

# The G7 and International Trade

by Davide Cichero

## ABSTRACT

The G7 trade *acquis* has traditionally rested on a set of key principles: the importance of free trade and investment for economic growth; the commitment to fight protectionism; and the prominence of the rules-based multilateral trading system, anchored in the WTO. With Donald Trump as president, the United States has begun to question this *acquis* and its key principles. In 2017, the G7 Heads of State and Government managed to reaffirm their commitment to fight protectionism and support the multilateral trading system. However, developments that followed the G7 Taormina Summit – from the 2017 OECD Ministerial Council Meeting to the 11th WTO Ministerial Conference – and unilateral trade restrictive measures taken by the Trump administration leave no room for complacency. In 2018, the G7 should serve as a platform from which to persuade the United States that unfair trade practices can be effectively tackled only through a multilateral approach.

*United States | Foreign trade | G7 | G20 | Summit | Transatlantic relations*

**keywords**

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### Introduction

On 1 January 2018, Canada took over the presidency of the Group of Seven (G7) from Italy.<sup>1</sup> As a result, throughout the year, Ottawa will be tasked with – among other things – identifying the priorities that will guide the discussions under its presidency; hosting and organizing the leaders' summit and the ministerial-level meetings, together with the respective preparatory meetings; and releasing the outcome documents at the end of the leaders' summit and of each ministerial meeting.

These documents can take the form of either a communiqué or a chair's summary. While the latter is merely a synthesis elaborated by the presidency of what was discussed during the meeting, the communiqué is a negotiated outcome. Indeed, the G7 being a consensus-based forum, all decisions must be agreed upon by all members. Therefore, the commitments included in the communiqués highlight the consensus existing among G7 members on some of the most pressing global issues. They also outline the measures, if any, that they intend to pursue, individually and collectively, to tackle these issues. The governments of the G7 countries are politically, though not legally, bound to deliver on such commitments, both towards their respective domestic constituencies and their international counterparts.

<sup>1</sup> The G7 consists of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States. In 1997 Russia joined the group, which was then renamed G8, until the country was suspended in 2014 following the annexation of Crimea, whereupon the group's name reverted to G7. The European Union is a non-enumerated member of the G7, but neither chairs nor hosts summits (with the exception of the 2014 Brussels Summit, originally scheduled in Sochi, which was cancelled following Russia's suspension from the G8). The Heads of State or Government of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK and the US represent their countries at G7 summits, while the EU is represented by both the President of the European Commission and the President of the European Council. The G7 presidency rotates each calendar year among enumerated members in the following order: France, US, UK, Germany, Japan, Italy and Canada.

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Among the issues that are likely to set the G7 agenda in 2018, international trade plays a key role. In fact, international trade is one of the themes that constitute the *raison d'être* of the G7, alongside global economy and foreign policy issues. However, whereas these last two themes are discussed not only at the leaders' summit, but also at the meeting of G7 finance ministers and central bank governors and at the meeting of G7 foreign ministers, respectively, a meeting of G7 trade ministers does not usually take place. This means that international trade issues are discussed only at the highest political level, that of leaders. Likewise, this means that the negotiations on the trade section of the leaders' communiqué are conducted exclusively by the "sherpas", the personal representatives of the G7 Heads of State and Government.<sup>2</sup>

### 1. The G7 trade *acquis*

International trade became a rather controversial issue in 2017, and is expected to become even more so in 2018. Indeed, the very same principles that constitute the G7 trade *acquis* were called into question last year.

The first principle of the G7 trade *acquis* is the importance of free trade and investment for economic growth – which has set the tone for the trade section of nearly all G7/G8 leaders' communiqués of the past. As an example, at the 2016 Summit in Ise-Shima, the G7 Heads of State and Government declared that "trade and investment are key drivers of growth, the prosperity of our people and the achievement of sustainable development worldwide".<sup>3</sup>

The second principle, which implicitly derives from the first, is the commitment to fight protectionism. Such a principle has been included in virtually all G7/G8 leaders' communiqués since the Heads of State and Government of France, (West) Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK and the US met for the first time in Rambouillet in 1975 (Canada joined the fully fledged G7 in 1976).<sup>4</sup> Over the years, the anti-protectionism pledge has been reformulated in a more stringent way, such as in the communiqué of the 2016 Ise-Shima Summit, which reads: "We reaffirm our commitment to keep our markets open and to fight all forms of protectionism

<sup>2</sup> By contrast, the bulk of the negotiations on the global economy section of the leaders' communiqué – as well as the negotiations on the communiqué of the meeting of finance ministers and central bank governors – are conducted by the "finance deputies", the personal representatives of G7 finance ministers. In the same way, the bulk of the negotiations on the foreign policy section of the leaders' communiqué – as well as the negotiations on the communiqué of the meeting of foreign ministers – are conducted by the "political directors" and by the "foreign affairs sous-sherpas" (FASS), the personal representatives of G7 foreign ministers for the political/security and the cross-cutting (such as food security and nutrition, health, etc.) aspects of foreign policy, respectively.

<sup>3</sup> G7, *Leaders' Declaration*, Ise-Shima, 27 May 2016, p. 7, <http://www.g8.utoronto.ca/summit/2016shima/ise-shima-declaration-en.html>.

<sup>4</sup> *Declaration of Rambouillet*, Rambouillet, 17 November 1975, <http://www.g8.utoronto.ca/summit/1975rambouillet/communiqu.html>.

including through standstill and rollback.”<sup>5</sup>

The third principle defining the G7 trade *acquis* is the commitment to the rules-based multilateral trading system, anchored in the World Trade Organization (WTO) and, more generally, to multilateral trade. Similarly to anti-protectionism, the roots of this principle can be found in the communiqué of the Rambouillet Summit in 1975, when the WTO had not yet been established: “We believe that the multilateral trade negotiations should be accelerated. [...] They should seek to achieve the maximum possible level of trade liberalization.”<sup>6</sup> Following the Marrakesh agreement of April 1994, in which the WTO was established as the successor of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) at the end of the eight-year long Uruguay Round, the G7 leaders affirmed that “The signing of the Uruguay Round Agreements and the creation of the WTO are important milestones in post-war trade liberalisation.”<sup>7</sup> The WTO officially came into being on 1 January 1995. At their Halifax Summit later that year, the G7 Heads of State and Government declared: “We will work together and with our trading partners to consolidate the WTO as an effective institution.”<sup>8</sup> Ever since, a reference to the importance of the multilateral trading system has been included in the communiqué of nearly all G7/G8 summits, such as the one from Ise-Shima in 2016, in which leaders stated: “We underline that the rules-based multilateral trading system, which is embodied in the WTO, has helped to create a strong and prosperous world economy.”<sup>9</sup>

In addition to these three principles, G7/G8 leaders’ communiqués usually contain a reference to the Group’s commitment to further liberalize trade, by advancing and/or concluding the bilateral, regional, plurilateral and multilateral trade agreements under negotiation.<sup>10</sup> Such a commitment is usually coupled with a call to ensure that these agreements are consistent with and supportive of the multilateral framework and, in the case of plurilateral agreements, that these can act as building blocks for future multilateral deals.

