

Summer 2022 Newsletter

WTO MSME Group



MESSAGE FROM THE COORDINATOR

Let me first express my appreciation for your continued support and interest in the WTO MSME Informal Working Group. This year, 2022, marks the fifth year following the Group's launch in Buenos Aires at the WTO's 11th Ministerial Conference at the end of 2017. In the past years the Group has grown to 94 and it has worked hard to develop tangible outcomes that could support micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprise (MSME) participation in international trade. These deliverables include the 2020 Package of Recommendations and Declarations ([INF/MSME/4/Rev.2](#)), two databases (one on [MSME provisions in regional trade agreements](#) and the other on [MSME references in WTO Trade Policy Reviews](#)) and of course the [Trade4MSMEs](#) web platform.

While working on all of these initiatives, the next ministerial conference, MC12, was always at the back of the Group's mind. One pandemic and two postponements later, MC12 has finally taken place. Although the challenging political situation prevented the Group from endorsing its draft declaration issued at the end of 2021, on 8 June, days before MC12, the Group had the pleasure of launching the Trade4MSMEs Network of development banks, international and regional organizations that are also working on supporting MSMEs and trade. The launch was very well-received with twelve presentations on work that has been completed or is currently under way. The Network will meet annually to brief participants on developments through the year and this information will be gathered by the WTO Secretariat to update the [Trade4MSMEs](#) platform.

Going forward the Group will return to its substantive work on recommendations and declarations. Recent topics that have been presented to the group include cyber readiness, low-value shipments, and sustainable trade. There are many more topics that the Group can explore and work on and we look forward to being in touch with you all about the pressing MSME trade-issues that we can consider.

Let me close here. We have come a long way and with your help I know the Group will go further still. I look forward to this next phase of the MSME Informal Working Group.

Wishing you a lovely summer ahead!

Ambassador Jose Luis Cancela, Uruguay

Upcoming meetings in 2022:

- 15 July
- 12 October
- 8 December

Past events:

8 June 2022

Launch of the Trade4MSMEs Network

27 June 2022

Launch of the 2022 Small Business Champions Initiative.



Recording

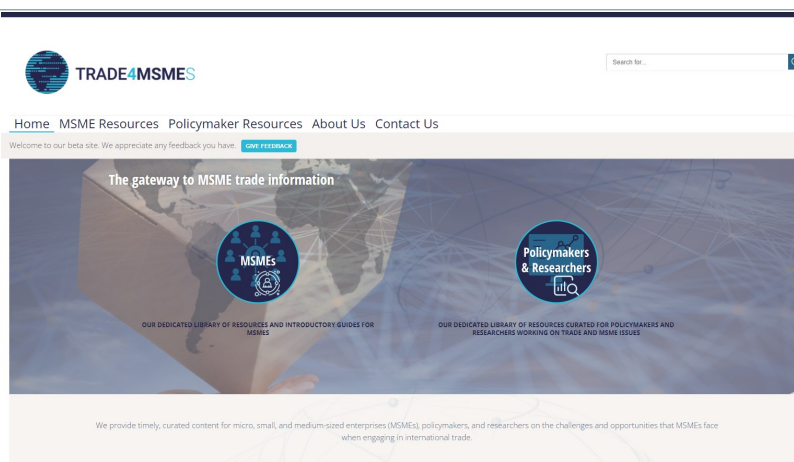
Small Business Champions Initiative 2022: Helping small businesses transition to a sustainable economy.

The WTO MSME Group, in partnership with the International Chamber of Commerce and the International Trade Centre, is calling for proposals that help small businesses to transition to more sustainable business practices, and contribute to global decarbonization. Industry associations, chambers of commerce, NGOs and the private sector are invited to submit proposals. To find out more, please visit [here](#).

Trade4MSMEs Network

Launched on 8 June 2022, the Trade4MSMEs Network currently counts 17 development banks, international and regional organizations as participants (see list below) and outreach continues to additional organizations. Created with the objective of maintaining the Trade4MSMEs web platform and keeping its information current, the network also aims to facilitate collaboration among participants, identify new tools to help MSMEs trade and to explore the possibility of joint projects. The Network plans to meet annually.

