INFORMAL WORKING GROUP ON MSMES[*]

MSMES PLATFORM DRAFT PROPOSAL

Revision[**]

The following communication, dated 14 June 2019, is being circulated at the request of the delegation of Guatemala, Mexico and Uruguay.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1. Whether in a developed or developing country, Micro, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (MSMEs) are important contributors to economic activity and the generation of employment. Recognizing that fundamental role in any country's economy, the Informal Working Group on MSMEs (hereinafter the Group) has carried out a variety of events, workshops, studies and meetings discussing the future and way forward for supporting the participation of MSMEs in global markets.

2 THE PROPOSAL

2.1. Aligned with the current agenda of the Group, the co-sponsors would like to propose the creation of an online Platform with the objective of supporting MSMEs navigate through the ever-competitive international environment. The idea is to gather in one place a wide variety of information and useful resources that would: a) support the participation of MSMEs into international trade and promote their economic growth; b) provide policymakers with ideas, examples of best practices and provisions included in Regional Trade Agreements to serve as a guide for governments interested in supporting their MSMEs; c) help future delegates to get an insight of the information already generated; and d) inform future discussions on MSMEs in the different WTO bodies.

2.2. The MSME section would include segments such as:

a) MSME Challenges and Strategies – Overview of challenges based on the Working Group's thematic sessions and MSMEs best practices.
b) Studies and Statistics on MSMEs – Compilation and summary of useful information from international organizations and other institutions.
c) Conferences and Workshops – Links to live streaming of useful MSMEs workshops held by the group; calendar of upcoming workshops and seminars; recordings of workshops on file.
d) National support programs – Mapping of national support programs made available for MSMEs.
e) Useful resources – Links to Global Trade Helpdesk and other platforms with practical information and networking.

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[*] This document was originally circulated as INF/MSME/W/3 dated 4 June 2019.
[**] This revision is to add Guatemala and Uruguay as co-sponsors to the submission.

    f)   Surveys and business dialogue forums – to capture feedback and information directly from MSMEs, and to achieve a more direct dialogue between the WTO and MSMEs around the world.

2.3. The Policymaker section would include segments such as:

    a)   Studies and Statistics on MSMEs – Compilation and summary of useful information from other international organizations and institutions.
    b)   Best Practices – List and explanation of government best practices for helping MSMEs.
    c)   National Support Programs – Mapping of national support programs made available for policy makers that will serve as a guide to governments interested in supporting their MSMEs.
    d)   Compilation of MSME-related provisions contained in Regional Trade Agreements.
    e)   Database with an overview of MSME-related information in TPRs.

3 VALUE OF A WTO MSMES PLATFORM

3.1. There are many pages that support MSMEs on the web. However, this platform can add value for several reasons:

    a)   Information tends to be very dispersed. This platform would concentrate information and guide MSMEs to different helpful sources in a single platform.
    b)   The WTO has more visibility than many other institutions/organizations, both public and private, national and international, so the information could potentially reach a greater number of MSMEs throughout many countries.
    c)   It would be a proactive way of working towards the Group's main objective of supporting and benefitting MSMEs.
    d)   Establishing a more direct connection with MSMEs and collecting direct information would better inform the Group's discussions.
    e)   It would help improve the image of the WTO as caring for all enterprises and not just transnationals and large companies.

4 ADMINISTRATION

4.1. This platform would not duplicate information and tools contained in other important and useful platforms such as the Global Trade Helpdesk, rather, it would complement them and promote them with direct links.

4.2. **It is important to note that members of the Group would define and request all content and its presentation.**

4.3. The Group would be in charge of updating the platform. In this process, the Group could request the help of the Secretariat.

5 FINANCING

5.1. The co-sponsors have reached out to the UK Government's Trade and Investment Advocacy Fund (TAF2+), which provides demand-led assistance to developing countries for participation in international trade and investment negotiations. TAF2+ has preliminarily offered (still subject to final approval) to finance work on the platform through one of their consulting firms. The support envisaged could potentially include the development of the platform, as well as mechanisms for its sustained maintenance, and the development of a communications strategy to support buy-in from other members and uptake after its launch. The support is being requested by members of the Group (not the Secretariat) and will not include monetary funds, but rather work done by the consulting firm hired directly by TAF2+.

5.2. The support of TAF2+ would be strictly on researching, summarizing, designing, and any other thing the Group asks them to develop. They will not be creating any content on their own. What goes on the platform will always be the decision of the Group.

5.3. TAF2+ would offer support through 2022. After that, should the platform need more funding to keep it updated, the Group would have to seek support from future funds.

6 TIMEFRAME

6.1. The co-sponsors are hoping to get approval from the Group by the next MSMEs meeting on 28 June. Upon approval, work on content, curation of links, and development/design would begin with the goal of launching the platform at MC12 (June 2020).

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