

**Council for Trade in Services
Special Session****REPORT OF THE MEETING HELD ON 5 JUNE 2026**NOTE BY THE SECRETARIAT¹

The Special Session of the Council for Trade in Services held a formal meeting on 5 June 2026, chaired by Ambassador H.E. Dr Adamu Mohammed Abdulhamid of Nigeria. The agenda, circulated in document [WT/AIR/TN/S/9](#), was adopted without modification.

1 ASSESSMENT WORK ON SERVICES – COMMUNICATION FROM AUSTRALIA; HONG KONG, CHINA; NEW ZEALAND; THE PHILIPPINES; AND SINGAPORE ([TN/S/W/67/REV.2](#))

1.1. The Chairperson recalled that, as indicated in the annotated agenda circulated on 22 May in document [JOB/SERV/TN/4](#), the Special Session would continue its discussion of the way forward. At the previous meeting, a group of delegations had presented a revised communication proposing work in the context of the assessment of trade in services, as set out in Article XIX of the GATS and in reference to Article IV. The proposal was contained in document [TN/S/W/67/Rev.2](#), and the report of the previous meeting could be found in document [TN/S/M/52](#).

1.2. The Chairperson recalled that, at the conclusion of the last meeting, he had invited the co-sponsors of the communication to undertake further outreach, and other delegations to share their views, in order to converge on a way forward. In that context, the co-sponsors had convened, under their own responsibility, an open-ended consultation to present illustrative examples of the proposed work and to receive feedback from Members. He had invited delegations to participate in the consultation and understood that it had been well attended and that the discussion had been productive.

1.3. The Chairperson indicated that he expected Members to continue their discussion of the proposal and of the way forward, taking into account the outreach undertaken by the co-sponsors and any other consultations among Members. He recalled that the assessment of trade in services, both in overall terms and on a sectoral basis, formed part of the mandate set out in Article XIX of the GATS and was intended to be an ongoing activity of the Special Session. Such assessment should be undertaken with reference to the objectives of the Agreement, including those set out in paragraph 1 of Article IV of the GATS.

1.4. The Chairperson said that he wished to hear Members' views on forms of assessment work that could attract broad support, including through consideration of issues relevant to the increasing participation of developing countries in world trade in services. He invited the co-sponsors of the communication to report on recent consultations and outreach activities undertaken since the previous meeting.

1.5. The representative of [Australia](#) confirmed that his delegation remained committed to progressing the proposal contained in document [TN/S/W/67/Rev.2](#). The mandate contained in Article XIX of the GATS and [S/L/93](#), which envisaged assessment as an ongoing activity, made the Special Session a valuable forum in which to undertake such work, guided by the objectives of the GATS.

1.6. He reported that the proponents had been pleased to host a well-attended informal session on 2 June to recap the proposal and review the issues that the proposed workstream sought to address.

¹ This document has been prepared under the Secretariat's own responsibility and is without prejudice to the positions of Members or to their rights and obligations under the WTO.

That had included an examination of statistics and trends relating to trade agreements covering trade in services, with a view to demonstrating the type of experience-sharing on services trade agreements that the proposal envisaged. The session had also included illustrative presentations by Hong Kong, China; Singapore; the Philippines; and the ASEAN Secretariat. It had provided an opportunity to illustrate what key inputs to the discussion could look like and to respond to concerns that the exercise might be used to target individual Members. It had also provided an opportunity for further questions and answers on the proposal.

1.7. Proponents had received positive feedback from many Members following the informal session. In particular, the session had drawn attention to the fact that significant activity relating to services commitments was taking place outside the WTO while no comparable work was taking place within the organization. The presentations had generated a number of insights of interest to Members and said that the proponents were working to make the material available to all Members. He observed that particularly positive feedback had been received regarding content showing how at least one Member had linked its development and industrialization objectives to services exports and, through that, to its FTA strategy.

