

The WTO is 'member-driven', with decisions taken by consensus among all member governments

1. Whose WTO is it anyway?

The WTO is run by its member governments. All major decisions are made by the membership as a whole, either by ministers (who meet at least once every two years) or by their ambassadors or delegates (who meet regularly in Geneva). Decisions are normally taken by consensus.

In this respect, the WTO is different from some other international organizations such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. In the WTO, power is not delegated to a board of directors or the organization's head.

When WTO rules impose disciplines on countries' policies, that is the outcome of negotiations among WTO members. The rules are enforced by the members themselves under agreed procedures that they negotiated, including the possibility of trade sanctions. But those sanctions are imposed by member countries, and authorized by the membership as a whole. This is quite different from other agencies whose bureaucracies can, for example, influence a country's policy by threatening to withhold credit.

Reaching decisions by consensus among some 150 members can be difficult. Its main advantage is that decisions made this way are more acceptable to all members. And despite the difficulty, some remarkable agreements have been reached. Nevertheless, proposals for the creation of a smaller executive body — perhaps like a board of directors each representing different groups of countries — are heard periodically. But for now, the WTO is a member-driven, consensus-based organization.

Highest authority: the Ministerial Conference

So, the WTO belongs to its members. The countries make their decisions through various councils and committees, whose membership consists of all WTO members. Topmost is the ministerial conference which has to meet at least once every two years. The Ministerial Conference can take decisions on all matters under any of the multilateral trade agreements.

ALTERNATIVE VIEW

'The WTO will likely suffer from slow and cumbersome policy-making and management — an organization with more than 120 member countries cannot be run by a "committee of the whole". Mass management simply does not lend itself to operational efficiency or serious policy discussion.

Both the IMF and the World Bank have an executive board to direct the executive officers of the organization, with permanent participation by the major industrial countries and weighted voting. The WTO will require a comparable structure to operate efficiently. ... [But] the political orientation of smaller ... members remains strongly opposed.'

Jeffrey J Schott

Institute for International Economics,
Washington

ON THE WEBSITE:

 www.wto.org > the WTO > decision making
> ministerial conferences



Voting is possible, too

The WTO continues GATT's tradition of making decisions not by voting but by consensus. This allows all members to ensure their interests are properly considered even though, on occasion, they may decide to join a consensus in the overall interests of the multilateral trading system.

Where consensus is not possible, the WTO agreement allows for voting — a vote being won with a majority of the votes cast and on the basis of "one country, one vote".

The WTO Agreement envisages four specific situations involving voting:

- An interpretation of any of the multilateral trade agreements can be adopted by a majority of three quarters of WTO members.
- The Ministerial Conference can waive an obligation imposed on a particular member by a multilateral agreement, also through a three-quarters majority.
- Decisions to amend provisions of the multilateral agreements can be adopted through approval either by all members or by a two-thirds majority depending on the nature of the provision concerned. But the amendments only take effect for those WTO members which accept them.
- A decision to admit a new member is taken by a two-thirds majority in the Ministerial Conference, or the General Council in between conferences.

Goods Council's committees

Market access
Agriculture
Sanitary and phytosanitary measures
Textiles Monitoring Body
Technical barriers to trade
Subsidies and countervail
Anti-dumping
Customs valuation
Rules of origin
Import licensing
Investment measures
Safeguards
State trading (working party)

Second level: General Council in three guises

Day-to-day work in between the ministerial conferences is handled by three bodies:

- The General Council
- The Dispute Settlement Body
- The Trade Policy Review Body

All three are in fact the same — the Agreement Establishing the WTO states they are all the General Council, although they meet under different terms of reference. Again, all three consist of all WTO members. They report to the Ministerial Conference.

The General Council acts on behalf of the Ministerial Conference on all WTO affairs. It meets as the Dispute Settlement Body and the Trade Policy Review Body to oversee procedures for settling disputes between members and to analyze members' trade policies.



ON THE WEBSITE:

www.wto.org > the WTO > General Council

Third level: councils for each broad area of trade, and more

Three more councils, each handling a different broad area of trade, report to the General Council:

- The Council for Trade in Goods (**Goods Council**)
- The Council for Trade in Services (**Services Council**)
- The Council for Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (**TRIPS Council**)

As their names indicate, the three are responsible for the workings of the WTO agreements dealing with their respective areas of trade. Again they consist of all WTO members. The three also have subsidiary bodies (*see below*).

