

World Trade Organization (WTO)



Background Guide



Letter from the Secretary-General and Director-General

Hello delegates, advisors, parents, and teachers,

On behalf of us, your Secretary-General Isabella Balbi Masso and Director-General Alexandria Cerini, and all of our Secretariat, we would like to welcome you all to the 37th iteration of the Florida International Model United Nations Conference! This upcoming FIMUN will continue to be held at Florida International University's beautiful Modesto A. Maidique Campus from March 14th to 16th, 2025.

This year we have selected the theme of "Diplomacy in a Divided World," where delegates will be prompted to show diplomacy during challenging and engaging scenarios in a wide variety of General Assembly, Specialized, and Crisis Committees. Both of us originate from opposite sides of the ocean and have seen the division of the world, especially in our modern day. We are strong believers that every person, even young students, have the ability to show diplomacy and change the world. Being able to act with diplomacy in cases of adversity, disadvantage, and injustice is a skill that every person should learn and harness to make the world a better place, not just for themselves but for everyone.

We are working hard to provide every delegate with a committee that they will love, and an unforgettable experience where they will make new friends, learn new skills, and discover the amazing world of Model UN! This year we will be hosting 15 committees each one focusing on a different current, historical, or fantasy issue, with an amazing staff who are prepared to make this FIMUN the best one yet!

We are incredibly honored and excited to welcome you all to our amazing campus and conference this March, and cannot wait to see each and every one of you succeed!

See you soon,

Isabella Balbi Masso and Alexandria Cerini Secretary-General and Director-General for FIMUN 37 <u>ibalb007@fiu.edu</u> and <u>aceri008@fiu.edu</u>

Letter from the Under-Secretary General

Hello delegates,

My name is Carmen Ordonez and I will be serving as FIMUN 37's Under Secretary-General for General Assembly Committees! Having competed in General Assembly Committees (also known as GAs) throughout highschool and college, I genuinely believe that these type of committees are the most impactful, challenging, and exhilarating not only to become more informed as a global citizen, but to develop your analytical and leadership skills, which in turn provides many lessons overall for personal growth. Most of my growth as a delegate and person has come from doing Model UN, especially through GAs as I strongly believe it teaches you to push yourself and find your values including authenticity and leading (not just yourself) but others to success.

A couple of fun facts about me: I am a senior double majoring in International Relations and Political Science with a certificate in Latin American & Caribbean Studies. I have previously lived in Washington DC and Taiwan, I am involved in the Sigma Iota Rho Honor Society, and am a proud sister of Sigma Kappa. This year would be my fourth and final year staffing at FIMUN and it could not be more bittersweet, especially having competed at FIMUN throughout all my years in highschool, so this team has truly become my home.

It is important to note that although each committee has a competitive environment, remember that FIMUN is a place for cooperation, diplomacy, and growth. With that being said, it is expected that every person allows each delegate to be heard, and to act equitably and honestly amongst your peers. The FIU team has worked hard to make this conference a memorable experience for every delegate and I hope it makes a deep impact and helps you find your passion as it has for me. If you ever have any questions, comments, or concerns about your committee please feel free to reach out as I want each of you to have the best experience at FIMUN 37!

Best,

Carmen Ordonez cordo022@fiu.edu Under Secretary-General for General Assembly Committees Florida International Model United Nations 37

Letter from the Director

Hello delegates and welcome to our WTO committee!

My name is Leticia and I am beyond excited to be your director in this year's remarkable FIMUN! I was born and raised in São Paulo, Brasil, but my parents are Japanese and Portuguese. As of now, I'm double majoring in International Relations and Political Science on the pre-law track with hopes of pursuing a minor in Economics (if I survive all the additional certificates I am pursuing on top).

My interest in MUN began in middle school, combining my passion for global issues with a competitive spirit only MUN could satisfy. I have been competing for about 5 years now, although I started taking it more seriously during my freshman year of college.

