

Geneva Seminar: Joint Statement Initiative on Investment Facilitation

28 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, 70 WTO Members co-sponsored the “Joint Ministerial Statement on Investment Facilitation for Development” calling for the beginning of “structured discussions with the aim of developing a multilateral framework on investment facilitation”.

According to paragraph 4 of the Joint Statement, these discussions:

- “Shall seek to identify and develop the elements of a framework for facilitating foreign direct investments that would: improve the transparency and predictability of investment measures; streamline and speed up administrative procedures and requirements; and enhance international cooperation, information sharing, the exchange of best practices, and relations with relevant stakeholders, including dispute prevention;
- “Shall seek to clarify the framework's relationship and interaction with existing WTO provisions, with current investment commitments among Members, and with the investment facilitation work of other international organizations;
- “Shall not address market access, investment protection, and Investor-State Dispute Settlement.”

The structured discussions commenced in 2018 and are still ongoing. Currently, they involve 98 WTO Members as signatories, though not all signatories, particularly some developing countries and LDCs, have actively participated in the discussions. In July 2019, a Working Document was prepared by the Coordinator under his responsibility to “help Members further develop the elements of the multilateral framework”. An updated version of this document is expected to be distributed ahead of the group’s organisational meeting, planned for mid-February 2020. Work by the group is expected to intensify in the run up to the Twelfth Ministerial Conference (MC12), to be held in Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan, when signatories look to see a “significant outcome”.

In the above context, the main objectives of this seminar for Geneva-based delegates of developing and least developed countries are: i) to take stock of the above-mentioned discussions and exchange further information; ii) to have a more in-depth conversation on the issues of particular interest to developing countries and LDCs in these discussions; 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 Investment Facilitation.

Seminar Programme

8:30 – 9:00 AM	Registration
9:00 – 9:15 AM	Welcome
9:15 – 10:30 AM	Structured Discussions on Investment Facilitation: Taking Stock
10:30 – 10:45 AM	Coffee break
10:45 AM – 1 PM	Identifying Key Development Issues in Relation to a Potential Multilateral Framework on Investment Facilitation
1 PM – 3 PM	Lunch and networking