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WTO Public Forum 2025

Geneva, September 17-18, 2025



**Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, WTO Director-General, WTO
and Ms. Priya Pansare, Director- Investment and
Trade Promotion, WTC Mumbai**

WTC Mumbai and AI AI Working Session

Empowering MSMEs through Digital Trade



Ms. Priya Pansare
Director- Investment and
Trade Promotion



Dr. Senthil Pandian C
Ambassador and Permanent
Representative of India to the
WTO



Dr. Carlos Maria Correa
Executive Director of the
South Center



Dr. Shamika Sirimanne
Senior Adviser to the
Secretary General of UNCTAD



Mr. Robert Skidmore
Chief of Sector and Enterprise
Competitiveness at the
International Trade Center



Ms. Sylvia Sorescu
from the OECD

From the Chairman's Desk

On behalf of World Trade Center Mumbai, I extend my sincere gratitude to the World Trade Organization and especially Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Director General, World Trade Organization for providing us the opportunity to host the session on “**Empowering MSMEs through Digital Trade**” at the WTO Public Forum.

This platform has been invaluable in highlighting how digitalization is transforming global trade and enabling Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises to access international markets, enhance competitiveness, and drive inclusive growth. Given the ever evolving global situation, the discussion underscored the relevance of digital trade in shaping a resilient, equitable, and sustainable global economy—particularly for developing nations where MSMEs are the backbone of progress.

We deeply appreciate the WTO for recognizing the importance of this dialogue and for fostering global collaboration toward a digitally empowered MSME ecosystem.



A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Vijay Kalantri". The signature is stylized and includes a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Dr. Vijay Kalantri

Chairman



Inaugural Session of WTO Public Forum 2025

World Trade Organization (WTO) Public Forum 2025 marked the thirtieth anniversary of the World Trade Organization. This year, policymakers, diplomatic community, entrepreneurs and businessmen, from across the world assembled in Geneva on 17th and 18th September under the theme of "Enhance, Preserve and Create". World Trade Center Mumbai, together with the All-India Association of Industries (AIAI), was selected to participate at the WTO Public Forum 2025, held in Geneva, Switzerland. Leading the delegation was Ms. Priya Pansare, Director of Trade & Investment Promotion, who also served as moderator for a special WTC Mumbai's session, "Empowering MSMEs Through Digital Trade." This session provided a platform for dialogue on how micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) can leverage digital trade to expand their reach, overcome traditional market barriers, and operate more efficiently in global markets. The session was well-attended by delegates and participants and received an excellent response, demonstrating strong interest from the international community in India's efforts to empower MSMEs through technology and trade facilitation.

This Forum marked a notable occasion for India and

WTC Mumbai, as the honor of hosting a session after five years reflected recognition of our growing contributions to global trade discussions. The session not only highlighted the potential of digital trade for MSMEs but also showcased WTC Mumbai's expertise in bridging Indian businesses with international markets.

WTC Mumbai was also invited to attend the opening session of the WTO Public Forum, which commenced with remarks by WTO Director-General Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, setting the tone for discussions on global trade, economic development, and digital innovation. The session was moderated by Mr. Chad P. Bown and Ms. Cecilia Malmström of the Peterson Institute for International Economics and featured prominent speakers including Mr. Yoji Saito (Mitsubishi Electric), Ms. Lola Aworanti (Afriborder), Mr. Philippe Varin (International Chamber of Commerce), Ms. Rosario Navarro Betteley (SOFOFA), and Ms. Cynthia Sanfilippo (L'Oréal). These discussions provided diverse perspectives on trade opportunities, challenges, and the future trajectory of global commerce.

In addition to formal sessions, the WTC Mumbai delegation actively participated in evening receptions hosted by Uzbekistan, Veto, and IDB, engaging with international trade stakeholders and fostering new



From L to R: Yoji Saito – Global Chief Advisor, Mitsubishi Electric; Ms. Lola Aworanti-Ekugo – Founder, AfriDora; Rosario Navarro Betteley – President, SOFOFA (Chile's Confederation of Industries); Cecilia Malmström – Senior Fellow, Peterson Institute for International Economics; Cynthia Sanfilippo – VP, Global Public Affairs, L'Oréal; With Chad P. Bown, Senior Fellow, Peterson Institute for International Economics; Philippe Vanin – Chairman, International Chamber of Commerce at WTO Public Forum Inaugural Session 2025.



From R to L: Abdul Qadir Bahman, Founder and CEO, WTC Kabul; Meena Wardak, Events and Membership Director WTC Kabul; Ms. Sylvia Sorescu, Project lead, trade facilitation at OECD; Ms. Priya Pansare, Director- Investment and Trade Promotion, WTC Mumbai; Dr. Carlos M. Correa Executive Director South Centre; Aashish Chandorkar, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of India to the World Trade Organization, Geneva, Switzerland; Pradeep S. Mehta secretary general, CUTS International.

connections for potential collaborations and partnerships.

On the eve of the Forum, WTC Mumbai hosted a dinner reception for speakers, WTO delegates and officials, representatives from international trade organizations, business leaders, and global trade experts. The reception was attended by notable figures like Mr. Pradeep Mehta, Secretary General, CUTS International, Mr. Aashish Chandorkar, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of India to WTO, and Ms. Meena Wardak and Mr. Abdul Bahman from WTC Kabul amongst others. This exclusive gathering facilitated informal interactions, relationship-building, and knowledge-sharing, strengthening WTC Mumbai's role as a connector between Indian businesses and the global trade ecosystem.



Shishir Priyadarshi, President, Chintan Research Foundation along with Ms. Priya Pansare, Director- Investment and Trade Promotion, WTC Mumbai.



World Trade Centre Mumbai Champions MSME Empowerment Through Digital Trade At WTO Geneva Meet

The World Trade Centre, Mumbai hosted a pivotal session on “**Empowering MSMEs through Digital Trade**” at the prestigious **WTO Public Forum 2025**, held on **September 17-18 in Geneva, Switzerland** bringing different voices across the world to underscore the transformative potential of digital technologies in enabling Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) to thrive in the global trading ecosystem.

The 36th session, organized under the broader theme of the WTO Forum, “**Enhance, Create, and Preserve,**” brought together global trade experts, policymakers, technology innovators, and business leaders to deliberate on strategies and best practices to digitally integrate MSMEs into international trade channels. It highlighted challenges faced by MSMEs in accessing digital tools and cross-border markets, while showcasing innovative solutions that can bridge these gaps.



The World Trade Centre, Mumbai was represented by a delegation led by **Ms. Priya Pansare, Director- Investment and Trade Promotion**. In her introductory remarks, she mentioned about the World Trade Center Mumbai's five-decade legacy since its inception in 1970, operating as India's premier

trade promotion and investment facilitation institution under the aegis of World Trade Centres Association (WTCA) which has a global network of over 300 centers across 96 countries.

Opening Remarks



Dr. Senthil Pandian C, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of India to the WTO, delivered the opening address, positioning digital trade as a “powerful catalyst for empowering micro, small and medium enterprises in developing countries and LDCs.” He emphasized

that digital trade enables MSMEs to overcome traditional barriers and participate more fully in global markets through enhanced market access, operational efficiency, price transparency, and streamlined payment systems. However, he also acknowledged significant challenges including the digital divide, with only 36% of LDC populations having internet access, limited digital infrastructure and literacy, exposure to increased global competition, predatory policies affecting digital platform sales, and concerns around consumer protection and cybersecurity. Despite these challenges, he stressed that embracing digital tools represents not