If you trust me with the honor to be your next Director General, I will use my political, ministerial, ambassadorial, managerial and negotiation experience at the strategic and tactical levels, to constantly pursuit to drive the WTO to a brighter future, with fairness, independence, transparency, inclusiveness, bearing in mind that this is a member-driven Organization, where all members, including the smallest, must be part of the driving force and that the DG is an honest broker, who both understands the issues and has the capacity to facilitate political dialogue and a DG that Gets Things Done!

The time is always right to do what's right. Let's win together!

2. Questions and Answers²

Q: Would you agree in thinking that there is something missing in the WTO rules in terms of equal conditions of competition among Members? Are the current rules not sufficient? If this is the case, how could these rules be improved to ensure that there is a level playing field? (France)

A: You have touched upon a crucial, existential question within the WTO. Efforts must be taken further to make sure that any actions and decisions taken by any Member ensure that there are no trade-distorting spill-over effects on the entire system and on other Members. Making sure that there is a level playing field should be a vision we need to strive for. To be sincere, at this point, this is an objective and a vision that has yet to be fully implemented. That is why I believe that the role of Director-General would be to further engage with all Members with a view to listen to the concerns and challenges particularly faced by those affected, by LDCs and some of the developing Members, to make sure that their process of integration into the multilateral trading system becomes smoother, and I do believe that the system has to be reactive to their needs. From that perspective, I am encouraged to see the multitude of proposals and new initiatives, include the joint initiatives, that will also allow that to happen.

Q: What do you view as the most important asset in addressing the many challenges currently facing the WTO as Director-General? (Thailand)

A: The immediate priority of the next Director-General is to ensure that there is an inclusive and transparent dialogue to make sure that trust is rebuilt between the Members. In order to progress, we need to have a sense of vision and purpose of where the WTO is going, and how the WTO is going to react to the ongoing challenges in the trade system, in the process economic development of Members. At the same time, in order for the system to be sustainable, we need to get back on track on the negotiating table. The negotiation arm of the WTO needs to be revitalized and Members need to return to the negotiating table. The extent of how that would be possible to be achieved depends of course from the Members. The role of the Director-General would be to listen and to steer the conversations, and to try to find that common thread that would allow us to make smaller but firm steps in the right direction. Before taking these steps, all of us need to have a clear understanding of where we are going. That is why, I believe, in a larger process of consultations with all Members, the Director-General needs to start in the first day of his or her mandate to make sure that the vision of Members are aligned and they are moving towards the right direction. At the same time, the judicial arm, the dispute settlement system and the DSU in particular, is currently experiencing an impasse that affects and has a negative impact on the negotiating function of the WTO. That needs to be addressed and this should be the utmost priority for the next Director-General. I am aware and I have taken the time to read the various proposals – the GC Chair proposals and the Walker Process including the various feedbacks from Members. What I have seen is that there is a common understanding that the DSU should be there. The way we implement the regulations and the application and its extent are areas where we need to find a common purpose and a clear understanding on how to move forward. So, to answer your question, these would involve: regaining trust, trying to make an effort to return to the negotiating table and focusing and identifying a solution for the dispute settlement process and the AB situation with a view that this solution is accepted and will have the chance to be rightfully implemented for the benefit of all Members.

Q: Concerning the ongoing changes and the changes that have taken place in the world economy over the past decade, how should the resulting changes in the international landscape be reflected in ongoing and future WTO negotiations, in particular when it comes to special and differential treatment? (Estonia)

² The following delegations also submitted their names to ask a question to the candidate: Afghanistan, Barbados, Botswana, Costa Rica, Denmark, European Union, Germany, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, The Netherlands, Norway, Paraguay, Qatar, Romania, Russian Federation, Singapore, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Chinese Taipei, Ukraine, Viet Nam and Zimbabwe.

A: You have touched on two major important matters for the organization and for the system. Special and differential treatment is the fundamental principle of the organization on the horizontal level – crosscutting various discussions, ongoing consultations and negotiations within this House. That being said, I am particularly encouraged to see an increasing number of joint initiatives reflecting the intention of an ever increasing number of Members to discuss and to address the ongoing issues that are reflected in the developments in the world economy, in particular in the Joint Statement Initiative on E-Commerce. Since Estonia has addressed the question, I would like to express my full appreciation for the extraordinary results that were registered on e-governance, e-commerce and e-trade by Estonia, which serves as a good example that this is possible and beneficial trade. It also stimulates participation of MSMEs in trade. Other initiatives such as on investment facilitation and services domestic regulation, among others, are also a result of the fact that a more increasing number of Members are aware of the ongoing changes in the global economic landscape and the organization needs to deliver and needs to be relevant. At the same time, the S&DT principle, its existence and the fact that this should be taken into consideration in any ongoing and future discussions have been expressed by all Members. The principle is the cornerstone and the foundation of the organization. The extent of the application of the principle and of the commitments and obligations to be assumed by Members is where a common understanding is needed. This in turn is where I believe the Director-General should drive the process to make sure that there is a common understanding on how to apply the S&DT principle – whether there needs to be a blanket solution or a case-by-case solution. I have seen different views on that. I believe that this issue will stay in the ongoing discussions and negotiations. But the application of the principle would be seen in the process of negotiation. Because at the end of the day, this is a Member-driven organization and the level of commitments or obligations should also be accepted by the Membership. So, this is something in which the Director-General should be aware of the various aspects and positions of different Members on the application of S&DT as a crosscutting principle on various ongoing and current and future initiatives. But then, at the end of the day, discussions and the decision need to be taken by Members.

Q: For more than fifteen years, the United States and other Members have expressed concern over the Appellate Body's failure to respect the rules governing the settlement of disputes. Recently, the EU, China and others entered into an Article 25 arrangement that in our view seeks to recreate the Appellate Body and institutionalize several of the problems created by the Appellate Body. For example, the arrangement weakens the mandatory deadline for reports, contemplates appellate review of Panel findings of fact and promotes the use of precedent or creates jurisprudence. Do you believe that a plurilateral arrangement that institutionalizes such problems is helpful as Members look to reform the dispute settlement system? (United States)

A: I have taken the time and I have become fully aware of the concerns expressed by all of the Members including the opinion that you have just presented. As I have mentioned, at the fundamental level, no one objects to the DSU including its application, implementation and the extent of various topics with regard to the Appellate Body referencing to the extent of its mandate, the period of time, the examination period, the concern expressed with regard to the consistency or continuity of decisions and so forth. I have taken the time to understand these matters and I will have the time to listen more to understand better the concerns and positions expressed by all Members including the US delegation. At the same time, I do believe that a solution of the impasse needs to be found and needs to be put as a priority for the next Director-General, with a view to put Members together to try to identify the common grounds. The decision is at the Member's latitude. The Director-General can understand and try to put together and connect the dots. I have seen of course the position expressed by the US delegation, the GC Chair's text and the feedback from Members. With reference to the MPIA, which is allowed by the current regulations through Article 25 of the DSU, this was a reaction of the Members that is allowed by the system. At the same time, the core priority is to find a long-lasting, sustainable solution to the Appellate Body problem and to the DSB per se. This is something that I believe should be on the agenda. I do not believe that there will be a solution immediately or before MC12. However, what I hope to have is an inclusive and transparent process that all Members are aware of, and try to see how we can resolve these fundamental issues. The MPIA which was initiated – and I have read the content and the number of delegations that have joined that – is allowed and regulated. But even with a temporary action or solution, I believe that the core issue should not be taken from the priorities of this organization. Of course, the Director-General will listen to all delegations and will try to understand how we proceed. But in my personal opinion, I believe that we need to keep our eyes focused on the actual problem,

while trying to understand how we can agree on the concerns that were put forward by certain delegations.

Q: We have a cobweb of bilateral and regional trade agreements. As we all see, these ones have intensified over recent years. What are your views on the oversight role of the WTO and about strengthening the oversight role in relation to these RTAs? Do you agree that we should do it? If so, how? (Luxembourg)

A: While fully reiterating the importance of the multilateral trading system, the current reality is that we have seen indeed an increasing number of RTAs and plurilaterals as well. When discussing the issue of regional arrangements and/or other formats of arrangements, I believe it is important to take into consideration their overarching or paramount importance and to make sure that they are oriented for a multilateral solution at the end of the day, while also making sure that on one hand, the respective Members are addressing their own concerns and have their own planned arrangements for regulations and that these arrangements are not affecting negatively other Members, that they do not have protectionist elements and there is market access that is clear and non-discriminatory. However, we were just discussing about the fact that the multilateral trading system is at an impasse. It needs to produce multilateral solutions. So, the negotiating arm needs to be revived. That has been taking quite a time. From that point of view, I do believe that the intention of various Members engaging in RTAs and PTAs as well should be seen as an element or as a signal that there is a wish and willingness to engage in consultations and to react to the ongoing challenges. From that perspective, I think that on the one hand, that is allowed by the system and the agreements, on the other, we need to make sure that they are inclusive and transparent. And we also need to make sure that, at the end of the day, they benefit the multilateral trading system.

Q: In the context of reform, do you think the WTO should incorporate certain new areas into the agenda from the lessons learned out of the COVID-19 crisis in a way that would address the concerns of all Members, especially those with capacity constraints? Could that be reconciled with delivering on the past mandates of the organization? If so, how would you do that? (Turkey)

A: I do agree with you that all of the elements that you have mentioned should be on the agenda for the next Director-General to encourage Members to continue discussions on the ongoing issues, while also trying to merge or continue discussing the ongoing and new initiatives. As I have mentioned, COVID-19 is a wake-up call. It is extremely important to assess the situation and the preparedness of the LDCs and the SVEs that have been affected by COVID-19. COVID-19 has also increased the role of digital transformation. That is why I believe that e-commerce and further engagement of Members in this area would be of paramount importance to drive the process. I remember the initial discussions several years ago on e-commerce. The reality today is that this is a dimension that affects everyone. Digital transformation is important. At the same time, the question of capacity building and preparedness is of paramount importance to make sure that there is inclusive and transparent integration of the LDCs and developing Members, particularly the SVEs into the digital trading system. From that perspective, I do not see an exclusive approach to differentiate or to pick and choose which initiatives to prioritize. All of them have interconnection and synergies. I am encouraged to see the number of joint initiatives. I applaud the Members that have been making the effort to make sure that discussions on e-commerce are inclusive. I recently had discussions with some of the African Members and the LDCs that have also expressed interest to engage while having the security that their capacity building concern is addressed, and their preparation level is enhanced. Discussions should continue both on the joint initiatives and on ongoing negotiations, especially on fisheries which are quite advanced, and I applaud the work of Ambassador Wills (Colombia) on the Negotiating Group on Rules to drive the process to get a negotiated text, so it can be presented or finalized by MC12, which is also part of the current unfinished business. I do believe that we should not leave any topic behind. And I do not believe that the Members would allow for that. It is not for the Director-General to decide that. But I would encourage Members to have an open-minded approach on continuing discussions on the ongoing issues, while also continuing engagement on better reacting and involving in the new initiatives.

Q: In your statement, you mentioned gender balance in the Secretariat. The issue of gender, geographical and development balance at the highest levels in the organization has been a source of concern to a number of Members for some years now. How do you think you can specifically address these issues? How do you think you can respond to such concerns? At a more general level, how should the Secretariat be restructured? (Panama)

A: On gender balance and women empowerment, as I mentioned, I have been for quite a while a member of the International Gender Champions and I believe that many in this House are also there. It is extremely important to take that into consideration on diversification and women empowerment. If we speak on a larger scale, various Members at various development levels will also benefit from e-commerce and women empowerment. Going back on your particular question with regard to the Secretariat, first and foremost I would like to reiterate my strong appreciation for the professionalism and high calibre of activity of the Secretariat and its members, that have been and will be continuing to provide assistance and will be serving the Members. That is important. As a former Minister that has managed an institution, a ministry and many missions abroad, I am proud to inform you of a track record that I have. I have appointed more than 30% of women Ambassadors which had extraordinary professional credentials. So, the foundation of any decision for any representation or diversification, while fully understanding your views expressed in your question, the paramount, critically important, fundamental principle should be meritocracy and merit-based promotion. Once that is secured, then I believe we can encourage further diversification within the Secretariat. Competence should be in front of the table.

Q: In your previous response, you mentioned a couple of times that you will listen to Members. But sometimes, Members' views could be 180 degrees different and opposition could be significant. If such situation happens, what will you do? Please elaborate on it by using one of the WTO's ongoing negotiations or topics as an example. (China)

A: I am bringing to the table the experience of both the Geneva-based Ambassador view that has been engaged in various conversations, consultations and negotiations of various degrees, and the political and Ministerial background which will allow me to better and more efficiently engage on the political discussions with the capitals of those Members that have expressed various views and to assist to the process of finding solutions. The Director-General cannot impose, and the mandate does not allow that. What the Director-General can do is to listen and to offer the services to those Members that are expressing opposing views and to assist them to find solutions based on the existing rulebook and/or identify proposals on how to promote certain processes. For example, an issue that is important for Members today is the one concerning dispute settlement. The DSU is of cornerstone importance. No one is arguing about the importance of the system. The application and implementation are extremely important. The role of the Director-General would be to stir the process – not to impose but to listen to understand better and hopefully try to find common solutions and also use political discussions having access to decision-makers from those particular Members and/or other Members to try to identify, when necessary, political pushes, movements or solutions to some of the technical issues. The political discussions would not replace technical ones but would be done to help stir the process in the right direction. The Director-General should be there for all Members to listen and to try to stir the process. But at the end of the day, it is the responsibility of the Members to try to make the effort to understand the opinion of other Members and to decide whether we are going to move forward. If yes, then "how" or at least to agree on "how to agree". The WTO has many mechanisms, procedures and systems in place that could or have not been used for a while. So, I do not think that the Director-General would need to come and impose a solution, but the DG could and should rather listen, engage, raise the political discussions and prepare and hope for the best.

Q: The WTO now has 164 Members. Multilateralism is of utmost importance but sometimes we are taking a plurilateral approach in this organization as well. If you are elected as Director-General, how would you balance multilateralism and pragmatism in plurilateral processes happening in this House? (Japan)

A: Any negotiation process in this House should be seen as a positive ab initio element because at the end of the day, discussions many times are not starting immediately at the multilateral level, but they are starting from the Members that are concerned on certain issues and certain topics of trade and/or economic development. From that point of view, I believe that, with the right approach towards plurilaterals, the end result should be multilateral to benefit all Members. That should be the signal that the Director-General should also convey to those Members engaged in PTAs and/or plurilateral discussions, while also making sure that the transparency principle is kept and the monitoring role is there to make sure that there are no arrangements that are disrupting the level playing field and that other Members are not negatively affected by that. On the contrary, with the right approach, a good initiative at the plurilateral level can also further engage and further convince other Members to listen more and to eventually engage in further conversations. I, on the one hand,

understand the importance, and that the end result should be multilateral, but it can pass certain processes or phases until it gets there. I would like to reiterate my firm belief that the negotiating function and the Members being brought back to the negotiating table is extremely important on the multilateral level.

Q: In an increasingly challenged multilateral world and facing other major crisis, for example global health crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic, how do you see the role of the WTO vis-à-vis other international organizations going forward, specifically UN organizations with a trade or economic policy mandate? (Canada)

A: This is a topic that is particularly close to my background as well. During my time in Geneva, I have also served as the President of the Trade and Development Board of UNCTAD, the Chair of the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards of UNECE and other organizations, working closely with other agencies in the UN system. The interagency dialogue and complementarity are of high importance to ensure that all agencies are helping populations and Members to be able to reduce the negative impact of COVID-19, especially on PPEs and food supply. The role of the WTO is of particular importance here from the two-dimensional perspective. The Director-General's role bears that in mind. The WTO should also engage in discussions with financial institutions such as the World Bank, the IMF, the Financial Stability Board and other banking regulators, with a view to address the capital needs for the LDCs and for those particularly affected by COVID-19, and to reduce the red tape in processing that phase. That being said, I also believe in close cooperation with the WHO, ITC and UNCTAD – particularly because UNCTAD is a Conference that provides lots of reports which can also be a source of information when necessary and when Members agree to further engage in examining the information available. COVID-19 is still there. The WTO needs to enhance the role of trade to make sure that there are no barriers to trade and no disturbances in global value chains, especially for those who are particularly affected such as the LDCs, African Countries, SVEs, CARICOM and LLDCs that have certain special impact due to their special situation and their vulnerability. Addressing on a case-by-case basis or on a particular group's concerns and challenges posed by their specific vulnerability, would be also the task of the Director-General to understand and also to try to come up with certain solutions on how to address that. I believe that there are plenty of agencies in Geneva that are already working on that. And I truly believe that the WTO can contribute to that work together.

Q: Regarding the moratorium on e-commerce, we had a discussion a couple of days ago where different opinions were expressed on the moratorium. How do you see the next steps regarding the extension of the e-commerce moratorium? What do you believe would be the conditions for extending it further or making it permanent? (Switzerland)

A: I have taken the time to further examine the topic of e-commerce and the ongoing discussions, including the particular one that you have asked with regard to the application of the moratorium. A decision needs to be taken by Members at the end of the day. I am fully aware of some Members proposing for the extension, while others are discussing that it should be prolonged until MC12. That is the latitude or the extent on further extending or not the moratorium. That would be the decision that all Members need to take. At the same time, MC12 provides for a good opportunity to put that into question and to have a further discussion and eventually try to bring the position close to each other. At this point, I am aware of the difference in views from various reasons by various Members and groups. This is one of the topics dealing with the larger matter of e-commerce. The decision on how to proceed and under what conditions to proceed will depend on Members. The Director-General's role would be to listen and to try to stir the conversation in the right direction.

Q: The multilateral trading system is based on rules, as several delegations have already said, and it is in a crisis with the paralysis of the Appellate Body, the special and differentiate treatment and the Doha Round. How do you plan to make negotiations more dynamic and respond to the challenges of a globalized world with the aim of coming back to a multilateral trading system based strictly on rules? (Gabon)

A: Since you have touched upon the existing negotiations on topics that are related to the DDA, a special approach needs to be taken with regard to the issues that are being discussed on that dimension. In particular, I am aware of the ongoing discussions and consultations between Members on agriculture in the CoA SS. The Director-General would need to listen and to understand better the positions of Members, particularly on issues connected to market access, PSH for food security purposes, SSM, cotton and on fisheries. The negotiations on fisheries is one of the positive ones

which show the way of moving forward helping achieve SDG 14.6 and demonstrating Members are slowly and gradually converging their positions on issues of common interest and of common concern. The issues-based approach is a pragmatic approach. It is a de facto approach that will allow for the discussions to be stirred in the right way. These all are very complicated issues. If they were easy, they would have already been solved. It is not the Director-General who would decide on them. It is the Members who will decide on them together. But the Director-General should make the effort to understand the views the positions expressed on these complicated topics – on the one hand by understanding and on the other by being an honest broker, representing the system, being mindful of what is best for the system and being able to discuss with everyone across the table. I have also addressed the issue of trust and these discussions have been here for quite a while in this House. More trust and confidence-building would be necessary. This should be necessary on the part of the Director-General to try to address these concerns that some Members believe that have not been addressed. Focusing on issues and not on labels might be one of the ways of looking or changing the optics for the same issues, not that the issues will be removed from the table, but having a more open-minded approach might lead to a solution. It might not lead to a solution, but at least effort must be made to address the concerns of those Members that are raising these concerns.

Q: What are your plans to facilitate the resolution of long outstanding issues in the WTO under the Doha Development Agenda? (South Africa)

A: I would like to reiterate what has been said so far. The issues-based approach towards the DDA and the matters of concern from the Members on those particular topics, would definitely need to be on the radar of the next Director-General. Having in mind the fact that the concerns have not been addressed yet, there has been a long track record of consultations and negotiations including differences in approaches and opinions. A case-by-case, issue-by-issue approach is one of the practical means and mechanisms that would provide for the right optics to address these matters. The role of the Director-General would be to try to encourage Members to seek a further adaptation of the way they look at things – not at the actual core, but the optics, and try to merge and facilitate the dialogue so there is an outcome. At the end of the day, this is a Member-driven, consensus-based organization. If an outcome is wished or wanted, efforts must be made to resolve these issues. The Director-General should be aware of all Members' positions on certain issues – but trying to have a more granular approach to the matters rather than focusing on labels. Focusing on principles, on issues and on a case-by-case approach could lead to a certain progress. Discussions should continue on that topic. The DDA, including agriculture and all of the other areas with unfinished business, should continue and the Director-General would need to further continue the dialogue with the entire Membership on those topics.

Q: SDG 14.6, as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which is agreed by all UN Member States, targets by 2020 the prohibition of certain forms of fisheries subsidies which contribute to overcapacity and overfishing and the elimination of subsidies that contribute to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. Where do you draw the line between S&DT and sustainable development for fisheries species? (Namibia)

A: I fully agree with you that the implementation and realization of the 2020 deadline for implementing SDG 14.6 is a priority that is seen by all Members. As I have mentioned, I am encouraged by the ongoing negotiations on fisheries subsidies and particularly the ones that are addressing the issues of IUUs and I believe there is an incoming discussion in this House on 21 July to further take a step forward and try to come up with a text that will reflect some progress on this important matter. If Members are to show the relevance of the WTO, one of the targets for the next Ministerial Conference in Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan would be to have a negotiated text to show some progress on the fisheries subsidies matter. I fully understand your question regarding the consideration or the optics from the S&DT perspective and having in mind the fact that for certain Members, for LDCs, SVEs and others, this topic is also important from the developmental point of view, from the economic growth point of view. A balanced approach needs to be taken if we are to progress, and a case-by-case approach based on a particular impact from the developmental point of view and also from the environmental point of view to make sure that the commitment or obligation assumed is also reflected by the situation of that particular Member. That being said, I believe there is a common understanding, particularly on IUUs as part of the larger problem. The application as well of a potentially agreed text will also be a question that would need to be discussed by the entire Membership. In my opinion, we do not need to lose this opportunity to score some progress and some result on fisheries subsidies. That does not mean that the topic will be resolved

next year or by 2020, but a common text will also be a common success. And that would also bring more trust and more confidence-building that we can gradually, carefully, inclusively and transparently move forward on this topic.

