



Council of the European Union  
General Secretariat  
The Secretary-General

SGS 21 / 003239

Brussels, 14. 07. 2021

Ms Vicky Cann  
Corporate Europe Observatory  
Mundo-B (2<sup>nd</sup> floor), Rue d'Edimbourg 26  
1050 Brussels

**Subject: Your letter of 21 June 2021 regarding the failure to provide information to the public and to parliaments about a key discussion held at the Foreign Affairs Council on 20 May 2021**

Dear Ms Cann,

Thank you for your letter dated 21 June 2021 on behalf of Corporate Europe Observatory. Thank you also for your strong commitment to transparency, which we share and implement on a daily basis in accordance with the Treaties and applicable EU legislation.

As regards the specific Council meeting to which you refer, I would like to provide you with the following clarifications:

The [provisional agenda](#) for the Foreign Affairs Council (Trade) meeting on 20 May was initially drawn up in April and issued on 5 May. Only that very day, the U.S. were announcing their support for a potential TRIPS waiver on COVID vaccinations patents. In the preparations leading up to the Council, including the meetings of Coreper on 12 and 19 June, no delegation demonstrated a particular wish to discuss that issue. This is why it was not considered necessary to specifically refer to this issue on the provisional agenda.

The item "WTO reform and preparations for the next Ministerial Conference – State of play" was intended to allow ministers the opportunity to address or comment on any issue they considered as relevant to the said Ministerial Conference. As it turned out, and as you have been informed through other channels, the Commission as well as a number of ministers did indeed address the issue of the TRIPS waiver on this occasion. In the discussion also other issues were raised, including fisheries subsidies, the creation of a working group on WTO reform, e-commerce, level playing field, the Joint Statement initiatives, trade and sustainable development, agriculture and the cooperation with the US.

Given the broad nature of the debate under a point of this character, it is not our tradition to report in detail on individual issues raised. In view of the particular political attention accorded to the issue of a possible TRIPS waiver at this particular moment, I would agree with you, however, that a mention could usefully have been made in the Outcome of the Council meeting. We will bear this in mind if a similar situation arises in the future.

I hope that this explanation clarifies the matter. We remain of course remain at your disposal if you have any further queries or comments to make.

Yours sincerely,



Jeppe TRANHOLM-MIKKELSEN