1. Asian Development Bank
2. European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
3. Inter-American Development Bank
4. International Labour Organization
5. International Telecommunication Union
6. International Trade Centre
7. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
8. United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
9. United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
10. United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
11. United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
12. United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
13. United Nations Industrial Development Organization
14. United Nations Commission on International Trade Law
15. World Customs Organization
16. World Intellectual Property Organization
17. World Bank



2. TRADE4MSMES WEBSITE UPDATES

The Trade4MSMEs website continues to be updated. New guides for MSMEs and policymakers have been developed including on exchange rates and reverse logistics (see table below). Next steps for the website include developing more regional and national content links and improvement to the search capacity. Following some technical glitches the contact links on the webpage are now fully functional and we invite all interested users to reach out about the website using these tools or directly at Trade4MSMEs@wto.org.

New Guides on Trade4MSMEs.org

MSMEs	Policymakers
Standards for Cross-Border Paperless Trade – for MSMEs	Standards for Cross-Border Paperless Trade– for policymakers
	Competition Policy
Exchange Rates	Government Procurement
Reverse Logistics	Investment Facilitation
Standards	Regional Trade Agreements
Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS) – for MSMEs	Think Small First Principal
	Trade Remedies
	Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS) – for policymakers

3. MSME DAY 2022

The WTO MSME Group celebrated international MSME Day on 27 June 2022 with the launch of the second Small Business Champions initiative called "Helping small businesses transition to a sustainable economy" (see the [call for proposals](#)) and a panel discussion with business representatives from Sustainable Finance Geneva, UPS, Sage, ADJOAA and Mantra Beauty. Introductory remarks were made by José Luis Cancela, Ambassador of Uruguay; Pamela Coke-Hamilton, Executive Director, International Trade Centre; John Denton, Secretary General, International Chamber of

Commerce; and Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Director General, World Trade Organization. Remarks focused on the critical importance of addressing climate change and the need for businesses of all sizes to join the decarbonization effort. Studies have shown that MSMEs are willing to change their business practices but frequently lack knowledge of how to decarbonize their operations and face significant costs to change. Finding ways to support them in this effort, either through business innovations, trainings or other tools will be critical.

4. ANNUAL MEETING BETWEEN THE MSME GROUP AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR

The MSME Group held its annual meeting with the private sector in the afternoon on 8 February 2022 to gather their views on issues of importance to MSME traders and to present the Trade4MSMEs platform. Ambassador Cancela opened the meeting with a presentation of the Group's work in 2021, including two separate databases on MSME references in Regional Trade Agreements (accessible [here](#)) and WTO Trade Policy Reviews (accessible [here](#)) and the ICC-ITC-WTO MSME Group Digital Champions for Small Business Initiative (information on the event's winners is accessible [here](#)). The delegate of Mexico also gave a demonstration of the Trade4MSMEs web platform (trade4msmes.org).

Following the introduction, private sector participants took the floor. Speakers invited the Group to support adoption of the Model Law on Electronic Transferable Records (MLETR) of the United Nations Commission for International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) at the national level; to look into MSME cyber readiness; and to address the proliferation of sustainability labels and standards which create significant barriers for small businesses to trade.

Additionally, prior to the meeting, Africa Women in Trade submitted a document to the Group detailing various concerns that their MSME members face when it comes to trading internationally, such as access to voluntary licences like FairTrade, the need for IP and how to obtain affordable finance. This document is available as [INF/MSME/P/1](#) in the WTO's documents online system. Other private sector participants are encouraged to provide similar information to the MSME Group.