Beyond MUN, I am also involved in three honors societies and some clubs across campus, but in my free time, I enjoy keeping myself active (lifting weights, doing pilates+yoga, running, and doing jujitsu), trying new restaurants and shopping with my friends, cooking and baking, and hanging out with my boyfriend.

This year is an exciting year for the WTO, as it is the year the Public Forum will explore how re globalization can help make trade more inclusive and ensure that its benefits reach more people. Therefore, I look forward to innovation, passion, leadership, and genuine diplomatic efforts that show me your true commitment to approaching a feasible resolution in the world of international trade and commerce. Although I emphasize collaboration and adaptability, since this is an extensive topic, don't overlook the research and quality of your speeches.

As always you are encouraged to do your extensive research and contact me for further information, questions, or overall points of order (please don't hesitate to ask for help, I will gladly assist with any concerns).

I can't wait to meet you all and see the amazing ideas you will come up with! See you soon!

Leticia Kato lkato004@fiu.edu World Trade Organization (WTO) Director Florida International Model United Nations 37

Letter from the Chair

Dear Delegates,

Greetings to you all, and welcome to the 37th Florida International Model United Nations High School Conference! My name is Mariya Shevchenko, and I will be serving as the Chair of the World Trade Organization committee this year. I am looking forward to meeting you and hearing your ideas for solving international problems! Although preparation is key to success, throughout this conference, we encourage you to approach your deliberations with the spirit of collaboration and integrity.

It is important to remember that FIMUN encourages each delegate to demonstrate honesty throughout the conference. Cheating or plagiarism will not be tolerated and may result in disqualification. Please remember to treat your fellow delegates, chairs, and staff with respect and courtesy at all times. During this committee, we will work to keep the 2025 FIUMUN committee running smoothly and will do our best to help you understand parliamentary procedure and to ensure that the views of all delegates are heard and respected.

If there are any questions regarding the procedure, feel free to contact me. Once again, I am excited to hear your innovative proposals and learn more about each of you as delegates. Best of luck to you all!

Warm regards,

Mariya Shevchenko mshev003@fiu.edu World Trade Organization (WTO) Chair Florida International Model United Nations 37

Sensitivity Statement

FIMUN 36 has a zero tolerance policy on racism, sexism, xenophobia, homophobia, and transphobia. If delegates are found to be engaging in any such actions or rhetoric are open to disqualification from awards

We ask all delegates to be conscious of the histories and context of their countries or characters for their committees. Many of our committees focus on the stories and topics relating to historically oppressed and marginalized communities and regions. While these committees are simulations, the histories behind them are real, and disresepct towards the histories and existences of people represented in our committees will not be tolerated.

On our website, we have an anonymous report form if delegates encounter such actions. While we hope to avoid the need for such, this form will be checked regularly by our Secretariat to ensure that all delegates at FIMUN 37 can enjoy their weekend comfortably.

Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that our university is located on the ancestral homelands of sovereign Native nations, including the Tequesta, the Calusa, and today, the Seminole Tribe of Florida, and the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida. We pay our respects to the traditional custodians, the Elders past and present, by fully recognizing Indigenous sovereignty as well as the historical and contemporary relationship between Indigenous peoples and their traditional homelands. It is within our responsibility as an academic institution to uphold knowledge about the history of our institution with the original stewards of this land that we live, learn, and work on. We encourage our delegates to read and learn about ways to support our local Indigenous communities in their efforts to preserve Seminole and Miccosukee land and water rights, cultural practices, and the conservation of the environment.

Consistent with our University's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, FIU is working towards creating an academic environment that is inclusive of Indigenous students, faculty, and staff who have often been rendered invisible due to structural discriminatory practices. At FIU, we hold ourselves accountable to serving local, regional and worldwide Indigenous communities through academic policy-oriented research, education, partnerships, community service, as well as enrollment initiatives to overcome the effects of Indigenous exclusion and erasure in our own academic institution. It is our hope that acknowledging the land helps us to better understand that harm has been done and address the legacies of violence in our communities in order to create a pathway to true healing

Rules of Procedure Motions

Motion to Open/Resume Debate

Opens the floor for debate. Delegates may now begin to provide further motions.

