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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Dear participants,

Kyrgyzstan is a mountainous and landlocked country located in the heart of Central Asia. More than 90 percent of our territory is covered by mountains. These mountains shape our national identity, culture, and natural heritage, but they also create significant challenges for international trade and transport logistics.

Unlike countries with direct access to seaports, Kyrgyzstan depends on transit routes through neighboring countries. In order to reach European markets, Kyrgyz exports often need to cross 3 or 4 international borders before arriving at their final destination.

Let me illustrate this with a practical example.

If a producer in Kyrgyzstan exports honey or dried fruits to Switzerland, air transportation may take approximately 3 to 5 days. However, when export documentation, customs clearance, transit procedures, and import formalities are taken into account, the total process may require between 7 and 13 days. Road transportation may take between 18 and 28 days, while rail transport combined with road logistics can require up to 29 to 43 days. These estimates are based on typical logistics timelines between Central Asia and Europe, including border crossings, transit requirements, and administrative procedures.

In other words, for countries such as Kyrgyzstan, trade is not only about distance. It is also about procedures, regulations, and connectivity.

According to international studies, trade costs for landlocked developing countries are approximately 40 percent higher than for countries with direct access to the sea. For us, this is not only a trade issue. It is a development issue that directly affects competitiveness, entrepreneurship, and economic opportunities for future generations.This is why the implementation to the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement is so important to reduce the cost of the transit. Moreover Its effective implementation can reduce administrative barriers, improve transparency, and accelerate the movement of goods across borders.At the same time, we believe that many existing procedures could be better adapted to the realities of the digital age.

Today, international trade operates in a world shaped by artificial intelligence, digital platforms, and real-time data exchange. Yet many procedures remain complex and insufficiently adapted to modern technological capabilities. As representatives of a generation that grew up with the internet and digital technologies, we see enormous potential in electronic documentation, paperless trade, digital customs services, and AI-powered solutions.

Trade rules should be understandable not only to those who negotiate them, but also to those who apply them every day - entrepreneurs, exporters, students, and future professionals.

For this reason, we would welcome greater participation of young people in WTO educational programs, digital trade initiatives, and capacity-building activities.

We firmly believe that the future of the multilateral trading system depends not only on institutions, but also on the next generation that will carry these principles forward in the digital economy.

Thank you very much for your attention.

I would now like to invite my colleague, Aikanysh, to continue our presentation.