

ACCELERATING WTO REFORM

Global Business Coalition Call to Governments Ahead of OECD Week

May 13, 2019 - The multilateral trading system remains under strain despite repeated calls from the global business community to both defend the existing rules, as well as to adapt the World Trade Organization (WTO) to the realities of 21st century trading.

The upcoming Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Ministerial Council Meeting, WTO Mini-Ministerial, and meeting of the Ottawa Group provide opportunities for countries to show leadership and make tangible progress. Work must now be accelerated to preserve our collective economic well-being. A vibrant trading system both creates new opportunities for exports and investment, and greatly expands choices for consumers.

To address the current challenges facing the global trading system and to deliver enhanced global prosperity, we call upon governments to:

1. Prioritize work to address distortive industrial subsidies. Building on the work of the Ottawa Group, and other initiatives such as the EU-Japan-US ministerial discussions, governments should find ways to ensure open, and fair trade without competitive distortions. This would be achieved by strengthening the transparency and monitoring function of the WTO to ensure that countries disclose policy measures which distort competition but more importantly urgently initiating discussions to adequately address industrial subsidies and non-market practices where existing rules are not effective. Prioritization should be given particularly to state-owned enterprises and reinvigorating WTO working groups responsible for competition and trade.

2. Reach a consensus on breaking the Appellate Body gridlock. Progress has been unduly slow in developing a consensus amongst WTO members on how to resolve the impasse in appointments. Ongoing work by the European Union, Australia, Japan, and others to develop solutions is well noted by the business community, but time to reach a resolution by the end of this year is running very short. We call upon members to develop proposals which address the concerns of countries, while also maintaining the crucial binding nature of Appellate Body decisions. Contingency work on potential alternatives in the event of continued gridlock should be seen only as a necessary last resort.

3. Accelerate work on e-commerce negotiations. We welcome the announcement earlier this year by over 70 countries of the intent to launch e-commerce negotiations. Negotiations should be undertaken with a view to consolidating substantial progress by the next WTO Ministerial Conference in Astana. Negotiators should focus on ensuring an ambitious and concrete set of digital trade rules as well as trade facilitation measures to support e-commerce. In the spirit of these on-going negotiations and the Trade Facilitation Agreement, we also call upon members

to extend indefinitely the moratorium on customs duties on electronic transmissions in order to stimulate and expand trade.



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This statement is issued by the Global Business Coalition members, in Berlin, Brasilia, Brussels, Buenos Aires, Cairo, Istanbul, London, Madrid, New Delhi, Ottawa, Paris, Rabat, Rome, Seoul, Sydney, and Washington, D.C.

ABOUT GBC

The Global Business Coalition (GBC) brings together leading independent business associations from the major world economies and advocates on behalf of more than 6.8 million small, medium and large companies. GBC, established in 2012, operates as a worldwide platform of exchanges between national business communities, and aims at building consensus and developing common positions on issues critical for enterprises. Through its broad-based representation, GBC engages policy-makers at a global scale and advocates policies that contribute to growth and job creation at regional and international levels.

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