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Page: 1/2

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INFORMAL WORKING GROUP ON MSMEs

COORDINATOR'S REPORT

The following communication, dated 10 June 2022, is being circulated at the request of H.E. Mr. José Luís CANCELA, Coordinator of the Informal Working Group on MSMEs.

The present document recaps key activities undertaken and outcomes achieved by the Informal Working Group since its establishment at MC11. It is circulated under my own responsibility as Coordinator of the Informal Working Group.

1 Since the 11th WTO Ministerial Conference that took place in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in December 2017, the Informal Working Group on MSMEs (the IWG):

1.1. Adopted on 11 December 2020 a package (INF/MSME/4 and Rev.2) including the following six recommendations and declarations:

- a. Recommendation on the collection and maintenance of MSME-related information (Annex 1) – For Annexes, please refer to document INF/MSME/4 and Rev.2;
- b. Declaration on access to information (Annex 2);
- c. Recommendation on trade facilitation and MSMEs (Annex 3);
- d. Recommendation on promoting MSMEs' inclusion in regulatory development in the area of trade (Annex 4);
- e. Recommendation on MSMEs and the WTO Integrated Database (Annex 5);
- f. Declaration on addressing the trade-related aspects of MSMEs' access to finance and cross-border payments (Annex 6).

1.2. Launched the Trade4MSMEs Platform and a partnership with key International Organizations working on MSME and trade-related issues (the Trade4MSMEs network).

1.3. Welcomed the establishment of the MSME Regional Trade Agreements and Trade Policy Review databases available on the WTO webpage.

2 Looking forward:

2.1. The IWG shall focus on issues of core significance to MSMEs and shall identify actions that could be taken to promote MSMEs' participation in international trade, including fostering exchanges of good practices on how to best take into account MSMEs needs in domestic rulemaking.

2.2. The IWG will continue monitoring the progress of implementation of the recommendations and declarations set out in paragraph 1.

2.3. The IWG will pursue its work on the basis of the Buenos Aires Joint Ministerial Statement (WT/MIN(17)/58/Rev.1), recommendations and declarations set out in paragraph 1 and will consider proposals submitted by members as well as any other inputs the IWG deems relevant in consistence with paragraph 4.1. We take note of the presentations made to the IWG, without prejudice to the position of IWG members.

2.4. IWG members, with the support of the WTO Secretariat and relevant multilateral institutions as needed, are invited to exchange good practices in areas of interest to the Group and to organize workshops and information sessions as appropriate.

2.5. The IWG shall meet at least twice a year and may hold additional meetings as appropriate.

2.6. The IWG shall promote effective coordination and information exchange on MSME-related issues with the other WTO regular working bodies, and IWG members shall do their best to promote MSME-related discussions within those bodies.

2.7. The IWG will continue to periodically share with the membership information on its work and discussions at the HoDs, General Council and the Ministerial Conference as well as to reach out to other Members in order to invite them to join the Group in light of the value of our initiative.

2.8. The IWG and its members should continue the existing dialogue with the private sector to ensure its work remains relevant for MSMEs.

3 Support to MSMEs in their efforts to manage the impact of, and recover from, the COVID-19 pandemic:

3.1. As a first response to the COVID-19 crisis, several IWG members circulated a "Statement on highlighting the importance of MSMEs in the time of COVID-19" on 14 May 2020 (WT/GC/215 and Rev.1). Looking ahead, the IWG is determined to foster a better understanding of how MSMEs can participate in international trade as a path to recovery considering not only the benefits MSMEs may derive from increased access to third markets but also because many MSMEs rely on imports in their activities.

3.2. The IWG will continue to support the WTO playing an active role in promoting open trade as well as resilient and sustainable value chains, which are essential to MSMEs' economic recovery after the pandemic.

3.3. As a transparent, inclusive, non-discriminatory, and predictable global trade environment is crucial for MSMEs to make the most of trade opportunities, especially in these COVID-19 trying times, the IWG will encourage raising awareness and promoting the use of platforms facilitating MSMEs' access to information. The IWG members will support the WTO Secretariat in its monitoring and information collection efforts, including on COVID-19 trade related measures. At the same time, the IWG will continue inviting members to fulfil their commitments regarding transparency, as a means to promote overall transparency for MSMEs and a more predictable regulatory environment, and to facilitate MSMEs' effective participation in global trade.