Six other bodies report to the General Council. The scope of their coverage is smaller, so they are "committees". But they still consist of all WTO members. They cover issues such as trade and development, the environment, regional trading arrangements, and administrative issues. The Singapore Ministerial Conference in December 1996 decided to create new working groups to look at investment and competition policy, transparency in government procurement, and trade facilitation.

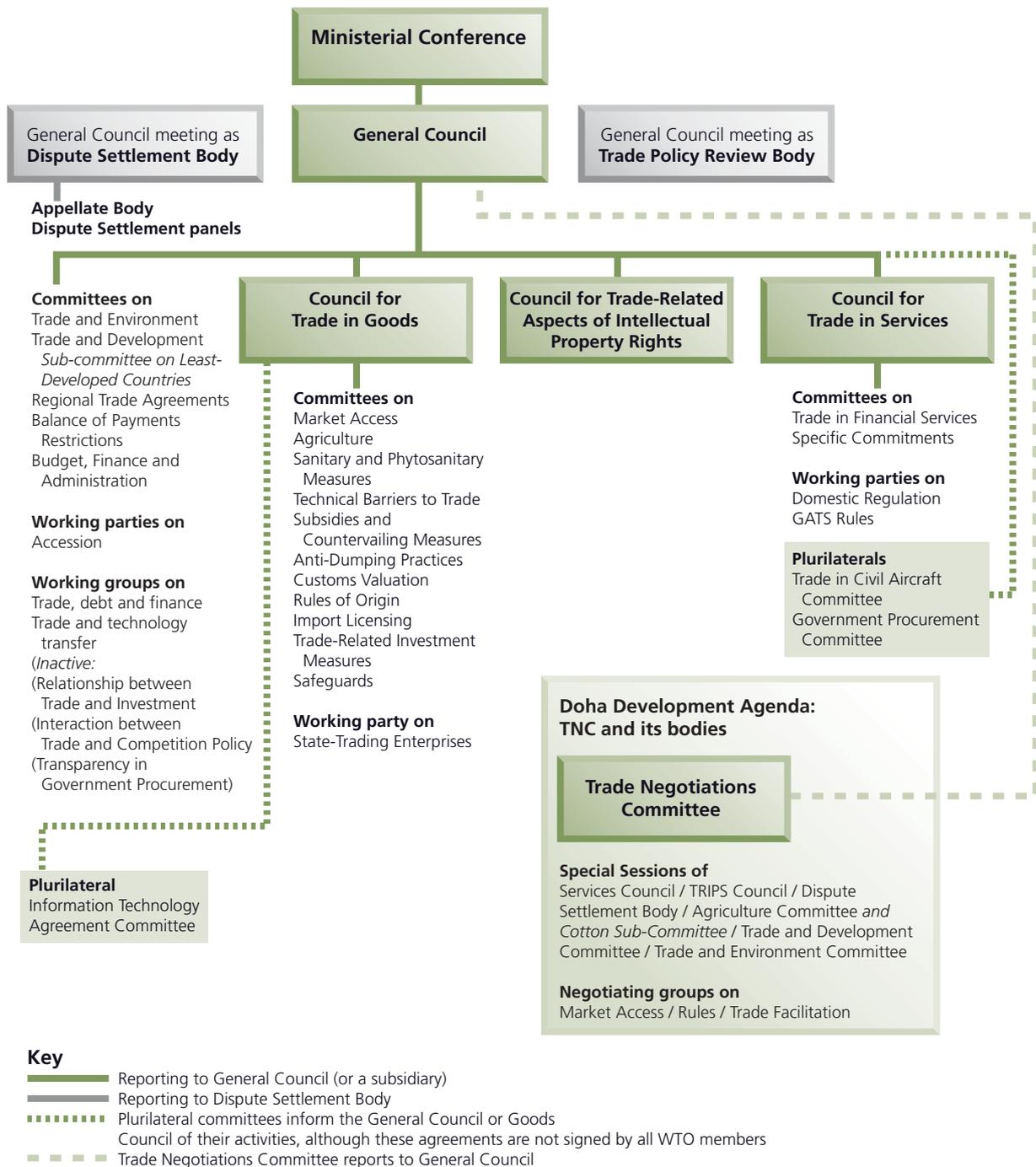
Two more subsidiary bodies dealing with the plurilateral agreements (which are not signed by all WTO members) keep the General Council informed of their activities regularly.

