

**Joint Statement Initiative on E-Commerce
Heads of Delegation Meeting
(26 July 2024)**

Statement by Hong Kong, China

- Thank you Chair. I would like to congratulate all of us on our accomplishment and make three points: on (i) the positives, (ii) the pragmatic need, and (iii) room for improvement.
- First, the negotiated outcome after five years of work is a commercially meaningful answer to the business community.
- It is valuable also because it is a breakthrough that compensates for the stalemate of services negotiation in the WTO. So the incorporation of this agreement into the WTO rulebook will be significant.
- Second, we should celebrate milestones of this negotiation, but we need to be very clear about which milestone it is in the whole roadmap. As Hong Kong, China mentioned in our written comments on the draft statement, we are puzzled by the choice of words “achieving stabilised text”. For us, it should be the conclusion of the negotiation with a finalized text. Any surgical changes should have been dealt with during the legal scrub. Having a finalised or frozen text will be important for our taking the next steps. Otherwise, we will be in limbo.
- Last, on room for improvement, we are surprised by the addition of the footnote in the statement. Hong Kong, China is not, and does not need to be, in the footnote, but by the construct of the statement, the understanding is not to have any list for the outside world as to who is in, who is out, or who is in the middle of the domestic process. So we are surprised by the addition, which departs from the draft circulated, as it will give the outside world the impression that those not included in the footnote are all at the same stage, which is not exactly the case. So I think it will be better if there is enhanced clarity from the Co-Convenors on the next steps.
- Thank you.

**Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in Geneva
July 2024**