



**Multi-association congratulatory letter to WTO Director-General Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala**

09 March 2021

Dear Director-General Dr. Okonjo-Iweala,

We the undersigned, representatives of global digital and technology industries, would like to congratulate you on your appointment as Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO). You are taking office in unprecedented circumstances, with the Covid-19 pandemic, global economic recession, and rising trade protectionism all underlining the key role of the WTO in opening markets, facilitating trade, and leveling the global playing field. Considering the global dimension of our industries, we are certain that a strengthened and reformed WTO is essential to international coordination and cooperation towards growth and technological progress. A comprehensive and ambitious framework for global digital trade is a crucial component here, and a necessity if all WTO Members are to successfully rise to the challenges posed by the current global environment.

We believe a reformed WTO can and should play a central role in digital trade transparency, including by combatting digital protectionist tendencies and policies and unfair practices. Therefore, we are happy to add our voices to calls for effective and forward-looking reform of the WTO across all three of its core functions.

The current global environment has incentivised companies of all sizes and across all industries, to shift their offline business online. This has highlighted the need for progress on the Joint Statement Initiative (JSI) on eCommerce in particular. A successful and prompt conclusion to these talks can benefit all economic sectors from a horizontal perspective, by removing barriers to digital trade. These impede the growth of both established and emerging businesses, including in developing countries. We place particular emphasis on enabling the cross-border flow of data, and making permanent the ban on customs duties on electronic transmissions – areas which should be prioritised for the 12<sup>th</sup> WTO Ministerial Conference as part of an ambitious agenda on digital trade.

Elsewhere, and especially considering the “servicification” of trade in goods and the critical importance of ICT products highlighted by the ongoing pandemic, we strongly believe that the

Information Technology Agreement (ITA) is deserving of your immediate attention, looking both to its expansion and implementation of WTO Members' existing commitments.

Considering the challenges of the green and digital transformations globally, we also look forward to contributing to work around Trade and Climate.

We look forward to working together towards multilateral solutions that match the challenges in today's global digital economy. We are firmly convinced that involving industry in these efforts is key to ensuring their success. In that regard, we would greatly welcome the opportunity in the near future to discuss these topics in more detail with you and your team.

Yours sincerely,



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