

## **ACP Statement for Informal General Council Meeting**

**30<sup>th</sup> March 2021**

Thank you, Chair.

The ACP Group thanks you for convening this meeting to discuss preparation for MC12.

At the outset, we believe that priority should be given to securing tangible, inclusive and development-friendly outcomes at MC 12. This includes in the areas of fisheries subsidies, Agriculture, Special and Differential Treatment, measures to ameliorate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and a post-MC12 work programme for WTO reform.

### **Fisheries Subsidies**

The ACP Group reaffirms its commitment to the implementation of SDG14.6 and the MC11 mandate. Targeting major subsidizers and large-scale industrial fishing should be the priority of the negotiations. Our desired outcome would be an instrument which provides adequate policy space for developing countries and LDCs to develop their fisheries sector responsibly and sustainably, at their own pace, without WTO scrutiny, as well as facilitate the narrowing of the development divide between the fisheries sectors in developed and developing countries. Special and differential treatment provisions that go well beyond transition periods with technical assistance and capacity building, would be an essential pillar in that regard. can we accept that Article 5.2 provides enough policy space for developing countries, when that provision is a disguised exemption for large subsidizers and brings fisheries management directly into scrutiny in the WTO.

Chair, an outcome must ensure that sovereign rights of members in their EEZs are respected, national judicial processes are unfettered, implementation is not more burdensome than necessary to achieve our sustainability objective, the provisions remain within the competence of the WTO, and there is policy space for small scale and artisanal fishing.

### **Agriculture**

An outcome package at MC12 should include PSH, SSM, Cotton and trade distorting domestic support, particularly as it relates to eliminating AMS above de minimis and strengthening green box disciplines. Given the thrust towards rural development and agricultural reform in capitals, an outcome should preserve Article 6.2 in its current form. We caution against unrealistic expectations for developing countries and LDCs to make significant concessions at this time, as they will require agricultural policy space to help accelerate their post-pandemic recovery efforts.

### **Services and E-commerce**

The Group's submission in the CTS-SS under JOB/SERV/305 has sought to highlight vulnerable services sectors affected by the pandemic, in ACP Group members, and, the challenges and opportunities flowing therefrom. Importantly, the crisis highlighted the need to address the digital divide within and among countries. Leading up to MC12, we look forward to enhancing engagements pursuant to an outcome for collaboration, including in improving digital capabilities, to drive recovery in sectors such as health care, education and trade facilitative services as well as in respect of how the WTO can provide adequate attention to transition developing countries and LDCs beyond being mere buyers in electronic commerce. This is essential for our MSMEs.

We also look forward to an extension of 1998 Work Programme on e-commerce and the e-commerce moratorium at MC12.

## **Development**

On special and differential treatment, we prioritise an outcome for MC12. We will continue to look at the proposals individually with members and call for flexibility and constructive engagement given the importance of S&DT in assisting developing countries and LDCs to enhance their integration in the global economy and global value chains.

## **LDCs Graduation**

The ACP Group looks forward to the General Council agreeing on the LDCs Group submission in WT/GC/W/807 before MC12. We fully support the proposal. We urge flexibility and constructive engagement on the proposal. If the General Council is not able to take a decision on the proposal, we believe it is one of the outcomes to be achieved at MC12.

## **Intellectual Property**

The WTO has an important role to play in facilitating swift, timely, affordable and equitable access to the vaccines and therapeutics to combat the pandemic. The ACP Group agrees with the general objectives of IP/C/W/669 regarding the TRIPS waiver. The Group urges constructive dialogue and flexibility to arrive at an outcome on this very critical issue, preferably before MC12.

We also look forward to a renewal of the moratorium on TRIPS non-violation and situation complaints at MC12.

## **WTO Reform**

On **reform**, the Group renews its call for a comprehensive dialogue on the structure, scope and objectives of WTO Reform. It is hoped that a framework in that regard will be an outcome at MC 12. The process and substance of reform should undergird the development dimension of international trade, accelerate the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals, be

pursued in a fair, transparent and equitable manner, and, importantly, reinforce the core development principles framed in the Marrakesh agreement.

We also believe that Ministers should be in a position at MC12 can take a decision to commence the appointment of Appellate Body members.

### **Trade, Debt and Finance**

Chair, the impact of the pandemic on the public finance and financial sectors of our members requires the WTO to play a role in international efforts to ensure that debt and limited access to finance do not hinder trade flows. We do hope that Ministers will be able to take a decision on the issue at MC12.

In closing, Chair, we stand ready to join hands with you and the Director General to preserve and strengthen a transparent, open, inclusive and rules-based multilateral trading system with the WTO as its core institution.

I thank you, Chair.