WTO Chairs Programme Annual Conference

2-4 July 2025

Draft Programme

DAY 1 (Wednesday, 2 July 2025)

# Opening Plenary

The opening session will feature a discussion with Director General Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, beneficiaries, and representatives from the donors of the programme – France, Austria, and the Republic of Korea – providing a valuable opportunity for the entire WCP Chairs Network and the Academic Advisory Board to align their efforts with the WTO's agenda. Participants will gain perspectives from the panel on relevant topics that address the needs of the global trading system, strengthening the impact of the WCP and ensuring its contributions are closely aligned with evolving challenges.

# Thematic Session: Digital Trade

In recent decades, particularly in response to the acceleration of digital operations during the recent pandemic, digital trade has become increasingly significant. This evolution has heightened the need for regulatory collaboration as governments seek to leverage technological innovation while addressing associated challenges. WCP Chairs have continued to advance their efforts by launching courses for policymakers and conducting research on new technologies, digital platforms, and diverse regulatory frameworks for digital trade. This session will examine the WCP Network's initiatives as well as the WTO's work (for example, the joint WTO-World Bank Digital Trade for Africa project) in this vital area.

# Thematic Session: Fisheries Subsidies

Ahead of the session dedicated to the 14th WTO Ministerial Conference on the second day of this event, this panel will focus on the important topic of ending harmful fisheries subsidies. Participants will engage in discussions about the ongoing negotiations in this area as well as the importance of preserving the marine environment. WCP Chairs will share insights on their related project activities alongside the Secretariat. The session aims to foster collaboration, identify priorities for action, and contribute to the broader dialogue on sustainable development within the context of international trade.

# Thematic Session: Outreach

WTO Chairs regularly engage with policymakers and stakeholders, often establishing advisory committees to enhance outreach effectiveness. This engagement fosters national trade expertise, supports the training of policy experts, and improves understanding of trade issues among civil society and the media. The outreach session this year will explore how Chairs can optimize their efforts, including in WTO observers and more broadly within regions, sharing best practices for stakeholder engagement, collaboration, and the integration of research into policymaking.

DAY 2 (Thursday, 3 July 2025)

# Thematic Session: The 14th WTO Ministerial Conference

As we look ahead to the 14th WTO Ministerial Conference to be held in 2026, Members will be putting their focus on several areas that have also been part of the WCP network’s research. Alongside the second wave of fisheries subsidies negotiations, investment facilitation for development, and environmental sustainability are on the horizon. Members are also exploring new ways of making progress and breaking through on agricultural reform, and further engagement will continue under the multilateral programme on electronic commerce. This session will focus on the continued contribution of the WCP Chairs Network which is anticipated in these areas.

# Thematic Session: Research and WTO Databases

Research is a fundamental component of WCP activities, providing critical insights to address current and future challenges. In this session, the Economic Research and Statistics Division will discuss the WTO’s work and upcoming research and present the resources that are available to the Chairs through WTO databases. WCP Chairs will also present their work on global trade and economic growth prospects. This session is also intended to benefit French Irish Mission Programme (FIMiP) participants.

# Advisory Board Meeting

The WCP is advised by an Academic Advisory Board, an external body composed of experienced scholars. By involving this external body, the WTO seeks to ensure the academic quality of outputs generated by WCP Chairs. During the Annual Conference, Board members will convene to discuss their appraisal of the WCP Network’s undertakings and offer insights on the programme’s functioning and ways to develop synergies with the WTO's other technical assistance activities.

# Session on Technical assistance Monitoring and Evaluation (for Phase III and IV Chairs)

This session will focus on the framework for Technical Assistance monitoring and evaluation, in particular the modalities of assessment under Key Result 3 of the TA Plan 2024-2025. A brief overview of the Technical Assistance Annual Report, the figures which will be reported to donors, the role of the baselines, the templates for reporting, and the frequency of reporting will be provided by the WCP Team. Collection of feedback from the Chairs is foreseen during the session. Results of the technical assistance questionnaires sent to the Chairs and Board Members will also be shared and feedback collected on the way forward.

# Thematic Session on resources available to the WCP Chairs

During this session it is foreseen to share with the WCP network as well as the FIMiP participants additional resources available through the WTO. For instance, presentation of library, catalogues, and search engines is planned to be done by the library section of the WTO. The E-learning unit will explain courses available to the public, enrolment processes and certification of completion.

# Reception

The WCP traditionally hosts a reception to allow the WCP Network to discuss various aspects and topics of their projects not covered during the substantive sessions due to time constraints. Apart from connections within the Network, this activity within the event also strengthens the mentorship role of the Academic Advisory Board, members of which are assigned to each Chair. It is also attended by beneficiaries, donors, and other stakeholders represented within the programme.

DAY 3 (Friday, 4 July 2025)

# WCP Academic Advisory Board Meeting

(Continued.)

# Regional breakout sessions

Parallel sessions of the broad regional networks within the programme, during which Chairs will convene in breakout rooms organized according to their respective regions (Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean) will take place.

The first two hours will be devoted to discussions moderated by Advisory Board Members. This will present an opportunity to define priorities of regional collaboration in the year ahead and to delve into strategies for solidifying and implementing lessons learnt. With the onboarding of five new Chairs, these sessions will also offer opportunities for knowledge sharing and mentorship.

The parallel sessions will be followed by a brief plenary discussion with representatives of the regional networks reporting back to the plenary on the outcomes of their discussions.

# Thematic Session: Trade and MSMEs

The role of trade in supporting micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) is increasingly recognized as vital for economic growth and development. In this session, participants will discuss strategies for enhancing the engagement of MSMEs in global trade, focusing on the unique challenges and opportunities they face. Chairs and stakeholders will explore best practices for empowering MSMEs to access international markets, improve their competitiveness, and leverage digital tools. Key topics will include identifying barriers to trade for MSMEs, fostering partnerships between government and the private sector, and promoting policies that support MSME participation in trade. Through shared insights and experiences, this session aims to strengthen the role of MSMEs in contributing to sustainable and inclusive global trade.

# Thematic Session: Curriculum Development

Curriculum development is essential for advancing the WCP's goals and enhancing technical assistance at the WTO. In this session, discussions will focus on best practices for designing impactful trade curricula for students, government officials, and other stakeholders. FIMiP participants will share their perspectives in this regard. Key topics will include assessing stakeholder needs, creating sustainable online resources, and preparing future trade professionals. Speakers will also explore innovative formats, such as simulations and moot courts, while sharing experiences that strengthen student and faculty exchange programmes across the network. Ultimately, this session aims to ensure that trade curricula effectively address the evolving demands of international trade policy and that the WCP Network is utilized to the fullest.

# Closing Ceremony

The closing session of the WCP Annual Conference will reflect on key discussions and insights shared throughout the event, emphasizing the collaborative efforts to enhance trade policy education and capacity building. Previous sessions’ moderators will summarize the main takeaways from various sessions, highlighting successful initiatives and pathways forward for the WCP. This session will also provide an opportunity to discuss strategies for sustaining momentum in their respective programs and fostering ongoing partnerships. By synthesizing insights and identifying actionable next steps, this closing discussion aims to strengthen the WCP’s impact and its relevance to global trade challenges.