1.8. He reported that the proponents had also received questions and comments from Members. One Member had questioned the objective of examining RTAs from a WTO perspective, and had asked why the work was not being undertaken in the regular session of the Council for Trade in Services. He also sought clarification as to whether the proposed work would examine instances where RTAs had not delivered meaningful outcomes for developing economies in services. In that regard, he said that the exercise could help identify areas where RTAs could better support developing countries, as well as areas where the WTO might be better placed to address issues on a multilateral basis, consistent with the objectives of the GATS. He noted that another Member had highlighted the difficulty of accounting for differences between bound market access commitments and effective market access owing to practical barriers. He suggested that the proposed assessment could help identify such issues and constitute a first step towards addressing them. He further reported that a third Member had questioned the quality of the evidence relating to RTA commitments that would feed into the assessment, as well as the relevance of such commitments to development priorities. He said that the proponents considered it worthwhile to undertake the exercise in order to test and improve the available evidence. It had also been noted during the discussion that services commitments could contribute to development priorities, including technology transfer. In that regard, Members could examine how services commitments had been used to provide confidence and stability in regulatory frameworks, attract investment in new technologies, and facilitate the transfer, dissemination, installation and use of new technologies by service suppliers, all of which constituted forms of service delivery.

1.9. He expressed the hope that Members had found the informal session useful in demonstrating the direction in which the proponents wished to take the work and in showing that the exercise was not intended to be threatening or detrimental to Members. In light of the discussions held during the week, he reiterated the proponents' request that the proposal proceed as part of the work of the Special Session.

1.10. The representative of Singapore thanked the delegates who had attended the informal session held earlier in the week, which formed part of the outreach efforts undertaken by the proponents to encourage further discussion of the proposal, particularly on substantive areas that Members might wish to explore, should the work be taken forward. She appreciated the opportunity to engage with Members and thanked delegations for their active participation. She observed that the discussion had demonstrated a significant degree of interest in services disciplines in RTAs. In her view, the exchange had been useful in identifying specific areas that Members might wish to examine further. She hoped that Members would continue the discussion and identify an appropriate modality for further engagement, so as to encourage more exchanges and allow for deeper consideration of some of the issues raised during the introductory session.

1.11. The representative of the Philippines expressed appreciation for the engagement of delegations in the informal session and the questions raised. He wished to highlight several reasons why the proposed work could be particularly useful for developing Members. The value of the exercise lay not simply in cataloguing what Members had done in RTAs, but in understanding what those experiences could reveal about development-oriented services outcomes and how commitments could become commercially meaningful for service suppliers, particularly MSMEs and firms from developing countries. He drew attention to elements of the presentation delivered by the

ASEAN Secretariat, which he considered particularly relevant in that regard. He noted that the ASEAN services architecture had initially been structured along GATS lines but had subsequently evolved through experience. ASEAN had begun with a request-and-offer approach and had subsequently moved through a series of approaches involving common subsectors, modified common subsectors, tables of subsectors and numerical targets, while integrating flexibilities and eventually transitioning under ATISA towards non-conforming measures and negative-list scheduling.

1.12. He observed that one of the key insights from the presentation concerned the value of negotiated formulas. While such an approach did not eliminate sensitivities, it had enabled ASEAN Members to proceed incrementally, compare offers, identify areas where progress was possible and maintain flexibility. In his view, it demonstrated that liberalization processes could be structured in a manner that incorporated transition periods and flexibilities. By way of example, the ASEAN Secretariat had indicated that the ASEAN Framework Agreement on Services (AFAS) included overall flexibilities of up to 15% of targeted items, while the ASEAN Trade in Services Agreement (ATISA) provided differentiated timelines for the transition to schedules of non-conforming measures. He considered that those experiences illustrated an important development lesson, namely that ambition and flexibility could be designed together.

1.13. The representative further suggested that the proposed assessment work could help identify sectors and modes of supply in which services commitments had supported Members' export strategies. In that regard, he recalled that the proponents had shared elements of their own national experience during the informal session. The exercise could also help Members better understand the relationship between services commitments and actual trading opportunities. In his view, commitments were most useful when service suppliers were able to understand them, make use of them and connect them to real commercial opportunities. The presentation by the ASEAN Secretariat had also demonstrated how the WTO Secretariat's analytical support, institutional memory and expertise in services-related data could contribute to the proposed work.

