

JOINT STATEMENT
2 April 2020

Heads of ICC¹ and WTO call for increased action on trade to ensure an effective response to COVID-19 pandemic and announce virtual business roundtable to provide concrete advice to governments.

We are profoundly saddened by the suffering and loss of life the COVID-19 pandemic is causing around the world. This health crisis is also becoming a social and economic crisis, and we support governments' efforts to mitigate the pandemic's effects on jobs and growth, and lay the foundations for a strong and inclusive recovery.

G20 leaders have clearly recognised the need for the international community to step up global cooperation in response to this crisis. The business community is—and will continue to be—an important partner in this response.

Trade and trade rules have a crucial role to play in both the health and economic response to the crisis. We welcome the G20's endorsement of this view, including their assertion that any pandemic-related trade measures should be "targeted, proportionate, transparent, and temporary."

We also underscore the importance of "actively working to ensure the flow of vital medical supplies, critical agricultural products, and other goods and services across borders," as well as the G20's broader commitment to "minimise disruptions to trade and global supply chains".

We deeply share the G20's concern about the impact of the pandemic on the most vulnerable, including developing and least developed countries, and on workers and businesses, including micro-, small-, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs).

We are concerned about the severe disruptions to value chains in many sectors—with major implications for employment and the supply of goods, especially essential medical and food supplies. Bold and urgent leadership is required to keep trade moving and to secure jobs.

Now is the time for concrete measures to respond to the economic dimensions of the pandemics. Business can play a key role in signalling where trade flows and production chains are being affected, helping to identify solutions that maximize health outcomes while minimising economic damage.

It is increasingly clear that the economic downturn caused by the pandemic will necessitate a significant rebuild of domestic policies—and of international cooperation. In this time of uncertainty, leadership requires not only responding to the crisis at hand but providing a clear vision for the future. On-going efforts to improve and strengthen the global trading system, including the WTO, must therefore continue.

With a view to providing additional concrete business recommendations to governments, ICC will work with its partners, supported by the WTO, to host an **extraordinary virtual business roundtable**. This virtual session will look to provide constructive recommendations to governments on trade policy measures that can be readily deployed to speed the response to the COVID-19 pandemic in the immediate and mid-term.

¹ The International Chamber of Commerce is the institutional representative of over 45 million businesses. ICC's recommendations on trade policy and post-pandemic rebuilding were sent to governments and international agencies in a 28 March letter [available here](#)