



Theme

The 2013 Public Forum will be held in Geneva on 1-3 October and the theme is: "Expanding Trade through Innovation and the Digital Economy".

Technology is changing the world economy. Innovation and new technologies are important drivers of economic growth and job creation. Trade can foster innovation, leading to the dissemination of technology and underpinning high-tech expansion.

Information and communication technology (ICT) is often central to the promotion of greater innovation in business, research and development programmes. Developing countries have a larger share in the global trade of ICT products, and some have used ICT as a tool to become key players in other areas. The WTO's 1996 Information Technology Agreement (ITA) has been a catalyst in the expansion of trade in ICT products. Over the past 15 years, world exports of IT products have almost tripled in value, reaching an estimated US\$ 1.4 trillion in 2010, accounting for 9.5% of world merchandise trade. Together, ITA participants account for 96% of world trade in IT products.

Similarly, new tools and technologies have changed the traditional way of doing business and have led to the development of an entirely new, digitalised economy. In the digital or internet economy, producers and consumers have significantly changed behaviour, transforming entire business sectors. The digital economy goes beyond the traditional concept of e-commerce: it is also about e-government, e-travel, e-education and e-entertainment.

Innovation, the digital economy and the development of new technology products and services have also given rise to questions and issues in areas such as security, intellectual property, environment, dissemination of technology, privacy, trade facilitation, trade in energy and medical innovation.

Has technological innovation changed the way we trade, and if so, how? Has trade helped countries to innovate? How can innovation enhance trading capacities of developing countries? How can trade keep up with the rapid evolution of technology?

The 2013 Public Forum will examine all of these issues. Discussions will focus on the following core themes:

- Innovation and Trade
- The Digital Economy
- Greening the Economy; what role for innovation?
- Technology, a tool for trade development
- Trade and Energy