1.14. The representative of Hong Kong, China joined previous speakers in expressing appreciation to all Members that had participated in the informal presentation of the proposal. She trusted that the session had provided a clear and practical illustration of the type of experience-sharing and analytical stocktaking envisaged under the proposal. The co-sponsors had already responded to a number of thoughtful questions raised by delegations. She nevertheless wished to highlight that the core objective of the proposal was to help bridge capacity gaps through a focused, Member-driven stocktaking of services-related developments in RTAs. She observed that, by mapping emerging global trends and regulatory approaches, Members could collectively explore which successful regional elements might hold value for the multilateral trading system. In her view, the exercise was intended to equip all Members, particularly those facing capacity constraints in pursuing extensive regional trade networks, with analytical tools that could help identify strategic opportunities by mode of supply and sector. The ultimate objective was to assist Members in translating global trends in services trade into domestic economic growth. She encouraged Members to support the proposal and was ready to continue engaging actively with all interested delegations.

1.15. The Chairperson thanked the co-sponsors for their statements and opened the floor for interventions by other delegations. He urged Members, in their statements, to provide guidance on how the Special Session could move forward, including through specific suggestions regarding the assessment work under discussion.

1.16. The representative of Barbados, speaking on behalf of the ACP Group, thanked the proponents for their presentations. The Group welcomed the efforts of the proponents to step back and exchange views on services liberalization and on assessing the participation of developing countries in trade in services, taking into account their differing circumstances. In her view, the informal session had been useful. She observed that the role of the CTS Special Session concerned liberalization and that, in that regard, ideas consistent with Article XIX of the GATS and the mandate of the Special Session were relevant. The structure of the GATS and the mandate under Article XIX allowed for different configurations for engagement, while remaining anchored in the principle that developing countries should be accorded a range of flexibilities and that approaches to market access should not follow a one-size-fits-all model. The representative observed that many ACP members, like developed Members, were parties to RTAs. The rationale for such agreements varied and might not necessarily be transferable to the multilateral context. In her view, it would be for individual Members to determine whether commitments undertaken in those agreements should also be undertaken in the broader WTO context.

1.17. Regarding future work, the representative noted that many of the comments made during discussions of the co-sponsors' communication earlier in the week had highlighted continuing challenges relating to developing-country access to services markets. In that regard, she suggested that it could be useful for Members to exchange views in the Special Session on what had worked in terms of services market access. Developing and developed Members alike could share experiences regarding access to services markets and discuss how the WTO could contribute in that area. Members could also share specific obstacles encountered in accessing markets and exchange views on possible ways to address such difficulties. She informed that the ACP Group was considering examining experiences across markets, including anecdotal examples of what had worked, and cataloguing lessons learned with a view to helping build awareness in the Special Session.

1.18. The representative of Ghana, speaking on behalf of the African Group, associated his statement with the one delivered on behalf of the ACP Group. He expressed appreciation for the efforts undertaken by the co-sponsors to engage Members and facilitate discussions on assessment work on trade in services pursuant to Article XIX of the GATS. He particularly commended the co-sponsors for the information-sharing session held on 2 June 2026. The representative recognized that assessment work on trade in services was an integral part of the negotiating mandate and should contribute to a deeper understanding of how the multilateral trading system could support the increasing participation of developing countries in services trade, consistent with Article IV of the GATS. While the African Group remained open to constructive engagement, it continued to seek greater clarity regarding the objectives and practical implications of the proposal. In particular, the Group would welcome further explanation of how an assessment of services commitments undertaken in regional and bilateral trade agreements would contribute to the development objectives embedded in the GATS and facilitate greater participation of developing countries, especially African countries and LDCs, in global services trade.

