

JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

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Australia, Japan and Singapore welcome WTO electronic commerce negotiations

Australia, Japan and Singapore hosted an informal meeting of Ministers on the World Trade Organization (WTO) e-commerce initiative in the margins of the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos, Switzerland.

Ministers welcomed the progress made in the WTO e-commerce initiative since its launch at the eleventh WTO Ministerial Conference in Buenos Aires in 2017.

Ministers exchanged views on how WTO negotiations can capture opportunities offered by e-commerce for businesses, consumers and the global economy. The importance of working in an innovative, open and inclusive manner was expressed. The unique opportunities and challenges faced by Members, including developing countries and LDCs, as well as by micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), were also highlighted.

Following the meeting, 76 WTO Members representing over 90 percent of global trade issued a Joint Statement (**Annex**) confirming their intention to commence WTO negotiations on trade-related aspects of e-commerce, with the objective of achieving a high standard outcome with the participation of as many Members as possible.

Australian Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment Simon Birmingham said,

“Commencing WTO negotiations on e-commerce is a significant step towards updating international trade rules in line with how modern business is done.”

“Through these negotiations we will demonstrate the importance of the multilateral trading system in helping reduce barriers, remove red tape and increase global trade.”

Japanese Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry Hiroshige Seko said,

“It would be truly meaningful for the world economy if we could create trade rules for the 21st century that address the new challenges and promote the growth of digital economy.”

Singapore’s Minister for Communications and Information and Minister-in-charge of Trade Relations S Iswaran said,

“Digital trade is the future of global trade. It fosters inclusive growth by enabling MSMEs to reach global markets. Modern WTO digital trade rules that address core needs will create an open and predictable environment for businesses to better harness the digital economy.”

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Annex

JOINT STATEMENT ON ELECTRONIC COMMERCE

Ministers representing the following Members of the World Trade Organization (WTO): Albania; Argentina; Australia; Bahrain; Brazil; Brunei Darussalam; Canada; Chile; China; Colombia; Costa Rica; El Salvador; European Union; Georgia; Honduras; Hong Kong, China; Iceland; Israel; Japan; Kazakhstan, Korea, Republic of; Kuwait, the State of; Lao PDR; Liechtenstein; Mexico; Moldova, Republic of; Malaysia; Mongolia; Montenegro; Myanmar; New Zealand; Nicaragua; Nigeria; Norway; Panama; Paraguay; Peru; Qatar; Russian Federation; Singapore; Switzerland; Chinese Taipei; Thailand; the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; Turkey; Ukraine; United Arab Emirates; United States; and Uruguay, welcome the progress made toward WTO negotiations on electronic commerce since the Eleventh WTO Ministerial Conference at Buenos Aires.

We confirm our intention to commence WTO negotiations on trade-related aspects of electronic commerce.

We will seek to achieve a high standard outcome that builds on existing WTO agreements and frameworks with the participation of as many WTO Members as possible.

We recognise and will take into account the unique opportunities and challenges faced by Members, including developing countries and LDCs, as well as by micro, small and medium sized enterprises, in relation to electronic commerce.

We continue to encourage all WTO Members to participate in order to further enhance the benefits of electronic commerce for businesses, consumers and the global economy.