Motion to Open Speakers List

Opens the Speakers List, wherein delegates can deliver speeches without a set topic.

Motion for a Moderated Caucus

Opens a set speakers list for debate on a specified topic. Total time and speaking time must be specified within the motion.

Motion for an Unmoderated Caucus

Opens time for unregulated working time for delegates to work within their blocs on working papers/draft resolutions/directives.

Motion for a Round Robin

Opens a Round Robin, where every delegate in the room delivers a speech for a set time without a designated topic. Will start from the delegate that motioned and will either go clockwise or counterclockwise at delegate's discretion.

Motion for a Gentlemen's Unmoderated/Consultation of the Whole

Similar rules as to a normal Unmoderated Caucus, however all delegates must remain in their seats.

Motion to Introduce Working Papers/Draft Resolutions/Directives

Opens the floor to begin formal procedure on papers. Order of address if not specified will default to order in which each paper was introduced.

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Authors Panel

Generally motioned for alongside the introduction of Working Papers/Draft Resolutions. Involves a Reading Period for Delegates to read papers, an Introduction where a panel of Delegates present the paper, and a Question and Answer portion, where sponsors of the paper are asked questions by fellow delegates about the paper.

Motions for For and Against Speeches

Opens a short speakers list where (generally speaking) 2 delegates are called to speak for and against a given working paper/draft resolution/directive.

Motions to Enter Voting Procedure and Voting Methods

Goes alongside a motion to end debate when in General Assembly and certain Specialized Agencies. Delegates will vote on papers on the floor. If no voting method is specified, committee will default to placard vote.

Placard vote operates the same way as votes for procedural matters. Delegates raise their placards to vote For, Against, or to Abstain if they stated they were Present.

Roll Call vote will have the chair call Roll Call once more, and when delegates are called they will state whether they vote For, Against, or if they Abstain.

Votes by Acclimation involves calling for general consensus, where the paper will pass unless anyone votes Against. Then placed vote is in order.

Points

Point of Inquiry

General question regarding committee or the conference

Point of Order

Question or correction regarding parliamentary procedures

Point of Personal Privilige

Personal request unrelated to committee. (e.g temperature in the room or seating issue)

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Historical Background

The World Trade Organization (WTO) is an international body responsible for regulating and facilitating international trade. Established in 1995, the WTO aims to ensure that trade flows as smoothly, predictably, freely, and equally as possible. Every year, the organization provides multiple forums in which nations can set trade disputes, negotiate agreements, and discuss frameworks to enforce adherence to trade rules. Through such, the WTO seeks to foster an "open and fair" global trading system by assisting nations in their economic growth, development, and job creation in its member nations, now numbering 164 countries.

Nevertheless, the creation of the WTO traces back to the establishment of its predecessor in 1947 (1). In the aftermath of the Second World War, the globe needed to find ways to boost economic cooperation between nations to regulate commerce and restore international monetary alliances. Consequently, at a time when nations sought to prevent the protectionist policies that contributed to the Great Depression, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) was established with the signature of 23 countries to minimize barriers to international trade by eliminating or reducing quotas, tariffs, and subsidies.

While the GATT played a crucial role in the post-World War II economic recovery with its intense emphasis on tariff reduction and fortified trade rules, its limitations hindered its effectiveness (2). The more countries signed into the GATT treaty, the more intricate the international system became, and the GATT's lack of a formal institutional structure allowed for a non comprehensive treaty that no longer satisfied the needs of member countries. For instance, GATT's frameworks were



Image 1: Final act of the Uruguay Round that created the WTO.

insufficient to address non-tariff barriers, trade in services, and intellectual property rights. Additionally, its diplomatic resolution mechanisms were weak, unable to enforce trade rulings effectively, leading to prolonged commercial disputes (3). These shortcomings highlighted a need for a more robust and

^{1.} World Trade Organization (n.d). History of the Multilateral Trading System. *World Trade Organization*. https://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/history_e/history_e.htm

^{2.} Shukla, S. P. (2000). From GATT to WTO and Beyond.

