Global Industry Doubles Down on Call for Restrained “Staging” for ITA

Over 80 industry associations from around the world again urge all parties wrapping up the negotiations to significantly expand the Information Technology Agreement (ITA) to implement their tariff elimination commitments as quickly as possible, showing restraint in their requests for extended “staging.”

The ITA negotiating parties met in Geneva in September for an initial round of talks to negotiate phase-out timeframes (staging) for the 201 tariff lines covered by ITA expansion. With a follow-up round set for the week of November 9 in Geneva, the time has come for all parties to show maximum ambition by limiting their staging requests to ensure the strongest possible ITA expansion outcome is ready for the World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Conference in Nairobi in mid-December.

We therefore repeat our call to the negotiating parties to embrace the provision in the July 28 WTO declaration on ITA expansion that encourages “autonomous immediate elimination of customs duties or accelerated implementation...” We similarly urge all negotiating parties to show restraint in seeking staging periods longer than three years (the standard ITA staging period), given the short innovation cycles for high-technology products.

The agreed product expansion of the ITA -- and expansion of its geographic scope -- will yield immediate and substantial economic benefits. Rapid removal of tariffs on a vast array of tech products will bolster global growth, innovation, accelerate productivity, create countless jobs, lower consumer prices, and help bridge communities the world over in ways unimagined 19 years ago when the agreement came into being. Limited requests for extended staging and more quickly lifting the burden of tariffs on economic growth will intensify the benefits of this historic triumph for global trade. It will also give greater credibility to the WTO by delivering an even
stronger outcome at the WTO Ministerial Conference in Nairobi December 15-18.

We therefore urge all the parties to this negotiation to exercise strong leadership, show restraint in their staging requests, and embrace the immediate and long-term benefits of the ITA expansion.