<sup>5</sup> G7, *Leaders’ Declaration*, Ise-Shima, 27 May 2016, cit., p. 7.

<sup>6</sup> *Declaration of Rambouillet*, Rambouillet, 17 November 1975, cit.

<sup>7</sup> G7, *Leaders’ Communiqué*, Naples, 9 July 1994, <http://www.g8.utoronto.ca/summit/1994naples/communique/index.html>.

<sup>8</sup> G7, *Leaders’ Communiqué*, Halifax, 16 June 1995, <http://www.g8.utoronto.ca/summit/1995halifax/communique/index.html>.

<sup>9</sup> G7, *Leaders’ Declaration*, Ise-Shima, 27 May 2016, cit., p. 8.

<sup>10</sup> For instance, at the 2014 Summit in Brussels, the G7 leaders recalled the advancement in the negotiations on the Canada–EU Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), the Japan–EU Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), the EU–US Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) and the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). With reference to plurilateral deals, they mentioned the Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA), the Environmental Goods Agreement (EGA) and the Information Technology Agreement (ITA). Concerning multilateral agreements, they committed to swiftly implementing the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA).

## 2. The Trump administration's "America First" trade policy

Following Donald Trump's inauguration in January 2017, the United States began to question the G7 trade *acquis* and its key principles, by introducing new, controversial concepts – such as "fair" and "reciprocal" trade – in the G7 process. Such concepts underpin the president's "America First" trade policy, whose declared goal is the elimination of the US bilateral trade deficits in goods. In the eyes of the Trump administration, these trade deficits would result from "unfair" trade deals signed by previous administrations and from "unfair" foreign trade practices, rather than from macroeconomic imbalances between domestic savings and investments, currency swings or international capital flows.

The administration seems to be determined to pursue such a goal in various ways, which include:

- the renegotiation of existing trade agreements, such as the North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the US–South Korea Free Trade Agreement (KORUS);
- the freezing of or withdrawal from negotiations over future trade agreements, such as the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) with the EU and the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) with eleven Asia-Pacific countries;
- the launch of negotiations on new trade and investment agreements at presumably more favourable conditions for the United States, but only in a bilateral fashion; and
- the adoption of unilateral trade remedies against countries allegedly responsible for trade wrongdoing.

More generally, the concepts of "fair" and "reciprocal" trade exemplify the Trump administration's diffidence towards multilateralism, which it perceives as a limitation to the national sovereignty of the United States rather than as a means to achieve win-win solutions. This applies not only to trade, but also, for instance, to climate change and migration, as demonstrated by the administration's decision to pull the United States out of the Paris Agreement and the UN Global Compact on Migration. As a result, under Trump, Washington no longer feels obliged to either deliver on the G7's past commitments or stick to the G7 *acquis*. Instead, the inauguration of a new administration – and, therefore, the participation of a new leader in the summit – should be considered as a "ground zero" for the G7, according to senior officials in the Trump White House.

## 3. The G7 Taormina Summit

The new trade policy course inaugurated by the Trump administration is clear from the outcome documents of the relevant multilateral meetings attended by US officials in the first months of 2017.



In particular, at their meeting in Baden Baden on 18 March, the G20 finance ministers and central bank governors affirmed: “We are working to strengthen the contribution of trade to our economies.”<sup>11</sup> This language was also used in the communiqué of the 35th meeting of the International Monetary and Financial Committee (IMFC), which was held in Washington DC on 22 April,<sup>12</sup> and of the G7 finance ministers’ and central bank governors’ meeting, which took place in Bari on 12–13 May.<sup>13</sup> It is considerably weaker than the explicit anti-protectionism language of previous IMFC and finance ministers’ and central bankers’ meetings.

Likewise, contrarily to what had happened in the past, due to a lack of agreement on any common language on protectionism, no joint communiqué was released at the end of the meeting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) ministers responsible for trade, which took place in Hanoi on 20–21 May. By contrast, the Vietnamese APEC chairmanship released a statement presenting a list of “ununified but prevailing views of APEC economies” including, among others, members’ commitment “to keep [...] markets open and to fight against all forms of protectionism”.<sup>14</sup>

Given all of the above, it was clearly going to be difficult for G7 leaders to reaffirm the key principles of the G7 trade *acquis* at the Taormina Summit on 26–27 May 2017.

Against this backdrop, the results achieved on international trade at the Taormina Summit actually exceeded the expectations. The first sentence of the trade section of the communiqué adopted by the G7 Heads of State and Government reads: “We acknowledge that free, fair and mutually beneficial trade and investment, while creating reciprocal benefits, are key engines for growth and job creation”.<sup>15</sup> Three elements differentiate this from the first sentence of previous G7 communiqués.

First is the use of the adjective “fair” to qualify trade and investment, which represents an element of novelty in the G7 tradition. Indeed, in the past the adjective “fair” had been used only with reference to the multilateral trading system, like in the

<sup>11</sup> G20, *Finance Ministers’ and Central Bank Governors’ Communiqué*, Baden Baden, 18 March 2017, <http://www.g20.utoronto.ca/2017/170318-finance-en.html>.

<sup>12</sup> International Monetary and Financial Committee (IMFC), *Communiqué of the Thirty-Fifth Meeting*, Washington, 22 April 2017, <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2017/04/22/sm2017-communicue-of-the-thirty-fifth-meeting-of-the-imfc>.

<sup>13</sup> G7, *Finance Ministers’ and Central Bank Governors’ Communiqué*, Bari, 13 May 2017, <http://www.g8.utoronto.ca/finance/170513-communicue.html>.

<sup>14</sup> Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), *Statement of the Chair, 23rd Meeting of APEC Ministers Responsible for Trade*, Hanoi, 21 May 2017, [https://www.apec.org/Meeting-Papers/Sectoral-Ministerial-Meetings/Trade/2017\\_trade/chair](https://www.apec.org/Meeting-Papers/Sectoral-Ministerial-Meetings/Trade/2017_trade/chair).

<sup>15</sup> G7, *Leaders’ Communiqué*, Taormina, 27 May 2017, par. 19, <http://www.g8.utoronto.ca/summit/2017taormina/communiquue.html>.

communiqué of the 2012 Camp David<sup>16</sup> and of the 2013 Lough Erne G8 Summits.<sup>17</sup>

Second is the adjective “mutually beneficial”, also used as a qualification for trade and investment, which was introduced as a compromise solution to the adjective “reciprocal”.

Last, the introduction of the wording “while creating reciprocal benefits”, which points to the need to enhance reciprocity in market access.

The trade section of the Taormina communiqué then goes on to state: “we reiterate our commitment to keep our markets open and to fight protectionism, while standing firm against all unfair trade practices”.<sup>18</sup> Although this formulation is less stringent than the wording of the 2016 Ise-Shima communiqué (in which leaders committed to fight “all forms of protectionism”),<sup>19</sup> the no-protectionism pledge is fully in line with the G7 trade *acquis*. At the same time, the addition “while standing firm against all unfair trade practices” corroborates the message conveyed through the adjective “fair” in the first sentence.

