

UK Statement for the WTO Trade Policy Review of Argentina

I'd like to join others in welcoming the delegation of Argentina, led by his Excellency Ambassador Jorge Neme, Secretary for International Economic Relations in Buenos Aires and the Argentine colleagues in Geneva. Let me also express our gratitude to the WTO Secretariat for the reports and to Ambassador Peralta for her invaluable insights, and to you Chair for facilitating the meeting today.

We very much welcome the opportunity to record Argentina's achievements, as well as considering the opportunities for further development in Argentina's trade policy so that we can collaborate even more effectively in the future.

And looking back over the period since Argentina's last review, firstly like to acknowledge Argentina's laudable hosting of MC11, typical of Argentina's commitment to the GATT and now to the WTO. We also welcome the ratification and acceptance by Argentina of the Protocol concerning the WTO Trade Facilitation the (TFA), the Protocol amending the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), and the Fourth Protocol on Telecommunications annexed to the General Agreement on Trade in Services.

Looking more to the present, I'd like to very much welcome Argentina's active participation at the WTO in the joint initiatives on e-commerce, the integration of MSMEs in international trade – for all the reasons stated by the Ambassador about the nature and the character of the Argentine economy – investment facilitation and services domestic regulation: all vital initiatives which cover topics of great interest for all our businesses, and which we think bring much-needed new dynamism to our discussions here at the WTO, as we try to ensure that the WTO is not only back in business but also backing business.

The Ambassador rightly referred to the challenges facing Argentina like many other countries in confronting the pandemic, and we would like to commend Argentina for their work in ensuring that essential supply chains remained open over the last 18 months. And as a fellow G20 member, we welcome Argentina's commitment in the March 2020 G20 Trade Ministers Statement to ensure any emergency measures designed to tackle the pandemic be targeted, proportionate, transparent, and temporary. We look forward to continuing to work with Argentina and other WTO members to strengthen the resilience of global medical supply chains, including through the Trade and Health Initiative.

The pandemic has of course as we have discussed elsewhere highlighted the importance of cross-border healthcare cooperation between partner countries. In particular, we would like to welcome and recognise Argentina's collaboration with AstraZeneca to produce and supply vaccines across the world. We believe this example of Anglo-Argentine collaboration could be extended to other areas going forward. However, we believe that this

collaboration could be strengthened yet further if Argentina resolved to continue economic reforms in some key areas.

First, in regard to excessive regulatory requirements for businesses, I think this is highlighted by some of the changes made to Argentina's rules on capital controls that in our review do result in an unnecessary administrative burden for companies. We understand that businesses now must seek authorisation from the Central Bank of Argentina to access foreign currencies to pay for imported goods or services. So like many of our partners at the WTO, we are always looking to expand the opportunities for our businesses to operate effectively and successfully in Argentina and restricting access to foreign exchanges inhibits British businesses' ability to do that. We are hopeful that these measures can be phased out in the near future as the economic situation improves.

Secondly, we are hopeful that this Trade Policy Review can drive change with regard to Argentina's rules on import licensing. The Secretariat highlights in the report the growing impact of non-automatic import licences since Argentina's last Review. The report notes that in 2020, non-automatic licences were required for about 14% of all tariff lines. This was a big increase on the numbers for 2012, when only 6% of tariff lines were subject to such licensing. In addition, these processes can be unclear to foreign businesses and often exceed the 60-day limit set out in the WTO Agreement on Import Licensing. This has remained an issue for British exporters to Argentina for several years, affecting a range of industries including automotive, footwear and manufacturing. We remain concerned that this measure will continue affecting these sectors and we would encourage our Argentine friends to consider the consequences that the growing use of non-automatic import licencing has on the international flow of goods, as well as the impact these measures have on their own economy.

Madam Chair, we submitted written questions to Argentina on a range of topics, and I'd like to thank our Argentine colleagues for their responses to those questions. We will review these carefully with a view to having constructive discussions aimed at enhancing the flourishing bilateral trading relationship between our two great countries.