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**INFORMAL DIALOGUE ON PLASTIC POLLUTION AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE  
PLASTICS TRADE (IDP)**

**MC12 MINISTERIAL STATEMENT ON PLASTIC POLLUTION AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE  
PLASTICS TRADE**

The following communication, dated 22 November 2021, is being circulated at the request of Australia; Barbados; Cabo Verde; Cambodia; Cameroon; Canada; Central African Republic; Chad; China; Colombia; Costa Rica; Ecuador; European Union; Fiji; The Gambia; Hong Kong, China; Iceland; Jamaica; Japan; Kazakhstan; Macao, China; Morocco; New Zealand; Norway; Panama; Peru; Philippines; Russian Federation; Switzerland; Thailand; United Kingdom; and Vanuatu.

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We, the Ministers representing the following Members of the WTO: Australia; Barbados; Cabo Verde; Cambodia; Cameroon; Canada; Central African Republic; Chad; China; Colombia; Costa Rica; Ecuador; European Union; Fiji; The Gambia; Hong Kong, China; Iceland; Jamaica; Japan; Kazakhstan; Macao, China; Morocco; New Zealand; Norway; Panama; Peru; Philippines; Russian Federation; Switzerland; Thailand; United Kingdom; and Vanuatu issue this statement at the 12<sup>th</sup> WTO Ministerial Conference (MC12):

*Recalling* that the Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the WTO recognizes the role of trade in achieving the objective of sustainable development and the need to protect and preserve the environment.

*Noting* the role of trade in contributing to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals and environmental sustainability, including the fight against climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss.

*Recognizing* that the rising environmental, biodiversity, health and economic costs of plastic pollution are a concern that increasingly unites all Members, and that the COVID-19 pandemic has only amplified these concerns.

*Recalling* the need for further commitment and actions across the life cycle of plastics to address marine litter and microplastics, including through a circular economy approach.

*Acknowledging* the impact that plastic pollution (including microplastics pollution) has on economies and the environment, including on oceans, coastal and terrestrial environments, particularly on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) which are especially vulnerable to environmental impacts, and recognizing the challenges that developing members and least developed Members face in addressing trade-related aspects of plastics pollution, including in moving towards environmentally sustainable and effective substitutes and alternatives and the role for multilateral trade cooperation in promoting good practices.

*Recalling* the inaugural statement (WT/CTE/W/250/Rev.1) and reaffirming our commitment to addressing the trade-related aspects of the plastic pollution challenge, including by supporting synergies between the WTO and other international organizations, in particular the Secretariats of Multilateral Environmental Agreements and their related processes.

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*Acknowledging* the many international, regional and domestic efforts, decisions and processes aimed at addressing the plastic pollution challenge in other fora, including, *inter alia*, the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal (Basel Convention) and its Plastic Waste Amendments, and in the context of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA), and highlighting the opportunities for enhanced cooperation among the different processes working towards a common vision taking into account the importance to ensure complementarity and avoid duplication of efforts.

*Noting* that recent research by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) indicates trade in plastics accounts for as much as 5 % of global trade – or more than 1 trillion US dollars in 2019 – almost 40% higher than previously estimated, with more trade in plastics still unaccounted.

*Noting* the importance of work in the WTO Committee on Trade and Environment as well as the synergies with other processes and initiatives at the WTO, and that work on this topic is a key part of broader WTO discussions to advance shared trade and environmental sustainability objectives.

*Recognizing* the contribution of our discussions so far (as summarized in the IDP Factual Report – INF/TE/IDP/W/3), which covered all six topics initially agreed (WT/CTE/W/250/Rev.1)<sup>1</sup>, to provide a clearer picture of international, regional, and domestic efforts to reduce plastic pollution and transition to a more circular and environmentally sustainable global plastics economy, as well as synergies, and the opportunities and value-added nature of addressing trade dimensions of the topic.

