



**General Council
23 July 2019**

ITEM 6 – WORK PROGRAMME ON ELECTRONIC COMMERCE – REVIEW OF PROGRESS

REPORT BY THE CHAIRPERSON

1.1. At MC11, Ministers adopted a Decision on the Work Programme on Electronic Commerce. In this Decision, Ministers decided to continue the work under the Work Programme on Electronic Commerce and instructed the General Council to hold periodic reviews in its sessions of July and December 2018 and July 2019, based on the reports that may be submitted by the WTO bodies entrusted with the implementation of the Work Programme namely the Councils for Services, Goods and TRIPS, and the Committee on Trade and Development.

1.2. The Chairs of the Council for Trade in Services and of the Council for Trade in Goods submitted written reports to the General Council under their own responsibility. These reports are contained in S/C/57 and G/C/65, respectively, and give an overview of the discussions that took place in the two Councils since our last review of progress in December 2018.¹ With respect to the TRIPS Council, I understand from the TRIPS Council Chair that there has been no appetite among delegations to discuss the Work Programme in the TRIPS Council since 2018. The Chair reminds Members of the Ministerial mandate for this work and will report again should there be any activity in the context of the TRIPS Council's meetings.

1.3. I would like to make a few remarks on the Work Programme in general, and also to report on the informal open-ended meeting that I convened on 17 June 2019 to discuss the moratorium on the imposition of customs duties on electronic transmissions.

1.4. On the Work Programme, let me first extend my gratitude to the Chairs for the work carried out on e-commerce in their respective bodies, and for their reports today. I welcome the discussions held under the Work Programme in the regular bodies, the papers submitted, and the information shared. However, as we have heard from the reports of the Chairs, the level of engagement differs amongst the bodies. In line with the Member-driven nature of our work, I encourage delegations to contribute to discussions in all the mandated bodies by putting forward views and concrete ideas on how we can move our e-commerce discussions forward.

1.5. Specifically, on the moratorium, you will recall that the discussion intensified last year following the submission from India and South Africa on the need to rethink the moratorium. This was followed by consultations by my predecessor and an informal open-ended meeting in late November 2018. To better inform the discussion, a workshop focusing on the moratorium was held earlier this year and I reported on that workshop at the May General Council meeting. On 17 June 2019, I convened an informal open-ended meeting to discuss the Work Programme in general, and to consider the recent submission from India and South Africa on the moratorium circulated in document WT/GC/W/774.

1.6. The proponents called for more discussion given the importance Members attached to the moratorium and the December deadline. In their view, such discussions may help identify areas of common interest to Members and provide a platform for experience sharing without prejudging the extension of the moratorium.

¹ In addition to their written reports, the Chairs of the CTS and the CTG, as well as the CTD Chair, provided oral reports.

1.7. As General Council Chair, I intend to consult broadly with Members following the summer break and I am ready to facilitate any further meeting as necessary, based on Delegations' proposals. As you are all aware, the General Council will need to take a decision on the moratorium by the end of this year.
