



NAIROBI FOURTH CHINA ROUND TABLE

WTO ACCESSIONS AND THE MULTILATERAL TRADING SYSTEM

HIGH LEVEL SESSION: INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND AFRICAN PERSPECTIVES
ON THE FUTURE OF THE MULTILATERAL TRADING SYSTEM

Opening Ceremony of the High Level Session

MONDAY, 14 DECEMBER 2015 AT 9:00

OPENING REMARKS BY H.E. PRESIDENT UHURU KENYATTA, PRESIDENT OF KENYA

"Africa's First WTO Ministerial Conference: Importance of Africa's Perspectives and Contributions"

WTO Director-General Roberto Azevêdo,

Minister GAO,

Ministers,

Ambassadors,

Invited Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Government and the People of Kenya, I welcome you all to Nairobi and to this High Level Segment (HLS) of the "Fourth China Round Table".

Thank you Director-General and Minister GAO for the honour to host the Fourth China Round Table here in Nairobi. I am pleased to see so many Ministers around this table.

And tomorrow, 15 December, together, we shall open the Tenth WTO Ministerial Conference, here in Nairobi – it will be the First to be held in Africa.

There is value in being the first! As you know, sometimes, it is circumstantial – simply, the gift of history! Sometimes, we work for it! Regardless, of how we achieve the position of being the *first*, above all, it is vital that we focus on the

substance and content of the standard we set when we become the *first; and not just to be the first for the sake of being the first!*

We have to make the records we set count. When we are the first, we should strive to set a standard that makes a difference and improves the welfare of the People. For stability in international relations, prosperity will need to be shared. I believe that International cooperation is the key to resolving the collective challenges that face us all. It is the basis for stability, welfare, peace and security. This is the lesson of history.

Preceding this Fourth China Round Table, less than a fortnight ago, on Friday, 4 December, with other African Heads of State and Government, we gathered in Johannesburg, South Africa, at the Second Forum of the "Forum on China-Africa Cooperation". When we met, President Xi Jinping of China pledged US\$60 billion of a new round of funding to support Africa's development across the board. The pledge was without precedent in development financing. It will support infrastructure projects, Chinese investments in joint ventures with Africa, assist with training and skills development and contribute development of healthcare systems. Africa is grateful to the Government of China. Africa will require more of such partnerships.

Yet we know that we have to make good use of this funding. Directly or indirectly, Africans will be held to account. The questions will follow, sooner rather than later: what have we done, what did we do with the latest round of resources?

This is why this Fourth China Round Table, scheduled at this moment, back-to-back with the Tenth WTO Ministerial Conference matters.

The China Round Table has emerged as a valuable mechanism for policy dialogue to strengthen the WTO as a rules-based Multilateral Trading System. This process will continue to have the strong support of the government of Kenya. I congratulate Director-General Azevêdo for the leadership of the China Round Table process to strengthen the system and sustain the work in progress of integrating Least Developed Countries and newly Acceded Members.

The questions and thematic focus of this Nairobi China Round Table establish the right policy context. What is at stake for the international community in the WTO? What is at stake for Africa and what are African perspectives on the future of the Organisation? What can Africa contribute? What do they expect from other members and regions?

In this the 20th year Anniversary of the Organization, it is a time for collective reflection and concrete action.

National, Regional and Multilateral policy choices that we make will matter. The choices and positions we take will have consequences.

In 1995, African countries joined in establishing the new global trade body. The objective was to use trade as an instrument for growth and development. Since then, the multilateral trading system, with its core values and principles enshrined therein, has served the Continent well. We continue to enjoy the benefits of open trade. The system has kept markets open during periods of crises when protectionism has posed the greatest menace.

But every system requires renewal and regeneration to make it stronger. This is why we have gathered in Nairobi.

Africa has enjoyed a period of sustained economic growth with increased trade and investment, despite global financial crises, in the past decade. It is one of the fastest growing regions in the world, now and the next decades to come.

Impressive as it is, Africa has major challenges and associated tasks before it. The Continent faces an industrialization challenge. Even as Africa has registered robust growth, manufacturing is failing and the industrial process is weak and in reversal. We urgently need to embark on diversifying our

economies, re-establishing our manufacturing base and, integrating into value chains. The commodity-cycle has ended and there is pressure on national economies.

The primary responsibility is with Africa. We need to deepen and sustain domestic economic, legal, institutional and structural reforms. We must make the right policy choices and implement them all the way! There is no other way. Improving the quality of governance is work in progress to which we in Africa are committed.

But there are also responsibilities for us all, collectively, as Members of the WTO. When we speak about the WTO, We, the Members are the WTO! Trade rules in agriculture must be made fairer. Trade distorting domestic support is damaging African agriculture and industry. If we are to industrialize, tariff escalation and peak tariffs should be eliminated. African economies producing competitively should not be halted with defensive trade remedies. Standards should not be the next frontier of protectionism. I hope that this China Round Table will lend support for the ratification of the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) and for its early coming into force so that goods and services can flow more freely amongst countries and employment be created for the youthful populations entering the job market.

We need a rules-based Multilateral Trading System that provides space and mutual accommodation for the growth and enhanced welfare of all its members. Count on the constant support of the Kenyan Government for the rules-based Multilateral Trading System. We consider the WTO the indispensable organization.

Prosperity is interdependent. No economy can exist in isolation. We must avoid fragmentation. This is the value of the WTO: established on the foundation of non-discrimination, a rules-based global market economy, trade openness, transparency, and the rule of law and, a central pillar of global economic governance. At this China Round Table, I look forward to hearing your perspectives on the future of the WTO and how to better blend and integrate African perspectives of the rules-based multilateral trading system and broader international cooperation.

Thank you.