



18 September 2020

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**General Council**

**APPOINTMENT OF THE NEXT DIRECTOR-GENERAL**

INFORMAL MEETING AT THE LEVEL OF HEADS OF DELEGATIONS

FRIDAY, 18 SEPTEMBER 2020

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

**1 INTRODUCTION**

1.1. Good morning and welcome to this Informal meeting of Heads of Delegation.

1.2. As I announced at the Heads of Delegation meeting on 31 July in which I outlined the modalities for Phase 3 of the process for the appointment of the new Director-General (JOB/GC/243), and in fulfilment of the commitment to transparency, inclusiveness and full participation in the process, the purpose of this meeting today is to report to all Members the outcome of the first round of consultations. This is required under paragraph 18 of the Procedures for the Appointment of Directors-General in WT/L/509. In this Phase, and in accordance with the Procedures, I am 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.

1.3. Before I share with you the outcome of the first round, let me take a few moments to recall the process and the arrangements for our consultations.

**2 ARRANGEMENTS FOR CONSULTATIONS**

2.1. In line with the Procedures, in particular paragraphs 17 and 18, and as indicated in the modalities for Phase 3, the Facilitators and I conducted the first round of consultations from 7 to 16 September.

2.2. I sent a communication to all Members on 31 July, in which I invited Members to reserve slots to consult with me and the Facilitators to provide their preferences. On 28 August, I sent a further communication providing more information on the technical and logistical arrangements for these consultations, and I indicated that I was available in case any Members had any questions about these arrangements. A number of Members contacted me to ask questions and provide suggestions, for which I am grateful. As a result, I sent a third communication on 4 September which included additional logistical and technical details, including about the security features which have been put in place for the consultations.

2.3. As I indicated, the consultations took place in a specific area of the WTO building, exclusively dedicated to this process. As you know, the Facilitators and I were present in that area, each of us in adjacent rooms. We were connected amongst ourselves, and to delegations coming to consult with us in an additional adjacent room, through a dedicated secure platform. Arrangements in that same area in the WTO building were put in place for in-person consultations for those delegations who indicated that they wished to consult in-person only.

2.4. Since we have the obligation to also consult non-resident Members, and again as announced in my communications, arrangements were made so that consultations could take place remotely.

Precise dates and times for these consultations were fixed and communicated to those delegations requesting them.

2.5. As I also said in my communications, the arrangements I have just referred to were put in place to ensure the robustness of the process in terms of preserving confidentiality, as well as its resilience in the exceptional circumstances created by COVID-19 that we are currently experiencing.

2.6. I, together with the Facilitators, would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank all delegations for their full participation and constructive engagement in this first round of consultations, and for their adherence to the modalities for Phase 3 of this process that I outlined in JOB/GC/243.

2.7. Throughout the 6 days of consultations it was clear to us that the entire membership is both committed to and fully engaged in this process.

### **3 SUBSTANCE AND RESULTS OF THE CONSULTATIONS**

3.1. Consistent with JOB/GC/243, each Member was asked the same question, i.e. "What are your preferences?". We requested each Member to come forward with a maximum of four preferences for this round without ranking. We also informed each Member that we would not accept any negative preferences. We assured each Member that the information provided would be treated in the strictest confidence.

3.2. Before turning to the results of the consultations, let me make some general points.

3.3. First, I recall that in line with paragraph 17 of the Procedures "the ultimate aim of the consultation process shall be to identify the candidate around whom consensus can be built. In order to do this, it may be necessary to conduct successive consultations to identify the candidate or candidates least likely to attract such a consensus".

3.4. Second, and as I have repeatedly stressed, this is a Member-led process. In assessing the information we received and in reporting to you, we were solely guided by the elements set out in paragraph 17 which provides that "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". With respect to the breadth of support, I once again refer to the modalities for Phase 3 in JOB/GC/243 in which I recalled that, 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." The Chair further 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.

3.5. Third, let me highlight paragraph 18 of the Procedures, which stipulates that: "It is understood that the candidate or candidates least likely to attract consensus shall withdraw". This is the only firm obligation for the candidates and the Members who nominated them. In accordance with the modalities in JOB/GC/243, three candidates are expected to withdraw at the end of this first round.