Such a message is further elaborated in the second paragraph of the trade section of the Taormina communiqué, which contains some of the strongest and most articulated language on trade-distorting practices in the history of the G7. In fact, the 2016 Ise-Shima communiqué focused exclusively on global excess capacity in industrial sectors. The main purpose of the Ise-Shima language was to pave the way towards the establishment of the Global Forum on Steel Excess Capacity by the 2016 G20 Summit, which took place in Hangzhou in September. On that occasion, G20 leaders committed to presenting a progress report on their efforts to tackle global steel excess capacity by the meeting of the relevant G20 ministers under the 2017 German Presidency.<sup>20</sup>

Therefore, the reference “we welcome the Global Forum on Steel Excess Capacity [...] and urge all Members to promptly deliver on effective policy solutions [...] to address the root causes of global steel excess capacity”<sup>21</sup> contained in the Taormina communiqué was meant to urge G20 members to deliver on their Hangzhou Summit commitment. However, the language on trade-distorting practices of the Taormina communiqué extends beyond global excess capacity to include dumping, discriminatory non-tariff barriers, forced technology transfers and more, and acknowledges that removing all of these is a necessary condition to

<sup>16</sup> G8, *Leaders’ Declaration*, Camp David, 19 May 2012, <http://www.g8.utoronto.ca/summit/2012campdavid/g8-declaration.html>.

<sup>17</sup> G8, *Leaders’ Communiqué*, Lough Erne, 18 June 2013, <http://www.g8.utoronto.ca/summit/2013lougherne/lough-erne-communique.html>.

<sup>18</sup> G7, *Leaders’ Communiqué*, Taormina, 27 May 2017, cit., par. 19.

<sup>19</sup> G7, *Leaders’ Declaration*, Ise-Shima, 27 May 2016, cit., p. 2 and 7.

<sup>20</sup> G20, *Leaders’ Communiqué*, Hangzhou, 5 September 2016, par. 31, <http://www.g20.utoronto.ca/2016/160905-communique.html>.

<sup>21</sup> G7, *Leaders’ Communiqué*, Taormina, 27 May 2017, cit., par. 20.

foster “a truly level playing field”.<sup>22</sup>

Concerning the multilateral trading system, the third paragraph of the trade section of the Taormina communiqué reads: “We recognize the importance of the rules-based international trading system.”<sup>23</sup> Similarly to the anti-protectionism pledge, this formulation is in line with the G7 trade *acquis*. However, compared to previous communiqués, it was not possible to reach consensus on the adjective “multilateral” with reference to the trading system, and the adjective “international” was instead used to characterize it. In addition, in Taormina, G7 leaders committed to working together to “improve the functioning of the WTO” – something that was missing in previous G7 communiqués – and to “achieve a successful 11th WTO Ministerial Conference”<sup>24</sup> – a reference also contained in the communiqués of previous summits.<sup>25</sup> With such a formulation, G7 leaders recognized that the WTO is not without its shortcomings; however, the language they agreed upon signals their determination to work together to address these shortcomings and, therefore, to avoid unilateral actions to this end.

#### 4. Legacy of the G7 Taormina Summit

The legacy of the Taormina Summit was not easy to establish. While the general assumption was that the language on trade of the Taormina communiqué would serve as a basis for the communiqué of the Ministerial Council Meeting (MCM) of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which took place in Paris on 7–8 June, the United States rejected such wording. In fact, officials from the United States Trade Representative (USTR) argued that, while the White House has competence over G7 and G20 summits, it is the USTR that is competent over OECD MCMs. As a result, it was not possible to sign a communiqué that made reference to the principles of the fight against protectionism and of support for the multilateral trading system.<sup>26</sup>

By contrast, the Danish Chair of the MCM issued a “Chair’s Statement on Trade, Investment and Climate Change”, which included these two principles in the list of points on which there was “near-consensus” among OECD Members.<sup>27</sup> The USTR responded with a “United States Statement on Trade for the OECD Ministerial Council Meeting”, which referred to some principles that the other members could

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., par. 21.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> For instance, in the communiqué of the 2015 Summit in Elmau, G7 leaders referred to the 10th WTO Ministerial Conference, which took place in Nairobi in December 2015.

<sup>26</sup> OECD, *2017 Ministerial Council Statement*, Paris, 8 June 2017, <http://www.oecd.org/mcm/documents/2017-ministerial-council-statement.htm>.

<sup>27</sup> OECD, *Statement of the Chair of MCM 2017*, Paris, 8 June 2017, <http://www.oecd.org/mcm/documents/statement-of-the-chair-of-mcm-2017.htm>.



not have easily agreed upon, such as “unfair trade practices on the part of some countries [...] can result in large, persistent trade imbalances” and the “United States recognizes the importance of international trading systems”.<sup>28</sup>

### 4.1 The G20 Hamburg Summit

Against this backdrop, the commitment to fight protectionism and support the multilateral trading system were reaffirmed at the G20 Summit held in Hamburg on 7–8 July 2017. Similarly to what the G7 leaders had done in Taormina, the G20 Heads of State and Government underlined the “crucial role of the rules-based international trading system”, and committed to working together with all WTO members to “make the eleventh WTO Ministerial Conference a success” and to “further improve the functioning of the WTO”.<sup>29</sup>

However, the anti-protectionism pledge of the Hamburg communiqué turned out to be considerably weaker than the one contained in the Taormina communiqué, from which it differs on several fronts.

First, while the Taormina communiqué referred to the adjective “reciprocal” only with regard to the benefits of trade and investment, the Hamburg communiqué elevates it to a key aspect of trade and investment frameworks, alongside “mutually advantageous” (“mutually beneficial” in Taormina). Similarly, it introduces the “principle of non-discrimination”, which was not referred to in the Taormina communiqué. In fact, the Hamburg communiqué reads: “We will keep markets open noting the importance of reciprocal and mutually advantageous trade and investment frameworks and the principle of non-discrimination”.<sup>30</sup>

These references can be partly ascribed to the advancement in the trade policy review conducted by the Macron administration in France. In fact, the reference to “mutually beneficial” trade and investment was already part of the Conclusions of the European Council meeting of 22–23 June, in which the EU Heads of State and Government stated that “trade and investment can only be free if it is also fair and mutually beneficial”.<sup>31</sup> In addition, in line with President Macron’s proposal to establish a “Buy European Act” – which would reserve access to public procurement contracts in the EU to companies that have at least half of their production inside the bloc – the EU leaders called on the European Commission and the Council to “deepen and take forward the debate on how to enhance reciprocity in the fields of

<sup>28</sup> United States Trade Representative (USTR), *United States Statement on Trade for the OECD Ministerial Council Meeting*, Paris, 8 June 2017, <https://ustr.gov/about-us/policy-offices/press-office/press-releases/2017/june/united-states-statement-trade-oecd>.

