

Statement by Minister Akira AMARI

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We gathered together in Geneva this time in order to establish modalities, which have been expected to be a big breakthrough towards the conclusion of the Doha Round this year, a goal that has been a matter of utmost importance for all WTO Members for the last seven years.

For the last eleven days, we engaged in intense negotiations, including several late night and early morning sessions. I myself have been in close contacts and consultations with my fellow trade ministers day and night in order to act as a bridge between developed and developing countries, and explore a negotiated outcome by which all of us can bring home some net gains.

There have been moments when we almost had a negotiated agreement in our sight. It is very regrettable that, despite of these moments of hopes, we were not able to make the last few steps towards final convergence.

Our failure to agree on modalities at this ministerial gathering is a heavy blow to the global economy. At a time when there is a risk of global economic downturn, it remains our joint responsibility to conclude this Round as soon as possible, which is important for the maintenance and strengthening of the rule-based free trade system under the WTO regime, for containing protectionism, and for salvaging the global economy through trade expansion including those for developing countries.

We have to explore our way to move the negotiation forward, based on what we have achieved in the last seven years, and especially our achievements that we have accumulated since the issuance of the two Chairs' texts in Agriculture and NAMA in July last year.

Japan remains committed to an early conclusion of the Doha Round and intends to continue its close consultation with other WTO Members in order to contribute to the strengthening of the free trade system.