1.19. The group believed that assessment work should not be limited to identifying areas where commitments in RTAs had advanced beyond the GATS. Rather, it should examine the conditions necessary for developing countries to participate effectively in services trade, including supply-side constraints, regulatory capacities, infrastructure gaps, technology transfer, skills development, and barriers affecting sectors and modes of export interest to developing countries. Therefore, any future assessment exercise should maintain a strong development focus and the evidence base should directly support Members' efforts to achieve more inclusive participation in the global services economy, in line with Members' guidance to pay particular attention to sectors and modes of supply of interest to developing countries and LDCs.

1.20. Turning to future work, the representative said that the African Group believed that discussions in the Special Session should be guided by Members' practical experiences on market access. In that regard, it could be useful for Members to exchange experiences on measures that had successfully facilitated services exports, improved market access opportunities, enhanced regulatory cooperation, and supported the growth of competitive services sectors. Such exchanges could provide valuable insights into both opportunities and persistent barriers faced by developing countries. Future work could also provide a platform for Members to identify specific obstacles affecting services suppliers in sectors and modes of export interest to developing countries and LDCs, and to explore how the multilateral framework could better address those challenges. The African Group would particularly welcome discussions focused on practical solutions for enhancing developing-country participation in global services trade, including capacity-building, digital connectivity, recognition of qualifications, mobility-related challenges, and the effective implementation of development-oriented provisions of the GATS. As Members considered the way forward, the objective should be to ensure that the work of the Special Session delivered meaningful development outcomes and contributed to the fuller integration of developing countries, particularly African economies and LDCs, into global services trade.

1.21. The representative of Egypt associated his delegation to the statements of the ACP Group and African Group. He said that, pursuant to the negotiating guidelines, the assessment should be conducted with reference to the objectives of the GATS and, in particular, Article IV, which imposed a positive obligation on Members to facilitate the increasing participation of developing countries in world trade in services, including through strengthening domestic services capacity, improving access to distribution channels, and liberalizing market access in sectors and modes of export interest to developing countries. While the delegation remained open to constructive engagement, greater clarity was needed regarding the objectives and practical implications of the proposal. In particular, the delegation would welcome further explanation of how an assessment of commitments

undertaken in RTAs would contribute to the development objectives embedded in the GATS. He shared the concern expressed by the African Group that such an exercise risked focusing attention on areas where RTA commitments had advanced beyond GATS levels, rather than on measures that would genuinely advance the participation of developing countries in global services trade.

1.22. He considered that a meaningful assessment exercise should examine the conditions necessary for developing countries to participate effectively in services trade. That included supply-side constraints, infrastructure gaps, and regulatory capacity limitations that prevented developing countries from translating liberalization commitments into actual export opportunities. It should also address barriers in sectors and modes of export interest to developing countries, particularly Mode 4, where the gap between scheduled commitments and actual market access conditions remained especially significant for developing-country suppliers. Furthermore, it should consider the extent to which autonomous liberalization undertaken by developing countries had received appropriate recognition in the negotiating process, as envisaged in the negotiating guidelines, as well as issues relating to technology transfer, skills development, and technical assistance needs that affected the ability of developing countries to compete effectively in global services markets.

1.23. The representative noted that Egypt had a direct and concrete interest in that work. He explained that Egypt's services sector, including tourism, Suez Canal and maritime transport services, construction, and rapidly expanding ICT and business process outsourcing sectors, represented a significant and growing share of the country's economy and export base. Egyptian professionals and skilled service suppliers had strong export interests in relation to Mode 4, yet continued to face restrictive visa and work permit regimes, non-recognition of professional qualifications, and non-transparent economic needs tests in key markets. He further noted that Egypt had undertaken significant autonomous liberalization in financial services, telecommunications, and professional services, often beyond its GATS-bound commitments, and considered that such contributions deserved recognition. The findings of any assessment exercise should translate into concrete support for developing-country participation, including improved market access, technical assistance, and capacity-building, rather than renewed pressure on developing Members to undertake additional liberalization commitments.