<sup>29</sup> G20, *Leaders’ Declaration*, Hamburg, 8 July 2017, p. 4, <http://www.g20.utoronto.ca/2017/2017-G20-leaders-declaration.html>.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> European Council, *Meeting’s Conclusions (22 and 23 June 2017)*, Brussels, 23 June 2017, par. 17, <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2017/06/23/euco-conclusions>.

public procurement and investment”.<sup>32</sup>

The anti-protectionism pledge of the Hamburg communiqué then goes on to read: “We will [...] continue to fight protectionism including all unfair trade practices and recognise the role of legitimate trade defence instruments in this regard”.<sup>33</sup> Compared to the anti-protectionism pledge contained in the Taormina communiqué, such language allows for a broader interpretation of the word “protectionism”. Indeed, rather than simply actions and policies aimed at restricting or restraining foreign goods and services, trade-distorting practices – such as dumping, subsidies, excess capacities, etc. – could be considered as “protectionism”.

Third, the G20 Hamburg communiqué recognizes the possibility for countries to adopt “legitimate trade defence instruments” to counter such unfair trade practices,<sup>34</sup> something that was missing in the Taormina communiqué. Trade defence instruments usually consist in countervailing and anti-dumping measures. However, the Hamburg language leaves their definition open to interpretation. In particular, as it clarifies neither what “legitimate” means nor who can determine what “legitimate” is, this formulation might provide an implicit justification for the adoption of safeguard actions or measures based on national security as “legitimate trade defence instruments”.

This said, there are also areas in which the Hamburg communiqué is more advanced than the Taormina one. For instance, in Hamburg G20 leaders affirmed: “We note the importance of bilateral, regional and plurilateral agreements being open, transparent, inclusive and WTO-consistent, and commit to working to ensure they complement the multilateral trade agreements”,<sup>35</sup> a reference that is in line with the G7 trade *acquis* but which was not possible to agree upon in Taormina.

### 4.2 Follow-up to the G20 Hamburg Summit

Despite the G20 leaders’ ability to reiterate – albeit with different nuances from what the G7 leaders had done in Taormina – their anti-protectionism pledge and support for the multilateral trading system, these two principles were not fully reaffirmed in the outcome documents of relevant multilateral meetings in the last months of 2017.

In fact, the communiqué of the 36th meeting of the IMFC (Washington DC, 14 October) failed to contain any explicit anti-protectionism pledge. By contrast, borrowing from the previous IMFC meeting, the communiqué reads: “We welcome the conclusions of the G-20 Hamburg Summit on trade and are working to

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> G20, *Leaders’ Declaration*, Hamburg, 8 July 2017, cit., p. 3.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

strengthen its contribution to our economies.”<sup>36</sup> In addition, the communiqués of both the APEC ministerial meeting (Da Nang, 8 November)<sup>37</sup>, and the APEC economic leaders’ meeting (Da Nang, 11 November)<sup>38</sup> contain rather ambiguous language on protectionism, as both ministers and leaders affirmed: “We [...] recommit to fight protectionism, including all unfair trade practices, recognizing the role of legitimate trade defence instruments”,<sup>39</sup> thus mirroring the language of the G20 Hamburg Summit.

Likewise, while both APEC ministers and leaders committed to working together towards a successful MC11 and improve the functioning of the WTO, the former declared: “We recognize the work of the WTO in ensuring international trade is rules-based, free, open, fair, transparent, predictable and inclusive”,<sup>40</sup> whereas the latter affirmed: “We underline APEC’s crucial role in support of a rules-based, free, open, fair, transparent, and inclusive multilateral trading system.”<sup>41</sup> Both affirmations stand out for the weakness of their support to the rules-based multilateral trading system.

The opaqueness of the APEC’s language stands in stark contrast to the much cleaner wording of communiqués from the BRICS trade ministers’ meeting (Shanghai, 2 August)<sup>42</sup> and from the BRICS leaders’ summit (Xiamen, 4 September).<sup>43</sup> Both read: “We will continue to firmly oppose [trade and investment] protectionism” and “We remain firmly committed to a rules-based, transparent, non-discriminatory, open and inclusive multilateral trading system as embodied in the WTO.”

Lastly, despite the G7 and G20 leaders’ commitment to work together towards its success, the 11th WTO Ministerial Conference – which took place in Buenos Aires on 11–13 December – was “a missed opportunity”.<sup>44</sup> Specifically, given the divergences among members, not only was it not possible to achieve any multilateral outcome, but also it was not possible to sign a joint declaration reaffirming the support of all WTO members for the multilateral trading system.

<sup>36</sup> IMFC, *Communiqué of the Thirty-Sixth Meeting*, Washington, 14 October 2017, <http://www.imf.org/en/news/articles/2017/10/14/cm101417-communiqué-of-the-thirty-sixth-meeting-of-the-imfc>.

<sup>37</sup> APEC, *Joint Ministerial Statement*, Da Nang, 8 November 2017, [https://www.apec.org/Meeting-Papers/Annual-Ministerial-Meetings/2017/2017\\_amm](https://www.apec.org/Meeting-Papers/Annual-Ministerial-Meetings/2017/2017_amm).

<sup>38</sup> APEC, *Leaders’ Declaration*, Da Nang, 11 November 2017, [https://www.apec.org/Meeting-Papers/Leaders-Declarations/2017/2017\\_aelm](https://www.apec.org/Meeting-Papers/Leaders-Declarations/2017/2017_aelm).

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 22.

<sup>40</sup> APEC, *Joint Ministerial Statement*, Da Nang, 8 November 2017, *cit.*, par. 7.

<sup>41</sup> APEC, *Leaders’ Declaration*, Da Nang, 11 November 2017, *cit.* par. 20.

<sup>42</sup> BRICS, *7th Meeting of the BRICS Trade Ministers Statement*, Shanghai, 2 August 2017, par. 11, [https://www.brics2017.org/English/Documents/Meetings/201708/t20170831\\_1824.html](https://www.brics2017.org/English/Documents/Meetings/201708/t20170831_1824.html).

<sup>43</sup> BRICS, *BRICS Leaders Xiamen Declaration*, Xiamen, 4 September 2017, par. 32, [https://www.brics2017.org/English/Documents/Summit/201709/t20170908\\_2021.html](https://www.brics2017.org/English/Documents/Summit/201709/t20170908_2021.html).

<sup>44</sup> European Commission, *WTO meeting in Buenos Aires: A missed opportunity*, Buenos Aires, 13 December 2017, <http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/press/index.cfm?id=1772>.

