

# FOSTERING SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE TRADE – RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS & PRACTITIONERS

SUMMARY REPORT:  
GOTRADE SUMMIT 2022

Connecting People, Improving Lives



**GOTRADE**

An initiative of  
Deutsche Post DHL Group



## FOREWORD

Dear readers,

Trade builds bridges that strengthen us as a global community: According to the World Bank, over one billion people have moved out of poverty because of economic growth, underpinned by open trade, since 1990. During the pandemic, trade and international exchange have helped to ensure that life-saving vaccines, masks and other medical supplies could be delivered to every corner of the world. Further, trade has helped foster peace for centuries.

However, we are being painfully reminded that trade cannot prevent all armed conflicts: The war in Ukraine has shocked us all, killing thousands and forcing millions to flee. Europe's policy of peace through trade is being challenged. Will it become obsolete?

History has shown that cross-border trade makes peace more likely: Without it, Europe would not have not experienced reconciliation and decades of freedom and prosperity since 1945. Many studies have reinforced the fact that economic interdependence can reduce the risk of conflict. In this sense, trade and globalization have contributed to peace and international understanding – and will continue doing so.

The DPDHL GoTrade 2022 Summit brought together stakeholders from all over the world to share their expertise and find ways to foster sustainable economic growth that benefits everyone. “Connecting people, improving lives” – our common purpose at Deutsche Post DHL Group – also served as the overarching theme of this enriching event. We were inspired by the enthusiasm, the level of participation and the valuable insights.

At the summit, a strong case was made for public-private partnerships that seek to further strengthen relevant trade policy institutions, and to make sure that they are inclusive. Participants reiterated just how much can be gained from trade facilitation. Governments must act, with strong support from business.

This report will provide a blueprint for shaping our ongoing and future GoTrade initiatives. We hope it also inspires trade champions in the public and private sectors worldwide. But the dialogue certainly does not end here, and we already look forward to taking stock of the summit's recommendations at the next GoTrade Summit in 2023.

Kind regards,

**Frank Appel**

CEO Deutsche Post DHL Group



**Frank Appel**, CEO Deutsche Post DHL Group

<sup>1</sup> This report was prepared by the GoTrade team in collaboration with Dr Andrew Grainger, and any additional comments offered by panellists and participants.



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## INTRODUCTION

GoTrade is a social impact program created by Deutsche Post DHL Group (DPDHL). It seeks to make the world a better place through public-private partnerships that foster international trade and sustainable economic growth<sup>2</sup>. Within the spirit of public-private partnership, the inaugural GoTrade summit – “GoTrade Summit 2022” – was hosted at the DPDHL Innovation Centre in Troisdorf, Germany<sup>3</sup>, on the 27th and 28th January 2022.

Debate, as captured in this summit report, shows that there is considerable scope for further momentum within global and national trade facilitation efforts, especially the respective resources and capabilities of the public and private sector are combined to maximise impact. Many action points – as highlighted in the respective panel reports – can be implied. Deutsche Post DHL Group’s intention is to draw on the insights and implied actions from this event. It is hoped that the summit participants and other interested parties will take similar inspiration.

With COVID-19 pandemic restrictions in place, the GoTrade Summit 2022 was hosted with in-person and virtual participation options. Organised into two summit days with 7 moderated panel sessions, a total of 28 invited panellists shared their respective insights, comments, and thoughts. Panellists included senior executives and experts from various NGOs, International Organisations and Government Agencies. Panellists also included several keen business leaders and established SME entrepreneurs from various countries around the world. Much of their motivation for participation at the GoTrade Summit 2022 is a shared concern for sustainable and inclusive trade – especially within the context of current and emerging trade facilitation opportunities.



<sup>2</sup> <https://www.dhl.com/content/dam/dhl/global/dhl-spotlight/documents/pdf/spotlight-gotrade-brochure.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> In proximity to the Cologne/Bonn Airport



Keynote presentations delivered by the World Customs Organization's Secretary General Dr Kunio Mikuriya, the Deutsche Post DHL's CEO Dr Frank Appel, and the Deutsche Post DHL's CFO Melanie Kreis helped frame the debates on offer over the two summit days. Moreover, debate was also shaped through the active input of 595 invited summit participants and their contributions to the event via moderated virtual Q&A tools. Moderators for the respective panel sessions were drawn from Deutsche Post DHL's senior leadership and the GoTrade team. Two hosts helped set the scene for the respective panel sessions. Their respective conversations with the accompanying expert at the end of each panel debate then formed the basis for a short "wrap-up" session<sup>4</sup>.

To encourage free and open conversations, the Chatham House Rule was adopted unless otherwise stated<sup>5</sup>. The first summit day was dedicated to the theme of "Connecting People" with the following panel sessions:

1. How public-private partnerships make this world a better place
2. Connecting countries and economies through digitalization
3. SMEs and e-commerce: The key to sustainable and inclusive growth
4. Global Trade: Ways to better medical supply

The second summit day was dedicated to "Improving Lives" with the following panel sessions:

5. Pushing the limits of international trade policy: How to gear up to the next level
6. Building foundations for sustainable and inclusive growth through qualification & empowerment
7. Driving gender equality and inclusive growth in business, economies and societies

The following Executive Summary reflects on the overlapping issues addressed throughout the event, including some of the event's key takeaways. Separate Panel Reports for each of the sessions are offered along with upfront reference to the wrap-up points presented during the summit. Importantly, the respective panel reports also include a list of Implied Action Points. Those Implied Action Points are also summarised in a separate Annex. A list of useful reference resources mentioned during the summit or help substantiate the many issues raised during the panel discussions has been added, too.

Recordings in English of the entire event, including the respective panels sessions, can be accessed by registered users on the GoTrade Summit 2022 online platform<sup>6</sup>. The online summit platform also contains synchronously translated recordings of the event in German, French, and Spanish. Supporting reference and background materials feature on the online conference platform, too.

It is recognised that the reporting of the event is inevitably prone to bias. Comment, feedback, and any further reflections from interested parties is thus very much encouraged.

<sup>4</sup> Dr Andrew Grainger, who is also the lead author for this report

<sup>5</sup> See: <https://www.chathamhouse.org/about-us/chatham-house-rule>; for the purposes of this report the rule has been interpreted to mean that the names of panellists can be published, but nothing shall be reported that identifies, either explicitly or implicitly, who said what unless already in the public domain. The names of participants other than the names of the panellists listed on the agenda are strictly confidential.

<sup>6</sup> <https://gotrade.virtual-meeting-dhl.com>

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The **COVID-19 pandemic** was a constant backdrop throughout the summit; had to be hosted in line with COVID-19 restrictions and was reliant on enabling virtual technologies. Most panel discussions referred to the pandemic's impact on global trade and explained that many lessons about the importance of sustainable and inclusive trade can be drawn – especially within the context “recovery” and “building back better”. A key assertion at the summit was that it was initially thought that the pandemic would lead to the demise of globalisation; but actually the pandemic showcased just how important global production systems and markets are.

Through private-public-partnerships (PPPs) it was possible to produce and distribute vaccines at pace. The response to the pandemic also revealed how rapidly digital trade facilitating technologies can be effectively adopted and applied worldwide. Also noted was how the express and logistics sector developed at pace capabilities to deliver **medical supplies** directly to patients, thus reducing some of the pressure on public health services. Another lesson is that the very large strides towards digitisation during the COVID-19 pandemic can be harnessed further to strengthen the global trade system. This might be by using **digital technologies** to help further streamline cross-border logistics operations in line with trade facilitation objectives (and those of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement in particular), or by enabling more inclusive participation in trade policy making (e.g., by using virtual communication tools).

Lamented were **poorly informed policy interventions** that undermined supply chain operations – such as nationalistic motivated export controls and the hoarding of critical goods. Thus, there is a need for the private sector to help raise awareness amongst policy makers about the integrated nature of global supply chains and the impact of ill-informed interventions. It was also noted that although much of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic can be hailed as a success, significant challenges remain in emerging and developing economies – especially “at the last mile” where vaccines still need to be administered to relevant patient populations. Escalating freight costs compound the impact on stretched financial resources. The public and private sector must come together and explore how to make supply chains more resilient. This includes the

need for a debate about the resilience of global production, and how the necessary **investment climate** can be created to enhance the capacity of trade enabling infrastructure and services. The latter point, as was emphasised, has long been a significant problem in many parts of the world – irrespective of the additional pressures resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Public-private partnerships** are also important within the context of modern customs procedures (e.g., within the frameworks of the WCO Revised Kyoto Convention and the WCO Safe Framework of Standards) where partnership arrangements between customs administrations and trusted economic operators play a key role. If well applied, such partnerships offer operational benefits to businesses and enhance border control capabilities. But, it was stressed that those efforts need to be supported by enabling institutions to help coordinate efforts. The WCO's Private Sector Consultative Group was highlighted as one positive example. At national (and sometimes regional level) the work of National Trade Facilitation Committees is essential in bringing relevant interest groups together and shaping a trade and customs environment that is conducive to sustainable and inclusive growth. But there is a strong case for the public and private sector to explore how trade enabling institutions can be further strengthened. Emphasised, for instance, was that the private sector can inform policy makers about experienced “on the ground” border performance (e.g., by sharing formal and informal performance data) and subsequent reform needs. And, these are insights are not just relevant at the national level, but also relevant at the WTO – especially within the context of its review of the Trade Facilitation Agreement<sup>7</sup>.

