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General Council

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**STATEMENT ON HIGHLIGHTING THE IMPORTANCE OF MSMEs
IN THE TIME OF COVID-19**

The following statement, dated 14 May 2020, is being circulated at the request of the following Members: Afghanistan; Albania; Argentina; Australia; Brazil; Canada; Chile; China; Colombia; Costa Rica; Côte d'Ivoire; Ecuador; El Salvador; European Union; Guatemala; Guyana; Honduras; Hong Kong, China; Israel; Japan; Kazakhstan; Kenya; Korea, Republic of; Lao People's Democratic Republic; Liechtenstein; Malaysia; Maldives; Mexico; Moldova, Republic of; Mongolia; Montenegro; Myanmar; New Zealand; North Macedonia; Norway; Paraguay; Philippines; Qatar; Russian Federation; Saudi Arabia, Kingdom of; Singapore; Switzerland; Chinese Taipei; Thailand; Turkey; Ukraine; United Kingdom; Uruguay; Vanuatu.

1.1. We note the significant negative impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on our citizens and our businesses, in particular on those that operate as Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) in economies at all levels of development. We recognize that addressing this global health crisis and economic shock requires a coordinated global response to stabilize our economies and to help MSMEs affected during this challenging period.

1.2. In this regard, we commend the actions taken by many WTO Members to address the immediate challenges faced by workers and businesses alike, in particular MSMEs, during these difficult times.

1.3. We will continue careful monitoring of all MSME-related developments. We will take further action where necessary to help MSMEs' involvement in international trade and promote that supply chains remain open and connected. In cooperation with other international organizations and stakeholders, we will look to explore solutions and share good practices to facilitate trade, accelerate efforts towards trade digitalization, including access to digital tools, as well as improve MSMEs' access to trade finance and to trade-related information through online platforms.

1.4. We reaffirm our support for the central role of the WTO in international trade. We will continue to work together to deliver a free, fair, predictable, and stable trade environment and to keep our markets open with a view to support the global recovery. We invite the WTO Secretariat to continue working closely with other international organizations to facilitate MSMEs' participation in international trade.

1.5. It is clear that timely and accurate information on COVID-related trade measures reduces uncertainty and allows MSMEs to make informed decisions. We therefore encourage Members to continue informing and updating the WTO, as soon as practicable, of any trade-related COVID-19 measures they implement in order to ensure transparency and predictability.

1.6. We will continue our efforts to deepen and multilateralize MSME conversations at the WTO, for the benefit of our MSMEs and our economies. We will work together to help MSMEs overcome this crisis, and build resilience to future shocks.