Q: The world we live in is quite different from the one in the 90s when this organization was created. In your view, which would be the main features of the reform process of this organization in order to reshape to be encompassed with the world we are living in now – a world that is also different in terms of ideas regarding trade and regarding economy than the one we used to live before? (Uruguay)

A: This is also a question about the WTO's role and relevance in the world today. There is the bigger question: "Is this today a Hamiltonian moment for the organization?" The current age of the WTO allows already for a mature analysis of the change that has been registered globally on the economic and trade dimension for the entire system. The WTO needs to reflect the ongoing 21st century achievements in various dimensions – talking particularly about e-commerce that has been seen clearly in the COVID-19 pandemic response and the need to have a more interconnected digital trade that benefits all. That is one of the natural reactions of the WTO and of the Members with reference to the fact that, even if it is a rules-based organization, it is a consensus based organization. But it has to deliver and it has shown that the ongoing, upcoming and future dynamics and topics are addressed in this House. So, from this point of view, I see as a positive signal the fact and the number of the joint initiatives that are also reflecting either an unfinished part or the changes of the dynamics and the way we do business today. This is important. I mentioned e-commerce, fisheries, investment facilitation for development and TFA implementation – the latter being important to make sure that the barriers are gradually removed and there is a level playing field. From that point of view, I would also like to draw the attention on, and to raise, the challenges faced by MSMEs. Globally, 94% or 95% of companies are MSMEs. There has been one recent report showing that, because of COVID-19, one every four MSME faces the risk of being closed. That is particularly important for LDCs and SVEs and some of the developing Members whose economy is based on the role of MSMEs. Further targeted assistance to MSMEs, capacity building, trade helpdesks and working with other organizations, among others, show that the WTO and its Members understand the importance of being relevant and to reflect in its work the current issues that are different from those of 25 years ago. That does not mean that some of the issues that have not been resolved should be taken out. They should be part of the process. But it is a very complex process. To continue, we will need to have a holistic approach and also, if we can score on some of the topics. The WTO has been blessed or doomed to get what it can get, when it can get it. The role of the Director-General is to identify the right time. Sometimes, the stars might be aligned but it will be the role of the Director-General to identify the right time to see if all the small threads are put together and then to put together Members and to have a decision that is acceptable by all, or, if not, by some with a view to a multilateral outcome.

Q: How could sustainability issues, in particular regarding the environment and climate change, be better integrated into the work of the WTO? (Finland)

A: As I have mentioned in some of the short and medium term priorities for the next Director-General should also be the task of addressing the trade and environment nexus trying to make sure that trade can contribute, but also mitigate the result of negative impacts of climate change on certain economies, based, of course, on a clear, assessed impact on particular Members. The negotiations that Members are having today on fisheries subsidies are also addressing the environmental question here. That is also a reaction that the WTO provides to that. At the same time, the topic of circular economy and plastic pollution is a topic that is extremely important for the Members and particularly for those who are exposed mostly to this particular challenges. We also have Members that are particularly exposed and vulnerable to natural disasters caused by the environment. That is an element of their particular vulnerability, which should be addressed. From that point of view, on the one hand, Members, capitals and governments have assumed their commitments toward taking clear action to mitigate the negative impact of climate change; on the other, the WTO is also an organization that can help and facilitate Members to react better, but also to be better prepared, such as through capacity building, and also deal with these probable solutions related to the circular economy, plastic waste and fisheries subsidies.

Q: What are your views on the post-pandemic opportunities for the WTO in terms of modernization of its meeting formats and keeping in touch with capitals and participating in the modernization through the fourth industrial revolution and the use of modern technology? (Philippines)

A: Any modernization effort should not include the changing of Ambassadors with AIs. The COVID-19 pandemic has really been a wake-up call for the need of digital transformation. That has been assessed and clearly reflected in the vast majority of feedbacks from Members. The WTO Secretariat and the organization has also taken that into consideration by designing, establishing and using the platform that we are also using today. From the negotiating point of view and from my experience as Ambassador and Minister, of course, the best way is to have an interpersonal contact to be able to assess the person's depth of understanding of the issues and try to get a consensual approach with a view to identify common issues of interest and trying to align the positions. Modernization is something that none of the organizations today can avoid. A better adaptation and raising awareness – I believe all of us are already aware – of the need to be prepared to face any future pandemic or risks related to climate change is important. We have to have the systems in place to be prepared. I have also discussed with many of you and understand that when COVID-19 appeared, not many Members were prepared for that. The WTO also needs to continue its processes to be able to adequately react to various pandemics and to modernize its format. With reference in particular to the efficiency of the Committee meetings and organization of various discussion formats including timing and administrative concerns, I have also been part of this conversation when I was in this House and I am familiar with the concerns expressed by the Members. Certain progress on that can be achieved, but also this progress or adaptation to modernization should not diminish the time needed for consultations and negotiations for Members to meet and hopefully to get consensual decisions. And it is the Director-General's role to do that.

3. Summing up by the Candidate³

I appreciate the opportunity to have had this interaction. The most important thing is to listen to the questions that you have posed and these questions reflect the concerns that you have. In my opinion, the role of the Director-General includes several steps – the first one being to listen to the concerns and to the questions posed. Many times, in the question that is being posed, there is a certain position or a certain concern behind. The role of the Director-General is to be able to carefully listen and to better understand the issues and the concerns expressed by the Members with a view to engage in an open, transparent and inclusive dialogue with all Members concerned, so that everybody feels onboard. Addressing the issue of trust in the organization is also an example that the Director-General can convey and the signal of inclusiveness and openness while maintaining a pragmatic approach with a results-oriented vision is extremely important. The role of the Director-General is not to impose a decision, but is to understand all of the possible potential pieces of the puzzle and try to help Members to reach decisions.

I believe I bring to the table a deep understanding of your concerns on the issues that are being discussed, on various proposals that are being circulated around. I also bring to the table the ministerial and political experience which in my opinion is inherent to the success of what you are doing here. I am not discussing only about the Ministerial Conferences or the mini Ministerials or others. This also means an ongoing job that the Director-General has to engage in Geneva and across the globe, being able to discuss with political leaders, to convey concerns and to try to facilitate dialogue and get things done, because at the end of the day, there is an expectation that the WTO needs to deliver. The Director-General also is a Member of the team that also has the interest to help everyone to deliver and to get things done. How many things should be done? The extend of the decisions and whether they will be done today, tomorrow or next year is a decision that needs to be taken by Members based on consensus and respecting the Member-driven process of the organization. This is something that I would like you to leave with you as a message. To conclude, I would like to express my gratitude for the work that you are doing in Geneva and also to express the support that the next Director-General would need to provide to the Members, to the Secretariat and to the dialogue with political leaders.

³ Under the modalities for the conduct of the meeting communicated by the Chair to all delegations on 1 and 10 July, each candidate had the opportunity to make a concluding statement during the last five minutes of the question-and-answer period if she or he so wished.

ANNEX 5

Meeting with H.E. Yoo Myung-hee (Republic of Korea)

1. Presentation by the Candidate¹

I. Introduction

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and all distinguished delegates for the invitation. It is an honour to participate as a candidate in this selection process, and to share with you my vision for the WTO.

Call it a coincidence, but I was born in 1967, the year Korea acceded to the GATT, and I started my career in trade when the WTO was born in 1995. Over my lifetime, I personally witnessed Korea achieve remarkable growth, from a relatively impoverished country recovering from the ruins of war to one of the largest trading nations.

But I do not say this as a boast. Quite the contrary. My career in trade has convinced me it was the open trading system as represented by the WTO that gave Korea the opportunity to follow this development path.

Korea as a country, and I as an individual owe a debt of gratitude to the GATT and the WTO for providing the tools and economic environment necessary for our development. It is my firm commitment that all Members should have such opportunities regardless of their levels of development.

My 25 year career in international trade has taught me that solid groundwork is the basis of an agreement, and political will is what closes the deal. I have dealt with both the technical details of agreements, as well as engaged in finalizing major trade agreements as Trade Minister. I believe my extensive experience and expertise will enable me to offer insights and creative solutions to restore and revitalize the WTO.

When I came to Geneva in the early days of the WTO, there was optimism and excitement around the building. Despite many challenges, I am confident that the WTO will regain the hope and optimism. It would be a privilege and great task of my life to have the opportunity to serve as Director-General, and to work with Members to ensure the continued viability, and vitality, of the multilateral trading system.

II. Challenges Facing the WTO

In voicing my confidence and optimism, I do not mean to downplay the challenges the WTO faces. Indeed, the WTO is at a crossroads, with the broader trade environment undergoing fundamental shifts and many questioning the relevance of the multilateral trading system.

We are now witnessing the threat of growing protectionism, and heightened trade tensions. Technological advances are transforming the way we produce, deliver, and consume goods and services in ways never imagined when the WTO was created. The global crisis induced by the pandemic is challenging the WTO's purpose of ensuring the smooth flow of goods and services.

The WTO, which was intended to provide predictability and stability in these times of turbulence, is now facing a trust deficit with all three pillars under stress.

Despite much good will and hard work, the record of negotiations in the WTO leaves much room to be desired. There has been progress, such as the adoption of the Bali and the Nairobi packages including the Trade Facilitation Agreement, but we need to do much more to meet the challenges and realities of the 21st century. The stagnant negotiations have had negative consequences for all of the WTO's functions, and, to some extent, contributed to the current problems facing the dispute settlement system.

¹ The presentation is also circulated in document JOB/GC/237.

III. My Vision for the WTO

Nonetheless, I am optimistic that the WTO can rise to meet these challenges. The pandemic has brought renewed commitment by Members to build a more robust international order. I believe the new Director-General should be pro-active, bringing energy and creativity to this effort.

My goal is to make the WTO more **relevant, resilient, and responsive**.

The WTO needs to keep evolving to become more **relevant** to changing economic circumstance and realities. The WTO needs to enhance sustainability and inclusiveness to remain **resilient** as a champion of open trade for the next 25 years and beyond. And the WTO needs to be more **responsive** to global challenges and contingencies for the benefit of all of its Members.

IV. Tasks Ahead

These general ambitions will have to be translated into concrete actions to have real impact. Let me address just a few that I see as top priorities: MC12, WTO reform, and sustainable development.

First, the 12th Ministerial Conference.

MC12 will be a critical milestone of Members' ability to deliver results and set the agenda for the future. The new Director-General must help make it a success in order to build trust in the WTO.

A successful outcome on fisheries subsidies will demonstrate the credibility of the WTO and its ability to contribute to global objectives on sustainable development. It will also provide the world with the benefits for trade and environmental sustainability. I will do everything I can to support these negotiations and bring them swiftly to a successful conclusion, for endorsement by Ministers at MC12.

Electronic commerce is also an area in which we should work towards tangible outcomes. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of this issue. A comprehensive agreement by next summer may be ambitious, but I think we can take some concrete steps and lay out the path forward for post-MC12 work.

We also need to see real progress on development issues. This should always be an important part of every Ministerial Conference, but I think it is even more important in MC12 due to the impact of the pandemic on world trade, growth, and global value chains. The Organization should seek to take real steps that can help Members, especially the most vulnerable, deal with this on-going health and economic emergency.

Second priority task, WTO Reform.

I am well aware of the proposals that Members have put forward on WTO reform. I also know how sensitive these issues can be to individual Members. A high degree of trust among Members must be the starting point in exploring cooperative solutions.

All three pillars of the WTO need to work hand in hand to maintain a healthy and well-functioning multilateral trading system.

First, we need to update the rule-books and deliver agreements with real economic impact. Progress at MC12 will show that the WTO can address the real world problems societies and businesses face. I believe any agenda items that reflect the founding principles of trade liberalization and development in a balanced manner can be put on the table for discussion.

Another urgent, pressing issue is restoring the dispute settlement system. We need a stable and fully functioning dispute settlement system which would effectively contribute to the prompt and satisfactory resolution of the disputes. I will act as an honest broker to facilitate constructive discussions to find an effective and permanent solution.

Implementation of agreements and increased transparency are also important elements of reform. The TBT and the SPS committees show how much we can achieve by meeting high standards of transparency to avoid unnecessary trade disputes from arising. Of course, specific means to achieve

such objectives should take into consideration the capacity and needs of Members, commensurate with their level of development.

Third, inclusive Trade and Sustainable Development.

WTO reform should not be a goal in and of itself, but an instrument to promote economic prosperity and better living standards for all of its Members. To this end, the WTO should pursue inclusive trade initiatives encompassing overall development issues, as well as specific, cross-cutting issues such as MSMEs, women's economic empowerment, and environment.

Among others, we should deepen our efforts to help developing countries, especially LDCs, secure a larger share in the growth in international trade. We should fully implement what has been agreed for LDCs and strengthen our technical assistance and capacity building programs. Further, while maintaining a central role for the WTO in seeking these important values, I will support cooperation with other international organizations in a proactive and forthcoming manner. This will help broaden the available resources and multilateral commitment to achieving Members' goals.

V. How I See the Role of the Director-General

The Director-General should bring optimism and also vision based on realism to the job. More importantly, the Director-General must enjoy the confidence of Members to rebuild trust in the Organization. To do so, the Director-General has to be an effective, trusted, and informed facilitator and a person who knows how and when to act to help achieve consensus and agreement.

Of course, all this will require a close and harmonious working relationship with you, Ambassadors, as well as your Trade Ministers back home. The WTO is, and will remain, a Member-driven Organization. We can only achieve our goals if we work together. My door will always be open. My phone will always be answered. I will be available whenever I am needed.

The WTO has an excellent Secretariat, and I will lead in a supportive and positive manner to keep attracting talented and ambitious professionals from around the world. I will actively support cross-cutting projects and transparency to support new initiatives, but at the same time to help breathe life into longstanding work programs. I will come to work every day enthused and energized and I will seek a Secretariat that does so as well.

I would like to close by recalling where I began this talk. I owe a great deal to the multilateral trading system represented by the WTO. To be given the opportunity to serve as Director-General of the WTO would be a tremendous honor and privilege. Should I be chosen to become the next Director-General I will give the job everything I have, all my time, my energy, and my hopes to make the WTO more relevant, resilient, and responsive. Thank you very much.

2. Questions and Answers²

Q: What is your opinion on the current situation we are undergoing economically around the world, especially in relation to trade? Do you have any proposal on how to overcome the current crisis? (Guatemala)

A: This is a very important question that all governments around the world are currently dealing with. For the last thirty years, trade volume has increased more than the world economic growth rate. However, now we are seeing that trade volume has not been increasing as much as in the past and its growth rate is lower than the world economic growth rate. On top of that, we have the COVID-19 situation. The economic and health crisis caused by the pandemic has added further fuel to this situation. As the WTO recently reported, we will see a decrease by 18.5% in trade volume in the first half of this year. This year, we will see less trade volume and the world will get less prosperous and less open. Having said that, what can we do? The first thing that we can start with

² The following delegations also submitted their names to ask a question to the candidate: Afghanistan, Australia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, European Union, Finland, France, The Gambia, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mauritius, Mongolia, Namibia, Nepal, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Philippines, Romania, Russian Federation, Singapore, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine, Uruguay and Viet Nam.

is dealing with this economic crisis caused by COVID-19 in close cooperation with Members. I understand that the WTO has compiled various information on trade restrictive measures and also even some improvements in trade barriers. We can closely monitor those measures so that Members will not increase protectionist measures or trade restrictive ones. Whenever things get better, Members can actually withdraw those trade-restrictive measures. In addition to that, the WTO should work hard to ensure the flow of essential goods and services in times of crisis, so that we can free the flow of goods and services as much as possible even during this crisis. What is more important is that the WTO has to start working on the WTO reform in the three pillars by first updating the rulebook of the WTO, because the multilateral trading system has not produced any major trade agreements for the last 25 years except for the Agreement on Trade Facilitation and it is not reflecting the current realities anymore. If the WTO can reflect all the realities that take place in the world, it will also help businesses recover from the crisis and actually take advantage of this crisis and make the most of the opportunities offered by the situation. Second, the dispute settlement function is also of utmost importance. Even if we agree on new rules, if there is no effectively functioning dispute settlement system, it is hard to resolve disputes among Members. That is the key part to provide stability and security to the multilateral trading system. Third, as I mentioned before, enhanced transparency will help Members know about all the measures adopted as of now, and they can also discuss how to further improve them. As a short-term measure, we can explore ways to ensure the free flow of goods and services and we can monitor all the measures so that there will be improvements as the situation gets better. As a more fundamental matter and issue, we need to take on the WTO reform in earnest and have to achieve some tangible outcomes from the effort.

Q: You mentioned sustainable development and sustainable trade as your priorities. That is quite interesting indeed. Given concerns of the population when it comes to combating climate change, how do you plan to include measures to respect sustainable trade in an agenda focused on free trade and trade liberalization? (Belgium)

A: Environmental preservation and sustainable development are two of the important objectives included in the Marrakesh Agreement's Preamble. Having said that, how do we actually achieve these goals? Our short-term and most urgent priority should be to conclude the fisheries subsidies negotiations. It is mandated by the UN SDG and it has significance in two ways: first, it can show to the world that the WTO is actually relevant and can reinvent itself to be relevant; and, second, it can also contribute to sustainable development. But we should not stop there. I understand that there are several ideas going on at the CTE. Several years ago, we also had negotiations related to trade and environment. We could perhaps look into those past negotiations to see whether we can find some issues that we can further improve or make progress on. At the CTE, there were various ideas proposed there. I understand that the plastic pollution issue and circular economy were discussed there. So, we can build on those discussions to address our environmental issues. As we have learned from our experience during this pandemic, environmental protection is also very important. We should therefore pursue both trade liberalization and sustainable development in a more balanced way. If I have the honour to serve as the Director-General, I will work hard with Members to facilitate those discussions. Of course, it should be up to the Members to decide whether they would want to have certain agreements or joint initiatives based on the discussions – and I would help facilitate them.

Q: Recently, the European Union, China and other Members entered into an arrangement under Article 25 of the WTO's Understanding on Rules and Procedures Governing the Settling of Disputes (DSU). In our view, the arrangement seeks to recreate the Appellate Body and the Secretariat support structure. In doing so, the arrangement makes several requests to the Director-General for WTO institutional support. For example, it specifically requests that the Director-General appoint staff to support the arbitration pool that is separate from the WTO Secretariat staff and its divisions supporting panels. What do you feel is the appropriate role of a Director-General as Members request WTO resources for activities that go beyond what is contemplated in the DSU and under other WTO rules? (United States)

A: I am well aware that there are very divergent views on the nature and role of the Appellate Body, as well as the focus and priority of the dispute settlement function. Having said that, considering the reality that the dispute settlement system is on the verge of paralysis because the Appellate Body has ceased to function for the last seven months, the arrangement of the EU and other Members hold some significance as an interim measure to overcome the vacuum, given the

Appellate Body impasse. We need to focus on finding a permanent and effective resolution to this issue. In that regard, we have to start discussions in various configurations on the various proposals, such as those taken up in the Walker Process, as well as the "why" question posed by a Member. With regard to the resources, if I become Director-General, I would consult with relevant Members on that issue. I would make sure that resources are efficiently allocated and not diverted from our focus on finding a permanent and effective resolution.

Q: As someone who has negotiated several bilateral trade agreements for your country, how will you convince the WTO Membership that the multilateral trading system is still the best way forward over bilateral and plurilateral trading arrangements? (India)

A: That is also a very important question that I have also dealt with as a Trade Minister and as a Chief Negotiator in various bilateral trade negotiations. I would like to start by stating the obvious: that Korea has benefited from the multilateral trading system and we pursue multilateral trade liberalization very actively. We are participating in all WTO Committees and in their meetings very actively. Having said that, those bilateral FTA negotiations are a response to the stalled multilateral negotiations in the WTO. This organization has not produced any major trade agreements for the last twenty-five years. Due to the stalled negotiations, it seems that Members started to pursue trade liberalization in alternative, more flexible ways, such as through RTAs. I do not take the criticism against bilateral trade agreements lightly because these bilateral agreements are not a substitute for multilateral trade agreements. We first need to focus our efforts on pursuing multilateral trade agreements, but given the realities of the prevalent bilateral trade agreements, we have to make sure that those bilateral trade agreements are consistent with the WTO rules, including GATT Article XXIV so that they can actually act as a stepping-stone or building block for the multilateral trading system. The FTAs that I have concluded are all consistent with the WTO rules and try to liberalize the markets bilaterally or plurilaterally, and not raise any trade barriers to others. But still, the CRTA needs to work more diligently and actively to monitor and to review all those bilateral agreements. Another important way to increase our efforts and our focus on multilateral trade negotiations is to revitalize the negotiating function at the WTO. The starting point could be fisheries subsidies because that is the only ongoing multilateral negotiation at the WTO. If we can achieve tangible outcomes and can show to the world that the WTO can actually achieve multilateral trade agreements, that will give more incentives for Members to look at the WTO as a forum to pursue trade liberalization.

Q: Would you agree that there is a gap in the WTO rulebook with regard to level playing field issues such as subsidies, economic action by the State and competition? What, in your view, would be necessary to level the playing field in the trade relations between WTO Members? (Germany)

A: One of the founding principles of the WTO is to provide a level playing field through fair competition and address any market distortions. Having said that, whether certain measures or issues actually need to be fixed under the principle, should still be discussed and agreed upon by the Members. If Members agree on the need to address certain issues under the founding principles of the WTO, I would make sure that those discussions would be conducted in a very transparent and inclusive manner. The rules were agreed upon in 1995 and some even before that time. In general, we need to update the rulebook to reflect the economic realities in the 21st century, but in terms of the specific issues and measures, we need to look into the particular measures and whether there is a gap at the WTO. Without further description on the particular measures, whenever there is any need to update the rules and if such could be one way to promote the founding principles of the WTO Agreement, Members should be open to those discussions. And whenever Members agree to discuss those issues, I would make sure that those discussions would be conducted in an inclusive and transparent manner.

Q: In your presentation, you referred to the issue of e-commerce and the importance of having an outcome in this area for the next Ministerial Conference. Do you have a strategy to try to manage to push towards a multilateral solution to the issues which are being tackled in the Joint Statement Initiatives that would be of great interest to a large number of Members? (El Salvador)

A: I understand that there are four ongoing Joint Statement Initiatives and one of them is on e-commerce. Concerning plurilateral versus multilateral agreements, the best and most ideal way of pursuing trade liberalization and discussing trade rules is in multilateral format. Having said that,

since we have not succeeded in agreeing on major multilateral trade agreements for quite a long time, Members started to explore flexible approaches such as Joint Statement Initiatives and plurilateral agreements. To be conducive to multilateral trade agreements, those plurilaterals and Joint Statement Initiatives should meet two criteria: first, open membership; and second, MFN application of the benefits. Open membership is easy. Of course, it should be open to any Member who wants to join and who is ready and capable of joining the agreements at a later stage. Regarding MFN application, I am aware that there are some discussions on reciprocity versus MFN application. There is an example of a closed PTA which is the GPA. I still believe that the best and most conducive way for the multilateral trading system is to pursue the application of benefits on an MFN basis. The participants should be able to provide such benefits to non-participants on an MFN basis. I would also like to add another point on plurilateral initiatives. For example, on e-commerce, I understand that even LDCs are participating in the JSI on E-commerce. Given COVID-19, perhaps Members will now see the importance of the digital economy more than ever. In that case, if the plurilateral initiative such as e-commerce can provide capacity building opportunities and technical assistance to developing and LDC Members or to any acceding Members, that will facilitate more Members joining the plurilateral initiatives and will be more conducive to developing multilateral trade agreements.