5. NEW RESEARCH NOTE SERIES ON SMALL BUSINESS' PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL TRADE

The WTO Secretariat launched a new series of research notes to explore issues related to small business participation in international trade. The first three notes were released on MSME Day. Two of the notes, titled "[Recent Evolution of Developed-Economy MSME Participation in International Trade](#)" and "[Small and Medium Manufacturing Enterprise](#)



Check-in with 2021 Digital Champions for Small Business winners

TofaraOnline

(By Tofara Chokera, CDMP and Loveness Nleya)

"The Tech-Driven Entrepreneur Program was officially launched on 29 January 2022. It was such an honour having Ambassador Cancela give us an endorsement and support all the way from Uruguay.

The Tech-Driven Entrepreneur program equips MSMEs with the digital marketing skills required to

- be resilient in times of economic transition or crisis.
- plan and implement a successful digital marketing strategy.
- remain viable by adopting digital marketing.
- create international trade opportunities.

So far we have trained more than 80 students online from Botswana, Nigeria, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe and have held two physical workshops on Digital Content Creation, Content Management and Customer Experience. On 3 May 2022 we embarked on another journey with MSMEs in Zimbabwe and Zambia where we are training Digital Marketing for

International Trade.

We continue to be innovative about the delivery of our training as we work on financing options to enable marginalised communities and training conversions for the visually and hearing impaired to participate.

MSMEs have historically struggled to enter the digital economy, due to lack of awareness, resources, or technological know-how. Our aim is to bring more MSMEs into the digital economy to help them grow, trade, and become resilient.”

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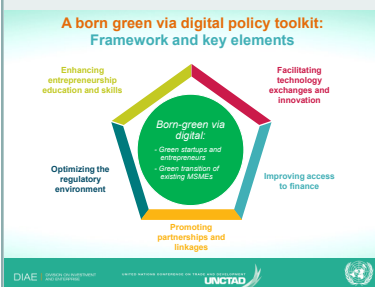
[Trade Participation in Developing Economies](#)", update MSME trade information from section B of the WTO's 2016 World Trade Report on [Levelling the Trading Field for SMEs](#). In the first report, MSMEs are found to have gained in importance in terms of both their total share of export and import values in the OECD economies examined, although they continue to participate relatively less in international trade than large firms, accounting for only 36 per cent of exports and 41 per cent of imports. In the second report, manufacturing MSMEs in developing economies are found to continue to have relatively low shares of exports as part of total sales and overall low participation in global value chains. The third research note, titled [Small Business and Climate Change](#), uses survey data from Meta's Facebook users to investigate how small businesses in different regions feel about climate change, with findings disaggregated by gender. Overall, businesses are aware of the climate crisis and the need for action, however responses clearly indicate that more information on policy requirements and access to tools or finance are needed for MSMEs to accomplish the transition.

6. PRESENTATIONS TO THE MSME INFORMAL WORKING GROUP

Since the start of 2022 the MSME Group received a number of presentations from international organizations and business support organizations on topics ranging from cyber readiness to sustainable trade. Below are summaries of these various presentations, which are now also accessible on the [WTO MSME Group web page](#).

Born Green Via Digital Toolkit Developed Under the G20 Italian Presidency

On behalf of G20 Italian Presidency, UNCTAD presented the "Non-Binding Policy Toolkit on Promoting Born Green via Digital MSMEs and Entrepreneurship in Global Supply Chains", which was developed in collaboration with the ITC, OECD, World Bank and WTO. The green and digital economies are two entry points for MSMEs and are tied-in with the G20 priorities of people, planet and prosperity. Recognizing new challenges that MSMEs face accessing green finance, digital technologies, online marketplaces, compliance with green regulations and access to new knowledge and skills, a toolkit with a framework of five elements was developed. These elements include enhancing entrepreneurship education and skills; facilitating technology exchanges and innovation; improving access to finance; promoting partnerships and linkages; and optimizing the regulatory environment. It is hoped that this toolkit can inform further discussions and exchanges of best practices, provide a reference for those looking to support MSMEs in the green and digital economies, and can inform policy support and technical assistance.



