

JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

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Australia, Japan and Singapore welcome good progress in WTO electronic commerce negotiations

Australia, Japan and Singapore hosted an informal meeting of Ministers on the World Trade Organization (WTO) electronic commerce negotiations in Davos, Switzerland, on 24 January 2020. The meeting discussed building up momentum in the negotiations into and beyond the Twelfth WTO Ministerial Conference (MC12) in June 2020.

Ministers welcomed the good progress achieved over the first year of negotiations, and underscored the importance of the initiative both commercially and systemically for the WTO.

Ministers conveyed their support for the negotiations on the trade-related aspects of electronic commerce, and emphasised the need to keep working hard to ensure substantial progress by MC12. In this regard, Ministers agreed to develop a consolidated negotiating text by MC12. Ministers also affirmed their commitment to a high standard outcome, with the participation of as many WTO members as possible.

The importance of working in an innovative, open and inclusive manner was acknowledged. The unique opportunities and challenges faced by Members, including developing countries and LDCs, as well as by micro, small and medium enterprises, were also highlighted.

Ministers welcomed the Philippines as the newest participant in the negotiations. There are now 83 participating WTO members, representing over 90 per cent of global trade and over half of the WTO's membership.

Australian Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment Simon Birmingham said: "I am pleased that Australia is playing a leadership role in these negotiations. They are a crucial opportunity to shape a global environment that promotes digital trade and supports the modern trade needs of business, while boosting privacy and other consumer protections."

Japanese State Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry MAKIHARA Hideki said: "Japan encourages international policy discussions on the digital economy based on the concept of Data Free Flow with Trust (DFFT) through the "Osaka Track", which was launched in the margins of the G20 Osaka Summit, and contributes to the further advancement of the electronic commerce negotiations."

Japanese State Minister for Foreign Affairs, WAKAMIYA Kenji said: "Under the "Osaka Track", Japan will further strengthen the momentum of the negotiations. Building on the successful outcome of its recent digital trade agreements, Japan will continue to make a substantial contribution to achieve substantial progress at MC12."

Singapore's Minister for Communications and Information and Minister-in-charge of Trade Relations S Iswaran said: "Singapore is committed to leading negotiations on electronic commerce, alongside Japan and Australia, which is the future of global trade. It will modernise the WTO rule-book to address new issues and needs in the rapidly evolving digital landscape. This will benefit large and small players alike. To this end, Singapore will work with other JSI Members to create a forward-looking and enabling environment that will unlock the potential of the digital economy."

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