^{3.} Niblett (2020). Global Supply Chains.

comprehensive organization that could provide everything the GATT could and could not. Hence, during the Uruguay Round negotiations, the WTO was created, with a robust institutional structure and an effective dispute resolution system to manage the complexities of modern international trade. In its early years, the WTO shook the international trade system upside down, achieving notable success in promoting economic cooperation between its members. One of its most relevant accomplishments



Image 2: ITA Conclusion 1996.

for this committee was the implementation of the Information Technology Agreement (ITA) in 1996 and overseeing the Financial Services Agreement im 1997 (4). The ITA aimed to eliminate tariffs on a wide range of IT products. This agreement facilitated the rapid growth of the global technology sector, which facilitated the trade of technological goods and made them cheaper. Yet,

through all of its accomplishments and contributions, the WTO is flooded with challenges and controversies that have delayed its progress toward completing its Doha Development Agenda (5) established in 2001 to address the needs of developing countries.

As the WTO completes its 29th birthday, it seems evident that there are still issues within the organization that naturally hinder the WTO's overall goal to foster an equitable global trading system, yet, for this committee in specific we will focus on the contemporary issues that have allowed for the perpetuation of an unjust system that often overlooks the needs of growing economies (6). The first



Image 3: Activist shows insatisfaction with the Doha Round.

^{4.} World Trade Organization (2015). The World Trade at Twenty: Challenges and Achievements. World Trade Organization

^{5.} World Trade Organization (n.d). Doha Development Agenda. World Trade Organization.

^{6.} Gene M. Grossman and Elhanan Helpman, "Trade Wars and Trade Talks," Journal of Political Economy, August 1995.

issue at hand is the obvious delay in the Doha Development Agenda, which is a direct consequence of ongoing disagreements over market access and agricultural subsidies. This delay was exacerbated by the WTO's consensus-based decision-making process, which prevents timely resolutions, and its "one-size-fits-all" approach to trade, which fails to acknowledge the economic contexts of growing economies and their individual needs (7).

It is also essential to stress that despite its early successes, the WTO carries a huge dilemma in the imbalanced treatment of nations (8). Oftentimes, the organization has favored developing nations at the expense of developing ones, leading to a discrepancy in the benefits of its membership (9). This and the previously mentioned obstacles underscore a need for modernizing the WTO's trade practices to effectively enhance economic cooperation and address the needs of all the members, allowing for developing economies to grow (10).

In the specific context of this committee, the WTO must address various issues surrounding trade issues that emerged with technological advancements and globalization. Digital trade, e-commerce, and intellectual property rights (amongst other issues) have become important elements in the contemporary global economy, and yet the WTO has not fully caught up to such developments (11). The rise of such progress in a rapidly evolving world has completely transformed how goods and services are exchanged. Addressing the web of new actors in the world's economy is essential to ensure all member states can participate in and benefit from the economy, consequently moving towards the goals of the WTO's Doha Development Agenda.

Moreover, in recent years, the proliferation of regional trade agreements (RTAs) (12) has posed challenges and opportunities for the WTO, especially regarding the concerns of this committee. While RTAs such as the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement has posed challenges and opportunities for the WTO, especially regarding the concerns of this committee. While RTAs such as the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) (13) and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) (14) have offered more flexible and tailored approaches

- 7. Chang, H. (2015). Economics: The User's Guide (pp. 151-172). Bloomsbury Publisher
- 8. Rodrik, D. (2018). What do Free Trade Agreements Really Do? National Bureau of Economic Research Hickel, J. (2017). The Divide: Global Inequality from the Conquest to Free Markets (pp. 184-219). Penguin Books
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- 14. AfCFTA (n.d). Purpose of the AfCFTA. The African Continental Free Trade Area https://au-afcfta.org/purpose-the-afcfta/