Many panellists explained that effective public-private co-operation and inclusive trade policy is dependent on mutual trust, accountability, and transparency. These key principles are more important than ever when recognising that trade policy has moved from backroom negotiations about trade tariffs to seeking inclusive and sustainable trade led growth. Therefore, the case for supporting initiatives that help raise awareness of what the public and private sector stakeholders can bring to the table, is particularly strong. Such initiatives, , e.g., could

<sup>7</sup> <https://tfadatabase.org/four-year-review>



focus on: training initiatives; sharing best practice experiences (e.g., addressing gender issues, or showcasing digital capabilities); implementing digital coordination platforms (e.g., the Reform Tracker web-based project management and monitoring tool developed by UNCTAD in their support for NTFCs<sup>8</sup>); and assisting private sector interest groups (if found lacking) to engage constructively with policy makers.

There is also a strong case for the private sector to apply itself to initiatives that help develop knowledge within SMEs about how to effectively participate in global trade opportunities – especially through e-commerce – and become aware of how to address applicable compliance requirements. Such knowledge can be developed by supporting: the adoption of digital technologies (e.g., internet-based trade information portals contain the necessary information on how to be compliant); formal training initiatives; peer-to-peer learning; and mentoring. Universities and other forms of formal education can play a significant role in the development of suitable expertise, too.

Alongside the training of SMEs, reference was made to the training needs of customs officers. This ensures that they are more effectively able to apply relevant rules and procedures. It also reduces the risk of creating “uneven playing fields” and provides a more favourable environment for reform and trade

facilitation type innovations. In the wrap-up session reference was made to the WCO PICARD Professional Standards<sup>9</sup> and the work of the International Network of Customs Universities.

Several entrepreneurs shared their own experiences at the summit and referred to the need of developing wider cultural skills that are necessary to effectively engage with export markets. The need to develop general business skills, such as finance and accounting or supply chain awareness, was explained, too. Gender issues and access to export finance were highlighted as barriers to trade that merit further, urgent attention.

Throughout the summit it was explained that gender equality is not a zero-sum game; it makes us all richer! (Or conversely: “failure to address gender equality makes us all poorer”). The case for PPP initiatives to focus on SMEs was highlighted because they suffer disproportionately from trade barriers, and representing a significant share of all economic activity. By contrast, well informed SMEs – as showcased at the summit – can draw on e-commerce services to secure a larger and fairer share of their profits, and tend to be less reliant on intermediaries. However, it was also mentioned that policy makers need to be mindful of the needs of those left behind – e.g., SME businesses that find themselves outcompeted or unable to access trade enabling services and infrastructure effectively.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Trade facilitation can make even greater strides where initiatives are pursued in partnership between the public and private sector and draw on their combined capabilities and resources.
- Effective public-private partnership and inclusive trade policy depends on trust, accountability, and transparency.
- Gender equality and SME business support are two topics where trade facilitation efforts can help drive significant, additional benefits.
- Digitalisation continues to be a strong driving force in trade facilitation, and more so when taking then responses to the COVID-19 pandemic into account. Digital technologies can be applied to: improving border management performance; e-commerce enabling services (especially for SMEs); and inclusive and accountable trade policy making through use of electronic tools.

<sup>8</sup> <https://unctad.org/topic/transport-and-trade-logistics/trade-facilitation/reform-tracker>

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/capacity-building/activities-and-programmes/people-development/learning/development-programmes/cb\\_picard\\_overview.aspx](http://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/capacity-building/activities-and-programmes/people-development/learning/development-programmes/cb_picard_overview.aspx)

## FIRST PANEL: “HOW PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS MAKE THIS WORLD A BETTER PLACE”

Slot	Day One / First Panel: 8:45-10:45
<b>Moderator</b>	<b>Monika Schaller</b> , Executive Vice President Corporate Communications, Sustainability & Brand, Deutsche Post DHL Group
<b>Keynote speaker(s)</b>	<b>Dr Frank Appel</b> , CEO Deutsche Post DHL Group <b>Dr Kunio Mikuriya</b> , Secretary General World Customs Organisation
<b>Panellist</b>	<b>John Denton</b> , Secretary General ICC <b>Isabelle Durant</b> , Deputy Secretary-General UNCTAD <b>Dirk Meyer</b> , Director General Global Health, Private Sector, Trade and Rural Development, Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development

for Trade and Development (UNCTAD); and **Dirk Meyer**, the Director General for Global health, Private sector, Trade and rural development at the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

A wide range of issues about how public-private partnerships make the world a better place, were highlighted and discussed. Conversations expanded upon: the specific role played by businesses within the global trade environment; the case for public-private partnerships and supporting mechanisms; and the specific needs of the SME sector. Insights from the impact of the COVID-19 epidemic served as a backdrop throughout.

Frank Appel helped frame the initial debate by setting out the case for global production in his keynote speech. Irrespective of initial fears that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic might cause globalisation to “go south”, globalisation proved remarkably resilient. This was explained by reference to the DHL Global Connectedness Index<sup>10</sup> which shows that “globalisation is now in a far stronger state than many had expected”. Inter-continental trade recovered faster than regional trade. The trade lane between the USA and China has grown at a pace even faster than before the pandemic. Quoting a recent Financial Times article, he expressed the sentiment that “the pandemic put globalisation and capitalism to a test they passed with flying colours”<sup>11</sup>. **Dr Kunio Mikuriya**, in his keynote speech, emphasised the importance of custom-business partnerships as enshrined in several of the WCO’s key instruments<sup>12</sup>.

The subsequent debates amongst panellists, which included the keynote presenters, stressed that the COVID-19 pandemic impacts the developing world disproportionately. A **strong case for trade capacity building was made**. This included the recommendation **to consider how investment into infrastructure** development can be encouraged<sup>13</sup>, especially where infrastructure was found to be unable to cope with the sudden COVID-19 response related increase in demand for critical supplies. Also, **supply chains need to be made more resilient**, either to help develop vaccine production capabilities on the African continent, or support with making less specialized or shorter supply chains.

### WRAP UP POINTS

- Globalisation was put to the test and has demonstrated what it can achieve
- Public-private dialogue, cooperation, collaboration, and trust are key to “building back better” and achieving sustainable trade led growth
- „Borders divide, customs connect“

### SUMMARY

This lively panel session was led by some of the most senior executives from key organisations that have an active interest in the form and shape of the global trade and customs environment. It was kicked-off by two keynote presentations. One by the Summit’s host **Dr Frank Appel**, the CEO of Deutsche Post DHL Group and the other by **Dr Kunio Mikuriya**, the Secretary General of the World Customs Organization (WCO). Further panellists included: **John Denton**, the Secretary General of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC); **Isabelle Durant**, the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.dhl.com/global-en/spotlight/globalization/global-connectedness-index.html>

<sup>11</sup> Martin Sandbu, “Shortages, what shortages? Global markets are delivering”, Financial Times (14 December 2021) [<https://www.ft.com/content/ea89a152-ca34-4c01-b986-0d019f3cae74>]

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.wcoomd.org/en/media/newsroom/2022/january/customs-business-partnership-highlighted-at-the-go-trade-summit.aspx>

<sup>13</sup> Which, as highlighted by one panellist, could be a particularly attractive opportunity for pension funds that like investments with long-term horizons (e.g., port and road developments).

However, it was also expressed that “nearshoring” efforts may not be easy and may not necessarily have the best public policy outcome – especially without exploring how existing private sector resources and capabilities may be best harnessed to address public policy challenges.

The panellists lamented **export controls** that inhibited the shipment of critical goods and wider nationalist or populist sentiments that led to **border closures and/or the hoarding** of critical items in the COVID-19 response. Organisations like **UNCTAD** (which called the global community to keep borders for cross-border trade open) or the **WCO** (which rapidly set out to share experiences, and update or develop guidelines and enabling standards) were highlighted for their global leadership and leading role in mitigating adverse nationalist or populist policy reactions.

In the panel discussion considerable emphasis was placed on the public and private sector’s **shared interests**. It was also explained that business investment decisions (e.g., to build critical infrastructure or new production capabilities) are dependent on public goods like security and investment enabling legal frameworks. Panellists also touched upon questions that concerned the specific roles played by businesses in the global trade environment and the role played by governments. While businesses focus predominantly on operating and competing within the global trade environment (and creating opportunities that help foster prosperity), governments help set the framework within which businesses compete (i.e., the market). Governments also provide **public goods** from which businesses, along with the wider society, benefit – e.g., in the form of national security, public health, education or support for innovation and research. Long-term (not-for-profit) public funded research in aid of innovative vaccine technology was also highlighted as a key factor in the rapid development and production of COVID-19 vaccines.