Q: The WTO will be more important for the development of the international economy and will face more challenges as well in the upcoming future. How do you see the priority tasks of the Secretariat and how do you see these tasks being carried out? (Chinese Taipei)

A: During my presentation, I shared with you my vision of making the WTO more relevant, resilient and responsive and to translate that vision into specific achievements and outcomes. I already outlined three priority tasks: first, tangible outcomes at MC12; second, WTO Reform; and, third, sustainable and inclusive development. The reason why I am of the view that MC12 is the first priority task for the WTO is that it is the watershed moment for the WTO to show to the world that the organization can reinvent and reinvigorate itself to be relevant and to actually come up with some multilateral trade agreements that really contribute to sustainable development and economies. That is why I named "tangible outcomes at MC12" as my first priority task and the first priority task of the Secretariat. Success breeds success. If we can achieve even a modest success at MC12, that would actually build and generate political will and momentum to tackle further, and in a more structural manner, difficult issues down the road. That is why I think MC12 is a watershed and a defining moment for WTO Members. The second priority task will be the WTO reform. As I mentioned before, all the three pillars are under stress. If one of the pillars is not working, it will actually put pressure and strain on the other two pillars. Those three pillars need to walk hand in hand and reinforce each other. In that regard, we have to revitalize the negotiating function and restore the dispute settlement system and also enhance transparency and notifications. The third priority task that I set is sustainable and inclusive development. During all these processes, we all know that WTO Members should be aware of the needs and concerns of developing country Members, especially the LDCs. Even if new market opportunities are provided by the newly agreed multilateral trade agreements, not all Members have the same level of capabilities and capacity to utilize and make the most of the opportunities. In that regard, it is of utmost importance to provide needed assistance to developing country Members and LDCs to fully integrate into the multilateral trading system. Those three are my top priorities if I have the honour to serve as the next Director-General, and those would and should be the priorities for the Secretariat as well.

Q: Many Members from this institution feel that they are marginalized and not able to reap the desired benefits of the WTO system and that the WTO is somewhat lagging behind in pursuing the development dimension in the multilateral trading system. How do you weave this narrative? If you agree, what is your vision and way forward for changing this narrative during your tenure? (Sri Lanka)

A: I am well aware of the concerns of developing countries, especially the LDCs that sometimes are not able to realize the benefits that were promised or offered by the WTO. Having said that, I understand that there are several ideas going on in various Committees in the Secretariat. From the Secretariat's point of view, what is most important is to realize the Secretariat's resources with top priorities for those developing and LDC Members. If I become the next Director-General, especially after COVID-19, it is more important to focus on capacity building and technical assistance for overcoming the digital divide, as well as helping developing countries integrate into the multilateral trading system, especially during the disruption of global supply chains around the world after COVID-19. So, there is the technical assistance and capacity building part, but I also understand

that some Members still have concerns about the negotiations, whether we should provide more market opportunities for developing and LDC Members or should give more flexibilities to them. In that regard, I will work closely with Members to address those issues. I understand that there are some initiatives that are provided to LDC Members, but I will make sure that those initiatives and packages agreed at Bali and Nairobi are actually implemented faithfully and hope that we can achieve some tangible outcomes for the upcoming MC12 for developing and LDC Members. Market access and flexibilities to be provided for developing and LDC Members need to be further discussed and agreed upon by Members. What I could assure you is that, as I mentioned before, I have personally witnessed Korea's grow from a reservoir and become one of the largest trading nations through the market opportunities provided by the WTO. I am also well aware that the world has significantly changed and it is harder to join the global supply chains given the slow rate of economic growth and of trade growth. That being the case, it is better to focus on the particular needs and opportunities that can be utilised by particular developing and LDC Members with a more tailored and targeted approach. I will make sure that the Secretariat together with Members could work to help developing and LDC Members integrate into the multilateral trading system.

Q: How do you see the role of the Director-General when it comes to fighting and tackling protectionist measures, as well as the resort to unilateral measures? (Spain)

A: In my view, the Director-General in this Member-driven organization serves as a facilitator. A facilitator can play a lot of roles. So, I will serve as an effective, informed and trusted facilitator and I will make utmost efforts to own the trust and confidence from Members by working closely with them. Having said that, the question was about protectionism and unilateralism. This needs to be discussed at each Committee or Working Group by Members. The WTO Agreements provide a lot of rules to tackle these issues. Each Committee needs to work diligently to address these issues and find a way to fix this situation. If we look at the reasons behind protectionism and unilateralism, if those measures stem from some frustration about the stalled negotiations at the WTO, we need to make sure to revitalize the WTO's negotiating function. In some sense, because of this stalled negotiating function, Members take different approaches. One of the examples is multilateral versus plurilateral approach. Another issue was raised by India regarding bilateral FTAs and RTAs. Perhaps the least ideal or desirable way would be unilateralism. If we can revitalize the functioning of the WTO and if the WTO multilateral trading system can provide rules to address all those issues at the Committee and at the Working Groups, we can fix and discuss those issues among ourselves. I will help, as an informed, trusted and effective facilitator leveraging my expertise and experience in concluding deals with many diverse Members around the world, to revitalize the negotiating function and to deal with those issues at each WTO Council and Committee.

Q: The COVID-19 crisis has put the spotlight on the role of public stockholding programmes and export restrictions for food security purposes. In your view, how can a balance be established between public stockholding and food security on the one hand and the avoidance of unnecessary trade restrictions on the other? (Qatar)

A: I would still look at the WTO Agreements as they provide certain room for legitimate governmental policy objectives. During this pandemic, not only on food products but also on some medical supplies, a lot of countries started to impose certain measures. But if those measures are temporary, transparent and proportionate and if they are for public health and safety, those are allowed under the WTO Agreements. Members need to work hard to use these measures within the parameters provided by the WTO Agreements. Having said that, food security in relation to public stockholding programmes is also an ongoing issue at the WTO. I hope that we could achieve some tangible outcomes on this and other agriculture-related issues before MC12, so that we can make further progress in this important matter.

Q: Concerning the role of the Director-General and of the Chair of the TNC, to which extent would you rely on Members driving the organization and to which extent would you propose solutions which you create yourself? (Lithuania)

A: I understand that the Director-General also serves as the Chair of the TNC. In this regard, I would closely work with the Chair of the General Council to make progress on the negotiations. How much active should I be in this role? As a facilitator, I can propose very creative ideas and solutions, but, still, it is a Member-driven organization. In a very informal setting, if I could detect certain common concerns and interests and could find a way to actually resolve those interests and concerns behind their official positions, I would probably informally suggest it, but I would be careful not to

force those Members to consider certain ideas, because this is a Member-driven organization. The Secretariat is supposed to provide top quality technical support to assist Members. On my part, I will tap into my expertise and experience in various negotiations and I will help Members get out of their comfort zone and have some out-of-the-box thinking whenever possible, but in a more facilitating way and in a more informal setting to ensure that Members themselves are the ones that are taking charge of the issues and of new ideas.

Q: How do you plan on increasing the participation of developing countries at this turning point and, as Director-General, what will your view be on the Doha Development Agenda? (Gabon)

A: Development is also the central part of the WTO agenda and negotiations. The DDA items were agreed upon twenty years ago. Some of them have already been harvested in Bali and in Nairobi. Among DDA items, if those agenda items are still relevant and have some convergence among the Members, Members need to look at those agenda items and should make progress to achieve tangible outcomes. One of the good examples is the fisheries subsidies. It is one of the DDA items and we are working hard to meet the working deadline of end of this year as mandated by the UN SDG. If those agenda items are relevant and have some convergence among the Members on achieving some concrete and tangible outcomes, Members could work hard toward them. As the DDA was agreed upon twenty years ago, if there are any new and emerging issues beyond this mandate, Members should be able to look at those issues and discuss them, especially if they are relevant and have some convergence among Members. With regard to helping developing and LDC Members integrating into the multilateral trading system at this very turning point, I would repeat the points that I said before. Capacity building and technical assistance are important, especially after COVID-19. The Secretariat should be able to provide technical assistance and capacity building opportunities, especially to deal with the digital divide and global supply chain disruptions. Sometimes, crisis and difficulties come together with opportunities. During global supply chain disruptions, developing and LDC Members could find an opportunity to make the most of these disruptions and find a way to join the global supply chain system. If I will have the honour of becoming the next Director-General, I will make sure that developing and LDC Members could cope with this global crisis very successfully, make the most of these opportunities and further develop their economies.

Q: Africa is a continent that has realized a disproportionately smaller regional integration – at about 15% intraregional trade and a declining share in world exports from 3.5% in 2008 to 2.5% in 2018. Despite this, Africa remains the frontier of growth now and in the future. There is an ambitious continental integration agenda espoused by the African Continental Free Trade Area. As Director-General, what role do you perceive the WTO playing to help drive Africa's integration agenda for the African countries that are Members of the WTO? (Botswana)

A: Although RTAs are not a substitute for multilateral trade agreements, they can serve as a building block for trade liberalization and further integration into the multilateral trading system. I am very much aware of the AfCFTA and more than a quarter of the WTO Members are part of it. The Secretariat has built up institutional expertise during its assistance to the CRTA. With regard to how further promote regional integration through this kind of agreements and what would be the best way to pursue trade liberalization – but at the same time also pursue sustainable development and economic cooperation through this RTA – the Secretariat, based on its institutional expertise built up in the CRTA, could provide technical assistance and capacity building opportunities to African Members. Having said that, the multilateral trade format is the best way to pursue trade liberalization. Together with Members, the Secretariat can help African Members to pursue this agreement in a more consistent manner with the WTO, so that it can be more helpful to integrate into the multilateral trading rules.

Q: You have mentioned quite a lot of priorities and you have mentioned some more in your response to the previous questions. What would be, in your view, the most important factor to get stuff done to make those priorities become deliverables? (China)

A: It is important to rebuild trust among Members. I came to this building in 1996 when there was optimism and excitement about the multilateral trading system. When I attended the first Ministerial Conference in Sentosa Island in Singapore, we were very hopeful. We were discussing the outcomes and implementation of the past two years, but at the same time we were discussing

the future of the WTO. Now, trust deficit is prevalent around this building. Members do not trust each other. Members do not trust that we can actually deliver on our mandate. My first and utmost priority will be to rebuild trust. I have set out all those priority tasks, but if we do not have the trust, I am sure we will be on the same page again and again. To do that, I will tap into my experience as a negotiator and as Trade Minister in one of the most dynamic countries. During my twenty-five-year career in trade, my country itself has gone through every stage of development. I think I am better positioned to understand all the Members because we have been there – I have been there. Based on my own experience and expertise, I will try to rebuild trust among Members. I am confident that I can do that because during my career, I believe that I earned trust from my counterparts around the world regardless of the levels of economic development, from LDCs to developed countries, and regardless of regional groupings. The most important factor would be to rebuild trust to actually achieve all those priority tasks.

Q: In light of our vulnerability, the issue of climate change and trade, and by extension natural disasters and trade, are of critical importance to us. What do you see is the role of the organization in ensuring that small island developing States like Barbados have continued space to manoeuvre in light of this vulnerability? (Barbados)

A: Small and vulnerable economies are particularly vulnerable to natural disasters. We have learned the lesson from this pandemic. Whenever a disaster or a crisis happens, it is always better to prepare before rather than to deal with the disaster or crisis after it happens. This pandemic has taught a lesson to us that it is all the more important to prepare for any natural disaster. In that regard, it is important to provide capacity building programmes and technical assistance to small and vulnerable economies. At the same time, it should not be the concern only for SVEs. Other Members should work together to promote environmental preservation, and also to tackle environmental issues. I would make sure that the relevant discussions on environment that are currently ongoing in the CTE and in other Committees could make progress to deal with those issues. Having said that, I also understand that there is an initiative proposed by the SVEs and I hope that we can achieve tangible outcomes at MC12 to build resilience of SVEs, particularly with regard to natural disasters.

Q: You are well aware that special and differential treatment is an integral part of the multilateral trading system and the WTO. What are your views on S&DT on the current discussions now in the WTO and what is your plan to bridge these differences? (Malaysia)

A: The Preamble of the Marrakesh Agreement recognizes the need to ensure that developing countries, especially the LDCs, secure their share in global growth commensurate to their economic development needs. Whether current S&DT provisions are enough to ensure that LDCs and developing countries secure their share in global growth is still up to the Members to decide. But I am aware of the discussions that those S&DT provisions and measures need to be effective and operational. I will make sure that those discussions are going smoothly if I become the Director-General. Having said that, I also understand there is another discussion on S&DT on whether we should provide S&DT to those Members that self-declare themselves as developing countries. It is a very contentious issue and it is up to Members to decide what kind of agreement they would reach and what kind of criteria to apply. I would just like to emphasize that we still need to focus on providing assistance to the LDCs, because they really need flexibilities and benefits from the WTO Agreements, so that they can fully integrate into the multilateral trading system. The world has changed and countries might have changed, but, still, it is up to the Members to decide what kind of agreements they are going to make and apply to developing countries. Until there is an agreement on that issue, it might be more helpful to take a practical approach, so that Members can take on their responsibilities and also receive their benefits commensurate with their economic weight in the global trading system.

Q: What is your comment to the assertions that the WTO Green Room Processes involving small consultations with a few countries are not inclusive and not transparent, especially at Ministerial Conferences – that most developing country Members are effectively excluded from the decision-making process and are then presented with a "take it or leave it" package at the final moment of the Conference? As you know, at the final moment, Members can only reject this at the risk of collapsing the Conference. (Zimbabwe)

A: In the WTO, decisions are made by consensus. I still see the merits and believe in the consensus decision-making system at the WTO. At the end of the day, the WTO will produce binding agreements and it needs the full commitment and agreement of all Members in taking on responsibilities in this regard. So, consensus decision-making is the best and most ideal way. Having said that, I am not sure of what kind of small room decision-making process you are talking about, but if I become the Director-General, I would make sure that all the discussions and negotiations are conducted in an inclusive and transparent manner. To ensure all the Members' commitment, it is of utmost importance to conduct meetings and negotiations in a transparent and inclusive manner.

3. Summing up by the Candidate³

I spent the past few days meeting with Ambassadors and delegates in Geneva. When I listen to your views, together with the questions today, it seems that there are diverse views and priorities of Members – whether it concerns the negotiations, how to pursue development objectives and special and differential treatment, the plurilaterals or restoring the Appellate Body function. So, how can we, a dynamic group of 164 Members with different social and economic environments, come to an agreement? This brings me back to my original message. We need to rebuild trust in the WTO. How? Amid these divergent and different views of Members, I would share the commitment and hope to restoring and revitalizing the WTO.

This pandemic has forced us to reflect upon what is needed from the multilateral trading system. Despite the current challenges, I have a firm belief in the multilateral trading system and what we can actually achieve in the future if we put our heads together and also our hearts into it. We are embarking on a new journey towards a new chapter for the WTO. Building on the past twenty-five years, when we embark on the new journey for the next twenty-five years, I am ready to provide a new leadership that will harness all the frustrations but most importantly all the hopes from Members to make the WTO more relevant, resilient and responsive for the next twenty-five years and beyond.

³ Under the modalities for the conduct of the meeting communicated by the Chair to all delegations on 1 and 10 July, each candidate had the opportunity to make a concluding statement during the last five minutes of the question-and-answer period if she or he so wished.

ANNEX 6**Meeting with Ambassador Amina C. Mohamed (Republic of Kenya)****1. Presentation by the Candidate¹**

Mr. Chairman, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

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. I know that for many of you dialing in, this virtual meeting format is a challenge, but I am grateful to 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 capacity to negotiate and to develop new trade rules and disciplines for the challenges of the very near future.

5. Let's reaffirm a basic truth. The WTO is the indispensable backbone of international trade cooperation. Imagine a world without it. All economies would suffer, even the largest.

6. This vital system is being tested as never before. The WTO was already in difficulties before COVID-19 struck. Its negotiating function had faltered, with only limited successes in the last twenty-five years, despite the launch of the Doha Round of negotiations at the beginning of the century. Trade tensions have increased and the dispute settlement system has been compromised. There is widespread acknowledgment among WTO Members that the WTO is in need of urgent reform.

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 behavior.

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 complex and integrated world economy. That intensified interdependence makes effective cooperation more vital than ever before.

9. We need to recapture the visionary inspiration of the original architects of the system. Governments must breathe new life into the WTO so it can play a key role in helping recovery from the crisis and in rebuilding economic resilience. Reviving trade is essential to recovery worldwide, to boosting growth and sustainable development, and to easing the social and economic impact of the crisis.

¹ The presentation is also circulated in document JOB/GC/238.

10. Once recovery is under way, however, we will still face the need to update the trading system to take account of crucial global issues, issues like climate change, the digital revolution, poverty and sustainable development. The WTO should be where governments come together to co-operate on formulating the best trade policy responses, sharing best practices, and reaffirming key principles.

11. We need to reform the WTO to ensure that it makes a positive contribution to the global economy and to the development of its Members, that it supports our shared environmental objectives as we seek to build a sustainable world. The WTO can help to promote sustainable value chains, and encourage the diffusion and adoption of the latest environmental technologies. In short, the WTO must ensure that sustainability is a core consideration in its future work.

12. You do not all share the same reform priorities. This makes it essential to work together for convergence around elements that all can support. We need to break the cycle of despair and enter into a new phase of hope and realism.

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 localized interests relevant to near neighbors are at stake. The African Continental Free Trade Area, for example, will not only foster new trading opportunities, it will also play a valuable role in improving infrastructure and bringing the continent together. But a trading world of overlapping preferential arrangements among subsets of economies, of which there are over 300, cannot be a substitute for the rules based multilateral trading system.

17. The WTO's dispute settlement function is key to the credibility and effectiveness of the rules. We need to find a way through its problems to make it once again an instrument that all Members can use with confidence.

18. We need a WTO that is fair and equitable, taking into account the level of economic development of each member. All WTO Members must be prepared to contribute to improving and strengthening the organization, so that it can facilitate trade for the benefit of all, and contribute to economic recovery from the effects of the pandemic.

19. The rules are the backbone of the system, but the multilateral trading system is more than just a rulebook. It is also the regular meetings of the delegates and representatives of each Member who come together to resolve trade tensions and 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.

20. It is our national legislators who determine the way in which each Member implements and administers its WTO obligations. It is the broad stakeholder community, from business to non-governmental organizations.

21. It is also part of a community of intergovernmental institutions responsible for an array of economic, social, political and environmental issues clearly related to trade. We need to encourage all these institutions to cooperate closely in delivering their mandates in a coherent manner.

22. 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.

23. I know that I have what it takes as Director General to help the WTO make progress on these crucial issues. During my time here in Geneva as an Ambassador, and later as a Minister, I have been appointed by you, the Membership, to Chair all the top WTO bodies, including the Ministerial Conference. So, I am acutely aware that this is a Member-driven organization.

24. The role of the Director General was described by Peter Sutherland as that of a facilitator. This 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.

25. 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.

26. 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.

27. 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.

28. Thank you.

2. Questions and Answers²

Q: Global trading rules framed in the 1980s have changed. These rules no longer facilitate and regulate the current trade regime. Their unfairness is manifested in the provisions on subsidies and domestic support measures. There is also a vast difference in the levels of commitment between Founding and Acceded Members. Nepal, as an Acceded LDC Member, has the commitment of 99.4% of binding coverage and 26.1% of average bound tariff. However, some Founding Members have commitments below 20% of binding coverage and above 90% of average bound tariffs. Emerging trends such as e-commerce are not adequately covered under existing WTO rules. In this context, what is your perspective on how to address these issues to ensure a fair and just multilateral trading system? (Nepal)

A: During the Nairobi Ministerial Conference which I chaired, two new Members acceded to the WTO – Afghanistan and Liberia. What you have said is true that in fact accession procedures and processes are long. Sometimes they do not fully take into account the challenges that LDCs and SVEs face. But the WTO has the capacity to provide the support that is required through its technical assistance and capacity building functions to implement the agreements and the commitments that you have made. It is also true that we are not living in the same world of the WTO's founding. It is a totally different world. If you just look around the room and see half of us are wearing masks – you would know that it is a totally different world. But it is also a world where there has been a digital revolution. It is a world that has moved on from where it was. It is a world that has adopted a new ITA. It is qualitatively a different place than it was before. Now, the challenge that we face in addressing the issues that you have raised of subsidies, for instance, is that the negotiating function of the organization has stalled and that there is a need to address that, and address it urgently. It is important for those that sit at the WTO to know that they have a contribution to make, and that

² The following delegations also submitted their names to ask a question to the candidate: Afghanistan, Australia, Barbados, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, El Salvador, European Union, Finland, France, Gabon, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mongolia, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Panama, Peru, Poland, Qatar, Romania, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, Viet Nam and Zimbabwe.

there is space for them to do that, including newly acceding countries. So, we need to fix the negotiating function of the WTO and I think that, if we come together as we have done on many occasions, we should be able to do that and address the issues that you have raised that must be addressed. In Nairobi, we were able to address some of the most pertinent issues to this organization and to the international community as a whole – issues that have not been addressed for a long time. We were able to prohibit export subsidies. So, if we negotiate, actually sit together and address these issues, we come up with solutions to that. The problem has been that, since Nairobi in 2015, there has not been any outcome for the WTO. Before Nairobi, it took a very long time for us to get any outcomes for the WTO that would support your full integration into the multilateral trading system. We need to do more to make sure that the reforms that need to be undertaken here at the WTO are undertaken, so that we can address some of the challenging issues that the international community including the LDCs are facing in integrating fully into the multilateral trading system.