## 5. The Trump administration's unilateral trade restrictive measures

During 2017, the Trump administration conducted a wide-range of trade investigations, which include:

- eighty-two US Department of Commerce anti-dumping (AD) and countervailing duty (CVD) investigations to determine whether goods imported to the American market are dumped or subsidized,<sup>45</sup> including self-initiated AD and CVD investigations under the Tariff Act of 1930 into Chinese imports of common alloy aluminium sheets;<sup>46</sup>
- two US Department of Commerce investigations under Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962 to determine whether steel and aluminium imports pose a threat to the national security of the United States;<sup>47</sup>
- two US International Trade Commission (USITC) investigations under Section 201 of the Trade Act of 1974 to determine whether large residential washing machines and crystalline silicon photovoltaic cells are being imported into the United States in such increased quantities as to be a substantial cause of serious injury to the domestic industry;<sup>48</sup> and
- one USTR investigation under Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974 to determine whether acts, policies, and practices of the Government of China related to technology transfer, intellectual property, and innovation are unreasonable or discriminatory and burden or restrict US commerce.<sup>49</sup>

As a result of many of these investigations, the Trump administration followed up on positions laid out in relevant multilateral gatherings in 2017 and – instead of seeking multilateral solutions – enacted unilateral trade restrictive measures. However, these measures may turn out to be counterproductive. In fact, the countries that see their exports in the American market restricted due to Washington's unilateral trade sanctions may request WTO consultations with the United States, thus formally initiating a dispute in the WTO. This is what Canada did in November 2017 following the US Department of Commerce affirmative final

<sup>45</sup> White House, *President Donald J. Trump Is Promoting Free, Fair, and Reciprocal Trade*, 30 January 2018, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/president-donald-j-trump-promoting-free-fair-reciprocal-trade>.

<sup>46</sup> US Department of Commerce, *U.S. Department of Commerce Self-Initiates Historic Antidumping and Countervailing Duty Investigations on Common Alloy Aluminum Sheet from China*, 28 November 2017, <https://www.commerce.gov/node/3284>.

<sup>47</sup> US Department of Commerce, *Statement from the Department of Commerce on Submission of Steel Section 232 Report to the President*, 11 January 2018, <https://www.commerce.gov/node/3409>; US Department of Commerce, *Statement from the Department of Commerce on Submission of Aluminum Section 232 Report to the President*, 22 January 2018, <https://www.commerce.gov/node/3415>.

<sup>48</sup> USTR, *President Trump Approves Relief for U.S. Washing Machine and Solar Cell Manufacturers*, 22 January 2018, <https://ustr.gov/about-us/policy-offices/press-office/press-releases/2018/january/president-trump-approves-relief-us>.

<sup>49</sup> USTR, *USTR Announces Initiation of Section 301 Investigation of China*, 18 August 2017, <https://ustr.gov/about-us/policy-offices/press-office/press-releases/2017/august/ustr-announces-initiation-section>.



AD and CVD determinations on imports of Canadian softwood lumber.<sup>50</sup> Similarly, following the initiation of US Department of Commerce investigations into other Canadian exports – from uncoated groundwood paper (on which final CVD determination is expected in May 2018) to large civil aircrafts (which in January 2018 the USITC ruled do not injure the American industry) – in December 2017 Canada requested WTO consultations with the United States relating to its AD/CVD investigations, reviews or other proceedings, which Ottawa deems inconsistent with Washington's WTO obligations.<sup>51</sup>

In the same way, following the safeguard tariffs imposed in January 2018 on imports of large residential washing machines and of crystalline silicon photovoltaic cells on the basis of the USITC investigations under Section 201 of the Trade Act of 1974, South Korea, Taiwan, China, the EU, Singapore and Japan also requested WTO consultations with the United States.<sup>52</sup>

According to the WTO Dispute Settlement Understanding, the United States must enter into consultations with the complaining party within no more than thirty days after the date of receipt of the request.<sup>53</sup> If the consultations fail to resolve the dispute, the complaining party may request the WTO Dispute Settlement Body (DSB) to establish a panel. Should Washington lose the dispute and fail to implement the panel report adopted by the DSB (together with the appeal report, in case Washington decided to appeal the panel report to the Appellate Body), it would then have to negotiate a compensation with the winning party pending full implementation. Eventually, if no agreement were reached on compensation, the DSB might authorize the winning party to retaliate against the United States.

<sup>50</sup> US Department of Commerce, *U.S. Department of Commerce Finds Dumping and Subsidization of Imports of Softwood Lumber from Canada*, 2 November 2017, <https://www.commerce.gov/node/3261>; WTO, *United States – Countervailing Measures on Softwood Lumber from Canada – Request for consultations by Canada* (WT/DS533/1), 30 November 2017, [https://www.wto.org/english/tratop\\_e/dispu\\_e/cases\\_e/ds533\\_e.htm](https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/dispu_e/cases_e/ds533_e.htm).

<sup>51</sup> US Department of Commerce, *U.S. Department of Commerce Issues Affirmative Preliminary Countervailing Duty Determination on Uncoated Groundwood Paper from Canada*, 9 January 2018, <https://www.commerce.gov/node/3406>; US International Trade Commission (USITC), *100- to 150-Seat Large Civil Aircraft from Canada Do Not Injure U.S. Industry, Says USITC*, 26 January 2018, [https://www.usitc.gov/press\\_room/news\\_release/2018/er012611898.htm](https://www.usitc.gov/press_room/news_release/2018/er012611898.htm); WTO, *United States – Certain Systemic Trade Remedies Measures – Request for consultations by Canada* (WT/DS535/1), 10 January 2018, [https://www.wto.org/english/news\\_e/news18\\_e/ds535rfc\\_10jan18\\_e.htm](https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news18_e/ds535rfc_10jan18_e.htm).

<sup>52</sup> WTO, *Committee on Safeguards – Imposition of a safeguard measure by the United States on imports of crystalline silicon photovoltaic cells – Request for consultations under Art. 12.3 of the Agreement on Safeguards – Republic of Korea* (G/SG/146), 24 January 2018; *Separate Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu* (G/SG/148), 30 January 2018; *China* (G/SG/149), 6 February 2018; *European Union* (G/SG/151), 7 February 2018; *Singapore* (G/SG/152), 9 February 2018; *Japan* (G/SG/153), 16 February 2018. While Taiwan, the EU, Singapore and Japan requested WTO consultations only relating to the safeguard tariffs imposed on crystalline silicon photovoltaic cells, South Korea and China did it also relating to those imposed on large residential washing machines. See WTO, *Committee on Safeguards – Imposition of a safeguard measure by the United States on imports of large residential washers – Request for consultations under Art. 12.3 of the Agreement on Safeguards – Republic of Korea* (G/SG/147), 24 January 2018; *China* (G/SG/150), 6 February 2018.

<sup>53</sup> See WTO website: *The Panel Process*, [https://www.wto.org/english/thewto\\_e/whatis\\_e/tif\\_e/disp2\\_e.htm](https://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/whatis_e/tif_e/disp2_e.htm).



