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**INFORMAL DIALOGUE ON PLASTICS POLLUTION  
AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE PLASTICS TRADE**

STATEMENT BY THE FORUM ON TRADE, ENVIRONMENT & THE SDGS (TESS)

*IDP pre-plenary Meeting – 24 May 2022*

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**DOCUMENT DE SÉANCE NON OFFICIEL<sup>1</sup>**

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**Agenda Item 3. Briefing on the proposed next steps to implement the Ministerial Statement and related discussions (see Annex III)**

- *Aid for Trade review and needs assessment survey and proposed event at the Eighth Global Review 2022.*
- *Update by the WTO Secretariat on plastics-related elements and work on the Aid for Trade Global Review*

Thank you for inviting us to share our thoughts and perspectives.

We would like to start by underlining how excellent it was to see the engagement and range of interventions from delegates and stakeholders during the pre-plenary meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> May.

Thank you to the IDP coordinators for the preparation of the "Aft Review and Needs Assessment Survey" as well as the "Survey to Identify Members' Trade-related Plastic Measures (TrPMs)." We believe that these two survey exercises will make a positive and significant contribution to bridging key information and knowledge gaps, to helping focus the IDP's work, and ensuring that the outcomes you pursue here reflect members' needs and priorities.

In particular, we believe that the "Aft Review and Needs Assessment Survey" is really great step forward. It can help provide greater transparency of ongoing and future Aft efforts to address plastic pollution. It can also help promote better targeting of Aft, and other development assistance and environmental financing, toward key priorities at the intersection of trade, plastic pollution and sustainable development. The driving priority of the survey must be to identify where developing countries and LDCs most need support to enhance their capacities to effectively deal with plastic pollution across the life cycle through a variety of trade-related tools and policy measures.

In addition to the various needs listed in the Needs Assessment Survey that are important and relevant, we would also like to suggest the inclusion of specific needs that developing countries and LDCs may wish to prioritize in order to enable the clean-up of existing plastic pollution in the environment. Here, it is especially important to recall that we have heard from many Members in the IDP that such pollution has been shown to threaten the viability of important economic sectors such as tourism and fisheries as well as the livelihoods that are associated with them.

We would also recommend that the Needs Assessment Survey be accompanied or include some questions to which the stakeholders engaged in the IDP process could contribute their views and findings on needs and priorities, based on their activities and experiences with the intersection of trade and plastic pollution.

Here, there is a growing wealth of knowledge in international organisations and non-governmental organisations on the intersections of trade and plastic pollution and possible policy options. The IDP may also benefit from perspectives shared by the private sector with regard to different technologies and business models, including through re-design, re-use, and substitution, that could help reduce address life-cycle related pollution in different contexts. In addition, companies that specifically produce digital technologies that can enable better tracking, tracing and monitoring of plastics and plastic materials could also be invited to share information on the practical application of their technologies and conditions for their successful deployment. Such presentations could provide valuable guidance on the role that Aft might play in leveraging greater private sector investment and technology deployment as well in developing countries that would promote more sustainable supply chains and help reduce plastic pollution associated with international trade.

TESS is also pleased to circulate for the consideration of delegates and stakeholders its recently released Policy brief on "[Aid for Trade Priorities in the WTO Informal Dialogue on Plastics Pollution.](#)"

In the policy brief, we lay out some specific short and medium term options for next steps that IDP members could consider on Aft and plastic pollution. In good news, the Needs Assessment Survey tabled today is exactly the kind of vital first step that we identify in the paper. We also signal the importance of ensuring that plastic pollution be included as a topic for the Aid for Trade Initiative's workplan in the next biennium, including by ensuring that it is on the agenda on the Aid for Trade Global Review in July. Other immediate opportunities we note are to bolster the focus on plastic pollution in the WTO's own technical assistance programme, as well as collaboration with the WCO

on its green customs initiative and with the Basel Secretariat on the implementation of the Basel Convention 'plastic waste amendments'.

Looking ahead, we emphasise important for Aft efforts to be coordinated with a broader package of green economy-related financing, environmental investments and development assistance beyond traditional Aid for Trade – all of these will be to reduce plastic pollution and facilitate just transition towards more circular economies in developing countries. In this regard TESS would like to suggest that the IDP also invite relevant actors outside of the traditional Aid for Trade space engaged in addressing plastic pollution, such as the Global Environment Facility (GEF), to share findings from their technical and financial assistance initiatives and efforts. It will also be useful to ensure that there is dialogue between donors and beneficiaries working on plastic pollution in the context of Aft and the efforts to negotiate financing provisions in the new international instrument on plastic pollution, including to propose a focus on trade dimensions in environmental financing arrangements that accompany the new treaty.