Panellists also briefly touched upon **the question of market regulation** and the point at which governments need to intervene in the event of (or fear of) market failure – as occurred in many countries at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic response when faced with supply constraints in critical goods

such as PPE. But, some panellists expressed their fear, that **ill-informed interventions can have adverse implications** to what policy makers may wish to achieve. The value of robust engagement with private sector networks to safeguard public (supply) expectations was thus emphasised.

Several **examples of effective business-government partnerships** were outlined – especially the WCO’s Private Sector Consultative Group and the WCO’s broader engagement with the private sector to seek detailed technical input into the development of WCO standards. It was also explained that public-private partnership is enshrined in WCO key instruments, such as the Revised Kyoto Customs Convention<sup>14</sup> and the WCO SAFE Framework of Standards<sup>15</sup>, to ensure effective control and trade facilitation. Emphasised, too, was customs administrations’ reliance **on good quality compliance data**; which in turn can create administrative efficiencies and enable expedited clearance (especially within the context of e-commerce).

Panellists, in their discussions, also touched upon the role of the WTO in setting the “rulebook” for the global trade and customs environment. Some explained that this “rulebook” has its roots in an era before the advent of the internet, e-commerce and digital data services. Moreover, trade policy has moved beyond the traditional focus on tariffs to new areas, such as trade facilitation (now served by the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement). The increasing public pressure to accommodate regulations to safeguard the environment and mitigate climate change were also emphasised. **The rulebook for global trade is thus in need of updating**. Failing to do so without the experience and input from the global business community, and the leverage it can provide, risks undermining the **legitimacy** of the WTO. **A healthy environment for dialogue is thus needed**.

This dialogue between the public and private sector, it was explained, needs to take place not just at the **global level**, but also at **national level**. The latter in particular – for example through the work of **national trade facilitation committees** – is needed to share insights from the bottom-up and inform policy makers at the national level about experienced barriers to trade, explore possible solutions, and implement those solutions. Regarding the global level, panellists thanked DPDHL

<sup>14</sup> Which is designed as the reference standard aimed at harmonising customs legislation worldwide; [http://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/facilitation/instrument-and-tools/conventions/pf\\_revised\\_kyoto\\_conv.aspx](http://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/facilitation/instrument-and-tools/conventions/pf_revised_kyoto_conv.aspx)

<sup>15</sup> Which seeks to strengthen security and trade facilitation through partnerships between customs administrations (Customs to Customs Pillar), between Customs and non-customs agencies (Customs-to-Other Government and Inter-Government Agencies Pillar) and between Customs and business (Customs to Business Pillar). [http://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/facilitation/instrument-and-tools/frameworks-of-standards/safe\\_package.aspx](http://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/facilitation/instrument-and-tools/frameworks-of-standards/safe_package.aspx)

for hosting this Summit, but also referred to the work of the ICC, the WEF, the Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation, and the already mentioned WCO Public Private Consultative Group. The panellists emphasised by panellists at the onset of the panel that the achievements of **GoTrade** need to be showcased and celebrated; and that **there is scope for further coordination and leverage** – for example via the ICC.

A thread throughout the panel conversations was the **need for trust between the public and private sector**, and a better understanding of what drives business interests within the global trade and customs environment. In many countries, further capacity building is necessary to help foster mindsets that enable collaboration and cooperation. **Well governed** mechanisms that foster public-private partnerships (such as national trade facilitation committees) are essential safeguarding against vested interests and to ensure that public goods are effectively delivered (for example by mobilising and leveraging resources, share insights as well as experience and scale).

The discussions it was also reminded that **other voices from civil society** need to be heard, such as those concerning **gender equality** issues, **climate change** or the needs of **Small and Medium Enterprises** (SMEs). Gender and SME needs were discussed in greater detail in dedicated panels (6 and 7). However, several key insights were shared in this panel, too. It was reminded, for example, that gender barriers can significantly compound other barriers, such as those found at borders or in accessing trade finance.

The panellists touched upon the **challenges in supporting SMEs** gaining access to global markets and the challenges of involving the SME sector effectively within public-private partnership arrangements. SME challenges include the lack of operational scale to successfully navigate market opportunities and compliance requirements. Access to finance and thus gain scale was highlighted as one further challenge. But service providers (like DPDHL Group) have a role to play by educating their customer base about global trade opportunities, and by leveraging their economies of scale in compliance as well as operational reach for the benefit of SME traders (which was also the subject of Panel 6). Reference was also made to tools

developed by international organisations, such as the ITC and WTO (with the support of donors) who host the online Global Trade Helpdesk<sup>16</sup>. It was also stressed that capacity building type support to help SMEs effectively articulate their specific needs within national and global business consultation mechanisms is necessary (a topic that was also picked-up in greater detail in Panel 5).

### IMPLIED ACTION POINTS

1. Showcase how business networks can support and leverage public policy expectations – especially within the space of trade facilitation, but also within the context of global supply chain configuration and development, and lending scale (and resulting efficiencies) to SME operations. Offer support for further public-private led capacity building initiatives.
2. Use business networks to bridge the gap between bottom-up experiences and top-down initiatives; ensure that the rulebook governing trade and globalisation meets the needs of its stakeholders (i.e., pass the “legitimacy test”).
3. Recognise that public policy needs to be shaped by well governed mechanisms that are inclusive to the voices of the business community along with those of other stakeholders from civil society. Where voices are not forthcoming, it is necessary help lend capacity support, especially within the context of the SME sector.
4. Acknowledge that all public-private sector relationships need to be based on trust – which needs to be nurtured and actively supported.
5. Capture any lessons from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic – especially within the space of rulemaking, governance, and resilient supply chain operations.
6. Recognise that the “rulebook” for global trade needs updating, especially when considering the emerging demands for new types of regulation (e.g., to safeguard the environment and climate change), the importance of non-tariff measures, and the many innovations in digitalisation and digital services.

<sup>16</sup> <https://globaltradehelpdesk.org/en>

## SECOND PANEL: “CONNECTING COUNTRIES AND ECONOMIES THROUGH DIGITISATION”

Slot	Day One / Second Panel: 10:50 -11:50
Moderator	Wing Huo, Deutsche Post DHL Group
Panellist	<b>Dr Tobias Meyer</b> , Post & Parcel Germany, Deutsche Post DHL Group <b>Poul Hansen</b> , Chief Trade Facilitation, UNCTAD <b>Sean Doherty</b> , Head of International Trade and Investment, WEF

### WRAP UP POINTS<sup>17</sup>

- “COVID-19 has accelerated digitalisation!”; more and more digital tools, applications, and technologies are now mainstream
- Inclusivity needs to be a consideration when advocating digital compliance requirements
- The transition towards e-commerce is evident, but policy makers also need to be mindful of those that will be outcompeted

### SUMMARY

This was another lively and informative panel session that lends itself well for reflection and the adoption of action points. In line with the panel theme, it was hosted at the DHL Innovation Centre in both virtual and “real” world formats, connecting people from near and far. As within the first panel, the **impact of COVID-19** pandemic upon the global trade and customs environment was elaborated in detail. And with a nod to the Summit’s in person and virtual format, several panellists stressed the importance of digital technologies for the COVID-19 response. It was explained how the digital space has offered continuity for connections within the personal space amongst family and friends, as well as in the business space and the day-to-day professional life.

It was also highlighted that the use of virtual conferencing tools made it easier for global experts to participate hands-on (albeit

virtually) in ongoing trade facilitation projects world-wide. Moreover, travel costs – sometimes very considerable – no longer need to be an inhibiting barrier to participating in global trade policy making or the sharing of expertise. There is now the opportunity for further inclusiveness (or democratisation) by easing access to relevant policy making at the global stage, and by being able to involve the business community, near and far, more effectively within the work of national and regional trade facilitation committees. Moreover, digital tools can also be used to help coordinate and support the implementation of trade facilitation projects from afar – e.g. by reporting progress to donors or in accessing expert support. It was explained that there is scope for experimentation and innovation for remote collaboration. Highlighted here was **UNCTAD’s Reform Tracker**<sup>18</sup> tool, designed to empower National Trade Facilitation Committees in their role as coordinators of trade facilitation initiatives, especially those related to the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement.

The panellists stated that the **COVID-19 response further accelerated the momentum towards digitalisation** in global cross-border trade operations. Much of that acceleration was due to necessity and subsequent political will to embrace digitalisation. Echoing conversations in the first panel, panellists stressed that the sharing of electronic data is essential in modern day logistics and supply chain management; “track and trace” systems being one of many examples. Indeed, it was explained that most larger transport and logistics companies are data rich organisations that have invested heavily in collecting performance related data (KPIs) as well as solutions that ensure compliance related data is robust and reliable.

