(16-3819)

# WORK PROGRAMME ON ELECTRONIC COMMERCE

## REINVIGORATING DISCUSSIONS ON ELECTRONIC COMMERCE

*Proposal by Hong Kong, China; Japan; Pakistan; Russian Federation; Singapore and the Separate Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu*

*Revision[1]*

The following communication, dated 14 July 2016, is being circulated at the request of the delegation of Japan.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1.  Electronic commerce is transforming the global economy, and has become a powerful engine of global economic growth. However, in order to unleash the full potential of electronic commerce, a number of challenges still remain to be addressed. Establishing an open, secure and reliable global electronic commerce environment is indispensable. It is also essential to improve connectivity and develop human resources for electronic commerce.

1.2. The WTO, as the pre-eminent global forum for trade rules setting and governance, is uniquely positioned as a platform where these issues can be discussed.

1.3.  We propose that Members engage in discussions on these issues from a broad perspective, and then aim to identify what the WTO should do to best address these challenges for e-commerce.

## 2 FOR BETTER DISCUSSIONS

2.1.  In order to hold more effective and inclusive discussion, Members are encouraged to examine their own interests and views on e-commerce. Key questions contributing to this purpose are as follows.

> Q1. In your country what barriers to e-commerce are faced by stakeholders such as consumers, manufactures, service providers, regulators and SMEs? (For your reference, we have added a summary of recent relevant reports at the end of this proposal.)
>
> Q2. Do the existing WTO framework and initiatives address these barriers, either completely, partially or not at all? How should or can the WTO address these barriers?
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> Q3. What are your existing or planned initiatives or practices in the area of electronic commerce either at the international, regional or domestic level? Please also share any specific cases of dealing with electronic commerce issues that you feel may be of reference.

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[1] This revision is only to add Hong Kong, China and Pakistan as co-sponsors.

## 3  HOLD DISCUSSIONS AMONG MEMBERS

3.1.  Members are encouraged to hold discussions on e-commerce as soon as possible based on their voluntary answers to the above questions, while also referring to other relevant information provided by Members and the Secretariat. At the request of Members, the Secretariat may compile Members' interests, views, and existing and planned initiatives and practices as expressed in these discussions.

## 4  HOLD WORKSHOPS WITH EXPERTS AND MEMBERS

4.1.  We propose holding a series of one- or two-day workshops. These workshops should serve as an opportunity for Members and experts to discuss topics related to Members' interests and views as expressed in the discussions. Experts in attendance may include those from academia, the business community, international organizations (UNCTAD, ITC, ITU etc.) and NGOs etc.

## 5  WAY FORWARD

5.1.  We believe that the above-mentioned discussions and workshops will help Members to identify areas and issues that require further work at the WTO. Members are encouraged to engage in addressing these specific areas and issues with concrete suggestions and proposals at the appropriate fora where more focused discussions are possible, while bearing in mind the cross-cutting nature of this issue.

5.2.  We expect that this approach can contribute to meaningful outcomes at MC11 and beyond.

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## SUMMARY OF RECENT REPORTS

**WTO (WTO trade dialogue with business)**

Taking action on electronic commerce was among the areas identified by business leaders as requiring work at the WTO. Recommended actions include:

- enhance transparency and non-discrimination on e-commerce
- facilitate cross-border trade by simplifying regulations and standards
- facilitate the inclusion of MSMEs in e-commerce
- improve consumer protection
- cooperate more closely with other international organizations
- discuss the establishment of global rules on e-commerce, including for cross-border data flows

Source: WTO (2016), SUMMARY OF ELEMENTS RAISED BY BUSINESS LEADERS AT THE WTO 'TRADE DIALOGUES' EVENT
https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news16_e/bus_30may16_e.htm)

**UNCTAD (Information Economy Report 2015)**

The "UNCTAD Information Economy Report 2015 — Unlocking the Potential of E-commerce for Developing Countries" provides valuable commentary on the following areas.

- National policies and strategies to enable e-commerce
  *Strategic approaches to the development of e-commerce*
  - Developing a national e-commerce strategy
  - Implementation, monitoring and follow-up

  *Key policies to address in a national strategy*
  - Affordable ICT infrastructure and services
  - Logistics and trade facilitation
  - Fostering an environment for e-commerce and online payment solutions
  - Strengthening the legal and regulatory framework
  - Skills development
  - Promoting government e-procurement
  - Raising the awareness of all stakeholders

- E-commerce policies at the international level

  - E-commerce and international trade rules
  - Taxation concerns related to e-commerce
  - Support by development partners

Source: UNCTAD (2015), *Information Economy Report 2015 - Unlocking the Potential of E-commerce for Developing Countries, CHAPTER VI STRATEGY AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS*
http://unctad.org/en/pages/PublicationWebflyer.aspx?publicationid=1146

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