

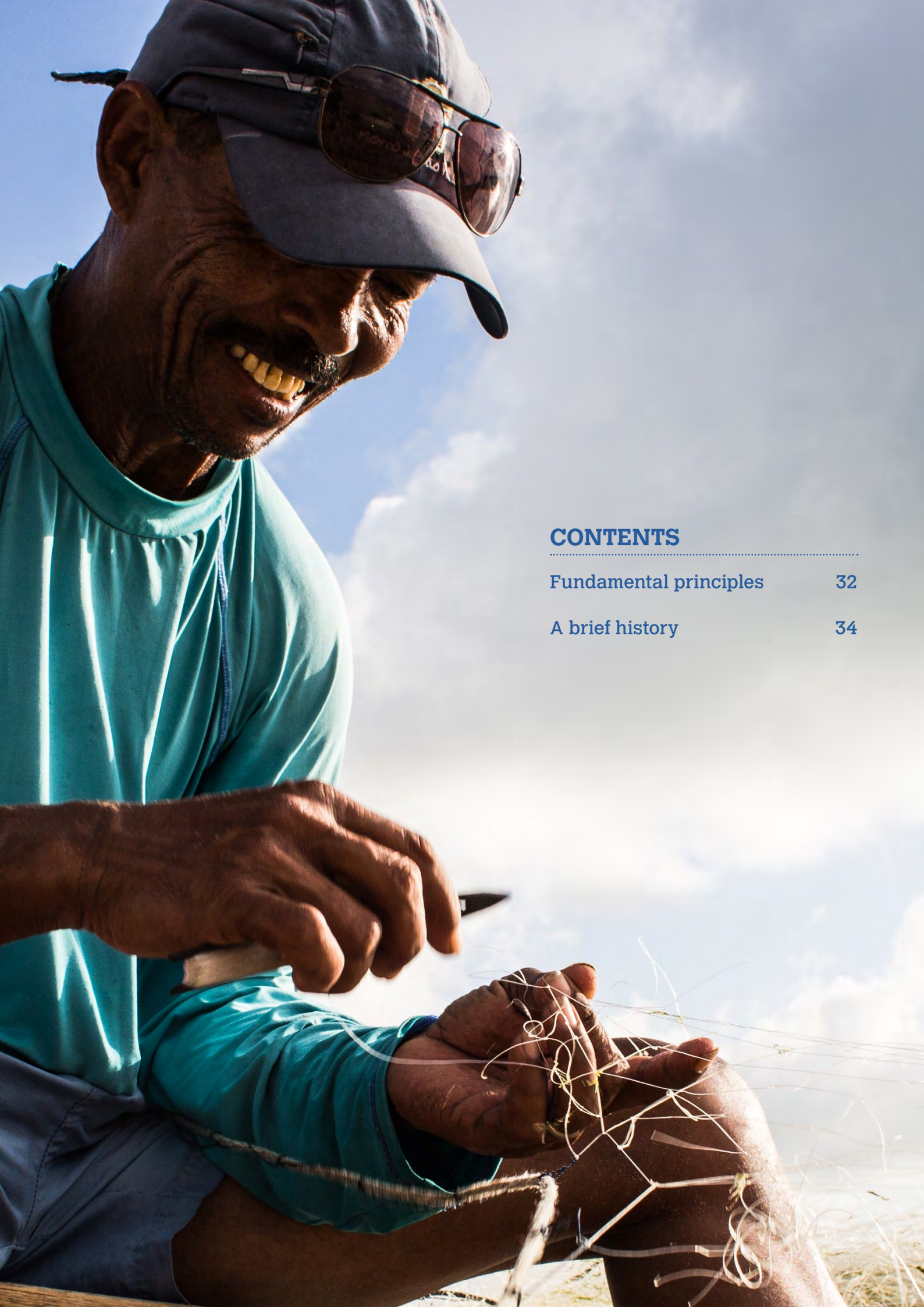
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What we stand for

Simple, fundamental principles form the foundations of the multilateral trading system. These principles have lain at the core of all WTO activities since its creation in 1995.

A fisherman repairs his fishing net in Maceió, Brazil.





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What we stand for



Improving people's lives

The fundamental goal of the WTO is to improve the welfare of people around the world. The WTO's founding Marrakesh Agreement recognizes that trade should be conducted with a view to raising standards of living, ensuring full employment and increasing real income while allowing for the optimal use of the world's resources.



Inclusive trade

The WTO seeks to build a more inclusive trading system that will allow more women and small businesses to participate in trade and to reap the economic benefits of global trading. The WTO also recognizes the importance of addressing the digital divide so that economies across the world can take advantage of the opportunities provided by the digital economy.



