



WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

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Dear Mr de Serpa Soares,

I have been asked to reply to your letter dated 6 May 2019, which requests a written contribution from the WTO to the report of the Secretary-General on oceans and the law of the sea, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 73/124, entitled "Oceans and the law of the sea".

Since the last reporting period, there have been developments at the World Trade Organization (WTO) relevant to section IX of the resolution, "Marine Environment and Marine Resources". On the basis of the decision on fisheries subsidies adopted at the WTO's 11th Ministerial Conference held in Buenos Aires, Argentina in December 2017 (document WT/MIN(17)/64), that parallels the SDG Target 14.6 language, currently all WTO Members are actively engaged in an intensive program of negotiations at the WTO, aimed at achieving the mandated outcomes by the end of 2019.

Since the 11th Ministerial Conference, WTO Members have continued and intensified their negotiations. In 2018, Members pursued a work programme that included technical sessions for sharing information, brainstorming for solutions in so-called "incubator groups", text-based discussions, and small-group and bilateral meetings. These activities were organized around four main topics: subsidies to illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing; subsidies to fishing where stocks are overfished; subsidies contributing to fishing overcapacity and to overfishing; and cross-cutting issues (including special and differential treatment for developing and least-developed members, dispute settlement, institutional issues, and notification and transparency).

At the end of 2018, the Chair of the Negotiating Group appointed a delegate as facilitator for each of the main topics, to assist Members' work in seeking convergence on the issues under discussion. The facilitators' work through mid-2019 was aimed at capturing the progress of negotiations and thus serving as a point of departure for the further-intensified work from September to the December deadline set by WTO Ministers for concluding the negotiations.

Yours sincerely,

Clarisse Morgan
Director
Rules Division