However, the parties affected by Washington's unilateral trade measures may also decide to take retaliatory actions without having previously filed a WTO dispute, with the risk of escalating tit-for-tat trade wars. This is especially relevant in light of the major US investigations involving China that are due to end in the first half of 2018. These include the Department of Commerce AD and CVD investigations under the Tariff Act of 1930 into Chinese imports of common alloy aluminium sheets and the USTR investigation under Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974 into Chinese practices related to technology transfer, intellectual property and innovation. In February 2018 China announced the self-initiation of an anti-dumping and anti-subsidy investigation into sorghum imports from the United States, presumably in retaliation for the safeguard tariffs President Trump imposed on imports of crystalline silicon photovoltaic cells and of large residential washing machines.<sup>54</sup> Should Washington follow through with these investigations and adopt new unilateral sanctions, it cannot be excluded that China will respond with additional retaliations.

In addition, should President Trump decide to impose the unilateral trade restrictions recommended in the reports on the Department of Commerce's investigations under Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962 into the effects of steel and aluminium imports on national security,<sup>55</sup> retaliatory measures also on the part of some of America's closest allies cannot be ruled out. Indeed, a number of G7 countries – such as Canada, Germany and Japan – are among the top sources of US aluminium and steel imports.<sup>56</sup> For instance, after President Trump hinted that he might take unilateral sanctions against the EU, the European Commission affirmed that the bloc stands ready to “react swiftly and appropriately” to any restrictive trade measures from the United States.<sup>57</sup>

### Conclusion

The developments that followed the G7 Summit in Taormina and the unilateral trade restrictive measures adopted by the Trump administration reveal how difficult it will be to reaffirm the key principles of the G7 trade *acquis* at the 2018 Summit. After all, the Trump administration has now developed a more in-depth knowledge of the multilateral process. Fact sheets released by the White House following President Trump's State of the Union address on 30 January 2018 clearly demonstrate this shift: “The President shaped Leaders Statements at the G7, G20,

<sup>54</sup> China's Ministry of Commerce, *MOFCOM Initiates Anti-dumping and Countervailing Investigation against the Grain Sorghum Imported from the US*, 6 February 2018, <http://english.mofcom.gov.cn/article/newsrelease/significantnews/201802/20180202710689.shtml>.

<sup>55</sup> US Department of Commerce, *Secretary Ross Releases Steel and Aluminum 232 Reports in Coordination with White House*, 16 February 2018, <https://www.commerce.gov/node/3438>.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. e.g., David Francis, “Trump's Trade Restrictions Could Miss China and Slam Everybody Else”, in *Foreign Policy*, 12 June 2017, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/06/12/trumps-trade-restrictions-could-miss-china-and-slam-everybody-else>.

<sup>57</sup> “EU says it will react swiftly if Trump restricts EU trade”, in *Reuters*, 29 January 2018, <https://reut.rs/2DTLh5I>.

and APEC, ensuring that they highlighted concerns about unfair trade practices and promoted fair and reciprocal trade for the first time ever.”<sup>58</sup> In addition, the Trump administration has now completed its trade policy review and more thoroughly defined its trade policy priorities, as shown by the National Security Strategy released last December.<sup>59</sup>

Notwithstanding the differences in trade policy views, there is still room for common work on trade within the G7. In particular, in 2018, the G7 should serve as a platform from which to persuade the United States that unfair trade practices can be effectively tackled only through a multilateral approach. After all, America is not the only country affected by unfair trade practices on the part of some non-G7 countries, and a coordinated G7 effort within the multilateral trade rules would be the best way to challenge these countries to remove such practices. A multilateral approach would also allow Washington to avoid the side effects of unilateral measures.

That there is merit in enhancing multilateral cooperation seems to have been more recently recognized by the Trump administration, as demonstrated by the statement the United States signed on the margins of the MC11 jointly with the EU and Japan.<sup>60</sup> As a follow-up, in 2018, the United States should side with the other G7 countries to deliver on the commitment leaders made in Taormina to strengthen cooperation to tackle unfair trade practices.

Concretely, in 2018, the G7 should continue to closely monitor the work of the Global Forum on Steel Excess Capacity. It is crucial that all G20 members implement policy solutions to reduce excess capacity, as suggested in the progress report approved in November 2017 by the relevant ministers.<sup>61</sup> In addition, G7 leaders should deliver on the commitment made in Taormina to work “together to improve the functioning of the WTO”<sup>62</sup> and to pave the way towards WTO reform, so as to enable that body to better tackle unfair trade practices. The need to do so was recently reiterated during an informal WTO ministerial gathering on the margins of the 48th Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos,<sup>63</sup> and is also recognized in the US National Security Strategy released last December<sup>64</sup> and in the fact sheets published by the White House following President Trump’s 2018 State of the Union address.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>58</sup> White House, *President Donald J. Trump Is Promoting Free, Fair, and Reciprocal Trade*, cit.

<sup>59</sup> White House, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, 18 December 2017, <http://nssarchive.us/national-security-strategy-2017>.

<sup>60</sup> USTR, *Joint Statement by the United States, European Union and Japan at MC11*, Buenos Aires, 12 December 2017, <https://ustr.gov/about-us/policy-offices/press-office/press-releases/2017/december/joint-statement-united-states>.

<sup>61</sup> G20, *Report of the Global Forum on Steel Excess Capacity*, Berlin, 30 November 2017, <http://www.bmwi.de/Redaktion/EN/Downloads/global-forum-on-steel-excess-capacity-report.pdf>.

<sup>62</sup> G7, *Leaders’ Communiqué*, Taormina, 27 May 2017, cit., par. 21.

<sup>63</sup> WTO, *Personal Concluding Remarks by the Chair, Informal WTO Ministerial Gathering*, Davos, 26 January 2018, [https://www.wto.org/english/news\\_e/news18\\_e/conc\\_igo\\_26jan18\\_e.pdf](https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news18_e/conc_igo_26jan18_e.pdf).

<sup>64</sup> White House, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, cit.

<sup>65</sup> White House, *President Donald J. Trump Is Promoting Free, Fair, and Reciprocal Trade*, cit.

Within the discussions on how to reform the WTO, and in addition to pointing out its dysfunctions, the United States should take on a more proactive role in suggesting ways to improve its functioning. That is, borrowing from 16th-century English philosopher Francis Bacon, Washington should couple its current “*pars destruens*” with a “*pars construens*”. This would mean, for example, following up on the proposal to enhance transparency and strengthen notification requirements, which the US submitted ahead of the MC11 and which was discussed by the WTO Council for Trade in Goods last November.<sup>66</sup>

Likewise, this would mean continuing to constructively engage in ongoing WTO disputes, such as the one between the EU and China over China’s Market Economy Status. In fact, in November 2017, Washington submitted a statement of opposition to the WTO as a third-party brief in support of the EU.<sup>67</sup> It is in the interest of the United States to join forces with other countries in such a dispute, as the WTO’s rulings over the EU would most likely apply also to the US. In fact, after the expiration on 12 December 2016 of the 15-year clause included in China’s 2001 WTO Accession Protocol, the United States – much like the EU and Japan – chose to continue treating China as a non-market economy in its anti-dumping investigations. As the 2017 USTR annual report on China’s WTO compliance shows, the US posits that China is not living up to certain key commitments it made when it joined the organization.<sup>68</sup>

However, in order to improve the functioning of the WTO, its members must first ensure its smooth functioning. This means solving the deadlock in the appointment of new judges for the WTO Appellate Body (AB), which Washington is currently blocking because of its systemic concerns about the body exceeding its mandate. Already three of the seven seats on the AB are empty; by the end of September 2018, another vacancy is expected, leaving just three members to handle a growing caseload. As a result, the US obstruction risks – in the words of the EU Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmström – “killing the WTO from inside.”<sup>69</sup> Washington has every interest in resolving this impasse, as a functioning dispute system is necessary for the WTO to adjudicate unfair trade practices. Therefore, while working together with the other G7 countries to resolve the systemic issues that concern it, the United States should allow the process for finding candidates for the AB vacancies to proceed.

