

**WTO Joint Statement Initiative on E-commerce:
Co-Convenor Statement by Australia, Japan and Singapore
20 December 2023**

We, the Co-convenors, together with participants, are pleased to announce the substantial conclusion of negotiations on a number of global digital trade rules that will facilitate electronic transactions, promote digital trade facilitation, and foster an open and trusted digital economy.

Following the strong political endorsement and support on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos, Switzerland, in January 2023, the JSI Membership intensified negotiations this year and made excellent progress. This was the result of great flexibility and compromise demonstrated by the Membership, and the adroit shepherding of negotiations by the respective Small Group Facilitators.

As of 20 December 2023, participants have substantially concluded negotiations on 13 articles, *viz.* E-authentication and E-signatures; E-contracts; Paperless trading; Open government data; Online consumer protection; Unsolicited commercial electronic messages; Transparency; Electronic transactions framework; Cybersecurity; Open Internet access; E-Invoicing; Single Windows; Personal data protection. Members continue to strive for convergence on provisions of ICT products that use cryptography, Telecommunication services and E-Payments. These commitments will help to enhance consumer welfare, support businesses especially micro, small and medium enterprises to cut costs, and support governments' digital transformation and greater integration into the global digital economy.

Most participants have also advocated the importance of an ambitious commitment on customs duties on electronic transmissions, and we encourage other participants to join the emerging consensus on this issue. This will add to the commercial impact of the agreement.

The JSI has also strongly prioritized and made good progress in the development provision, including with a view to ensure that the JSI remains open and inclusive for all WTO Members, especially least developed countries (LDCs). Since the launch of negotiations in January 2019, the JSI has grown in membership from 71 to 90 participants today, accounting for over 90% of global trade across all major geographical regions and levels of development. All participants support the development provision as a critical component of the eventual JSI outcome.

A number of challenging proposals, including data flows and localisation, and source code, represent important issues for many participants, but they will require substantially more time for discussions as divergent approaches and sensitivities remained.

As Co-Convenors, we will work in coming weeks to prepare a Chairs' text that reflects our best assessment of a viable and commercially meaningful package.

Looking ahead in 2024, the JSI Membership will focus on resolving outstanding issues, including those related to horizontal provisions (e.g. preamble and exceptions) and legal architecture, in relation to the integration of the JSI outcome in the WTO framework. The JSI Membership will strive to conclude negotiations in a timely manner in 2024.