Fourth level: down to the nitty-gritty

Each of the higher level councils has subsidiary bodies. The **Goods Council** has 11 committees dealing with specific subjects (such as agriculture, market access, subsidies, anti-dumping measures and so on). Again, these consist of all member countries. Also reporting to the Goods Council is the Textiles Monitoring Body, which consists of a chairman and 10 members acting in their personal capacities, and groups dealing with notifications (governments informing the WTO about current and new policies or measures) and state trading enterprises.

WTO structure

All WTO members may participate in all councils, committees, etc, except Appellate Body, Dispute Settlement panels, Textiles Monitoring Body, and plurilateral committees.



The General Council also meets as the Trade Policy Review Body and Dispute Settlement Body

The **Services Council's** subsidiary bodies deal with financial services, domestic regulations, GATS rules and specific commitments.

At the General Council level, the **Dispute Settlement Body** also has two subsidiaries: the dispute settlement “panels” of experts appointed to adjudicate on unresolved disputes, and the Appellate Body that deals with appeals.

‘HODs’ and other bods: the need for informality

Important breakthroughs are rarely made in formal meetings of these bodies, least of all in the higher level councils. Since decisions are made by consensus, without voting, informal consultations within the WTO play a vital role in bringing a vastly diverse membership round to an agreement.

One step away from the formal meetings are informal meetings that still include the full membership, such as those of the Heads of Delegations (HOD). More difficult issues have to be thrashed out in smaller groups. A common recent practice is for the chairperson of a negotiating group to attempt to forge a compromise by holding consultations with delegations individually, in twos or threes, or in groups of 20–30 of the most interested delegations.

These smaller meetings have to be handled sensitively. The key is to ensure that everyone is kept informed about what is going on (the process must be “transparent”) even if they are not in a particular consultation or meeting, and that they have an opportunity to participate or provide input (it must be “inclusive”).

One term has become controversial, but more among some outside observers than among delegations. The “Green Room” is a phrase taken from the informal name of the director-general’s conference room. It is used to refer to meetings of 20–40 delegations, usually at the level of heads of delegations. These meetings can take place elsewhere, such as at Ministerial Conferences, and can be called by the minister chairing the conference as well as the director-general. Similar smaller group consultations can be organized by the chairs of committees negotiating individual subjects, although the term Green Room is not usually used for these.

In the past delegations have sometimes felt that Green Room meetings could lead to compromises being struck behind their backs. So, extra efforts are made to ensure that the process is handled correctly, with regular reports back to the full membership.

The way countries now negotiate has helped somewhat. In order to increase their bargaining power, countries have formed coalitions. In some subjects such as agriculture virtually all countries are members of at least one coalition — and in many cases, several coalitions. This means that all countries can be represented in the process if the coordinators and other key players are present. The coordinators also take responsibility for both “transparency” and “inclusiveness” by keeping their coalitions informed and by taking the positions negotiated within their alliances.

In the end, decisions have to be taken by all members and by consensus. The membership as a whole would resist attempts to impose the will of a small group. No one has been able to find an alternative way of achieving consensus on difficult issues, because it is virtually impossible for members to change their positions voluntarily in meetings of the full membership.

Market access negotiations also involve small groups, but for a completely different reason. The final outcome is a multilateral package of individual countries’ commitments, but those commitments are the result of numerous bilateral, informal bargaining sessions, which depend on individual countries’ interests. (Examples include the traditional tariff negotiations, and market access talks in services.)

Same people, different hats?

No, not exactly.

Formally, all of these councils and committees consist of the full membership of the WTO. But that does not mean they are the same, or that the distinctions are purely bureaucratic.

In practice the people participating in the various councils and committees are different because different levels of seniority and different areas of expertise are needed.

Heads of missions in Geneva (usually ambassadors) normally represent their countries at the General Council level. Some of the committees can be highly specialized and sometimes governments send expert officials from their capital cities to participate in these meetings.

Even at the level of the Goods, Services and TRIPS councils, many delegations assign different officials to cover the different meetings.



So, informal consultations in various forms play a vital role in allowing consensus to be reached, but they do not appear in organization charts, precisely because they are informal.