*Updated 16 February 2018*

<sup>66</sup> WTO, *Council for Trade in Goods – Report (2017) of the Council for Trade in Goods (G/L/1204)*, 14 November 2017, <https://docs.wto.org/dol2fe/Pages/SS/directdoc.aspx?filename=q:/G/L/1204.pdf>.

<sup>67</sup> WTO, *European Union – Measures Related to Price Comparison Methodologies (WT/DS516)*, [https://www.wto.org/english/tratop\\_e/dispu\\_e/cases\\_e/ds516\\_e.htm](https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/dispu_e/cases_e/ds516_e.htm).

<sup>68</sup> USTR, *USTR Releases Annual Reports on China’s and Russia’s WTO Compliance*, 19 January 2018, <https://ustr.gov/about-us/policy-offices/press-office/press-releases/2018/january/ustr-releases-annual-reports-china>.

<sup>69</sup> Jim Brunsten, “EU’s top trade official warns on Trump impact on WTO”, in *Financial Times*, 16 October 2017.

## Appendix: Chronology of major trade-related events in 2017

<b>January</b>		
17	Davos, Switzerland	Chinese President Xi's keynote address at the 2017 Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum
23	Washington DC, USA	US President Trump signs a Presidential memorandum to withdraw the United States from the Trans-Pacific Partnership
23	Geneva, Switzerland	Following the request for consultations with the EU made by China on 12 December 2016 concerning certain provisions of the EU regulation pertaining to the determination of normal value for "non-market economy" countries in anti-dumping proceedings involving products from China (the "European Union – Measures Related to Price Comparison Methodologies" dispute), WTO consultations are held between China and the EU with a view to reaching a mutually satisfactory solution, but fail to resolve the dispute
<b>February</b>		
15	Strasbourg, France	The European Parliament votes in favour of the Canada–EU Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, concluding the ratification process at the EU level
22	Geneva, Switzerland	The WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement enters into force
<b>March</b>		
9	Geneva, Switzerland	China requests that the WTO Dispute Settlement Body establish a panel regarding the "European Union – Measures Related to Price Comparison Methodologies" dispute
17	Washington DC, USA	German Chancellor Merkel's visit to the United States
17–18	Baden-Baden, Germany	G20 Finance Ministers' and Central Bank Governors' meeting
29	Brussels, Belgium	The UK notifies the European Council of its intention to leave the EU, in accordance with Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union
<b>April</b>		
3	Geneva, Switzerland	The WTO Dispute Settlement Body establishes a panel on the "European Union – Measures Related to Price Comparison Methodologies" dispute
6–7	Mar-a-Lago, USA	Chinese President Xi's visit to the United States; launch of the "US–China Comprehensive Dialogue", which includes the "US–China Comprehensive Economic Dialogue"



<b>April</b>		
19	Washington DC, USA	The US Department of Commerce initiates an investigation under section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962 to determine the effects on national security of steel imports
20	Washington DC, USA	US President Trump signs a Presidential Memorandum calling on Commerce Secretary Ross to prioritize the investigation under section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962 to determine the effects on national security of steel imports initiated on 19 April
21–23	Washington DC, USA	Spring meetings of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund
22	Washington DC, USA	35th meeting of the International Monetary and Financial Committee
24	Washington DC, USA	The US Department of Commerce issues affirmative preliminary countervailing duty determination on imports of softwood lumber from Canada
26	Washington DC, USA	The US Department of Commerce initiates an investigation under section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962 to determine the effects on national security of aluminium imports
27	Washington DC, USA	US President Trump signs a Presidential Memorandum calling on Commerce Secretary Ross to prioritize the investigation under section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962 to determine the effects on national security of aluminium imports initiated on 26 April
29	Brussels, Belgium	The European Council adopts a set of political guidelines following the UK's notification of its intention to leave the EU, defining the framework for the negotiations and setting out the EU's overall positions and principles
<b>May</b>		
10	Brussels, Belgium	The European Commission publishes a "Reflection paper on harnessing globalization"
11	Washington DC, USA / Beijing, China	Joint release of the initial results of the 100-day action plan of the "US–China Comprehensive Economic Dialogue"
12–13	Bari, Italy	G7 Finance Ministers' and Central Bank Governors' meeting
14–15	Beijing, China	Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation
17	Washington DC, USA	The US International Trade Commission institutes an investigation under Section 201 of the Trade Act of 1974 to determine whether the increased imports of crystalline silicon photovoltaic cells are a substantial cause of serious injury to the domestic industry



<b>May</b>		
18	Washington DC, USA	US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer submits notice of intent to Congress to renegotiate NAFTA via fast-track status, launching a 90-day consultation period
18	Washington DC, USA	The US Department of Commerce initiates anti-dumping and countervailing duty investigations of imports of 100- to 150-seat civil aircraft from Canada
20–21	Hanoi, Vietnam	Meeting of the APEC Ministers Responsible for Trade
21	Hanoi, Vietnam	Meeting of the Trade Ministers of the 11 remaining countries of the Trans-Pacific Partnership
21–22	Hanoi, Vietnam	Intersessional Ministerial meeting of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership
22	Brussels, Belgium	The Council of the EU authorizes the opening of negotiations with the UK for an agreement setting out the arrangements for its withdrawal from the EU and adopts directives for the negotiation of an agreement
26–27	Taormina, Italy	G7 Leaders' Summit
<b>June</b>		
1–2	Brussels, Belgium	EU–China Summit
5	Washington DC, USA	The US International Trade Commission institutes an investigation under Section 201 of the Trade Act of 1974 to determine whether the increased imports of large residential washing machines are a substantial cause of serious injury to the domestic industry
7–8	Paris, France	OECD Ministerial Council Meeting
12	Washington DC, USA / Beijing, China	As part of the “US–China Comprehensive Economic Dialogue”, the two countries reach a deal on market access for American exports of beef to China and for Chinese exports of cooked poultry to the United States
19	Brussels, Belgium	Agreement between the EU and the UK on the Terms of Reference for the Article 50 TEU negotiations
22–23	Brussels, Belgium	Meeting of the European Council
26	Washington DC, USA	The US Department of Commerce issues affirmative preliminary anti-dumping duty determination on imports of softwood lumber from Canada
29	Geneva, Switzerland	China asks the WTO Director-General to determine the composition of the panel on the “European Union – Measures Related to Price Comparison Methodologies” dispute

