General Council
22-23 July 2024

APPOINTMENT OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

COMMUNICATION FROM THE AFRICAN GROUP

The following communication, dated 11 July 2024, is being circulated at the request of the delegation of Chad on behalf of the African Group.

The African Group, in accordance with the Procedures for the Appointment of Directors-General (WT/L/509), requests the inclusion of the following agenda item on the agenda of the forthcoming General Council:

Appointment of Director-General

Document WT/L/509 provides that the process leading up to the decision by the General Council to appoint a Director-General shall be conducted by the Chair of the General Council in consultation with Members, and sets out the procedures to be followed in this regard. Regarding time frames, Article 7 provides that the process 'shall start nine months prior to the expiry of the term of an incumbent Director-General with a notification from the Chair to the General Council.'

Article 12 further provides that 'where a serving Director-General decides to seek reappointment, he or she shall so notify the Chair of the General Council before the start of the process, and shall thereby be considered to be a candidate. The Chair shall inform Members of the candidature of the incumbent Director-General, in order that they may take this into consideration in submitting their nominations'.

The tenure of the current Director-General ends in August 2025, and the African Group is of the view that it would be in the best interest of the Organization if the process of reappointment were to start early for a number of reasons:

Firstly, the organization has delivered important results on many of the critical issues at MC12 in June 2022 and MC13 in February 2024, and it is essential that we build on these results at MC14.

Secondly, it would be important to ensure continuity and preserve the gains made so far, especially at MC12 and MC13.

Thirdly, in order to allow Members to focus on the preparations for MC14 that will be taking place in Africa (Cameroon) in a manner that delivers further results, the African Group believes that it is crucial that the process of appointing Director-General does not overlap with the preparations for MC14. The African Group is proud to support Cameroon in the hosting of MC14.

For these reasons, the African Group wishes to request the current Director-General, Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, to make herself available to serve a second term, in accordance with Article 12 of the Procedures for the Appointment of Directors-General (WT/L/509). At MC12 and MC13, her leadership enabled the organization to conclude on several long-standing multilateral agreements. She has also been instrumental in guiding the Secretariat's work to support Members' efforts to reform the WTO.
We therefore request that the Chairperson of the General Council begin the appointment process as soon as possible, in the best interests of the Organization. The African Group further urges WTO Members to support this proposal with a view to achieving the provisions of Article 2 of the Procedures for the Appointment of Directors-General (WT/L/509) which states that 'the overriding objective of Members in this process shall be to reach decisions by consensus'.

Coordinator, African Group