1.24. Consistent with the statement delivered by the African Group and with Ministers' guidance, the representative considered that any future assessment exercise should be firmly anchored in the development objectives of the GATS, with particular attention to sectors and modes of supply of interest to developing countries and LDCs. It should also be evidence-based and inclusive, with adequate technical support to enable all developing Members, including those with smaller delegations, to participate meaningfully in any analytical process. Finally, it should be structured to produce actionable outcomes that advanced inclusive and equitable participation in the global services economy, rather than merely benchmarking levels of liberalization against RTAs. The delegation was ready to engage constructively with the co-sponsors and all Members in identifying approaches that could command broad support and advance the development mandate of the Special Session.

1.25. The representative of the European Union thanked the proponents for the informal briefing and presentations held earlier in the week. The session had demonstrated the existence of a substantial body of material that could be of considerable relevance to Members and to the work of the Special Session. He therefore reiterated the European Union's support for the proposed stocktaking exercise on services commitments undertaken by Members in the context of RTAs. In his view, the exercise was not solely about enriching knowledge or sharing information but should also be considered in terms of the inspiration it could provide for the design and implementation of future work in the multilateral framework, drawing on the information collected and the best practices shared by Members.

1.26. He observed that the exercise had the potential to be very broad and comprehensive, given the volume of information available. In that regard, he suggested that Members might wish to consider focusing the work on particular sectors, such as those of greatest importance globally or those of particular significance to the services profiles of developing countries and LDCs. Alternatively, the exercise could focus on specific thematic or horizontal issues, such as domestic regulation, where work had already been undertaken in the WTO context, but where RTAs had in some instances developed further approaches. The representative emphasized that the value of the exercise lay not in undertaking an academic review for its own sake, but rather in facilitating the sharing of information, identifying successful experiences and practices, and providing Members with

an opportunity to learn from them. He also expressed support for the suggestion that the exercise could benefit from analytical support from the Secretariat. Such support would be valuable for the Membership as a whole and could contribute to the delivery of a useful and meaningful outcome. He hoped that Members would be able to move forward with the initiative in the near future.

1.27. The representative of the United Kingdom thanked the proponents for the informative session held earlier in the week. The presentations had helped bring the communication to life and the delegation had taken note of the trends in services RTA commitments and of the factors that typically informed Members' approaches, including business interests and broader strategic priorities. As a services economy, the United Kingdom aimed for high-quality services commitments, including in its recent RTAs. Looking ahead, the representative welcomed the ideas set out in the communication and would welcome further experience-sharing on the negotiation and implementation of services RTA commitments, including in areas of particular interest to developing Members. The delegation was open to exploring a Secretariat-supported assessment and a Member-driven discussion of services commitments in RTAs. He also agreed with the point raised by the European Union on the need to focus on particular sectors, and considered that the sectors mentioned in section 2.2 of the communication would provide a sensible starting point. He thought that Members could draw useful lessons from the significant activity taking place outside the WTO and reaffirmed the United Kingdom's interest in engaging and contributing further to the discussion.

1.28. The representative of Switzerland thanked the co-sponsors for their update and for the efforts undertaken to explain the stocktake exercise proposed in the communication. The proposal suggested a pragmatic approach to advancing assessment work under Articles IV and XIX of the GATS and the delegation stood ready to engage constructively. He welcomed the idea of a Member-driven stocktake exercise on services commitments undertaken in RTAs, noting the observation in the communication that many Members, irrespective of their level of development, had undertaken commitments in RTAs that went beyond their GATS commitments. In his view, a better understanding of those trends could help Members identify practices that supported transparency, development, and more effective participation in services trade. He agreed that the assessment of trade in services, both in overall terms and on a sectoral basis, formed an integral part of the mandate under Article XIX of the GATS and constituted an ongoing activity of the Special Session. Such work should be guided by the objectives of the Agreement, including increasing the participation of developing countries in trade in services, as well as by Ministers' call at MC13 to reinvigorate the work with a focus on sectors and export interests of relevance to developing Members, including LDCs.

