



Council of the European Union

PRESS
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BACKGROUND¹
Brussels, 6 December 2017

FOREIGN AFFAIRS COUNCIL - TRADE ISSUES

Sunday 10 to Wednesday 13 December in Buenos Aires

The Council will meet at 11:30 local time in the margins of the 11th **WTO ministerial conference** organised in Buenos Aires (Argentina). It will adopt conclusions which will serve as a reference for the EU's position during the conference, which is scheduled to take place from 10 to 13 December 2017.

Additional meetings of the Council, as well as the Trade Policy Committee, may be convened on the spot, depending on developments. The Council will, as required, be called on to approve WTO negotiating texts on behalf of the EU and will, at the conclusion of the conference, meet to assess the outcome.

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[Council meeting webpage](#)

[Video coverage in broadcast quality \(MPEG4\) and photo gallery](#)

1 This note has been drawn up under the responsibility of the press office.

WTO ministerial conference

The Council, during its opening session, is expected to approve a first set of conclusions, setting out the EU's position for the 11th World Trade Organisation ministerial conference.

The conference will be held in Buenos Aires from 10 to 13 December 2017. The EU's objective is to achieve a strengthening of the multilateral trading system and a clear commitment to the WTO by all its members. To that end, the Council is expected to stress its readiness to explore ways of strengthening the WTO's negotiating, monitoring and dispute settlement functions.

The Council will call on all WTO members to contribute constructively to the negotiation and is ready to support an ambitious but realistic and balanced package at the conference.

Such a package needs to include the following:

- a substantive outcome on fisheries subsidies, including clear disciplines going beyond illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU);
- a reasonable and balanced outcome addressing domestic support in agriculture and public stockholdings for food security purposes in a comprehensive manner;
- a commitment to deepening discussions on e-commerce, domestic regulation in services, transparency and good regulatory practices for SMEs and investment facilitation, as well as MSMEs and export restrictions in agriculture.

Towards the end of the ministerial conference, the Council is expected to agree on a second set of conclusions, giving its assessment of the overall outcome.

Once that overall outcome is known, the Council is expected to adopt a decision establishing the EU's position on those issues where the WTO ministerial conference has been able to agree a text and could have legal effects.

The ministerial conference, which is organised every two years and attended by trade ministers and senior officials from the organisation's 164 members, is the highest decision-making body of the WTO. Argentina will be the first South American country to host this event.

Since the last meeting in Nairobi in December 2015, the EU has undertaken preparations for the Buenos Aires conference in order to ensure that it has a leading role in the process. However, preparations for the conference have proved challenging given the range of different positions between members on key areas of the negotiations, such as domestic support. The difficulties in reaching consensus should also be seen in the light of more systemic issues, such as the current standstill in the election of members of the WTO appellate body and the reluctance of some members to engage positively in the discussions.