Because of these challenges inherent in the global economy, it is hard to believe in a cohesive integrated international economic order, especially when analyzing the web of structural incompatibilities between the WTO's "goal" and how its frameworks are pragmatically imposed. Therefore, empowering developing countries is crucial for modernizing trade to strengthen economic cooperation between nations. Developing countries often face significant challenges in their participation in global trade; however, the WTO can play a pivotal role in addressing all of these challenges through multiple different initiatives (15). The organization should work to ensure that trade agreements include provisions that support the economic development of these nations. By revising the needs and priorities of member states, the WTO can create a more inclusive and equitable trading system.

Case Studies

Trade Facilitation Agreement

The WTO's 9th Ministerial Conference in 2013 introduced the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) (16). This Agreement was designed to improve the efficiency of international trade by simplifying customs procedures and reducing trade barriers. The TFA includes measurements such as facilitating customs documentation, enhancing infrastructure, and increasing cooperation among customs authorities, leading to a more predictable and less costly global trading system.

For developing and least-developed countries, the TFA offers potential benefits such as reduced export costs and improved market access (17). However, the implementation of such an agreement requires significant investments in capacity building and infrastructure, which can be challenging for many countries that can not afford such acquisitions. Strong efforts to implement the TFA occurred in Rwanda (18) and Kenya (19), where the reduced business cost and automated customs procedures have enabled faster movement of goods and improved port infrastructures.

^{15.} Kyle Bagwell and Robert W. Staiger, The Economics of the World Trading System, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002.

^{16.} Hoekman, B. (2016). The Bali Trade Facilitation Agreement and rulemaking in the WTO: milestone, mistake or mirage. The World Trade System: Trends and Challenges, 149-92.

^{17.} Hoffmann, J. (2016). 7 reasons why the Bali trade facilitation agreement needs to happen. World Economic Forum. https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/10/wto-bali-trade-facilitation-agreement/

^{18.} World Customs Organization (n.d). WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement. World Customs Organization. https://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/wco-implementing-the-wto-atf/wto-agreement-on-trade-facilitation.aspx

19. World Trade Organization (2024). Trade Facilitation Agreement Database: Kenya, World Trade Organization.

^{19.} World Trade Organization (2024). Trade Facilitation Agreement Database: Kenya. World Trade Organization. https://tfadatabase.org/en/members/kenya

The Aid for Trade Initiative

The Aid for Trade Initiative was launched in 2005 at the WTO's Hong Kong Ministerial meeting with the intent to support developing economies in enhancing their trade capacity. This initiative provides funding, technical assistance, and policy guidance to help countries overcome challenges in the international trade system. Some of the focus areas are improving infrastructure and ensuring compliance with global trade regulations.

Hence, this initiative aims to integrate countries into the global economy by addressing the barriers that limit their trade potential. Nevertheless, despite its goals, this initiative's effectiveness depends on donor priorities and recipients' honest use of funds, which requires law-abiding management and coordination of the aid. Still, Countries like Cambodia have benefited from the Aid for Trade Initiative through multiple projects aimed at improving its trade capacity, and through such, the country has been able to significantly improve transportation infrastructure and a more skilled workforce that have helped increase Cambodia's exports (20).

The Digital Economy Partnership Agreement (DEPA)

The Digital Economy Partnership Agreement (DEPA) was signed in 2020 by Singapore, New Zealand, and Chile to address the challenges and opportunities in trade brought up by technological advancements (21). This agreement sets out frameworks for multiple aspects of digital trade, including cross-border data flows and digital payments, which aims to reduce barriers within digital trade and further establish international standards that facilitate e-commerce.

