

ACP Statement for Meeting of TNC

12th October 2020

Thank You, Directors General and the ACP Group conveys its thanks for the reports.

Chair,

This statement is delivered on behalf of the ACP Group in the context of the continuing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our trade capacity and development objectives continue to be eroded by the impact of the pandemic across sectors of our economies. As developing countries and LDCs, our ability to cushion the trade-related impact is severely limited and this has compromised our long-term development and growth trajectory, including our achievement of the SDGs.

The WTO has an important role to play in assisting its members at different levels of development to manage recovery from the impact of the pandemic and to successfully adapt to a post-pandemic global trading environment. The ACP Group is urging the membership of this organization to accord high priority in this regard.

Now to the issues under negotiations.

On **Fisheries Subsidies**, we must adhere to the Buenos Aires mandate. Any outcome on this file should enjoy the ownership of all members, hence the need to improve adherence to established principles of consensus, transparency, balance and inclusiveness.

The work of the NGR should bear in mind the COVID-19 induced challenges of capitals to guide delegations in Geneva. We have engaged constructively in the September and October clusters and will continue to do so until we arrive at an outcome. We believe that there is a lot of ground to cover to improve the draft consolidated text, including the incorporation of elements that have been long advocated for by the ACP Group.

The agreement should complement rather than conflict with or duplicate other international instruments relating to fisheries. The focus should be on subsidies, especially those provided by large subsidizers; it should not regulate fisheries management. An outcome should provide appropriate exemptions for natural disasters and similar events. We also need policy space for our small scale and artisanal fisherfolks. An outcome should not be prejudicial to the sovereign rights of members in their maritime space, should not

interfere with matters related to territorial disputes, and should not encroach on national processes related to fisheries management and IUU determinations.

As it relates to **agriculture**, we welcome the new Chair, Ambassador Peralta of Costa Rica, and will support her efforts to guide us to a successful outcome. We do not object to the appointment of facilitators and for pursuing engagements in sub-plenary formats. We would, however, call for all engagements to be inclusive, transparent and consensus-based. The schedule of meetings should accommodate the capacity of small delegations and accommodate virtual participation. The ACP Group is recommending a follow-up meeting to the CoA-ss of 25th May to continue members' assessment of the impact of COVID 19 on the work programme. Chair, Domestic Support, PSH and SSM are priorities for the ACP Group, so too is the need to arrive at an outcome on Export Restrictions that assists the World Food Programme in their operations.

Chair, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and **TRIPS**, the ACP Group continues to reiterate that the WTO should prioritise improved easier access to medicines, diagnostics, medical equipment and other technologies protected by intellectual property rights, thereby expanding the capacity to distribute them globally with the necessary quality and quantity. Chair, we also wish to commend the Secretariat for its important work in facilitating Member's reporting on the IP Measures that have been implemented in the Context of COVID-19. Finally, on TRIPS, we also wish to signal the Group's support for the extension of the LDCs TRIPS flexibilities which is due to expire in July 2021.

Chair,

Services trade is a priority for many ACP Group members. The impact of COVID-19 continues to take its toll in the form of foreign exchange loss, closure of key sectors such as tourism, and significant disruption in economic linkages. We renew our call for the CTS-SS to proceed in a manner that is sensitive to the vulnerabilities of developing countries and LDCs. We also continue to urge the CTS to deliberate on an appropriate response to the impact of COVID-19.

As it relates to **ecommerce**, we have always recognized the benefits, especially given our experience during the pandemic. We need to address the digital divide within and among countries, which is essential for our MSMEs. We see value in continuing the conversation on and beyond the moratorium to cover issues such as revenue implications, the impact on our businesses, consumer welfare and the extent to which the temporary moratorium has impacted national ICT and industrial policies.

On **reform**, the ACP Group reiterates its position that the process and substance should accentuate the development dimension of international trade, complement the SDGs, be fair, transparent and inclusive. Indeed, the ACP has long advocated for reform in critical economic and trade related sectors, including, reforms related to unfair domestic subsidies, reforms related to establishing a fair international market place for cotton, reforms related to TRIPS and public health that would expand access to critical therapeutics and vaccines, reforms related to non-tariff measures that frustrate effective assess of industrial and agricultural products into important external markets, and reforms concerning the activation of work within the WTO that is principally focused to pro-poor, pro-development polices. We therefore need to begin with a comprehensive dialogue on the structure, scope and objectives of WTO Reform. We must collectively find a resolution to the Appellate Body impasse to ensure that we have a two-tier, transparent, independent dispute settlement system as envisaged by the DSU. We cannot surrender the multilateral two-tier dispute settlement system to external remedies, notwithstanding how well intentioned they may be,

In closing, Chair, the ACP Group recommits to playing a constructive role as we seek to ensure that the WTO responds to the challenges to the multilateral trading system.