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Strengthening of the United Nations system

Identical letters dated 20 May 2020 from the Permanent Representatives of Canada, Chile, Egypt, Guyana, Italy, Malawi, New Zealand, Rwanda, Singapore and Sweden to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly

We have the honour to transmit to you a joint statement sponsored by a group of 175 countries on the issue of open markets, the flow of essential goods and supply chain connectivity (see annex).

This joint statement sends a strong and clear message on the importance of open markets, the flow of essential goods and supply chain connectivity for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Many critical priorities of the United Nations, such as global food security, fighting hunger and inequality, humanitarian relief and access to critical medical supplies, depend on the continued flow of essential goods and supply chain connectivity.

The fact that this joint statement has received such a large number of sponsors and wide cross-regional support from the United Nations membership not only underlines the critical importance of this issue but also indicates that the text of the statement is balanced, timely and relevant to the current global situation. It is our hope that the joint statement will help to mobilize international support, including through the United Nations, to facilitate the flow of essential goods, including food and vital medical supplies, to all in need, and to lay the foundation for an inclusive longer-term recovery from the pandemic.

We kindly request you to circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 123.

(Signed) Marc-André **Blanchard**
Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations

(Signed) Milenko Esteban **Skoknic Tapia**
Permanent Representative of Chile to the United Nations



(Signed) Mohamed Fathi Ahmed **Edrees**
Permanent Representative of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the
United Nations

(Signed) Rudolph Michael **Ten-Pow**
Permanent Representative of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana to the
United Nations

(Signed) Mariangela **Zappia**
Permanent Representative of Italy to the United Nations

(Signed) Perks Master Clemency **Ligoya**
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Malawi to the
United Nations

(Signed) Craig John **Hawke**
Permanent Representative of New Zealand to the United Nations

(Signed) Valentine **Rugwabiza**
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Rwanda to the
United Nations

(Signed) Burhan **Gafoor**
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Singapore to the
United Nations

(Signed) Anna-Karin **Eneström**
Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations

Annex to the identical letters dated 20 May 2020 from the Permanent Representatives of Canada, Chile, Egypt, Guyana, Italy, Malawi, New Zealand, Rwanda, Singapore and Sweden to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly

Joint statement on open markets, the flow of essential goods and supply chain connectivity

1. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has severely disrupted societies and economies and sharply reduced global trade and travel, causing unprecedented damage to the livelihoods of people around the world. We recognize that we are facing first and foremost a global health crisis, and the immediate focus should be on efforts to ensure the health and safety of our citizens while laying the groundwork for a strong recovery. The Secretary-General has rightly called on all countries to work together to prepare for an inclusive longer-term recovery and to “build back better”. In this regard, it is important for countries to cooperate with a sense of urgency and in a spirit of global solidarity, within the framework of multilateral institutions and the United Nations system.

2. Beyond the immediate health crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the normal functioning of open markets, global supply chain connectivity and the flow of essential goods, especially food and agricultural products, vital medical supplies and personal protective equipment. These disruptions not only threaten global food security and access to critical medical supplies and equipment, they also hinder the fight against poverty, hunger and inequality. Ultimately, disruptions to the flow of essential goods will undermine our efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development for our people, especially for the most vulnerable.

3. The poorest and most vulnerable have been the hardest hit by this pandemic, which has exacerbated existing development challenges, deepened inequalities and worsened the adverse effects of climate change, other shocks and natural disasters. We also recognize that women and children are disproportionately impacted. Our responses at the national and global levels must address the needs of all and promote gender equality and human rights.

4. As we seek to build more inclusive and resilient societies for our people, in line with the 2030 Agenda, it is important to acknowledge the crucial importance of open markets and supply chain connectivity to ensure the global flow of essential goods. In this regard, we welcome the Secretary-General’s call to Governments to facilitate the global supply chain response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

5. We believe that it is essential for all States Members of the United Nations and for the United Nations system to recognize and reaffirm the critical importance of open markets and connected global supply chains in ensuring the unimpeded flow of vital medical and food supplies and other essential goods and services across borders. We emphasize that emergency measures designed to tackle COVID-19, if deemed necessary, must be targeted, proportionate, transparent and temporary, and that they do not create unnecessary barriers to trade or disruption to global supply chains and are consistent with World Trade Organization (WTO) rules. We also emphasize the importance of transparency in building confidence in international trade through the exchange of trade information through WTO.

6. We recognize and reaffirm the need for critical infrastructure, such as airports, roads, rail and seaports, to remain open to support the flow of essential goods through air services, air bridges, road networks and maritime routes. The viability and

integrity of global supply chains require an international transport network to be operational around the world. We praise the commitment of transport workers in ensuring the flow of essential goods and global supply chain connectivity. We also recognize that keeping trade flowing requires effective trade facilitation measures, such as digitalization of procedures, where possible.

7. We call on the United Nations system to target its assistance to helping developing countries secure international access to essential supplies, including through stockpiles held by the World Health Organization, the World Food Programme and other United Nations agencies. At the country-level, the United Nations can advise and support national authorities to procure, distribute and use these supplies, as well as to enhance local productive capacity.

8. We welcome the launch of the United Nations COVID-19 Supply Chain Task Force, including the “solidarity flights”, which will continue to distribute medical supplies and personal protective equipment to 95 countries. We recognize the need to urgently mitigate the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in humanitarian contexts and to step up support for the response efforts of the United Nations and its partners to bring humanitarian relief to those in need. In this regard, we reaffirm the importance of avoiding any disruptions in the movement of humanitarian supplies and workers, in line with the updated Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19.

9. We underline the need to minimize disruptions throughout global food and agriculture supply chains, and to ensure that everyone, especially the most vulnerable, can have access to adequate, safe, affordable and nutritious food. We also stress the need to keep food and agriculture supply chains functioning and to ensure the continued flow of food, livestock, products and inputs essential for agricultural and food production to markets. It is important to recognize the essential service of workers and farmers in agriculture and food supply chains and to support them to continue their essential work in a safe manner. These efforts are critical to ending hunger, achieving global food security and improved nutrition and promoting sustainable agriculture.

10. We acknowledge the crucial role played by the private sector in the continued functioning of open markets, supply chain connectivity and the flow of essential goods. We recognize the need to support and work with the private sector to find innovative solutions to scale up production and distribution to meet critical national and global demands. We also recognize the need to work with and support micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises, including helping them to access markets at the local and international levels, as they are an important element of global supply chain connectivity. We also recognize the need for Governments, multilateral development banks and the private sector to work together to enhance private investment flows and access to global supply chains in the poorest and most vulnerable countries.

11. We welcome all international partnerships to accelerate the development, production and equitable distribution of affordable vaccines, diagnostics and therapeutics for COVID-19, including the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator. Such partnerships rely on open markets and supply chain connectivity to facilitate research and development, and on the dissemination of health technologies within countries and across borders to ensure equitable testing and access to these technologies. Over the longer term, keeping trade in health technologies as open and predictable as possible is of vital interest to all countries.

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