The role of data in managing inventory costs effectively (a key aspect of just-in-time and lean management systems) was mentioned, too, as was the shift away from physical stores towards e-commerce. **It is now possible, as highlighted, “for everyone to trade”** (a theme explored further in Panel 3), **especially SMEs**. More and more people purchase goods online and e-commerce is increasingly embedded in everyday life.

<sup>17</sup> Slightly elaborated in aid of clarity from what was presented at the Summit

<sup>18</sup> <https://unctad.org/topic/transport-and-trade-logistics/trade-facilitation/reform-tracker>

Moreover, the response to the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the speed the internet can be used by buyers to identify and engage new sources of supply.

It was also explained that digital tools and systems – next to assisting with communication and logistics operations – can provide for more **streamlined solutions for payment and “digital foreign investment”**. It was stated that thanks to digital technologies, **“businesses can go global almost instantly”**. It was later added that businesses in developed and developing countries can more easily access digitally enabled support services<sup>19</sup> and outsource accordingly.

While much optimism for the “transition towards e-commerce” was expressed, the panellists discussed that although e-commerce enables businesses to easily participate in global trade, it also **exposes businesses to increased competition** and being outperformed. They further stated that access to electronic solutions and the internet cannot be taken for granted – even in the developed world where there are pockets of poor internet connectivity, and necessary IT literacy does not have to be given (especially amongst the older population).

Panellists explained that electronic data sharing capabilities between business and government feature prominently within the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement<sup>20</sup> and help **reduce the hassle factor** frequently associated with cross-border trade operations. This is achieved through digitally enabled automation, reengineered business processes, and a reduction in dependencies on paper documents. It was also implied that **streamlined trade and customs procedures** bring benefits for the administration by putting scarce resources to best use.

Reference was made to **pre-departure and pre-arrival declarations** (a key theme in several GoTrade projects) and **single windows**<sup>21</sup>. However, the panellists emphasised that it is not always necessary to go for expensive high-tech such as the single window. Trade information portals were cited as a good example of how governments can utilise a website – the trade

information portal<sup>22</sup> – to help streamline communication with the business community in an open and transparent manner. But more importantly, well-designed trade information portals offer a single place where businesses can find out and learn about how to comply with applicable trade and customs procedures.

Panellists pointed out, too, that thanks to mobile phone technologies the internet can be routinely accessed, even in remote parts of the world. It is a positive development that customs administrations are actively exploring how mobile tools can be used to increase their efficiency. For example, officers in more and more countries use mobile devices to sign documents in the field rather than having to return to the office.

Despite the opportunities that digitalisation offers, it was noted that government agencies may be hesitant with embracing digital technologies. They may be mindful of implementation failures and resulting implications – for example by wasting public or donor monies, or by losing control over goods at the border. Such fears can significantly impede action and advocates of digitalisation need to be humble. Pathways towards advanced digital trade solutions like the single window therefore need to be incremental. In this context it was mentioned that the WTO currently records a TFA implementation commitment of 72% overall [now 74.8%], but that figure is just 41% for Least Developed Countries<sup>23</sup>.

The possibility that trade facilitation as a topic is likely to evolve significantly was also discussed – the term “game changer” was used especially within the context of trade compliance solutions that require data to be shared across borders amongst trade partners. It is thus foreseeable that the **connectivity of data between countries** will take greater prominence in trade facilitation policy.

Mentioned, too, was that the public-private-partnership approach, e.g. as seen in well-functioning National Trade Facilitation Committees, has proven to be important, not only in the

<sup>19</sup> E.g. remote personal assistants, specialists advisors, engineers, consultants, etc.

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.tfafacility.org/agreement-article-resources>

<sup>21</sup> <https://tfadatabase.org/tfa-text/measure/29>

<sup>22</sup> E.g.: [https://www.tfafacility.org/sites/default/files/2022-01/4-1.2\\_world\\_bank\\_developing\\_a\\_trade\\_information\\_portal.pdf](https://www.tfafacility.org/sites/default/files/2022-01/4-1.2_world_bank_developing_a_trade_information_portal.pdf)



COVID-19 recovery phase, but also when digitalising trade procedures. Within this context, it was stressed that cross-border connectivity of automated systems is an important objective.

However, it was also reminded that the development of electronic compliance capabilities incur costs that impact operators differently. BREXIT and new EU VAT declaration requirements were cited as an example for how “big businesses have found ways around new challenges, but the smaller guys may have not”. Thus, **digitalisation efforts should give due consideration to ensuring inclusiveness**<sup>24</sup>.

### IMPLIED ACTION POINTS

1. Advocates of trade facilitation should draw on the many positive examples that the response to the COVID-19 pandemic has offered, but also be humble in recognising the needs of stakeholders – be it government agencies that are mindful of failure and may wish to take small steps, SMEs who may struggle to adapt, or parts of society that are marginalised or excluded from access to digital innovations.
2. Explore and promote tools that foster inclusive participation in public-private partnerships, including the work of national trade facilitation committees.
3. Explore how expertise and experience can be made more accessible by using remote working tools in the implementation of trade facilitation projects.
4. Draw on available business data that is routinely collected (e.g., within performance management systems) to help monitor trade facilitation performance and progress.
5. Recognise that e-commerce and digital innovations create significant opportunities (especially for SMEs), but resulting positive and negative impacts on the business environment need to be carefully considered by trade policy makers (especially regarding those that might be marginalised).



**Tobias Meyer,**  
CEO Post & Parcel Germany, Deutsche Post DHL Group

<sup>23</sup> <https://tfadatabase.org/implementation/progress>

<sup>24</sup> E.g.: by safeguarding cost efficient access to economies of scale as alluded to in the first panel or ensuring that implemented systems are ready and easily accessible as implied here.

## THIRD PANEL: “SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES AND E-COMMERCE: THE KEY TO SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH”

Slot	Day One / Third Panel: 12:45-13:45
Moderator	Steven Pope, Deutsche Post DHL Group
Panellist	<p><b>Hennie Heymans</b>, CEO DHL Express Sub-Saharan Africa</p> <p><b>Kati Suominen</b>, Founder and CEO, Nextrade Group</p> <p><b>Marcos Neto</b>, Director Finance Sector Hub, UNDP</p> <p><b>Paul Fekete</b>, Senior International Trade Advisor, USAID</p> <p><b>Pinaman Owusu-Banahene</b>, Founder and CEO, ADJOAA</p>

### WRAP UP POINTS

- SMEs play a major role in the global economy
- Need to support SMEs – mobilise resources
- Address SME needs – enhance capabilities and opportunities
- Enable SMEs to draw effectively on the global trade infrastructure

### SUMMARY

The panel brought together experts with a wealth of first-hand expertise about public-private partnerships at the global level, e-commerce at the operational and policy level, and launching and running SME businesses. It was explained that Small-Medium enterprises currently represent 40% of global GDP and that their activities represent a significant share of the global economy. But when it comes to bureaucracy and barriers to trade, **SMEs suffer disproportionately with some of those barriers**. It was noted that significant scope for improvement exists, and that the private and public sector need to work together to give SMEs cost effective access to global markets through e-commerce.

Panellists commented that many trade facilitation programmes have already identified the SME sector as a focal point for trade capacity building. This includes programmes that concern the wider trade and business environment with impacts that also benefit the SME community. Increasingly, there are dedicated programmes targeted explicitly at further empowering SMEs to effectively take part in global business opportunities. Emphasised here were the ample opportunities for SMEs to draw on global markets through e-commerce<sup>25</sup> and the need for further capacity building.

Service providers, including express parcel operators, play a significant role in enabling SMEs to access global markets. But SMEs do have training needs to effectively take advantage of e-commerce and operate effectively within new digital environments. Therefore, reference was made to the “COVID-19 Private Sector Global Facility”, which aims to bringing together public and private sector partners to help local communities and micro-SMEs to recover from the pandemic. E-commerce and the development of digital expertise within the SME sector along with boosting access to capital and enabling dialogue with the public sector and large enterprises, is at the core of this initiative<sup>26</sup>. Reference, too, was made to the Alliance for eTrade Development (eTrade Alliance)<sup>27</sup>. Implemented between USAID and 11 leading private sector partners, the initiative seeks to advance developing country MSMEs’ use of e-commerce, including for cross-border trade.

In comments about on ongoing e-commerce developments, the panellists mentioned that the private sector (and fintech, in particular) is in the process of developing innovative global trade enabling electronic platforms. But access to those platforms can be costly for SMEs; a conversations about these issues – the cost of accessing de facto public trade enabling services – needs to be had.

<sup>25</sup> With the caveat mentioned in Panel 2 that SMEs are now increasingly exposed to competition and are at risk of being outperformed.

