

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

Ministers and Senior Officials representing Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Viet Nam met in Singapore on 8 October 2022 on the occasion of the Sixth Meeting of the CPTPP Commission, hosted by Singapore. The opportunity to meet in person for the first time since the pandemic was greatly valued and enabled excellent discussions on a range of issues of importance to CPTPP members. We reviewed the progress made over the year on the implementation of the Agreement against the backdrop of COVID-19 economic recovery and welcomed the notable contribution of the Agreement to the global economy as well as the growing interest shown by several economies to accede to the CPTPP. We also reaffirmed our commitment to deepen our collaboration, as highlighted in the following areas:

Ratification of the Agreement

We express our delight at the entry into force of the Agreement for Malaysia on 29 November 2022 after its notification of the completion of its applicable legal procedures on 30 September 2022. We firmly believe that the addition of Malaysia as the ninth Party to the CPTPP will further deepen economic integration, boost the economic coverage of the Agreement and enhance the mutual benefits that Parties reap from the CPTPP. 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.

Progress on the Implementation and Review of the CPTPP

We are heartened that the implementation of the Agreement continues to grow in strength and welcome the work of the 13 subsidiary bodies that met virtually in the lead up to the Commission meeting.¹ In particular, we are pleased with the progress in the areas of e-commerce and professional services. This year, we convened the first meeting of the E-Commerce Committee. Building on discussions at the meeting, Singapore, in consultation with CPTPP members, commissioned a study to examine the domestic laws and regulations adopted by members to implement the disciplines in the CPTPP E-Commerce Chapter. Following the study, we may consider how our existing laws and regulations could be further reviewed to facilitate digital trade. In addition, we welcome the adoption of the Guidelines for Mutual Recognition Agreements or Arrangements for Professional Services under the Professional Services Working Group. These guidelines provide practical guidance for governments, relevant bodies or authorities or other entities entering into mutual recognition negotiations for regulated professional services. We look forward to continued progress on the implementation of the CPTPP.

¹ The subsidiary bodies that met virtually this year are the committees on (i) electronic commerce; (ii) sanitary and phytosanitary measures; (iii) trade in goods; (iv) agricultural trade; (v) rules of origin and origin procedures; (vi) textile and apparel trade matters; (vii) technical barriers to trade; (viii) financial services; (ix) environment; (x) competitiveness and business facilitation; (xi) small and medium-sized enterprises; (xii) state-owned enterprises and designated monopolies; and (xiii) professional services working group.

Third-Year General Review

We are pleased with the commencement of work on the third-year general review of the CPTPP as per Article 27.2.1 (b)², which was put on hold last year due to the unprecedented circumstances arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. We welcome the analytical studies undertaken on the impact of the Agreement, with a focus on the benefits to businesses, workers and consumers in trade and investment flows. We note the discussions at the research conference held in Singapore from 5 – 6 October, during which speakers and experts shared insights about the CPTPP’s impact on trade and the way forward for the implementation of the Agreement to maximise benefits for our businesses, workers and all our communities including women, Indigenous peoples and small and medium-sized enterprises. To this end, CPTPP members may, at a later stage, take into consideration the findings from the analytical work to explore possible areas of application to the CPTPP, to ensure that the Agreement remains relevant to members’ trade and investment priorities.

CPTPP Supply Chains Review

The CPTPP enables us to deepen our economic relationships and engage in crucial trade matters that concern the region, such as building resilient supply chains impacted by the pandemic. In this regard, we are pleased that the Committee on Competitiveness and Business Facilitation has embarked on an empirical analysis of the effects of the CPTPP on supply chains for the purpose of the Agreement’s required supply chains review³, which will advance our understanding of ways to improve the operations and development of our networks. We will also continue to build expertise in risk management mechanisms to mitigate supply chain vulnerabilities and promote the integration of small and medium-sized enterprises in global supply chains.

Cooperation in Areas of Growing Importance to Advance the Agreement

Demonstrating our commitment to advance the CPTPP, we continue to explore new and emerging areas of cooperation in the digital economy and green economy.

On the digital economy front, we are pleased with the discussions during the e-commerce workshop convened by Singapore on 29 and 30 June 2022, which featured presentations on digital trade facilitation, emerging technologies and data. Similarly, cooperation on the uptake of digitisation and data-driven tools could facilitate improved trade between CPTPP members. We are committed to the CPTPP’s instrumental rule-making role in this field and advancing further collaboration on digital issues.

