DRAFT MINISTERIAL DECLARATION ON STRENGTHENING REGULATORY
COOPERATION TO REDUCE TECHNICAL BARRIERS TO TRADE

SUBMISSION BY AUSTRALIA; CAMEROON; CANADA; CHINA; COLOMBIA; THE EUROPEAN UNION;
HONG KONG, CHINA; JAPAN; JORDAN; KAZAKHSTAN; THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA; THE STATE OF
KUWAIT; MACAO, CHINA; MYANMAR; NEW ZEALAND; NICARAGUA; NORWAY; PAKISTAN;
SEYCHELLES; SINGAPORE; SWITZERLAND; THE UNITED KINGDOM;
THE UNITED STATES AND THE BOLIVARIAN REPUBLIC OF VENEZUELA

The following communication, dated 13 February 2024, is being circulated at the request of the
delегations of Australia; Cameroon; Canada; China; Colombia; the European Union; Hong Kong,
China; Japan; Jordan; Kazakhstan; the Republic of Korea; the State of Kuwait; Macao, China;
Myanmar; New Zealand; Nicaragua; Norway; Pakistan; Seychelles; Singapore; Switzerland; the
United Kingdom; the United States and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

1. We acknowledge that the work of the WTO Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade
(TBT Committee) has been instrumental in advancing the implementation of the Agreement on
Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT Agreement) and keeping the TBT Agreement dynamic since 1995
particularly through the Triennial Review process. In this regard, we recognize the good practices
developed by the TBT Committee in the areas of transparency and notifications, managing trade
interests (e.g. specific trade concerns), decisions and recommendations (e.g. the decision of the
Committee on Principles for the Development of International Standards1), information exchange
(e.g. thematic sessions) and efficient use of digital tools (e.g. ePing; eAgenda).

2. We reaffirm that the TBT Agreement remains relevant to modern global trade challenges and
emerging policy concerns, including measures taken to address climate change, the digital economy
and global health pandemics. The TBT Agreement provides a unique multilateral framework for
regulatory cooperation that is essential to avoid and reduce unnecessary barriers to trade. We note,
for example, that close regulatory cooperation among Members was fundamental in addressing the
COVID-19 pandemic by facilitating trade through the reduction or suspension of unnecessary
regulatory barriers, use of international standards or temporary recognition of multiple standards,
and decreasing unnecessary costs.

3. We also recognize the important role of the Committee discussing regulatory cooperation in
promoting good regulatory practices for both developed and developing Members.

4. We recall that the TBT Committee was established with the explicit mandate of affording Members
the opportunity to consult on any matters relating to the operation of the TBT Agreement and the
furtherance of its objectives.2 In this regard, we seek to promote and further enhance the

1 G/TBT/9, 13 November 2000, para. 20 and Annex 4.
2 Article 13.1 of the TBT Agreement.
Committee's role in supporting transparency, regulatory cooperation and collaboration between Members within the scope of this Agreement.

5. In light of the above, the Ministerial Conference:

a. Affirms that regulatory cooperation helps to avoid and reduce unnecessary barriers to trade. Cooperation assists Members in meeting cross border and global challenges, and builds confidence between trading partners through mutual understanding and dialogue. This contributes to the development of effective and efficient technical regulations and avoids regulatory differences and unnecessary divergence;

b. Notes that cooperation on emerging issues – particularly in the context of international standards development and adoption - provides an opportunity to promote regulatory convergence where appropriate.

c. Encourages Members to engage early in exchange of comments on draft regulations and signal willingness to work together in order to identify and mitigate potential regulatory differences or more trade restrictive than necessary obstacles to trade before regulatory changes are finalised;

d. Urges the Committee to enhance its Member-driven work on immediate and emerging regulatory challenges, including but not limited to the areas of climate change, sustainable development, digital economy, and human health, and stresses the importance of promoting dialogue between Members, including among competent authorities and bodies;

e. Underlines the importance of transparency as a key building block for constructive engagement and encourages making information on all related technical regulations/conformity assessment procedures publicly available, continued refinement of related Committee notifications and use of digital tools to improve the global trading and business environment;

f. Encourages Members, as a means of enhancing the predictability of the business environment and access to regulatory information, to implement the TBT Committee recommendation on notification formats and notification of adopted final text of measures3;

g. Promotes the further development, enhancement and adoption of digital tools, including ePing and eAgenda, for early engagement on TBT matters and deliver training on how to use these which will support the proper functioning of the TBT Agreement.

h. Stresses the importance of technical assistance and capacity building to address challenges facing developing Members, especially in the area of transparency and quality infrastructure; and,

i. Promotes international recognition arrangements for accreditation, which can facilitate the acceptance of conformity assessment procedures.

6. The Ministerial Conference supports the TBT Committee advancing work on these points in the context of the Tenth Triennial Review of the TBT Agreement based on proposals from Members (e.g. regular meetings, thematic sessions, informal meetings and working groups as necessary), and reporting to the Council for Trade in Goods with recommendations, as appropriate.

3 G/TBT/1/Rev.15, page 43.