1.29. The representative of Cambodia expressed appreciation for efforts to advance discussions on that important issue. He noted the mandate of the Council for Trade in Services in Special Session to continue the assessment of trade in services, both in overall terms and on a sectoral basis, as provided for in the relevant WTO agreements and negotiating guidelines. In that regard, he welcomed the proposal to undertake a stocktaking exercise on relevant developments and experiences relating to services commitments, including those arising from regional trade agreements. Such work could help improve Members' understanding of developments in services trade and facilitate informed discussions on potential implications for the multilateral trading system. The delegation was ready to engage constructively with all Members as discussions on the proposal moved forward.

1.30. The representative of South Africa thanked the co-sponsors for their efforts. While expressing appreciation to Australia for the summary of the information session, she regretted that hybrid participation could not be facilitated. She supported the statement delivered by the African Group. The proposal in [TN/S/W/67/Rev.2](#) suggested to assess the benefits being pursued in services RTAs and to assess how those would be beneficial if pursued at the WTO as well. The delegation was not in agreement as it considered that such matters fell within the internal policy processes of the respective RTAs and therefore outside the ambit of the Special Session. The delegation supported assessment work in accordance with the provisions of [S/L/93](#), including assessment of trade in services in overall terms, identification of trends, and examination of measures that facilitated the integration of developing-country services and service suppliers into global markets. With regard to future work, she suggested that information-sharing activities focus on three areas: measures that had successfully enabled technology diffusion and transfer in support of services innovation, exports and investment; measures that had increased MSME exports and attracted new investment; and measures that had facilitated digital services trade and investment.

1.31. The representative of Pakistan referred to his delegation's detailed intervention at the meeting of the Special Session last October. He thanked the proponents for their continued engagement and for the informal discussions held outside the formal meeting. Such exchanges enabled Members to better understand the objectives, scope and possible implications of the proposal. However, the delegation's concerns regarding the mandate, process and scope of the proposal remained. In his view, any work undertaken in the Special Session should remain firmly within the agreed mandate. Work relating to the systemic examination of services commitments in RTAs should not duplicate the role of the Committee on Regional Trade Agreements.

1.32. The representative had listened carefully to the explanations provided by the proponents during the meeting and at the informal session, in which he had participated. Nevertheless, he considered that greater clarity was still required regarding the objective and intended use of the proposed assessment. In light of the proponents' clarification that the initiative was not aimed at new liberalization but rather at information-sharing, it remained unclear how the proposal fell within the mandate of the Special Session. Such work would be more appropriately undertaken in the regular session of the Council for Trade in Services. In that context, the delegation was not in a position to support a decision on the proposal at that stage. He nevertheless remained open to continued informal and voluntary engagement with the proponents and other interested Members, including through discussions similar to the information session held earlier in the week, without prejudice to its position and without creating any negotiating implications.

1.33. The representative of India thanked the proponents for their explanation of the proposal, including at the information session organized earlier in the week, and said that her delegation wished to share some observations. On substance, she expressed uncertainty regarding the quality of evidence relating to RTA commitments, whether in the literature or otherwise. Examinations in that area typically tended to be quantitative rather than qualitative, focusing on the number and depth of sectoral commitments undertaken. That had also been reflected in the possible inputs for the exercise shared by the proponents at the information session. Such evidence was typically not outcome-oriented or development-focused, including in terms of what commitments or liberalization had contributed to domestic services capacity or export opportunities. Those were among the shortcomings in that area, and the delegation was not entirely convinced of the utility of the proposed exercise.

1.34. She recalled that the assessment of trade in services had been envisaged as an exercise to assess outcomes in sectoral and overall terms from a development perspective, particularly with regard to the extent to which Article IV of the GATS was being implemented. The objectives of Article IV included the strengthening of developing countries' domestic services capacity, including through access to technology, distribution channels and information networks. In her view, assessment was meant to be development-oriented and outcome-focused. She questioned how cataloguing or examining the number and depth of commitments in RTAs, and assessing gaps between such commitments and GATS commitments, would contribute to that objective. The Committee on Regional Trade Agreements received notifications relating to RTAs, and its transparency mechanism required Secretariat presentations to be strictly factual and to avoid value judgements. She believed that, by placing the proposal in the Special Session, which was mandated to conduct multilateral services negotiations and to undertake assessment of trade in services under [S/L/93](#) in the context of negotiations, the proposal risked creating normative implications going beyond the transparency exercise required by the WTO in respect of RTAs. In the past, two submissions had attempted to frame the assessment of trade in services in terms of comparative analysis of commitments. Such framing had been resisted, inter alia, because assessment should serve to highlight the needs and priorities of developing countries and act as a diagnostic tool to identify structural constraints, rather than create pressure for deeper commitments. An analysis of gaps between GATS and RTA commitments would have precisely that effect by creating normative expectations. No assurances could fully delink such an exercise from its inherent purpose and outcome.

