There is a growing recognition that the global trade regime needs to be made fit-for-purpose to tackle today’s urgent global public policy challenges and fulfil the ambitions set out under Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals. Tackling income and wealth inequality, eradicating extreme poverty, ending hunger, transitioning to low-carbon forms of production, and addressing gender-related inequities are vital objectives, and trade can help or hinder their achievement depending on trade policy design and implementation.

The Twelfth WTO Ministerial Conference (MC12) being held in Geneva, Switzerland in December 2021, is a crucial opportunity for highlighting the links between trade and sustainable development, and for beginning to chart a path forward for the multilateral trade system that goes beyond short-term gains to look at long-term impact.

To mobilize the collective and multi-stakeholder action needed for deep-seated reforms of the trade regime, IISD will host a Trade and Sustainable Development Hub alongside MC12. The Hub will provide stakeholders with the space or organise substantive discussion of issues on the agenda of the Ministerial meeting, as well as other issues relevant to the development of trade policy. Diversity of views and perspectives will be focused on developing solutions oriented at furthering a more sustainable trade regime.

How will the Hub work?

IISD will convene the Trade and Sustainable Development Hub from 1-3 December 2021, to coincide with the last three days of MC12. The Hub will likely be held in a hybrid format, with some sessions run in person at a small venue close to the WTO Ministerial premises so policy-makers can participate actively in the discussions outside the formal negotiations, and others organised entirely online on a specific virtual platform that will be created for the event. If in-person events are not allowed or practicable in Geneva in December, the Hub will be entirely virtual. Whether hybrid or entirely virtual, all Hub sessions would be streamed live to a global audience.

The Hub activities will consist of:
• Six plenary sessions on the mornings and lunchtimes of 1-3 December.
• Smaller parallel sessions to be held throughout each day. These sessions will be conducted in a variety of formats, including roundtables, panel discussions, and workshops, in order to encourage dynamic exchanges and interactions.
• Networking breaks to build and strengthen multi-stakeholder linkages.
• Co-sponsoring partners will be provided the opportunity to organize dedicated plenary sessions and in-person events as appropriate.
IISD will be responsible for organizing the overall agenda and opening and closing plenaries. In coordination with IISD, smaller sessions on the agenda will be organized by different organizations or coalitions with substantive knowledge or expertise in the relevant policy areas. Partners will be responsible for developing the session agenda, as well as speaker and participant outreach. Special partners will also be invited to organise morning or lunch-time plenary sessions.

What will the agenda cover?

IISD has already received a large number of expressions of interest in convening sessions from potential partners (non-governmental organizations, international organizations, business and academic institutions). The expressions of interest will be supplemented with a call for more formal proposals in September 2021.

The sessions selected will be organised in two parallel streams according to four general themes:

1. **Trade and the Natural Environment**
   - Including fisheries and oceans, climate change, deforestation, biodiversity, plastic pollution and the circular economy.

2. **Trade and Society**
   - Including trade and health, food security and gender equality.

3. **Trade and Economic Development**
   - Including industrialisation priorities and the impact of digitalisation.

4. **Trade and Sustainable Development Governance**
   - Including WTO reform, the interaction of multilateral trade rules with other multilateral regimes, and with regional trade regimes.

Organisers of sessions will be asked to ensure that their discussion of their chosen topic considers two critical overarching issues: inequality and social inclusion and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The sessions will be organised so as to avoid overlap between sessions on similar themes, and to ensure there is sufficient time between sessions for transitions and, should there be an in-person element to the Hub, for networking.