

**Trade Policy Review of Norway**  
(First Session on 30 June 2025)

**Statement by Hong Kong, China**

- Thank you, Chair; good morning, colleagues.
- Chair, let me start by congratulating you on taking up the important role of chairing the TPRB.
- I would like to warmly welcome the delegation of Norway, led by **Ms. Ragnhild Sjoner SYRSTAD**, State Secretary of the Ministry of Trade, Industries and Fisheries. We also want to recognize the thoroughness of the Norwegian government and the WTO Secretariat in compiling your respective reports. Our thanks also go to the Discussant, **His Excellency Ambassador Dr. Mzukisi QOBO** of South Africa for his insightful remarks about the economic outlook of Norway.

**Bilateral relations**

- Hong Kong, China (HKC) has all along maintained steady and cordial economic and trade relations with Norway. The Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between HKC and the Member States of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) entered into force in 2012 and its implementation has since been sound and smooth. The more favourable market access for goods and services under this FTA has further strengthened our trade and investment ties with Norway. Over the past four years, our bilateral merchandise trade has recorded a steady average annual growth rate of over 4%. We are also open to explore with Norway further opportunities to release the untapped potential in our bilateral relations.

**Norway and the WTO**

- We recognized Norway's strong commitment to free trade and the rules-based multilateral trading system (MTS). As staunch supporters of the MTS, Norway and HKC share many common interests in advancing various WTO initiatives, and revitalizing the Organization's core functions, thereby preserving stability and predictability in global trade amid ongoing challenges.
- In particular, we commend Norway's active and constructive participation in WTO reform, as well as in various negotiation tracks. Norway has consistently demonstrated leadership, and openness in listening to

different views and demands. This explains why Ambassador Petter Ølberg was invited to take up the Facilitator role in support of the membership-wide attempt at a WTO Reform. Norway's pragmatic and forward-looking approach – especially its emphasis on restoring a fully functioning dispute settlement system, and tackling the decision-making impasse – has helped build trust and momentum among Members. HKC looks forward to continuing our close partnership with Norway in this important endeavour to boost the effectiveness, credibility and relevance of the WTO amidst global turbulence.

- Regarding fisheries subsidies, we recognize Norway's strong support and welcome its acceptance of the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies (AFS) in February 2024. We also commend Norway's contribution to the WTO Fisheries Funding Mechanism, which supports developing and least-developed Members in implementing the AFS. Norway's constructive role in the negotiations has been instrumental, and we stand ready to working with Norway and other interested Members in exploring possible pathways on next steps.

### **Trade Policy**

- With respect to Norway's trade policy, we would like to share our observations in three areas: services, tariffs and trade facilitation.
- First, on **services**, it is a key economic sector of Norway, which accounted for over 50% of Norway's GDP and 76% of employment in 2023, with health and social services, public administration, wholesale and retail trade, and education being the largest sectors with respect to value addition and employment. We note from the Secretariat report that there are some cross-cutting regulations in Norway affecting Modes 3 and 4 of services supply, and we look forward to Norway's continued efforts to further liberalise its services trade regime. We also note that Norway is a highly digitalised economy, with notable advancements in mobile payments, block chain technology, and digital asset management. Norway and HKC share common interests in these areas as both economies are working towards fostering Fintech innovation and developing regulatory frameworks for digital assets, so we see a strong potential to deepen our exchange on digitalisation of financial services going forward.
- Second, on **tariffs**, we commend Norway for having bound all its tariff lines, with most carrying ad valorem rates. We also welcome a drop in the average applied MFN tariff along with a decline in the number of lines with international tariff peaks as compared to the last review period.

Having said that, we note from the Secretariat report that the average rate applied to agricultural products (at 27.8%) is considerably higher than that applied to non-agricultural products (at 0.4%). Noting Norway's commitment to free trade, we would encourage Norway to continue exploring possibilities to enhance access to its agricultural market.

- Third, on **trade facilitation**, we commend Norway for its transparent policies on customs procedures. During the review period, Norway further modernised its customs procedures and made notable advancements in digitalising customs processes. The digital customs initiative, *Digitoll*, facilitated automated clearance and significantly reduced processing time from some 30 minutes to only a few minutes. Norway's well-developed risk management system complements these efforts, enabling low rates of physical inspections while maintaining good targeting of controls. Furthermore, with nearly all declarations submitted electronically in 2023 and the development of a single window system, Norway has demonstrated its efforts to streamline customs procedures and reduce administrative burdens for traders.
- Last but not least, HKC would like to thank Norway for their timely replies to all our written questions and would study them in details. We sincerely wish Norway a successful Trade Policy Review and look forward to having close cooperation with Norway in mapping out the complementary pathway to reinforce a robust and sustainable multilateral trading system through the reform of the WTO that lies before us.

**Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in Geneva**  
**30 June 2025**