

INITIATIVE

Geneva - MSMEs Connection

LINKING MICRO, SMALL & MEDIUM-SIDZED ENTERPRISES (MSMEs) TO THE MULTILATERAL TRADING SYSTEM

About

WTO delegates in Geneva are not always fully aware of the interests and concerns of their MSMEs. This can lead to participations and actions which do not adequately address trade impediments actually faced by their micro, small and medium private sectors. This problem can be most pronounced for developing and least developed country delegations, which lack the resources and established systems in capitals to undertake broad stakeholder consultations regularly. Moreover, there is a lack of participation from those same countries in regular work of the WTO, which makes it difficult for them to take advantage of the opportunities that the Multilateral Trading System (MTS) offers through these Committees (e.g. the TBT Committee, the SPS Committee, the TPR Body).

Building on the previous experience of its “Geneva Trade & Business Connection” initiative, CUTS is launching a similar forum to help connecting World Trade Organization (WTO) delegates of selected South & South East Asia (S&SEA) developing and least-developed countries with their national Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) so that their participation in the relevant WTO meetings is more fully aligned with on-the-ground conditions faced by their micro, small and medium business communities, and hence allow their issues to be appropriately brought to the relevant WTO Bodies

The project also aims to improve the understanding of WTO Agreements and regular procedures among the MSMEs in the participating countries, establish regular and sustainable connections between them and their WTO delegates, and demonstrate to all of them the utility and relevance of the WTO, thus not only improving their participation in the WTO but also contributing to the strengthening of the WTO in the current challenging times.

Negotiators’ Forums

Taking Advantage of WTO Work

Monitoring the proper implementation of negotiated agreements is an essential part of WTO members’ work. Indeed, ensuring transparency of members’ trade policies (e.g. in TPRs) and raising specific concerns (e.g. in TBT and SPS Committees) is critical to ensure that the trading system remains fair, with all members respecting their commitments.

Yet, the participation of smaller developing countries in these committees has been limited. Their missions in Geneva are often understaffed, and they need to be better connected to institutions and stakeholders back home - particularly their private sector – to be able to identify and pursue their interests.

With this initiative, WTO delegates from S&SEA will hold **regular forums** to first identify and then pursue with our technical assistance their interests in the WTO Bodies on SPS, TBT and TPR. **Country updates** will help them identify their interests, by compiling feedback from their MSMEs on the ground. They will also benefit from CUTS’ expertise, through **technical papers** and **follow-up support** (e.g. diplomatic work, document drafting).

This process will also help the participating countries better understand and, as appropriate, participate in the deliberations of the Informal Group on MSMEs established pursuant to the Joint Ministerial Statement of 87 WTO Members at MC11 last year

Key Features

● Geneva Meetings

Beneficiary developing countries' WTO negotiators meet regularly at CUTS International, Geneva office to focus on an issue they wish to pursue in one of the WTO regular bodies. There, delegates can exchange views on the issue, ask clarifications, and plan action. During the forums, negotiators receive two types of resource documents:

● CUTS' Issue Notes

These notes prepared by CUTS International, Geneva provide a brief background of the issue as well as analysis and options for consideration by the delegates.

● Country Update Notes

These notes are prepared by country partners, in consultation with national private sector organizations, particularly the MSMEs. The notes compile and summarise the views and experiences on the ground with regard to the issue.

● On-demand Studies

CUTS' follow-up support to delegates will include on-demand research studies on delegates' request. CUTS makes sure that these studies address specific technical needs of the negotiators, and propose concrete, user-friendly recommendations.

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