Global Legal Entity Identifier Foundation (GLEIF)

The GLEIF joined the Group again to present the Legal Entity Identifier (LEI), a life-long code owned by the respective legal entity. The GLEIF highlighted the benefits of the LEI through supporting presentations by four financial institutions and businesses with a case study from Zimbabwe. First, Yann Desclercs, Managing Director of Cornerstone Advisory Plus, a west African financial compliance firm, explained the importance of the LEI, especially for African financial institutions. The LEI can help financial institutions to increase their compliance standards, thereby reducing their exposure to "de-risking" when the international financial community offloads certain institutions because they assume they will require excessive due diligence. Next, Munyaradzi Kamhoso and Erasmus Bhunu from the NMB Bank in Zimbabwe, reported that the LEI can significantly reduce the time to validate the identity of MSMEs and can decrease the cost of doing business for traders who are especially exposed. Finally, Second Muguyo from Copperwares, a Zimbabwe copper and silver goods manufacturer, explained how the LEI would make finance more accessible to small businesses like Copperwares, assuring their business sustainability.

Global Cyber Alliance (GCA)

A presentation was received from the Global Cyber Alliance (GCA) concerning their approach to cyber readiness for MSMEs and their free-to-use toolkit of MSME resources they have developed. Overall, the GCA is focused on building a secure and trustworthy internet including by building a domain trust community for information sharing and best practices. Tools that the GCA has developed for MSMEs include six guided steps for better MSME cyber security, skills assessments and video trainings. These steps include knowing what a business has already; applying relevant updates, such as for software; using strong passwords; ensuring systems are backed up and recoverable; and finally, protecting email. The Toolkit itself is accessible via an interactive [website](#) with a menu bar, guided popups, video introductions and handbooks on the relevant topics. Besides a toolkit for business, the GCA also offers cybersecurity toolkits for other potential users including mission-based organizations and financial institutions.

ITC GreenToCompete

The ITC reported to the MSME Group on their GreenToCompete initiative to build MSME capacity and strengthen their resilience in green markets. Recognizing the competitive forces in trade that are affecting businesses, both negative from value chain risks due to climate hazards and environmental externalities created by business including emissions and waste as well as positive forces like new environmental business opportu-



GreenToCompete Hubs: Strengthening green competitiveness

— of more than 4500 MSMEs directly by end of 2022



Enhancing competitiveness
Scancom, Viet Nam:
Increasing resource efficiency and improving productivity



Increasing Sales
Shivvi, Peru: Selling sustainably sourced food ingredients from the Amazon online



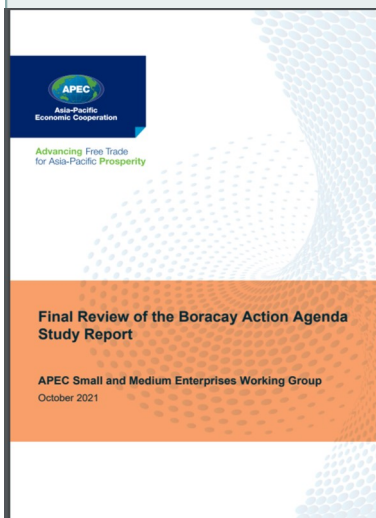
Accessing green finance
Myonga, Kenya:
Investment of 300k USD secured for mobile solar drying truck to reduce waste



TRADE IMPACT FOR GOOD

nities, the ITC looked for ways to activate green trade focusing on circularity, climate resilience and the bioeconomy. Through new GreenToCompete Hubs (available [here](#)), access to green finance via a mapping of national sources, platforms for dialogue and thought leadership, the ITC hopes to help set the policy agenda and support MSMEs to drive green change. As part of the initiative, the ITC has developed a toolkit on the circular economy, coaching programmes for MSMEs, and are in the process of developing a platform where MSMEs can do an environmental assessment of their business.

