

BACKGROUND DOCUMENT FOR THE JOINT DECLARATION ON TRADE AND WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Purpose

The objective of the Joint Declaration on Trade and Women's Economic Empowerment is to provide a framework and platform for members to foster a more inclusive trade agenda as they seek to ensure that trade benefits all.

Through the Declaration WTO members send a strong signal of their support for inclusive economic growth by adopting practices and rules that support greater integration of women, especially MSMEs, in to the global economy. The Declaration sets out key focus areas to help countries to make their trade and development policies more gender responsive and will be adopted during the 11th Ministerial Conference in Buenos Aires in December 2017.

This goal between now and MC11 is to secure universal adoption of the declaration by WTO members.

Context

The Trade Impact Working Group (TIWG) was established in December 2016 under the auspices of the International Gender Champions Geneva (IGCG). IGCG is a leadership network that brings together decision-makers to break down gender barriers. The TIWG, comprising a growing number of WTO members and international organisations, is one of several IGCG working groups. It was established to galvanise the Geneva community on issues related to trade, gender, and the empowerment of women.

Despite the critical role women play in sustainable economic growth and development, the link between trade and gender is not fully understood by the trade community, there is a paucity of gender-disaggregated data on women and trade, and there remains some ambiguity about how gender equality can be addressed through all elements of trade.

The group aims to raise the visibility of trade and gender; facilitate sharing of good practices; identify points of entry where gender barriers can be addressed and provide practical guidance on how best to do this.

The group has a set of key priorities and a plan of action. It convenes quarterly to discuss progress and next steps. The group is co-chaired by the governments of Iceland and Sierra Leone, and the International Trade Centre (ITC). It is open to all WTO members and international organisations in Geneva.

Key elements of the declaration

The Declaration affirms that:

- Gender is an essential component of inclusive economic growth, which requires gender-responsive trade policies;
- International trade and investment drive growth, and inclusive trade policies can lead to better outcomes for women, growth, and poverty reduction;
- Women face specific barriers to participating in the economy.

The Declaration highlights five key areas where members can collaborate to make their policies more gender-responsive:

1. Sharing experiences on gender-responsive policies and programmes;
2. Sharing best practice for analysing trade policies and their effects on women;
3. Sharing methods for collecting, analysing and using gender-disaggregated data;
4. Working together in the WTO to remove barriers impacting women's economic empowerment and involvement in trade;
5. Ensuring Aid for Trade provides tools and approaches to make trade policy more gender responsive.

In addition, over the coming months, members are called upon to hold a series of seminars in coordination with relevant international organizations to explore and discuss main themes related to trade and the economic empowerment of women including financial inclusion, public procurement, trade facilitation, and data collection and analysis.

Next steps

In the lead up to the WTO Ministerial Conference in December 2017, the TIWG will continue to promote and refine the draft declaration, engaging with all WTO members to finalise the declaration by November.