

**Informal Trade Negotiations Committee and
Informal Heads of Delegations Meeting
(25 February 2021)**

Statement of Hong Kong, China

- Thank you, Deputy Director-General and thank you to the Negotiating Group Chairs for their reports.
- Hong Kong, China is delighted that 2021 has brought about a good start and positive changes. We welcome heartily the confirmation of the appointment of the new Director-General earlier this month and look forward to working under her leadership, together with other Members, to tackle the systemic and priority issues at hand.
- Today, I would just focus on three issues: fisheries subsidies, e-commerce and investment facilitation for development.
- On fisheries subsidies, I would like to thank in particular the Chair of the Negotiating Group on Rules, Ambassador Wills, for his untiring efforts in leading the text-based negotiations and keeping the momentum of the negotiations. Our thanks also go to Ambassador Chambovey, as Friend-of-Chair, for his facilitating role in the discussions on special and differential treatment and his renewed efforts in trying to find landing zones.
- While we are still in February now, two clusters of meetings have already taken place this year, covering some key provisions of the core disciplines. We, however, note that positions among Members remain vastly divergent, in particular in respect of the core disciplines, which are complex and closely linked to international law and Members' own fisheries management regimes. So much work remains to be done.
- Going forward, we expect that more intersessional meetings will be held to allow for more thorough discussions on all the important disciplines. Small group meetings will also help, and we would like to highlight the principle of openness, transparency and inclusiveness in this respect. With MC12 just ten months away, time is not on our side. We would encourage Members to make extraordinary efforts to work in good faith and constructively for progress. Hong Kong, China reaffirms our commitment to concluding the negotiations early with a meaningful outcome.

- On e-commerce, we would like to congratulate the three co-convenors from Australia, Japan and Singapore on the issuance of a consolidated text in December last year. The negotiations have made further headway at the meeting held earlier this month, achieving the first “clean” text on the issue of unsolicited commercial messages. Members also agree to accelerate work in the remaining areas where convergence is in sight so that we may move on to focus on the more challenging issues early.
- Hong Kong, China remains committed to this Joint Initiative and to working flexibly in a combination of plenary, focus group and small group meetings. This has shown to be an efficient process, while preserving the key principles of openness, transparency and inclusiveness. Members should also bear in mind the possibility of seeking ministerial engagement in the run-up to MC12, so as to provide further political impetus and resolve issues where views are still divergent.
- On investment facilitation for development (IFD), I would like to express our gratitude to the Coordinator, Ambassador Francke of Chile, for his leadership and tireless efforts in steering the negotiations. We are pleased to note that the negotiations in the past months has been productive and that Members are making good progress in streamlining the text on substantive issues such as transparency and simplification of investment procedures. The intersessional and small group meetings have helped intensify discussions and have enabled Members to resolve their differences in complicated issues.
- Hong Kong, China supports the Coordinator’s plan to continue with the negotiations in different formats and his mid-term objective of circulating a compilation of revised text that would serve as the main basis of drafting. We will continue to work with the Coordinator and Members in advancing the negotiations, with a view to achieving a substantive outcome in MC12, and ultimately producing an IFD agreement that provides meaningful facilitation to investors.
- Thank you very much.

Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in Geneva
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