

ICC AT THE 10TH WTO MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

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Gloomy Prospects as Ministerial Opens

As trade ministers, negotiators and observers converge on Nairobi for the 10th Ministerial Conference (MC10) of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the mood is glum, much like the grey and rainy skies over the Kenyan capital. This is the first WTO ministerial conference held in Sub-Saharan Africa, on this 20th anniversary of the Organization.

This gloomy atmosphere is due to the fact that almost all issues on which some form of progress was expected at the Ministerial are being held up in ongoing discussions among WTO members. Notable among these are the Information Technology Agreement (ITA) 2, which is the subject of “technical” differences between China and other ITA parties, and measures to facilitate market access for least-developed countries, such as duty-free, quota-free access. One ambassador commented that while there were many meetings taking place among delegations, not much had emerged from these so far.



Trade and Development Symposium

Nonetheless, in the Nairobi Hilton -- a few streets away from the Kenyatta Convention Centre where the Ministerial opens on the afternoon of 15 December -- the importance of a strong and effective multilateral system and its contribution to sustainable development is being enthusiastically discussed by over 1000 participants at the Trade and Development Symposium (TDS). Organized by the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development (ICTSD), in partnership with several organizations including ICC, this event has established itself as the main venue for sharing ideas and engaging in dialogue among a broad range of participants during WTO ministerial conferences, including interaction with WTO ambassadors. All the sessions can be viewed at: <http://tds.ictsd.org/>

As they did for the first time at the 2013 Bali Ministerial Conference, ICC and ICTSD have partnered to co-organize the Nairobi Trade and Business Forum (NTBF), as part of the Trade and Development Symposium and during the 10th WTO Ministerial Conference. This edition of the NTBF was organized in collaboration with [TradeMark East Africa](#).

Nairobi Trade and Business Forum

The Nairobi Trade and Business Forum (NTBF) provides a platform for closer engagement between businesses and policy makers. It offers a specially tailored forum for businesses, decision makers and experts nationally, regionally and globally to identify and examine the most critical issues, find new perspectives and build alliances.

ICC participated in the opening plenary panel of the Forum entitled “The Voice of Business in Trade Policy” on the afternoon of 14 December. The session focused on how and what input business should provide to government on shaping trade policy at the national, regional and global levels, on the benefits that international trade presented for African economies, and on the policy challenges

Africa needed to address to be able to maximize these benefits. The entire plenary can be viewed at <http://tds.ictsd.org/content/plenary-voice-business-trade-policy>

On 15 December, as part of the NTBF, ICC participated in a panel organized by the Evian Group -- an international coalition of corporate (including ICC), government and opinion leaders that promotes a better understanding of how multilateral rules and governance can help businesses and societies benefit from economic globalization. The panel, entitled “The future of the WTO: how to rekindle the interest of the private sector”, discussed the need to ensure business support for the multilateral trading system embodied by the WTO. Participants highlighted the value for business of all three pillars of the WTO system (the negotiating pillar, the monitoring/implementation pillar, and the dispute settlement pillar), and how these pillars needed to be mutually supportive for the WTO to function effectively. The panel also discussed possible alternative institutional mechanisms for business-WTO engagement. The entire session can be viewed at: <http://tds.ictsd.org/content/future-wto-how-rekindle-interest-private-sector-0>

“From drifts to deals: Advancing the WTO agenda”

Also as part of the NTBF programme, ICC organized its own panel session entitled “From drifts to deals: Advancing the WTO agenda”, in which business experts from ICC’s Commission on Trade and Investment Policy presented their perspectives on the WTO ministerial conference, and selected issues featured in the ICC/Qatar Chamber World Trade Agenda (WTA) post-Bali business priorities, and illustrated in the report commissioned by the WTA from the Peterson Institute for International Economics. The entire session can be viewed at: <http://tds.ictsd.org/content/drifts-deals-advancing-wto-agenda>

The opening session of the 10th WTO Ministerial Conference got under way at 15:00 on 15 December, and was opened by the President of Kenya, Uhuru Kenyatta. For this reason, extra security measures did not allow non-governmental organizations registered as observers to the Ministerial to be present in the plenary hall.

MC10 will proceed until noon on Friday 18 December, together with the TDS in parallel.

A press conference on the Information Technology Agreement 2 negotiations was planned for 15:30 on Wednesday 16 December.
