

WTO JOINT STATEMENT INITIATIVE ON ELECTRONIC COMMERCE ACHIEVES STABILISED TEXT

1. The co-convenors of the WTO Joint Statement Initiative (JSI) on Electronic Commerce jointly announced that the JSI has achieved a stabilised text. This is a significant milestone which reflects a balanced and inclusive outcome achieved after five years of negotiations. The agreement covers three broad areas of (a) digital trade facilitation; (b) open digital environment; and (c) business and consumer trust.

2. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade and Industry Gan Kim Yong said: “Singapore welcomes this significant milestone after five years of negotiations. These rules, which will be the first set of comprehensive rules on e-commerce at the WTO, will bring benefits to governments, businesses and consumers by fostering greater inter-operability and transparency. The JSI also aims to help participants, especially developing and least developed WTO Members and their businesses, to better integrate and enjoy the opportunities offered by the fast-growing digital economy.”

3. Singapore looks forward to working with fellow JSI participants on the implementation of this landmark agreement, which will play a pivotal role in supporting digital transformation, harmonising digital trade rules globally, and bring benefits to governments, businesses and consumers.

4. Looking ahead, participants will proceed with their domestic processes, with a view to integrating the outcome of the negotiations in the WTO legal framework.

5. The co-convenors also stand ready to support developing and least developed country Members in capacity building and technical assistance. We welcome all WTO Members to support and join this initiative, when ready.

Annex: Statement circulated by Australia, Japan and Singapore as the Co-Convenors of the Joint Statement Initiative on Electronic Commerce

**MINISTRY OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY
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JOINT STATEMENT INITIATIVE ON ELECTRONIC COMMERCE

The following communication, dated 26 July 2024 is being circulated at the request of Australia, Japan and Singapore as Co-Convenors on behalf of the participants¹ of the Joint Statement Initiative on Electronic Commerce.

We recognise the importance of global electronic commerce and the opportunities it creates for inclusive trade and development, and the important role of the WTO in promoting open, transparent, non-discriminatory and predictable regulatory environments in facilitating electronic commerce.

After five years of negotiations under the WTO Joint Statement Initiative on Electronic Commerce, participants have reached a new phase, achieving stabilised text on the attached Agreement on Electronic Commerce that reflects a balanced and inclusive outcome. The Agreement is set to benefit consumers and businesses involved in digital trade, especially MSMEs. It will also play a pivotal role in supporting digital transformation among participating members.

Participants will proceed with their domestic processes, with a view to integrating the outcome of negotiations in the WTO legal framework.

We reaffirm the importance of supporting developing and least-developed country Members in implementing the Agreement on Electronic Commerce by addressing their identified needs including through implementation periods, technical assistance and capacity building support.

Taking note of the evolving nature of cross-border electronic commerce and digital technology, participants recognise that some issues of importance to digital trade have not been addressed in this text. Participants will discuss the inclusion of these issues in future negotiations. Participants reserve the right in any future negotiations to propose amendments to the attached agreement including with respect to scope, exceptions and dispute settlement.

We encourage all WTO Members to support and join this Initiative and, in this context, we will extend our outreach to WTO Members on the benefits of the negotiated rules for facilitating electronic transactions.

We acknowledge that some Members that participated in negotiations continue to undertake internal consultations or domestic processes and we commit to continued engagement with these Members in coming months with the goal of expanding participation.

¹ Due to ongoing domestic consultations and considerations, this statement is circulated on behalf of JSI participants, except for Brazil, Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Indonesia, Paraguay, Separate Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu, Türkiye and United States.