Q: How do you plan with the Joint Statement Initiatives in the interest of preserving multilateralism in the WTO and to minimize the plurilateralization of the organization? (Jamaica)

A: I know that a lot of work has gone into coming up with the Joint Statement Initiatives on e-commerce, investment facilitation, MSMEs and gender. Those that are involved in these negotiations are not just developed countries, but there are also some developing ones which means that there is broad support for them. If you need to have a plurilateral agreement that would enjoy support, there are two principles that you must put in place: the first is the non-discrimination principle, so that the benefits accrue to all of us and I think we did that with the ITA 2; and the second one is to ensure that it is open for any Member who wants to join the agreement and that is able to do that. If you meet those broad conditions and if the rest of the Membership during the negotiations supports that, I think that the Joint Statement Initiatives can actually support the multilateral trading system, they can enhance the participation of Members, open up markets, create jobs and provide opportunities for the countries that are part of the agreement, but also for those that are not, because of the extension of these benefits on an MFN basis.

Q: My question is related to the issue which deeply concerns my country and others due to our geographical characteristics. We all know about the position of the small economies which do not have access to the sea, which face high transport costs due to their landlocked position and depend on others for the transit of their goods. What is your vision on addressing the concerns of small and landlocked economies and how do you see, if possible, small and landlocked economies being fully integrated into the multilateral trading system? If you share the opinion that this issue is very important for the WTO, what concrete steps can you propose to address these problems? (Kyrgyz Republic)

A: I come from a region where there are a number of landlocked countries that have enjoyed access to the sea because of the measures that we have been able to put in place. We have actually modernized all our customs procedures, making them much simpler for these countries to access the sea. When I went back home and became Minister of Foreign Affairs, we realized that between Nairobi and Mombasa, for instance, there were fifteen or twenty roadblocks. It became really expensive for countries that are landlocked to access the sea and be able to participate effectively in multilateral trade. What we did is we came together and came up with two very important initiatives which eased transit trade between Kenya from the Port of Mombasa to Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and Eastern DRC. All of them depended on the Port of Mombasa. So, we eased the customs procedures, made them much easier for them to be able to fill the forms, and allowed them to do this from their countries. As such, we made sure that we digitized some of the procedures, so that they do not have to travel all the way to the Port of Mombasa to fill forms. We got rid of all the roadblocks to facilitate these processes in a very short period of time. In the beginning, it took a week from Mombasa to the border town. By the time we had finished with easing all of the procedures, modernizing and simplifying them, and making sure that their transactional costs were at a minimum, because we did not want this cost to make it expensive for them to do business, we also allowed them to put in place measures on the ease of doing business and eased all the challenges that they faced. My proposal would be that we take the same kind of measures: we simplify the procedures for you; we make it much more cost-effective; for the coastal countries to make it their business to bring down those costs, so that it is possible for landlocked countries to actually do business; and for the landlocked countries to take the initiatives that they need to take to modernize their own systems, so that it is easier for them to access ports and the coastal strips. Basically, it is about modernizing, digitizing and simplifying procedures. It is about working together

and cooperating, but also asking the WTO to support these countries and work on those measures, rules and procedures.

Q: The debate on development perspective and market orientation has become increasingly prominent in the WTO. What is your view on that debate and how, as Director-General, you can make a bridge between the two? (Indonesia)

A: I do not think it is part of the job description of the Director-General to decide what economic model countries should adopt, as long as they adhere to all their commitments within WTO Agreements. The model of economic development to follow is a sovereign choice of a country. If it is a Member of the organization, then it must strictly adhere to the principles of this organization and deal with all its commitments, adhere to them and carry them out as everybody else does. I do not think the market orientation of a country has anything to do with that.

Q: You have mentioned reform as your first priority. Now my question is about your experience with reform processes. What experience do you have from managing and leading reform processes that might be of relevance in this context? (Norway)

A: The reforms that are carried within the domestic boundaries of our country are definitely not the same reforms that you would carry out here at the WTO. Reform is about change. It is about adapting to new realities. Within the WTO, there have been a lot of discussions about reforms, but there has not been any coming together of identifying exactly what these reforms that should take place are. At the domestic level, it is much easier. It is about agreeing on what reforms should take place, looking at the objectives that you have set yourself as a country and, in order to achieve them, you take the measures that are necessary to reform your economy, your social space and also the political space, because you need to make sure that the objectives that you have set for yourself are realized. As Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Justice, Constitutional Affairs and National Integration, I carried out a lot of reforms. I reformed the whole criminal justice system in my country. It was never easy to reform, but it is necessary as long as you have identified what needs to be reformed, how it should be reformed and how it will impact the forward movement of the work that the WTO is doing. The fact that the work of the WTO has stalled means that it needs reform. As DG, I will encourage Members to come together, identify what reforms need to be done, ask for the support that they need to carry out those reforms. I would listen and sometimes maybe provide options on how things can be done. Reforms in our country are so different for what needs to be done – from having to reform the judicial function, the negotiating function and the deliberative function of the WTO, I think reforms here need your full participation and full engagement. This is a Member-driven organization, but as DG, you would actually tell me how you want me to support this reform process. I do not know whether I should talk about the reforms that we carried out in my country, but I can tell you that they are very extensive and that they are very productive.

Q: Would you agree that there is a gap in the WTO rulebook with regard to level-playing-field issues? If you do, do you have a vision on how to deal with this matter? (Lithuania)

A: If you are talking about subsidies, that gap in the rulebook needs to be filled through negotiations between Members of the WTO. It is not something that the Director-General of the WTO can address himself because negotiations are the preserve of Members of the WTO. They do not belong in the job description of a Director-General, but the Director-General will be supportive of anything that the Membership wants to address, provide the enabling environment for that to happen, provide the space and provide any resources that are needed for Members to negotiate on issues that they feel need to be addressed, so that the rulebook does not have any gaps.

Q: The C-4 addressed the cotton issue in WTO negotiations in 2003. Seventeen years later, there are no advances made in this very important aspect for cotton-producing countries. What innovative action do you foresee to ensure that all Members concerned can be involved in providing pressing answers to this cotton issue by the next Ministerial Conference? What will you do to involve more resources and stakeholders in developing the cotton sector in developing countries, in line with the Nairobi agenda and others? (Mali)

A: The first time that we dealt with the cotton issue and the C-4 was in Hong Kong and it was when I was chairing the General Council of the WTO. I recall that, at that time, the many meetings

that we held with the Cotton-4 encouraged the Membership to address this issue seriously and agreed that cotton will be dealt with ambitiously, expeditiously and specifically. The reason why that did not happen, that it was not addressed ambitiously, expeditiously, and specifically, was because it was tied to negotiations on domestic support. Until those negotiations take place and Members agree that there is a resolution to domestic support negotiations in agriculture, I do not think that there is a way to fully address the issues of cotton. After the decision on the prohibition of export subsidies, at least that bit on the negotiation was addressed. My plea would be to make sure that, by the time we get to Kazakhstan for the Twelfth Session of the Ministerial Conference, negotiations on agriculture, which have stalled for a very long time – the two pillars of domestic support and market access – would be addressed, that Members actually devote time to negotiating. I know that these are very difficult negotiations. They were difficult in Nairobi. But when the Membership comes together and rises to the occasion, it is able to deal with even the most difficult of the issues. My role as Director-General would be to encourage Members, to negotiate in good faith and agree on a set of issues that must be negotiated before we go to the Ministerial Conference and hope that in fact domestic support and market access would be some of the issues that are negotiated, so that finally we can put to rest the issue of cotton because it is a real issue. I have visited many of the countries that are in the C-4 and I know how much pain these countries have to go through. All of them are LDCs in Africa, so it is important that this issue is fully addressed, but that is something for the Members to do. It was tied to domestic support and, as long as it is tied to domestic support, it would have to be negotiated within that pillar.

Q: The fisheries subsidies negotiation is widely viewed by WTO Members as a priority and is expected to yield certain results multilaterally. As Chair of the Trade Negotiations Committee, how will you facilitate this negotiation, while bearing in mind that the WTO is a Member-driven organization? (Chinese Taipei)

A: If WTO Members who have done a lot of work on fisheries negotiations are to conclude the Fisheries Agreement, you would actually tick two boxes. One would be expanding opportunities and obviously addressing the issues of overcapacity and IUU, among others. If we are able to get an agreement on fisheries, what we would have done is to prove the credentials of this organization in sustainability. We would have made a clear statement about sustainability being a major plank of the organization's work. As Chair of the TNC, I would encourage Members to reach agreement on the outstanding issues. Some of the issues have made a lot of progress. There are some that are much more difficult than others. I would just encourage that enough progress is made, so that, by the time we go to the next Ministerial Conference, it would be one of the deliverables. It would be one of the things that we are able to do. I do not think that, as Director-General, it would be in my place, even as Chair of the TNC, to negotiate on behalf of Members. That negotiating function belongs to the Members. My job will be to create the necessary environment for Members to be able to negotiate in good faith.

Q: You have extensive experience working in international organizations including in the WTO. In recent years, we have seen a significant deterioration of the situation in this area which, among other things, has resulted in the decrease of trust among Members, as you have rightly mentioned in your presentation. Could you be more precise and specific about your vision of the role of the Director-General in overcoming this situation? (Russian Federation)

A: You are right, at the WTO, there is a deficit of trust, but you cannot have trust if you are not engaged in negotiations, if you are not ensuring that there is full engagement of the Membership with each other and if you are not able to narrow the differences that you have. I know that it is possible to overcome this trust. The Director-General can offer good offices. They can talk to different Members to make sure that you build trust. When we went to Nairobi, everybody said it was not going to happen, that we were not going to be able to reach any agreements. It is going to be a huge failure – the worst one that the organization has had. It took a lot of energy, a lot of passion – because obviously I am very passionate about the multilateral trading system. It took a lot of passion, a lot of time and a lot of energy to build the trust that was required among the Members. That was something that we did in collaboration with the Director-General and the Chair of the Nairobi Ministerial, because it had to be a representative from the Members and the Director-General working together in concert to assure Members that there is a need to send the right signal after Nairobi. A lot of work had been done and that work should not be for nothing. We really have to rise to the occasion – get up and get this done so that the international community would accept the relevance of the WTO going forward. It takes time. With more engagement, the walls of mistrust

will fall off and people will begin to discuss issues more often, candidly and honestly, so that they can find a resolution. If you are not talking to each other, then it is very difficult to resolve some of the difficult issues. There is really nothing that cannot be resolved if there is no good faith and good will and if time and energy is not devoted to it. So, the trust in this organization must be rebuilt. The Director-General can play a part, but the Members have to do the heavy lifting, I am afraid.

Q: You talked about "3 Rs" – reform, recovery and renewal. If I may, I'd like to request to add one more "R", that is: revival. When I say revival, I mean revival of the Doha Development Agenda. It is considered that the success of the Doha Development Agenda negotiations could have been a way towards augmenting world trade in a mutually beneficial manner, both for developed and developing Members. However, there has not been much tracks in the last two decades in the Doha Development Agenda, particularly after the Nairobi Ministerial Conference. Do you have any vision or plan to revive the Doha Development Agenda or for launching negotiations of key pillars of the development agenda items in a new format? (India)

A: I was privileged to be in Doha in 2001 when we launched the Doha Declaration and I was one of those that was quite sure that in the four years after Doha, we would be able to conclude the round because of what it stood for. There was so much enthusiasm in Doha. It came after 9/11, we were all traumatized and desperate to find something that would bring all of us together. So, we were able to come together in a way that the world had not seen for a while. We were all very excited that finally we had a round that would ensure that development happens, that the development elements in the WTO Agreement will come to life after Doha. I think it is a matter of concern that, long after that, not much has happened with Doha, except, of course, for the export subsidies prohibition in Nairobi, where we really worked hard to get that done. So, I do not even think it is a matter of form. It is a matter of substance. What are the key issues in Doha that all the Members can come around and agree should be negotiated and concluded? We have shown an example of export subsidies. I think that domestic support and market access are being negotiated. We do not know how long it would take, but there are elements there and key issues that are really important for the organization and that would need to be negotiated. It is not about the form it would take. It is about the substance, the issues in the Doha Declaration that are important for the Membership of this organization.

Q: COVID-19 is an unprecedented crisis of our time and has shown how interdependent we are. What role will you play to ensure that the WTO contributes towards multilateral solutions that will ensure affordable access to the vaccine, once available, as well as the requisite medicinal supplies and technologies? (South Africa)

A: The pandemic has affected all countries. Unfortunately, it has affected the most vulnerable of us disproportionately, as those countries cannot afford the economic stimulus packages that others can. Fortunately, there has been a lot of international cooperation. A lot of organizations and partners have come forward to provide support. We worked on the TRIPS Agreement. We had an amendment to that agreement that basically supported the access of developing and LDC Members to medicines that are critically important for their survival. HIV and AIDS were devastating in the continent at that time. We were able, as a community of nations, of Members of the WTO, to actually rise up to that and get an agreement – an agreement that balanced access with IPR, because we also needed to make sure that we encourage pharmaceutical companies that had developed ARVs to continue investing in research and development. Now there is a competition to come up with vaccines for the COVID-19 pandemic. If we are able to do that, I think it would be very useful for Members to come together again and see how they can support it. It will probably not be in the same manner as we did with the amendment of the TRIPS Agreement, although it can be used for situations like the HIV and AIDS pandemic, but I think it would be time again for Members of this organization to come together and support the developing and LDC Members to have access to vaccines. That has happened before. Members felt that it was immoral for some to have ARVs, while others did not. As DG, I would encourage Members to think about it, to discuss it and to see whether they can come up with a way forward. Another thing that I can do as DG is to work together with other institutions and regional organizations and partners, to make sure that we get some of the resources that are required to be able to support developing and LDC Members to have access to vaccines if and when they are developed. It is still a long way, I think, and some are actually engaging in some of the work that is required to develop vaccines, and I think countries like South Africa and Kenya are in that group. By the time a vaccine is developed, we will have invested enough in it to be able to play a key role to ensure that other countries in our region have access to the

vaccines that are developed. But, at the moment, thinking of the vaccine when there is so much devastation that is going on, where we actually need international cooperation to support Members, that may be obliterated by the pandemic. I would suggest that, as a Membership, as an incoming Director-General, the focus should be on just ensuring that the resources that are available are used to support livelihood, to support people who actually do not have any access to anything, who lost jobs, those whose economies were dependent on tourism and services. Everything is locked, there is no travel, facilities are not open anymore, their economies are in real trouble. The first step would be to support countries that are facing that kind of devastation and make sure that the Membership would come together to provide the resources that they need, to share practices, to provide information and make it cost-effective, because if you are sharing experiences and information, you can do it online. But it is important that we get some of these to those that need them the most.

Q: In 2001, three former GATT and WTO Directors-General warned about overreaching by WTO dispute settlement. More recently, the United States has catalogued, through DSB statements and a written report, pervasive Appellate Body overreaching in which adjudicators effectively write new rules never agreed by WTO Members. Do you agree that overreaching in dispute settlement undermines the WTO, including its more important functions of discussion, monitoring and negotiations between Members? If so, what would you do to ensure the WTO adjudicators and their Secretariat support stop overreaching? (United States)

A: We need to go back to the basics. We need to look at what the DSU says. It is very clear that it does not allow for overreach. It does not allow for precedent-creation. It is very specific on what needs to be done. We also need to stress the interpretation of the provisions that actually exist in the DSU, and not go beyond it. There are two articles in the DSU that indicate clearly that rights and obligations should not be diminished or increased depending on a ruling or a decision of the Appellate Body. We need to go back to the basics. I am not the only one saying this. I think the Membership has said several times that we need to reform the dispute settlement system in the WTO. The dispute settlement system ensures credibility and predictability. It is supposed to instil confidence, and not take it away from believing and working with the system, from ensuring that if there is a dispute, there is a system that will deal with it. The founders of this system made sure of that. They wanted to ensure that there were no conflicts that would arise out of trade disputes. So, they had a system that was almost full proof from initiation of negotiations to dispute resolution. I think that it is important that we all work together to reassert that role of the dispute settlement system of the WTO. Losing it would be very unfortunate. I think we need to come together and ensure that the Appellate Body resumes – a reformed one, of course, taking into consideration the concerns that many Members have expressed. I do not think that any other system would fix that. We need a multilaterally negotiated Appellate Body that will take the interests of all of us into consideration, but also make it very clear what we expect from the Appellate Body. It is a pity that it is not there anymore. I was Chair of the DSB and honestly that was the crown in the jewel of the WTO – the fact that there was a system that you could appeal to and get decisions taken. The Membership had serious concerns that would not allow it to continue existing. We need to deal with those concerns, so that we can get our Appellate Body back. As DG, I would work very closely with the Membership, address all the concerns that have been raised, and negotiate together a new Appellate Body, so that our dispute settlement system is complete again.

Q: If you were appointed Director-General, you will be the first woman to occupy this role at the organization. What plans will you have then for your first 100 days to mark this difference being a woman leader? (Paraguay)

A: It would be a total privilege for me. Although in looking for a Director-General of the organization, we should be looking for expertise and competence. If that happens to be something that Members feel I have, I would be greatly honoured to do the job, and in my first 100 days, I would make sure that some of the issues that were critical for the Membership, such as fisheries negotiations, were concluded. We need to get that done. It would immediately tick two boxes – a trade box and a sustainability box. I would address the issues that have been raised around dispute settlement. I would encourage Members as Director-General to really work on them and get a very quick resolution on it. And then, of course, COVID-19 is an issue that needs to be dealt with, including the fallout from this pandemic. We need to address that together as Members, and that is something that I would encourage Members to do, so that, from the trade perspective, we show that the WTO is an organization that is trade-supportive, because during the pandemic there are many effects on the multilateral trading system due to measures that were taken by Members. I would also work on

laying the ground for the Twelfth Ministerial Conference. Now, beyond that, I would work with UNCTAD, ITC and UN Women, that are very interesting initiatives that affect the role and empowerment of women in trade. There is a very good example of work that was done by ITC, but supported by UNCTAD and WTO which is "SheTrades". That is something that I supported. I was present when it was launched, and I thank Arancha González, the Foreign Minister of Spain, for having worked really hard on it. There are so many other initiatives that we can actually work on. The WTO should take a lead in some of the initiatives that need to come out on the empowerment of women, on supporting women in multilateral trade. I do not believe that you need a multilateral agreement on it. We can agree on measures that the organization can take to support women in small businesses, in MSMEs, in developing countries, so that they can access the global value chains and the global supply chains. There is a lot of work that needs to be done. Even at the organization, making sure that there is an equitable representation and presence of women at the highest levels of the organization would be something that I would want to see happen as Director-General.

Q: What personal qualities or unique attributes would you bring to the WTO if given the privilege of serving as the new Director-General? (Philippines)

A: I would bring the attributes that I possess – attributes of passion for the multilateral trading system and what trade can do as a force for good, as a transformational force that has pulled lots of poor people out of poverty in my country and in many others. I would bring the attributes of a skilled diplomat who is able to support negotiations. I have done that before and I have done that here at the WTO and elsewhere as well. I would bring my political vision which I used very effectively during MC10 in Nairobi, but not only – in other areas that I have worked in, I also brought back to bear on the work that I did and it actually was very successful. I would also bring to the table my understanding of the system. I understand the WTO. I have worked here. I have walked the corridors, when the corridors were a beehive of activities, when we used every little corner that we could find to negotiate and strike deals and agreements, staying three nights or four awake working on the amendment to the TRIPS Agreement, bringing all the excitement of knowing that you are doing something that is going to impact the globe and in a very positive manner. I will bring all that to bear, but also the understanding that Members of the WTO have different interests and that these interests must converge, and that they are the only ones that can do that, that the Director-General cannot converge interests of Members. But the Director-General can offer support to make sure that the environment exists for Members to sit down and talk to each other. So, I would bring back to bear and I am sure that those that have worked with me before know that I am very energetic, but I use the energy sensitively and reasonably and I will do that if I have the privilege of being selected Director-General of the organization that I am very passionate about.

Q: How do you perceive the WTO's image among the business community and civil society? Would you see a need to improve relations with these stakeholders and how would you do that? (Estonia)

A: I would draw from the experience that I had when I was here in Geneva – for the six years that I was here. One of the things that I enjoyed very much was the dialogues we had with the ICC. But at that time, there was a lot of activity and so there was interest from the business community to see what was happening here, but also to discuss with us what they thought was critically important. So, I would continue those dialogues – probably make them even more frequent. There is value in WTO Members having constant engagement with the business community. At the end of the day, they use the rules that are negotiated here. I would encourage more of those. If I was Director-General, I would plan more of them to just make sure that we know exactly how the business community that uses the rules that we negotiate feels about the work of the WTO. I also enjoyed the public forum that we had here that allowed all of us to get together with the NGOs to talk to them and to also see how they perceive us and see whether there was something that we could work on together to either change that perception, or to improve it. So, those are instruments that we can use. Those are mechanisms that we can use to make sure that the outside world that does not belong to the world of Members and the Secretariat follow the work of the organization, support the work of the organization, advocate for some of the things that we are doing and make them known. I would also encourage discussion with MSMEs. It would be important for them to know that this organization takes them seriously. After all, they are major players, especially if you think about the countries that we come from – developing and LDCs – MSMEs are big players. They are big players in the developed countries as well. But the impact that they have in the economies of developing and least developed countries are almost unimaginable, so it would be a very interesting development if we are able to work with them, to get them to see how we actually manage affairs

at the WTO, see if they can add value to our conversations, discussions and negotiations. That will be useful. The WTO's engagement with these different stakeholders has helped the organization understand how the external world actually views it. It has been very productive. I enjoyed them when I was young. I attended each one of them. I even attended them when I had gone back to Nairobi, because I wanted to come and participate and see what was going on. I think they are very valuable instruments and we should continue using them – maybe even increase the number of times that we have them. Now that we are not very effectively negotiating, maybe it would a good idea to have others come in and talk to us about the issues that we are discussing and some of the issues that we may not be discussing but are of value to the rest of the international community.

