

**WTO Joint Statement Initiative on E-commerce: Statement by
Ministers of Australia, Japan and Singapore
June 2022**

Electronic commerce is of critical importance to the modern global economy and is driving the global recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. The development of global rules on e-commerce will help promote growth of the digital economy and increase the engagement of businesses, in particular MSMEs, and of consumers in digital trade across the participating WTO Members' economies. The Co-convenors of the Joint Statement Initiative (JSI) on Electronic Commerce welcome the good results achieved in the negotiations to date and remain committed to agreeing on a global set of digital trade rules as rapidly as possible and to ensuring that these rules help unlock the opportunities of the digital economy for developing and least-developed countries.

Inclusion has been a core principle of the E-Commerce JSI since the launch of negotiations in 2019 and is reflected in its open, inclusive and transparent working modalities. The co-convenors recognise that while the digital economy offers benefits for all – including by reducing trade costs, improving productivity, and increasing ability to participate in export markets – least developed and developing countries face barriers in achieving these aims. To help better understand these barriers and how developing and least developed economies can utilise e-commerce for their benefit, the co-convenors have launched the E-Commerce Capacity Building Framework. The Framework will bring together a wide range of technical assistance and capacity building efforts to support countries participating in the E-Commerce JSI and harnessing the opportunity of digital trade through providing training and assistance to help developing and least developed countries.

Participants in the Initiative strongly support the continuation of the multilateral moratorium on levying customs duties on electronic transmissions at the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference to foster certainty and predictability for businesses. Recently, 105 trade associations from around the world, including developing countries in Asia, Africa, Europe, Latin America, North America and the Caribbean, have emphasised that the extension of the Moratorium is absolutely necessary to avoid significant trade and investment disruptions. The co-convenors consider it crucial that the Initiative makes permanent the practice of not imposing customs duties on electronic transmissions among participants.

The highly challenging geopolitical environment, which has impacted negotiations, has also reinforced the importance of international rulemaking. The co-convenors reaffirm our commitment to the timely conclusion of the negotiations and will issue a revised Consolidated Negotiating Text by the end of 2022. To that end, we will revise our working modalities to intensify the engagement of participating Members and will seek expedited progress in the negotiations, including on the key issues of data flows and data localisation.

We count on the constructive engagement and commitment of participating Members towards a high standard and commercially meaningful outcome in the E-Commerce JSI as soon as possible.