# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **Visit to World Trade Organisation, Geneva**  |
| **DATE**  | **17 November 2017** |
| **BY** | **Ken Skates AM, Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Transport** |

This written statement provides an update on my visit to the World trade Organisation (WTO) in Geneva on 31st October 2017 to build relationships between Wales and the organisation.

As the UK leaves the EU it is essential we can represent Welsh interests at WTO level. The WTO is an extremely important trade organisation which facilitates trade relationships between countries as well as providing a set of trade rules for countries to abide by and a place for them to settle trade disputes. The UK will need to re-establish itself as an independent member of the WTO, as we are currently included as part of the EU, and it is important that Welsh interests are considered as part of this process.

During my visit to Geneva I met with the UK Ambassador to the WTO, Julian Braithwaite, and discussed how leaving the EU might impact on our international trade relationships. It was a very helpful discussion and I hope it will form the basis of a productive working relationship going forward. I also had discussions with Deputy Director General WTO, Alan Wolff, around how the WTO operates and the key issues Wales needs to be prepared for.

At this stage of the EU/UK negotiations it is unclear whether the Welsh Government’s priority of maintaining full and unfettered access to the EU’s Single Market is fully compatible with the UK Government’s desire for an independent trade policy and creation of new Free Trade Agreements across the globe. It was clear from meeting a range of WTO Permanent Representatives, from countries including Canada, Australia, Switzerland and South Korea, that whatever the outcome of the negotiations with the EU it is vital to the prospects of Wales to strengthen and build

upon our international trade links, both within the EU and across the rest of the world.

I also took the opportunity to meet with range of Swiss businesses who were investing in Wales. I was really pleased to hear about their success in creating jobs and economic growth within Wales.