They are not separate from the formal meetings, however. They are necessary for making formal decisions in the councils and committees. Nor are the formal meetings unimportant. They are the forums for exchanging views, putting countries' positions on the record, and ultimately for confirming decisions. The art of achieving agreement among all WTO members is to strike an appropriate balance, so that a breakthrough achieved among only a few countries can be acceptable to the rest of the membership.

2. Membership, alliances and bureaucracy

All members have joined the system as a result of negotiation and therefore membership means a balance of rights and obligations. They enjoy the privileges that other member countries give to them and the security that the trading rules provide. In return, they had to make commitments to open their markets and to abide by the rules — those commitments were the result of the membership (or “accession”) negotiations. Countries negotiating membership are WTO “observers”.

How to join the WTO: the accession process

Any state or customs territory having full autonomy in the conduct of its trade policies may join (“accede to”) the WTO, but WTO members must agree on the terms. Broadly speaking the application goes through four stages:

- **First, “tell us about yourself”.** The government applying for membership has to describe all aspects of its trade and economic policies that have a bearing on WTO agreements. This is submitted to the WTO in a memorandum which is examined by the working party dealing with the country’s application. These working parties are open to all WTO members.
- **Second, “work out with us individually what you have to offer”.** When the working party has made sufficient progress on principles and policies, parallel bilateral talks begin between the prospective new member and individual countries. They are bilateral because different countries have different trading interests. These talks cover tariff rates and specific market access commitments, and other policies in goods and services. The new member’s commitments are to apply equally to all WTO members under normal non-discrimination rules, even though they are negotiated bilaterally. In other words, the talks determine the benefits (in the form of export opportunities and guarantees) other WTO members can expect when the new member joins. (The talks can be highly complicated. It has been said that in some cases the negotiations are almost as large as an entire round of multilateral trade negotiations.)
- **Third, “let’s draft membership terms”.** Once the working party has completed its examination of the applicant’s trade regime, and the parallel bilateral market access negotiations are complete, the working party finalizes the terms of accession. These appear in a report, a draft membership treaty (“protocol of accession”) and lists (“schedules”) of the member-to-be’s commitments.
- **Finally, “the decision”.** The final package, consisting of the report, protocol and lists of commitments, is presented to the WTO General Council or the Ministerial Conference. If a two-thirds majority of WTO members vote in favour, the applicant is free to sign the protocol and to accede to the organization. In many cases, the country’s own parliament or legislature has to ratify the agreement before membership is complete.



ON THE WEBSITE:

www.wto.org > the WTO > accessions

The Quad, the Quint, the Six and ‘not’

Some of the most difficult negotiations have needed an initial breakthrough in talks among four to six “major” members.

Once upon a time, there was the “Quadrilaterals” or the “Quad”:

- Canada
- European Union
- Japan
- United States

Since the turn of the century and the launch of the Doha Round, developing countries’ voices have increased considerably, bringing in Brazil and India — and Australia as a representative of the Cairns Group. Japan remains in the picture not only in its own right, but also as a member of the G-10 group in agriculture.

Since 2005, four, five or six of the following have got together to try to break deadlocks, particularly in agriculture:

- Australia
- Brazil
- European Union
- India
- Japan
- United States

They have been called “the new Quad”, the “Four/Five Interested Parties” (FIPS), the “Quint” and the “G-6.” The Doha Round was suspended in July 2006 because the six could not agree.

Afterwards an alternative group of six, sometimes called the “non-G-6” or the “Oslo Group” tried their hand at compromise, sometimes listed in reverse order to emphasise their “alternative” nature — Norway, New Zealand, Kenya, Indonesia, Chile, Canada

European Union

The EU is a WTO member in its own right as are each of its 27 member states — making 28 WTO members.

While the member states coordinate their position in Brussels and Geneva, the European Commission alone speaks for the EU at almost all WTO meetings. For this reason, in most issues WTO materials refer to the EU or the more legally-correct EC.

However, sometimes references are made to the specific member states, particularly where their laws differ. This is the case in some disputes when an EU member's law or measure is cited, or in notifications of EU member countries' laws, such as in intellectual property (TRIPS). Sometimes individuals' nationalities are identified, such as for WTO committee chairpersons.

