

**Formal Trade Negotiations Committee
and Informal Heads of Delegations Meetings on 20 July 2020**

Statement of Hong Kong, China (HKC)

- Thank you, Chair.
- I would like to thank you and the Negotiating Group Chairs for their reports. We appreciate the Secretariat's diligence in facilitating Members' ongoing work despite various technical and logistical challenges due to the impact of the Covid-19 on our operations.
- While it remains difficult to predict how the pandemic will evolve, not only here in Geneva but also in other parts of the world, we know at least one thing for certain: the path to economic recovery will be long and challenging.
- We have heard many times that international trade will be a pivotal driver for this recovery. That is why we at the WTO must show that the multilateral trading system can live up to this expectation and we can contribute to this in at least the following two ways.
- First, we should press ahead with our preparatory efforts for the MC12, including the ongoing negotiations and discussions on the various Joint Statement Initiatives. The uncertainties surrounding the arrangements for the MC12 do not mean that we have to put on hold the potential deliverables and the good progress that we have achieved so far. The pandemic has caused disruptions to our normal work in some areas, but it has also revealed new opportunities in other areas. We need to be creative and flexible in advancing our work so that we can bring further benefits to international trade in a timely manner.
- Second, we should continue to enhance the transparency of pandemic-related trade measures and ensure that the WTO exercises its monitoring function effectively. Transparent and efficient information-sharing is particularly important for businesses in times of crisis, but information alone is not enough when it comes to pandemic-related trade measures. Members should work at all levels of the WTO to monitor the implementation of these measures, both to ensure their consistency with WTO rules and to promote good practices in liberalising and facilitating trade. We are pleased to note that some WTO bodies are already doing

substantive work in this regard. Such efforts are fundamental in maintaining the rules-based multilateral trading system and enhancing its resilience in the face of the unprecedented challenge caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

- Chair, the summer this year does look more sombre than usual. On the one hand, the organisation is reflecting on its needs for reform at a critical time when we are selecting the next Director-General. On the other hand, we are under immense pressure to prepare for the road to recovery ahead. It is incumbent on us – all of us – to work together in good faith and demonstrate by concrete actions what contributions the WTO can make during these trying times.

Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in Geneva
July 2020