Protection of the environment

Protection and preservation of the environment are fundamental goals of the WTO. The WTO agreements permit members to take measures to protect not only public, animal and plant health but also the environment. However, these measures must be applied in the same way to both local and foreign businesses.



Predictability and transparency

Foreign companies, investors and governments should be confident that trade barriers will not be raised arbitrarily. With stability and predictability provided by WTO rules, investment is encouraged, jobs are created and consumers can fully enjoy the benefits of competition – such as increased choice and lower prices.



Opening trade

The WTO seeks to ensure that trade flows as smoothly, predictably and freely as possible. Lowering trade barriers is an obvious way to encourage trade; these barriers include customs duties – or tariffs – and measures such as import bans.



Fair competition

“Unfair” practices, such as export subsidies and dumping products at below normal value to gain market share, are discouraged. WTO rules try to establish what is fair or unfair and how governments can respond, in particular by charging additional import duties calculated to compensate for damage caused by unfair trade.



Non-discrimination

Under WTO rules, a WTO member should not discriminate between its trading partners, and should not discriminate between its own and foreign products, services or citizens.



Support for less developed economies

Over three-quarters of WTO members are developing economies or in transition to market economies. The WTO agreements give them transition periods to adjust to WTO provisions and, in the case of the Trade Facilitation Agreement, provide for practical support for implementation of the Agreement.



Partnerships

The WTO maintains regular dialogue with civil society, labour unions, universities, the business community and other intergovernmental organizations to enhance cooperation and build partnerships. The WTO's Trade Dialogues initiative and the annual Public Forum provide a platform for civil society, business groups and others to discuss the latest developments in world trade and to propose ways of enhancing the multilateral trading system.

World Trade Organization

A brief history

The WTO began life on 1 January 1995, succeeding the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) which had regulated world trade since 1948. Over the past 28 years, the WTO has made an important contribution to the strength and stability of the global economy, helping to boost trade growth, improve people's lives and support the integration of developing economies into the trading system. The following timeline looks back at some of the WTO's major achievements.



February

Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala becomes the first African and first woman to become Director-General.

October

WTO hosts inaugural **World Cotton Day** to highlight central role of cotton in developing economies.

2021

2019

2022

June

12th Ministerial Conference results in an unprecedented package of decisions, including a landmark Fisheries Subsidies Agreement.

December

Negotiations on **services domestic regulation** conclude successfully, with increased market access for service providers.

2020



November

WTO marks its 25th anniversary.

2018

January

WTO and UN Environment launch new dialogue on using trade to support **green growth**.



December

First **World Trade Congress on Gender** takes place at the WTO.



January

Amendment to the **TRIPS Agreement** enters into force, easing access to medicines.



December
10th Ministerial Conference results in “**Nairobi Package**”, including abolition of agricultural export subsidies and expansion of **Information Technology Agreement**.



December

9th Ministerial Conference in Bali, Indonesia, sees conclusion of negotiations on landmark **Trade Facilitation Agreement**.

2017

2015

2013

February

Trade Facilitation Agreement enters into force.

December

11th Ministerial Conference in Buenos Aires, Argentina, sees launch of new areas of negotiations.



2014

April

Revised Government Procurement Agreement enters into force, adding new markets.

2012

November

Historic signing ends 20 years of **EU-Latin American banana dispute**, the longest-running dispute in WTO history.



WHAT WE STAND FOR



September
First WTO Open Day in Geneva.

September
First WTO Public Forum takes place in Geneva.



January
WTO Chairs Programme launched to support trade-related work of universities in developing economies.



2010

2007

2011

December
Expansion of Agreement on Government Procurement agreed at **8th Ministerial Conference** in Geneva.

2009

November
7th Ministerial Conference in Geneva takes stock of WTO's contribution to growth.

2006

November
First Global Review of Aid for Trade takes place in Geneva.





May
2nd Ministerial Conference in Geneva marks 50 years of the GATT.



December
WTO holds first Ministerial Conference in Singapore.

December
6th Ministerial Conference in Hong Kong, China, sees launch of Aid for Trade initiative.

November
4th Ministerial Conference in Doha, Qatar, sees launch of new round of trade negotiations known as the Doha Development Agenda.

2005

2001

1998

1996

2003



1999

November
3rd Ministerial Conference in Seattle, United States, ends with breakdown in negotiations amid public protests. DG Moore reaffirms WTO commitment to **poverty alleviation**.

1997

July
Information Technology Agreement enters into force, slashing tariffs on IT goods

1995

January
 The WTO is born on **1 January**.



September
5th Ministerial Conference in Cancún, Mexico, welcomes Cambodia and Nepal as first least-developed countries to join WTO since its establishment.