3.6. Fourth, once again, the ultimate objective of this endeavour is to appoint a Director-General by consensus. Accordingly, support across the membership is an important factor – meaning, as I have just recalled, preferences expressed by Members not only from the region of the nominating Member but also from other regions, and across categories of Members (developed; developing; LDCs).

3.7. And finally, it was clear from the consultations that Members considered all of the eight candidates to be highly qualified and respected individuals. I take this opportunity to thank all the candidates and the Members who nominated them for the dignified manner in which they have conducted themselves in this round.

3.8. With this introduction, I will now inform you of the list of the three candidates least likely to attract consensus. And let me emphasise, the outcome that emerged from our consultations is the result of Members' expressions of preferences.

3.9. The list of three candidates is in the order in which their nominations were received, and not in ascending or descending order of preferences. The list is as follows:

- Dr Jesus Seade Kuri (Mexico)
- Mr Abdel-Hamid Mamdouh (Egypt)
- Ambassador Tudor Ulianoschi (Republic of Moldova)

3.10. On this basis, therefore, we intend to begin a second round of consultations based on a revised slate of five candidates, again in the order in which their nominations were received, as follows:

- Dr. (Mrs.) Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala (Nigeria)
- H.E. Yoo Myung-hee (Republic of Korea)
- Ambassador Amina C. Mohamed (Republic of Kenya)
- Mr Mohammad Maziad AL-TUWAIJRI (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia)
- Dr Liam Fox (United Kingdom)

3.11. These consultations will begin on 24 September and continue through 6 October. The practical arrangements for the second round will remain the same, including with respect to non-resident delegations. A communication will be sent shortly after this meeting.

3.12. In line with paragraph 6 of the Procedures, our aim continues to be to encourage and facilitate the building of consensus among Members, and to assist in moving from the revised slate of candidates to a final decision on appointment.

3.13. With this in mind, as set out in JOB/GC/243, we will once again invite delegations to respond to the question: "What are your preferences?"

3.14. Each Member is invited to express a maximum of two preferences in this round, with delegations urged to provide two preferences in order to enhance the efficiency of the process. Three candidates will be expected to withdraw at the end of the second round.

3.15. Let me also emphasize that any preference received in the first round of consultations will not be used in the second round. I would therefore urge all Members to come forward once again to meet with us and to express their preferences on the basis of the revised slate of five candidates. As in the first round, all the information we receive from Members will be treated by us in the strictest confidence.

3.16. As we have done this time, the outcome of the consultations will be reported to all Members at an open-ended meeting of Heads of Delegation to be held as soon as possible following the conclusion of our second round of consultations. The Members who nominated candidates on the revised slate for Round 2 will be informed of the outcome before the rest of the membership. Looking further ahead, for Round 3, we intend to follow a similar rhythm – with a brief pause between the HODs to be held at end of Round 2 and the start of Round 3.

3.17. We once again thank Members for their participation and engagement in the first round, and we look forward to the same level of participation in the next round. Let me reiterate once again that the decision to appoint the new Director-General is for you, the Members, to make.

#### **4 TRIBUTE TO CANDIDATES**

4.1. Before I conclude, and on behalf of the entire membership, I would like to express sincere gratitude to Dr Jesus Seade Kuri, Mr Abdel-Hamid Mamdouh, and Ambassador Tudor Ulianoschi for their participation in this selection process. As I said earlier, Members consider them all highly qualified and respected individuals. I would also like to pay tribute to the dignified manner in which they, their delegations, and their Governments have conducted themselves in this process. Their willingness to engage, especially at these challenging times, has been greatly appreciated, and the Organization is in their debt. Their expertise and high professional and personal qualities are highly valued and respected by all Members. I am sure I speak on behalf of all of you in wishing them well in their future endeavours.

4.2. I would also like to thank the Governments of Mexico, Egypt and the Republic of Moldova for participating in this process, which has shown once again their firm commitment to the multilateral trading system. And our sincere gratitude goes also to Ambassador Ángel Villalobos, Ambassador Alaa Youssef, and Ambassador Tatiana Molcean for their cooperation during this process.

4.3. That concludes my statement, which will be circulated as a JOB document after this meeting.

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