



Statement by Commissioner Phil Hogan on the retirement of Roberto Azevêdo, Director-General of the WTO

Brussels, 14 May 2020

I want to acknowledge the decision by Roberto Azevêdo, Director-General of the WTO, to announce his retirement today.

Over the past seven years, he has engaged with the member countries to deliver important outcomes for the multilateral trading system. I am thinking in particular of the Trade Facilitation Agreement, International Technology Agreement, and the elimination of agricultural export subsidies (in which I was personally involved as EU Agricultural Commissioner).

Of course, the WTO is now encountering major challenges and we hear louder voices demanding reform and greater effectiveness.

Today's announcement by Roberto, and I agree with him, offers a good moment for us to select a new Director-General to embrace and respond to the many challenges for the organisation. It is essential that we quickly chart a new path ahead at this critical and uncertain time for trade. It makes sense to proceed now with the succession process rather than wait until next year in order to be proactive with the enormous agenda that requires policy approval for MC 12 in June 2021.

The trade challenges arising from the impact of Covid-19 require immediate planning for the future. The WTO's role is to respond collectively to this pandemic so that we can achieve better coordination and eliminate unnecessary and associated trade barriers. Many important policy areas require immediate attention.

A new Director-General will help the membership to play an integral part in shaping the future. We cannot waste a moment.

I would like to thank Roberto again for his service to the multilateral trading system and to wish him and his family every good health and best wishes for the next phase of his life.

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Press contacts:

[Daniel ROSARIO](#) (+ 32 2 295 61 85)

[Kinga MALINOWSKA](#) (+32 2 295 13 83)

General public inquiries: [Europe Direct](#) by phone [00 800 67 89 10 11](#) or by [email](#)