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1. Australia, Japan and Singapore co-chaired a Ministerial meeting on electronic commerce in the margins of the 11th WTO Ministerial Conference in Buenos Aires.
2. Ministers exchanged views on the importance of creating an enabling environment for electronic commerce and the role international trade rules could play in maximizing the benefits of electronic commerce for businesses and consumers across the globe.
3. Ministers representing 70 WTO Members and over 75 percent of global trade issued a Joint Statement committing to work as a group to initiate exploratory work together toward future negotiations on electronic commerce.
4. Australian Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment Steven Ciobo, said “Modern trade will increasingly be by e-commerce. At a time when the role of the WTO is being called into question, this e-commerce initiative reinforces how the WTO adds value. We need to ensure international trade rules keep up with how trade is conducted in the digital era.”
5. Japanese Minister for Economy, Trade and Industry, Hiroshige Seko, said “The world is more interconnected than ever in the era of digital evolution. The WTO has an important role to harness the benefits of digital revolution. We made a meaningful start on rule-making in e-commerce in the WTO.”
6. Singapore Minister for Trade and Industry (Trade), Lim Hng Kiang, said “E-commerce presents developing Members and LDCs an opportunity to leapfrog, overcome traditional market barriers, and allow for more inclusive participation in global trade.”

MINISTRY OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY
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ANNEX A: Joint Statement on Electronic Commerce

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Ministers representing the following Members of the World Trade Organization (WTO): Albania; Argentina; Australia; Bahrain; Brazil; Brunei Darussalam; Cambodia; Canada; Chile; Colombia; Costa Rica; European Union; Guatemala; Hong Kong, China; Iceland; Israel; Japan; Kazakhstan; Korea, Republic of; Kuwait; Lao PDR; Liechtenstein; the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; Malaysia; Mexico; Moldova, Republic of; Montenegro; Myanmar; New Zealand; Nigeria; Norway; Panama; Paraguay; Peru; Qatar; Russian Federation; Singapore; Switzerland; Separate Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu; Turkey; Ukraine; United States; and Uruguay; reaffirm the importance of global electronic commerce and the opportunities it creates for inclusive trade and development.

We share the goal of advancing electronic commerce work in the WTO in order to better harness these opportunities.

We recognize the particular opportunities and challenges faced by developing countries, especially LDCs, as well as by micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, in relation to electronic commerce.

We also recognize the important role of the WTO in promoting open, transparent, non-discriminatory and predictable regulatory environments in facilitating electronic commerce.

We, as a group, will initiate exploratory work together toward future WTO negotiations on trade-related aspects of electronic commerce. Participation will be open to all WTO Members and will be without prejudice to participants' positions on future negotiations. A first meeting will be held in the first quarter of 2018.

Welcoming the contributions since the 10th WTO Ministerial Conference in Nairobi, our work will build on WTO rules. Our initiative will be undertaken without prejudice to existing WTO agreements and mandates. We encourage all WTO Members to join us and to support and enhance the benefits of electronic commerce for businesses and consumers across the globe.