

## Spotlight: Public Forum 2019

**Under the theme “Trading Forward: Adapting to a Changing World”, the 2019 Public Forum was the largest ever in terms of sessions held and running time. Taking place over four days, it attracted over 2,500 participants from 126 countries and featured 140 sessions. High-level sessions examined how countries, businesses and traders can best adapt to change, including threats to the environment, and discussed the increasing importance of services in global trade. A high-level panel of millennials and Generation Z looked at what they expect from global trade.**



Keynote speakers at the opening plenary addressed the importance of a rules-based multilateral trading system in uncertain times and how to ensure that global trading rules work in sync with environmental policies to ensure that trade contributes positively to sustainable development.

The enthusiastic response to the Public Forum, the WTO's largest public outreach event, was “reassuring,” DG Azevêdo told the plenary. “It means we're asking the right questions – and that we are working together to find answers.”

### Adapting to a changing environment

DG Azevêdo stressed the need for all participants in global trade – including the WTO – to recognize and adapt to a trading environment that is undergoing rapid technological change. “We need to change because technology advances, more services become tradeable, and rising generations join the workforce,” he declared.

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DG Azevêdo launched the World Trade Report 2019 at the Public Forum.

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New technologies have the potential to expand human capabilities and enable inclusive prosperity, said DG Azevêdo, or they could fuel unemployment, inequality and years of instability and unrest. “The future we get will be shaped by the policies we choose, at the domestic and international levels.”

### Agreement for a sustainable future

Another high-level panel called for the urgent need to end harmful fisheries subsidies (see page 44). Sir David Attenborough, renowned conservationist, voiced his support, noting via video message that a WTO agreement is vital for the sustainable future of the oceans.

### Launch of the World Trade Report

The 2019 edition of the WTO's *World Trade Report* (see pages 158 and 162) was launched at the Forum and highlighted the increasing and dynamic role of services in international trade and the need for cooperation to support this expansion. The Forum also debated how statistics can better capture trends in trade.

### Youth

Thirty-one sessions were held under the sub-theme “The Next Generation – What do Millennials & Gen Z Want to See from Global Trade”. A high-level panel of millennials and Generation Z, who will soon account for over half of the world's population, brought together young entrepreneurs to discuss with DG Azevêdo how global trade can reflect youth values and address the challenges facing young people.



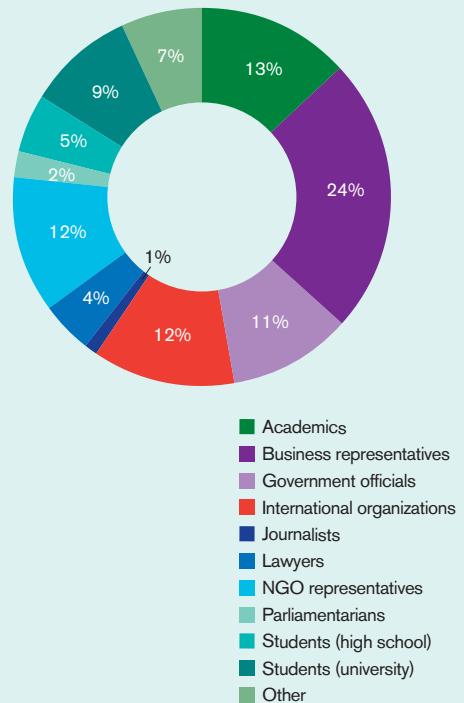


A high-level youth panel looked at their expectations for world trade.

In the panellists' view, the current paradigm has to change and institutions and governments need new ideas that respond to new ways of doing business. "The theme of the conference is how we need to adapt to the trading environment of 2030, 2040 and 2050, and the millennials and Generation Z are the ones who are going to be trading," DG Azevêdo told the high-level session.

Of the 14 exhibitors at the Forum, several were millennials showcasing how they are using new technologies to address challenges including those related to the environment, education and poverty. A photo exhibition, "Youth Voices on Trade", highlighted the hopes and expectations of youth around the world for the future of global trade. The photos were made available to a wider audience through a dedicated webpage on the WTO website.

Figure 1: Public Forum participation in 2019



A Meet the Author session at the Public Forum.

