

# WCO and WTO join forces to minimize disruptions to cross-border trade in goods

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The heads of the World Customs Organization (WCO) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) issued a joint statement on 6 April pledging to work together to facilitate trade in essential goods such as medical supplies, food, and energy.

WCO Secretary General Dr. Kunio Mikuriya and WTO Director-General Roberto Azevêdo said the two organizations would work closely together to minimize disruption to cross-border trade in goods – in particular those essential to combat the COVID-19 pandemic – while safeguarding public health.

They also pledged to establish a coordinated approach to support initiatives that facilitate cross-border trade so that essential goods can quickly reach those most in need, including in least developed and land-locked countries. WCO and WTO members have already been invited to increase transparency by sharing information on new trade and trade-related measures introduced in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“As COVID-19 continues to spread globally and governments consider new measures to protect the health and well-being of their citizens, we urge Members to ensure that any new border action is targeted, proportionate, transparent and non-discriminatory,” they declared.

The text of the joint statement is below.

## **WCO-WTO Joint Statement on COVID-19 related trade measures**

The COVID-19 pandemic, while above all a public health crisis, presents the world with unprecedented social and economic challenges. Emergency measures needed to curb the spread of the disease have unintended impacts on the world economy and trade, including the global supply chains that produce and distribute essential goods such as medical supplies, food, and energy.

To support the ongoing efforts to mitigate the social and economic effects of the pandemic, we, the Secretariats of the World Customs Organization (WCO) and the World Trade Organization (WTO), agree to work closely together to minimize disruption to cross-border trade in goods – in particular those essential to combat COVID-19 – while safeguarding public health. We commit to provide appropriate support to all relevant stakeholders.

Within our respective mandates, we have already invited Members to increase transparency by sharing information on new trade and trade-related measures introduced in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. To the extent appropriate, we are making such information publicly available through our respective websites.

We are also willing to establish a coordinated approach in support of initiatives that facilitate cross-border trade in goods, in particular those key to combat COVID-19. This would allow that essential goods can quickly reach those most in need, including in least developed and land-locked countries.

As COVID-19 continues to spread globally and governments consider new measures to protect the health and well-being of their citizens, we urge Members to ensure that any new border action is targeted, proportionate, transparent and non-discriminatory – as agreed by G20 leaders. We stress that these measures should be temporary, and we encourage Members to rescind them once they are no longer needed, especially if they restrict trade. We welcome initiatives to facilitate and simplify cross-border procedures and urge our Members to prioritize those for exporting and importing essential goods.

As the pandemic evolves, we will continue to further explore ways to coordinate the efforts of the two organizations in response to the COVID-19 pandemic aimed at keeping trade flows open for the safety of populations around the world and a strong recovery of the global economy.