



General Council

APPOINTMENT OF THE NEXT DIRECTOR-GENERAL

INFORMAL MEETING AT THE LEVEL OF HEADS OF DELEGATIONS

WEDNESDAY, 28 OCTOBER 2020

Statement by the General Council Chair, H.E. Dr David Walker

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1. Good afternoon. Welcome to this informal meeting of Heads of Delegation, and thank you once again for attending at short notice. Before we start, a kind reminder that, further to the latest recommendations from the Host Country, delegates *"are required to wear facial mask all the time throughout meetings, except when you address the meeting. According to current knowledge the mask gives you effective protection. By wearing it you also protect others and show that you care."*

1.2. The purpose of this meeting is to allow me, assisted by the Facilitators – the Chair of the Dispute Settlement Body, Amb. Castillo, and the Chair of the Trade Policy Review Body, Amb. Aspelund – to report to the whole membership the outcome of the third and final round of consultations in the process of appointment of the next Director-General. In this respect, let me highlight that paragraph 19 of the Procedures in WT/L/509 provides that "at the end of the final stage of the consultative process, the Chair, with the support of the facilitators, shall submit the name of the candidate most likely to attract consensus and recommend his or her appointment by the General Council".

1.3. We are therefore making this report in accordance with the Procedures for the Appointment of Directors-General in WT/L/509, and in line with our commitment to transparency, inclusiveness and full participation, as we set out in the modalities for Phase 3 of the process in JOB/GC/243, and as also indicated in my statement to the meeting of Heads of Delegation on 8 October, contained in JOB/GC/245.

1.4. Before I report on the outcome of this final round of consultations, the Facilitators and I wish to pay tribute to all eight candidates in this appointment process and to the Members who nominated them. We have been very fortunate to have had such outstanding candidates for this position, and their vast experience and outstanding qualifications have been greatly valued by all Members. They all have, throughout this process, conducted themselves in an exemplary manner and demonstrated their high regard for and commitment to the multilateral trading system – and for that, we are very grateful.

2 ARRANGEMENTS FOR CONSULTATIONS

2.1. As indicated in JOB/GC/245, the Facilitators and I conducted the consultations on the revised slate of the two final candidates. These are, in the order in which nominations were received:

Dr. (Mrs.) Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala (Nigeria)

H.E. Yoo Myung-hee (Republic of Korea)

2.2. We conducted the consultations over six working days, in the period from 19 October to yesterday 27 October. As indicated in JOB/GC/245, the logistical and technical arrangements for this final round of consultations were the same as for the previous two rounds, including with respect to non-resident delegations.

2.3. And as was also the case for the previous two rounds, the entire membership remained fully engaged in and committed to this process. The Facilitators and I are grateful for this consistently very positive response. Throughout the process, it has been clear that all Members have attached the greatest importance to this appointment.

3 SUBSTANCE AND RESULTS OF THE CONSULTATIONS

3.1. Consistent with JOB/GC/245, each Member, whether Geneva-based or non-resident, was asked the same question, i.e. "What is your preference?". As for the previous two rounds, we informed Members that we would not accept any negative preference, and that the information provided to us would be treated by us in the strictest confidence. In this final round Members recognised that both candidates are exceptionally qualified individuals and they both are held in very high respect.

3.2. As set out in paragraph 18 of the Procedures, allow me now to report on the outcome of this third round of consultations.

3.3. As for the previous two rounds, the outcome of this round is the result of the preference expressed by you, the Members, and our assessment was guided strictly by the elements set out in paragraph 17 of the Procedures. In this respect, I again refer to my statement in JOB/GC/244.

3.4. And allow me to also recall that, in line with paragraph 6 of the Procedures, our role has always been "to encourage and facilitate the building of consensus among Members, and assist them in moving from the initial field of candidates to a final decision on appointment".

3.5. The results of your preference were communicated this morning to the two nominating Members, along with the relevant procedures.

3.6. On the basis of all of the above, and in keeping with the Procedures, our assessment of the preference provided to us by you during this third round of consultations is that the candidate from Nigeria, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala is the candidate most likely of the two to attract consensus, on the following basis:

- Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala clearly carried the largest support by Members in the final round; and,
- She clearly enjoyed broad support from Members from all levels of development and from all geographic regions and has done so throughout the process.

3.7. In accordance with the provisions of paragraph 19 of the Procedures, I, supported by the Facilitators, am therefore submitting the name of Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala as the candidate most likely to attract consensus and recommending her appointment by the General Council as the next Director-General of the WTO until 31 August 2024.

3.8. Allowing for the Rules of Procedure of the General Council, in particular the ten-day period in Rule 2, I intend to convene a special meeting of the General Council on Monday, 9 November at 10am, where the sole item on the agenda will be the appointment of the next Director-General of the WTO. I trust that this is acceptable to delegations. Let me again reiterate, as I have done since the start, that the decision to appoint the new Director-General at that Special General Council meeting will be for you and only you, the Members, to make.

3.9. I will ask the Secretariat to issue the convening Airgram for the special meeting shortly after this meeting.

4 TRIBUTE TO CANDIDATES AND TO MEMBERS

4.1. Before I conclude, I would like to acknowledge H.E. Yoo Myung-hee for her participation in this selection process.

4.2. As I said at the start, Members consider her a highly qualified individual. H.E. Yoo Myung-hee has vast experience, which she has acquired in a number of leading positions, and her outstanding qualifications are highly valued and respected by all Members. In her distinguished career, H.E. Yoo Myung-hee has always been a tireless promoter of the multilateral trading system, and I am certain that the WTO can continue to count on that commitment.

4.3. We would also like to acknowledge the Government of the Republic of Korea and its Geneva Representative Ambassador PAIK Ji-ah for their commitment to this institution and to the multilateral trading system.

4.4. The Facilitators and I wish to most sincerely thank Members for participating in the consultation process with an exceptionally high level of engagement and a constructive spirit, despite the current challenging times. We have been impressed by the constructive approach, which has greatly facilitated this process. This very constructive approach will be equally important as Members move to a formal decision on appointment at the General Council on Monday, 9 November.

4.5. Finally, let me sincerely thank the two Facilitators in this process, Ambassador Castillo and Ambassador Aspelund. Their firm commitment, engagement, and support throughout the consultative process has been invaluable. They have been key in the smooth running of this process, and for this I am forever in their debt.

4.6. This concludes my statement, which will be circulated shortly in a JOB document.