The Cairns Group

From four continents, members ranging from OECD countries to the least developed:

Argentina
Australia
Bolivia
Brazil
Canada
Chile
Colombia
Costa Rica
Guatemala
Indonesia
Malaysia
New Zealand
Pakistan
Paraguay
Peru
Philippines
South Africa
Thailand
Uruguay

Representing us ...

The work of the WTO is undertaken by representatives of member governments but its roots lie in the everyday activity of industry and commerce. Trade policies and negotiating positions are prepared in capitals, usually taking into account advice from private firms, business organizations, farmers, consumers and other interest groups.

Most countries have a diplomatic mission in Geneva, sometimes headed by a special ambassador to the WTO. Officials from the missions attend meetings of the many councils, committees, working parties and negotiating groups at WTO headquarters. Sometimes expert representatives are sent directly from capitals to put forward their governments' views on specific questions.

Representing groups of countries ...

Increasingly, countries are getting together to form groups and alliances in the WTO. In many cases they even speak with one voice using a single spokesman or negotiating team. In the agriculture negotiations, well over 20 coalitions have submitted proposals or negotiated with a common position, most of them still active. The increasing number of coalitions involving developing countries reflects the broader spread of bargaining power in the WTO. One group is seen as politically symbolic of this change, the G-20, which includes Argentina, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, South Africa, Thailand and many others, but there are other, overlapping "Gs" too, and one "C" — the Cotton Four (C-4), an alliance of sub-Saharan countries lobbying for trade reform in the sector.

Coalition-building is partly the natural result of economic integration — more customs unions, free trade areas and common markets are being set up around the world. It is also seen as a means for smaller countries to increase their bargaining power in negotiations with their larger trading partners and to ensure they are represented when consultations are held among smaller groups of members. Sometimes when groups of countries adopt common positions consensus can be reached more easily. Sometimes the groups are specifically created to compromise and break a deadlock rather than to stick to a common position. But there are no hard and fast rules about the impact of groupings in the WTO.

The largest and most comprehensive group is the **European Union** and its 27 member states. The EU is a customs union with a single external trade policy and tariff. While the member states coordinate their position in Brussels and Geneva, the European Commission alone speaks for the EU at almost all WTO meetings. The EU is a WTO member in its own right as are each of its member states.

A lesser degree of economic integration has so far been achieved by WTO members in the **Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN)** — Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, Singapore and Viet Nam. (The remaining member, Laos is applying to join the WTO.) Nevertheless, they have many common trade interests and are frequently able to coordinate positions and to speak with a single voice. The role of spokesman rotates among ASEAN members and can be shared out according to topic. **MERCOSUR, the Southern Common Market** (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela, with Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru as associate members), has a similar set-up.

More recent efforts at regional economic integration have not yet reached the point where their constituents frequently have a single spokesman on WTO issues. An example is the **North American Free Trade Agreement: NAFTA** (Canada, US and

Mexico). Among other groupings which occasionally present unified statements are the **African Group**, the **least-developed countries**, the **African, Caribbean and Pacific Group (ACP)** and the **Latin American Economic System (SELA)**.

A well-known alliance of a different kind is the **Cairns Group**. It was set up just before the Uruguay Round began in 1986 to argue for agricultural trade liberalization. The group became an important third force in the farm talks and remains in operation. Its members are diverse, but sharing a common objective — that agriculture has to be liberalized — and the common view that they lack the resources to compete with larger countries in domestic and export subsidies.

The WTO Secretariat and budget

The WTO Secretariat is located in Geneva. It has around 630 staff and is headed by a director-general. Its responsibilities include:

- Administrative and technical support for WTO delegate bodies (councils, committees, working parties, negotiating groups) for negotiations and the implementation of agreements.
- Technical support for developing countries, and especially the least-developed.
- Trade performance and trade policy analysis by WTO economists and statisticians.
- Assistance from legal staff in the resolution of trade disputes involving the interpretation of WTO rules and precedents.
- Dealing with accession negotiations for new members and providing advice to governments considering membership.

Some of the WTO's divisions are responsible for supporting particular committees: the Agriculture Division assists the committees on agriculture and on sanitary and phytosanitary measures, for example. Other divisions provide broader support for WTO activities: technical cooperation, economic analysis, and information, for example.

The WTO budget is over 180 million Swiss francs with individual contributions calculated on the basis of shares in the total trade conducted by WTO members. Part of the WTO budget also goes to the International Trade Centre.