Philippines Presentation on the APEC Boracay Action Agenda



The Philippines updated the Group on the APEC Boracay Action Agenda (BAA) as well as the outcomes of the 2021 Global MSME Forum on Greening SME Finance. The Boracay Action Agenda was initiated in 2015 and has five main priorities, namely trade facilitation, access to finance, the digital economy, capacity building, and support for women-owned MSMEs. A recent study found that initiatives of the BAA focused on women, the digital economy and capacity building and included the creation of an APEC MSME Marketplace; APEC Trade Repository; APEC Authorized Economic Operator Compendium; APEC Strategy for Green, Sustainable and Innovative MSMEs; and La Serena Roadmap for Women and Inclusive Growth. A number of issues were also identified that still need addressing, including a strong need for MSME e-learning and skill certification programmes, increasing MSME access to finance, and establishing a common standard for intellectual property evaluation in APEC economies. The BAA also found a need for promoting green and SMART MSMEs as enterprises of the future. The Philippines noted its desire to collaborate with WTO Members in common priority areas of cooperation for MSMEs from the BAA including on transparency and information sharing; trade facilitation and e-commerce; participation in regulatory development; gender equality and women's economic empowerment; aid-for-trade and technical assistance and capacity building; and access to finance.



International Standards of Accounting and Reporting

UNCTAD – Intergovernmental Group of Experts on International Standards of Accounting and Reporting (ISAR)

UNCTAD also presented on the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on International Standards of Accounting and Reporting (ISAR). Created by ECOSOC and housed at UNCTAD, ISAR seeks to generate consensus building, provide policy guidance, and give technical assistance on financial and sustainability reporting. ISAR also looks to support enterprise reporting for assessing the private sector contribution to implementation of the SDGs. Key areas of focus also include MSME accounting and reporting. Currently, ISAR is in the pilot phase of developing an e-accounting platform for MSMEs. It has also developed guidance on core SDG indicators and a training manual on accounting for MSMEs. Improving MSME reporting and accounting capacity can help these businesses improve their credit worthiness

and access to finance.

7. GOOD REGULATORY PRACTICES REPORT FROM THE STANDARDS AND TRADE DEVELOPMENT FACILITY (STDF)

Sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures are critical for the international trade of food – they ensure these products' safety for consumers and prevent the spread of disease and pests. However, SPS measures can vary widely by country and can pose significant challenges to comply with, especially for small businesses that may be less familiar with the requirements and may have less resources to devote to understanding the regulations.

In November 2021, the STDF published a new guide for policymakers in developing economies to support good regulatory practices (GRP) in the context of SPS measures, including greater transparency and reviewing legislative changes through a small business lens ([STDF GRP Guide EN.pdf \(standardsfacility.org\)](#)). The guide offers practical information and encourages public and private sector stakeholder engagement. It also aims to improve compliance, reduce administrative costs and increase trust in new SPS regulations by understanding MSME needs, identifying challenges, and tailoring regulatory interventions for MSMEs. Beyond the report, more information on the STDF's work on GRPs is available at [Good Regulatory Practice | Standards and Trade Development Facility \(standardsfacility.org\)](#), including a separate study on an online survey of the use of GRPs from 2017.

8. MSME VOICES

The WTO Informal Working Group on MSMEs believes that direct interaction with MSMEs and organizations focused on MSME support will enrich discussions and help the Group identify issues that deserve consideration at the WTO. After a hiatus during the Group's MC12 preparations, we have returned to interviewing MSME experts or groups who have participated in our meetings and workshops.

People who are interested in being featured are welcome to [contact us](#).

Gill Thomas, Global Cyber Alliance (GCA)

A few words about yourself and your interest in the MSME cause.

MSMEs are the lifeblood of the global economy. Often, from a cybersecurity perspective, they are ill-prepared to trade online because they do not have the knowledge, tools or resources needed to do so safely. They risk losing everything whilst also putting their customers and suppliers at risk. Adoption of globally recognised cybersecurity controls and best practices will substantially reduce cyber risk for all MSMEs. The [GCA Cy-](#)



The Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) grew out of a joint communiqué among five international organization partners in 2001: the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), the World Bank Group, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Trade Organization (WTO). Since its founding, a host of other donors and organizations have joined the facility to promote SPS improvements in developing economies by financing innovative pilot projects and issuing related research.

