

New business-led trade alliance formed

NAIROBI: Three leading private-sector organisations have joined forces to launch a major new partnership to support effective implementation of the World Trade Organization's (WTO) landmark Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA).



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The Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation - hosted by the Center for International Private Enterprise, the International Chamber of Commerce and the World Economic Forum - will provide a unique platform to leverage business expertise and resources in the implementation of customs and border reforms. While it is widely recognised that private-sector engagement will be critical for successful implementation of the TFA, the Alliance is the first initiative to provide a global platform to bring business closer to the process of enacting reforms under the agreement.

Richard Samans, head of the Centre for the Global Agenda at the World Economic Forum said: "The Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation will drive both top-down and bottom-up reforms. The private sector can play a vital role in directing trade facilitation reforms to the areas of greatest impact."

Alliance focus

The Alliance will support TFA-related projects in 12 to 15 developing countries on an annual rolling basis - identifying trade bottlenecks and working with governments to implement reforms to enable trade for local enterprises. It will also work to remedy the limited private-sector awareness of the TFA in some sectors and markets. Underscoring the business-led nature of the partnership, the effectiveness of Alliance programmes will be measured by real-world commercial metrics.

Andrew Wilson, deputy director of the Center for International Private Enterprise, said: "At the country level, the Alliance will focus on empowering the local business community to become a leading stakeholder in trade facilitation efforts. This will ensure that reforms get implemented and have commercially meaningful outcomes."

International support

The Alliance - launched today during the WTO's 10th Ministerial Conference - is being supported by the Canadian, German, UK and US governments. In addition, a broad range of leading multinational companies have already committed to working with the Alliance-including A.P. Moller-Maersk , DHL, Walmart, eBay and Huawei. Other partners are expected to join the initiative as its activities commence in the coming weeks.

John Danilovich, secretary general of the International Chamber of Commerce said: "Neither governments nor the private sector can deliver on the potential of the TFA on their own. The Alliance offers the potential to take a great leap forward in realising the gains of this landmark agreement for business, governments and consumers."

The core activities of the Alliance will include:

- Building understanding of the benefits of trade facilitation within both the public and private sectors;
- Establishing sustainable multi-stakeholder dialogues on trade facilitation;
- Mobilizing public-private partnerships to drive change, engaging local businesses and associations;
- Providing technical and financial assistance in support of capacity building; and
- Benchmarking and evaluation based on established business metrics.

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