

Joint Ministerial Statement

Meeting of the Inclusive Trade Action Group (ITAG)

22 May 2022

New Zealand, Canada, Chile and Mexico met as the Inclusive Trade Action Group (ITAG) in Bangkok, in the margins of the APEC Ministers Responsible for Trade meeting (MRT), to discuss and advance inclusive trade issues.

This was a welcome first opportunity to meet in person since Mexico became ITAG's first new entrant in October 2021 on the margins of the OECD Ministerial Council Meeting (MCM) in Paris.

This meeting, chaired by Aotearoa New Zealand, was an important opportunity to reaffirm the commitment made by ITAG to achieve economic growth while advancing broader social and environmental objectives and ensuring that the benefits of trade and investment are more widely shared.

New Zealand, Canada, Chile and Mexico reaffirmed their support for Thailand's hosting of APEC in 2022, following on from New Zealand's hosting year in 2021. The four economies welcomed work this year in APEC to ensure our economic, financial and social policies, and our trade and investment environment, promote equality of opportunity, and advance decent work and economic inclusion for all. In this regard, APEC is playing a leading role in the region on important sustainable development and inclusion issues such as the economic empowerment of women, Indigenous Peoples, and others with untapped economic potential.

The four countries reaffirmed their strong support for the rules-based multilateral trading system, now more than ever, and pledged to support a successful Twelfth WTO Ministerial Conference (MC12) to be held in Geneva in June 2022. In that context, they reiterated the need for a comprehensive pandemic response and to conclude negotiations on fisheries subsidies at MC12. They also agreed to work together to identify ways to ensure that the WTO is fit for purpose in the 21st Century including through initiatives on trade and gender, and for Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) to ensure that all benefit from trade.

New Zealand, Canada, Chile and Mexico expressed concern at both the fragile recovery from COVID-19, over two years since the pandemic began, and the impact of further global disruptions on this nascent economic recovery. The four countries also reinforced their grave concern at the deteriorating humanitarian situation in and around Ukraine, which is threatening the global economic recovery, destabilising global supply chains as well as global food and energy security, and holding back the region's ability to recover from COVID-19. They also underlined their resolve to pursue peace and stability and the upholding of international law, recognizing that these are preconditions for inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

New Zealand, Canada, Chile and Mexico welcomed ongoing interest from other countries in the Global Trade and Gender Arrangement (GTAGA), ITAG's first concluded trade instrument, and discussed the range of implementation events that had successfully occurred since the GTAGA was agreed in August 2020.

The four countries underlined that trade can deliver positive outcomes for women, but that women were too often underrepresented in trade-focused industries. The GTAGA can play a useful role in raising awareness, enhancing understanding and ensuring issues related to women's economic empowerment had greater focus internationally, including in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic (in which women have been disproportionately affected).

New Zealand, Canada, Chile and Mexico agreed to advance specific actions over 2022-24, as outlined in the ITAG Work Plan, including to:

- Share experiences and best practices to develop inclusive trade provisions on SMEs, and to promote their use in bilateral, regional, and multilateral negotiations;
- Continue the meetings of ITAG caucus at the WTO, OECD and APEC;
- Identify opportunities to engage with other potential ITAG members amongst the CPTPP and APEC membership, as well as how best to advance engagement with other potentially like-minded WTO Members; and,
- Implement an activity to share experiences and best practices translating standards, guidelines and principles of Responsible Business Conduct into concrete action.

The four countries agreed to meet again at the Ministerial level at MC12 in Geneva in June 2022.