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JOINT MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

DECLARATION ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A WTO INFORMAL WORK PROGRAMME FOR MSMEs

The following communication, dated 13 December 2017, is being circulated at the request of the delegations of Afghanistan; Albania; Antigua and Barbuda; Argentina; Australia; Bahrain; Belize; Brazil; Brunei Darussalam; Canada; Chile; China; Colombia; Costa Rica; Dominica; the Dominican Republic; Ecuador; El Salvador; European Union; Grenada; Guatemala; Honduras; Hong Kong, China; Iceland; Israel; Japan; Kazakhstan; Kenya; the Republic of Korea; Kyrgyz Republic; Lao PDR; Liechtenstein; Malaysia; Mexico; the Republic of Moldova; Montenegro; Myanmar; New Zealand; Nicaragua; Norway; Pakistan; Panama; Paraguay; Peru; Philippines; Qatar; Russian Federation; Saint Kitts and Nevis; Saint Lucia; Saint Vincent and the Grenadines; Singapore; Switzerland; The Separate Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu; the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; Turkey; Uruguay and Viet Nam.

We, the Heads of Delegations representing the following Members of the WTO: Afghanistan; Albania; Antigua and Barbuda; Argentina; Australia; Bahrain; Belize; Brazil; Brunei Darussalam; Canada; Chile; China; Colombia; Costa Rica; Dominica; the Dominican Republic; Ecuador; El Salvador; European Union; Grenada; Guatemala; Honduras; Hong Kong, China; Iceland; Israel; Japan; Kazakhstan; Kenya; Korea, Republic of; Kyrgyz Republic; Lao PDR; Liechtenstein; Malaysia; Mexico; Moldova, Republic of; Montenegro; Myanmar; New Zealand; Nicaragua; Norway; Pakistan; Panama; Paraguay; Peru; Philippines; Qatar; Russian Federation; Saint Kitts and Nevis; Saint Lucia; Saint Vincent and the Grenadines; Singapore; Switzerland; The Separate Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu; the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; Turkey; Uruguay and Viet Nam, met in Buenos Aires, in the Eleventh WTO Ministerial Conference (MC11).

During the Eleventh WTO Ministerial Conference, we have underlined the role performed by MSMEs in the national economies of WTO Members, which is not commensurate with their share in international trade.

We have also highlighted the importance of promoting the participation of Micro, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (MSMEs) in international trade, as notably contributing to a relevant development outcome for the WTO.

We reaffirm our pledge, as per the proposed Work Program included in our draft Ministerial Decision WT/MIN(17)/24/Rev.1, to favour horizontal and non-discriminatory solutions which are likely to yield benefits for the participation of MSMEs in international trade, taking into account the specific needs of developing countries and LDCs.

We proposed a comprehensive and strategic discussion on MSMEs in the WTO, as a contribution at the multilateral level to addressing obstacles related to foreign trade operations that represent a significant burden for MSMEs interested in participating in international trade.

We are satisfied for now that there is broad and growing consensus that MSMEs require more attention from the multilateral trading system, particularly by the WTO.

In light of the debates at the Ministerial level, we acknowledge that some Members need to continue the analysis and discussions seeking the best way forward to address their concerns and objectives.

In this regard, **we have decided to create an Informal Working Group on MSMEs at the WTO** that is open to all members and we will continue striving for a multilateral outcome aimed at establishing a formal work programme for MSMEs at the next Ministerial Conference.

With the utmost degree of transparency, the group will discuss, among others, issues of relevance to MSMEs, related to improved access to information for MSMEs; ways to promote a more predictable regulatory environment for MSMEs; reduction of trade costs, including areas such as trade facilitation, shipping and logistics, and procedures and requirements related to origin; promotion, including through cooperation with other multilateral institutions, of better access to trade finance for MSMEs; identification of issues of particular interest to MSMEs that could be addressed in WTO Trade Policy reports; and consideration of how technical assistance and capacity building initiatives could take into account the trade needs and challenges of MSMEs.

The **Informal Working Group on MSMEs at WTO** will continue to periodically share with the membership information on its work and discussions at the HoDs, General Council and the Ministerial Conference, as well as to reach out to other Members in order to invite them to join the Group in light of the value of our initiative.
