

Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) - Joint Ministerial Statement on the occasion of the Fourth Commission Meeting

Ministers and Senior Officials, representing Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Viet Nam, met virtually on the occasion of the fourth meeting of the CPTPP Commission, hosted by Japan on June 2, 2021.

We welcome the formal request to accede to the CPTPP received from the United Kingdom on 1 February, 2021 and, acting upon the request, the Parties have reached a decision to commence an accession process with the United Kingdom and establish an Accession Working Group.

Significance of the CPTPP and interest in CPTPP accession

Amidst the downturn of the global economy caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the emergence of inward-looking tendencies, such as restrictive and unjustified trade practices, we affirm that an innovative, high standards agreement like the CPTPP can be a significant contributor to post-COVID-19 trade and economic recovery in our region and beyond. We are resolved to continue our on-going work towards this end, including to strengthen supply chain resilience and facilitate e-commerce.

In this regard, we share the view that the commencement of an accession process with the United Kingdom and the potential expansion of the CPTPP will send a strong signal to our trading partners around the world, of our commitment to support a free, fair, open, effective, inclusive and rules-based trading system.

The commencement of an accession process with the United Kingdom provides an opportunity to advance the CPTPP's high-standard rules for the 21st century and further promote free trade, open and competitive markets and economic integration in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond.

These objectives are aligned with Article 5 of the Agreement and the Accession Process adopted by the CPTPP Commission at its first meeting in Tokyo in January 2019. These make clear that the CPTPP is open to accession by economies committed to these objectives and able to fulfill the Agreement's high standards.

In furthering these objectives, the CPTPP Commission emphasized the importance of aspirant economies demonstrating their full acceptance and commitment to complying with all the existing rules of the Agreement and to delivering the highest standard of market access commitments, consistent with the benchmarks set out in the CPTPP Accession Process.

Decision to commence an accession process with the United Kingdom

In making its decision, mindful of the need to advance the high-standard rules of the CPTPP, the Commission took into consideration the United Kingdom's experience with high-standard trade and investment rules; its clear commitment to promote transparency, predictability, and confidence in the rules-based trading system; and its affirmation of its intention and ability to meet the high standards of the CPTPP.

The work on the accession process with the United Kingdom is just beginning and today's decision is but one step in the process. The United Kingdom has indicated that it is prepared to meet the high standards of the CPTPP. We look forward to working with the United Kingdom to understand how it would fulfill the commitments of the Agreement, especially its compliance with all the existing rules, to receiving the United Kingdom's market access offers and to negotiating the terms and conditions of its accession. The CPTPP aims to achieve the highest standard of comprehensive market access through the elimination of tariffs and other barriers to goods and services trade and investment. We view the United Kingdom as a partner with the potential to contribute faithfully to this endeavour.

In addition, we note that the United Kingdom's potential membership would support the mutual interests, common values and commitment to upholding the rules-based trading system shared by the members of the CPTPP. It would also promote market-oriented principles and help to counter protectionism and the use of unjustified trade restrictive measures.

CPTPP entry into force by all Signatories

We reiterate the importance of maintaining solidarity within CPTPP membership, and express the hope that those Signatories for which the CPTPP has yet to enter into force will ratify the Agreement as soon as possible and engage in this and future accession processes as Parties.