Finally, in the policy brief, we also note that a key challenge for attention is the mismatch between the inadequate flows of Official Development Assistance targeted at reducing plastic pollution and the far greater volume of public and private financial flows directed towards the expansion of petrochemical and plastic sectors.

- *Communication to the World Customs Organization (WCO).*
- *Briefing by the WCO on recent HS2027 discussions on an amendment to plastics wastes definition in support of the Basel Convention Plastics Amendment*

Thank you for the opportunity to take the floor on the agenda item regarding the proposed letter to the World Customs Organisation regarding cooperation on issues related to trade and plastic pollution. We commend the IDP on this initiative, which we think is excellent step forward.

You will all recall, TESS, together with UNCTAD, have emphasized at previous IDP discussions the short fall of reliable and disaggregated data on cross-border trade flows across the life cycle of plastics, noting that this is an important missing piece for effective, evidence-based policymaking to tackle plastic pollution. For this reason, we were heartened to hear from our colleagues from the World Customs Organization (WCO) this morning that governments are poised to move ahead on efforts to amend the World Custom Organization's Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System (HS) in order to enable better monitoring and regulation of plastic waste trade, and in particular to support implementation of the Basel Convention's plastic waste amendments. We welcome these efforts.

At the same time, we note that there is additional work to be done to amend the HS to support international efforts to tackle plastic pollution.

In short, beyond plastic waste, there are a number of further HS amendments that are needed to support the monitoring and regulation of trade flows across the life cycle of plastics, from additives and other inputs to primary plastics and intermediary and final plastic products.

In that spirit, we are pleased to share today a new [TESS policy brief on that puts forward a subset of options that could be pursued in the current 2022-2027 HS amendment cycle](#).

The policy brief draws on a longer research paper and highlights the key short falls that amendments could seek to address and outlines a subset of options that governments could focus on in this amendment cycle, offering proposals on each stage of life cycle of plastics. Briefly, and to highlight our point on the need to consider further amendments, let me quickly provide a snapshot of the kinds of amendment options that we hope Members might consider.

## Recommendations for the 2027 HS Amendment Cycle to Support Plastic Pollution Reduction

Feedstocks and additives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Add specific HS codes for chemicals such as POPs and other harmful chemical additives used in plastics, starting with those controlled by the Stockholm or Rotterdam Conventions.</li> </ul>
Plastics in primary forms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Create new HS subheadings to allow for greater disaggregation of primary polymer types, many of which are already identified in national legislation or regulatory frameworks.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Create new HS subheadings for the most commonly recycled primary polymers, such as recycled ethylene, propylene, and styrene polymers.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Amend the Section Notes for Chapter 39 to guard against illegal trade of plastic waste being misclassified or disguised under subheadings on primary polymers.</li> </ul>
Intermediate and final manufactured plastic products
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Create new HS subheadings to enable disaggregation of a subset of intermediate and manufactured plastic products that are particularly associated with plastic pollution, with a focus on disaggregation by a wider range of polymers as well as mixtures of polymers and materials.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Amend HS subheadings to incorporate specific information for products made of polymers that contain POPs and other harmful chemical additives.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Amend and create HS subheadings to reveal information about "hidden" plastic packaging associated with trade in certain products.</li> </ul>
Plastic waste
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Create new HS subheadings for a range of plastic wastes to differentiate by more polymer types and better align the HS classification with the annexes to the Basel Convention.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Amend the Section Notes for HS Chapter 39 to align with definitions provided in the Basel Convention plastic waste amendments.</li> </ul>

As noted by our colleague from the WCO, the window of opportunity for HS amendments in the current cycle is short. Only three HS committee meetings remain to reach conclusions on further amendments, with the next meeting coming September. TESS recommends that this cycle of HS amendments is an opportunity that Members should encourage their customs authorities to seize, working in partnership with environmental ministries. If this opportunity is missed, amendments would need to wait until the 2028-2033 cycle, which we would argue is far too late given the urgency of action needed to tackle plastic pollution and the critical role that better trade data will play in enabling trade-related cooperation.

Thank you Chair for the opportunity to contribute to these IDP discussions.

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