

On behalf of the Commonwealth Secretary General, Patricia Scotland, and the Commonwealth team, I wish to thank the Secretary of State and the UK Government for hosting tonight's reception on the margins of the WTO's 11th Ministerial Conference.

It is a delight to have an opportunity to bring together the Commonwealth family and many of our close friends here in Buenos Aires.

Now, having scanned the room and listened to your avid chatter, I'm reminded there are much more important things that you want to return to this evening than speeches! But there are things to be said about this Ministerial Conference and its importance to our member states.

The Ministerial Conference is one of the most important gatherings of the trade and development community. Last time we met, the conference was in my beloved country, Kenya, which was the first time ever that a WTO ministerial conference was held on African soil. We made great progress at that meeting. The launch of the Post-Nairobi Work Programme was an important step on the path towards achieving sustainable development, boosting investment, creating jobs, raising the standard of living, and improving the future of all our populations.

Building on the positive momentum of Nairobi, we very much look forward to a successful outcome here in Buenos Aires.

A strong rules-based multilateral trading system is of utmost importance to all our member states, especially small states, LDCs and Sub-Saharan African countries. We need to ensure that the voices of these most vulnerable countries are heard. In giving them an equal voice, together, we can find solutions to their challenges, and chart a clearer, better path of integration into the global trading system.

We have engaged on the margins of MC11 with our partners and stakeholders to reflect on trade and climate change, fishing and harmful fishing subsidies, and on the importance of diversifying from dependence on commodities. These discussions underpinned the centrality of ensuring sustainability and resilience-building for our member states, and will be followed by a work programme of joint action.

It's a tribute to our Commonwealth family gathering in Buenos Aires that at the plenary this evening, our Chair in Office delivered a statement, on our behalf, in support of the multilateral trading system. In the face of great challenges confronting world trade, this statement assures the international community that the Commonwealth continues to

champion a strong, stable, and rules-based multilateral trading system. May I, on your behalf, appreciate the Hon Minister of Malta for carrying our collective voice to this meeting.

Looking ahead, we continue to strengthen Commonwealth ties as we prepare for the next Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting to be held in

London in April 2018 under the theme of A Common Future.

Focusing on trade, the past two years have seen major Commonwealth achievements. These include the first Commonwealth Trade Review in 2015, followed by a successful Commonwealth Trade Ministers Meeting and the first meeting of the Working Group on Trade and Investment held earlier this year in London. There are a number of trade initiatives underway as we prepare for CHOGM. These include the Secretariat's work on the second Commonwealth Trade Review, which will provide deeper analysis of the trade and investment opportunities arising from the Commonwealth Advantage.

As I conclude, it would be remiss for me not to say that we are extremely grateful to the UK for its support, under the Kickstarter Fund, for two projects that address the specific trade and development challenges of our small and vulnerable member states. The first will address the sustainable graduation of LDCs. For this initiative, we will partner with, among others, the City of London, UNCTAD, and the WTO's Enhanced Integrated Framework. The second project will examine policy barriers to services trade in selected member states, in order to enhance greater trade-induced growth. The initial findings of this second project will be launched at CHOGM.

Trade is the lifeblood for many of our members. Working together, we can harness the Commonwealth trade advantage to boost trade, investment and innovation for the benefit of all our citizens - and contribute to greater global prosperity for all.

Once again, I thank the UK Government for hosting this gathering of the Commonwealth family. I wish you all an enjoyable evening. Buenas Noches