FORUM WTO TRADE MINISTERS MEETING ON POST-MC12 PRIORITIES FOR THE PACIFIC
DENARAU, NADI
18 November 2022

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

PREAMBLE

1. **Re-affirming** the importance of the rules-based multilateral trading system to provide an open, transparent, inclusive, non-discriminatory, equitable and predictable system that promotes the interests of all Members, in particular the small and vulnerable Members, and to international trade as a vehicle to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals;

2. **Recognising** the critical role of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in delivering trade-related measures to contribute to solutions to global challenges severely impeding on the development aspirations of the Pacific region, including the impacts of climate change, natural disasters COVID-19 pandemic and the slow economic recovery, and food and energy crises;

3. **Commending** the success of the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC12) held in Geneva from 12 to 17 June 2022, which delivered ten multilaterally-agreed outcomes;

4. **Expressing** appreciation to the WTO Director General and Secretariat for the support in ensuring that the High-Level Regional Pacific Event held from 16 to 18 November is convened in the Blue Pacific region;

5. **Taking account** of the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent endorsed by Forum Leaders in July 2022 establishing the regional framework for a safe, prosperous and resilient region;

6. **Further noting** the July 2022 Communique from the Forum Leaders, encouraging all Forum WTO Members to work together to conclude the remaining pillar of the fisheries subsidies negotiations on Overcapacity and Overfishing to protect the sustainability of fish stocks and provide appropriate Special and Differential Treatment for developing and least developed countries;

**We, the Forum WTO Trade Ministers, met in Nadi, Fiji on 18 November 2022 to consider the Pacific’s post-MC12 priorities and agreed to work collaboratively to progress the following:**

7. On Fisheries Subsidies and the second wave of negotiations, Ministers
i) welcome the WTO’s Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies (FSA) as a historic outcome of the WTO’s MC12 in June 2022;

ii) also welcome the significant role that the Forum WTO Members played in driving the conclusion of the Agreement at MC12 and recognise that cooperation of the Pacific region significantly contributed to securing the partial FSA and the commitment for the conclusion of a comprehensive FSA;

iii) acknowledge the rules of the FSA will make a meaningful and tangible contribution to the sustainability of global oceans and welcome the prohibition on subsidies contributing to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, overfished stocks, and to fishing in the unregulated high seas;

iv) recognise in that regard that the FSA provides an additional tool to complement the regional fisheries management efforts of Forum WTO Members;

v) note the efforts in the region to ratify the FSA in line with respective domestic processes;

vi) request the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat to assist each Forum WTO Member to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the implications of implementing the FSA, and building on the Workshop provided by the WTO, organise a regional Workshop on the implementation of the FSA and preparations for the ‘second wave’ of negotiations before MC13;

vii) call on WTO Members, particularly large subsidising fishing nations, to ratify and implement the Agreement as soon as possible;

viii) welcome the voluntary Fisheries Funding Mechanism established under the FSA that should enhance the capacity of developing countries and least developed countries (LDCs) in the implementation of the disciplines, and call on donors to ensure adequate funding;

ix) commit to further negotiations to conclude a comprehensive agreement to give the fullest effect to SDG14.6;

x) reaffirm our commitment in working together in the second wave of the negotiations ahead of MC13 to address outstanding issues and conclude a comprehensive and ambitious agreement including on overcapacity and overfishing (OCOF) in line with the following principles:

a) Address the outstanding issues in the negotiations (in documents WT/MIN(21)/W/5 and WT/MIN(22)/W/20) and where appropriate other concepts and approaches in a solution seeking mode;

b) Address subsidies that contribute to OCOF, in particular, those subsidies provided by large subsidising fishing nations;

c) Include effective disciplines on subsidies provided by WTO Members to distant water fishing, including on the high seas and the EEZs of other Members;

d) Preserve all rights of coastal states under UNCLOS to effectively manage and develop their fisheries;
e) Include appropriate and effective SDT for developing countries, especially small island developing states (SIDS), and LDCs, taking account of the specific needs and circumstances of Pacific WTO Members, their artisanal and small-scale fishers and their livelihoods, appropriate transition periods, and adequate policy space to develop their fisheries sector; and

f) Provide technical and financial assistance and capacity building to address the particular needs of Pacific WTO Members.

8. On Agriculture negotiations, Ministers **underscore** the urgent need to deliver outcomes at MC13 on agricultural trade reform. Possible outcomes should recognise the importance of trade as a tool to advancing food security objectives of developing country Members as most Pacific WTO Members are net food importers and mitigate the impacts of climate change on global food security.

9. Ministers **further emphasise** the need to address the issue of trade-distorting domestic support to give small agriculture producers such as those in the Pacific equal opportunity to participate fairly in global agricultural trade while ensuring adequate policy tools are available to help boost agricultural productivity and resilience in the face of contemporary challenges.

10. On Food Security related issues, Ministers **recognise** that Pacific WTO Members are Net Food-Importing Developing Countries (NFIDCs) and in view of the current food crisis resulting in inflated food prices, engagement in relevant discussions is crucial to ensure food security and to address trade restrictions that reduce access to imported food.

11. On COVID-19 response and future preparedness, Ministers **further recognise** the importance of engaging in discussions on the COVID-19 response and preparedness for future pandemics, including on sectors that can support economic recovery, extension of the TRIPS Waiver, and minimisation of barriers to trade given the heavy dependence of the Pacific WTO Members on imported vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics to effectively prevent, detect and combat the pandemic and future public health emergencies.

12. On Development issues, Ministers **reaffirm** the provisions of special and differential treatment for developing and least developed countries as an integral part of the WTO and its agreements, and **agree** to continue to work on improving the application of special and differential treatment in the WTO to be precise, effective and operational. Ministers also **agree** to continue the Work Programme on Small Economies and to discuss the LDC proposals to address the trade-related issues identified for the fuller integration of small vulnerable economies and LDCs like the Pacific in the multilateral trading system.

13. On Trade and Environment issues, Ministers **reiterate** that climate change remains the single greatest threat to security facing the Blue Pacific; **welcome** the recognition given to global environmental challenges in paragraph 14 of the MC12 Outcome Document; and **commit** to increasing efforts to find and adopt concrete and mutually supportive trade policy-based contributions to climate change mitigation and adaptation, and environmental sustainability.

14. On WTO Reform, Ministers **stress** the need to improve the functioning of the WTO, ensure that WTO Reform is an open, transparent and inclusive process, and the need to restore a fully and well-functioning dispute settlement system that is accessible to all Members by 2024.
15. On E-commerce, Ministers *further recognise* the significant opportunity that digital trade presents for Pacific economies, including in overcoming barriers associated with geographic remoteness; and *remain committed* to addressing the digital divide faced by developing countries, including Pacific WTO Members, by improving connectivity infrastructure and participating in a rejuvenated Work Programme on E-commerce, including to assess the economic impact and benefits and opportunities of the E-commerce Moratorium for developing countries.