

Trade Negotiations Committee Meeting on 10 October 2024

Statement by Hong Kong, China

- The question before us today is one on process.
- The CoA/SS Chair has distilled two options¹ for members' consideration, while highlighting that they are not mutually exclusive. HKC can go along with either option – as long as our collective decision today can help ease the gridlock in the negotiations. While HKC do not have strong offensive or defensive interest in the negotiation on agriculture, we do have robust systemic interest in the capability of the WTO to champion trade policies conducive to the progressive reduction of trade distorting measures through successive negotiations. We need to re-start the negotiations to continue the agricultural reform process as envisaged in Art. 20 of the Agreement on Agriculture²; we also need to develop what the CoA/SS Chair describes as “cutting-edge rules” that would underpin global agricultural trade in the foreseeable future.
- If members go for the second option, we consider it fair and reasonable to discuss the questions of (a) the grouping of topics; as well as (b) the process of appointing facilitators. On the grouping of topics, colleagues from Brazil and the EU have eloquently illustrated why it is pertinent to the success in finding convergence, and so I would not expound on this point. On appointment of facilitators, a similar approach has been adopted by members for DS reform, and HKC sees merits in modelling on the bottom-up approach in nominating facilitators for various negotiating issues. Apart from the competence and neutrality of individual facilitators, for the purpose of building trust, ideally the slate of facilitators should be a balanced mix – balanced in geographical representation, balanced in development status, and balanced in the representation of exporter and importer interests.

¹ 1st option is for Members to form groups in different configurations to discuss specific negotiating issues; and the 2nd option is for the Chair to appoint facilitators for various negotiating issues.

² The Agreement on Agriculture provides: -

“Article 20 Continuation of the Reform Process

Recognizing that the long-term objective of substantial progressive reductions in support and protection resulting in fundamental reform is an ongoing process, Members agree that negotiations for continuing the process will be initiated one year before the end of the implementation period, taking into account:

- (a) the experience to that date from implementing the reduction commitments;
- (b) the effects of the reduction commitments on world trade in agriculture;
- (c) non-trade concerns, special and differential treatment to developing country Members, and the objective to establish a fair and market-oriented agricultural trading system, and the other objectives and concerns mentioned in the preamble to this Agreement; and
- (d) what further commitments are necessary to achieve the above mentioned long-term objectives.”

- Whichever option we choose, as a small and open economy which depends on global trade, we underline that the negotiation process should remain open, transparent and inclusive.

Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in Geneva
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