



8 March 2024

(24-2164)

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Original: English

INFORMAL WORKING GROUP ON MSMES

CONVENING NOTICE

Revision

The following convening notice, dated 8 March 2024, is being circulated at the request of the Coordinator of the Informal Working Group on MSMEs, Ambassador Matthew Wilson (Barbados).

The Informal Working Group on MSMEs will hold its next regular meeting in hybrid mode on **Tuesday 19 March 2024**, starting at 15:00 (half-day meeting).

In-person participation is encouraged. For delegates wishing to join remotely via the Interprefy platform, a technical guide summarizing logistical details for participation in Interprefy meetings will be made available on the Members' interactive calendar of meetings, and can also be found at: [WTO Interprefy Delegate Guide](#).

The following items, based on the work program adopted by the Group at its March 2023 meeting, are proposed for the agenda:

1 MSMES AND WTO ACCESSION

Ms. Ralyana Horta Ribeiro, First Secretary of the Permanent Mission of Timor-Leste, and Mr. Ahmed Mzé, Economic Counsellor at the Permanent Mission of Comoros, will join the meeting to discuss their recent accession to the WTO, how the views of MSMEs were taken on board in their accession process and how accession will support MSME trade from their economies.

2 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECEMBER 2020 MSME PACKAGE

Members will be invited to share updates on actions taken to implement the December 2020 MSME package ([INF/MSME/4/Rev.2](#)). In particular, Members will be invited to report on:

- Inclusion of MSME information in Trade policy reviews (TPRs) – Members having undergone a Trade Policy Review since our July 2023 meeting will be invited to report on their inclusion of MSME information in their TPRs (Annex 1 of [INF/MSME/4/Rev.2](#));
- Actions taken to support the Global Trade Helpdesk (Annex 2);
- Trade facilitation measures for MSMEs (Annex 3);
- Inclusion of MSMEs in the development of trade regulations to minimize regulatory burden (Annex 4);
- Implementation of the 2019 Integrated Database Decision (Annex 5);
- Actions taken to facilitate MSME access to finance, including trade finance, and cross-border payments (Annex 6).

3 THEMATIC DISCUSSIONS

Under this pillar of the 2023 MSME work program, the MSME Group continues exploring issues of particular interest to MSME trade with a view, where relevant, to developing policy guidance.

3.1 Discussion on MSMEs, sustainability and reporting requirements

Following from points made by participants in the 2022 and 2023 dialogues with the private sector on the difficulties faced by MSMEs to meet sustainability reporting requirements, Kate Kallot, Founder and CEO of Amini, and Steven Capell, Vice-Chair of UN/CEFACT will engage in a discussion of the challenges these businesses face and explore actions that could be taken to make this kind of reporting more accessible to MSMEs. The discussion will be moderated by Mathieu Lamolle, Senior Advisor, Trade for Sustainable Development at the ITC.

3.2 MSME Investment

Richard Bolwijn, Director of Investment Research at UNCTAD, will present its February 2024 report titled [Promoting International Investment by Small and Medium-sized Enterprises](#). This report discusses how to reduce the common investment policy bias in home and host countries towards large MNEs, the role of SMEs in South–South and intraregional FDI, and ways and means to maximize the development impact of SME FDI. It introduces a new framework to assess the relevance and effectiveness of existing investment policies for the promotion of SME investment and presents policy options.

4 STRENGTHENING ENGAGEMENT WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

4.1 Presentation by the Universal Postal Union (UPU) on their work related to MSMEs

Houssem Gharbi, SME Growth and Trade Expert at the Universal Postal Union (UPU), will brief the Group on UPU work related to MSMEs and how postal networks can be used to promote MSME trade inclusion.

4.2 Presentation by the World Trade Centre Association

As part of the continued engagement with the private sector and external stakeholders, Robin van Puyenbroeck, Executive Director – Business Development of the World Trade Centre Association (WTCA), a not-for-profit with trade service organizations located in more than 90 economies, will provide a presentation on their work and its efforts to increase MSME international trade through business networks.

4.3 MSME Spotlight

The Institute of Export and International Trade (IOE&IT) will update the Group on their ongoing work and present their 2023 International Trade micro-business awardee, Bob Gokani, owner and inventor of EziDrops, a small UK manufacturer of eye and ear drop applicators. As the second MSME Spotlight, Bob Gokani will present his experience as a micro business in international markets.

5 GOING FORWARD – MSME WORK PROGRAMME PLANNING

Members will be invited to engage in a discussion on post-MC13 MSME work. As noted in the Coordinator's MC13 statement ([WT/MIN\(24\)/9](#)), the Group has successfully issued one package of recommendations and declarations ([INF/MSME/4/Rev.2](#)), launched the Trade4MSMEs platform ([trade4msmes.org](#)), held three Small Business Champions with the ICC and ITC, created two databases, and recently launched two compendia on access to finance by women-led small businesses ([INF/MSME/W/46/Rev.1](#) & [INF/TGE/W/7/Rev.1](#)) and authorized economic operators programs with a MSME dimension ([INF/MSME/W/47/Rev.1](#)). The Group has also discussed and received presentations on a rich range of topics over the past few years, including cross-border payments, digitalization, fragility, informality, intellectual property and innovation, low value shipments, MSME financing, regional trade agreements, rural MSMEs, sustainability, and trade facilitation.

Building on this work and following discussions on inclusiveness at MC13, Members will be invited to flag topics of particular interest to them and to share their views on how the Group could best structure its work in the coming year or two.

6 OTHER BUSINESS

6.1 Regular participation by International Organizations

Given the close collaboration of the MSME Group with other International Organizations (IOs) such as support of the Global Trade Helpdesk, the compendium on MSME Authorized Economic Operators (AEO) programs prepared with the support of the WCO ([INF/MSME/W/47/Rev.1](#)), and the Trade4MSMEs Network, MSME Group members will be invited to consider inviting other international organizations working on MSME-related issues to participate in MSME Group meetings as observers.

Participants in the Trade4MSMEs network who could be invited to attend MSME Group meetings include: the Asian Development Bank (ADB); European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD); Inter American Development Bank (IADB); International Labour Organization (ILO); International Telecommunication Union (ITU); International Trade Centre (ITC); Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD); UN Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL); UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA); UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE); UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNECLAC); UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP); UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO); World Bank; World Customs Organization (WCO); and World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO).

6.2 Any other business
