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General Council

**APPOINTMENT OF THE NEXT DIRECTOR-GENERAL – MODALITIES FOR PHASE 3**

INFORMAL MEETING AT THE LEVEL OF HEADS OF DELEGATIONS

FRIDAY, 31 JULY 2020

*Statement by the General Council Chair, H.E. Dr David Walker*

1. As indicated in the convening notice and further to the useful discussion that we had at the Informal HoDs Meeting on Tuesday, the purpose of this meeting today is to announce the modalities for the Phase 3 of the DG Appointment Process which, as you know, will start on 7 September. In this Phase and in accordance with the Procedures in WT/L/509, I will be assisted by the Chairs of the Dispute Settlement Body and the Trade Policy Review Body acting as Facilitators – respectively, Ambassador Castillo of Honduras and Ambassador Aspelund of Iceland. I greatly appreciate and look forward to their assistance in this process.

2. On the basis of the discussion last Tuesday, and having listened carefully to the views expressed, Phase 3 will proceed on the basis of the following modalities:

- First, we will hold **three rounds** of consultations, with **two candidates in the third and final round**, in order to facilitate the building of consensus.
- Second, **three candidates** will be expected to withdraw after the first round; and **three candidates** will be expected to withdraw after the second round. So, the profile will be 8-5-2. This means we start with 8 candidates in the first round; then narrow the field to 5 candidates in the second round; and 2 in the third and final round.
- Third, on the basis of past practice, and keeping in mind that this is a consensus-building exercise, the Facilitators and I will ask the same question as in the past, that is: "**What are your preferences?**" – this means more than one, that is multiple, preferences in no order, i.e. without ranking. As in the past, we will not accept any negative preferences.
- We will ask delegations to come forward with a maximum of **four** preferences in the first round of consultations and a maximum of **two** preferences in the second round, with delegations urged to provide the full number of preferences in each case.
- Let me stress again that the aim of this exercise is to identify "the candidate or candidates least likely to attract consensus," thereby allowing Members to arrive at a final decision. The objective is to identify, among the different preferences expressed by Delegations, those least likely to attract consensus, so that the General Council can narrow the field of candidates, as foreseen in the Procedures.
- Fourth, we will be consulting Heads of Delegations in their capacity as representatives of individual Members, and the consultations will be on a "confessional" basis. As in the past, the positions and views expressed by Members will be treated in the strictest confidence by us, with no information or other forms of indications of individual Members' specific preferences made available by us to other Members, to the candidates or to the public.

- Fifth, in assessing the information we receive and reporting to Members, we shall be guided by the elements set out in paragraph 17 of the 2002 Procedures, which states: "The Chair, with the assistance of the facilitators, shall consult all Members, including non-resident Members, in order to assess their preferences and the breadth of support for each candidate". And with respect to the breadth of support, I recall that this concept was discussed and clarified during the previous appointment processes – that is the one that took place in 2005, and then confirmed in 2013. In particular, in 2005, the then General Council Chair explained that: "As regards the breadth of support, we considered the distribution of preferences across geographic regions and among the categories of Members generally recognized in WTO provisions: that is, LDCs, developing countries and developed countries". In 2005, the Chair also informed that other criteria were considered and rejected by Members in the formulation of the Procedures in 2002. Therefore, the Chair explained that "as reflected in past decisions and in experience, and based on common sense, "breadth of support" means the larger membership." This was also the approach followed in 2013.
- And finally, after each round of consultations, and in line with paragraph 18 of the Procedures, we will be reporting the outcome of the first round of consultations to all Members at an open-ended meeting of Heads of Delegation to be held as soon as possible following the conclusion of the first round of consultations.
- In respecting the dignity of the candidates and the Members nominating them, the eight Members who nominated candidates will be informed of the outcome immediately after each round and before the rest of the membership – as was also done in the past.

3. The first round of consultations will begin on Monday 7 September. The Facilitators and I will aim at finishing the first round in 6 working days, as was done in the past. This means that we will aim at finishing this round on 16 September, taking into account the period of the *Jeûne Genevois*. We will then convene an Informal Heads of Delegation meeting as soon as possible to report on the outcome of the consultations to all Members – after having informed the Members who nominated candidates. We will aim at maintaining a similar schedule for the second and third rounds too, to the extent possible. We will send out a communication later today inviting all Members to consult with us in the first round. I urge you all to come forward and schedule appointments.

4. Once again, let me stress a couple of additional key elements. The decision to appoint the new Director-General is for you, the Members, to make. The task of the Chair and the Facilitators is to support you in this process, facilitate the building of consensus, and assist you in moving from the initial field of candidates to a final decision on appointment. You can count on us to carry out this task with objectivity and impartiality. We are very mindful of the importance of this task and of the trust that you, the Members, have placed in us. Rest assured that we take this most seriously. We will act at all times strictly within the agreed Procedures.

5. And in line with paragraph 1 of the Procedures, we need to keep in mind at all times that this process has to be guided by the best interests of the Organization, respect for the dignity of the candidates and the Members nominating them, and by full transparency and inclusiveness at all stages.

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