1.35. She noted that the proponents were proposing analytical work in the area of trade in services from an informational perspective only. The proponents had confirmed in past CTS meetings that they were not proposing negotiations. The delegation was therefore not convinced by efforts to bring the proposed work to the Special Session. The Special Session had a specific purpose, namely to undertake services negotiations and assessment work related to such negotiations. The assessment of trade in services, as emphasized in Article XIX of the GATS and the 2001 Guidelines, was intended to help formulate guidelines for a new round or to assess or adjust progress in ongoing negotiations. Since the proposed work sought to identify best practices from RTA outcomes in order to develop

Members' understanding, India did not consider that it fit within that context. Article XIX of the GATS related exclusively to rounds of negotiations, which had been launched in 2000 and incorporated into the Doha Round. Since the proposal sought to reinvigorate work in the Special Session and was presented in the context of Article XIX, she considered it relevant to understand whether the proposed work would fall within the existing multilaterally mandated process under the Doha Round, or whether those seeking the work were doing so as part of a new process. In her view, that question was not immaterial to assessment work, as assessment of trade in services had a defined purpose and context. In view of the various concerns relating to the proposal, the delegation was not in a position to move forward on it.

1.36. The representative of China thanked the co-sponsors for their efforts and expressed appreciation for the presentation and the information shared. He considered the presentation to be valuable and supported its use as a basis for subsequent work. The insights provided on balancing ambition with regulation and on the design of commitments for different levels of development were highly relevant to discussions in the Special Session. Bilateral and regional efforts interacted dynamically with the multilateral system and could serve as stepping stones towards multilateral progress. Consistent with Articles IV and XIX of the GATS, China supported undertaking a comprehensive assessment of trade in services.

1.37. To advance the work, the representative of China put forward three suggestions. First, he joined other delegations in proposing that the Secretariat provide technical support through the preparation of a factual paper on services assessment. Such work could initially focus on an overall assessment of trade in services and subsequently examine specific sectors of interest to Members. Second, he suggested that the co-sponsors prepare a concise summary incorporating the insights emerging from the informal session held earlier in the week, as well as Members' comments, in order to facilitate further consideration by delegations. Third, he proposed that the experience-sharing undertaken by the co-sponsors be broadened into an inclusive, Member-driven process open to all delegations as soon as possible. He expressed the view that the accumulation of such contributions could help build momentum and contribute to revitalizing the work of the Special Session. The delegation was ready to engage constructively with all Members in operationalizing that work.

1.38. The representative of Brazil said that his delegation was still analysing the proposal and was not yet in a position to support moving forward on it. The delegation would continue its examination of the documents submitted by the proponents before considering next steps.

1.39. The Chairperson, noting that no other delegation had requested the floor, invited the co-sponsors to respond to questions and comments made.

1.40. The representative of Australia, speaking on behalf of the co-sponsors, thanked delegations for their statements. He noted the interest expressed in services issues and the support expressed by a number of Members, both at the present meeting and at previous meetings, for the proposal and for advancing the work, while also taking note of the concerns raised by some delegations. At the outset, he noted that a facility had been provided for Members to participate via Zoom in the informal session held earlier in the week. He regretted that one delegation had been unable to participate and said that the co-sponsors would be happy to engage further with the representative, as her views and contributions on the matter would be valuable.

