



Council for Trade in Goods

WORK PROGRAMME ON ELECTRONIC COMMERCE

**REPORT BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE COUNCIL FOR TRADE IN GOODS
TO THE GENERAL COUNCIL**

As agreed by the Council for Trade in Goods (CTG or the Goods Council) at its meeting of 8 and 9 July 2019, I hereby make, under my own responsibility as Chairperson, the following factual report to the General Council.

Pursuant to the 2017 Ministerial Decision¹ instructing the General Council, *inter alia*, to hold periodic reviews of the Work Programme on Electronic Commerce (WPEC or WP) in its sessions of July and December 2018 and July 2019, based on the reports submitted by the WTO bodies entrusted with the implementation of the Work Programme, the Council for Trade in Goods placed the issue of the Work Programme on Electronic Commerce on the agenda of its meetings held on 23 and 26 March, 3 and 4 July, and 12 and 13 November 2018, and 11 and 12 April and 8 and 9 July 2019. At these meetings, the Chair invited delegations to express their opinions and to make suggestions as to how to work on the preparation of the periodic review to be held in the General Council at its sessions of July and December 2018 and July 2019.

This report concerns the CTG meetings that took place on 11 and 12 April and 8 and 9 July 2019.²

At the CTG's meeting of 11 and 12 April 2019, the LDC Group invited the four WTO bodies entrusted with the implementation of the WPEC to intensify their work, prior to the expiration of the Ministerial Decision on the WPEC by end-2019, by considering the benefits and costs of E-Commerce for LDCs. The issues highlighted by the LDCs that made it difficult for them to engage in and benefit from E-Commerce included the following: limited knowledge of the digital market and E-Commerce platforms; difficulties in creating an appropriate institutional and regulatory framework; absence of enterprise development mechanisms to encourage the creation and growth of E-Commerce-based businesses; difficulty in identifying and resolving the challenges and possible negative impact of E-Commerce; lack of infrastructure and technology, with limited access to relevant information and technology equipment; limited use of credit cards that could be used for e-payments; logistics constraints when delivering goods; and consumer protection. To consider how best to address these challenges the LDC Group intended to hold a dedicated internal workshop.

At the CTG's meeting of 8 and 9 July 2019, one delegation shared several examples of E-Commerce that, in its view, demonstrated how E-Commerce could help to promote industrial development and international trade in goods. Another delegation, while recognizing the potential advantages and benefits of E-Commerce, indicated that it was also important to take account of the varying capacities of WTO Members; in addition, this delegation indicated that WTO work of importance to developing countries and LDCs should be completed before Members turned their attention to E-Commerce negotiations. A third delegation highlighted the importance of ongoing E-Commerce discussions, which demonstrated the WTO's ability to respond to contemporary trading realities.

Given that MC12 would take place in June 2020, Members also considered it useful for the CTG to report to the General Council at its December 2019 meeting.

¹ Document WT/L/1032.

² The factual report to the General Council concerning the discussions on E-Commerce that took place at the CTG's 12 and 13 November 2018 meetings is contained in document G/C/64.