Side Event

World Trade Organization
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Empowering Mountain and Landlocked Communities Through Trade Facilitation, Market Access, and Student-Centric Learning: Lessons from the Kyrgyz Republic and the State of Utah, United States

STATEMENT

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Distinguished guests, dear colleagues,

The challenges facing landlocked and mountainous countries have already been outlined by my fellow speakers. The question before us now is how these challenges can be addressed in a world where trade is becoming increasingly complex and technology-driven.

For countries such as Kyrgyzstan, physical barriers cannot be removed overnight. However, administrative barriers can be reduced, procedures can be simplified, and new technologies can make international trade more accessible. Achieving this requires people who understand both the rules of the multilateral trading system and the technologies that are transforming global commerce.

This is why we believe that investing in knowledge, skills, and international cooperation is one of the most practical contributions we can make today, especially for landlocked and mountainous countries. Although such countries make up less than 10% of the world's states and are home to only about 4% of the global population, they face some of the greatest barriers to connectivity, trade, and economic development. That is why investing in youth remains one of the most effective ways to overcome the limits of geography.

We believe that trade promotes cooperation and contributes to peace. For landlocked countries, a transparent and rules-based trading system is vital. But such a system cannot function effectively without people who understand its rules

and can adapt them to new technological realities. This is precisely why education and international cooperation matter.

To contribute to this objective, as students and young professionals from Kyrgyzstan, we propose the creation of a Regional WTO and Trade Facilitation Network for landlocked and mountainous countries.

The network could organise an annual summer school on international trade, two online policy dialogues each year, and joint research projects on trade facilitation and the use of artificial intelligence in customs and logistics.

We also propose student and academic exchange programmes and partnerships between participating institutions. As partners, we are ready to host students, researchers, and international experts.

In addition, the network could convene an Annual Forum on Landlocked and Mountainous Countries to discuss common challenges, exchange best practices, and strengthen a shared understanding of trade and development priorities.

We hope to create a joint platform on International Trade and Artificial Intelligence involving at least ten universities from landlocked and mountainous countries and partner institutions worldwide.

We would welcome the support of the World Trade Organization through the participation of WTO experts in lectures, discussions, and capacity-building activities for young professionals.

Investing in the next generation of trade professionals is therefore an investment in a more open, peaceful, and inclusive international trading system. For countries like Kyrgyzstan, building human capital and strengthening international cooperation may be the most effective way to overcome the limitations of geography and to ensure that being landlocked never means being left behind.

Thank you.