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**JOINT STATEMENT ON ELECTRONIC COMMERCE**COMMUNICATION FROM CÔTE D'IVOIRE<sup>1</sup>

The following communication, dated 14 November 2019, is being circulated at the request of the delegation of Côte d'Ivoire.

Côte d'Ivoire has decided to join the Joint Initiative on Electronic Commerce Group, in order to actively participate in the work aimed at establishing multilateral rules on this matter, for a number of reasons.

First, our delegation considers that examining all e-commerce issues in a single forum, as is now the case, not only provides us with an outlook and overall assessment of all aspects of e-commerce and related interactions, but it is also beneficial for small delegations, such as ours, that cannot attend several simultaneous meetings at the World Trade Organization (WTO).

In addition, and above all, Côte d'Ivoire is taking part because the digital economy and e-commerce are increasingly permeating and transforming all sectors of the economy and all commercial transactions and shaping more and more global value chains. This creates opportunities, but more importantly, it creates various challenges for developing countries, like Côte d'Ivoire. Various types of obstacles are slowing down the establishment of an effective ecosystem that would allow our country to fully exploit its e-commerce potential.

This is why Côte d'Ivoire has decided to take part in this group's discussions at the WTO: to ensure that such challenges are taken into consideration during our deliberations, with a view to reducing them as much as possible.

Against this backdrop, the issue of development seems crucial and cannot be treated as a peripheral, secondary issue.

The issue of development and special and differential treatment must be taken into consideration in all areas of our discussions.

We must examine development issues and address, *inter alia*, the following:

1. **Digital and physical infrastructure, logistics and cross-border payment solutions**, as meeting the demands of e-commerce requires having a comprehensive, quality digital infrastructure.
2. **Support for national digital networks**. The WTO Secretariat should be responsible for identifying and cataloguing the various programmes, which are sponsored primarily by donors and are aimed at providing Internet access, promoting the Internet in rural areas and among disadvantaged groups, providing technical assistance and implementing pilot projects for the development of e-commerce, for the benefit of requesting member countries.
3. **Establishment of a forum for inter-institutional cooperation**. In a world where economies are increasingly interdependent and interconnected, participation in e-commerce appears to be a

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<sup>1</sup> Statement delivered at the E-Commerce Joint Statement Meeting on 24 September 2019.

right. In this respect, the need to establish a legal framework to facilitate e-commerce will inevitably have to be accompanied by the establishment of a **multilateral cooperation forum** for the various institutions involved in this area. The forum should also encourage exchanges of experience, help to secure e-transactions and, above all, promote national micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) and national frameworks for data use, as well as facilitate technology transfer.

**4. Establishment of a fund to support the integration of developing countries, such as Côte d'Ivoire, and the least-developed countries (LDCs) into the digital economy and e-commerce.** Anything that is urgent and will help to ensure universal benefits from the digital economy.

**5. Healthy competitive practice; and other strategies for development.**

In conclusion, having multilateral rules that help to strengthen e-commerce and its regulation on a global scale is not only desirable, but also necessary, given the structural transformations brought about by the infrastructure of e-commerce, affecting the production and distribution of goods and services, as well as payment for goods and services. But such rules will have to be drafted from a development and cooperation perspective to ensure that e-commerce is a real instrument for inclusive development and a useful complement to physical transactions in goods and services.

To conclude, I wish to thank Germany for funding the study assessing Côte d'Ivoire's readiness for e-commerce, which will be conducted by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

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