

UK statement to the WTO Trade Negotiations Committee

Thank you very much, Chair and thanks very much to you and your fellow Deputy DGs for your leadership during this transition period.

Chair, in the face of continuing uncertainty with regards to COVID-19, the United Kingdom commends the Secretariat for the steps they have taken to enable work to continue, while keeping staff and delegates safe. This has enabled our work to progress in an inclusive manner despite an evolving situation in Geneva and across capitals.

The United Kingdom would once again like to reiterate the importance of forging ahead with ongoing work at the WTO, including efforts to reinstate a fully functioning dispute settlement system as soon as possible. The United Kingdom welcomes Members' engagement on the draft consolidated text on fisheries subsidies, circulated by Ambassador Wills, as a basis for developing effective disciplines.

We have been strong supporters of the Joint Initiative on E-commerce since its inception. We welcome the resumption of monthly negotiating sessions in small groups and in plenary, and we stand ready to intensify our efforts towards achieving a consolidated negotiating text by the end of the year. The pandemic has shown us that digital trade lies right at the heart of the global economy – and will continue to be of fundamental importance as we look to build back better from this crisis. We need to ensure that this Initiative delivers an outcome that benefits developed, developing and least-developed members.

The United Kingdom has been a ready participant in the reinvigorated efforts on the Joint Initiatives on Services Domestic Regulation and Investment Facilitation for Development. On domestic regulation, we urge members to reinvigorate their efforts to resolve the small number of issues that remain. We look forward to working with Members to finalise the draft Reference Paper by the end of the year and encourage others to join this important Initiative. We also welcome the shift to negotiating mode in investment facilitation for development which is testament to Members' commitment to progressing this initiative.

Finally, on MSMEs, the United Kingdom thanks the Facilitator and Secretariat for the further progress on texts made since the beginning of summer. With MSMEs accounting for 99.9% of British businesses, we strongly support this initiative, and we hope for an ambitious outcome in December.

Thank you, Mr Chair.