

Global Industry Calls for WTO Members to Restart Full Regular Schedule of Work Online

The undersigned organisations, representing businesses worldwide, know that the Covid-19 pandemic has created an unprecedented international economic emergency that threatens not just a global recession but a depression. Virtually all enterprises, from single person MSMEs to the largest multinationals, face serious threats to their ability to operate, tens of millions of jobs have already been lost and many businesses have already failed. The international business community needs the WTO fully engaged across its existing work programme as well as to address the pandemic and its aftermath. Trade law and policy has an important, indeed integral, role to play in recovery. The replacement of the departing Director-General makes a return to regular working using virtual tools even more important.

We believe that all multilateral economic institutions must be engaged across the board to limit the damage in the near term and to help the international community craft responses to recovery that 'build back better.' We cannot return to where we were, we must move forward, and this will require a whole of society approach at the local, national, and international level.

Against this backdrop we note with concern that while many international organisations and processes, from the UN Security Council to the IMF and World Bank to the WHO to the ITU are all routinely working online, the World Trade Organisation has yet to fully empower its substantive bodies to meet and take decisions virtually and the Joint Statement Initiatives have not yet scheduled formal negotiating sessions either. WTO Members must demonstrate political will and flexibility to adopt new working methods so that their vital collective work can continue.

We call upon all WTO Members to show that flexibility and rise to the challenge that the situation requires.

We are all committed to the WTO and the international rules-based trade architecture that it is responsible for. We look forward to continuing to work with the Members and the Organisation.

Associação Nacional das Empresas das Tecnologias de Informação e Eletrónica (ANETIE)
Canadian Chamber of Commerce
Canadian Services Coalition
Computing Technology Industry Association (CompTIA)
Confederation of British Industry (CBI)
Confederation of Danish Industry
Confederation of Finnish Industries EK
Confederation of Swedish Enterprise
Digital Trade Network (DTN)
Ecommerce Forum Africa
Egyptian Information, Telecommunications, Electronics, and Software Alliance (EITESAL)
Federation of Brazilian Information Technology Associations (ASSESPRO)

Information and Communication Technologies Chamber of Costa Rica (CAMTIC)
Information Technology Association of Nigeria (ITAN)
Japan Electronics & Information Technology Industries Association (JEITA)
Scientific and Technological Association (Infopark)
techUK
United States Council for International Business (USCIB)
World Information Technology & Services Alliance (WITSA)