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.unglobalfacility.org/about>

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.allianceforetradedevelopment.org/what-we-do>

During conversations amongst panellists, it was reminded that logistics companies stand at the “front line” when it comes to the challenge of shipping goods efficiently across borders. The panellists noted that considerable insights about barriers to trade and the performance of border agencies can be gleaned from the private sector. But it was also observed that **business and government stakeholders**, in their efforts towards trade facilitation, **do not always share the same vocabulary**. Moreover, government policy makers may not always understand the motivation for businesses<sup>28</sup> to participate in public-private partnership and dialogue. It also was reiterated that there is a lot of symbiosis between the public and private sector stakeholders when it comes to e-commerce and trade facilitation.

The panellists emphasised that the need to mobilise trade capacity building resources remains. They mentioned that there are several examples of matched funding where the public and private sector resources are combined to meet the needs of SMEs in developing countries – various GoTrade projects can serve as an example. Challenges needed to address include: the need to make improvements to the regulatory environment; ensuring that SMEs can access finance at competitive rates<sup>29</sup>; the need to foster the necessary skills for SMEs to take advantage of e-commerce opportunities; and the need to improve the capacity of enabling trade infrastructure. It was noted on the latter that in many places, access to basic things like water and electricity are still difficult for SMEs. It was also mentioned that SME economies are often informal in nature. There is thus a need for policymakers to explore how the informal can be made formal. Likewise, it was expressed, that large businesses should be incentivised to make investments that benefit SMEs. Moreover, there is a need to encourage governments to be more supportive of SME enabling policies that in partnership with the business community ensure that SMEs can take advantage of global trade opportunities<sup>30</sup>.

### IMPLIED ACTION POINTS

1. Understand that even if the public and private sector use different vocabulary, there is considerable alignment in their interests towards fostering a frictionless trade and customs environment. Further dialogue and awareness of respective motivations for SME e-commerce support is necessary.
2. Recognise the significance that SME activity has for the global economy; prioritise this sector in trade capacity building initiatives; understand what the public and private sector can bring to the table in fostering appropriate policies and trade capacity building initiatives.
3. Recognise the role played by larger enterprises in providing services for the SME sector; safeguard that such trade enabling services are accessible to SME; and encourage SME supporting investments by such enterprises.



**Steven Pope** (moderation, Deutsche Post DHL Group), **Marcos Net** (UNDP), **Paul Fekete** (USAid), **Kati Souminen** (Nextrade Group), **Pinaman Owusu-Banahene** (ADJOAA), **Hennie Heymans** (DHL Express SSA)

<sup>28</sup> A point that was also touched upon in the first panel where panellists sought to set out the respective roles of business and government stakeholders.

<sup>29</sup> Not forgetting the additional gender barriers to accessing finance as reported in various other panels (Panel 7).

<sup>30</sup> This can include – as highlighted in feedback to drafts of this report – support for policies that seek to update archaic tax regimes so that SMEs are not disincentivised from taking advantage of e-commerce opportunities.

## FOURTH PANEL: “GLOBAL TRADE: WAYS TO IMPROVE MEDICAL SUPPLY”

Slot	Day One / Fourth Panel: 14:15-15:30
Moderator	<b>Christoph Baumgarten</b> , Senior Expert Sustainability, Communications and Programmes, GoTrade, Deutsche Post DHL Group
Panellist	<b>Danny Hendriksen</b> , Vice President, Inter-company Operations, Pfizer <b>Gian Gandhi</b> , Chief, COVID-19 Tools (Vaccines, Diagnostics, Therapeutics) and Health Emergencies, UNICEF Supply <b>Katja Busch</b> , Head of Customer Solutions and Innovations, DPDHL Group

### WRAP UP POINTS

- Trade facilitation can save lives!
- Operational challenge: End-to-end orchestration (vaccines, people, equipment)
- Export controls are a problem in the global response
- Secure the lessons learnt during the pandemic - including partnerships developed

### SUMMARY

This was the concluding session for the first day of the summit. It was dedicated to the improvement of medical supply chains and equal access to healthcare products and medical supplies. Panellists came from organisations responsible for medical supply chains that benefit millions of people around the world. They shared first-hand accounts of the operational challenges linked to medical supply chains, especially with focus on their experiences in the COVID-19 response. The COVID-19 pandemic was already featured as a topic in all other panels during the day, but what was made clear in this session was the sheer scale of global effort necessary to develop vaccines at speed, produce these vaccines, and distribute them across the world.

It was also stressed that the COVID-19 vaccine production chain had to be built from scratch and that what may have been thought impossible turned out – thank goodness! – to be possible.

It was also explained that medical supply chains are not just about getting goods and temperature controlled vaccines to where they are needed, it is also about supplying the necessary equipment and ancillaries, and ensuring sufficient stock of such items to enable effective administration into peoples' arms. The challenge of finding the necessary people to administer vaccines and take care of patients (during periods at which the health system was already under extreme stress) was also elaborated on. Medical supply chains may thus be described as end-to-end orchestration of public health activities, ranging from research and development to production and distribution, and the final delivery to patients. As was also mentioned, we are still seeing global disruptions to global supply chains along with escalating upstream freight costs and extended lead time. This, in turn, stretches resources and budgets at the expense of delivering healthcare on the ground.

Highlighted, too, was that the rapid response to the COVID-19 pandemic was in part possible thanks to “lots of very hard work” and effective collaboration between the public and private sector. Billions of vaccines could thus be produced and administered at a pace. But, despite such success there have been failings. Export controls prevented manufacturers' ability to move goods to other recipient countries in a way that might have been desirable. As an example, it was stated, that “we saw a lot of personal protective equipment (PPE) nationalism and syringe nesting that undermined global public health responses”. Panellists commented that the response to the pandemic offers many very positive lessons for successful public-private sector collaboration, but it also offers less positive lessons with “**remaining challenges at the last mile in many middle- and lower-income countries**”.

Positive lessons include the rapid increase in use of **digital technologies** to help streamline supply chain operations and cross-border compliance (Panel 2), the increasing use of e-commerce systems for direct shipments to patients, greater supply chain visibility, and **scope to advance trade facilitation**. Lessons learnt also included the need for greater standardisation and data sharing. Inspiration for future planning can be drawn from the many collaborations between businesses that helped speed-up production and distribution. This was leveraged to help make medical supply chains more efficient without undermining the necessary need for competition. The undertaking of transport companies and airlines to prioritise COVID-19 related shipments was also highlighted as a positive example of public-private partnership.

It was explained that scope for improvements in the regulatory space exist, too. This includes the need for border control systems that are better at prioritising humanitarian shipments<sup>31</sup>. The need to explore measures that ensure freight rates do not spike excessively was mentioned, too. And it was stressed— as in other panels — for supply chains to be “de-risked” from the very significant export control related obstacles.

## IMPLIED ACTION POINTS

1. Within the humanitarian space there is considerable scope for further trade facilitation type innovation. This deserves attention and lessons can be drawn from the COVID-19 pandemic experience.
2. Much of the rapid response to the COVID-19 pandemic was possible thanks to deep public-private cooperation. There is significant scope to build on these positive experiences and draft recommendations that facilitate trade and make supply chains more resilient.
3. In the context of humanitarian disasters, trade facilitation can save lives. The rapid response to the COVID-19 pandemic deserves showcasing — “the impossible was made possible”. This could be done, for example in the form of funded case studies, research, and policy communications.
4. Within a public health context, trade facilitation is not just about the movement of goods, it is also about the movement of people and equipment. In the context of temperature-controlled vaccines, it is also about developing appropriate handling and distribution infrastructure at speed.
5. There is a need to highlight just how disruptive export controls and PPE hoarding has been for the COVID-19 public health responses, and to draw the necessary policy conclusions.
6. Recognise that e-commerce systems enable medical items to be sent directly to patients (and for samples to be returned), thus, offering new streamlined distribution options that can radically reduce the impact on public health services.