*Noting* the value and importance of proactive engagement by a broad diversity of Members and relevant stakeholders, including, *inter alia*, international organizations and institutions, trade and environmental authorities and domestic bodies, the private sector, academia, and civil society.

We have accordingly reached the following shared understandings:

1. To intensify our work on areas of common interest with a view to identifying actions that participating Members could take collectively to support global efforts to reduce plastics pollution. *Inter alia*, this includes:

- Identifying ways to improve the understanding of global trade in plastics, including flows of plastics embedded in internationally traded goods or associated with them (such as plastic packaging), and enhance transparency regarding trade policies relevant to reducing plastic pollution and more environmentally sustainable plastics trade.
- Sharing experiences of effective approaches to move towards more circular, resource efficient and environmentally sustainable plastics trade.
- Addressing trade-related capacity building and technical assistance needs of developing members, in particular least developed members and vulnerable SIDS, to support their efforts to:
  - move towards more circular plastics economies;
  - improve the environmentally sound management, recovery and recycling of plastics;
  - facilitate access to key technologies;
  - expand trade in environmentally sustainable and effective substitutes and alternatives;
  - encourage collaboration with the relevant stakeholders through, *inter alia*, the exchange of knowledge and experience relating to the development of and access to environmentally sustainable and effective (including cost and functionally effective) substitutes and alternatives to single-use plastics;
  - develop and strengthen local capacities to produce environmentally sustainable and effective substitutes and alternatives to single-use plastics; and
  - design and implement trade policies to address plastic pollution.

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<sup>1</sup> The six topics initially agreed were: improving transparency and monitoring trade trends; promoting best practices; strengthening policy coherence; identifying the scope for collective approaches; assessing capacity and technical assistance needs; and cooperating with other international processes and efforts.

- Considering plastic pollution and environmentally sustainable plastics trade in Aid for Trade with environmentally sustainable objectives.
2. We emphasize the importance of continuing to engage and support actions in other international processes, including:
- Enhancing cooperation with other international organizations in areas such as definitions, scope, standards, design and labelling for plastics (including plastic packaging) and capacity building that would promote a more environmentally sustainable plastics sector, including through relevant international processes, and intensifying our work and continued cooperation on areas of common interest, such as the ongoing discussions towards a new global instrument on plastics at UNEA-5, the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the Basel Convention.
  - Identifying effective trade policies or measures to support the implementation of actions under other international processes and efforts and strengthening cooperation and policy coherence within rules and mechanisms of the WTO.
  - Identifying actions needed to improve gathering of data on trade flows and supply chains, including by utilizing the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System (HS Convention) of the World Customs Organization or other trade instruments or standards, such as UN/CEFACT, and the flow of information about the chemical and material characteristics of plastic products traded internationally.
3. To hold dedicated discussions with a view to identify best practices and share experiences regarding:
- How trade-related cooperation could help to support efforts to reduce unnecessary or harmful plastics and plastic products, including single-use plastics and plastic packaging associated with international trade that are not essential for medical or sanitary purposes, with special attention to issues and challenges arising for developing members.
  - How to promote trade in goods and services including the use of technologies that can reduce plastic pollution, such as: environmentally sustainable waste management technologies; environmentally sustainable and effective substitutes and alternatives; and reused and recycled plastics, including by incentivizing increased reuse and recycling of plastics (considering evidence of their long-term impacts), and identifying technologies for environmentally sustainable and effective substitutes and alternatives of interest to developing members and least developed members, including SIDS which are especially vulnerable to marine litter and plastic pollution, and opportunities for their MSMEs.
4. We invite other WTO Members to join this Ministerial Statement.
5. We will continue to regularly update Members to ensure progress and cooperation on implementing actions of this Ministerial Statement, and to inform WTO Members about the IDP, including through the Committee on Trade and Environment.
6. We will look for concrete, pragmatic, and effective outcomes on these actions and understandings at the latest by MC13.
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