



20 May 2020

His Excellency Tijjani Muhammad-Bande
President of the 74th session of the United Nations General Assembly
United Nations, New York

His Excellency Antonio Guterres
Secretary-General of the United Nations
United Nations, New York

Copy to: All Permanent Representatives to the United Nations
New York

Excellencies

JOINT STATEMENT ON OPEN MARKETS, FLOW OF ESSENTIAL GOODS AND SUPPLY CHAIN CONNECTIVITY

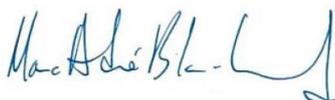
We have the honour to transmit to you the attached Joint Statement sponsored by a group of 175 countries on the issue of open markets, flow of essential goods and supply chain connectivity.

This Joint Statement sends a strong and clear message on the importance of open markets, flow of essential goods and supply chain connectivity for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Many critical priorities of the UN, 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.

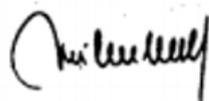
The fact that this Joint Statement has received such a large number of sponsors and wide cross-regional support from the UN membership underlines not only the critical importance of this issue but also indicates that the text of the statement is balanced, timely and relevant to the current global situation.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

We kindly request that you circulate this letter and the text of the Joint Statement, together with the complete list of sponsors, as an official document of the UN General Assembly under Agenda Item 123: Strengthening of the United Nations system.

Please accept, Excellencies, the assurances of our highest consideration.



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Permanent Representative of Canada
to the United Nations



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Permanent Representative of Sweden
to the United Nations

**JOINT STATEMENT
ON OPEN MARKETS, FLOW OF ESSENTIAL GOODS AND
SUPPLY CHAIN CONNECTIVITY
UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK**

1 The 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 recognise 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 (UN) 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 (PPEs). 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 for Sustainable Development, 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 UN members and for the UN system to recognise 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 Organisation (WTO) rules. We also emphasise the importance of transparency in building confidence in international trade through the exchange of trade information through the WTO.

6 We recognise 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 recognise that keeping trade flowing requires effective trade facilitation measures such as digitalization of procedures, where possible.

7 We call on the UN system to target its assistance to helping developing countries secure international access to essential supplies, including through stockpiles held by the World Health Organisation, World Food Programme and other UN agencies. At the country-level, the UN 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 UN COVID-19 Supply Chain Task Force, including the “Solidarity Flights”, that will continue to distribute medical supplies and PPEs to 95 countries. We recognise 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 UN 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 UN Global Humanitarian Response Plan.

9 We underline the need to minimise 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 ensure the continued flow of food, livestock, products and inputs essential for agricultural and food production to markets. It is important to recognise the essential service of workers and farmers in agriculture and food supply chains and support them to continue their essential work in a safe manner. These efforts are critical to end hunger, achieve global food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture.

10 We acknowledge the crucial role played by the private sector in the continued functioning of open markets, supply chain connectivity and flow of essential goods. We recognise 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 recognise the need to work with and support Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs), 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 recognise 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 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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