

ACP Group Statement

Agenda Item 8- COVID-19 INITIATIVE: PROTECTING GLOBAL FOOD SECURITY THROUGH OPEN TRADE - STATEMENT BY CO-SPONSORS OF WT/GC/218/REV.1

Chair.

1. The ACP Group wishes to thank members of the Cairns Group for their statement in WT/GC/218/Rev.1 and to thank Ambassador Francis Lisson for her presentation.
2. The ACP Group acknowledges the unprecedented challenges posed by COVID-19, including on the agricultural sector of our economies.
3. We also continue to highlight and emphasize the importance of the WTO in global efforts to manage the impact of the pandemic, especially as it relates to minimizing trade imbalance and enhancing food security.
4. We believe that the effectiveness of the WTO's role will be enhanced if national measures deemed appropriate to address the impact of the pandemic is targeted, temporary, proportionate and in line with members' commitments in WTO rules.
5. Importantly, chair, we see an outcome on PSH as a crucial element of the WTO's effort to address the food security risks posed by COVID-19 and any similar future shocks to global agricultural production and trade. We believe that PSH disciplines should also allow for both existing and new

programmes that may become necessary today but was not foreseen in 2013. We also believe that transparency measures should be in line with the capacity of developing countries and LDCs so that they are able to use the disciplines when it is necessary to do so.

6. We agree that an outcome on domestic support would be effective in the WTO's work to manage market imbalance occasioned by crises such as COVID-19. We believe that imbalance in the Agreement on Agriculture should be addressed and any outcome should be embedded with appropriate S&DT for developing countries and LDCs.

I thank you, Chair

Agenda 10: PROCEDURES TO STRENGTHEN THE NEGOTIATING FUNCTION OF THE WTO – STATEMENT BY THE UNITED STATES (WT/GC/W/757/REV.1 AND WT/GC/W/764/REV.1)

1. The ACP Group thanks the United States for its Statement under this Agenda Item.
2. The Group reiterates its concerns that these proposals set pre-defined criteria which rely on the conceptualization of development that are not in accordance with the realities of our Members.
3. This is quite evident in the context of COVID-19 which continues to disproportionately affect our Members. The use of criteria to deprive developing countries of special and differential treatment, especially at this time, would be severely damaging. Paragraph 44 of the Doha Ministerial Declaration envisaged a strengthening of S&DT provisions and making them more precise, effective and operational. It does not call for an elimination of special and differential treatment.
4. We are particularly concerned about any movement of the WTO in a direction that seeks to classify members based on pre-defined criteria, conceptualized outside of the WTO, without a thorough assessment and accommodation of the realities that lie behind the quoted numbers. It could create unintended consequences if some developing countries are arbitrarily excluded upfront from SDT in WTO Agreements when internal conditions require these flexibilities. Even before COVID-19 many of our Members were facing

economic downturns and an increase in levels of poverty, making the achievement of the SDGs much more difficult.

5. The UN HRC Special Rapporteur¹ on extreme poverty and human rights emphasizes that the world is at an existential crossroads involving a pandemic, a deep economic recession, devastating climate change and extreme inequality. He points out that COVID-19 is projected to push more than 70 million additional persons into extreme poverty and hundreds and millions more into unemployment and poverty.² This is but one example of how a staggeringly low standard of living is imposed on developing countries and by extension, affects the achievement of the SDGs.

Chair,

6. Decision WT/GC/W/ 764/REV.1, would, in our view, disenfranchise developing countries by excluding treaty embedded rights and flexibilities, even before negotiations begin. This draft decision goes against the principle of Special and Differential Treatment which is enshrined in the Marrakesh Agreement and which is an integral part of all WTO Agreements. WTO members who choose to opt-out of Special and Differential Treatment or to voluntarily self-declare that they do not require flexibility are free to do so.

¹ Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights. A/HRC/44/40 presented at the Forty-fourth session of the Human Rights Council, 15 June – 3 July 2020, p.3.

² Ibid.

7. Since negotiations on SDT is ongoing in the CTD SS, the ACP hopes that the United States will engage further on its ideas in that forum.

8. The G90 has recently updated its SDT proposal contained in document JOB/DEV/60; JOB/TNC/79 dated 9 March 2020. The G90 also submitted its written responses to the questions of WTO Members on 24 June 2020 in document JOB/DEV/61 titled: *Consolidated Responses on Comments and Questions from Members on the G-90 Submission*. The ACP Group looks forward to active engagement in the CTD SS, which is the mandated body to consider issues of development and special and differential treatment.

Thank you, chair.