



**Committee on Agriculture  
Special Session**

**REPORT BY AMB. GLORIA ABRAHAM PERALTA, CHAIR OF THE COA SPECIAL SESSION,  
TO THE INFORMAL TNC AND HODS MEETING**

14 DECEMBER 2020

1. I would like to report today on the recent developments on process and substance.
2. Further to my announcement in October, I initiated a topic-by-topic Facilitators' led process to complement the work carried out in the CoA Special Session. Its main objective is to contribute to making progress on the various topics by assisting the Chair with technical work in order to improve understanding of different issues and concerns, narrow gaps and identify potential options.
3. All Facilitators have already held numerous consultations and have reported on their work at the CoA Special Session meetings on 10 November and 7 December. Let me thank again all the Facilitators for their remarkable work and dedication.
4. I also took note of the fact that time is required to undertake this technical work, notably for small delegations, and for Capitals to take stock of the discussions, prepare inputs and pursue their post COVID-19 assessment.
5. Some Members also mentioned the possible linkages between topics that cannot be addressed in this format and the need to prioritize the topics to avoid dispersing the efforts. While I agree, it also seems to me that more technical work is needed to mature the issues before we can get to that stage.
6. This process will be evaluated and adapted as needed in early 2021 and its timetable will depend on the date of MC12.
7. Turning to substance. As you know, Singapore, and many co-sponsors, submitted a draft General Council Decision (WT/GC/W/810/Rev.2 - TN/AG/46/Rev.2) suggesting exempting from export restrictions food purchases for humanitarian purposes by the World Food Programme. This submission is accompanied by a communication also from Singapore (WT/GC/811 - TN/AG/47), and is, of course, on the agenda of the General Council this week.
8. A lot of work has been done on this issue, including an open-ended meeting organized by the Facilitator on 26 November. I also invited, at the suggestion of Mali, the FAO and the WFP to provide updated information on the impact of COVID-19 on food insecurity at the November CoA Special Session meeting. The humanitarian consequences of the COVID-19 crisis, as well as the fact that WFP was granted the Nobel Peace Prize, have clearly re-energized the discussions in this domain.
9. Following the CoA Special Session meeting on 7 December and subsequent exchanges between Members, I held a consultation on 11 December with a group of proponents and Members and Group Coordinators to help Members better understand each other's position and to facilitate convergence building. Following this consultation, the Facilitator circulated this morning at my request to the whole Membership an informal working document attempting to reflect various drafting suggestions made thus far by some Members to the original text.
10. The other issues covered under Export Restrictions relate to transparency and clarification elements with a view to enhancing their monitoring. On these issues, which have also attracted renewed interest, further written contributions are expected.

11. Regarding other issues, Domestic Support remains the key priority for virtually all Members who all want an outcome on this issue at MC12. However, divisions remain. Many Members support the Framework proposal by Cairns Group members, while other Members would like to address the imbalances in the Agreement on Agriculture first, notably by gradually eliminating AMS above *de minimis*. There are also suggestions to use some of the pre-MC11 proposals as a basis for an outcome. In short, the topic will still require more technical work and notably more political will. It is therefore very timely that Canada presented an update of its analytical tool (JOB/AG/190) that includes valuable data and can be used by Members for technical work.

12. PSH remains a crucial topic, the COVID-19 crisis having brought again more attention to this issue. There have been renewed calls to find a Permanent Solution by MC12. The Facilitator will be focusing notably on the scope, transparency, safeguards and monitoring. He also proposed a list of questions for Members to reflect on during the year-end break.

13. On the SSM, the proponents have renewed their demand for an outcome in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic based on broader food security objectives. While acknowledging the fundamental issue of linkages between Market Access and the SSM, the Facilitator has initiated work with a view to developing a common understanding on the numerous technical parameters that an SSM would entail.

14. Members continue to attach importance to pursue reforms in the Market Access pillar. However, in view of a lesser attention and priority accorded currently to deepen core Market Access commitments, as well as for reasons of an overall balance, recent discussions have focused mainly on a transparency outcome – such as goods *en route* – considered by many as important for "trust-building".

15. On Export Competition, the Facilitator noted that some Members had continued to stress that additional transparency requirements would be difficult due to resource constraints. She therefore decided to explore ways to address such concerns which would enlist the support of the Secretariat, noting the possible complementarity with the work of the regular Committee on Agriculture.

16. On Cotton, the main development was the announcement that the C4 had prepared a draft text on transparency that – once available – will serve as a starting point to initiate technical discussions in the Quad Plus context.

17. Finally, the importance of enhancing transparency as a cross-cutting issue in the agriculture negotiations was reiterated by some Members, including with the prospect of a new submission.

18. To conclude, I would say that after the sudden halt in the negotiation process this Spring, work has now fully resumed and the intensity of work is very encouraging.

19. Members continue to emphasize the importance of an agricultural outcome at MC12 for the reform and to preserve the credibility and relevance of the Organization.

20. Our challenge in 2021 will, therefore, be to build consensus for an ambitious and balanced agricultural outcome for MC12. This will require your support and engagement.

21. The next CoA Special Session meeting is scheduled on 5 February 2021.

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