<sup>31</sup> Although not referenced in the panel discussions, following documents are worth highlighting: UN CEFAC’s “Recommendation No. 44: Cross-Border Facilitation Measures for Disaster Relief” [<https://unece.org/trade/documents/2021/02/recommendation-no-44-cross-border-facilitation-measures-disaster-relief>]; various WCO Secretariat Notes, including the use of “essential goods lists” [[http://www.wcoomd.org/-/media/wco/public/global/pdf/topics/facilitation/activities-and-programmes/natural-disaster/covid\\_19/essential-goods-lists\\_guidance.pdf?la=en](http://www.wcoomd.org/-/media/wco/public/global/pdf/topics/facilitation/activities-and-programmes/natural-disaster/covid_19/essential-goods-lists_guidance.pdf?la=en)]; and Grainger, Rundle and Ahsen (2019) “Customs and Humanitarian Logistics”, Global Trade and Customs Journal, Volume 14, Issue 4, April 2019 [a free pre-submission draft is publicly available at: [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Andrew-Grainger-2/publication/330579710\\_Customs\\_and\\_Humanitarian\\_Logistics/links/5c49a40592851c22a38c7cbc/Customs-and-Humanitarian-Logistics.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Andrew-Grainger-2/publication/330579710_Customs_and_Humanitarian_Logistics/links/5c49a40592851c22a38c7cbc/Customs-and-Humanitarian-Logistics.pdf)]



**FIFTH PANEL:****“PUSHING THE LIMITS OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE POLICY: HOW TO GEAR UP TO THE NEXT LEVEL”**

Slot	Day 2 / Fifth Panel: 8:45-10:30
<b>Moderator</b>	<b>Steven Pope</b> , Head of GoTrade, Deutsche Post DHL Group
<b>Keynote speaker(s)</b>	<b>Melanie Kreis</b> , CFO, Deutsche Post DHL Group
<b>Panellist</b>	<b>Delores Halloran</b> , Acting Secretary of the WTO Trade Facilitation Committee <b>Marion Jansen</b> , Director, Trade and Agriculture Directorate OECD <b>Melanie Kreis</b> , CFO, Deutsche Post DHL Group <b>Prof. Dr. Stefan Schepers</b> , Executive Director High Level Groups on EU Policy Innovation <b>Trudi Hartzenberg</b> , Executive Director of the Trade Law Centre, Acting Secretary, WTO Trade Facilitation Committee <b>William Gain</b> , Global Lead, Trade Facilitation, Customs Reform & Border Management, World Bank Group

Panellists shared their various experiences, insights, observations, and ambitions for the COVID-19 recovery and WTO TFA Review. It was explained that barriers to the movement of goods have long been a challenge, even before the COVID-19 pandemic, and it is important for the business community that applicable rules and regulations are practical and clear. By reference to OECD studies, it was also mentioned just how much economic gain can be achieved from effective trade facilitation – especially for emerging and developing economies. Furthermore, attention was drawn to the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), which is currently being reviewed and serves as a key vehicle for achieving those economic gains.

It was commented that there is no need to reinvent the wheel, but - there is a need to explore how the public and private sector can “build back better” in their recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, and how to overcome cognitive gaps. Subsequent requirements include the need for: keeping economies open and connected; ensuring global economic growth in a more socially equitable way; and safeguarding sustainability in a low carbon and climate resilient world where no country or social group is left behind. The ability for the public, private and academic sector to come together to tackle those challenges effectively was emphasised as crucial.

**WRAP UP POINTS**

- Free trade, fairness, inclusiveness, and equality: trade policy mechanisms/institutions
- Political developments, policy changes and need for agility and future orientated thinking
- Capacity building – not just focused on government agencies, but also the private sector
- Trust is the foundation for Public-Private Partnership (PPP): commitments, outcomes, progress.

**SUMMARY**

Panellists and summit participants were welcomed with a keynote speech by Melanie Kreis, CFO of Deutsche Post DHL Group. She pointed out, by reference to the COVID-19 pandemic, how rules and regulations can impact cross-border mobility, business travel and the shipment of goods. She drew attention to DHL’s White Paper on “Delivering Pandemic Resilience<sup>32</sup>”, the “COVID-19 Private Sector Global Facility<sup>33</sup>”, the various efforts by International Organisations, and the positive leadership of the WCO in its guidance to the global customs community and stakeholders (Panel 1).

It was also explained that the TFA itself is an innovative tool because it commits governments to help partner countries facilitate trade; and the implementation of trade facilitation measures relies to a large part on the effective engagement of the business community. Some noted that the TFA can be described as a “**common sense agreement**” which is practical with its ambition to speed up the ability to move goods across borders. To achieve that objective, it was explained, “can be challenging on the ground” and National Trade Facilitation Committees (NTFCs) have to play an important role in overcoming those challenges.

Several panellists also drew attention to the need for speeding up capacity building initiatives that seek to strengthen the trade policy making capabilities – especially in countries where a coherent trade policy might not be in place, but also in aid of NTFCs to ensure that trade facilitation type opportunities are understood and that the needs of stakeholders are suitably articulated.

Reference was also made to **the rate of TFA implementation commitments, which currently stands at 74.8% overall<sup>34</sup>**. The

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.dhl.com/content/dam/dhl/global/core/documents/pdf/glo-core-delivering-pandemic-resilience-2020.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.unglobalfacility.org>

<sup>34</sup> <https://tfadatabase.org/implementation/progress>



public and private sector thus need to explore how to drive up that rate and bring in the remaining countries in an effective and meaningful way. It was also mentioned that there **can often be a disconnection between policy makers at the WTO level, in the capitals and at the country level**. Thus, it was suggested that there are many cases where the capacity of private sector stakeholders needs to be strengthened so that they can effectively engage in policy making. And, it was emphasised that stakeholder dialogue and international collaboration are important at all policy levels.

Furthermore, panellists commented on the need for trade policy mechanisms and institutions (including the WTO) to become more agile in order to respond to the changing conditions in a rapidly changing world, such as the Paris Climate Agreement. External shocks to the trade system, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, are catalysts for change; and “the [COVID-19] pandemic has shown us the relevance of global supply chains. People recognise [...] that global supply chains cannot be taken for granted” and that [...] “the power of e-commerce offers a new way in bringing together people and partners across the world”.

**Many economic opportunities can be realized and the TFA offers a framework to make that happen.** But it was also cautioned by several panellists that while trade creates “winners”, the impact on “losers” must be proactively managed.

Within the context of public-private partnerships, panellists emphasised that **trust is an essential ingredient**. GoTrade sets a useful example of how public-private collaboration with global focus can be developed. It was also explained that in addition to formal (hard) institutional structure, informal (soft) collaboration can help build policy consensus. It was also reiterated that public-private partnerships need to be mindful of the policy interests of wider society.

Attention, too, was drawn by the panellists to the ambitions of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) where “**regional integration makes absolute sense**”. It was explained that the continent is still fragmented and there are significant trade transaction costs in the movement of goods across borders. Those barriers weigh heavier than most tariff barriers. Any reduction in trade transaction costs through trade facilitation would thus produce significant economic benefits. But it was also cautioned that any trade facilitation policy needs to be realistic since the 55 countries of the AfCFTA come from different backgrounds and positions. Progress in trade facilitation will

require effort and has to be incremental. A long-term approach is required.

Similar challenges towards regional integration, can be observed amongst the island nations of the Pacific and within the Caribbean. **There are opportunities to share lessons and experiences in aid of regional integrations**. Similar attention was drawn to landlocked developing countries<sup>35</sup>. One panellist recommended that “we should seek to understand the needs of these specific groups of countries and **explore a collection of trade facilitation initiatives that will create improvements for them**”.

### IMPLIED ACTION POINTS

1. There is a lot of scope for learning, be it from the policy lessons gleaned from the COVID-19 pandemic or within the context of regional integration (e.g., between the Caribbean and Pacific or amongst landlocked countries).
2. There are good examples of public-private partnerships from which lessons and insights can be gained. A key principle to hold on to is that trust amongst parties is the foundation for such collaboration.
3. The review of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement provides an opportunity to make sure that trade facilitation is strengthened, and that it meets the needs of stakeholders for inclusive and sustainable growth.
4. Apart from working with the WTO, there is a strong case for long-term public-private sector support that seeks to strengthen the inclusive trade policy making capabilities of relevant stakeholders at the regional and national levels.



Melanie Kreis, CFO Deutsche Post DHL Group

<sup>35</sup> UNCTAD counts 32 landlocked developing countries of which 17 are Least Developed Countries (LDCs); <https://unctad.org/topic/landlocked-developing-countries/list-of-LLDCs>

## SIXTH PANEL: “BUILDING FOUNDATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH THROUGH QUALIFICATION & EMPOWERMENT”

Slot	Day 2 / Sixth Panel: 10:50-11:50
<b>Moderator</b>	<b>Stefan Niclauss</b> , Deutsche Post DHL Group
<b>Panellist</b>	<b>Amadou Diallo</b> , CEO DHL Global Forwarding Middle East & Africa <b>Dan LeClair</b> , CEO Global Business School Network <b>Joan Tanui</b> , Founder, Urembo Arts <sup>36</sup> Kenya <b>Mark Goodger</b> , Chief Executive at Globle Maritime Learning/Legal Solutions <b>Dr Thomas Ogilvie</b> , Chief Human Resources Officer, DPDHL Group

### WRAP UP POINTS

- Professionalism and the breadth of knowledge required
- Diverse learner needs
- Global Markets: education, empowerment, business support and growth
- Approaches: mentoring, formal, informal.

### SUMMARY

This panel offered insights into how training can “empower businesses to trade”. The case study of a small SME was used to illustrate how they may benefit from public-private training initiatives. In subsequent debate it was highlighted that learners have diverse needs. It was stated that for many SMEs it is about developing the skills necessary to identify export markets and serve those markets effectively. However, in addition to those practical skills it was mentioned that an awareness of wider cultural skills about “knowing and understanding your customers” is essential. Likewise, core SME business skills, such as accounting and finance – along with knowing how to leverage e-commerce services effectively – need to be mastered. And, it was explained, entrepreneurs often need support in developing all these essential skills. It was thus observed just how complex learner needs can be, and how formal qualifications can assist in developing the necessary capabilities for SMEs to draw upon.

