



Berlin, 09.10.2019

## 12th WTO Ministerial Conference - Time for MSMEs

The 12th Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Kazakhstan is scheduled for 2020. After years of blockades and the largely unsuccessful previous ministerial conference in 2017, business expectations as regards solutions to current trade policy challenges are dampened. In order to strengthen the practical relevance of the multilateral system, it is necessary to make micro, small and medium -sized enterprises (MSMEs) a central aspect of the WTO agenda . The clear commitment of countries to free trade must be cemented into legal frameworks so that this is open to all companies, regardless of size. After all, MSMEs account for a considerable proportion of economic output and have enormous potential with regard to global value chains. For business, the following points are therefore decisive for a successful ministerial conference in Kazakhstan.

MSME checklist for the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference:



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In detail : DIHK has made detailed proposals in the 2018 idea paper "[WTO SME Initiative now!](#)"<sup>1</sup> on the above-mentioned individual aspects of a WTO MSME initiative.

Further topics:

WTO-Reform

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## Background

Since the 11th WTO Ministerial Conference, 90 WTO members have been negotiating an informal work programme for small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs). SME-inclusiveness in trade has been advanced by the European Union (EU) following the [initiative of the DIHK](#) and other parts of the European economy (e.g. [EUROCHAMBRES: Making MC11 Think Small First](#)). In turbulent times for global trade, the current talks of the WTO Working Group for MSMEs are all the more important.

MSMEs play a key role in growth and competitiveness. There are over 20 million MSMEs in the EU. Over six million jobs depend on the 600,000 exporting European MSMEs. According to the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) World Employment Social Outlook 2017, the number of full-time jobs in MSMEs has more than doubled in the last 10 years. Although entrepreneurs today think more and more internationally, the gap between exporting MSMEs and those who could do international business is still large. Not only in Europe, but worldwide, the integration of MSMEs into global value chains holds great potential. This is where WTO members should start an ambitious MSME initiative to set the right framework conditions.

The following countries participate in the MSME Talks:

Afghanistan; Albania; Antigua and Barbuda; Argentina; Australia; Bahrain, Kingdom of; Belize; Brazil; Brunei Darussalam; Canada; Chile; China; Colombia; Costa Rica; Côte d'Ivoire; Dominica; the Dominican Republic; Ecuador; El Salvador; European Union; Grenada; Guatemala; Guyana; Honduras; Hong Kong, China; Iceland; Israel; Japan; Kazakhstan; Kenya; Korea, Republic of; Kyrgyz Republic; Lao PDR; Liechtenstein; Malaysia; Mexico; Moldova, Republic of; Mongolia; Montenegro; Myanmar; New Zealand; Nicaragua; Nigeria; North Macedonia; Norway; Pakistan; Panama; Paraguay; Peru; Philippines; Qatar; Russian Federation; St. Kitts and Nevis; Saint Lucia; Saint Vincent and the Grenadines; Singapore; Switzerland;