Q: As you know, for some years now, going back to the days of Pascal Lamy, the WTO has been looking annually at trade restrictions. I am referring particularly to the 2009 crisis. Following the recent reports on G-20 trade measures, the OECD has noted that there has been an increase in trade restrictive measures which is having a strong impact on trade. What is your opinion concerning this matter? (Guatemala)

A: I think that it is true that there have been more trade-restrictive measures taken by Members in the recent past. I was actually looking at how many measures have been put in place. Just by following the pandemic, I was truly surprised that the Membership that believes in the value of multilateral trade would put up so many restrictions. But it was also a matter of fear. I think we were all afraid. We were all frightened of this pandemic that we did not understand. As soon as people started talking, international organizations started coming together, including the WTO, FAO and WHO, among others. There was understanding that in fact some of the measures that have been taken were not useful at all because, for instance, for the restrictions on the export of food, the realization that, in presence of surplus stocks and if we continued the restrictions, the prices would actually fall. Sometimes, we put in place such measures as Members, and I think something that the Director-General of the WTO can do, in the same way that the current DG did in his joint statements with other international organizations, would be to discourage restrictive measures and encourage trade facilitating measures. The WTO is about opening of markets, it is about trade facilitation, it is about the free flow of goods and services. It is a sad story when we have more restrictive measures put in place than facilitative measures. It is something that the Membership needs to work for very seriously, to make sure that the value of this international organization remains and that we all believe in the power of market opening – that increase our GDP, create jobs and alleviate poverty. It is something that, as DG, I would discourage. I always found a lot of value in the work that the TPRB did, and I chaired it. I think I learned a lot about how governments could interact with others – the peer review system that in fact was borrowed by the Human Rights Council later on. The value of the peer review system resides in the fact that we all sit and look at measures that have been put in place, at the policies of different countries, and critique them – but also borrow some of them, exchange experiences on how these policies have affected countries. In general, within the multilateral trading system, we should be focused more on facilitating trade, on opening markets, on creating jobs, on improving our economic status, on growing our economies, than on restricting trade.

Q: Irrespective of trade negotiations, the WTO Secretariat continues to operate effectively thanks to its merit-based recruitment and promotion system. How would you ensure to preserve this in the future and what is your management vision for an optimal allocation of resources and a robust system for ensuring accountability? (Denmark)

A: The WTO Secretariat is one of the most professional ones that I have come across. It has a lot of experience and institutional memory. The reason why it is so valuable is because of what you have just talked about – the recruitment policies making sure that it is about expertise, experience and competence of those that are recruited. That is something that one cannot move if they want an organization to function optimally. You must make sure that you have the best minds working for you, so that you can move the process forward, but you can also have what you need. There is so much done to inform Members on developments and on what is happening within the multilateral trading system. It is very important that the best minds are recruited. We also know that today, the best minds come from all over the world. So, it would be very important to make sure that, as you recruit, you recruit competence, but you also recruit diversity, so that the Secretariat of the WTO is representative of the Membership of the WTO. It would be very unfortunate if we felt that any Member amongst us did not have competent nationals to be recruited into the WTO. We need to make sure that we continue and become sticklers for competence-recruiting, but also ensure that there is diversity, so that the face of the organization is representative.

Q: You have mentioned the importance of the support the WTO can provide to sustainability. In this regard, in your view, aside from our immediate goal to successfully conclude the fisheries subsidies negotiations, what should be the role of the WTO in supporting the protection and preservation of the world's resources and the environment? (Colombia)

A: Trade must be supportive of the environmental agenda. We have a Committee on Trade and Environment that needs to work much more energetically to ensure that the WTO becomes a little bit greener. We need a greener WTO that can focus on some of the issues that are so critically important for the global community. This pandemic has brought those things to the fore. As Director-General, I would support the reenergization of the Committee on Trade and Environment, so that it can contribute to the discourse that is taking place around the world. But it is also true that we need to address some very sensitive issues in the organization. We need to know how we are going to engage on carbon emissions, for instance. It is something that the Membership will need to discuss and decide they will approach issues like that, because it would be very important for the WTO to be part of the global system of governance, of trade but also of the environment. I was the Deputy Director-General of UNEP in Nairobi. One of the things that I wanted to do and I did when I joined the organization was to make sure that there was some relationship between the WTO that I enjoyed working in, that I really was passionate about, and UNEP that had offered me an opportunity to bring the two together. I think that we did a really fine job in identifying areas in which trade could support environment, including in areas such as green technologies and the kind of support you would give to an organization, an enterprise that wanted to adopt to new and greener technologies. So, there is a lot of work that we can do, work that is really good, that will not disrupt trade, but will showcase that relationship that can be extremely valuable. Reenergizing the Committee is one thing that we can do, but working much more closely with international organizations that deal with trade, looking at ways in which we can support, whether it is farmers that would like to embrace new technologies or companies, including financial services where there is a lot of talk about green instruments.

Q: Regarding agriculture, could there be any kind of approaches or methodologies that could help to revamp the negotiations on agriculture that, as you very well know, are already mandated within the agreement itself? (Uruguay)

A: Agriculture negotiations have been the most difficult negotiations that the WTO has ever embarked on. We were happy that in Nairobi we were able to get the prohibition of export subsidies out of the way. The hope was that then Members would engage energetically on the two other pillars, but also on issues that have come up, such as PSH and SSM. We still should be able to get that done. We need to move away from drawing red lines on the sand and saying that this cannot be touched and that cannot be touched, and waiting to see who will blink first. As Director-General, I would encourage negotiations on agriculture. It is critically important. Of course, it is small in total of trade – we know that – but it affects so many people that we need to make sure that we actually complete those negotiations. My role would be to encourage Members. In Nairobi, I had a different role. I was Chair, so I could do things that a DG cannot do, but as Director-General I would just create the enabling environment. I would keep nudging you. I would have discussions with Members to see how we can get convergence, look at the issues that Members are putting on the table, look for commonalities and place those areas where there could be convergence, so that you can encourage movement forward. But I think it would be a really positive move and a good signal to the international community if in Kazakhstan we had some outcome on agriculture.

3. Summing up by the Candidate³

I thank the Chairman and also all those delegations who have put questions to me. I have tried to answer you, but I have also listened to you carefully and attentively. If you select me as your next Director-General, you can be sure that I will go and listen to you. Everything I do will be informed by my respect for the Membership. At the same time, I will whole-heartedly take on all the responsibilities of the job, carry them out with energy and with commitment. A key responsibility for the Director-General is to facilitate agreement among Members. This is a challenging task, given

³ Under the modalities for the conduct of the meeting communicated by the Chair to all delegations on 1 and 10 July, each candidate had the opportunity to make a concluding statement during the last five minutes of the question-and-answer period if she or he so wished.

the diversity of views and interests among you which we have seen again this afternoon. It is also essential if the WTO is to be reformed and reinvigorated. You know that I am equal to that challenge. I have worked with you. I have lived amongst you. I have walked through these corridors and we have managed to make progress together. As a Minister, as an Ambassador, I have already worked with you to reach agreements on difficult and divisive issues.

Now, in these testing times for the multilateral trading system, I offer you my experience, my energy and my deep commitment to the WTO and to you, its Members. In me, you will have a Director-General who knows the WTO, someone who can, and will, be effective from the first day, someone who will work closely with Members in Geneva and someone who also has the skills and experience to operate effectively at a political level. If you select me, I promise I will work unceasingly to help this great global asset regain its place as a force for progress, for development and for prosperity.

ANNEX 7**Meeting with Mr. Mohammad Maziad Al-Tuwaijri (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia)****1. Presentation by the Candidate¹**

**Your Excellency Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Excellencies and Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Before I start my statement, I would like to express my sincere, personal solidarity towards all people and governments affected by the tragedy caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. I sit on Saudi Arabia's Supreme Committee for responding to and overcoming the virus in our country, so I deal with first-hand and every day the challenges that I know all of our governments and people are facing. Collective effort at the WTO is an important part of countering the effects of COVID-19, and recovering from its ravages on international trade.

I would like to thank the Chairman of the WTO General Council, Member Delegations, and the Secretariat for giving me the opportunity to share my approach to continuous reform at the WTO, and to raise questions and ideas on how the WTO should be equipped to face 21st century challenges.

Before I proceed, I would like to provide some background that will illustrate my approach to life and to leadership. My family comes from generations of traders. I grew up with stories about my grandfather's travels by caravan across the desert to trade throughout our region. He and other traders were guided by the North Star, just as they were in all of your trading histories.

In my view, the only way for the WTO to succeed is for Members to establish goals, then set a course, following their True North toward those goals. In the journey of WTO Members, the DG is a compass to help Members stay on the path toward their goals with the support of the Secretariat. Businesses and governments cannot function without direction and leadership. And the WTO is no different.

I think we can all agree that a challenging situation has become even more difficult with the pandemic; it will likely get worse; and, we know that trade policy is an essential part of the response to the pandemic itself, and will be key to our collective recovery. The crisis that we see today further emphasizes the importance of working collectively to advance our common interests.

But, Your Excellencies, what is our True North? How will the WTO be guided to its destination? I would now like to talk through with you my impression of the problem, and to share my approach to staying on course for the WTO.

History has shown us again and again that crises can inspire both coordination and cooperation. The GATT and the WTO both emerged from major upheavals and uncertainties over the last century. COVID-19 presents no less of a challenge, and requires no less of an inspired vision and strong leadership, especially because it affects all countries and people at the same time.

So, Your Excellencies, I look forward to the questions that you will ask a bit later, but at this point, I propose to consider three questions of my own:

First, what **opportunities and solutions** will emerge from current challenges?

Second, how can Members work together to leverage new ideas, new rules and new technologies to solve the emerging problems that we face today, and the issues that will arise tomorrow?

And, **third**, Your Excellencies, **what kind of leadership is required** to ensure that the multilateral trading system **delivers** on the vision and objectives set by Members?

¹ The presentation is also circulated in document JOB/GC/239.

I would like to offer my responses and my experience in relation to each of these questions which, I hope, will help you get to know me and my approach to management, problem solving and leadership.

Regarding what kind of leadership is required for the WTO, I believe that the leader of a Member-driven Organization must ensure that steady progress is made on **delivering** the goals and objectives set by Members. Some important goals and objectives, are set out in the preamble to the Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the WTO. I think we can all agree that the goals and objectives that Members originally set out are still relevant and worth pursuing.

However, from my point of view, we can also probably agree that the delivery of results under the main pillars of the WTO system has drifted off course, and that reform is now more urgent than ever, or the WTO risks losing its way.

In my view, we should question: in what manner and to what extent is the system not delivering – and, most importantly, **WHY is it not delivering?** I have many specific observations about these questions, but would like to concentrate here on the approach to continuous reform that I would apply as WTO DG, if granted this honor.

I have seen throughout my career that in order for any system to deliver intended outcomes, there must be a system in place to maintain True North at all times: for tracking, reporting and measuring progress, for resolving problems, and for adjusting operations in response to inevitable changes. As you all know, the WTO has three main functions for **monitoring** trade issues, **settling disputes**, and **negotiations**, which include improvements to existing rules, new rules and market access. We all know the WTO "bicycle theory", that we must continue to move forward, or fall down. If selected as DG, I would think through new approaches and theories. For example, I would suggest a "tricycle theory" for the WTO, bearing in mind that the WTO was designed with three wheels - to handle disputes, negotiations and monitoring. If all wheels do not spin as designed, the tricycle cannot carry the Members forward to reach their goal.

But before we repair the broken parts, we need to understand **WHY** these wheels are not turning, and for this we need to have a performance assessment system in place. We also need to recognize the consequences for the WTO of over-performance in litigation, while neglecting the negotiating and monitoring functions. A system out of balance cannot move forward.

Businesses have indicators for profitability and return on investment. And **governments** have economic and social development indicators to track the success of programs and results delivered in the public interest.

As Minister of Economy, I personally established and still Chair a new "Delivery Unit" of 50 people whose sole responsibility is to monitor, assess, and solve problems in order to ensure that the system delivers the transformation objectives set by the government. For any system, goals and objectives are only meaningful if they are actually delivered.

Again, the WTO is no different. If entrusted with the DG leadership mandate, I would establish **critical success factors** from Members' **goals and objectives**. Then, we would establish **key performance indicators** to allow the objective measurement of performance of the core functions of dispute settlement, monitoring and negotiations.

Finally, as DG, with the help of the Secretariat, we would **collect evidence and data**, and **calculate metrics** to help you all understand where goals are being reached, or where performance on WTO objectives is falling short. This **structured analysis** would help Members to understand what changes of direction or re-focus in priorities are required to achieve their objectives.

If selected, I can promise that performance assessment and adjustment will need to continue as long as the WTO exists, because international trade, business and societal needs will change as much over the next 4, 8 and 25 years, as they have changed since 1995. As part of this effort, feedback loops of constructive suggestions will be encouraged to deliver continuous improvement.

If we do not respond to shortcomings, the system will not run smoothly, stakeholders will become dissatisfied, and alternative means will be found outside the WTO to achieve your goals and objectives.

The WTO needs a DG who helps Members to guide the system forward by constantly **assessing performance** and helping find ways to introduce gradual transitions toward improved functioning and, where necessary, to support reform to stay the course into the future. And one of my main goals would be to establish a well-functioning system that will carry Members forward long after my term.

Since 1995, the WTO has largely kept markets open, maintained a transparent, rules based approach to international trade, and stood against protectionism particularly during periods of great economic and financial crisis.

But this "performance" might be called "maintaining the status quo". This is not good enough. In fact, as we see today, standing in place while the world is moving forward means that the WTO is falling behind.

Concerning, my second question of how can we work together to solve current and future problems, I am a pragmatic optimist who believes that as long as Members trust that they all remain committed to the True North of the WTO project, we will always find a way to work together.

In order to work together to solve problems, we need to identify the problems, and their root causes. Again, if all elements of a system are not functioning, the system will eventually break down.

As we work together to solve problems, we must be inclusive. In order to ensure that results reflect the broad interests of the Membership, all voices must be at the table in terms of both Members and genders. Regarding women's empowerment, the WTO Secretariat must walk the talk, including in all levels of management and staff.

Concerning working together through negotiations, I believe that Members will participate in negotiations when they are convinced that the agenda includes an incentive for them to participate. Therefore, in order to have a successful multilateral negotiation, the agenda needs to be balanced – it needs to include something for everyone. I support plurilateral negotiations as long as they are open to all Members, their outcome is applied to all on a most-favored nation basis, and they do not create rules that prejudice the interests of non-participants. I am aware that concerns remain about whether the current plurilateral approach will meet these criteria, and think more work is required in this area.

With full deference to the Member-driven and sovereign nature of the WTO, I am convinced problems can be solved through contributions by the WTO Secretariat staff's research, analysis and increased technical assistance, as well as through increased interaction with various sizes of businesses from all Members.

Finally, transparency is key to my approach to performance assessment and problem solving, so I would recommend periodic public reporting of WTO performance indicators against its goals and objectives.

And finally, concerning the first question on what opportunities and solutions will emerge from current challenges, the existing delay in convening Ministers for the 12th Ministerial Conference may be a blessing in disguise. If we move quickly to take advantage of the opportunity of having an additional year to prepare, we could find and deliver solutions at MC12, particularly on fishery subsidies and electronic commerce and digital trade, which would demonstrate that the WTO can address issues in the public good – that would deliver on your goal of "optimal use of the world's resources in accordance with the objective of sustainable development" – while recognizing the contribution of e-commerce to economic growth in all markets, which has been emphatically affirmed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Although concluding the fishery subsidies negotiations would be a welcome sign that WTO Members can agree on **something**, we should not exaggerate the impression that this small step will make on our constituents. We need to aim higher, and the DG must work overtime to support a more complete agenda for the future of the WTO by MC12.

Having attended **annual** meetings of the IMF and World Bank, I suggest that WTO Ministerial Conferences could be held **annually** in order to bring ministers together, to build personal relations,

and to explore common interests, without always expecting to have a negotiated deliverable at each meeting.

Concerning Special and Differential Treatment, the bottom line is, without negotiations that include incentives for everyone to participate actively, I do not think it will be possible for Members to address the issue of SDT. This is one of the main reasons that the negotiating function needs to start working. Members have various capacities to implement and take advantage of new rules and commitments, so it is clear that each Member must decide for itself what is in its own interest.

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Your Excellencies, no one has all the answers. But under my leadership as WTO DG, I would help provide solutions, and would help guide Members toward your goals – the goals set for the multilateral trading system.

If I am selected to be the DG, on day one, I would establish a WTO "Delivery Unit" that would immediately assess performance against your existing objectives based on data and economic evidence, and which would help ensure that all Members understand how the WTO is operating, where it is not delivering as intended, and which functions need your attention.

This initial assessment would include a deep internal review – a kind of MRI scan – so we can evaluate every aspect of the Organization, including the DG's office, and issues not immediately apparent on the surface.

After Members consider the nature of the problems, it will then be up to them – up to you – to set or revise goals and objectives, and we would then work to constantly assess and measure success going forward consistent with your vision for the future of the WTO.

Your Excellencies, thank you for your attention. It has been an honor to present my ideas to you, and I look forward to responding to your questions.

2. Questions and Answers²

Q: What role do you see the Director-General playing in the multilateral trade negotiations? More specifically, what would you do to help conclude the negotiations on fisheries subsidies, which would become one of your first immediate challenges? (Denmark)

A: We have a great opportunity with MC12 coming up hopefully. There is actually a delay because of COVID-19, which may be a blessing in disguise, as it could provide a huge opportunity for us to prepare further and make sure, between now and then, that those initial Key Performance Indicators are agreed. People use the term "low hanging fruits" all the time, but speaking to Members over the last few days, let us also be careful around what is a "low hanging fruit". The question is delivery – actual delivery. I am pro having more success stories even if they are small, but they will build up. When small success stories are delivered and executed, people regain trust. We need to think about that in terms of process, and the DG's role in the multilateral trade negotiations is to be able to reach out and reach out more. When I say reach out, I mean to all stakeholders. I would like to have a dialogue with all of you and your capitals as well. But, also, when I think about what is between Geneva and capitals, there may be some disconnect. I have heard of this, but I agree. The Director-General, in terms of his approach to reach out, should have a mission. Why is he going to the capital? What is the deliverable? What is the outcome? And the Director-General should bring that feedback back to Geneva to the negotiations. That connection is very important. For MC12, I would propose to you to do it once a year – why do it every two years? Things happen now on a daily basis in our lives. What happens in a month in 2020 is equal to what happened in a year in 1995. I have seen people actually engaging more frequently than once every two years. What do we achieve if we do it annually? If we agree on these KPI performance concepts, the Ministers will have the opportunity

² The following delegations also submitted their names to ask a question to the candidate: Afghanistan, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Estonia, European Union, Finland, France, Gabon, Germany, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Mongolia, Morocco, Nepal, The Netherlands, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Philippines, Romania, Singapore, South Africa, Switzerland, Chinese Taipei, Thailand, Ukraine and Uruguay.

to see performance hands on, and maybe change their minds on some of the issues. Through this, maybe we can deliver more if we hold sessions of the Ministerial Conference more frequently. Regarding your fisheries question, it is one of the files that is more advanced than the others and I would like to conclude it by MC12. Working with you, one of the main things that I will be delighted to help with, is to identify if there are any gaps, determine where they are, what the views are, what people's motives are, and really communicate and come up with comprehensive solutions based on your system, to make sure that this file in particular moves ahead and we call it a success. But let us not exaggerate around that particular file. To me, as more and more files move forward, progress becomes more important.

Q: Reference was made to the primary reason why the majority of our countries joined the WTO. We therefore seek to appoint a Director-General who is able to lead the WTO and help broker a deal that could usher in inclusive development, as espoused by the Marrakesh Agreement establishing the WTO. Development, of course, comes at varying degrees for WTO Members, and Africans realize a disproportionately smaller share of development and growth. As a prospective Director-General, what innovative ideas can you offer to help move forward the negotiations on Paragraph 44 of the Doha Ministerial Declaration? (Botswana)

A: I am aware of the DDA issues that have not been addressed. But, actually, I do not think we can have progress at the WTO until all Members feel that their issues are being attended in negotiations. To me, it is more important to find progress opportunities. As a potential DG, again I would like to demonstrate to the Members, the community, and all stakeholders that there is continuous progress. I do understand also that there are very hot files within the WTO, and I hope we have a chance to discuss many of them during this Q&A, but the main idea is to come back and help Members, come back and assist gaps, come back and say: "these are the scenarios, these are the trade-offs", and really trigger those discussions and trigger those negotiations, and assess and help. Nobody in my view will have 100% of their issues satisfied all the time, and I can relate to that. I have had so many experiences in my life. Before, I once landed on a very complex job with a multinational organization, and the mandate was to basically reduce risks, adhere to the best practice of compliance and reduce costs. When the design was made to addressing all these challenges, the objective was to make a maximum impact to shareholders, making sure that progress had been made, making sure that the next CEO taking over this role actually found a better shop. The case is exactly the same as here. Success to me is when the next Director-General in the future comes and finds a better shop and a better process. I think the issue here to answer your question is around process. Did we actually improve the process?

Q: For the WTO to remain relevant, it cannot work in silo because of the dynamics of the problem and the complexity of the issues. What is your plan to strengthen cooperation with other multilateral organizations? (Malaysia)

A: I absolutely agree, because the world is changing challenges altogether. And I can relate to so many multinational institutions and their operations. I have participated in the IMF Annual Meetings and WEF. I am in charge of the SDGs with the UN and have been on this file for the last four years. So, the question is: is there a lesson learned that we can capture from other multinational institutions? Can we add value to them? When I think about trade, I always try to think about it as a sum of a total. If we think about the world economy as 100, a typical economist or an accountant will tell you that the trade part, let's say hypothetically, for the sake of illustration, is 20%. I would like to actually challenge this and say: what about the indirect issues related to trade? You know, we can talk about jobs, energy, production, manufacturing, logistics and transportation. They are all related. So, I think Members here deserve the right to have this very comprehensive, creative analysis into what trade here really is, how it is changing and shifting, and what the roles are of other multinational organizations in terms of this dialogue that we are facing here. So, I do encourage 100% an open dialogue with other multinational organizations in the spirit of being also the true north for trade. When people refer to growth today, all of us will trust the IMF numbers. Why? Because they are engaging. They do a lot of due diligence. They produce country reports. I would like to see with your help, assistance and inputs that the WTO is also the north star for trade. Publications, periodic reports – all of these adds up. And again, let us face it. All here realize that we are all facing a little bit of reputational and brand issues. We do, and I have seen this from the outside. I have seen the WTO from the outside. Maybe people have also lost hope in many ways. So, by engaging, we will actually be hitting too many birds with one stone. This is very important. It makes a lot of sense. The timing is very good, and we can add a lot of value. It is the way we

present our story, our deliveries and the importance of trade to the world, especially now. And I think there is no better time to engage more proactively with multinational organizations.

