

WTO General Council: UK statement on work programme on electronic commerce



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Thank you Chair.

As we have mentioned in this forum before, the United Kingdom is a strong supporter of the moratorium on imposing customs duties on electronic transmissions, and believe the moratorium should be made permanent.

COVID-19 has revealed just how important digital trade is to the global economy, and it will continue to be of fundamental importance as we look to build back better from this crisis. We are that digital trade should be uninhibited by tariff barriers, like customs duties, in order to provide the stability and predictability that businesses in developed and developing countries need to innovate, grow and prosper in the digital age. Barriers to trade are barriers to trade and we should refrain from introducing them.

That said, the United Kingdom recognises that there are a range of views held by members on the impacts of the moratorium. We welcome the growth of academic publications in this field, such as the paper by the OECD entitled 'Electronic Transmissions and International Trade - shedding new light on the moratorium debate'. These publications play an invaluable part in increasing our understanding of the complex issues, and they can help to generate informed and constructive debate between members.

The United Kingdom welcomes continued discussions on this important issue through the Work Programme on E-Commerce.

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