



IMPROVING INCLUSIVENESS BY REVIEWING AND EVALUATING EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT

COMMUNICATION FROM COLOMBIA; GUATEMALA; ISRAEL; NEW ZEALAND; PERU;
THE PHILIPPINES; THE SEPARATE CUSTOMS TERRITORY OF TAIWAN, PENGHU, KINMEN AND
MATSU; THAILAND AND THE UNITED STATES

*Revision**

The following communication, dated 24 July 2023, is being circulated at the request of the delegations of Colombia; Guatemala; Israel; New Zealand; Peru; the Philippines; the Separate Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu; Thailand and the United States.

1. The Preamble to the Marrakesh Agreement recognizes that trade should be conducted with a view towards wider purposes – raising living standards, ensuring full employment, and increasing real incomes and demand – while also recognizing that we should seek the optimal balance necessary to fulfil our objective of ensuring sustainable development.
2. The WTO was established in part to provide a forum for Members to engage with each other to improve our understanding of how trade relations can support these broader economic and social objectives in pursuit of sustainable development. Recent global challenges bring to the forefront the need to consider the broadest range of viewpoints to ensure that multilateral policy discussions and deliberations capture the complexity of cross-cutting issues and the differential impacts on diverse sets of stakeholders and interested persons.
3. WTO Members are currently discussing ways to ensure the organization's future work is relevant and contributes to confronting local and global challenges as part of our post-MC12 work. Therefore, the co-sponsors believe it may be appropriate for Members to reflect on the adequacy of our current practices of engagement with stakeholders who are likewise confronting these same global challenges and are impacted by our actions at the WTO.
4. Our reflections may draw on practices and Members' experiences with inclusive external engagement in other international organizations that may be relevant to consider in the context of improving our work in the WTO. For example:
 - The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are frequently referenced in discussions among WTO Members. The SDGs reflect an interconnectedness and shared responsibility for action across many aspects of our societies with cooperation and coordination required from governments, non-governmental organizations, businesses and civil society. SDG 17 is explicit in incorporating diverse cross-sectoral stakeholders in policy dialogues.¹ Most United Nations organizations have incorporated and internalized multi-stakeholder engagement as part of their everyday work. WTO Members may want to

* This revision is to add Peru and Thailand as co-sponsors to the communication.

¹ Enhance the global partnership for sustainable development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the sustainable development goals in all countries, in particular developing countries.

Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships.

examine the policies and practices of the United Nations system and identify for further discussion any practices they find relevant.

- Most of the world's development assistance organizations, both bilateral and multilateral, have likewise developed innovative and sustainable multi-stakeholder engagement mechanisms to improve the delivery of development assistance and to ensure that outcomes can be comprehensively evaluated and that they achieve multifaceted objectives.
- The WTO's Public Forum and Aid-for-Trade Initiative are two examples of broad external engagement mechanisms used by WTO Members to gain wider perspectives on issues of interest across Members. Most WTO Committees benefit from the perspectives shared by the International and Regional Organizations granted Observer status. Committees also hold thematic sessions or Members organize individually sponsored events which enrich the Memberships' understanding on current global issues. However, these mechanisms may not be sufficient. Multi-stakeholder events that discuss issues at the heart of the WTO's mandate increasingly take place outside the WTO, and those voices are heard by only a small subset of Members, if at all.

5. Despite success in some areas, opportunities for sustained multi-stakeholder engagement at the WTO and within WTO Committees appear to significantly lag global best practice as established by other international organizations, international financial institutions, and development assistance providers.

6. The co-sponsors are interested in reviewing and evaluating how Members may better use the WTO as a convening forum for engagement with diverse stakeholders and interested persons impacted by global trade challenges. We are interested in hearing from Members what their experience has been with regard to external engagement in the conduct of committee and body work, with multi-stakeholder dialogues, and other opportunities they have had to solicit and incorporate diverse stakeholder interests and perspectives. We seek to understand what they perceive works, and what approaches are less effective. We intend to initiate an informal, Member-driven dialogue as a first step to solicit the interests and perspectives of other Members on multi-stakeholder engagement and to identify overlapping interests in search for common ground in order to strengthen the Organization's relevance. We look forward to engaging with all Members in this dialogue.
