

THEME

Why trade matters to everyone

This year, the Public Forum will tell the human story behind trade. It will showcase the myriad connections between trade and people's daily lives and demonstrate how trade impacts and improves the day-to-day lives of citizens around the globe, whether in developed or developing countries.

"No nation was ever ruined by trade, even seemingly the most disadvantageous", wrote Benjamin Franklin in 1774 in a pro-trade pamphlet. Imagine what Franklin might say about today's globalized world: trade has become such a pillar of the global economy that we often do not even realize how often we interact with products and services that come from beyond our borders. Even a seemingly simple product like your favourite pair of jeans may originate in one place, be produced in another and shipped from a third country before finding its way into your local shop. This international production of goods and services contributes to the development of poorer countries and to the growth of the world economy. Similarly, millions of products are transported every day across continents and borders to fulfil needs of consumers from all corners of the world.

Trade creates social and economic opportunities, for consumers, citizens and economic players. But are these benefits inclusive enough?

Under this thematic umbrella, the following three subthemes will be discussed: trade and jobs – trade and consumers – trade and Africa.

Trade and jobs

The global economic crisis of 2008 left a lasting impact on the labour market leading to the elimination of around 50 million jobs. As the world recovers from the economic turmoil, the rate of job creation has lagged behind. According to ILO figures, global unemployment in 2013 reached almost 202 million and about 400 million more jobs must be created between 2012 and 2022 to keep it from rising further. In this context, how can trade help foster growth and jobs? Are regional trade agreements the solution? Could the promotion of decent work create fairer trade and better distribution of the benefits of globalization?

Many global initiatives are currently underway that are designed to promote growth. Free trade agreements, investment treaties and aid for trade all promise job creation, higher wages and opportunities for alleviating poverty. Proponents of globalization highlight the importance of trade in achieving international convergence of labour rights and work environments.

The rule of law is firmly established in some places while in others political instability is all