Q: Some developing WTO Members grew fast during the last decades and improved their economic competitiveness substantially. How should the result in changes in the international landscape be reflected in the ongoing and future WTO negotiations and, in particular, with regard to special and differential treatment? (Sweden)

A: I must repeat myself here, because I have the deepest respect to Member-driven organizations. This only can be resolved by Members through negotiations. My mind is very clear about this. The question is: are there flexibilities that can be done? The answer is: maybe yes, and I do agree with you. As regards some developing countries and COVID-19, some of them will come out of it stronger than the others. What is their digital infrastructure? How much have they invested in their digital platforms? With the way the world is changing, trade would ultimately, naturally come their way. The question is: are there flexibilities that can be applied where it is genuinely needed? It is not about granting flexibilities. It is genuinely needed. And what is the criteria to define that genuine need? Is it time? Is it sectoral? This is something the Members should agree on through negotiations. This is a Member-driven organization. I know that the issue of general application of S&DT also needs to be resolved and specifically who needs what, would only come out of negotiations. That takes me back actually to the whole essence of having continuous performance indicators in place. The design of these Key Performance Indicators with you must address all these issues for them not to come back. If we all collectively think that things are not progressing, then the performance should tell us. The north star should tell us whether we are deviating, whether we are not moving in the right direction. Again, I must tell you that it is extremely important to believe and think that this is good for everybody. When talking about the LDCs and others, it is actually a tool that will help people make more informed decisions and be more engaged – and maybe change their mind about motives. One of the things that crossed my mind this morning is that we are going through this pandemic, and I do not know the answer to this, but how much was the WTO prepared? Was there a kit ready for Members to access during this pandemic with multiple scenarios, outcomes, a lot of information? What if this stays longer? What if we have another one in ten years, accompanied by a natural disaster? All these questions, hopefully through the DG's role related to information, KPIs and performance, will address your concern and those of others.

Q: If you are elected as the next Director-General, how do you see the role of the Secretariat? Are you going to reform it? If yes, how? (Viet Nam)

A: The role of the Director-General is more of a compass to help Members achieve their common goals, and the realization of the basic ingredients of the organization must be well respected. But I also see a lot of upside potential to think about the DG role and the office itself. For example, I think it is fair to say that, for the first 100 days – though I would like to think as the first 2,400 hours because it makes more sense – what is the first action that the DG should do? I have always liked this concept of deep dive diagnosis, because, even if big issues are identified here and we talk about dysfunctionalities and stalling and all of these, there are also issues that are not there yet. It is under the surface. You could only discover them by really doing a sort of MRI, sort of a deep dive to the office itself. I have done this twice in my life at least. The last job I got as Minister, I was given an agenda and told: tell us what you think in three months' time. These involved things so important that initially you may have an impression and an idea, but once you dig deeper and once you start talking to people and when you start to probe and ask the right questions and do really your homework and due diligence, you will actually find that there is something else. One of the things that I found out in my previous job was that there was a huge gap of communication – massive. This was a very ambitious plan. Targets were designed using big brains, lots of consultants and so on and so forth – very ambitious. And when you filter this down to the average person who is going to deliver it, you will see a huge communication gap. How would you know this, unless you really start talking to people and understand their awareness of the situation and really understand motivations and how motivated they are? One of the things that I feel and please this is not a statement, this is a feeling around my discussions in the last couple of days here – is that maybe we have a motivation issue within the DG's Office. That is the feeling so far, I cannot confirm it. What is it that we need to do in terms of bringing people back to being more motivated? How can this organization and the DG's Office be a centre to attract the best talents in the market? Why would people want to come here? How can we tackle the issue of technical assistance to Members? How can we build performance indicators and monitor them continuously? All of these should be done during the first few weeks – a deep MRI, thinking about priorities, thinking about specific

reforms. The DG himself needs to be monitored and measured against performance, and asked questions by all Members. This is the right way to do it. If things do not move for years, you should ask why. Why is it not moving? What is your role? What have you done about this? This is the only way I can operate. I have built this habit personally, every day, every night, no matter where I am, no matter what day of the week it is. Every day, I ask myself at night what progress have I made today – no exceptions. Progress sometimes is so little, so tiny – things like formats. One day I thought we are sending people a lot of formats and ask them to fill them – tedious and very complicated. And people, when they go into format filling, enter into something called "death by formats". They just hate it, and what is the outcome? They either do it quickly with no quality, or delay it because they do not like it. Simplifying formats and convincing people that it is for the good of everyone was progress. So, that day I was happy. If the answer to the question: "what progress have you made today?" is: "nothing for a while", there is a question mark. Seriously, there is a question mark, especially at this point of time when the world is shifting very rapidly in multiple dimensions and the level of uncertainty, as we have discussed, is unprecedented. COVID-19 may stay with us for a year, two, five, I do not know. It is very difficult to assess. People talk about the new norm. What is this? How does this impact trade? What does it mean for everybody? Let me try to give you as many examples, such as the style, the leadership, management, because I truly think what is needed today is leadership and management more than anything else. Technical support is there. This organization is very competent, I have no doubt. Talking to people, you just know that people are competent. When I took the job of Minister, I said to my leadership that my ultimate customer for the 2030 SDGs is 10 years old today – because by 2030, he will be 20. He is going to enter the job market and, by that time, the objective is to make sure he will enter into a vibrant economy, will have access to jobs and will trust the system. Unless we start today thinking about that person who is 10 years old, then 2030 will not happen, or when it happens it is going to be average – it will not be real. So, as ambitious as you want, you should think of him today – skills development, education, lifestyle, quality, having access to best educational facilities, among others. When it comes to trade, everybody is benefitting. Women entrepreneurs are benefitting. MSMEs are benefitting. Governments are benefitting. How do we think about this collectively? When we talk about incentives and motives, are people really aware of the value of the negotiations? What is the value they are bringing to the main objectives that you have set in the first place? To fill this gap, we should think about measuring our performance and measuring it more frequently, including the Director-General. So, to answer your question – yes, of course and please do. I cannot stand and think about no progress or doing nothing. This is not right.

Q: In light of our vulnerability, the issue of climate change and trade, and by extension natural disasters and trade, are of critical importance to us. What do you see as the role of the organization in ensuring that small island developing States like Barbados have continued space to manoeuvre in light of our vulnerability? (Barbados)

A: In terms of the environment, you have probably heard me saying this: I am all about ensuring performance, and the optimal goal of the WTO Agreement is to allow for the optimal use of the world's resources. When it comes to the environment, there are extremes of interpretations, developments and challenges, but Members have agreed that it is the optimal use. There are few ships that we can jump in. Malaysia asked about multinational organizations. I think SDGs is a good ship. And I have been personally in charge of SDGs, and the environment is in the core of it. You have other international organizations, NGOs and think-tanks. I will encourage the dialogue with specialized entities, with people who think about the environment and make an informed dialogue here at the WTO. But again, I go back to the nature of this organization, which is Member-driven. You have established your goals and you are agreeing to those goals, but any change will come through you. Again, I am here to facilitate, help, assist, and put everybody fairly and equally at the same table and try to assess the decision-making by understanding the motivations, gaps and lack of information, among others. The environment issue is complex and is going to stay with us. It is not easy, but every Member has the right to address its concerns.

Q: Looking at the post-COVID-19 economic recovery, what will be the role of the WTO and the rules based multilateral trading system, particularly considering that the necessary stimulus packages that are being put in place may nevertheless have an unintended consequence of causing further trade distortions? As you are aware, bigger economies have more fiscal space, while smaller economies do not. (Zimbabwe)

A: I have been on the seat of trying to design a stimulus package to open back the economy and stimulate growth again. I can tell you, hands on, that this was one of the toughest mandates you

can ever think about. How do you actually target it based on very little information? And how do you make sure you then continuously measure the impact, whether you need more, and if it should be deployed now or later? It is very complex, and I sympathize with every policymaker today thinking about these variables and thinking about all of us collectively trying to help reopen and survive the post-COVID-19. This is my personal view on the difficulty of the task. The role of the WTO post-COVID-19 is going to be a game changer by all dimensions. Trade is one of the most hit functions globally, to start with. We go back to the same analogy of what is the direct and indirect impact of trade, going into deeper and deeper holes globally. So, that is critical. Demonstrating that story, communicating it effectively and drawing the picture of the real implications of more deterioration on global trade is the responsibility of the WTO. We should be proactive enough to tell the story supported with more evidence, science and inputs from other organizations, and collectively think about this impact. When people are generally aware of the impact, informed decisions would be made. I have seen this hands on. When we look at the total impact, people sometimes think differently about the solutions. We definitely have a major role to play going forward – that is with the spirit of this organization, its mandates and its objectives. The issue to me is how do we communicate this going forward, and what the role of the DG is to really try and reach out to capitals and other stakeholders globally to make sure that the message is delivered regarding trade. I tell you upfront that nobody on earth has the complete solutions 100% when it comes to COVID-19. Even the stimulus packages that have been introduced, you have seen how volatile they are. You have seen how people come up with new numbers all the time and new initiatives, and how they even change their approach to deploying those stimulus packages. I think it is a question of also observing how this will evolve ultimately on all of us. The answer is: yes, definitely we have a role, because of the nature of trade. Yes, some countries have been more privileged, and they are invested and have more ability to introduce more stimulus packages, but our role here as a Member-driven organization is to make sure that we collectively look at the story of trade.

Q: How would your finance background bring input to the WTO reform discussions? As Director-General, what concrete elements would you try to include in this discussion, also taking into account the prospective changes in the way that we do trade in the post-COVID-19 economic recovery period? (Turkey)

A: The correlation between trade finance and growth is very clear. I have done banking for 25 years, and policy recently for the last four years. If you can now have one aggregate balance sheet for all financial institutions, just imagine that you have one capital to deploy towards the world, the components of this balance sheet is high-tier where you can find investments, bonds, large corporations and multinationals. Then there is a lower segment concerning consumers, which include mortgages, loans and credit cards, among others. And there is this beautiful, commercial, trade-related segment of this balance sheet called trade. To me, whenever I look at this and recall my experience managing multinational institutions, trade was always a flow business – something we continuously should invest in: first, because it is cash flow, as trade always generates this; and second, there is a huge set of opportunities around it, as there is a massive ancillary business around it. That is the technical part from my previous life. How would this be brought up here? I think the argument around having a discussion with stakeholders is key. I know that there is some effort, but the WTO should start actively to discuss trade with these multinational institutions, including financial institutions. I think that dialogue should take place. They should see this fresh look, especially in this pandemic. It is in their interest also to see the only entity in the world engaging with a dialogue. For finance people, it is all about risk, risk-taking, risk-reward and returns to shareholders. If they see someone like the WTO, which is the global entity in charge of trade, I think they will be open-minded. This dialogue should be continuous and take many forms. We should also be in the debate of their own challenges around trade finance, and maybe address them back here. Again, we have this feedback loop. How can we make sure there is a continuous information- and knowledge-sharing within this Member-driven organization? The Director-General should play a role into this dialogue. That is one aspect of it. The other aspect of it is that the more uncertainty around us, the more volatility that I have talked about – with COVID-19 it is even worse – that capital with financial institutions becomes even more difficult. Allocation of such capital when it comes to segments that are trade-related, becomes even more difficult because it is very uncertain. What will happen to trade if post-COVID-19 nothing is really done? That means loss. And how does this loss translate to returns? Again, bringing back this confidence in the system, bringing back the agility and the role of the WTO by reviving it and ensuring its Member-driven nature and providing evidence that it is actually delivering and executing – with all of these efforts, the financial institutions would love it. This is great news, even if it would mean that they would have to assume more risk. But these efforts would give them something very precious: clarity. Maybe one of the KPIs should include

making sure that the WTO delivers more certainty to the market. That is just an idea and we need to discuss further. When it comes to post-COVID-19, I will be very surprised if post-COVID-19 the financial institutions, in particular, will come back as they used to be. They usually are late to react. Our role here is to make sure that, when they come back as a major force to support trade, they come back on a more informed and engaged basis. So, bottom line: will I bring all these values and experiences back here and try to discuss with all of you around potential opportunities on leveraging on that particular experience within the framework of the WTO? The answer is: yes, I would be delighted.

Q: In order to facilitate the conclusion of negotiations, a successful WTO Director-General needs to be able to operate at a political level, while mastering technical details. How would you rate your capacities in this regard? (Latvia)

A: The political will is an absolute key success factor for the success of the WTO. I will share something with you, and I am sure that most of you are aware of it. Only recently, with the Presidency of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the G-20 initiated an idea around the future of the WTO. The whole objective was to try to get political will around reforms that are necessary to the WTO. In terms of that, I come from a country that is very trade-neutral. We adhere to the rules of the WTO and have always been a major and neutral partner to many of you here. The political will is definitely one side. I would also like to tell you that my personal approach to this is based on continuous dialogue and continuous improvement. This implies that, when I reach out to capitals, I would like to go with a very specific message and a very specific outcome. I will ask a specific set of questions. What is that we want? What is it that Members want in terms of the values that we are seeking? So, the political side is, I would say, fine. Everything in the world needs improvements, including this. When it comes to the technical side, you will ultimately face three choices in selecting your Director-General. First, we have the very technically oriented person. Second, we have someone who is a technocrat and an outsider from the system. Both of them have risks. And there is a third one – a category in between which I call "hybrid". This is the person with the right technical knowledge, the right awareness and ability to understand things quickly, has a relevant track record, there is a political angle and a technical angle of some sort. You are taking a risk with this person too, but it is somewhere in the middle. The call will ultimately be what is the level of risk you are willing to take? The political aspects will change, and the technical aspects will change. The question is leadership, management and the ability to bring in delivery continuously and make sure there is progress. That is what is really missing here today.

Q: What is your vision for the future of the WTO? What reforms do you believe could drive the process of developmental concerns for LDCs and developing countries, especially the African countries? (Namibia)

A: The future of the WTO will be decided by the Members. The role of the Director-General is to make sure, through this journey and navigation, that we provide assistance and help being a compass. We should provide every solution available and discuss it with Members. What I would ultimately like to introduce is probably five process improvement ideas every quarter – maybe you would like three, reject one and rethink one. So, that is the kind of approach I am proposing. Every quarter you will hear process enhancement ideas that will make your life easier, that will make your negotiations move forward, that will make monitoring and transparency better, that will improve technical assistance needed for LDCs, among others. That is the concept of process improvement that I would like to bring to the table and generate as many ideas as possible. In terms of Africa and LDCs, we definitely need to help create a positive agenda for them. I have mentioned technical assistance and an idea of delivery unit. If the situation is more complex, I, as a potential Director-General, am willing to go myself and assist that technical deficiency. What is it? And how can I help personally, if needed, with this technical assistance? Shortcomings must be identified. Deliveries of the system specific to Africa and the LDCs must be identified. We would probably need to understand why some countries oppose the plurilateral negotiations. We need to understand the root cause. Why are you opposing it? I am not here to judge, I am here to help, but we need to understand what the root cause is, especially if the results would be implemented on an MFN basis. Here is a plurilateral initiative and you can benefit from it, but still you refuse. I do not know why. We have to dig deeper and understand why some people refuse it, especially if they benefit from the results. In the same spirit, what is the way to encourage people to join these plurilateral agreements? In one way, we need to understand why they are not. We should also think of ways to encourage them to enter the plurilateral negotiations.

Q: We are witnessing turmoil in different dimensions, including trade tensions among WTO Members which are having drastic and destructive spill-over effects on many developing countries such as mine. Most of the tensions have been figured within the WTO. As Director-General, how would you address the trade tensions, and how do you define your role in assisting to tackle them during your tenure? (Sri Lanka)

A: If I can tell you that I can succeed in identifying the root causes of any dispute even before they happen, that will already be a great success for the Director-General to be able to have a system in place in this regard. So, when things are trending towards the wrong direction, you have an early alarm, you do not wait until the situation is worse and the dispute is deeper. The approach around finding root causes of all the issues is what the Director-General should be doing, working with Members, understanding issues and bringing in practice. But that is the system designed in terms of process reform. People go into disputes when it is probably too late. Things happen before. We can hopefully help with identifying those before they happen – early warning system. This can be done. In the private sector, I have seen this again and again. People build scenarios not very much related to here, but, again, the thinking is related to here. People build scenarios based on a set of assumptions. They use collective wisdom, they used both quantitative and qualitative measures, and they actually audit these models to tell them how their outcome could be. Every policymaker in the world use scenarios and modelling to predict how things are. In here, the issue is process. How did we get there? What is the root cause? The Director-General has the responsibility to read those signs early on. If we can do that together, that is a big success. That is actually improvement, it is progress. Do I expect the disputes to get deeper in the future? Yes, I do. That is why I say the WTO must start thinking about the implementation of its necessary reforms now, because with more delay, this is going to be much harder in the future. This is simple logic. The more you leave a problem without tackling it and addressing it, the bigger it will just get, or people will go more out of the system and find alternative solutions outside the system. What happens to trust and the brand? It will just deteriorate. My biggest fear, if this is not done now with the right necessary reforms, is that the drifting is becoming bigger, and more Members are now thinking about solutions outside the multilateral system. And Members would face even more difficulties in their disputes. So, again, we are back to the same cycle of issues. Providing an early warning is the role of the Director-General. The DG must come and try to say that this is trending, this may happen, this may lead to this – of course, in the spirit of consultations and dialogue with all Members.

Q: Development is critical to the work of the WTO, it is essential. If elected, how would you safeguard the interests of the developing Members in this organization? In particular, how would you play the role as Director-General to facilitate the negotiations on those proposals to strengthen the S&DT provisions and make them more precise, effective and operational? As you may know, this is an issue on the table for a very long time, even before Doha. (China)

A: This is a Member-driven organization and the role of the Director-General is always to be neutral. I go back to my earlier observation around why these disputes are here. What is the root cause? I do not have the answer now, and it is not my responsibility to pick any political position at all. I am here to facilitate, assist and help as much as possible. But, fairly, the question is why and how we can collectively think of a mechanism or a new process to make sure that those are now actually or at least measured. If there is a delay, do you accept a month's delay or a delay of five years? What is an acceptable duration of a delay for you? We should always highlight the fact of delay and let Members decide how this would impact their goals. How does it impact the initial objectives agreed by all Members? The Director-General should come in at any time, based on the situation, to assist, help navigate and be the compass, the facilitator and the person who tries to find the common ground and bridges any gaps. Within that, the main focus that I will bring as Director-General, is that process of the DG Office and how it can address those complicated, long-term issues and find the root causes. My impression is that, once people really know why we are here and what happens if we do not do anything about it, what the consequences are, the hope is that the process would be more informed than just doing nothing about it.

Q: The growth of protectionism in the form of unilateral, restrictive barriers to trade is evidently the reality of the current conditions of international trade. This problem has been repeatedly raised by many WTO Members. What do you think about this problem, and what actions do you envisage to address it if you are elected as the next Director-General? (Russian Federation)

A: I will definitely emphasise the importance and bring people back to the table around the original objectives of the rules based multilateral trading system, and try to use every single tool available to me to make sure that the risk-rewards are addressed, that its impact on all of you is addressed, and how this deviation from the original agreement is going to help everybody and bring all these argument, but also support it as potential Director-General with a lot of evidence. But before doing that, we need to determine the root cause. During COVID-19, we had issues with healthcare supplies and food security challenges. We are yet to see and yet to understand what really happened. We should understand why people move into that direction and what the root cause is. The Director-General's role is to try to bring back people to the table. Everybody should be at the table. The DG should provide ideas, solutions, evidence, data and scenarios, so that when people negotiate and talk, they are actually more informed. Collectively, is this something you want to bring in as a KPI? Is this something that is worrying the Membership? We need to ask these questions, so we can measure if it is moving or not down the road. When we go to MC12 and present to them our performance, is this something you want to present? That is it. This is what I am presenting. It is all about protecting the essence, the culture and the spirit of this organization; bringing in all these issues back to the table; giving my best to make sure that the approach and the process around negotiations, dispute settlement and transparency are addressed in a process-improvement way; and then collecting the evidence to make sure there is progress. As a result, we will have a collective measurement tool to make sure that progress is made.

Q: As Director-General, what steps would you take to help ensure that workers and businesses across the WTO Membership are subject to market constraints and disciplines, given that free and fair trade based on open, market-oriented policies is a founding principle, or perhaps a north star of the WTO? (United States)

A: There are many changing variables and many challenging things coming our way. If we continue to operate the same way and do not address those external variables and do not address the dynamics of the world towards us, then the WTO, including all of its topics, is going to be challenged. My approach to this, as DG, is to first determine whether we are really informed about the impact of any variable out there on trade that we are looking for here. Is it something that we collectively, with the help of the DG Office, address to make sure that this organization has enough dynamic approach to it to address those issues? Is it something you want to be addressing as a Key Performance Indicator agreed by all Members? Is it something we want to measure? Against what? Is it something that will impact trade globally and benefits the goals of the WTO? That is the approach. That is the DG role around this process – trying to ensure that Members' viewpoints are respected and addressed, and then come up with "what ifs" to everybody. What does this mean for everybody? I think every Member also deserves to see what this means for their people. How can I give and take something into this? That is the role of the DG – help and assist people to navigate. I am not saying that this is not done entirely today. I am saying that the world has changed significantly. The world is going to be worse, maybe, in the future. This extreme volatility is going to stay with us and maybe increase, so any issue, if addressed today, is going back to the same point: process, the help of the DG's Office, continuous progress, continuous reforms, provision of evidence, and so on and so forth.

3. Summing up by the Candidate³

Your Excellencies, it is clear to everyone that the road ahead of the WTO will be very difficult. When we emerge from the current hardships of COVID-19 and trade tensions, we will need to reform and rebuild in order to move ahead. I believe that this effort needs to begin urgently.

I have confidence in the WTO. I believe in its principles, and in its ability to deliver on the goals set by Members. And most importantly, I believe in you, in Members' ability to work collectively in the common interest to stay strong, and bound together for our mutual benefit.

As we say, [Arabic] –

This means "In no way can you break a bundle of sticks bound together. But once they are separated, they are easy to break."

³ Under the modalities for the conduct of the meeting communicated by the Chair to all delegations on 1 and 10 July, each candidate had the opportunity to make a concluding statement during the last five minutes of the question-and-answer period if she or he so wished.

If you put your trust in me as DG, I will help deliver the WTO to its goal, and to maintain its path, True North. For my entire career in private sector and in government leadership positions, I have assessed problems, prepared strategies, and implemented plans to deliver on goals successfully. I know that the circumstances of the WTO would keep me quite busy, and I welcome the challenge.

I would be honored to apply my passions and skills to achieve the worthwhile mission of the WTO, and to help guide all Members to the benefits of multilateral trade.

Thank you, Your Excellencies, it has been a pleasure to speak with you today.