While DEPA offers benefits for the participating countries, its frameworks can not be adopted universally, which could lead to a noncomprehensive and fragmented trade scenario. Nevertheless, DEPA has been leveraged in its signatory countries, notably in Singapore, where the agreement further developed the digital infrastructure and regulatory environment for digital trade, which has fostered innovation and enhanced trade capabilities in the nation.

^{20.} UNCTAD (2023). What trade policy and aid for trade support for Cambodia after LDC graduation?. United Nations Trade and Development.

^{21.}MTI (n.d.). Digital Economic Partnership Agreement (DEPA). Ministry of Trade and Industry of Singapore. https://www.mti.gov.sg/Trade/Digital-Economy-Agreements/The-Digital-Economy-Partnership-Agreement

The E-Commerce Joint Statement Intiative (JSI)

The E-Commerce Joint Statement Initiative (JSI) was agreed upon in 2017, seeking to expand exploratory work towards international e-commerce trade participation (22). Hence, the initiative plans on developing comprehensive frameworks for e-commerce by focusing on international regulations, data flow and privacy, and electronic contacts, but mainly, it aims to update WTO frameworks to better accommodate the growing presence of technology in the global economy.

Nevertheless, the success of the JSI relies heavily on the support of small and large businesses involved and addressing issues related to digital inequality. Regardless, active participants of the JSI such as Japan have advocated for cybersecurity and the adoption of comprehensive rules in e-commerce, which not only significantly impacted the predictability of digital trade but also allowed for cleared international business transactions in the country.

Topic 1: Local Implementation

Focus: Enhancing Trade Facilitation and Capacity Building for Developing Economies

Trade facilitation refers to the simplification, modernization, and harmonization of export and import processes. It aims to reduce the cost and time associated with trade, making it easier for countries to participate in global markets. Capacity building involves providing developing countries with the tools, resources, and knowledge necessary to improve their trade infrastructure and regulatory environments.

Key Aspects to Consider:

- 1. Customs Modernization
- 2. Infrastructure Development
- 3. Regulatory Reforms
- 4. Capacity Building

By focusing on these areas, this topic will explore practical measures to enhance trade facilitation and build necessary capacity locally according to the needs of each nation. This will lead to more inclusive and sustainable global trade, allowing developing countries to better integrate into the global economy and reap the benefits of international trade.

Topic 2: Legal Framework

Focus: Integrating Digital Trade and E-Commerce Into the WTO Framework

Integrating digital trade and e-commerce into the WTO framework is essential for modernizing trade practices in the digital area. The rapid growth of digital trade presents both opportunities and challenges , especially for developing countries. Therefore, this topic will address the creation of international frameworks/rules and standards to facilitate international trade while simultaneously exploring solutions to the issues of data privacy, cybersecurity, and consumer protection.

Key Aspects to Consider:

- 1. Multinational Data-Flow
- 2. E-Commerce Regulations
- 3. Cybersecurity
- 4. Capacity Building for Digital Trade

Through these elements, the second topic aims to develop strategies to integrate digital trade and e-

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commerce into the WTO framework and make sure the organization adapts to the rapid advancements in the international trading system. Nevertheless, this topic will address how developing economies can benefit from the digital economy's potential in order to foster global economic growth and cooperation.

Questions to Consider

- 1. How can your country implement/enhance modernized custom devices to reduce delay and costs at borders and ports?
- 2. How will you secure funding and international cooperation for the infrastructure projects needed to support more efficient trade flows?
- 3. What are the primary capacity-building needs for trade industries in your country?
- 4. How will you leverage international assistance and training programs to build these capacities?
- 5. What policies do you propose to facilitate the free flow of data while ensuring privacy and security?
- 6. What cybersecurity measures are necessary to protect your country's digital trade structures?
- 7. What are the main digital infrastructure needs in your country?
- 8. How will you enhance digital literacy and tech capabilities to ensure your country can effectively participate in the digital economy?
- 9. What strategies can be implemented to improve market access for agricultural products from developing countries?
- 10. What mechanisms will be used to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of trade facilitation and digital trade initiatives?

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