3. The Secretariat

The WTO Secretariat is headed by a director-general. Divisions come directly under the director-general or one of his deputies.

Director-general
Pascal Lamy

Office of the director-general
Council and Trade Negotiations Committee Division:
General Council, Dispute Settlement Body,
Trade Negotiations Committee (DDA), etc
Office of Internal Audit
Human Resources Division
Information and External Relations Division

Deputy director-general
Alejandro Jara

Accessions Division:
negotiations to join the WTO
Economic Research and Statistics Division: economic analysis
and research, trade and finance, trade statistics
Legal Affairs Division: Dispute settlement, etc
Rules Division:
anti-dumping, subsidies, safeguards, state trading, civil aircraft, etc

Deputy director-general
Valentine Rugwabiza

Development Division:
trade and development, least-developed countries, Aid for Trade
Technical Cooperation Audit
Trade Policies Review Division: trade policy reviews, regional
trade agreements
Institute for Training and Technical Cooperation:
trade-related technical assistance

Deputy director-general
Harsha Vardhana Singh

Agriculture and Commodities Division:
agriculture, sanitary and phytosanitary measures, etc
Trade and Environment Division:
trade and environment, technical barriers to trade, etc
Trade in Services Division: GATS etc.

Deputy director-general
Rufus Yerxa

Administration and General Services Division:
budget, finance and administration
Informatics Division
Intellectual Property Division:
TRIPS, competition and government procurement
**Language, Documentation and Information Management
Division**
Market Access Division:
Goods Council, market access, tariffs, customs valuation,
non-tariff measures, import licensing, rules of origin,
preshipment inspection

4. Special policies

The WTO's main functions are to do with trade negotiations and the enforcement of negotiated multilateral trade rules (including dispute settlement). Special focus is given to four particular policies supporting these functions:

- Assisting developing and transition economies
- Specialized help for export promotion
- Cooperation in global economic policy-making
- Routine notification when members introduce new trade measures or alter old ones.

Assisting developing and transition economies

Developing countries make up about three quarters of the total WTO membership. Together with countries currently in the process of "transition" to market-based economies, they play an increasingly important role in the WTO.

Therefore, much attention is paid to the special needs and problems of developing and transition economies. The WTO Secretariat's Training and Technical Cooperation Institute organizes a number of programmes to explain how the system works and to help train government officials and negotiators. Some of the events are in Geneva, others are held in the countries concerned. A number of the programmes are organized jointly with other international organizations. Some take the form of training courses. In other cases individual assistance might be offered.

The subjects can be anything from help in dealing with negotiations to join the WTO and implementing WTO commitments to guidance in participating effectively in multilateral negotiations. Developing countries, especially the least-developed among them, are helped with trade and tariff data relating to their own export interests and to their participation in WTO bodies.

ON THE WEBSITE:



www.wto.org > trade topics > development > WTO Training Institute

Specialized help for exporting: the International Trade Centre

The International Trade Centre was established by GATT in 1964 at the request of the developing countries to help them promote their exports. It is jointly operated by the WTO and the United Nations, the latter acting through UNCTAD (the UN Conference on Trade and Development).

The centre responds to requests from developing countries for assistance in formulating and implementing export promotion programmes as well as import operations and techniques. It provides information and advice on export markets and marketing techniques. It assists in establishing export promotion and marketing services, and in training personnel required for these services. The centre's help is freely available to the least-developed countries.

The WTO in global economic policy-making

An important aspect of the WTO's mandate is to cooperate with the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and other multilateral institutions to achieve greater coherence in global economic policy-making. A separate Ministerial Declaration was adopted at the Marrakesh Ministerial Meeting in April 1994 to underscore this objective.

The declaration envisages an increased contribution by the WTO to achieving greater coherence in global economic policy-making. It recognizes that different aspects of economic policy are linked, and it calls on the WTO to develop its cooperation with the international organizations responsible for monetary and financial matters — the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

The declaration also recognizes the contribution that trade liberalization makes to the growth and development of national economies. It says this is an increasingly important component in the success of the economic adjustment programmes which many WTO members are undertaking, even though it may often involve significant social costs during the transition.