ANNEX 8

Meeting with Dr. Liam Fox (United Kingdom)

1. Presentation by the Candidate¹

Your Excellencies, it is such a pleasure to be back in Geneva. As UK Secretary of State for Trade I visited this organisation on 6 occasions and during my ministerial roles I have visited over 100 countries, I suppose that is why I recognize so many faces here.

I feel I must begin today by acknowledging the scale of the challenge the world currently faces in the COVID pandemic, something I hope we will be able to discuss in the Q&A.

What has it taught us? For me, it is that we now live in a world that is, beyond doubt, more interconnected and interdependent than at any time in the past. This has profound implications for the global economy, for health, for security – and of course, for trade. And we are all in this together.

Yet even before the pandemic there were problems in the global trading system. We actually saw trade contract in the final quarter of 2019, before the pandemic struck.

Together these mean that we simply cannot continue as if it is business as usual. In fact, you might characterise it as business unusual. And the task for both international organisations and nation states is to rise to the challenge that it presents.

The WTO is one of the key institutions in that challenge. I believe that this is a great organisation, full of talent, expertise and knowledge. We have been at the heart of the global project of trade liberalisation that has helped take a billion of our fellow human beings out of extreme poverty in just one generation, a tremendous achievement in human history.

But I know from talking to many of you, including in this last week, that there is a widespread feeling that things are not as they should be. Yes, there are technical issues to be overcome but the real problems of the WTO are not technical. Our problem is the lack of political momentum.

There is too little political will to make the compromises needed for the multilateral trading system to evolve and too little vision to make those compromises easier. We must rediscover that political will and find the right language to express our vision about the opportunities that trade can bring to a new generation.

The global public should see the WTO as having an indispensable seat at the top table of multilateral organisations. When people think about the United Nations, or the IMF or the World Bank, they should also think about the WTO.

So it is not where the new DG comes from that matters but the skills and experience, especially the political experience, that they are able to bring to the organisation for the benefit of each every one of our members.

I believe that my 28 years in politics, and my years serving in senior cabinet posts...

...such as trade...

...and representing the UK at the top table on global issues...

...give me the right experience to bring the renewed momentum, commitment and compromise, which will allow us to return this institution to greater global relevance.

A RULES BASED SYSTEM

I have always been a passionate believer in a rules based international trade system.

¹ The presentation is also circulated in document JOB/GC/240.

Open trade between sovereign nations relies on stable, predictable and dependable rules. These rules help politicians stay honest and resist the protectionist measures which – let's be honest – have advocates in some form in all our systems. If we adhere to, and live up to, these rules they can help to promote political stability and domestic economic progress, development, jobs and growth which is what we all want to see.

And let me say this if I may – if we want those we represent to believe in the concept of free trade then no amount of abstract philosophical discussion here in Geneva will achieve it. Show people jobs, show them prosperity and hope for the next generation, for that is how we will be validated in their eyes.

And I say all of this this because I fear for the rules based system itself. There is a lack of respect for the implementation of what has already been agreed. When the world came together in London in the aftermath of a World War our predecessors, in a few short months, put together a set of principles that have stood the test of time. Principles to which we must recommit ourselves today – most-favoured-nation, national treatment, transparency of commitments.

As someone who has been in the British House of Commons for 28 years, I fully understand the temptation for politicians to skimp on the commitment to multilateralism. There are always elections to be won and domestic stability to secure. But what we must always remember is what the alternative to a rules based international system would look like. Only the very strongest would get what they want and the rest of us? We would be left in their wake, with the smallest and most vulnerable at the greatest disadvantage.

Free trade must never mean a free for all.

CHALLENGES AHEAD

Now, one of the first tasks for a new DG will be to deliver a successful 12th Ministerial Conference. The contents are, of course, for the members to agree but it is essential that the DG works with members to produce ideas and an agenda that, yes, excites us here at the WTO but is also seen as relevant outside. It must focus on outcomes, not process, helping the real businesses – large, medium, small and micro – upon which real prosperity depends.

So what are some of our specific challenges?

Well, despite remaining gaps, members are perhaps closer than they have been in the past to agreeing new rules to discipline harmful fisheries subsidies, and we must push for an outcome as soon as possible to meet the SDG goal set by Leaders. But, this is not just about fish, but about showing that the WTO can take steps on sustainability more generally – an area where members are rightly bringing forward other ideas, and where the public attach great importance.

I know many members are also keen to make progress on Joint Initiatives on e-commerce, services, MSMEs and investment – these will be an important part of the discussions in the coming months.

And of course agriculture. Subsidies, public stockholding for food security, cotton, and other issues will remain critical. This remains perhaps our most difficult challenge something that I have to say I'm well very aware of, from hours we spent discussing this in trade ministerial meetings. Anyone who doesn't understand what this means should not be applying for the job of Director General of the WTO. But it's difficult for a reason, because it is crucial to the livelihoods of so many of our citizens.

Finally, many members understandably want to make progress on critical questions of WTO reform. Again something I hope we can return to in Q&A.

There is a reason why all of this matters. As we emerge from the pandemic, we cannot yet judge what the economic damage will be. But we can bet it will lie somewhere on the spectrum between bad dream and worst nightmare. And we know from experience that the burden could easily fall heaviest on those least able to support it.

And that is why I'm so concerned about the rise in trade restrictive measures taken in recent years which are starting to block up the arteries of global trade – something which, as a medical doctor, I find a very unpleasant analogy.

Last month's WTO report on G20 trade restrictive measures showed that since 2009 the proportion of G20 imports covered by such measures has doubled roughly every two years, rising from only 0.7% in 2009 to an astonishing 10.3% by the end of 2019.

Now, as trade secretary I was a huge supporter of aid for trade and in that time the UK tripled our contribution through Geneva to more than £100 million per year. But what is the point in working harder to assist development when at the same time some of the world's biggest economies are increasing their barriers to trade. We all need to practice what we preach and I would not hesitate to give that message to G20 leaders. Our outcomes have to match our rhetoric.

WOMEN AND TRADE

Let me turn, if I may, to one of the other main issues being discussed in the current DG selection process, that of gender. I recognize the importance of this debate. Let me just make two points.

First, I believe that the role of women in trade is of profound importance, and we need to ensure that all women can have access to the opportunities that trade brings. I am proud to say that during my time as Trade Secretary, the UK significantly scaled up funding to the ITC's SheTrades initiative, supporting women-owned businesses including MSMEs to access the benefits of trade in developing countries.

Second, I think it is fundamentally wrong that trade departments and institutions around the world are – to a large extent – still male-dominated, and I believe this needs to change. When I was asked by former Prime Minister Theresa May to set up, from scratch, the U.K.'s Department for International Trade I was proud to appoint a woman as Permanent Secretary, and I am proud of the representation of women in the department generally under my watch. I commit to you today that if you give me the honour of becoming the next DG then I will ensure that at least half of the WTO's most senior leadership team are women.

I believe that the empowerment of women, including through trade, is a fundamental economic and development objective – just as fundamental as access to education or political expression. I also believe that in support of that goal we should send out an unequivocal message about the powerful and equal role of women in trade right here, in the WTO.

CONCLUSION

I began by talking about how COVID has shown us how interconnected and interdependent we have become. Let me close by sharing something that I learned in my time at the most senior levels in politics including as both defence and trade secretary.

It is this: trade is not an end in itself. It is a means to an end. It is a means by which we create and share prosperity. That prosperity underpins social cohesion and that social cohesion in turn underpins political stability. That political stability is the bedrock of our collective security.

And I say this because we must understand protectionism does not come without a price tag. If we deny people access to prosperity and opportunity through trade then we should not be surprised if the outcomes, whether mass migration, political radicalisation or failing states, come back to bite us.

As an organisation we all need to recapture that optimism that comes from committing to shared values. Yes, we've taken a billion people out of extreme poverty but that cannot remotely be the end of our ambitions.

We need the political momentum to take us forward. It is only with vision, and shared purpose, that we can find the compromises required to meet the challenges I've set out...

...reversing the rise in trade restrictive measures...

...recommitting ourselves to the founding principles to which we have all agreed...

...while updating and strengthening this institution so it's fit to tackle the challenges of the 21st Century.

I believe I have the skills and experience to deliver that political momentum.

One of my political heroes, Winston Churchill said in 1953 that we stand, 'at this hour...before the portals of supreme catastrophe and of measureless reward'. Perhaps, just perhaps, this is such a moment for the WTO with the choices we face.

Thank you for doing me the great honour of allowing me to be part of one of those choices.

2. Questions and Answers²

Q: In recent years, we have seen a rise in protectionism and trade tensions, coupled with increasing scepticism regarding the ability of multilateral institutions to effectively address current global challenges. COVID-19 increases the risks that countries will turn inward, rather than strengthen the multilateral trading system. You have addressed this in your speech, but I want to be a little bit more specific: what role do you think that the Director-General has in building and maintaining support for trade liberalization and rules based trade? (Canada)

A: The leadership role of the Director-General is to constantly be reiterating what it is we have in common. We signed up to a common set of principles, we signed up to a common set of rules. There is little credibility in moving forward with new rules if we are not willing to implement the ones we already have. We have already seen what the WTO can do as part of that program of global trade liberalization. I mentioned it earlier, and yet we can go so much further. My worry is that we have almost taken for granted what the whole process of trade liberalization has been able to do, not just on increasing trade, but in the elements that also brings with it. We need to take those principles, we need to recommit ourselves to them and then, to an extent, reset them. The themes for MC12 need to be recommitment and reset. By reset I mean understanding what the role of trade is – and we are the guardians of those trade rules – but also understanding the role that we play in the objectives that we seek through trade and sharing them with other institutions. There is a lot of work that we can do. I think that the way that the global institutions are set up, rather reflects the shape of domestic governments and the silo mentality that governments have in establishing their system of domestic government, where trade sits on its own, economics sits on its own, security sits on its own, environment sits on its own, development sits on its own. In the real world, that is not how it works. We can take those basic principles, basic beliefs that have done so much for us and so much for the world around us, and extend them into the world ahead and the tasks that we face – but we have got to recommit ourselves to those rules. We've got to understand that, what we have already agreed to, we must honour, or what we agree to in the future will be of much less value.

Q: What is your view as regards the current proposals to reform the application of the special and differential treatment provisions by categorizing developing countries, especially in view of the fact that these provisions are embedded in the WTO Agreements, and also bearing in mind that Paragraph 44 of the Doha Ministerial Declaration mandated Members to strengthen the S&DT provisions in the WTO Agreements making them more precise, effective and operational? (Zimbabwe)

A: I am aware of the complexity of the ongoing debate. Let me make some points of a general nature on this, and then some specific ones. This is a question of how best to integrate low income countries and ensure that the benefits of growth are equitably distributed. That has been on the agenda of every Trade Ministers Meeting I ever attended. We need to start with the first principles and those that we can agree on – that shared global prosperity means that developing countries,

² The following delegations also submitted their names to ask a question to the candidate: Afghanistan, Barbados, Colombia, Denmark, El Salvador, Estonia, European Union, Gabon, Germany, Guatemala, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Malaysia, Mauritius, Namibia, Nepal, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, Philippines, Qatar, Russian Federation, Singapore, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, Chinese Taipei, Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine and Viet Nam.

especially the poorest, must be fully integrated into the rules based international system. Where the WTO has delivered in the past, then it has created more prosperity than any amount of government aid or development could give. And yet, some of our Members still do not believe that trade has improved their lives. First, I see the role of the DG as being a bridge between north and south and working, of course, for all our Members. Second, the questions over special and differential treatment go to the heart that many people feel about the very challenges that the organization has. I think that they are at heart questions about the rights and responsibilities of Members at different stages and development. There is a reason that we have special and differential treatment. It is a recognition that not all our Members are at the same stage of that development. Now we found some technical solutions, such as the Agreement on Trade Facilitation. But I think that this may be a sticking plaster over a much greater problem. The reason that we have continuation of special and differential treatment is that changes in the rules are meaningless if countries do not have the capacity to trade under those rules. Aid for Trade is therefore a critical part of that. For, each dollar invested in Aid for Trade, it can increase exports from all developing countries by eight dollars, and twenty dollars from the least developed countries. When I was Trade Secretary – my record in that stands by itself – I oversaw the tripling of the UK's contribution to that, and we were strong in our support of the ITC's SheTrades. I would add something else to that, which is: supporting countries in that position cannot just be done by pumping extra money into their capitals. If we want to support some of those most vulnerable developing countries, money must be made available to them here in Geneva. If you do not have a voice, you cannot have any influence.

Q: When we talk about vulnerable developing countries, we talk mostly about the LDCs, but there is also another group of vulnerable countries that is the landlocked developing countries or LLDCs. As you know, the trade volume and trade participation of LLDCs is less than one per cent in global trade. Transit of goods is already a problem, and transit cost is twice as high than that of others. This is not only a problem for LLDCs, this is also a problem for other Members in reaching the markets of LLDCs. Knowing this, how could we address the issues faced by LLDCs? (Mongolia)

A: I have learned very quickly this week in Geneva that what the UK does, would not be my goods, would not be my services. I would have to stand back from that. The point is a very fair one. And it is a point that I understood way back, when I first answered for development in the UK Government in the House of Commons, and then was reinforced with me when I was doing trade. There are real, special interests as sub-groups in this debate. Landlocked States are one of them. Island States are another. Coastal States are another. Small and Vulnerable Economies are another. What do they have in common? They have to find ways in which they can access and be given space to develop the capacity to participate in the free and fair trade system. Many of these States, the smaller ones, are even more dependent on access to a free market, because of the limitations of the consumption ability in their own smaller markets. For them it is key that it works. We have to find ways to ensure facilitation for many of these States, and the issues that you raised are highly pertinent ones. There is no point in simply having access to a global market in general if some of those States that have specific difficulties are not given the mechanics in practice to find ways to facilitate entry into those systems, which is a level of complexity which is something that we need to be raising as part of the wider debate to the wider public and not just in here.

Q: Will the WTO save the fish or will the fish save the WTO? I am referring here on the ongoing fisheries subsidies negotiations. The critics of the WTO say that the consensus-based decision-making in the WTO has been responsible for the slow progress in the negotiations and its ability to produce timely outcomes. As Director-General, how will you intend to address this issue? (India)

A: I love the way you phrase the question, because it also makes it a win-win situation for both fishing and the WTO. As a politician, I find that a very attractive premise to the question. There is no doubt that, yes, it is correct. The way that we do business here through consensus is difficult. There cannot be anyone who sat through any length of negotiation that does not understand that. But the prize is also a very great one when we can achieve it. How would we bring extra momentum to this process on fisheries? I think it is going beyond seeing it as simply an economic issue, but also as a sustainability and an ecological issue as well. We can harness some of the power of public opinion out there, which really does believe that we all have a duty to create a viable industry in fishing. Many countries depend on it, sometimes massively disproportionately for their income. We need to understand that, but we also have to understand that we all have a duty in husbanding global resources. Public opinion can be used to help countries understand how important that is. I

know that people have different views on climate change, but I think that one thing that even climate sceptics, of whom I am not one, have to understand is that we have a duty to maintain and husband global resources. We do not own the environment around us. We simply manage it for the next generation. Sustainability of stocks, the health of our oceans, are absolutely key in my mind to dealing with a whole range, not only of those economic, but ecological issues as well – and where we can actually tick both boxes at the same time. I do think we get a win in terms of the negotiations, but we get a win for this organization when the world outside understands that we are more than just about the rules of trade, but we understand the consequences of trade as well.

Q: The utility and the relevance of the Enhanced Integrated Framework is beyond the demonstration stage on how it would help LDCs. As Director-General, how would you ensure support to the EIF and its Secretariat to be able to marshal the necessary funds for inclusive and sustainable development to LDCs, particularly those in Africa and those severely impacted by COVID-19? (Mali)

A: Congratulations on your ingenuity of getting at least three major topics in one question. They are all extremely important topics. The first concerns the point that I was referring to earlier, which is the interaction that this organization can have with other international organizations and what we can manage to develop in terms of more joined up policy. The first thing I would say is: we have to understand in this organization what we are and what we are not. We are about the maintenance of rules based trade. We are about keeping trade moving as the lifeblood of the global economy. We are not the UN and we are not the Security Council, and therefore other disputes need to be taken in the appropriate fora and not overlapping into this one. But we do have shared interests that are not our primary objective. We are not UNCTAD, but we have a very strong role in development. We are not primarily responsible for the environment or climate change, but yet it is a very big part of what we want to do as part of that joined up thinking and action. The first that I would like to do is to see us utilize that relationship better. I would like to see more working papers shared between those different organizations. I would like to use the expertise that is out there to be able to deal with some of the issues. One of the problems that we sometimes get is with definitions used by the international financial institutions. Let me give you one of them. If you look at some of the island States, they may well be regarded by those financial institutions as high-income countries if you measure it by GDP per capita – that is if you measure it by GDP per capita in a good year. If you measure it in a GDP per capita in a hurricane season, you may find that there is a massive swing between them. In terms of the information that we use in our categorization, maybe we require flexibility from some of those institutions to look at the timescale over which we measure GDP per capita, and not as a snapshot. That is a concrete example of where we need to be. In a whole range of issues, including COVID-19, as a doctor myself, we should be cooperating more with the WHO in the current situation. What can we be doing in a COVID-19 emergency to help through trade achieve the objectives that they have set? In a world that is joined up in reality, we have got to ensure that the governance tools for that world do not sit in silos that are inappropriately segmented. We need to be able to bring the expertise, the information, the knowledge, the data that exists in many of these places and the expertise to bear on areas where we have shared interests, if not shared primary responsibility. As DG, that is one of the things that I would love to see happen. It is one of the things that I was very keen to see happen in the UK where we were better able to marry up our development, our economic and our trade policies. That is one of the main challenges that we face and one of the main aims that I would have as Director-General.

Q: This organization is facing existential challenges. Canada just asked you a question on protectionism. My question is on unilateralism. Among all those challenges, unilateralism probably is the biggest threat to the multilateral trading system. In your personal view, what can the WTO do to fight against unilateralism and defend multilateralism? (China)

A: It is enormously flattering when someone asks what your personal views are. In this case, however, my personal views entirely correspond to what my views as Director-General would be. So, we have a happy coincidence. I believe we already have a set of rules that is set out. It is not an à la carte menu. We need to commit to the rules that we have already agreed to, because if we do not agree to those rules – and it is an open, liberalizing, rules based global trading system – we cannot choose which rules any of us wants to see, and which ones we are happy to discard. That is important for the running of the system as it is, but it is also important for the credibility of any of the challenges that we are likely to face in the future. If we are not willing, any of us, to meet the legal and treaty commitment we have already signed up to, what do you suppose the value of our

signature on any future rules or any future treaties would be? It is a question of credibility, as well as the running of the rules based system itself. Everybody has to understand that where we have had in the past, that commitment to shared values and shared goals, that is where we have done the best for those that we represent.

Q: How do you understand the WTO reform? Could you elaborate and specify major elements? (Lithuania)

A: In all my time in politics, one of the greatest lessons is that the shortest questions are usually going to be the worst questions in terms of their difficulty. In this case, this is an issue upon which I place great priority. You can take that question on the WTO reform at a number of levels. We have the practical levels, we have the conceptual level, we have the policy level. What are the different levels of reform and the urgency in them that we need to have? I was in the UK asked to reform our Ministry of Defence. Let me tell you: whatever the challenge of reform in the WTO, it is nothing to having to reform a department whose budget is £ 36 billion, but has an overdraft of ten in real time. I relish the challenge of reform. First of all, let us look at the practical issues that we need to have. I look at what I would call the importance of team and organization. First of all, in team, the head of any organization has two options in the type of team they have. You can have the number twos in your team that are relatively weak because that gets you your own way all the time. Or you can have very strong number twos in your team, who will tell you that you are maybe doing wrong, tell you to wind it in if you are going too far, and pushing your leadership ideas, or that you need to step up if you are not. I have always valued that second model. In politics, I have always ensured that my teams were such that were I to be ran over by a bus tomorrow, my department would continue to operate seamlessly. Of course, the danger in politics is that it makes some of your colleagues to want to be bus drivers. The key element there is that in an organization when you have a Director-General who travels, we have got to make sure that we have the top level who are able to get this organization operating at its maximum all the time. Because of the Member-based nature of this organization, it is important that those who are in the senior team are willing to say to the Director-General: "remember at all times that this is a Member-driven organization. You may have strong views yourself, but you need to back off sometimes." Having people who have got the strength to say that to you is important. In terms of the organization, the Secretariat is great, but you have to ensure that we are not spending too much time on legacy issues and spending time on the issues that are emerging and we will have to face in the future, and also that the workload in the Secretariat is even, so that you are getting the best out of the people. So, that is the practical and the people side. And then there is the conceptual element which has been mentioned a number of times and that is the commitment to the rules based system. I would hope that at MC12 our themes would be to recommit and reset. We have to get that commitment to the rules based system. We cannot be an à la carte menu. We need to obey the rules we have all already agreed to. Of course, we also have the policy challenges. Fishing has already been mentioned. The Appellate Body is another one to be able to get these things running. All these different elements – some more exciting to the outside world than others – are important in getting an organization to be operating at peak efficiency. Those of us who have actually had to run big organizations with big budgets and very large numbers of staff, we have the scars to show when we have gone wrong, but we have also got the flags to wave where we have gone right.

Q: Do you agree that there is an insufficiency in the WTO rules with regard to fair competition on the international stage, particularly with regard to government intervention in certain economies? If you share this point of view, how do you think it would be possible to improve and to level the playing field among Members? (France)

A: As in many things, the core answer to the question is understanding what our objective actually is. That is, as I have said earlier, to make the benefits of a liberalized, free trade, fair trade system available to as many people as possible, first of all by understanding that we do require differential treatment, so that those at different stages of development are able to access the benefits of the system incrementally over time. The key to that is the aiming point, not the snapshot. If we are able to grasp that we have to have a variable geometry on this, then we diminish some of the difficulties and frictions that we sometimes have. Accepting that we do not all come from the same place, we might all want to get to the same destination and we might be doing it at different speeds, enables us to have the patience and the compromise that is inevitably involved in creating those differentiations, and sometimes, at least for a short term, slightly different ways in which we interpret the rules going forward. This is where we need to maintain this focus on our shared aspirations. Focusing on the aspirations suggests that where we all want to get to, is a common

place. We are not having different rules for the sake of it. We are having slightly different rules because they are necessary, if we genuinely want to bring the benefits of our trading system to a wider and wider section of countries, their peoples and their businesses. I see it not as an intellectual differentiation, I see it as a pragmatic one, and there is nothing wrong with pragmatism.

