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Joint Statement of the Second Meeting of the USMCA/CUSMA/T-MEC Free Trade Commission

July 08, 2022

Following the second meeting of the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA/CUSMA/T-MEC) Free Trade Commission (FTC) on July 8, 2022, United States Trade Representative Katherine Tai, Canadian Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development Mary Ng, and Mexican Secretary of Economy Tatiana Clouthier released the following statement:

“Today the United States, Canada, and Mexico held the second meeting of the USMCA/CUSMA/T-MEC FTC in Vancouver, Canada. The Agreement supports a robust and inclusive North American economy and serves as a global model for competitiveness, that helped the three countries reach unprecedented levels of collaboration and trade. The Agreement prioritizes the interests of workers and underserved communities and reflects our shared recognition that trade policies should foster broad-based and equitable growth, spur innovation, protect our shared environment, and have a positive impact on our communities. Today’s productive meetings demonstrated our collective efforts toward implementing, leveraging and enforcing the USMCA/CUSMA/T-MEC, which is even more important after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine caused severe economic consequences across the global trading system.”

During this second meeting of the FTC, the Ministers reviewed the ongoing work by USMCA/CUSMA/T-MEC committees and working groups to implement the Agreement, particularly on Agriculture Trade, Agricultural Biotechnology, Trade Facilitation, Temporary Entry, Private Commercial Disputes, Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures, Technical Barriers to Trade, Transportation Services, State Owned Enterprises, and Good Regulatory Practices.

The Ministers took note of this progress, offered guidance for future work, and reiterated that ongoing engagement is critical to the Agreement’s full implementation. The Ministers also engaged in broader discussions on North American Competitiveness, SMEs and Inclusive Trade, Labour, and Environment.

North American Competitiveness

The Ministers affirmed their shared interest in strengthening regional economic growth, prosperity and competitiveness. They acknowledged that North American competitiveness underpins the future prosperity, security and sustainability of all three countries. Ministers recognized that integrated supply chains are a competitive advantage for North America and that maintaining trade flows in emergency situations is essential for all three countries.

Therefore, they directed the Competitiveness Committee to complete, within 90 days, negotiations on the establishment of a sub-committee to cooperate during emergency situations in order to maintain, re-establish, or otherwise address issues related to the flow of trade between the Parties as well as a working group under that Sub-Committee to coordinate on a shared understanding of critical infrastructure priorities.

Ministers also recognized that competitiveness is directly linked to the productivity of our workers and that ensuring underrepresented groups are supported and equipped to succeed in current and future careers, including high-growth sectors supporting a lower carbon future, is necessary for a vibrant and growing middle class. Therefore, Ministers

welcomed upcoming workforce development events in each country to gain an understanding of national approaches to workforce development, to exchange best practices and to explore regional solutions to workforce development challenges.

SMEs and Inclusive Trade

The Ministers reiterated their commitment to increasing the engagement of SMEs led by groups that are traditionally underrepresented in international trade such as women, Indigenous peoples and other underrepresented groups, and to facilitate their access to the North American market. They also acknowledged the potential for further collaboration on inclusive trade in multilateral forums.

The Ministers recognized the many activities organized over the last two years by the SME Committee to support SMEs from all three countries, and the specific attention given to communities that are traditionally underrepresented in trade. The Ministers were also pleased that delegations travelled to San Antonio, Texas, to attend the first trilateral SME Dialogue in April of this year. The Ministers look forward to the next SME Dialogue, which will be hosted by Mexico in 2023.

Overall, the Ministers acknowledged the committees' response to their May 2021 directive to explore new approaches to better engage with underrepresented communities on trade issues, acknowledging the directive on inclusive trade for CUSMA/T-MEC/USMCA committee work and the establishment of a sub-committee on diversity and inclusion by the Private Commercial Dispute Committee.

Labour

The Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to uphold workers' rights as set out in the USMCA/CUSMA/T-MEC, including freedom of association and collective bargaining rights. Today, Canada, Mexico, and the United States reiterated a joint commitment to address forced labour in our supply chains and discussed opportunities for continued sharing of best practices, experiences and lessons learned in relation to forced labour and other forms of labour exploitation. The Ministers also discussed steps each country is taking to implement the shared USMCA/CUSMA/T-MEC obligation to prohibit the importation of goods produced by forced labour. Improving the livelihoods of workers is a shared goal at the heart of the Agreement and Ministers committed to continue the dialogue and collaborative efforts to this end. The Ministers expressed their desire to continue discussing ways to advance labour matters at the next Labour Council in 2023.

Environment

The Ministers affirmed the importance of Canada, Mexico, and the United States working together to strengthen the implementation of the USMCA/CUSMA/T-MEC Environmental Chapter. They welcomed the report of the Environment Committee and its ongoing work to identify opportunities to strengthen existing bilateral and trilateral collaboration among the Parties and with the Commission on Environmental Cooperation. They encouraged the Committee to discuss possible next steps at the next Environment Committee meeting in fall 2022. Ministers also discussed the importance of strengthening resiliency and sustainable trade within the North American economy. By working together and through multilateral fora, the three countries can advance trade policies that are sustainable, transparent, and inclusive.

Next Steps

As our countries continue to recover from the COVID-19 and face the economic impact of Russia's illegal and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine, consistent with what our Foreign Ministers stated at the North American Foreign Ministers' Meeting on the margins of the Summit of the Americas, we recognize that the USMCA/CUSMA/T-MEC has an ever more important role to play in revitalizing our region, including for SMEs and underrepresented peoples, and promoting a global rules-based order. As we continue implementing the USMCA/CUSMA/T-MEC, Parties agreed that committees should explore ways to better engage with underrepresented communities to ensure the Agreement benefits those who have historically been left behind by trade. The Parties further agreed to hold a Deputies meeting before the end of this year to assess progress on the areas highlighted today and identify ongoing opportunities for future engagement.

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