<b>July</b>		
6	Brussels, Belgium	EU–Japan Summit; political agreement in principle on the main elements of the Japan-EU Economic Partnership Agreement
7–8	Hamburg, Germany	G20 Leaders' Summit
7	Hamburg, Germany	BRICS Leaders' informal meeting on the margins of the G20 Leaders' Summit
10	Geneva, Switzerland	The WTO Director-General composes the panel on the "European Union – Measures Related to Price Comparison Methodologies" dispute
12	Washington DC, USA	US Trade Representative Lighthizer requests the convening of a special session of the Joint Committee of the US–Korea Free Trade Agreement
19	Washington DC, USA	1st meeting of the "US–China Comprehensive Economic Dialogue"
<b>August</b>		
1–2	Shanghai, China	Meeting of the BRICS Trade Ministers
14	Washington DC, USA	US President Trump signs a Presidential Memorandum calling on US Trade Representative Lighthizer to determine whether to investigate any of China's laws, policies, practices or actions that may be unreasonable or discriminatory and that may be harming American intellectual property rights, innovation or technology development
14	Washington DC, USA	US Trade Representative Lighthizer initiates an investigation under section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974 to determine whether acts, policies and practices of the Government of China related to technology transfer, intellectual property and innovation are unreasonable or discriminatory and burden or restrict US commerce
16–20	Washington DC, USA	1st round of NAFTA renegotiations
22	Seoul, South Korea	1st special session of the US–Korea Free Trade Agreement Joint Committee
30	Washington DC, USA	The US Department of Commerce initiates anti-dumping and countervailing duty investigations of imports of uncoated groundwood paper from Canada
<b>September</b>		
1–5	Mexico City, Mexico	2nd round of NAFTA renegotiations
4	Xiamen, China	BRICS Leaders' Summit
13	Strasbourg, France	European Commission President Juncker's State of the Union speech; the European Commission unveils its proposal for a "trade package"
21	Brussels, Belgium / Ottawa, Canada	The Canada–EU Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement provisionally enters into force

<b>September</b>		
22	Washington DC, USA	The US International Trade Commission determines that there is a reasonable indication that a US industry is materially injured by reason of imports of certain uncoated groundwood paper from Canada that are allegedly subsidized and sold in the United States at less than fair value
22	Washington DC, USA	The US International Trade Commission (USITC) determines that crystalline silicon photovoltaic cells are being imported into the United States in such increased quantities as to be a substantial cause of serious injury to the domestic industry producing an article like or directly competitive with the imported article
23–27	Ottawa, Canada	3rd round of NAFTA renegotiations
26	Washington DC, USA	The US Department of Commerce issues affirmative preliminary countervailing duty determination on imports of 100- to 150-seat large civil aircraft from Canada
<b>October</b>		
3	Strasbourg, France	The European Parliament and the Council of the EU reach an agreement on the proposal adopted by the European Commission in November 2016 to change the EU's anti-dumping and anti-subsidy legislation
4	Washington DC, USA	2nd special session of the US–Korea Free Trade Agreement Joint Committee
5	Washington DC, USA	The US International Trade Commission determines that large residential washing machines are being imported into the United States in such increased quantities as to be a substantial cause of serious injury to the domestic industry producing an article like or directly competitive with the imported article
6	Washington DC, USA	The US Department of Commerce issues affirmative preliminary anti-dumping duty determination on imports of 100- to 150-seat large civil aircraft from Canada
11	Geneva, Switzerland	The EU and the UK formally inform WTO members how they plan to split up the EU's tariff quotas and farm subsidies after Brexit
11–17	Arlington, USA	4th round of NAFTA renegotiations
13–15	Washington DC, USA	Annual meetings of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund
14	Washington DC, USA	36th meeting of the International Monetary and Financial Committee

<b>November</b>		
2	Washington DC, USA	The US Department of Commerce announces the affirmative final determinations of the anti-dumping and countervailing duty investigations of imports of softwood lumber from Canada
8	Da Nang, Viet Nam	APEC Ministerial meeting
8–10	Da Nang, Viet Nam	APEC CEO Summit
10	Da Nang, Viet Nam	The Trade Ministers of the 11 remaining countries of the TPP agree to continue the negotiations to finalize a new agreement renamed the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership
10–11	Da Nang, Viet Nam	APEC Economic Leaders' meeting
10	Geneva, Switzerland	The WTO Council for Trade in Goods considers the US proposal to enhance WTO transparency and strengthen notification requirements through a decision intended for the upcoming 11th Ministerial Conference
14	Manila, Philippines	1st Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Leaders' Summit
17–21	Mexico City, Mexico	5th round of NAFTA renegotiations
28	Washington DC, USA	The US Department of Commerce self-initiates under the Tariff Act of 1930 anti-dumping and countervailing duty investigations of imports of common alloy aluminium sheets from China
29	Geneva, Switzerland	The US submits a statement of opposition to the WTO as a third-party brief in support of the EU in the "European Union – Measures Related to Price Comparison Methodologies" dispute
30	Geneva, Switzerland	Canada requests WTO consultations with the United States following the US Department of Commerce affirmative final determinations of the anti-dumping and countervailing duty investigations of imports of softwood lumber from Canada
30	Berlin, Germany	G20 Ministerial meeting of the Global Forum on Steel Excess Capacity
<b>December</b>		
5	Brussels, Belgium	The European Commission, the Council of the EU and the European Parliament reach a political agreement on the modernization of the EU's trade defence instruments
7	Washington DC, USA	Following the US International Trade Commission's affirmative final injury determinations, the US Department of Commerce issues anti-dumping and countervailing duty orders on imports of softwood lumber from Canada

<b>December</b>		
8	Brussels, Belgium	Conclusion of the final discussions on the EU–Japan Economic Partnership Agreement
8	Brussels, Belgium	The European Commission recommends to the European Council (Article 50) to conclude that sufficient progress has been made in the first phase of Article 50 negotiations with the UK
11–13	Buenos Aires, Argentina	11th WTO Ministerial Conference
15	Brussels, Belgium	Meeting of the European Council (Article 50): the Heads of State and Government welcome the progress achieved during the first phase of negotiations and decide that it is sufficient to move to the 2nd phase related to transition and the framework for the future relationship, and adopt the related guidelines
18	Washington DC, USA	Publication of the National Security Strategy of the United States of America
20	Brussels, Belgium	Adoption of the new EU anti-dumping and anti-subsidy legislation
20	Brussels, Belgium	Following the guidelines adopted by the European Council (Article 50) on 15 December, the European Commission sends a Recommendation to the Council of the EU (Article 50) to begin discussions on the next phase of the orderly withdrawal of the UK from the EU
20	Washington DC, USA	The US Commerce Department announces the affirmative final determinations in the anti-dumping and countervailing duty investigations of 100- to 150-seat large civil aircraft from Canada
20	Geneva, Switzerland	Canada requests WTO consultations with the United States relating to its anti-dumping or countervailing duty investigations, reviews or other proceedings



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