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Gill spent 20 years working in networks and telecommunications. She took time out with her young family and returned to find digital transformation fuelling opportunity, growth but an exponential rise in cyber crime. Gill joined [Global Cyber Alliance](#) (GCA) in 2019. She has a BSc (Hons) in Electronic Engineering.



GCA is an international, cross sector, non-profit organisation dedicated to confronting systemic cyber risks. We build programs, partnerships, and tools to make the connected world safer and more secure for all.

[bersecurity Toolkit for Small Business](#) provides tools for free which improve cyber readiness.

What are, in your view, the top two or three challenges that MSMEs face when it comes to cyber readiness and global markets?

Understanding MSMEs are at risk of cyber attack, the ease by which cyber criminals can launch an attack and what MSMEs can do to substantially reduce that risk.

In many cases cyber attacks are automated, based on devices, systems and software irrespective of company size - and the majority do impact MSMEs.

Global markets expand the potential attack surface for MSMEs. Attacks can happen, unannounced, at any time, so cyber readiness is essential to trade both locally and globally online.

What two or three tips would you give to MSMEs wishing to access global markets in terms of cyber readiness?

Keep a back-up copy of all important data (separate to the network).

Ensure security updates (patches) are applied as soon as possible (or auto-update).

Use two-factor authentication where available, do not share any passwords across any accounts.

Do not transfer sensitive information over public WiFi.

Use anti-virus software and Quad9.

Keep your business network purely for business devices - understand what is connected and how.

Have a plan for what you would do if your business was affected - check it works.

What advice would you give to national policy makers wishing to support MSMEs' cyber readiness for participation in international trade?

They need to encourage and incentivize larger organisations to support the MSMEs in their global supply chains as part of protecting the global cyber ecosystem, encouraging collaboration and information sharing among organisations to reduce cyber risks.

Where government programs exist that provide resources to support MSMEs, cybersecurity guidance and resources should also be included.

If you had to mention one example of a successful program or initiative to support MSMEs' cyber readiness and participation in international trade, what would it be?

If I am allowed to mention two they would be the Mastercard Academy 2.0 Program in [Indonesia](#), alongside Mercy Corps, utilizing the toolkit and MicroMentor online platform to upskill and mentor MSMEs and also improve

their cyber readiness.

Under the UK Government Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office Digital Access Programme improving cyber readiness for MSMEs across [South Africa and Nigeria](#) through the use of the toolkit, localised resources and in-country partner networks.

How, in your view, can the WTO Informal Working Group on MSMEs help firms be more cyber ready and access international markets?

For the majority of MSMEs access to international markets is dependent on the use of the Internet and online platforms. When transitioning from a physical environment, where adopting simple security measures and mindset can protect against intrusion and loss, to an online one the same principles apply.

GCA suggests developing programs to educate MSMEs with simple-to-implement, effective cybersecurity controls so MSMEs can safely access global supply chains and international markets. GCA would be keen to support all initiatives.

Dr Funke Bolujoko, RUCHIM Ltd.

A few words about yourself and your interest in the MSME cause.

Having been bothered as a Public Health Specialist about the increasing rate of diet-related health concerns in our communities; RUCHIM's vision of having Master Tea Herbal Infusions in every home to support a healthier lifestyle highly resonates with my passion of population-based Health Promotion. However, many MSMEs are often confronted with infrastructural deficit; high production and trade costs, limited access to market and finance, etc. which limit their ability to achieve their objectives.

What are, in your view, the top two or three challenges that MSMEs face when accessing global markets?

Most MSMEs are often driven by the passion of giving back to their communities through, value addition, hence they often have export ambitions because they believe exporters do better, create more jobs, grow faster and earn foreign exchange. However, they often underestimate the complexities of the export process in terms of high trade costs and lack of capital to fund export market development, sustainability of partnerships at destination and meeting buyers' requirements in terms of price competitiveness and mitigating their perception of risk.



