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DRAFT SPEAKING POINTS FOR DDG YI

Launch of the Import Licensing website

Formal meeting of the Committee on Import Licensing

10am, 9 October 2020

Dear colleagues,

I am pleased to join you today at this formal Import Licensing Committee meeting.

The Agreement on Import Licensing Procedures is one of the oldest Agreement in the GATT/WTO history, and its establishment dates back to the Tokyo Round. As one of the most-frequently-used trade policy instruments, applied by almost all governments, use of import licensing has extended from enforcing quantitative restrictions and collecting trade statistics, to safeguarding product quality, environment, consumer welfare, public health or national security. Detailed procedural requirements under various provisions of the Agreement add further complexity to information search in this particular area.

The idea of creating a database on import licensing dates back to 2017. The objectives of the website are multifaceted. The first was to create a database which stores and presents import licensing information in a systemic and structured way. Second, was to make better use of information contained in notifications. Third, was to make it easy for Members and the business community to find the right information more efficiently.

During the past four years, my colleagues in the Market Access Division designed the structure of the new website; reviewed and analysed all import licensing notifications submitted by Members since 1995; uploaded Member profiles of 134 WTO Members; verified over 2500 legislations to ensure their website links

were functioning and legal texts were in place; as well as 1085 products and procedures to ensure accuracy. In this process, colleagues from the ITSD have provided indispensable technical support. Thanks to their work, the objectives of this project have been achieved and the import licensing database is ready to be launched today.

Transparency makes trade more inclusive and predictable. Enhanced efficiency, achieved through easy access to information, further reduces trade cost of both exporters and importers. I fully believe that the new WTO import licensing database will significantly improve transparency in this important field and will benefit all Members, especially those developing Members who have capacity and resource constraints, as well as SMEs and MSMEs.

In conclusion, I would like to thank Suja, Xiaodong, Donna, Irina, Karine, Steve Tanner, and all other colleagues in the Secretariat who contributed to this project at different stages. You have done excellent work. My thanks extend to all Members, especially former Chairs of this Committee, for your devotion, your support and valuable contributions in the past few years.

Finally, I would like to encourage Members to use this database frequently. Ultimately it was established for you and its value will be enhanced by your use of it, so please submit notifications regularly. Let's work together to make it a product which is more responsive to your needs.

With these words I announce the launch of the Import Licensing website.

Thank you.