



**Joint Statement on WTO Ruling on “Public Morality”**

*All trading industries and service sectors should be deeply concerned about the recent World Trade Organization (WTO) decision preliminarily upholding a European Union ban on the import of seal products, on the grounds that European politicians were protecting the “public morality” of their people.*

*The decision by the panel in this dispute settlement sets a dangerous precedent. If affirmed on appeal, member countries could unilaterally break the WTO’s fundamental principles of open trade and non-discrimination. Protectionist trade policies could be introduced on the basis that a legitimate commercial product is immoral, notwithstanding the existence of evidence-based production standards. The concept of “public morality” is not defined in the WTO’s agreements and that lends itself to differing views among the WTO’s member states as to what is and is not “moral.”*

*The guidelines for invoking the currently ambiguous “public morality clause” in international trade agreements must be more clear and balanced. They must adhere to internationally agreed upon standards and be based on fact - not on misleading and emotionally charged international lobbying campaigns.*

*If the panel’s report is allowed to stand by the WTO’s Appellate Body, it will have a destructive impact on fair and open trade amongst all nations, and will undermine the WTO’s ability to ensure that global trade policies are coherent and transparent.*

*We call upon the World Trade Organization’s Appellate Body to set aside this ruling.*