

## Trade Policy Unit

### Daily news and updates

#### **(1) Plastics Dialogue participants brainstorm on MC13 outcomes, welcome US co-sponsorship (WTO)**

- Next year's 13th Ministerial Conference (MC13) presents an opportunity for the WTO to deliver concrete, pragmatic, and effective outcomes to reduce plastics pollution and address environmental concerns, according to participants in the Informal Dialogue on Plastics Pollution and Environmentally Sustainable Plastics Trade at a meeting on 13 March. The attendees had their first focused discussion on the structure of MC13 outcomes and welcomed the United States as a new co-sponsor of the initiative.
- The ambassadors of three coordinating members-- Ecuador, China, and Australia-- highlighted the positive spillover effects of the Dialogue, noting it has brought together officials from various members in the fields of trade, environment, customs, and industry. They emphasized the Dialogue's objective of supporting other significant international initiatives in this area, particularly the ongoing multilateral negotiation process at the UN Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee where participants are seeking to achieve a legally binding instrument by the end of 2024 to put an end to plastics pollution.
- The ambassadors encouraged active participation from all participants in shaping the outcomes of MC13, emphasizing the need to incorporate developmental elements and establish a plan for providing capacity building and technical assistance to developing members, in particular small island developing states (SIDS) and least developed countries (LDCs).
- Facilitators of the three work streams, namely the United Kingdom, Colombia, and Australia, provided an update on the latest discussions within each work stream and shared their views on the next steps. The three work streams cover cross-cutting issues such as international cooperation, capacity building and transparency, issues related to reduction of plastics pollution and a full life-cycle approach to eliminating such pollution, issues regarding promotion of environmentally sustainable trade in plastic alternatives and substitutes, as well as technologies required to address plastics pollution.
- Participants suggested that key components of the MC13 outcomes should include a political statement highlighting commonly identified priorities as well as a call for action, voluntary pledges of domestic actions, and collective efforts in plastics reduction. Additionally, they recommended the inclusion of specific trade actions such as the identification of harmful plastic goods targeted by trade measures, a compendium of best practices, and a set of Harmonized System (HS) codes for substitutes of harmful plastic goods to recommend to the World Customs Organization.

## **(2) Accelerating the Use of Digital Technologies is Key to Creating Productive Jobs and Boosting Economic Growth in Africa (World Bank)**

- With Africa's share of the global workforce projected to become the largest in the world by 2100, it is critical for African countries to increase the uptake of digital technologies to drive employment growth for the more than 22 million Africans joining the workforce each year, emphasizes a new report.
- The "Digital Africa: Technological Transformation for Jobs" report provides a comprehensive analysis of how digital technologies can enable economic transformation and boost jobs in the region. It also sheds light on how policy and regulatory reforms can widen the availability and increase usage of digital technologies.
- Of all the regions in the world, Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) displays the largest gap between the availability of digital infrastructure and people's actual usage. Usage rates range from a low of 6% in South Sudan to 53% in South Africa, underscoring the heterogeneity of average use and the need for differentiated policy reforms across countries.
- The report highlights evidence that internet availability has a positive impact on creating jobs and reducing poverty in African countries. To bring down costs, governments should aim to promote competition in the provision of digital infrastructure and reduce operational costs.
- To boost productive usage, governments should implement policies that support the development of more attractive digital solutions geared to the skills and productive needs people have while building broader awareness and education.
- Policies that foster innovation and support digital start-up entrepreneurs are essential to ensure that more Africans use the internet for jobs and learning, which will lead to higher standards of living. When digital technologies better meet the needs of people, households and firms, demand for their use will also increase, making internet expansion more commercially viable, and supporting a virtuous cycle of technology-led transformation.

## **(3) SADC Fisheries Monitoring, Control and Surveillance Coordination Centre to enter into force in April 2023 (SADC)**

- The Republic of Botswana has signed the Charter establishing the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Fisheries Monitoring Control and Surveillance Coordination Centre (MCSCC) on 9th March 2023.
- Botswana has become the 11th signatory of the Charter, meaning the Region has reached the required two-thirds threshold for the Charter to enter into force in order for the MCSCC to be established to assist the Region in prioritising the protection of fisheries to underpin greater benefits and blue economy growth. Angola, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, the United Republic of Tanzania, and Zambia have already signed the Charter.

- The MCSCC will coordinate regional fisheries data and information sharing services, a regional fishing vessel register, provide fisheries surveillance services, coordinate fisheries observers and support the implementation of port state measures, provide fisheries enforcement and legal support services, and support improvements in the capacity of national Monitoring Control and Surveillance (MCS) systems.
- The Charter will officially enter into force in 30 days. The MCSCC will be based in Katembe municipal district of Maputo, and the Government of Mozambique is ready to implement this with support from other SADC Member States, and funding from the World Bank.
- In his keynote address, Hon. Molebatsi, Assistant Minister of Agriculture in Botswana, underscored that the Regional MCSCC will help in adopting coordinated schemes for inspection of fishing vessels and gears, coordinated border controls to monitor fish trade, shared intelligence and information and the cooperative use of remote and physical inspection tools, robust protection for a region, their resources and their markets are developed.
- He also noted that this will help in more efficient and comprehensive detection of illegal operators creating a real barrier and deterrence to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

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