1.41. He thanked in particular those delegations that had engaged on the substance of the proposal, identified areas of assessment work of priority interest, and provided feedback or suggestions. Extensive discussions had already taken place on procedure and mandate, and he did not intend to repeat those discussions in detail. He nevertheless reiterated the co-sponsors' view, shared by many delegations, that there was a clear and solid basis for advancing assessment work of that nature in the Special Session. In his view, commitments undertaken in trade agreements were relevant to a services assessment. While they did not constitute the whole picture, they formed part of the picture that the co-sponsors wished to take forward.

1.42. With respect to procedural concerns, he said that it was not yet clear to the co-sponsors what changes Members with concerns wished to see in the proposal in order for it to proceed. He said that the co-sponsors would reflect carefully on the feedback provided at the informal session held earlier in the week and on the statements made at the present meeting, particularly regarding process, with a view to identifying common understanding. The co-sponsors would continue to

engage with Members, as it remained unclear to them why the Special Session should not consider the growth and evolution of services commitments outside the WTO in order to inform discussion within the WTO. Some Members were negotiating, agreeing and concluding commitments outside the WTO in pursuit of their economic and development objectives. In his view, Members should explore where the WTO could assist all Members in considering those developments and possible opportunities for multilateral work.

1.43. He further noted that Article IV of the GATS was not receiving significant attention within the WTO and that Members should consider how to advance its objectives in the WTO, especially where Members were advancing similar objectives outside the WTO. He acknowledged that some ideas raised by Members might go beyond the scope of the proposal and expressed appreciation for the fact that those priorities had been identified. He said that, if Members had other ideas for advancing an assessment agenda in the Special Session, the co-sponsors would be pleased to hear them and consider either how the proposal could accommodate them or how such priorities could otherwise be reflected in the work of the Special Session. He noted that the present proposal was currently the only proposal before the Special Session.

1.44. The representative said that the co-sponsors would first consult among themselves on next steps. He recalled that the Committee on Agriculture in Special Session had been able to conduct similar analytical work on RTA commitments in agriculture. In his view, the CTS SS could conduct a comparable exercise under its assessment mandate, with a view to identifying work of common interest to all Members and consistent with the objectives of the GATS. He thanked Members for their additional feedback and comments and said that the co-sponsors would reflect on how to take the work forward, while noting the interest expressed by many delegations.

1.45. The Chairperson thanked Australia for its response on behalf of the co-sponsors. He thanked all co-sponsors for their statements and delegations for the views expressed. He expressed appreciation for the outreach session organized by the proponents earlier in the week and for the participation of many delegations. Regarding the substance of the proposed assessment work, the Chairperson observed that the discussion suggested support from a good cross-section of the Membership for that type of stocktaking and experience-sharing, provided that it remained Member-driven and non-prescriptive. He encouraged delegations to build on the consultations held earlier in the week and to continue discussing ways to move forward on assessment work, taking into account the interventions made during the meeting. He expressed the expectation that further consultations would be held with a view to identifying common ground.

1.46. Turning to process, the Chairperson noted that some concerns had been raised. He recalled that the Special Session was tasked with carrying out the built-in mandate in the GATS, in a manner similar to the Committee on Agriculture in Special Session. He observed that it had proved more difficult to generate discussions in services than in agriculture but considered that attitudes towards discussions in the two bodies should not be starkly different. Members should be able to hold discussions even where views differed, and he encouraged Members to continue engaging constructively with one another. Assessment of trade in services formed part of the mandate of the Special Session and Members had agreed that assessment was an ongoing activity of the Special Session. Nothing provided that assessment work was contingent on the level of activity in the negotiations. He noted that the built-in mandate under Article XIX of the GATS continued to provide the legal basis for work in the Special Session, in the same way as the built-in mandate in agriculture was doing for that area.

1.47. The Chairperson said that he did not aim to steer Members towards any predetermined outcome, but rather to help create a space in which Members could explore possible avenues for assessment work, better understand one another's concerns and interests, and gradually identify areas where convergence might be possible. He encouraged Members to continue their reflections and said that he stood ready to facilitate further discussions, as appropriate.

1.48. He proposed that the Council take note of the statements made.

1.49. It was so agreed. The meeting was then adjourned.
