

INFORMAL WORKING GROUP ON MSMES

To: All Members of the WTO and Observers
From: H.E. Dr. Yusuf Bucheeri, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Bahrain
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THE INTERNET AS A TOOL FOR MSMES

WORKSHOP

31 October 2018, 10.00 am to 1.00 pm, Room W

Hosted by The Kingdom of Bahrain

CONTEXT

Recent years have witnessed remarkable developments in the digital economy, creating unprecedented opportunities for cross-border trade. The Internet is enabling Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) to access global markets unlike ever before. Studies show that MSMEs that use on-line platforms are around five times more likely to export than those in the traditional economy. Research also finds that companies connected to the global economy are more productive and contribute to the development of more prosperous communities.

Small businesses and entrepreneurs in developing economies are already at the forefront of this emerging trend. However, Internet-led changes to the composition, nature and speed of global trade are contributing to increasing policy frictions. Today's trade rules – which largely reflect 20th Century patterns of trade – are not always well-suited to supporting the growth of MSME e-commerce.

The 2018 World Trade Report has found that the Internet has contributed to a significant decline in trade costs over the past twenty years and, along with other new technology, is expected to continue this trend in the future. This decline in trade costs can be especially beneficial for MSMEs and firms from developing countries, if appropriate complementary policies are put in place and challenges related to internet and technological access are addressed. Finally, the report discusses how international trade cooperation can help governments harness digital technologies, seize the opportunities that they create, and address the challenges that arise. It highlights the growing number of digital technology provisions in regional trade agreements, provides examples of measures taken by governments, and discusses whether and how international trade cooperation can help governments reap the benefits of digital trade and at the same time achieve their public policy objectives, both now and in the future.

OBJECTIVE

The proposed workshop aims to initiate a discussion to identify policy issues and suggested solutions in this field. With this in mind, after presentations by a panel of experts, the floor will be opened to discussion by Members aimed to address the following guiding questions:

- What are the biggest challenges currently facing MSMEs in your countries in accessing global markets via the internet (e.g. trade costs, infrastructure, regulatory, access to information, technical capacity, etc.)?

- What can be done by the Informal Working Group on MSMEs to address these challenges and support the growth of MSMEs through electronic commerce?
- Can more be done to improve data collection on MSMEs participation in global trade?

AGENDA

10:00-10:20	Opening
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Welcome by Ambassador of Uruguay, H.E. Mr. José Luis Cancela - Opening Remarks by Ambassador of the Kingdom of Bahrain, H.E. Dr. Yusuf Bucheeri 	
10:20-11:00	Key Speakers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emmanuelle Ganne – Senior Analyst, World Trade Organization - Cécile Barayre – Economic Affairs Officer, ICT Policy Section, UNCTAD - Kimberley Botwright – Lead, International Trade and Investment, World Economic Forum - Questions and Answers 	
11:00-12:50	Discussion
<p>Guiding questions for the working session:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the biggest challenges currently facing MSMEs in your countries in accessing global markets via the internet (e.g., trade costs, infrastructure, regulatory, access to information, technical capacity, etc)? • What can be done by the Informal Working Group on MSMEs to address these challenges and support the growth of MSMEs through electronic commerce? • Can more be done to improve data collection on MSMEs' participation in global trade? 	
12:50-13:00	Conclusion
<p>Closing Remarks by Ambassador of the Kingdom of Bahrain, H.E. Dr. Yusuf Bucheeri</p>	
