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Page: 1/2

General Council

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**DRAFT MINISTERIAL DECISION ON ESTABLISHING A WORK PROGRAMME FOR
MICRO, SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES (MSMEs) IN THE WTO**

PROPOSAL BY THE GROUP OF FRIENDS OF MSMEs

The following communication, dated 26 October 2017, is being circulated at the request of the delegations of Argentina, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, the European Union, Guatemala, Honduras, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, the Republic of Moldova, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the Philippines, the Russian Federation, Singapore, Switzerland, Chinese Taipei, Uruguay and Viet Nam.

The Ministerial Conference,

Acknowledging that the participation of MSMEs in international trade has emerged as an important issue in the WTO agenda;

Recognizing that Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) perform a significant role in the national economies of WTO Members, as sources of job creation, innovation, entrepreneurship and economic growth;

Recognizing that costs related to foreign trade operations represent a significant burden for MSMEs interested in participating in international trade;

Recognizing that MSMEs from developing countries and especially the least developed countries among them face additional obstacles when participating in international trade;

Building on the work undertaken by the WTO in addressing trade issues and the relevant work of other international organizations.

Decides as follows:

1 ARTICLE 1 - ESTABLISHMENT OF A WORK PROGRAMME

1.1. To establish a Work Programme for MSMEs, which shall include, among others, the following issues:

- a. Improve access to information on trade requirements, regulations and markets for MSMEs;¹
- b. Consider ways to promote a more predictable regulatory environment for MSMEs;²
- c. Identify measures that contribute to reducing trade costs for MSMEs in areas such as trade facilitation, shipping and logistics, and procedures and requirements related to origin;

¹ These elements are without prejudice to negotiating proposals currently examined by Members.

² These elements are without prejudice to negotiating proposals currently examined by Members.

- d. Promote, including through cooperation with other multilateral institutions, access to trade finance for MSMEs;
- e. Further identify issues of particular interest to MSMEs that could be addressed in WTO Trade Policy reports;
- f. Consider how technical assistance and capacity building initiatives could take into account the trade needs and challenges of MSMEs.

1.2. The discussions under the Work Programme shall 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.

2 ARTICLE 2 - STRUCTURE

2.1. A Working Group will be established under the General Council to conduct the discussions on the issues listed in Article 1.

2.2. The Working Group shall consider the work of other WTO bodies. As appropriate, it may invite these bodies to undertake specific assignments and cooperate with them closely in areas of their competence.

2.3. The General Council will review the progress made by the Working Group at least once a year. In providing guidance to the Working Group, the General Council may also supplement the issues set forth in Article 1.

2.4. The Working Group will prepare a first report for the Twelfth Ministerial Conference.
