

Dispute Settlement Reform Process
Heads of Delegation Meeting
(18 July 2024)

Statement by Hong Kong, China

- Thank you, Madam Chair.
- I know you know well that I have said we are in very good hands when you took up the role of Facilitator. So, I will save time not to commend you today; but allow me to thank and congratulate the co-convenors and the delegates who have done most of the heavy-lifting.
- I have listened actively to the presentations by David and Jessica. I can see that they have also listened very attentively to different perspectives that transpired in the technical meetings. On top of that, they have exercised great care to deal with the sensitivity.
- Many proposals or suggestions made today on how to make their technical meetings more effective are already in practice. For example, there are guiding questions to help delegates prepare in advance, and to decide if other commitments should be prioritized over Dispute Settlement (DS) reform meetings.
- Insofar as Hong Kong, China, is concerned, we are not a particularly big mission, but you can rest assured that we will give priority to the DS reform process because we have said time and again that the restoration of a fully functioning DS system is our top priority. Certainly, there can be other ways to find time for it – if people can agree to work outside office hours, then we can avoid clashes. But this proposal will get me stoned by many. So let us be pragmatic. We only have 24 hours and probably we need to work within our limitations.
- Today is the day of analogies – let me give one as well. The current DS reform is like building a house. We used to have one but the roof of its second floor was

blown away in late 2019. So, when we say we need to have a fully functional DS system, we need to have this roof restored.

- Madam Chair, I feel very assured when you said at the very beginning that the restoration of the review or appeal mechanism is definitely part of the tasks that we need to address this year. When our friend from Panama talked about interim achievements, I do not relate them to early harvest. I believe it is more like parking elements that are more mature, so that we can set our time and focus on others in the task list.
- I also have no issue with transparency. The Heads of Delegation (HoD) meetings are meant for demonstrative transparency and inclusiveness. Verbal and written reports from the technical meetings are for delegates and HoDs alike. From these reports, we are pretty clear about the progress made so far. And I know if I have any questions, I can always knock on your door. So no question about your decision to cancel the September HoD meeting. Thank you.

Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in Geneva
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