It was also explained that it is possible to reduce SME reliance on the services of intermediaries by developing their knowledge of distribution, marketing, and compliance requirements. This can translate into a fairer share of profits. Mentioned, too, was the role of universities in enabling a safe and secure learning environment – whether for students on fulltime programmes or adults on continuous learning journeys.

The need for customs administrations to develop the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively apply applicable trade and customs procedures was addressed, too. Noted was that the training of officials should also include subjects relevant to trade facilitation and foster awareness about the specific service needs that businesses have. Mentioned, too, was the role that the private sector can play in reaching SME business communities.

Likewise, it was highlighted how public-private sector networks can be used to share experiences (learning) about the effective use of digital technologies and best practice trade facilitation experiences.

Thoughts were also shared about the significant impact that training can have in enabling SMEs to trade, and help officials embrace trade facilitation. Reference was also made to the ambitions of the AfCFTA and how the promotion of training standards could help drive intra-Africa trade.

Approaches to learning, as was mentioned, range from formal learning (and qualifications) to peer-to-peer support groups. The importance of access to mentors was also alluded to. In the wrap-up session, the WCO PICARD Standards<sup>37</sup> for the training of customs professionals was mentioned, as was the work of the International Network of Customs Universities (INCUS<sup>38</sup>). It was suggested that the development of trade facilitation enabling training and education might still be a neglected area within current trade and customs policy<sup>39</sup>.

<sup>36</sup> <https://uremboartskenya.com>

<sup>37</sup> <http://www.wcoomd.org/-/media/wco/public/global/pdf/topics/capacity-building/activities-and-programmes/picard/professional-standards/omd-normes-prof-uk-bas-se-def.pdf?la=fr>

<sup>38</sup> <https://incu.org>

<sup>39</sup> For example, the words “training” and “education” do not feature in the text of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement. However, as highlighted by Kunio Mikuriya in Panel 1, training is a core part of the WCO remit.

**IMPLIED ACTION POINTS**

1. Recognise that SME training and skill development programmes can play a significant enabling factor for SMEs in becoming trade active.
2. Understand that private sector networks can help connect with SMEs and entrepreneurs, and support their training needs; they can also be leveraged to help share experiences (learning) about the effective use of digital technologies and best practice trade facilitation experiences.
3. Support capacity building initiatives that foster the development of skills and expertise – be it in formal settings (e.g., universities or professional training programmes)<sup>40</sup>, or informal via peer-to-peer networks and on-the-job training (including mentoring).
4. Explore in public-private partnership how support for training and education can be enhanced further and improved (e.g., via schools, universities, training institutes, enhanced customer service, mentoring services, peer support networks, etc).



**Thomas Ogilvie,**  
Chief Human Resources Officer, Deutsche Post DHL Group

<sup>40</sup> Inspiration may be taking from the WCO PICARD standard, and also from textbooks such as Andrew Grainger's (2021) "Cross-border logistics operations: effective trade facilitation and border management", Kogan Page: London, New York

## SEVENTH PANEL: “DRIVING GENDER EQUALITY AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH IN BUSINESS, ECONOMIES AND SOCIETIES”

Slot	Day 2 / Seventh Panel: 12:45 – 13:45
<b>Moderator</b>	<b>Sarah Meinert</b> , Head of Knowledge Management, GoTrade, Deutsche Post DHL Group
<b>Panellist</b>	<b>Belinda Esaete</b> , Founder and CEO Bel Deluxe <b>David Thornehill</b> , Chief Information Security Officer, Deutsche Post DHL Group <b>Dr Hanna Norberg</b> , Founder and Principalla of Trade Economista & Trade Expertes, Co-founder of TPRForum <b>Kimberly Harrison</b> , EVP HR Group Functions <b>Vanessa Erogbobo</b> , Chief, Sustainable and Inclusive Value chains, International Trade Centre

### WRAP UP POINTS

- Trade policy has moved on from its backroom focus on tariffs – “New rules of the road”
- Raise awareness of the issues, understand them, and act: “less talking, more walking”
- Leverage support through partnership and networks (operational and institutional)
- Equality is not a zero-sum game – we all gain.

### SUMMARY

This was the concluding panel of the GoTrade 2022 Summit, thus underpinning just how important it is to address gender equality and inclusive growth in business and society. Panelists, all of which actively work against gender barriers in global trade, shared their insights to help address those barriers through public-private sector initiatives. Much was shared, but importantly: the urgent call for action towards gender equality (as featured in most panel discussions) was reiterated. Half the world’s population is female and by addressing gender inequalities there is a phenomenal opportunity for mobilising talent and economic activity; hence offering a very strong catalyst for growth and prosperity.

The panellists gave various accounts of the additional challenges women can face in setting-up a business or accessing finance. Reference was made to the barriers of accessing support networks, overcoming “the old boys’ networks”, and engaging in policy making. It was also explained how gender barriers add to skill gaps. Highlighted, too, was that currently mostly women have less disposable time due to disproportionate commitments outside of the commercial sphere.

One of the panellists also gave a first-hand account of how training and mentoring can help entrepreneurs to become established and thrive. It was explained that 50% of the beneficiaries of GoTrade’s SME business support programmes are female. The importance of female support networks in securing influence over trade policy was stressed, too. Panel discussions also touched upon how businesses (and other organisations) may wish to communicate their gender equality aspirations. It was explained that companies may choose to set gender targets for key positions. However, it was also explained that by failing to address gender equality (with or without gender targets) a large source of talent is excluded at the expense of business competitiveness.

Reference was made to gender stereotypes, and that some professions suffer from strong gender bias. Discussed, too, was the need to understand values that are frequently attributed to gender and their wider importance for organisations and society. And care was recommended where gender biases are echoed in the use of language and, if left unaddressed, can lend itself to further stereotyping and discrimination.

It was also suggested, that companies may seek to encourage gender related experiences through their organisation’s HR policy and review bias processes. For example, unconscious bias can be minimised during the recruitment process by encouraging applicants not to include a picture with their CV (as is the practice in many parts of the world).

Recruitment practices that require job-applicants to attach a picture to their CVs (as is the practice in many parts of the world) ought to be reconsidered, too.



Furthermore, it was explained that gender issues overlap with other trade policy areas – including climate change, which may impact women disproportionately. It was also noted that “trade policy dictates the rules of the world”; and while in the past focus was mostly on tariffs, it is now about trade barriers, environmental effects, and gender effects. It was thus inferred that institutions need to evolve so that relevant interests can be appropriately considered in the trade policy making process – very much echoing sentiments expressed in Panel 5.

Throughout the discussion, panellists highlighted that gender issues in global trade can be a complex topic. It was also implied that it is necessary to be aware of gender issues, understanding them, and to act accordingly. It was also stressed that the subject does need urgent and constant attention; to quote one panellist: “less talking and more walking”.

#### IMPLIED ACTION POINTS

1. Ensure awareness of gender issues, understand those issues, and act – “less walking, more talking”. Failure to step-up is a missed opportunity.
2. Recognise that trade policy is fast evolving and gender issues are a key feature.
3. The public and private sector need to come together to further leverage support in aid of gender equality and inclusiveness. As demonstrated by the panel, it is possible to share best practice experiences.
4. Ensure that trade facilitation motivated initiatives also address those barriers to trade that are gender dependent.



**Marion Jansen**, Director Trade Facilitation, OECD, **Steven Pope**, Head of GoTrade, Deutsche Post DHL Group





## USEFUL REFERENCE RESOURCES

GoTrade Summit 2022 Online Hub: <https://gotrade.virtual-meeting-dhl.com/login>

“Cross-border logistics operations: effective trade facilitation and border management”; textbook by Andrew Grainger (2021) and distributed globally by Kogan Page [ <http://www.koganpage.com/cblog> ]

“Customs and Humanitarian Logistics”, Global Trade and Customs Journal, Volume 14, Issue 4, April 2019, Grainger, Rundle and Ahsen (2019) [a free pre-submission draft is publicly available at: [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Andrew-Grainger-2/publication/330579710\\_Customs\\_and\\_Humanitarian\\_Logistics/links/5c49a40592851c22a38c7cbc/Customs-and-Humanitarian-Logistics.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Andrew-Grainger-2/publication/330579710_Customs_and_Humanitarian_Logistics/links/5c49a40592851c22a38c7cbc/Customs-and-Humanitarian-Logistics.pdf)]

“Helping SMEs internationalise through trade facilitation”, Javier López González Silvia Sorescu (2019), OECD Trade Policy Papers No. 229: [https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/trade/helping-smes-internationalise-through-trade-facilitation\\_2050e6b0-en](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/trade/helping-smes-internationalise-through-trade-facilitation_2050e6b0-en)

“Make business the genuine partner of government”, Letter to the Financial Times by John WH Denton, Secretary General, International Chamber of Commerce, Paris, France (January 21, 2022 <https://www.ft.com/content/9038bb4f-4d89-4d92-b302-a5ade4dad013>).

