



Council for Trade in Services

WORK PROGRAMME ON ELECTRONIC COMMERCE

**REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL FOR TRADE IN SERVICES
TO THE GENERAL COUNCIL**

1.1. The Council for Trade in Services agreed on 30 October 2019 that I should report to the General Council, on my own responsibility, regarding work carried out under the Work Programme on Electronic Commerce since the report presented in July 2019.¹

1.2. The Council for Trade in Services discussed the Work Programme on Electronic Commerce at its formal meeting on 30 October 2019, in accordance with the Ministerial mandate to continue the work under the Work Programme and endeavour to reinvigorate work by the Members.

1.3. At that meeting, the United States provided additional clarifications on various questions that had been posed at the June meeting about its submission on "The Economic Benefits of Cross-Border Data Flows".² It referred, inter alia, to APEC's Cross-Border Privacy Rules (CBPR) as an example of an interoperable system dealing with privacy; provided some background on LDC participation in global economic activity generated from the flow of data; noted that requiring the local storage of a copy of data was trade-restrictive because it duplicated data storage costs for firms; and said that most governments had specific rules for the treatment of personal data. The United States said that its submission was designed to complement the on-going JSI negotiations and encouraged Members to support a high-ambition outcome.

1.4. A couple of delegations offered further observations on the US submission, with one noting that the ability of regulatory authorities to access data was important across all sectors, and not only in the financial services sector, and also pointing to the difficulty of delineating the boundary between personal and non-personal data.

1.5. China presented a case-study on e-commerce and poverty alleviation. It provided information about a pilot programme launched by JD.com, Inc., one of China's largest e-commerce platforms, to help poor and small farmers from the rural Wuyi county to raise and sell organic chickens by leveraging Big Data. The case-study highlighted that digital technologies had an important role to play not only in urban contexts but also in rural areas, both China and another delegation remarked.

1.6. One delegation referred to the Moratorium on customs duties on electronic transmissions and its upcoming expiry, recalling the interventions and submissions³ it had made in the General Council and noting that the Moratorium was an issue of a cross-cutting nature.

¹ Document S/C/57.

² Document S/C/W/382.

³ Document WT/GC/W/747 and WT/GC/W/774.