

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I think we can agree that we have had a very full day packed with a wealth of information.

It was pleasing to have seen so many examples of impactful implementation of TFA provisions and their advancement of trade facilitation reform.

Today's sessions underlined the ways in which the TFA is making a difference, and of course also noted some of the challenges going forward. Let me highlight a few points in particular: Digitalization, Resilience, Inclusiveness, and Coordination:

First, digitalization. There seemed to be a broad recognition today that the TFA can accelerate – and yet heavily relies on – the sorts of automated processes that make customs procedures both more efficient and more effective. For instance, various commentators noted how the success of certain technological innovations can be borne out of the introduction of single window systems – electronic documentation, data analytics, the use of blockchain and artificial intelligence, to name a few. At the same time, there continue to be challenges in the implementation of single window, particularly as it relates to developing better quality data and finding solutions to maximize data interoperability.

Second, trade facilitation also strengthens resilience. We heard today how the experience with recent health and geopolitical shocks has confirmed the proof of concept of the Trade Facilitation Agreement. Several commentators noted, for instance, that countries who had implemented TF reforms were better able to adapt to changes in trade volumes and regulatory controls during the pandemic. The TFA helps members build resilience, and thus efforts to improve TF compliance not only yield the immediate benefits of reduced trading times and costs, but also strengthen members' ability to respond to the next crisis.

Third, trade facilitation promotes inclusiveness. There was a spirited discussion this morning about the extent to which benefits extend to all traders, and more work remains to be done to identify the areas of maximum benefit for the world's smallest traders – the micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, and in many cases the women who run them. Several countries identified their efforts to facilitate trade for small businesses and noted how efforts to streamline customs processes and formalities can only accrue to the benefits of these entities by clarifying the rules and lowering the barriers to participate in global markets.

Finally, the importance of NTFCs was highlighted. Trade facilitation relies on sound coordination within and between countries. In our afternoon session today, we heard common

themes from participants about the importance of improving coordination and ownership by various national agencies responsible for border matters, having a sound legal mandate to ensure a strong foundation for that dialogue, and to the critical importance that the private sector plays in informing NTFCs about what is truly happening at the border while also serving as a critical partner in designing and implementing trade facilitation reforms. Yet a host of challenges remain – technical, human, and budgetary – and further cooperation both nationally and internationally is critical to long term NTFC sustainability.

And I don't think we can forget the warning we have heard from developing and LDC members and from some international organizations about the gaps in meeting technical assistance and capacity building needs.

If you would like to follow up on the many interesting and useful presentations today, you will find them on the event website.

It has been very encouraging to hear and see how Members are committed to the implementation of the Agreement and how they are committed to trade facilitation reform. And I am pleased that we have had this opportunity to continue the conversation in sharing experiences and exchanging best practices.

## Conclusion

Many people have made a valuable contribution to today's anniversary event.

Firstly, I would like to express my warm appreciation to all speakers and panelists, for sharing their experience and insights with us.

I would like to thank everyone who intervened. And I would like to thank everyone who joined us in the room and virtually.

I would like to thank Members for their support in putting together today's programme.

I would like to express my thanks to the interpreters who have greatly facilitated today's session despite some of the technical challenges that we faced today. Indeed, I want to thank everyone for their patience in that regard.

And I would like to thank the TF team who worked very hard to organize today's programme. Among a great team, I would like to mention in particular Helen, Nikki and Maria who managed the event.

With that, I wish you all a good evening from Geneva.

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