

ICC AT THE 10TH WTO MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

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African Business and Global Trade

On this second day of the Nairobi 10th Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO MC10), ICC activity started early in the day, with a by invitation only breakfast meeting organized by the pan-African business consultancy Africapractice, on the theme “Trade and sustainable growth: strengthening the voice of Africa’s private sector”.



Presentations were given by a diverse panel composed of East African business leaders and executives with experience in both government and the private sector, including former WTO Chief Economist Patrick Low who hails from Kenya. The audience included representatives from foreign companies based in Kenya, local companies, leaders of Kenyan business organizations and representatives of intergovernmental organizations based in Nairobi.

Members of the audience, including ICC, were called upon to participate in the discussion that followed the presentations..

Remarks by panelists and the audience showed the importance the Kenyan business community attaches to a vibrant WTO and multilateral trading system, as an indispensable overarching global framework. The multilateral trading system should benefit Kenyan, East African, and African business more broadly, and facilitate the further integration of African economies into the global trading system, including through trade facilitation. Some felt that it would be useful to conceive of an additional mechanism to allow an exchange of views between WTO members (through the WTO General Council for example) and business.

At the same time, regional and continental economic integration were seen as necessary for African economies to play a greater role in global trade by creating economies of scale and scope. Moreover, there was broad recognition that, at national level, business needed to build effective representative organizations to mobilize business leadership collectively and convey business priorities to the government in an effective way. This is to ensure that government sets the necessary enabling framework for business to trade, invest and create wealth and jobs. These national organizations should establish links to regional and global business networks to carry their priorities effectively at the national, regional, and global levels including to the WTO.

The Africapractice breakfast allowed ICC to re-establish contact with Kenya’s “apex” business body – the Kenya Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA), which brings together all of the main Kenyan business associations – to revisit the creation of an ICC national committee in Kenya. The possibility of strengthening ICC’s representation in Africa on a regional basis was also briefly discussed on the sidelines of the breakfast.

Uncertain outcomes at MC10

Meanwhile, across the street at the Kenyatta International Convention Centre, the WTO MC10 plenary session resumed, consisting in pre-prepared short opening statements by WTO member trade ministers. Whereas all ministers who spoke so far reaffirmed the need for a strong WTO system with an effective negotiating function, and a successful Nairobi Conference with tangible outcomes, especially in favour of least-developing countries. However, WTO members continue to disagree on how to move forward in the context of the Doha Round. Many parallels were drawn with COP21 and many ministers felt that comparable multilateral momentum and ambition should characterize MC10.

ICC World Trade Agenda at MC10 Infographics are available for use by the global network at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/international-chamber-of-commerce/sets/72157661858076720>