



Ministerial Declaration of the BRICS Trade Ministers

Geneva, Switzerland, December 14, 2011

We, the Ministers of Brazil, China, India, Russia, and South Africa, have met on 14 December 2011 in Geneva, before the 8th World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Conference.

Following up on our previous meeting held in Sanya, China, on 13 April 2011, we are pleased with the recent establishment of a contact group entrusted with the task of proposing an institutional framework and concrete measures to expand economic cooperation both among BRICS countries and between BRICS countries and all developing countries, within a South-South perspective. We notice that the contact group met for the first time on December 2nd, 2011, in Beijing, China, to further its work.

We also note that India would be hosting the Fourth BRICS Summit in New Delhi on 29 March 2012 and the first substantive meeting of the BRICS trade ministers would also take place on 28 March 2012. This would provide a good opportunity to review the outcomes of the MC8 and to devise a common approach on the way ahead.

We recognise the huge growth potential both in trade flows among developing countries and in cooperation in investments in the coming decades. We believe that the BRICS countries should play a leading role in South-South cooperation. We are accordingly committed to further expanding economic, trade and investment ties among our countries. Deepened and enlarged economic cooperation of the BRICS countries may be conducive not only to serving our shared interests but also to helping promote growth in the global economy. We agree that steps to strengthening economic and trade cooperation among our countries should be taken in an incremental, proactive, and pragmatic manner.

We further recall that, in Sanya, we highlighted our commitment to the WTO trade regime and to the Doha Development Agenda (DDA).

In this context, the WTO BRICS countries congratulate Russia, the largest economy outside the multilateral trading system, on the successful conclusion of the accession process to the WTO, and look forward to the forthcoming Ministerial Conference to formally endorse Russia as a new member. This will be a crucial step in making the WTO even more representative and legitimate, further strengthening the multilateral trading system.

We express satisfaction at the completion of the accession processes of three other new WTO members: Montenegro, Samoa, and Vanuatu. We also welcome the approval of a new set of guidelines for the accession of the Least Developed Countries that will contribute to our shared goal of reaching universality in WTO membership.

In this process of buttressing the multilateral trade system, we underscore the pressing need to further develop its rules and structure to address in particular the concerns and interests of developing countries. The WTO must maintain its central role in monitoring the implementation of the multilateral trade disciplines and commitments, including in the key area of dispute settlement. It also serves as a forum for discussion of trade related matters that all members agree to be relevant and pertinent. The negotiating functions of the Organisation must also be preserved and energised.

We attach great importance to the role of the WTO in keeping protectionist forces at bay. Under the present global economic conditions, international trade plays an even more critical role in stimulating economic growth and development. We are in full agreement that all forms of protectionism must be resisted. At the same time, we underscore the need for developing countries to retain and use, when necessary, any existing WTO-consistent policy space. We also underline that trade distorting subsidies granted by developed economies, particularly in agriculture, are one of the most harmful forms of protectionism. These subsidies generate food insecurity and deny the development potential of this key sector in countries that already face formidable challenges to participate in global trade flows.

We are particularly concerned with the existing impasse in the Doha Development Round. Despite these circumstances, we will remain fully engaged in negotiations with a view to concluding the single undertaking within the shortest possible timeframe. We emphasise that negotiations on any component of the DDA must be based on the mandates multilaterally agreed since the launching of the Round in 2001 and on the delicate balance of trade-offs achieved over the last 10 years, which are also reflected in the draft modalities texts of December 2008. We remain willing to conclude the Round on the basis of those draft modalities.

We agree that the DDA negotiating stalemate should not discourage members from seeking results in specific areas where they agree that progress is possible. We will instruct our negotiators to engage effectively and constructively whenever such agreement exists. These efforts must not lose sight, however, of the centrality of development in the Doha mandate. Any early outcomes must deliver first on elements of interest to the poorest among the membership. Issues of interest to the developing and the least developing countries must be at the forefront, without linkages to other areas. The full implementation of the Hong Kong Ministerial Declaration regarding the duty-free-quota-free initiative, as well as topics like cotton and agriculture, must be given priority and constitute an integral part of any early agreements. These efforts must be wholly consistent with the existing mandates and observe the principles of transparency and inclusiveness. In this context, we will not encourage or support plurilateral approaches, or any other negotiating modality that may compromise or weaken the multilateral nature of the negotiations.

We welcome measures taken by our agencies of technical cooperation in areas which are especially relevant to African countries. They complement initiatives undertaken by the WTO and other relevant international organizations. We underline the need to keep pursuing and enhancing aid-for-trade initiatives that benefit our trading partners. The cooperation with the Cotton-4 economies is a landmark in this field and we commit to maintain and intensify it.

The Minister of the Russian Federation recalls that her country is expected to start implementing its commitments in the WTO as of mid-2012. She affirms that, with full WTO membership attained, Russia is going to participate in a constructive and active manner in the DDA negotiations in view of the crucial role that a balanced DDA outcome would have in the strengthening and development of the world trade system.