

Open-ended thematic session: Improving access to information for MSMEs

WTO room W, March 27, 10:00-13:00

MSMEs in both developed and developing countries face resource challenges when dealing with the intricacies of trade regulations and the search for market opportunities. However, some international organizations have already started to take the initiative to alleviate these challenges. As an example, ITC, WTO and UNCTAD have launched the “**Global Trade Helpdesk**” in Buenos Aires (available at HelpmeTrade.org): a one-stop shop for businesses and policymakers to access trade data and practical information on target markets.

In this context, the *Informal Working Group on MSMEs* has decided to hold a dedicated session in order to discuss policy options on how WTO members can best support existing initiatives as well as additional actions that could create conditions for **better access to information and improved transparency** for smaller trade actors.

Agenda:

Moderator: H.E. Amb. Didier Chambovey of Switzerland

- 1. Opening remarks by Amb. José Luis Cancela of Uruguay and coordinator of the Informal Working Group on MSMEs**
- 2. Challenges and opportunities in building a globally accessible database: the ITC/UNCTAD/WTO Global Trade Helpdesk**

Introductory remarks by:

Mr. Alan WOLFF, Deputy Director General, WTO

Ms. Dorothy TEMBO, Deputy Executive Director, ITC

Discussants:

Mr. Mondher MIMOUNI, Chief Market Analysis and Research, ITC

Mr. Ralf PETERS, Chief Trade Information Section, UNCTAD

Members are invited under this agenda item to address the following questions:

- Do MSMEs in your respective countries face challenges when looking for information needed to trade? If yes, which elements are the most difficult to find?
e.g. *tariffs, trade procedures, TBT and SPS requirements, standards, rules of origin, business contacts, etc.*
- If possible, can you explain the reasons behind these challenges?
e.g. *costs, non-existent information, language barriers, complexity, time constraints, etc.*
- What actions could be undertaken to maximize the impact of initiatives such as the Global Trade Helpdesk? Which type of information do you consider important to include in such a portal?

3. Additional initiatives and national experiences

- What other actions can be undertaken by the members of this group in order to help MSMEs access information?
- Which additional aspects should be considered to address the specific challenges faced by MSMEs in LDCs and developing countries?