



JOINT STATEMENT ON ELECTRONIC COMMERCE

COMMUNICATION FROM NEW ZEALAND

The following communication, dated 5 July 2019, is being circulated at the request of the delegation of New Zealand.

PROPOSED TEXTS: DIGITAL TRADE FACILITATION AND LOGISTICS

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1. New Zealand believes that issues regarding digital trade facilitation and logistics supporting e-commerce trade are important areas for discussion in the context of this Joint Statement Initiative. The following texts are proposed as a complement to our previous proposals regarding consumer protection (INF/ECOM/21) and customs duties (INF/ECOM/33).

Paperless Trading

1.2. The WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation contains a range of provisions which support the digitalisation of border clearance processes. New Zealand believes there is further opportunity to build on these provisions through this Initiative. Several other Members have already submitted language regarding paperless trading: New Zealand's text proposal shares common elements with these but ensures that the language builds on the Agreement on Trade Facilitation by requiring both the availability and acceptance of electronic versions of trade administration documentation that is required.

1.3. New Zealand is also a strong proponent of the role of international standards and standards setting bodies in the area of digital trade facilitation, such as the World Customs Organization's Cross-Border E-commerce Framework of Standards, and the UN/CEFACT standards for electronic information exchange. We believe Members should draw on these as the basis for developing paperless trading initiatives to support global interoperability, and thus facilitating e-commerce trade.

E-Invoicing

1.4. Ensuring timely payment of invoices is a critical issue for business, in particular SMEs, yet in New Zealand over 25% of invoices are over one month overdue for payment which creates serious cash-flow challenges for firms. Electronic invoicing ("e-invoicing") offers a solution for business to address this challenge, regardless of size, by enabling faster delivery, processing and payment of invoices. Businesses can save money as e-invoices are less expensive to process than paper or pdf invoices, and the removal of manual handling can lead to improved data quality and fewer errors in invoices. E-Invoices are also impossible to lose, and they reduce the risk of fake or compromised invoices, so businesses can be more confident that the invoices they are paying are authentic.

1.5. E-invoicing is another area where international standards are emerging that can support cross-border interoperability of systems. New Zealand proposes that Members agree to work towards mutual recognition of e-invoicing systems, drawing from such international standards as PEPPOL. We also see value in using the WTO as a forum to share experiences on implementation of such standards.

1.6. New Zealand therefore submits for consideration the below texts as a basis for discussion. This proposal is without prejudice to New Zealand's ability to make further submissions, and to New Zealand's position on the applicable legal framework.

DRAFT TEXT FOR DISCUSSION

Article X: Paperless Trading

1. Each Member shall ensure that all publicly available trade administration documents are available in electronic form.
2. Each Member shall accept the electronic versions of trade administration documents as the legal equivalent of paper documents except where:
 - (a) there is a domestic or international legal requirement to the contrary; or
 - (b) doing so would reduce the effectiveness of the trade administration process.
3. In developing initiatives which provide for a transition to paperless trading, each Member shall endeavour to base such initiatives on relevant international standards.

Definition:

Trade administration documents means forms issued or controlled by a Member that must be completed by or for an importer or exporter in connection with the import or export of goods.

Article X: E-Invoicing

1. Each Member recognises the importance of e-invoicing standards which help improve the efficiency, accuracy, and reliability of electronic commerce transactions.
 2. Each Member shall work towards mutually recognising the e-invoicing document specifications and systems of other Members through implementing recognised existing international interoperability standards.
 3. Each Member shall endeavour to share best practices pertaining to e-invoicing systems.
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