For the green economy, the growing nexus between trade and environment has highlighted

² Article 27.2.1 (b) stipulates that the Commission is tasked to review, within three years of the date of entry into force of the CPTPP and at least every five years thereafter, the economic relationship and partnership among the Parties.

³ Per Article 22.3.5, the Committee on Competitiveness and Business Facilitation is tasked to commence a review to examine the extent to which the CPTPP has facilitated the development, strengthening and operation of supply chains in the free trade area during the fourth year after the date of entry into force of the Agreement.

the role of the CPTPP in supporting trade in environmental goods and services and the opportunity it presents for supporting regional efforts to address climate change. To this end, we fully support developing capacity-building and cooperation initiatives under the environment chapter of the CPTPP. We welcome the discussions at the green economy webinar convened by Singapore on 17 August 2022, during which participants exchanged views about the adoption and expansion of carbon pricing and carbon markets, the transition to a low-carbon energy future and the role of trade policies in addressing climate change. We look forward to contributing to further efforts and the possible development of initiatives that promote trade and investment in environmental goods and services and technologies through the CPTPP.

CPTPP's Role in Supporting Global Economic Recovery

Amid rising commodity and energy prices, inflationary pressures and supply chain disruptions against the backdrop of an increasingly uncertain global environment, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank have lowered their forecasts for global growth. In this regard, we reaffirm our commitment to leverage our strong partnership within the CPTPP and explore concrete ways to foster an enabling environment for trade and investment flows. We highlight the importance of preserving our economic security and resolve to enhance cooperation to counter protectionism and unjustified trade restrictive measures. We also seek to ensure that emergency measures designed to tackle COVID-19 are targeted, proportionate, transparent, temporary and consistent with World Trade Organization (WTO) rules. We reaffirm our strong commitment to upholding and supporting the rules-based multilateral trading system, with the WTO at its core, including as a means for responding to economic coercion. Concomitantly, we remain resolute in our continued commitment to facilitate the flow of essential goods and services in a manner consistent with and supportive of international trade rules.

More than ever, we must ensure that trade works for all, including women, Indigenous peoples and small and medium-sized enterprises. We commend the important outcomes of the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference in June this year, which encompass key commitments such as the WTO response to emergencies to address food insecurity and access to vaccines, as well as an agreement on fisheries subsidies and the extension of the moratorium on customs duties on electronic transmissions. We are particularly pleased with the commitment to WTO reform, including discussions with a view to having a fully and well-functioning dispute settlement system accessible to all members by 2024, as well as progress made in the Joint Statement Initiatives in areas such as services domestic regulation, e-commerce and investment facilitation. We will continue to drive continued progress on these outcomes and advance concrete economic recovery solutions for the benefit of our people and businesses.

Expansion of the CPTPP to advance its high standards

We welcome the progress of the ongoing discussions for the United Kingdom's accession process and resolve to ensure that the high standards of the CPTPP are upheld throughout this process. We acknowledge all efforts made thus far to ensure the United Kingdom's compliance with all the obligations of the Agreement and look forward to further progress on the accession process with the commitment of both the CPTPP membership and the United

Kingdom. We note that this accession process, which is the first for the CPTPP and will set a precedent, is important for preserving and advancing the CPTPP's high standard rules and comprehensive market access commitments as well as further promoting free trade, open and competitive markets, the rules-based trading system and economic integration in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond.

We note the growing interest from aspirant economies to accede to the CPTPP. In support of the Agreement's open architecture, we will reflect on the ongoing accession process with the United Kingdom and continue to exchange views on the CPTPP's expansion. We will also continue efforts to address subsequent applications in accordance with the CPTPP Accession Process and inform ourselves on whether aspirant economies can meet the CPTPP's high standards, taking into account their experience on their trade commitments. We reaffirm our support for the expansion of the CPTPP by economies committed to the Agreement's objectives, able to meet and adhere to its high standard rules and comprehensive market access commitments and with a demonstrated pattern of complying with their trade commitments. In addition, we affirm the importance of upholding the spirit and principles of the CPTPP as established in the Preamble of the Agreement and Joint Ministerial Statements.

Looking ahead

The next CPTPP Commission meeting will be hosted by New Zealand in 2023.