

**General Council Meeting
(5-6 May 2021)**

Hong Kong, China's Statement

Item 7: Work Programme on Electronic Commerce and Moratorium on Imposing Customs Duties on Electronic Transmissions – Request from India

- Thank you, Chair.
- First of all, I would like to join other colleagues in bidding farewell to all the Permanent Representatives who are leaving us, especially Ji-ah (Korea), and extending a warm welcome to all those who just arrived.
- Hong Kong, China would reaffirm its continued support to the Work Programme on e-commerce and we are open-minded to any concrete suggestions from Members, especially other developing and LDC Members, that would contribute to organising structured discussions under the Work Programme that respond to Members' priorities.
- We are also open-minded about the format in which further discussions under the Work Programme are to be held, including discussions at the relevant WTO bodies, dedicated General Council meetings or thematic workshops outside regular meeting cycles in the lead-up to MC12, but we do not support including it as a standing agenda item in regular General Council meetings. We look forward to engaging constructively with other Members on this important subject.
- On the moratorium on customs duties on electronic transmissions, Hong Kong, China all along supports making the moratorium permanent, and we believe that, even if consensus on this permanent moratorium could not be reached by MC12, we should at least extend it until the following Ministerial Conference. This will be critical to the post-pandemic global economic recovery and will avoid bringing unnecessary uncertainties and disruptions to the global e-commerce activities.
- Thank you very much.

Item 8: Introduction of a Paper on “Legal Status of Joint Statement Initiatives and Their Negotiated Outcomes” – Request From India and South Africa (WT/GC/W/819)

- Thank you, Chair.
- At the last General Council meeting held in March, Hong Kong, China already expressed our views on the issues raised in the communication from India and South Africa on the legal status of Joint Statement Initiatives (JSIs). I would highlight just a few key points today.
- Hong Kong, China believes these JSIs will serve to modernise and strengthen the multilateral trading system in areas of increasing relevance to the global trading system, and allow Members to discuss new trade rules that respond to the aspirations of consumers and business communities across the globe.
- These JSIs build upon rather than compete with our ongoing mandated work under existing WTO bodies and programmes, such as the Working Party on Domestic Regulation and the Work Programme on Electronic Commerce.
- In particular, we note that these JSIs are progressing well and the JSIs on e-commerce and Investment Facilitation for Development have scheduled to discuss their legal structure before the summer break. We would encourage all interested Members, including those who may have concerns about the legal structure of these JSIs, to join the discussions so that their views could be taken into account fully and accurately.
- We believe participants in these JSIs should first focus the discussions on the substance at this stage. We are confident that when there are broad consensus on the substances, participants will be able to identify a suitable legal format to incorporate their outcomes into the WTO framework.
- Thank you very much.

Item 9: General Council Declaration, Trade and Health: COVID-19 and Beyond (JOB/GC/251/Rev.1) – Update from Australia; Brazil; Canada; Chile; China; the European Union; Hong Kong, China; Iceland; Japan; Kenya; Republic of Korea; Mexico; Republic of Moldova; Montenegro; New Zealand; North Macedonia; Norway; Singapore; Switzerland and the United Kingdom

- Thank you, Chair.
- Hong Kong, China is pleased to join as a co-sponsor of this draft Declaration. At the outset, we would like to thank the fellow co-sponsors for their ongoing outreach efforts, and other Members for sharing with us their valuable views and comments.
- As Canada has already recalled the salient elements of the draft Declaration, I do not intend to repeat those points, but would just highlight that, in the face of a global pandemic, it is crucial for Members to work in a coordinated and collaborative manner. We need to demonstrate to stakeholders worldwide that the WTO is relevant and responsive to the most pressing issues of our time. The draft Declaration will bring us closer to that common goal.
- Hong Kong, China strongly supports the draft Declaration and would call on other Members to also consider joining.
- Thank you very much.

Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in Geneva
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