“The Role of the Private Sector in Border Management Reform”, A Grainger (2010) in Border Management Modernization, G. McLinden, E. Fanta, D. Widdowson and T. Doyle. Washington, World Bank: 157-174, Chapter 10 [ <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/2544> ]

COVID-19 Private Sector Global Facility: <https://www.unglobalfacility.org/about>

Delivering Pandemic Resilience, How to secure stable supply chains for vaccines and medical goods during the COVID-19 crisis and future health emergencies, DHL White Paper: <https://www.dhl.com/content/dam/dhl/global/core/documents/pdf/glo-core-delivering-pandemic-resilience-2020.pdf>

Developing a Trade Information Portal, guide by the World Bank Group: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/16975>

DHL Global Connectedness Index, 2021: <https://www.dhl.com/global-en/spotlight/globalization/global-connectedness-index.html>

Financial Times (14 December 2021), “Shortages, what shortages? Global markets are delivering”, Martin Sandbu [ <https://www.ft.com/content/ea89a152-ca34-4c01-8986-0d019f3cae74> ]

International Network of Customs Universities: <https://incu.org>  
ITC and UNCTAD’s “Global Trade Helpdesk”: <https://globaltradehelpdesk.org/en>

Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide, United Nations: <https://tfig.unece.org>

UN CEFAC “Recommendation No. 44: Cross-Border Facilitation Measures for Disaster Relief”: <https://unece.org/trade/documents/2021/02/recommendation-no-44-cross-border-facilitation-measures-disaster-relief>

UNCTAD’s Reform Tracker – a digital project management tool for NTFCs: <https://unctad.org/topic/transport-and-trade-logistics/trade-facilitation/reform-tracker>

WCO PICARD Standard: <http://www.wcoomd.org/-/media/wco/public/global/pdf/topics/capacity-building/activities-and-programmes/picard/professional-standards/omd-normes-prof-uk-basse-def.pdf?la=fr>

WCO Private Sector Consultative Group: <http://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/key-issues/private-sector-consultative-group.aspx>

WCO Revised Kyoto (Customs) Convention: [http://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/facilitation/instrument-and-tools/conventions/pf\\_revised\\_kyoto\\_conv.aspx](http://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/facilitation/instrument-and-tools/conventions/pf_revised_kyoto_conv.aspx)

WCO SAFE Framework of Standards: [http://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/facilitation/instrument-and-tools/frameworks-of-standards/safe\\_package.aspx](http://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/facilitation/instrument-and-tools/frameworks-of-standards/safe_package.aspx)

WTO’s Trade Facilitation Agreement Database: <https://tfadata-base.org/tfa-text/measure/29>

WTO’s Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility: <https://www.tfafacility.org/agreement-article-resources>

## ANNEX: SUMMARY LIST OF ALL ACTIONS POINTS THAT WERE IMPLIED IN THE RESPECTIVE PANEL SESSIONS

No.	Ref	Action Point
1	P1-1	1. Showcase how business networks can support and leverage public policy expectations - especially within the space of trade facilitation, but also within the context of global supply chain configuration and development, and lending scale (and resulting efficiencies) to SME operations. Offer support for further public-private led capacity building initiatives
2	P1-2	2. Use business networks to bridge the gap between bottom-up experiences and top-down initiatives; ensure that the rulebook governing trade and globalisation meets the needs of its stakeholders (i.e., pass the “legitimacy test”)
3	P1-3	3. Recognise that public policy needs to be shaped by well governed mechanisms that are inclusive to the voices of the business community along with those of other stakeholders from civil society. Where voices are not forthcoming it is necessary to help lend capacity support, especially within the context of the SME sector
4	P1-4	4. Acknowledge that all public-private sector relationships need to be based on trust – which needs to be nurtured and actively supported
5	P1-5	5. Capture any lessons from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic – especially within the space of rulemaking, governance, and resilient supply chain operations
6	P1-6	6. Recognise that the “rulebook” for global trade needs updating, especially when considering the emerging demands for new types of regulation (e.g., to safeguard the environment and climate change), the importance of non-tariff measures, and the many innovations in digitalisation and digital services.
7	P2-1	1. For advocates of trade facilitation to draw on the many positive examples that the response to the COVID-19 pandemic has offered, but also be humble in recognising the needs of stakeholders – be it government agencies that are mindful of failure and may wish to take small steps, SMEs who may struggle to adapt, or facets of society that are marginalised or excluded from access to digital innovations
8	P2-2	2. Explore and promote tools that foster inclusive participation in public-private partnerships, including the work of national trade facilitation committees
9	P2-3	3. Explore how expertise and experience can be made more accessible by using remote working tools in the implementation of trade facilitation projects
10	P2-4	4. Draw on available business data that is routinely collected (e.g. within performance management systems) to help monitor trade facilitation performance and progress
11	P2-5	5. Recognise that e-commerce and digital innovations create significant opportunities (especially for SMEs), but resulting positive and negative impacts on the business environment need to be carefully considered by trade policy makers (especially regarding those that might be marginalised)

No.	Ref	Action Point
12	P3-1	1. Understand that even if the public and private sector use different vocabulary, there is considerable alignment in their interests towards fostering a frictionless trade and customs environment. Further dialogue and awareness of respective motivations for SME e-commerce support is necessary
13	P3-2	2. Recognise the significance that SME activity has for the global economy; prioritise this sector in trade capacity building initiatives; understand what the public and private sector can bring to the table in fostering appropriate policies and trade capacity building initiatives
14	P3-3	3. Recognise the role played by larger enterprises in providing services for the SME sector; safeguard that such trade enabling services are accessible to SME; and encourage SME supporting investments by such enterprises.
15	P4-1	1. Within the humanitarian space there is considerable scope for further trade facilitation type innovation. This deserves attention and lessons can be drawn from the COVID-19 pandemic experience
16	P4-2	2. Much of the rapid response to the COVID-19 pandemic was possible thanks to deep public-private cooperation. There are many good and bad lessons that need to be reflected in updated trade facilitation policies, and in supply chain resilience planning
17	P4-3	3. It is worth holding onto the fact that within the context of humanitarian disasters, trade facilitation can save lives. The rapid response to the COVID-19 pandemic deserves showcasing – “the impossible was made possible”
18	P4-4	4. Within a public health context, trade facilitation is not just about the movement of goods, it is also about the movement of people and equipment. In the context of temperature-controlled vaccines, it is also about developing appropriate handling and distribution infrastructure at speed
19	P4-5	5. There is a need to highlight just how disruptive export controls and PPE hoarding has been for the COVID-19 public health responses, and to draw the necessary policy conclusions
20	P4-6	6. Recognise that e-commerce systems enable medical items to be sent directly to patients (and for sample to be returned), thus, offering new streamlined distribution options that can radically reduce the impact on public health services.
21	P5-1	1. There is a lot of scope for learning, be it from the policy lessons gleaned from the COVID-19 pandemic or within the context of regional integration (e.g., between the Caribbean and Pacific or amongst landlocked countries)
22	P5-2	2. There are good examples of public-private partnership from which lessons and insights can be gained. A key principle to hold on to is that trust amongst parties is the foundation for such collaboration
23	P5-3	3. The review of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement provides an opportunity to make sure that trade facilitation is strengthened, and that it meets the needs of stakeholders for inclusive and sustainable growth
24	P5-4	4. Apart from working with the WTO, there is also a strong case for long-term public-private sector support that seeks to strengthening the inclusive trade policy making capabilities of relevant stakeholders at the regional and national levels.

No.	Ref	Action Point
25	P6-1	1. Recognise that SME training and skill development programmes play a significant enabling factor for SMEs in becoming trade active
26	P6-2	2. Understand that private sector networks can help connect with SMEs and entrepreneurs, and support their training needs; they can also be leveraged to help share experiences (learning) about the effective use of digital technologies and best practice trade facilitation experiences
27	P6-3	3. Support capacity building initiatives that foster the development of skills and expertise – be it in formal settings (e.g., universities or professional training programmes), or informal via peer-to-peer networks and on-the-job training (including mentoring)
28	P6-4	4. Explore in public-private partnership how support for training and education can be enhanced further and improved (e.g., via schools, universities, training institutes, enhanced customer service, mentoring services, peer support networks, etc)
29	P7-1	1. Ensure awareness of gender issues, understand those issues, and to act – “less walking, more talking”. Failure to step-up is a missed opportunity
30	P7-2	2. Recognise that trade policy is fast evolving and gender issues are a key feature within
31	P7-3	3. The public and private sector needs to come together to further leverage support in aid of gender equality and inclusiveness. As demonstrated by the panel, it is also able to share best practice experiences
32	P7-4	4. Ensure that trade facilitation motivated initiatives also address those barriers to trade that are gender dependent.