Transparency (1): keeping the WTO informed

Often the only way to monitor whether commitments are being implemented fully is by requiring countries to notify the WTO promptly when they take relevant actions. Many WTO agreements say member governments have to notify the WTO Secretariat of new or modified trade measures. For example, details of any new anti-dumping or countervailing legislation, new technical standards affecting trade, changes to regulations affecting trade in services, and laws or regulations concerning the intellectual property agreement — they all have to be notified to the appropriate body of the WTO. Special groups are also established to examine new free-trade arrangements and the trade policies of countries joining as new members.

Transparency (2): keeping the public informed

The main public access to the WTO is the website, www.wto.org. News of the latest developments are published daily. Background information and explanations of a wide range of issues — including “Understanding the WTO” — are also available. And those wanting to follow the nitty-gritty of WTO work can consult or download an ever-increasing number of official documents, now over 150,000, in Documents Online.



On 14 May 2002, the General Council decided to make more documents available to the public as soon as they are circulated. It also decided that the minority of documents that are restricted should be made public more quickly — after about two months, instead of the previous six. This was the second major decision on transparency. On 18 July 1996, the General Council had agreed to make more information about WTO activities available publicly and decided that public information, including derestricted WTO documents, would be accessible on-line.

The objective is to make more information available to the public. An important channel is through the media, with regular briefings on all major meetings for journalists in Geneva — and increasingly by email and other means for journalists around the world.

Meanwhile, over the years, the WTO Secretariat has enhanced its dialogue with civil society — non-governmental organizations (NGOs) interested in the WTO, parliamentarians, students, academics, and other groups.

In the run-up to the Doha Ministerial Conference in 2001, WTO members proposed and agreed on several new activities involving NGOs. In 2002, the WTO Secretariat increased the number of briefings for NGOs on all major WTO meetings and began listing the briefing schedules on its website. NGOs are also regularly invited to the WTO to present their recent policy research and analysis directly to member governments.

A monthly list of NGO position papers received by the Secretariat is compiled and circulated for the information of member governments. A monthly electronic news bulletin is also available to NGOs, enabling access to publicly available WTO information.

ON THE WEBSITE:

www.wto.org > [community/forums](http://www.wto.org/community/forums)



Current WTO members

153 governments, since July 2008, with date of membership (“g” = the 51 original GATT members who joined after 1 January 1995; “n” = new members joining the WTO through a working party negotiation):