Q: How can plurilateral initiatives contribute to the strengthening of the multilateral trading system? Do you have ideas on how plurilateral agreements could be best integrated into the WTO system? (Romania)

A: The first that I would say to that, is that we are a multilateral organization and the gold standard of anything we agree is a multilateral agreement. I sat through those long discussions in Argentina at MC11, agonizing over this issue of plurilateral versus multilateral. The emergence of some of the plurilateral initiatives really were an expression of frustration about the lack of progress we were able to make in some areas. The attitude you take to plurilateral agreements vis-à-vis multilateral agreements is in part pragmatic, in part philosophical. If you see plurilateral agreements as a clear alternative to multilateral agreements, then you somewhat missed the point of the establishment of the World Trade Organization. If, on the other hand, you see plurilateral agreements as a steppingstone whose ultimate destination is a multilateral agreement, then you have conceptually something quite different. In practice, if a plurilateral agreement does not have a destination of a multilateral one, there are questions about the use of the Secretariat and the resources of the WTO. On the other hand, if we do see it as something that would be available to all Members when they are ready to take part and something that is open and generous, but ultimately has the destination of a multilateral, that is something that I can live quite happily with. It is not the preferred outcome, it is not the gold standard, but sometimes we have to make progress because that is what the people outside expect us to have in an organization that perpetually goes through meetings with lots of process and little outcomes, which is very hard to validate in the eyes of those people we represent.

Q: How would you propose to revive the WTO's negotiating arm to ensure global trading rules remain relevant to business and WTO Members? (Australia)

A: You begin that with how genuinely committed are we to those basic principles? One of the essential roles of the Director-General has to be to point out the importance, as I have set out earlier, of the principles upon which we were established – the value that all of the different elements and parts of the negotiations are able to bring when they have the political backing behind them. Many of the problems we face are not technical issues. They are about the political will to make them happen. When we have the consensus, when we have the shared goals, we are actually able to do a great deal. A lot of time is spent in saying what are the technical obstacles in our way to making this part of the organization or another part of the organization work, when in fact our problem is lack of political commitment. When we have that political commitment, it is the key to unlocking a whole range of the issues that the organization has in taking different parts of our agenda forward in different places.

Q: Trust is an essential element for successfully concluding negotiations at the WTO. One challenge faced by the system is how to create this trust among Members. What could a Director-General do in this regard? How could we avoid the abuse of the use of the principle of consensus in taking decisions? What can be done to facilitate consensus? Are there alternatives to the rule of consensus in cases of institutional paralysis? (Costa Rica)

A: That is such a profoundly important question. What is trust? For me, trust is our confidence in the ability of others to deliver on what they had promised in a whole different range of scenarios – in our personal lives, professional lives, institutional lives. Trust comes from two things: it comes from experience and having good experience of other people delivering on what they promised; it also comes through verification and the ability to ensure that there is transparency in the process and that what we are being promised is what we are being delivered. That is the most basic. That is how I would regard what trust is. It takes time. It takes a lot of effort. If I may, in my previous existence as a doctor, in dealing with patients, it takes time to build that relationship of trust and it comes because they do not get any surprises. They are given good information. They are given transparency in that relationship. That holds in a whole range of other relationships. Yes, again, as I mentioned earlier, it is difficult to build that in a system that requires consensus. It is, of course, a huge challenge. Are there alternatives to paralysis? Yes. We have found institutional measures in terms of trade and plurilateral agreements to find other ways forward, even though they may be a

steppingstone to the same end. But the transparency in what we do is key. On that issue of link between transparency and trust, if we do not have transparency, how can we get good quality trade negotiations? If we do not know exactly what we are negotiating to implement, how can we get good quality within those agreements? Trust and transparency are two sides of the same coin. We have to develop the mechanisms for that. It also helps if you have someone who can see both sides and who can recognize that both sides may have a case, even if they do not agree in everything together, and building consensus is an essential role I see of the Director-General, because that consensus can lead to better transparency and that transparency can lead to better trust. It would be very different in an organization where you can just slap the table and implement change. If we want to implement change, we have got the added difficulty of reaching consensus, and consensus without trust is infinitely more difficult than with it.

Q: Regarding the dispute settlement system, on the issue of the Appellate Body, this organization is now faced with a big challenge. If you were elected as Director-General, how would you approach this issue to restore its function? (Japan)

A: As I mentioned in my initial presentation, this is one of the main challenges facing the new DG and it is one of the main issues in the run up to MC12. Providing a forum to resolve disputes is one of the most important contributions that the World Trade Organization makes to the global trading system. I believe very strongly in the rules based system, but that system needs an effective dispute settlement system enabled to ensure that the rules that we have collectively agreed are enforced. Over this last week, many of you have said to me that the current challenge we face is the inevitable consequence of the failure to take decisions in negotiations which have forced the Appellate Body to fill in some of the gaps. Others have said that the Appellate Body has gone beyond the mandate provided for it. Equally, some of the concerns of Members have been technical concerns about the way that the system has developed over time. And I think that there may well be elements of truth in all of these, and I think that they have to be looked at in the round, and not as conflicting challenges to the system. If I may, let me say to Ambassador Walker that the work he has done on possible solutions has taken us a number of steps forward and provide a very positive basis for future conversations. But if I am being very frank, we have to understand that it is not just technical issues that we face on this particular problem. Again, as I said in my presentation, it is a political issue. Do all Members want the Appellate Body to be up and running? If we all do, then compromises can be found to enable us to go forward. Regarding the MPIA, having a temporary solution can only be a temporary solution. It cannot be a replacement to a long-term settled view of what we actually want to get from the system. If we can get an agreement, it is great, we can move forward together. If we cannot get an effective dispute resolution settlement at the WTO, the rules based system itself comes under threat. When we consider the political elements of this particular dispute, we will do well to remember what the consequences of failure would be, as well as the rewards of success.

Q: We were very happy to hear the word agriculture in your opening remarks. What are your views on the WTO agriculture negotiations? Should it be part of the MC12 package? What is your view on the role of the WTO in opening markets in agriculture and significantly reducing trade distorting domestic subsidies? (Brazil)

A: It is important we make progress, because frankly there is one major global crisis out there that we need to be putting more of our attention towards, and that is the COVID-19 crisis and our role in that. And so, we need to try to deal with some of these legacy issues as much as we can, because it takes up a great deal of our time and energy, understandably. There is a reason why agriculture has its own special, separate agreement. That is because governments have a fundamental obligation to make sure that their citizens are fed. As a politician, I understand that. Agriculture also has important ecological and cultural considerations, which add to the complexity of the issue. I was there in Buenos Aires. I am very familiar, after long hours spent in some of those rooms, about the issues. Members have an idea where they want to get to, but the compromise is essentially very difficult politically. That is why we have taken such a long time. The DG's job is to build the trust that Costa Rica mentioned, and to make those compromises easier. Do we have to end distorting subsidies? Well, that is the aim of this organization – to end distorting subsidies and barriers to trade. Very often we talk about one, but not the other, and they must go hand in hand if we were to make real progress. The reason why I mentioned the COVID-19 crisis is that up until now our situation in getting an agriculture agreement has been difficult. Maybe we are making a bit more progress than we had in the past, but I am afraid that we may find that the COVID-19 crisis accentuates some of the differences and some of the difficulties we face in the global economy, including in agriculture. It may well be that, going forward, we find that, at least in the short term,

our task does not become easier, but becomes harder, because it is harder to get the political compromise and the consensus required. That is very said, but that is not something that is within our control. You asked: should it be a major element in MC12? Yes, it should. In a perfect world, we would be saying: this is our priority, this is our priority, this is our priority. We must be very careful in this organization that we do not over-promise, particularly in the coming months, because the agenda that we might want to have in "business as usual" may not be a luxury we have in "business unusual". I would love to say to you: yes, we made progress, and with a bit more help, encouragement of political consensus, we might get there. I am afraid, I have to be honest with you and say that I fear that the consequences of the pandemic might make it more difficult in the short term rather than easier. Going back to my earlier career, I always found it easier to get the agreement and compliance of my patients if I actually told them what they needed to hear rather than what they wanted to hear, because giving people false confidence actually, in the longer term, undermines your credibility. I am sorry. Normally, I am a very optimistic person and I would like to give you a more optimistic answer, but we have to be hard-headed and realistic about the potential of the COVID-19 pandemic and what it may do to some of the complexities we already have in this organization.

Q: What is your view on South-South Cooperation and the establishment of new South-South value chains, especially on how to uplift them? (Morocco)

A: As UK Trade Secretary, I was very involved in the Ministerial Meeting that we had with Commonwealth Ministers back in 2018. One of the areas we looked at was how to help countries develop intra-regional trade in a much better way than we have in the past. One of the practical ways in which we did this was to try to get people to understand what the differences may be between their economies that actually provided difficulties in diminishing those barriers to trade and increasing trade between countries. His Excellency from India would remember that we set out what we described as a trade audit. We said: how can we look at our economies and see where we can reduce the gap between us on a sector by sector basis to be able to make it easier for us to have better trade and come to, in the longer term, trade agreements? We looked to see in all those sectors where the differences were, where we could through market access or regulatory reform. If we do the preparatory work, if we understand better what the data is around some of these issues, then we can actually make very substantial progress. Inter-regional trade and south-south trade is a huge potential in global growth. Sometimes we forget that we are not the World Trade Agreement Organization, we are the World Trade Organization. A great deal of what we want to do and what will improve the laws of the people we represent, can be done through market access, de-regulation and understanding the complexities of the differences, rather than embarking endlessly on trade negotiations ending up in either multilateral, plurilateral or bilateral agreements. Getting the best data available is important in that. If countries are looking to establish better interregional trade, we can do a lot with other global partners, whether it is the international financial institutions, or the OECD, to provide better data. I have always taken the view in my professional work that you make your best decisions when you have the best amount of empirical data in front of you. One of the problems that we often have is a lack of detailed knowledge of the workings of some of the systems, some of the differences that we have. If we can help, especially some of our small Members, gain the insight and the knowledge that they require to make good decisions going forward, it is one of the biggest contributions we can make. It is not going to make frontpage headlines across the world, but it is what we are here for. It is one of the reasons why we were established – to increase trade so that we can improve the ability of people at all levels of development to access the benefits of a rules based system. There is tremendous opportunity for us to take some of those initiatives forward. It is one of the key elements, perhaps even in the post-COVID-19 environment, of how we will be able to get that global economy recovering and be able to get trade moving. So, thank you very much. You have made me feel more optimistic after my last answer to the question from our colleague from Brazil.

Q: I want to follow up on my colleague from Japan's question about dispute settlement. You suggest there might be a lack of political will. I am wondering whether there is a lack of common vision about the appropriate role of dispute settlement in the WTO. In your view, is it the job of appellate reviewers here at the WTO to establish precedent, create jurisprudence, and issue binding, authoritative interpretations of the WTO Agreements, or is their role a more limited one to helping Members resolve their specific disputes on a case by case basis? (United States)

A: In British politics, rule number one is never accept the premise of the question without questioning the question itself. I am very grateful to the Chair for the fact that we are allowed in this forum to ignore the questions if we think we have dealt with them before. Believe me, that is not a luxury you get in the House of Commons. What I would go back to, is why was the Appellate Body created. It is there because we believe that the dispute panel of the GATT went too far, that it was taking into account elements that it was not really designed to do. Therefore, it came into a quasi-judicial system to narrow down the scope of those judgments – that I find from the legal background of my country a very acceptable thing to do. We need to look at the scope of the Appellate Body to ensure that it is not going beyond the remit that was originally intended. There is a danger with every institution of mission creep, and we have to make sure that that is dealt with. Do I think, in limited cases, very tightly drawn, there could be the setting precedent? I think yes, if it was very tightly drawn. Do I think that in general it is a principle that we should accept without limitations? No, I don't.

Q: Members have entrenched positions across the three functions of the WTO: rulemaking, trade monitoring and dispute settlement – issues that are very much pronounced in Paragraph 30 of the Nairobi Ministerial Declaration. Coming from Africa, a continent that continues to face Twentieth Century developmental challenges, we need a WTO that is able to bring the Members together and chart a way forward for inclusive development that leaves no one behind in accordance to the SDGs. As prospective Director-General, what strengths do you bring that can offer the Membership the comfort that we will not in the future arrive at a position where we agree to disagree, which of course paves an undesirable picture of trade being a zero-sum game? (Botswana)

A: I would, again, go back to a number of the points that I made earlier. First of all, the key element is to emphasise our shared vision. When we understand what it is that we have achieved together and can achieve together, then we are able to make some of the compromises more easily. The reason why I went back to what we did in 1946 and 1947 was that, at that time, in a very broken world around us, we had a real understanding that, if we worked together, if we were willing to give and take, if we were willing to make the compromises necessary, we could create something much better than that which had gone before. In many respects, that challenge is just the same today, and I wonder whether the dislocation that may be coming in trade as a result of the pandemic, may give us an opportunity to understand that mindset in future better than perhaps we do today. That is the first thing I would say. What do I personally bring? As I said earlier, having done a number of governmental jobs, including answering in the UK Parliament on the issue of development and having travelled very extensively. It is one thing for politicians to have read about things. It is quite another for politicians to have seen things for themselves. And in my experience, when politicians have been exposed to the reality of a situation rather than just the facts on paper, it can produce a very different response. Back in my early days in politics, I was responsible for a British aid project in improving drainage and sanitation in Kolkata. Before I went to see it, it was an academic exercise. After I had seen it for myself, I completely understood the importance of what that spending on behalf of the UK taxpayer actually meant to people on the ground. An understanding of the real world, having seen it at all different levels of development, is key to being able to, in all situations, see the perspective from both sides. That is necessary in building trust, in building consensus. Concerning not being ideological but being pragmatic, all of us have our strong views. If we did not all believe in a rules based trading system, we would not be here. But those basic ideals apart, we cannot take a hard ideological view of the challenges we face, or we will not allow ourselves to take advantage of one of the greatest things that we have in the human spirit, which is the ability to compromise and the ability to see the best, even if it requires ourselves to make small sacrifices. It is not possible, especially in an organization that operates in consensus, for us to move forward, unless we all accept the principle that we cannot all always get what we want and that sometimes we have to make sacrifices – sometimes difficult political sacrifice – to take forward those shared ideals and create new achievements. And we will need new achievements because, yes, we have got the legacy issues, but we will face new challenges ahead in the post-COVID-19 environment. What will we do when we find that we have a world where a lot of the finance that was used to deal with the short-term issues of COVID-19 requires the attention of more developed countries in terms of their ability to deal with sovereign and corporate debt? There are a whole range of new issues coming down the line. What are we going to do about the orange economy? What do we do about the tech gap that will be cruelly exposed by what is happening at the present time? All these challenges are best met when we understand that we have to be able to learn to be pragmatic and compromise. If we all say that this is exactly what we want and if we do not get it, nobody moves forward. Then a consensus-based organization like this one, which has

achieved so much in the past, will not be able to replicate that in the future. If I believe in anything passionately, it is that we have the talent. I also believe we have the innate direction and desire to take forward many of the challenges we have, in a way that is beneficial to us all. But we all have to learn that we cannot always get all of what we want, at least not all the time.

Q: Besides concluding the fisheries subsidies negotiations, would you have any ideas on how the WTO and its Director-General could concretely contribute in delivering the Sustainable Development Goals? (Finland)

A: The first thing is understanding what it means in terms of our basic aims, which is how do we spread the benefits of a rules based trading system to as many people, countries and businesses as possible. The SDGs are key to that. I would go back to the point I made earlier that the core principle here is how we will allow countries at different levels of development and capacity to have the breathing space to be able to maximize the benefits of the system that many of us already take for granted, because we have long had the capacity and capabilities. So, how do we manage this wider process? How do we deal with some of the other issues – not just access to trade but the ongoing climate crisis which I had hope we might have talked about more today? How do we incorporate our concepts around Aid for Trade? How do we include concepts around food security? How do we improve productivity? How do we deal with market distortions, barriers to market and unacceptable subsidies? All of these have to be taken together. And I think, if I may say, that in some of the elements we have discussed today, part of our problem is that agriculture, SDGs, fisheries, are seen as separate rather than connected issues. In many ways, they are hugely connected. In many ways the climate change issue is the one that does connect them. Understanding all of those in a more holistic way is key. How do I think they can be taken forward? I think by understanding that we have got to get away from the silo mentality of seeing some of these issues as completely independent and separate, and trying to get the organization itself to operate in a way that allows some of that cross-referencing which, let's face it, out there in the rest of the world we take for granted, and maybe we have to do a bit of catching up in the way we think about some of these challenges.

Q: What could be done to martial the political will you so pertinently underlined, precisely to revamp the agriculture negotiations that, as you know, are mandated within the agreement? As you said, COVID-19 has created a new situation, but as you also said that food is essential for any one of us. Perhaps you could provide us with examples of new approaches and new methodologies that we could use to revamp these negotiations? (Uruguay)

A: One of the problems that we face is that, if you ask our domestic populations at the end of the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s: "what are the most relevant organizations in the world?", they would have said: "the WTO". One of the reasons that we find it difficult to get political momentum is that our publics have disconnected in their interest in what we do, because they do not see a direct link between what we talk about and what they are interested in. We talk, understandably at times, about ideological distractions, about philosophical differences. What people out there want is jobs, they want prosperity, they want hope for the next generation, they want sustainability, they want us to understand the ecological consequences of what we do. The first thing in getting our governments to give greater attention to the issues, as I said in a holistic way, is to reengage the public. I do not think that we use some of the tools effectively. Here we are in the year of social media and we do not use it enough. We are not using the communications that we could in the way that would bring our people together. For example, if we want the fisheries to put pressure on elected governments around the world, there are a lot of NGOs and environmental organizations who can be mobilized to say that if we cannot get agreement, then the sustainability, the quality of our oceans, the quality of the environment and the planet we live on will be diminished. Do we do enough to try to bring those different elements of our societies together to create a political climate in which it is easier for politicians to make those compromises? No, I don't think we do. If I were to pick a single element of where we need to make progress, it is that. We need to reconnect with civil society and get them to understand that much of what they want, could be done in this forum, but they have a role in applying some of the pressure to their governments to be willing to make the compromises without which a whole range of the points that could have been raised in this forum this morning will not be possible to conclude.

Q: What would the role be of the Director-General as regards promoting the organization's image before the eyes of the civil society and the business community? (Paraguay)

A: The role of the DG is to express in a relevant way to a different generation what the WTO is for and what it has achieved. I go back to the point that I made earlier. Taking a billion of our fellow human beings out of extreme poverty in just one generation is an unparalleled achievement in human history. But how many people out there understand that we, the WTO, had a role in achieving that – not alone, but a role in achieving that? How many of them understand that many of the issues that they are concerned about, we actually may not have unique responsibility for, but we have some role in ensuring that we can get the outcomes that they would want to see? First of all, there is a conceptual intellectual role of setting out why we are who we are, and what we actually have achieved in the past. It really annoys me when people say: "the WTO does not work". The WTO has been one of the most successful organizations that we achieved in the post-World War II environment. That I think is key. How do we start to get the messaging right about what we can, and have done? There is an element about how we run ourselves. That is a very key role for the Director-General. And that's, I think, in the team that the Director-General runs and in the wider sense amongst the Members that, if you allow me to use a UK analogy, it's first among equals. That is a very important concept in terms of how we see the role of a DG in a consensus organization. This is not someone who can just, as I said, slap the table and get their own way. You have to work a lot harder at this. The role of the DG is in making the case that, if we are all willing to give a little bit here and there, we can actually make that progress. So, we have to get the message out to the wider world out there about what we have done and what we can do if we act together, and internally understand that there has to be this search for consensus, there has to be an element of pragmatism, there has to be an element of give and take. Then you've got where we really need to be. And I still do believe, hand on heart, that this organization can have its best days ahead of it. It certainly will have some of its biggest challenges ahead of it, but we better get ourselves into a good fit shape to be able to deal with those. It is possible, it won't be easy, but you show me anything that was worthwhile that was easy.

3. Summing up by the Candidate³

Thank you, Chair and thank you to all Members for the opportunity to answer such a wide range of searching questions. I know from speaking to many of you this week and during my many visits to Geneva over the past few years that despite the great achievements of the WTO that I just referred to, there is a feeling that we need to regain our drive and our direction. The next Director-General will need to steer this organization through the economic consequences of a global health crisis that now risks frankly undoing some of the progress that we have made in recent years. And we cannot pretend that it will be "business as usual". At the same time, the Director-General will need to work with Members to renew the spirit of the WTO and make it fit for purpose for the 21st Century. It cannot simply be held back by the stalemate of the decades past and vision, which has come up a few times during our questions. It is something that we should not be embarrassed about or something that we should shy away from as an organization.

As I mentioned, before I was an MP for 28 years before I had the honour of working as our Defence Secretary and Trade Secretary in the UK. I practiced as a doctor. I worked in our National Health Service for about ten years. In that time, I think I learned four skills that I think are vital for the next Director-General. First, be authoritative enough to have difficult conversations. I know the organization has got great talent and great technical ability, but it needs political momentum. Serving in senior cabinet posts over the past years, I had conversations that have led to real, lasting and positive change, but they have seldom been easy or painless. And I believe I can help return this institution to the global relevance I believe it deserves. Second, be focused on first principles and do everything on the basis of the best information available. The question about inter-regional trade was a classic example of how we need to make that happen. Third, be a good listener and be intuitive enough to understand when to intervene and when to step aside, and let others act on your behalf. And fourth, set up a system that genuinely does work for everyone. You cannot be healthy

³ Under the modalities for the conduct of the meeting communicated by the Chair to all delegations on 1 and 10 July, each candidate had the opportunity to make a concluding statement during the last five minutes of the question-and-answer period if she or he so wished.

if one part of your body is neglected and you cannot maximize economic health if some are left behind.

As Director-General, I would be genuinely devoted to establishing a system whose benefits can be accessed by everyone. I learned from my previous profession that if you do not listen, you won't come to the right diagnosis. But also, if you don't have the right experience, you are unlikely to provide the right treatment. This is a great organization, but it can be greater still – which is why I want to run for the position of Director-General. And let me finish on this point. Almost everything that we do in our private lives, in national service, in international life, is binary – either we shape the world around us, or we will be shaped by the world around us. I believe in this organization. We have the principles, we have the experience, we have the ideals to shape the world around us in a better way. We are going to face major challenges in the future, but perhaps the greatest one is whether we have the courage to take up the challenge that will be placed before us.
