

Geneva Seminar: Joint Statement Initiative on Electronic Commerce

29 January 2020 • From 8:30 AM

The Graduate Institute Geneva • Meeting Centre (C1), Petal 5 of the Maison de la Paix
Chemin Eugene-Rigot 2A

At the Eleventh WTO Ministerial Conference (MC11) held in Buenos Aires in December 2017, proponent groups launched initiatives on the issues of electronic commerce, investment facilitation and micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs). On that occasion, a group of 71 WTO members issued the first Joint Statement on Electronic Commerce and agreed to “initiate exploratory work together toward future WTO negotiations on trade-related aspects of electronic commerce”.

After a year of discussions, in the second Joint Statement dated 25 January 2019, Ministers confirmed “their intention to commence WTO negotiations on trade-related aspects of electronic commerce”. The negotiations seek to “achieve a high standard outcome that builds on existing WTO agreements and frameworks with the participation of as many WTO Members as possible”.

Over the course of 2019, Members held six rounds of negotiations and the text proposals submitted by Members revolved around 15 categories of issues. Each round consisted of 4 to 6 Focus Groups, which discussed proposals falling under one of the 15 categories, as mentioned in the facilitators’ reports on the six rounds. In the first half of 2020, negotiations are expected to intensify toward an “outcome” by the Twelfth Ministerial Conference (MC12), to be held in Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan,

The main objectives of this seminar for Geneva-based delegates of developing and least developed countries are: i) to take stock of and share further information on the above-mentioned negotiations; ii) to have a more in-depth conversation on the issues of particular interest to developing countries and LDCs; iii) to contribute to the identification of development-related issues that will be further analysed in the subsequent issue paper that will be made available in April, ahead of MC12.

Seminar Format

The seminar will convene developing and least developed country member delegates, regardless of whether they are a signatory or non-signatory of the JSI, to engage in an open and informal discussion on the issues most pertinent to their development agenda.

The seminar will have two sessions, each consisting of a short presentation followed by an open discussion. To facilitate a frank exchange, the seminar will be held off-campus, outside the WTO, and will take place under the Chatham House Rule.

This seminar is held under the TAF2+ WTO Umbrella Grant project, a project of the Trade Advocacy Fund (TAF2+). The project has been produced with funding by UK aid from the UK Government, and is implemented by the International Institute for Sustainable Development, CUTS International, Geneva, BKP Economic Advisors, and InterAnalysis. The project aims to strengthen the capacity of developing and least developed country (LDC) member delegations in Geneva and in capitals as they determine their level of engagement, strategy and approach to the Joint Statement Initiative on Electronic Commerce.

Seminar Programme

8:30 – 9:00 AM	Registration
9:00 – 9:15 AM	Welcome
9:15 – 10:30 AM	JSI Negotiations on Electronic Commerce: Taking Stock
10:30 – 10:45 AM	Coffee break
10:45 AM – 1 PM	Identifying Key Development Issues in Relation to a Potential Outcome of the Negotiations
1 PM – 3 PM	Lunch and networking