


Minister Patel Calls for Enhanced Global Coordination and WTO Reform for Development at the G20 Trade Ministers Summit in Italy

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The Minister of Trade, Industry and Competition, Mr Ebrahim Patel, yesterday called for a global partnership to expand production of Covid-19 health supplies, establish a more sustainable and balanced global fishing rights regime, and reform the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to underpin industrialisation and development.

The call was made at the G20 Trade and Investment Ministerial Meeting in Sorrento, Italy. Addressing the meeting, Minister Patel highlighted the importance of African industrialisation and development in ensuring that “shared prosperity moves from slogan to reality”.

He proposed a package of measures to address the challenges with supply of Covid-19 vaccines across many developing countries.

“There are five practical steps that can assist developing countries: i) a temporary Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) waiver covering Covid vaccines and essential diagnostics and therapeutics; ii) diversifying production locations and scaling up production capacity and access on the African continent and across the world; iii) protocols covering transparency, equity in vaccine supply contracts and pricing; iv) a meaningful commitment to keep supply chains open; and v) a forward-looking TRIPS provision to address future pandemics by providing automatic rights of use that obviates the need for special arrangements and waivers,” said Minister Patel.

He spoke about environmental sustainability and proposals at the WTO for an agreement on a new fisheries trade policy framework.

“South Africa will support effective, fair and balanced outcomes on over-fishing and fisheries subsidies, which should address illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. A global trade deal should allow developing countries to leverage their marine resources for development within a sustainable framework and limit the actions of large subsidisers. Moreover, in the context of climate change, investment commitments by developed countries needed to make provision for bolder concessional financing to shoulder the costs of transitions and unlock new green jobs and technologies, in line with ambitious and bold emissions-reduction goals,” he added.

South Africa called for reform of the WTO to address emerging challenges of economic resilience, supply-chain security, policy space for African countries to industrialize, enhanced efficiency in WTO processes and re-establishing a functioning dispute resolution system.

“We should re-establish the nexus between trade and industrial development policies and enable industrial policy for structural transformation in global policy frameworks. As new technologies become more critical in both the established and newer industries, countries will seek to gain a foothold in this fast-growing area and thus a number of developing countries seek to preserve their policy autonomy to better leverage national opportunities,” said Minister Patel.

The G20 Trade and Investment Ministerial Meeting served as an important step towards the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference, scheduled for 30 November to 3 December 2021 in Geneva. The G20 meeting was attended by representatives inter alia of the United States, China, the European Union, Japan, Australia, India, Saudi Arabia, Brazil, Argentina, Indonesia and South Africa.

For Media Enquiries:

Bongani Lukhele – Director: Media Relations

Tel: (012) 394 1643

Mobile: 079 5083 457

WhatsApp: 074 299 8512

E-mail: BLukhele@thedtic.gov.za

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