

ACP Group Statement

Informal General Council Meeting

10th January 2022

Thank you, Chair!

The ACP Group thanks you for circulating the letter from the Delegation of India dated 23rd December 2021, proposing that the WTO convenes a virtual Ministerial Conference on “the issue of the WTO response to the pandemic, including TRIPS waiver”, stating the urgency of the WTO to respond to the impact of the evolving pandemic. The ACP Group also extends its thanks to you, Chair, for convening this meeting to consider this request. For us, it underscores the continued preeminence of the Member-driven, consensus-based nature of the Organisation.

The ACP Group wishes to reiterate that it fully supports the general objective of the TRIPS Waiver proposal, which is, to ensure that our people have access to medicines, vaccines, diagnostics and other items required to treat the virus and contain its outbreak. The constant mutation of the virus and the crippling effect that it has on our members’ health care systems, our economies, our livelihood and our personal lives should serve as a testament to the importance of resolving the WTO’s response to the pandemic in a timely manner.

While all countries have been significantly impacted by the pandemic, the impact is disproportionately faced by developing countries and LDCs due to, *inter alia*, the limited capacity of our health care systems to cope with crises of this magnitude, and the limited resilience capacity of their economies and trade, including as it relates to supply chains, transportation costs and production capacity.

While the ACP Group, as a group, is not a co-sponsor of the TRIPS Waiver Proposal, we are consulting internally regarding the proposal to convene a special Ministerial to address the issue of the WTO’s response to the pandemic, including the intellectual property aspects, with the expectation that such a meeting will enable us to find a mutually acceptable outcome, which accommodates the concerns of all members. We should ensure that we find an amicable and timely solution on this and other COVID response issues under discussions at the WTO. ACP Group members depend on a well-functioning multilateral trading system to enhance and sustain their trade performance and their implementation of national and regional development goals.

The proposed virtual Ministerial meeting is predicated on addressing the issue of the WTO's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including the waiver proposal, as indicated in the letter, in order to have a comprehensive solution. This would help our members to navigate the impact of the unpredictable evolution of the pandemic. This would mean that a lot of work would be needed to reach perhaps an *ad referendum* accord among delegations in Geneva ahead of the proposed special Ministerial, as virtual engagements among Ministers, as other processes have proven, are not the most suitable means of facilitating negotiations.

Chair, the ACP Group places a high premium on the preservation and enhancement of a rules-based, inclusive, transparent and development-oriented multilateral trading system with the WTO at its core. We stand ready to engage in a manner that achieves this objective.

I thank you, Chair