Albania 8 September 2000 (n)
Angola 1 December 1996 (g)
Antigua and Barbuda 1 January 1995
Argentina 1 January 1995
Armenia 5 February 2003 (n)
Australia 1 January 1995
Austria 1 January 1995
Bahrain 1 January 1995
Bangladesh 1 January 1995
Barbados 1 January 1995
Belgium 1 January 1995
Belize 1 January 1995
Benin 22 February 1996 (g)
Bolivia, Plurinational State of 13 September 1995 (g)
Botswana 31 May 1995 (g)
Brazil 1 January 1995
Brunei Darussalam 1 January 1995
Bulgaria 1 December 1996 (n)
Burkina Faso 3 June 1995 (g)
Burundi 23 July 1995 (g)
Cambodia 13 October 2004 (n)
Cameroon 13 December 1995 (g)
Canada 1 January 1995
Cape Verde 23 July 2008
Central African Republic 31 May 1995 (g)
Chad 19 October 1996 (g)
Chile 1 January 1995
China 11 December 2001 (n)
Colombia 30 April 1995 (g)
Congo 27 March 1997 (g)
Costa Rica 1 January 1995
Côte d’Ivoire 1 January 1995
Croatia 30 November 2000 (n)
Cuba 20 April 1995 (g)
Cyprus 30 July 1995 (g)
Czech Republic 1 January 1995
Democratic Republic of the Congo 1 January 1997 (g)
Denmark 1 January 1995
Djibouti 31 May 1995 (g)
Dominica 1 January 1995
Dominican Republic 9 March 1995 (g)
Ecuador 21 January 1996 (n)
Egypt 30 June 1995 (g)
El Salvador 7 May 1995 (g)
Estonia 13 November 1999 (n)
European Union 1 January 1995
Fiji 14 January 1996 (g)
Finland 1 January 1995
Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 4 April 2003 (n)
France 1 January 1995
Gabon 1 January 1995
Gambia 23 October 1996 (g)
Georgia 14 June 2000 (n)
Germany 1 January 1995
Ghana 1 January 1995
Greece 1 January 1995
Grenada 22 February 1996 (g)
Guatemala 21 July 1995 (g)
Guinea Bissau 31 May 1995 (g)
Guinea 25 October 1995 (g)
Guyana 1 January 1995
Haiti 30 January 1996 (g)
Honduras 1 January 1995
Hong Kong, China 1 January 1995
Hungary 1 January 1995
Iceland 1 January 1995
India 1 January 1995
Indonesia 1 January 1995
Ireland 1 January 1995
Israel 21 April 1995 (g)
Italy 1 January 1995
Jamaica 9 March 1995 (g)
Japan 1 January 1995
Jordan 11 April 2000 (n)
Kenya 1 January 1995
Korea 1 January 1995
Kuwait 1 January 1995
Kyrgyz Republic 20 December 1998 (n)
Latvia 10 February 1999 (n)
Lesotho 31 May 1995 (g)
Liechtenstein 1 September 1995 (g)
Lithuania 31 May 2001 (n)
Luxembourg 1 January 1995
Macao, China 1 January 1995
Madagascar 17 November 1995 (g)
Malawi 31 May 1995 (g)
Malaysia 1 January 1995
Maldives 31 May 1995 (g)
Mali 31 May 1995 (g)
Malta 1 January 1995
Mauritania 31 May 1995 (g)
Mauritius 1 January 1995
Mexico 1 January 1995
Moldova 26 July 2001 (n)
Mongolia 29 January 1997 (n)
Morocco 1 January 1995
Mozambique 26 August 1995 (g)
Myanmar 1 January 1995
Namibia 1 January 1995
Netherlands 1 January 1995
Nepal 23 April 2004 (n)
New Zealand 1 January 1995
Nicaragua 3 September 1995 (g)
Niger 13 December 1996 (g)
Nigeria 1 January 1995
Norway 1 January 1995
Oman 9 November 2000 (n)
Pakistan 1 January 1995
Panama 6 September 1997 (n)
Papua New Guinea 9 June 1996 (g)
Paraguay 1 January 1995
Peru 1 January 1995
Philippines 1 January 1995
Poland 1 July 1995 (g)
Portugal 1 January 1995
Qatar 13 January 1996 (g)
Romania 1 January 1995
Rwanda 22 May 1996 (g)
Saint Kitts and Nevis 21 February 1996 (n)
Saint Lucia 1 January 1995
Saint Vincent & the Grenadines 1 January 1995
Saudi Arabia, Kingdom of 11 December 2005
Senegal 1 January 1995
Sierra Leone 23 July 1995 (g)
Singapore 1 January 1995
Slovak Republic 1 January 1995
Slovenia 30 July 1995 (g)
Solomon Islands 26 July 1996 (g)
South Africa 1 January 1995
Spain 1 January 1995
Sri Lanka 1 January 1995
Suriname 1 January 1995
Swaziland 1 January 1995
Sweden 1 January 1995
Switzerland 1 July 1995 (g)
Chinese Taipei 1 January 2002 (n)
Tanzania 1 January 1995
Thailand 1 January 1995
Togo 31 May 1995 (g)
Trinidad and Tobago 1 March 1995 (g)
Tonga 27 July 2007
Tunisia 29 March 1995 (g)
Turkey 26 March 1995 (g)
Uganda 1 January 1995
Ukraine 16 May 2008
United Arab Emirates 10 April 1996 (g)
United Kingdom 1 January 1995
United States 1 January 1995
Uruguay 1 January 1995
Venezuela, Bolivarian Republic of 1 January 1995
Viet Nam 11 January 2007
Zambia 1 January 1995
Zimbabwe 3 March 1995 (g)

Observers

Afghanistan
 Algeria
 Andorra
 Azerbaijan
 Bahamas
 Belarus
 Bhutan
 Bosnia and Herzegovina
 Comoros
 Equatorial Guinea
 Ethiopia
 Holy See (Vatican)
 Iran
 Iraq
 Kazakhstan
 Lao People's Democratic Republic
 Lebanese Republic
 Libya
 Montenegro
 Republic of Liberia
 Russian Federation
 Samoa
 Sao Tome and Principe
 Serbia
 Seychelles
 Sudan
 Syrian Arab Republic
 Tajikistan
 Uzbekistan
 Vanuatu
 Yemen

Note: With the exception of the Holy See, observers must start accession negotiations within five years of becoming observers.



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