Progress on the JSIs:

Communication by the Co-coordinators of the JSIs

At the WTO's 11th Ministerial Conference in Buenos Aires, groups of WTO Members launched new initiatives on e-commerce, investment facilitation for development, services domestic regulation, and micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs). Known as Joint Statement Initiatives (JSIs), our aim was to initiate forward-looking, results-oriented negotiations or discussions on issues of increasing relevance to the world trading system. The JSIs are open to all WTO Members and seek the participation of as many Members as possible. The shared and ultimate goal of the JSIs is to strengthen and reinforce the multilateral trading system.

In the lead up to the WTO 12th Ministerial Conference next year - we, the coordinators, have delivered summary statements to the WTO membership outlining how far these initiatives have advanced, where they stand today, and what their next steps will be. What these statements clearly show is the substantial progress of the JSIs in a short period of time, that they are on track to delivering concrete results or progress at MC12, and that they are contributing to building a more responsive, relevant and modern WTO – which will be critical to restoring global trade and economic growth in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis.

These initiatives have grown into an increasingly important part of the agenda of the WTO, with an expanding number of participants from both the developed and developing worlds that account for a significant part of the WTO's membership, and based on the principles of openness, transparency and inclusiveness.

The e-commerce JSI has grown to 86 members and achieved textual convergence across various themes, as reflected in the circulation of a consolidated negotiating text on 7 December. The consolidated text is a milestone in the e-commerce JSI and will provide the foundation for intensified negotiations in 2021. The services domestic regulation JSI with 63 members currently, will provide much needed certainty and transparency for global service suppliers. Given the very mature stage of the negotiating text, this JSI offers genuine potential for an outcome by MC12. Likewise, the investment facilitation JSI - which has expanded to 106 members – has begun negotiating the substantive provisions of an investment facilitation agreement, with participating members already showing signs of potential convergence in some areas. The MSMEs working group - which has now grown to 91 members- has just announced an initial package of reforms and its members are now planning a second phase of work.

These initiatives are also contributing to building a more relevant and modern WTO – an increasingly critical goal further underlined by the COVID-19 crisis and the pressing need to restore global trade, investment, and economic growth. Challenging and complex negotiating processes in recent years have

risked widening the gap between WTO rules and modern economic realities. The JSIs on e-commerce, investment facilitation, services domestic regulation, and MSMEs clearly demonstrate that the WTO can respond to new economic and technological challenges in a flexible, pragmatic, and timely way. These initiatives – and their innovative approach to cooperation and negotiation - can provide a valuable illustration of WTO reform in action.

We, the coordinators, look forward to making further progress towards MC12 through our intensified work programs in 2021 and encourage other Members to join these valuable initiatives.

The coordinators:

Informal Working Group on Micro, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises

Ambassador José Luis Cancela Gómez (Uruguay)

Joint Statement Initiative on E-Commerce

Ambassador George Mina (Australia)
Ambassador Yamazaki Kazuyuki (Japan)
Ambassador Tan Hung Seng (Singapore)

Joint Statement Initiative on Services Domestic Regulation

Deputy Permanent Representative Jaime Coghi Arias (Costa Rica)

Structured Discussions on Investment Facilitation for Development

Ambassador-designate Mathias Francke (Chile)