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Council for Trade in Goods

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COVID-19: MEASURES RELATED TO TRADE IN GOODS

COMMUNICATION FROM CANADA; COLOMBIA; COSTA RICA; HONG KONG, CHINA;
NEW ZEALAND; NORWAY; SINGAPORE; AND SWITZERLAND

The following communication, dated 19 November 2020, is being circulated at the request of the delegations of Canada; Colombia; Costa Rica; Hong Kong, China; New Zealand; Norway; Singapore; and Switzerland.

Despite global efforts over the past months in combatting the COVID-19 pandemic, it is quite clear that we all have to live under the ongoing threat and impact of COVID-19 in the near future. An effective adjustment to the new normal and a solid foundation for recovery will be needed. Through safeguarding the rules-based multilateral trading system, regular bodies in the WTO play an essential role in international cooperation to fight the pandemic.

Much work has been done to enhance the transparency of trade-related measures taken in the context of the COVID-19 crisis over the past several months, including with respect to trade in goods. This includes the compilation or tracking of trade-related measures taken in the context of the COVID-19 crisis on the WTO website and the trade policy monitoring reports, as well as discussion by various committees. In some WTO committees, Members have benefited from other Members' sharing of experience in responding to the global pandemic. Notified measures have also been reviewed by relevant WTO committees as part of their regular work.

In line with its mandate, the CTG should be a platform for Members to discuss trade-related measures taken in the context of the COVID-19 crisis in a systematic manner. Without duplicating the efforts of other WTO bodies, and without adding any new notification obligation to Members, the November 2020 CTG meeting could reflect on the significant information already on hand, identify trends and to build on the ongoing work of subsidiary bodies. This would facilitate a coherent and concerted approach in alleviating the impact of the pandemic on the international trade in goods.

At this meeting, we hope to draw Members' attention to the overall picture of implementation of COVID-19 related measures and initiatives. In particular, the following observations and questions may be relevant for discussion:

- (a) Among the more than 250 measures related to trade in goods as at early October, more than 130 have indicated an expiry date. While about 100 of these measures have their effective dates expired, not all of them are indicated to have been terminated – are all the expired measures terminated?
- (b) Among the measures with an expiry date, more than 50 measures were related to trade facilitation or trade liberalization, most of them have expired – has their continuation been considered?
- (c) About 25% of the 250 measures are notified, hence would be discussed at relevant committees. For the remaining ones, what would be the possible avenues to keep track of them?

- (d) Are there good practices in CTG subsidiary committees in monitoring the measures, which could be considered by other committees? Have discussion in committees shed light on whether the measures are implemented in a transparent, targeted, temporary and proportionate way?
 - (e) Could the CTG or the subsidiary bodies take advantage of relevant information and collaborate with other International Organizations?
 - (f) With an overview on the work of subsidiary bodies, would the CTG be able to further analyse the trend and monitor overall implementation of measures related to trade in goods?
 - (g) Would it be useful for the conclusions or analysis held in the committees to be published in the dedicated COVID-19 website of the WTO?
 - (h) Is it possible to identify good practices and lessons learned that could be used by WTO Members or the Secretariat in the future?
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