Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) - Joint Ministerial Statement on the occasion of the Fifth Commission Meeting

Ministers and Senior Officials, representing Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Viet Nam met virtually on the occasion of the fifth meeting of the CPTPP Commission, hosted by Japan on September 1, 2021.We are pleased with the solid progress that has been made since the Agreement entered into force in 2018 and reaffirm the significant contribution of the Agreement to the global economy as well as the importance of further collaboration, as highlighted in the following areas:

Welcome the CPTPP's entry into force for Peru and encourage ratification for remaining Signatories

We express our delight at the entry into force of the Agreement for Peru foreseen on September 19, 2021, after its notification of the completion of its applicable legal procedures on July 21, 2021. We firmly believe that Peru's addition as the eighth Party, and its steady implementation of the Agreement, will realise more mutual benefits as well as maintain and further strengthen solidarity within CPTPP's entire membership. We encourage the remaining Signatories to intensify their efforts to complete their domestic procedures so that the Agreement will enter into force for all Signatories as soon as possible.

Continued importance of the CPTPP in supporting recovery from COVID-19

Amidst the uncertainty of the global economy caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the emergence of inward-looking tendencies, we reaffirm our strong belief in the importance of countering protectionism and the use of unjustified trade restrictive measures and reinforcing an open, effective, fair, inclusive and rules-based trading system to restore economic growth worldwide. Given such unprecedented circumstances, we reaffirm that innovative, high standard agreements like the CPTPP are a significant contributor to trade and economic recovery from the impact of COVID-19. We underline the contribution of CPTPP to making global supply chains more resilient and less vulnerable to shocks, and to enhancing the digital economy and connectivity. In this regard, we will continue our work on strengthening supply chain resilience, advancing the integration of small and medium enterprises in global supply chains and facilitating e-commerce through steady implementation and effective advancement of the Agreement. We are also committed to working collectively as well as with the private sector to provide for an enabling trade and investment environment for vaccine research and development, manufacturing and delivery.

We reaffirm our strong commitment to upholding and supporting the rules-based multilateral trading system, with the WTO at its core, including as a tool to counter economic coercion. CPTPP members reaffirm their commitment to collaborate to achieve a successful outcome at the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference.

We remain resolved to ensure trade restrictive emergency measures designed to tackle COVID-19 are targeted, proportionate, transparent, and temporary, do not create unnecessary barriers to trade or disruption to global supply chains, comply with this Agreement and are consistent with WTO rules and will support efforts to unwind remaining restrictive measures when appropriate.

We reaffirm our commitment to implementing measures in line with the provisions of the CPTPP to facilitate the flow of essential goods and services during the pandemic, including medical supplies and equipment, medicines, agriculture and food products and other supplies across borders, in a manner consistent with international trade rules. We call upon trading partners to ensure that import measures are transparent, based on scientific evidence and relevant international standards, and are no more trade restrictive than necessary. We recognize that supporting the movement of agriculture and food products plays an instrumental role in avoiding food shortages and ensuring global food security.

Establishment of Committee on Electronic Commerce

The pandemic has accelerated the process of digitalization and the adoption of digital solutions. The CPTPP, with its advanced electronic commerce rules, sets up its members as front runners in the development of a stable and trustworthy business environment for the facilitation of trade by electronic means.

We are committed to the enhancement of digitalization in the Asia-Pacific region and to contributing to global rule-making in this field. In April, CPTPP members participated in the CPTPP E-Commerce Webinar to discuss the relevance and benefits of the CPTPP's electronic commerce rules for consumers and business. The Parties have reached a decision to establish a Committee on Electronic Commerce to facilitate continued discussion of the implementation and operation of the Electronic Commerce Chapter. The new Committee will further explore ways to promote digitalization within the region and position the CPTPP to play a central role in global rule-making in this field.

Steady implementation of the Agreement and initiatives in the CPTPP framework to advance the Agreement

We have been steadily implementing the Agreement for more than two and half years. We noted the work of the Agreement's 17 subsidiary bodies that met virtually this year ahead of this Commission meeting[1]. The Commission notes with appreciation the progress made, such as the work by the Professional Services Working Group to advance development of non-binding guidelines for the drafting of mutual recognition agreements for professional qualifications, and the formal establishment of the Working Group on Products of Modern Biotechnology formed under the Committee on Agricultural Trade, among other developments.

The Commission takes note of the review work stipulated in Article 27.2.1(b) of the Agreement, including preliminary technical exchanges on the evaluation of the Agreement among the CPTPP members. We share the view that due in part to the unprecedented circumstances arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, it is not possible to fully review the impacts of the Agreement on the economic relationships and partnerships among the Parties in a meaningful manner, and further work would be required to fully evaluate the extent to which the Agreement has affected its Parties, including its positive contribution. We reaffirm the importance of this review mechanism under the Agreement, and instruct Senior Officials to continue to work on this matter, including holding further technical discussions at the earliest possible opportunity in 2022.

Based on our common recognition that promoting conservation of the environment and sustainable management of natural resources can be a driving force of the long-term growth of the global economy, we have undertaken efforts to advance the cooperative activities among the CPTPP members under the environment chapter (Chapter 20), which also highlights the comprehensive and progressive nature of this Agreement. These efforts include the workshop on combating illegal trade of wildlife species held in March, as well as a series of webinars which respectively focused on prevention of the spread of invasive alien species, conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, circular economy and resource efficiency, and climate change and decarbonization, held from June to August. We believe that such initiatives in the CPTPP framework will contribute to addressing global environmental challenges, including climate issues for the international community, which is especially timely at this juncture given that the meetings of

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[1] The Committees on Trade in Goods, Agricultural Trade, Rules of Origins, Textiles and Apparel Trade, Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures, Technical Barriers to Trade, Financial Services, Temporary Entry for Business Persons, State-Owned Enterprises and Designated Monopolies, Environment, Cooperation and Capacity Building, Competitiveness and Business Facilitation, Development, Small and Medium Enterprises, and, Regulatory Coherence, Labour Council, and Professional Services Working Group met virtually to consider matters arising from their applicable Chapters in the Agreement.

the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change are scheduled to take place shortly.

The accession process with the United Kingdom and CPTPP expansion to extend its high standard rules

We take note of the progress on the United Kingdom's accession to the CPTPP since the decision on June 2, 2021 to commence the accession process and establish an Accession Working Group. We continue to work with the United Kingdom in preparation for the first meeting of the Accession Working Group and look forward to the United Kingdom fully demonstrating its compliance with all the obligations of the Agreement at the said meeting. The United Kingdom's possible accession would provide an opportunity to advance the CPTPP's high-standard rules for the 21st century and further promote free trade, open and competitive markets and economic integration in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. We also reaffirm that the CPTPP is open to accession by economies committed to the Agreement's objectives, able to meet and adhere to its high standards and ambitious market access commitments, and having demonstrated a pattern of complying with trade commitments.

The next CPTPP Commission meeting will be hosted by Singapore in 2022.