



WTO DG CAMPAIGN SECRETARIAT

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30th September, 2020

H.E (Hon.) Ebrahim Patel

Chairperson

African Union of Ministers for Trade

Minister for Trade and Industry

Republic of South Africa

Excellency,

I am writing to thank you for including a dialogue between the African Union Ministers of Trade and the remaining African candidates for the post of Director General of the World Trade Organization on the Agenda of the 11th African Ministers of Trade Meeting on 30th September., 2020.

I was looking forward to the opportunity to share my vision with the honourable Ministers, and to engage in a conversation on trade-related matters of importance to the entire continent.

In light of this situation, I request that you share this letter with the Ministers as it contains aspects that I had planned to present at the meeting. I remain available to respond to any questions the honourable Ministers may have including individual requests for meetings sent to my campaign secretariat's email: wtodgcandidature@gmail.com.

Honourable Chair,

“I believe Africa is on the cusp of an unprecedented opportunity. An African at the helm of the WTO offers an opening for the continent to contribute as never before to shaping global trade governance.

This opportunity coincides with our shared commitment to work together to establish a continent-wide economic powerhouse through the African Continental Free Trade Area. The potential synergies between our linked-up continent and the multilateral trading system are powerful.

The AfCFTA is still in its formative stages, with an implementation date slated for the beginning of 2021. While the agreement has been legally in force for over a year now, I urge those countries that have yet to ratify it to do so as soon as possible.

I believe that our continent-wide free trade agreement – the largest FTA in the world – and the WTO must work closely together in the months and years ahead. At a purely practical level, WTO specialists have been assisting in the drafting of the AfCFTA. But much more importantly, the two institutions must come together to build a strong, predictable, and durable environment for the conduct of trade. This is a critical necessity if the private sector across the continent is to flourish.

As an African I am sensitive to the need for inclusiveness and fairness, and for the WTO to be responsive to the varied needs of all its members, be they large or small, and more or less developed.

As Director-General, a key component of my responsibilities would be to ensure that all members are heard, can defend their interests, and can participate fully in WTO deliberations and activities. This would be facilitated by improving the quality of technical assistance and capacity-building and making sure it is attuned to real needs.

We have to ensure that the balance of rights and obligations among the WTO's diverse membership is matched to each party's trade and development needs. Attaining this balance must be a cooperative endeavour based on shared responsibility. African countries should continue to be provided with Special and Differential Treatment, as required in specific areas and circumstances.

It is no secret that the crisis facing the WTO is the gravest since its establishment a quarter of a century ago. The Organization is badly in need of reform across a wide range of its responsibilities. The stresses and strains of frayed trade relationships have eroded the WTO's authority and its centrality in shaping orderly global trade relationships. Putting these things right is in the interests of all members.

The trade disruptions brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic have highlighted the importance of durable rules-based trading arrangements. Some of the trade restrictions put in place immediately following the outbreak of the pandemic serve as a warning to governments of the constant need for predictability in trade relationships. No country can address a crisis of this magnitude alone. This is a key area where regional and multilateral initiatives can reinforce one another. The WTO must play a leading role in ensuring the availability of vaccines and other remedies and it must also help to enable economic recovery.

Reviving the WTO's negotiating function is essential. The ongoing negotiation on fisheries subsidies is a prime example. This is not only a trade challenge, but a sustainability one as well, with the continuing depletion of global fish stocks. A successful negotiation is of considerable importance to many African countries. The new Director-General will have the responsibility of supporting completion of these negotiations in short order.

Similarly, negotiations in agriculture are of crucial interest to many of the countries represented here. It is five years since we achieved the elimination of export subsidies on agricultural products at the Nairobi Ministerial. Further progress is urgently needed, not least on cotton.

The WTO dispute settlement system is imperiled by the demise of the Appellate Body and members must urgently come together to restore order here. Little else can work effectively in the WTO for long if members do not have the means to settle their differences in an orderly manner.

The virtual economy is growing dramatically in size and scope and the WTO needs to keep up, as it is trying to do through the ongoing negotiations on e-commerce. Digitization presents both opportunities and challenges for developing countries. The need to bridge the digital divide is of particular importance for Africa.

We must also address more effectively the inter-relationship between trade, the environment and climate change. A complex and often misunderstood set of linkages is involved here and calls for closer attention and cooperation among governments and international agencies.

Sustainability more generally should be a key concern in the trade sphere, especially in relation to social justice and equality of opportunity. This includes improving opportunities for women.

This list of issues facing the WTO is daunting enough, and doubtless incomplete. We need to make progress on these matters before the 12th Ministerial Conference next year and forge a coherent work plan thereafter to address all areas of needed reform.

The new Director-General will face enormous challenges. If selected I will devote all my energy, skills, knowledge and experience to these tasks. My long experience as a Minister and as a negotiator, both regionally and internationally, have prepared me for the task. I would bring to the job the combination of political weight and trade knowledge that the WTO needs right now.

I pledge my full commitment to ensuring that the WTO is responsive to the interests and needs of Africa and Africans. I will also work to ensure that Africa, through its own integration and development efforts, can play a growing role in steering and supporting the viable multilateral trading system that we all need.

Thank you for your continued collaboration.

Yours *Sincerely*,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Amina Mohamed', written in a cursive style.

AMB. AMINA MOHAMED, EGH, CAV

CABINET SECRETARY &

**CANDIDATE FOR THE POSITION OF DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE
WORLD TRADE ORGANISATION**
