



7 May 2021

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**General Council**

**AGENDA ITEM 2: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BALI, NAIROBI AND BUENOS AIRES  
OUTCOMES – STATEMENT BY THE CHAIR**

WEDNESDAY, 5 MAY 2021

1.1. This item remains on the agenda so that the General Council can continue to follow up, in a horizontal and transparent manner, on the Ministerial decisions adopted in Bali, Nairobi and Buenos Aires.

1.2. My report today is based on the information provided by the Chairs of the regular bodies on the implementation work taking place further to Ministerial mandates in their respective areas. The report will focus only on those areas where there have been developments since the March meeting of the General Council, and for those areas I do not mention today I would refer you to the previous report under this item.

1.3. Let's begin with the Work Programme on Electronic Commerce and the Moratorium. You will recall that in a communication dated 1 April, I invited all Members to consult on the Work Programme and the Moratorium, in preparation for MC12. Eighteen delegations responded to my invitation, including two group coordinators.

1.4. On 29 April, I convened an informal open-ended meeting where I reported on my consultations. My statement has been circulated as JOB/GC/257. The meeting was also an occasion to hear the views of those who had not attended the consultations and to hear views on possible ways forward ahead of MC12. In this regard, and based on what I heard from the consultations, I asked whether Members would consider it useful to hold structured discussions, including the sharing of national experiences as suggested by some delegations.

1.5. Despite well-known differences in Members' positions, delegations confirmed their readiness to engage and deepen the discussions on e-commerce. On the Moratorium, some delegations reiterated the need to have clarity on its scope and revenue implication. Others noted the need to consider the broader benefits of the moratorium. A number of delegations also highlighted the need to broaden the discussions under the Work Programme to address not only issues related to the moratorium, but also the digital divide and the challenges limiting developing countries' ability to leverage the benefits of digital trade.

1.6. As I heard no objection to having structured discussions ahead of MC12, I concluded that I would reflect further on the next steps and reach out to Members as necessary.

1.7. Let me note that we had a rich and fruitful discussion at last week's meeting. Given today's long agenda, I would like to encourage delegations not to repeat that discussion. However, if any delegation wishes its statement made on 29 April to be reflected in the record of this meeting, they should send it to the Secretariat. I also note that we have a separate agenda item on the work programme and the moratorium – which is Item 7 of our agenda.

1.8. There are a few matters to report in the area of Agriculture. In particular, concerning the Ministerial Decision on Public Stockholding for Food Security Purposes, as you will recall, the first recourse to the Decision was reported in 2020. Recently the same Member notified on 8 April to have exceeded the *de minimis* level for rice for the marketing year of 2019-2020, and sought coverage of the breach of the *de minimis* limit under the Interim Solution set out in the Bali Decision, and in the subsequent General Council Decision of November 2014. The notification will be on the agenda of the June meeting of the Committee on Agriculture for review.

1.9. As regards the follow-up to the Bali TRQ Decision, the Committee continues to deliberate on the outstanding issue of the future operation of paragraph 4 of the underfill mechanism, with a view to finding an agreement within the agreed deadline of December 2021. The Chair has already started consultations with Members on this issue.

1.10. Regarding the implementation of the Nairobi Decision on Export Competition by Members with scheduled export subsidies commitments, fourteen Members have circulated their revised schedules - twelve of which have already been certified. One of the two remaining Members has recently informed the Committee to have completed the domestic process to approve the Nairobi outcome, paving the way for the circulation of its draft schedule. The Committee on Agriculture has initiated the second triennial review of the Nairobi Decision.

1.11. Let me also note that 2021 is the first year when all Members are expected to reply to the annual Export Competition questionnaire, following the expiry of the grace period foreseen in the Nairobi Decision.

1.12. Turning now to the LDC Services Waiver, following an initial proposal from the LDC Group, on 5 March the Council for Trade in Services agreed to organize a virtual workshop on LDCs' services export performance and implementation of the preferences notified under the LDC Services Waiver. The event will be held during the first week of June.

1.13. Regarding Duty-Free Quota-Free market access for LDCs, a discussion took place at the last CTD meeting in March. A number of Members provided updates on their DFQF schemes for LDCs, and the LDCs once again stressed the importance to them of DFQF market access. The Committee will revert to this agenda item at its next meeting in June.

1.14. A brief update concerning Trade Facilitation, where the Committee has been very active, including initiating discussions on the first four-year review of the Trade Facilitation Agreement. The rate of ratification remains at 93%, with 10 Members left to ratify the agreement.

1.15. And finally, regarding Aid for Trade, a stocktaking event took place on 23 to 25 March, and I am pleased to give the floor to Ambassador Piracha of Pakistan, Chair of the CTD, to report on this event (See Annex).

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**ANNEX****STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR PIRACHA, CHAIR OF THE  
COMMITTEE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT ON  
AID-FOR-TRADE STOCKTAKING EVENT**

The Aid-for-Trade Stocktaking event was held on 23-25 March 2021. The online event provided an opportunity to survey the on-going economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic – impacts that are falling particularly hard on least-developed countries and many small, tourism-dependent developing countries. A total of 35 sessions were held. Some 20 of these sessions were organized by Members or Groups of Members, including four sessions organized by the LDC Group. More than 200 speakers participated, with 46% of those being female speakers. Several thousand trade and development professionals attended the three days.

The conference generated a considerable amount of analysis on how Aid for Trade can contribute to pandemic recovery, response and resilience measures. The divergent outlooks of different parts of the world in terms of economic growth, indebtedness and access to finance was a theme evoked in the high level plenary event at which the Director-General was joined by the Heads of the IMF, OECD, UNCTAD, WHO and World Bank.

Equitable global COVID-19 vaccine roll-out was also identified as the best value global economic stimulus package available in that high level session. There was recognition too of the need to redouble efforts to promote global value chain integration and to address supply side capacity constraints if hard-won development gains were not to be permanently reversed by the pandemic.

Keeping markets open was described as essential for vaccine delivery and to bring forth a strong and sustained recovery. Several sessions looked at adapting trade formalities to take account of the pandemic, both at a practical level in terms of using electronic tools to speed clearance and also how implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement provisions might help in this regard.

Regional approaches to COVID-19 recovery were also discussed, including leveraging the African Continental Free Trade Area and PACER Plus agreement in the Pacific. There was also a focus on promoting recovery among MSMEs and in the tourism sector. One bright spot in terms of resilience was the rapid growth of digital trade, but again there was concern that opportunities for recovery were limited by the digital divide. Two sessions took a gender-lens to the impact of COVID-19 on women's participation in trade and trade-related activities and many of the sessions examined the gender dimension to the issues at hand.

Promoting an inclusive and green recovery was also a theme discussed and one that will be taken forward through further work in the ongoing biennial Aft Work Programme. This work will culminate next year in the 2022 Global Review of Aid for Trade that will examine the theme of "Empowering connected, sustainable trade."

This information, along with a more detailed summary report of the Stocktaking event, will be made available in due course on the WTO website at the Aid for Trade section.

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