I am Dr Funke Bolujoko, a Public Health Specialist with over 35 years' experience, 22 of which were spent working with the World Health Organisation at its country, regional and headquarters levels where I had the privilege of supporting over 90 countries as a Public Health Advisor. I now currently support RUCHIM Ltd in promoting a healthy lifestyle.



RUCHIM Ltd is a research-based, multi award-winning SME in Nigeria registered in 2006 and which began operation in 2008 with only one product, a classic pack Refreshing Black Tea.

It now produces thirteen 100% natural health-enhancing herbal tea blends under the Brand Name Master Tea.

CALL FOR CASE STUDIES ON SMES OPERATING IN SUPPLY CHAINS

Are you a micro-, small- or medium-sized enterprise (MSME) from a developing economy involved in international supply chains? Tell us your story!

Case studies complement quantitative analysis and provide concrete examples on ways that developing economies can take advantage of opportunities to access foreign markets. This helps policymakers and trade analysts better understand the reality of investment, production and trade within production networks.

Your story should comprise key thematic areas such as:

- The history of the company and motivation to join international production networks.
- The key incentives and factors that facilitated your integration into supply chains (government incentives, implementation of WTO agreements, domains of expertise, international certifications etc.)
- The company's current position in the chain, its role in domestic and international production and trade as well as the benefits and results obtained in

What two or three tips would you give to MSMEs wishing to access global markets?

It is extremely important for MSMEs wishing to access global market to objectively examine and evaluate their export readiness in terms of production capacity, product quality and packaging; the company's knowledge of the export process and the inherent risks, the export costs implications and their own financial strength; knowledge of partners' and target countries' requirements and what it takes to maintain sustainable market access. MSMEs must identify the areas where they lack readiness and get help where required to go global.

What advice would you give to national policy makers wishing to support MSMEs' participation in international trade?

National Policy makers wishing to support MSMEs' participation in International Trade could make available capacity building that will help the MSMEs evaluate their export readiness and support MSMEs to be export ready through expanding MSMEs' knowledge base on the export process. Policy makers should be intentional in creating enabling environments that will tangibly increase price competitiveness of MSMEs' products such as control of logistics and other trade costs; provide infrastructures that will help mitigate high production costs; support production and packaging of high quality products as well as facilitate market research.

If you had to mention one example of a successful program or initiative to support MSMEs' participation in international trade, what would it be

I have found the ITC 's She Trades Programme to be a great support to MSMEs' participation in International Trade, particularly for women-owned businesses. The extensive capacity building has helped to increase MSMEs' knowledge base on the export process and strengthen the capacity of MSMEs to produce high quality products of global standards. The She Trades Programme has also supported MSMEs to participate in International Trade Fairs had has helped to expose these MSMEs to global markets.

How, in your view, can the WTO Informal Working Group on MSMEs help firms access international markets?

The WTO Informal Working Group on MSMEs can come up with agreed proposals that can support the WTO to: a. Fully analyze all the barriers to sustainable market access by MSMEs; b. Expand the WTO's Trade Facilitation Programme to cover many more countries and be particularly MSME sensitive and friendly; c. Help harmonize and streamline regulatory and sustainability standards in order to increase the market share of MSMEs in the global market ; d. Promote extensive capacity building to deepen the knowledge base of MSMEs on the Export process and its inherent risks; e. Identify funding partners in the export market who will help

with market development, logistics of clearing and warehousing and legal services for contract and debt recovery.

WHY AN INFORMAL WORKING GROUP FOR MSMEs?

The MSME Informal Working Group is a coalition of 94 WTO Members of varied levels of development and all regions of the world that share an interest in improving access to global markets for Micro, Small and Medium-Sized enterprises (MSMEs). Today, 95 per cent of companies across the globe are MSMEs. Although MSMEs account for 60 per cent of the world's total employment and comprise anywhere from 80-99 per cent of a country's registered firms they remain underrepresented, and face a large number of obstacles when seeking to participate in international trade. When MSMEs successfully access international markets, they can act as a catalyst for better distribution of the gains from trade to all sections of the economy. The MSME Informal Working Group aspires to ensure that the multilateral system enables these economic benefits through better inclusion of MSMEs in global commerce.

