

CPTPP Professional Services Working Group

Working Group Report

1. The Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) Professional Services Working Group (PS) was held virtually on 21st July 2021. Delegates from the following CPTPP Members participated: Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Viet Nam. Mr. Toru Kajiwara of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs chaired the Working Group.
2. The Working Group agenda is attached at **ANNEX A**.
3. A summary of the Working Group's discussion and any outcomes agreed under the respective agenda items is set out below.
4. AGENDA ITEM 1: Countries of Chair and Vice-Chairs made initial remarks.
5. AGENDA ITEM 2: The Working Group agreed to adopt the agenda.
6. AGENDA ITEM 3:
 - New Zealand made a presentation about its compilation work on the questionnaire on the regulatory systems for professionals across Members and suggested that further questions be added to the existing questionnaire to help establish a MRA negotiation framework.
 - Australia agreed to New Zealand's proposal and suggested that, because of the diversity of professional services, the questionnaire should focus on specific professions and solicit more detailed responses from Members, and encouraged those Members who have not submitted answers to the existing questionnaire to do so.
 - Mexico and Canada appreciated the work of New Zealand, and supported the suggestion from Australia.
 - The Chair encouraged any Members who have not submitted their answer to do so and thanked New Zealand and interested Members for continuing this work.
7. AGENDA ITEM 4:

- Canada presented the outline of its proposal on non-binding MRA guidelines, emphasizing that these guidelines are non-binding, voluntary, illustrative and aiming to support MRA negotiations between competent authorities. Canada also explained the difference between their draft MRA guidelines and the Guidelines for Mutual Recognition Agreements or Arrangements in the Accountancy Sector, which were adopted by the WTO's Council for Trade in Services in May 1997; and welcomed further comments from other Members by August 31 as an indicative deadline.
- Australia fully supported the Canada's proposal and proposed to add a description on the impact of MRA in the Introductory Notes in order to improve the context and also introduced their APEC projects including an inventory of existing MRAs.
- Brunei welcomed this initiative, commenting that there are MRAs which have been adopted under the ASEAN umbrella.
- Chile welcomed Canada's initiative and looked forward to continuing discussions.
- Japan agreed to this initiative, stressing that a single guideline will allow Members to have a common understanding among the wide segment of the stakeholders, including regulatory bodies and authorities.
- Malaysia proposed to add time frame of negotiations in the Paragraph 1 (d).
- Mexico asked about comparison between this draft MRA guidelines and the one which is included in the EU-Canada Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement.
- New Zealand expressed its general support and noted that they needed to circulate the draft to its regulatory bodies for detailed comments.
- Peru welcomed Canada's initiative and looked forward to engaging in the discussion.
- Singapore asked how the paragraph regarding "Single Negotiating Entity" has been implemented in practical terms.
- Viet Nam observed that, as Members have different regulatory systems on professional services and recognition, it would be desirable to advance efforts to ensure common understanding among countries on related terminologies and definitions. Viet Nam also proposed Australia to share the experience on their APEC projects including an inventory of existing MRAs.

8. AGENDA ITEM 5:

- The Chair proposed to continue intersessional consultation among the bureau Members regarding the possibility of holding a second meeting within this year.
- The proposal was accepted by Members, and Australia expressed its support to hold a second meeting before the end of this year.

9. AGENDA ITEM 6: The Working Group agreed to finalize its report by correspondence.

ANNEX A

Professional Services Working Group

AGENDA	
Date and Time:	21 st July 2021, 9:00 am (Tokyo Time)
Venue:	Video-Conference
ITEM 1:	Initial Remarks (Chair and Vice Chairs)
ITEM 2:	Adoption of the Agenda
ITEM 3:	Updates on Questionnaires on the regulatory systems for professionals across CPTPP Members
ITEM 4:	Non-Binding MRA Guidelines
ITEM 5:	Work Plan of PSWG in 2021
ITEM 6:	Other Issues including Working Group Report