

**ACP Group Statement
Heads of Delegation Meeting**

2 December 2021

Thank you, Chair, for your report and suggestions on the way forward.

The ACP Group extends its thanks to the Chairs of negotiating Groups for their proposals on the way forward.

Chair, the ACP Group was disappointed over the postponement of MC12. We understand that the circumstances around the unfolding epidemiological situation and we believe that the postponement was in the best interest of Ministers and their delegations, as well as in the interest of the host, the Swiss Confederation. We, therefore, support the postponement of the event.

We have taken note of the joint letter from the Chair and Vice-Chairs of the Conference proposing that the new date be set for early March 2022. The ACP Group would have no objection to keeping this date as a working hypothesis subject to the status of the epidemiological situation and the ability of delegations to travel to Geneva for the Conference.

In the meantime, we support your proposal for us to continue our work and sustain the momentum. There is a lot of ground to cover and we believe that the postponement should afford us an opportunity to make additional progress in bridging the remaining divergences in all areas of our multilateral work ahead of MC12.

The ACP Group is of the view that we should proceed with our work on the WTO's response to the Pandemic.

We note your intention, as Chair of the General Council, to facilitate these discussions, in respect of which we offer no objection. In so doing, the ACP Group wishes to thank Ambassador Walker for his tireless work and for his stewardship over the past months.

We believe that while we understand the need to ensure we respond quickly, we also should ensure that we agree on something tangible and end up with a document that enhances the credibility of the WTO in the global response to the pandemic. We will urge an exercise of patience from Members to allow for delegations to work carefully through the difficult issues to ensure that the interests of all members are accommodated.

The ACP Group believes that any outcome document from this process must include the TRIPS element of the WTO's response. We, therefore, commend the co-sponsors of the TRIPS Waiver proposal for their hard work and constructive spirit. The ACP Group sees an intricately linked relationship between the COVID response work and ongoing work in the TRIPS Council. We should engage constructively on both fronts to ensure that the COVID Response is comprehensive, credible and include a TRIPS and health dimension.

In respect of our work on fisheries subsidies, we will contribute to continuing the momentum. There are some technical work to be done to, *inter alia*, improve predictability in implementation. We call for the negotiations to improve the pursuance of balance and the ACP Group wishes to remind the membership that we cannot live with an outcome without special and differential treatment, including a de minimis exemption that is accessible to our members and which is not limited to the EEZ in application. As we proceed with the negotiations, we must ensure that we adhere to the principles enunciated by our Ministers on 15 July.

The postponement of MC12 gives us an opportunity to have additional technical work on agriculture with a view to elevate the ambition of and bring balance to the text to be put to Ministers. This is especially so in the areas of Domestic Support, Cotton, SSM and PSH.

We also have additional time to deepen our understanding of each other's concerns and objectives in the critical areas of services, the e-commerce moratorium and the Work Programme.

We should also use the opportunity to forge additional progress on the MC12 outcome document.

Chair, special and differential treatment for developing countries and LDCs must be an integral part of our work going forward in all areas.

We do not object to convening small group meetings where the Chairs find that doing so would improve efficiency and effectiveness. However, we call on all Chairs to ensure that the process is inclusive and transparent. Even if it means widening the composition of previous groups. We want Chairs to constantly report back to the wider membership. It is important that the process remains transparent, inclusive and member-driven.

We believe that a text-based discussion is the best way forward in the various areas to enhance the current versions of the documents on the table. We believe that the Chairs should facilitate virtual participation in the meetings where possible so that the evolving COVID-19 situation does not affect progress, and to facilitate capital-based experts' contributions to our work in Geneva.

We stand ready to contribute to the processes. In this regard, we pledge our support to the Chairs of the negotiating groups.

I thank you, Chair