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**INFORMAL WORKING GROUP ON MSMEs  
SECOND OPEN-ENDED THEMATIC SESSION  
IMPROVING ACCESS TO INFORMATION FOR MSMEs: TAKEAWAYS AND NEXT STEPS\***

The following communication, dated 26 June 2018, is being circulated at the request of the delegation of Switzerland, as co-coordinator of the Informal Working Group on MSMEs and organizer of this session, and the delegation of Uruguay, as general coordinator of the Informal Working Group on MSMEs.

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Reflecting on the Informal Group of MSMEs thematic session held at the WTO on 22 May 2018, we, the co-coordinator and general coordinator of the Informal Working Group on MSMEs, took note of the following key messages from speakers and participants.

This meeting was a follow-up to the thematic open-ended session on Access to Information that was held on 27 March 2018 (see JOB/GC/183/Rev.1).

## **1 REMARKS BY SPEAKERS**

1.1. Mr Mimouni from the ITC gave an update on the Global Trade Helpdesk (GTH) project. He noted that a trust fund to support implementation of the GTH has been established and fundraising for further development is ongoing. The ITC is also working with a designer to make the GTH more user-friendly. Data collection is underway and the ITC is also now developing a capacity building program. On the language dimension, he explained that the website would be translated into the 6 UN languages within the next three years. As having the information available in national languages is important, the ITC would need to work very closely with national governments for translation and input. Concerning focal points, he noted that there are already many at the national level. However, there is a need for improved synergy.

1.2. Mr Loridan of ITC made a presentation on the ePing SPS/TBT notification alert system.

## **2 DISCUSSION**

Following the presentations, the floor was opened to participants to comment and react. Members discussed concrete actions they could take, including:

### **a. Country Surveys**

- i. The idea of a survey to map information sources was discussed. The Chair invited the ITC to prepare the necessary material. The survey would then be sent to Members to complete. Members who are not part of the informal working group on MSMEs but who are also interested in this issue are invited to signal their interest to the group coordinators or the ITC.

### **b. National Contact Points**

- i. Members generally supported the need for national contact points to allow the managers of the GTH to more easily interact with the national authorities that retain

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relevant information. Various approaches were discussed ranging from leveraging already existing contact points, such as those established under the TFA, to establishing new structures. The idea of national contact points that could answer MSMEs' queries was also raised.

- ii. It was felt that further discussion was required on this issue. A follow-up meeting would be organized in the coming months to further discuss the question of the national contact points.

**c. How to further improve access to information with the WTO framework**

- i. The work done in the TBT and SPS committees to enhance transparency was flagged. It was suggested that the Group should continue to explore ways to further improve access to information, including through the work of relevant WTO bodies.

### **3 NEXT STEPS**

- a. The ITC will develop a draft survey to map information sources for the GTH. The survey would then be sent to the Group for Members to complete.
  - b. A follow-up meeting will be organized in the coming months to further discuss the question of the national contact points. The Chair invited Members to reflect on best practices and experiences.
  - c. The Chair also invited Members to reflect on other initiatives that the Group could take to improve access to information for MSMEs.
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