THE ROAD TO BUENOS AIRES 2017

The Informal Working Group on MSMEs was created at the 2017 Buenos Aires Ministerial Conference by a Joint Statement. The road to the Buenos Aires Joint Statement began with a proposal by the Philippines in 2015, which identified MSMEs as a dynamic sector and suggested that "the General Council shall consider the most appropriate arrangement to facilitate discussions".

In July 2016, Brunei Darussalam, Lao PDR, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand reported on a workshop held in June that year titled "Enhancing the Participation of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)" that aimed at enhancing awareness of the role that MSMEs have in international trade. In May 2017 at the General Council, a group of 47 Members (counting EU member states individually) effectively launched an Informal Dialogue on MSMEs chaired by H.E. Mr Héctor Casanueva of Chile.

In June 2017, Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay submitted a proposal for the development of a work programme that would cover areas such as information and transparency, trade facilitation, e-commerce and trade finance.

Several workshops were organized in the run-up to MC11 to emphasize to Members the importance of having a specific forum to discuss MSMEs at the WTO, including a workshop on regional and national experiences in October 2017.

A draft ministerial declaration was circulated prior to MC11 (click [here](#)).

terms of employment, production capacity, and operating income.

- Your perspective on what it takes to maintain a sustainable presence and evolve or upgrade your position in supply chains.
- Your values and approach vis-à-vis environmental issues and regulations and climate change.
- The challenges, risks and issues met with in your experience.

The case studies envisaged would be short and easy to read reports (including tables, graphs and schemas), jointly prepared by SME managers and WTO staff.

Should you be interested in sharing your experience in supply chains, please contact kathryn.lundquist@wto.org to suggest a collaboration for a case study.

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"MSMEs are fundamental to our economies – a win-win for everybody - and employment, and we are working to develop the potential of MSMEs in international trade"- H.E. Mr José Luis Cancela of Uruguay, Coordinator of the Group



WELCOME TO MACAO,
CHINA AND TAJIKISTAN!



Macao, China and Tajikistan became
the most recent MSME Group mem-
bers in December 2021 and May 2022.

WHAT IS THE MSME INFORMAL WORKING GROUP?

In their 2017 Joint Statement establishing the Group, Members committed to discuss and identify “horizontal and non-discriminatory solutions” to improve the participation of MSMEs in international trade. The Group seeks to develop solutions that would apply to all companies (but would benefit MSMEs the most) while taking into account the specific needs of developing countries. Members of the Group exchange information on a voluntarily basis, which benefit both MSMEs and policymakers.

Coordinator: H.E. Mr José Luis Cancela of Uruguay (Since January 2018)

Previous Chair: H.E. Mr Hector Casanueva of Chile (June 2017-January 2018)

Membership of the Informal Working Group: Afghanistan; Albania; Antigua and Barbuda; Argentina; Armenia; Australia; Bahrain, Kingdom of; Belize; Brazil; Brunei Darussalam; Canada; Chile; China; Colombia; Costa Rica; Côte d'Ivoire; Dominica; the Dominican Republic; Ecuador; El Salvador; European Union; The Gambia; Georgia; Grenada; Guatemala; Guyana; Honduras; Hong Kong, China; Iceland; Israel; Japan; Kazakhstan; Kenya; the Republic of Korea; Kyrgyz Republic; Lao PDR; Liechtenstein; Macao, China; Malaysia; Mexico; Mongolia; the Republic of Moldova; Mongolia; Montenegro; Myanmar; New Zealand; Nicaragua; Nigeria; North Macedonia; Norway; Pakistan; Paraguay; Peru; Philippines; Qatar; Russian Federation; Saint Kitts and Nevis; Saint Lucia; Saint Vincent and the Grenadines; Saudi Arabia, Kingdom of; Singapore; Switzerland; Chinese Taipei; Tajikistan; Turkey; Ukraine; Uruguay; United Kingdom and Viet Nam.

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