

# UK's G7 Trade Track Opening Statement

As the world recovers from coronavirus, we are coming together today to show that the best way forward lies in free and fair trade.

Just as trade built our nations, it will help us build back better by creating high-quality jobs in the industries which are key for our future.

We cannot squander our opportune moment.

The World Trade Organization has a new Director-General, Dr Ngozi Okonjo Iweala, who I am glad is with us today.

The US has a new administration, with Ambassador Katherine Tai as Trade Representative.

The United Kingdom is a newly independent trading nation.

Today marks the start of the inaugural G7 Trade Track, an initiative pioneered by the UK.

Fundamentally, our like-minded democracies need to win the battle for the soul of global trade... making sure the WTO works for people across the world.

Together, we can fully back Dr Ngozi in driving much-needed reforms at the twelfth WTO Ministerial Conference to be held in December in Geneva, the first such conference for three years.

We would be derelict in our duties if we were not to make progress today, and to build on it in person at our next meetings in May and October.

The G7 covers half of global GDP – we need to make our voices heard and bring more of our friends and allies on board to push trade into the 21st century.

Let us be clear, if we fail to act, then we risk global trade fragmenting under the tyranny of the largest... in which the big players feel they get to set the rules. That winner-takes-all future would ultimately leave people across the world worse off.

The WTO is over a quarter of a century old. It was founded in 1995, before Google had even set up their first website, when China's economy was a tenth the size of the US, and the UN was holding its first Climate Conference – COP1 – in Berlin.

But the WTO still reflects that world in too many ways, despite the incredible rise of digital trade and China... and the UK now preparing to host COP26.

We need to reflect the world as it is now, particularly in areas like digital and data, the environment and women's economic empowerment, rather than stay stuck in the 1990s.

We have been held back by a rulebook which has not kept pace with the modern world.

Pernicious practices by non-market economies have given trade a bad name, from forced labour and forced technology transfer to mass unreported subsidies and environmental degradation.

It is ludicrous that some countries can evade market disciplines by claiming to be developing nations when they are not.

The fact is the trading system has not delivered – by not being fair to people across the world or relevant to their lives.

With the WTO under Dr Ngozi's fresh and dynamic leadership, we must work together to set a roadmap to Geneva delivering change in two big ways.

Firstly, we need to make sure the WTO is fair for all its members.

We need to reform the dispute settlement system, stamp out unfair industrial subsidies and make sure everybody – large or small – is following the rules and being transparent.

Secondly, we must modernise the WTO by making progress on rules for data and digital trade, properly addressing the issue of carbon leakage and improving the inclusion of women in global trade.

We can demonstrate our commitment to delivering reform by helping resolve issues which should be common sense like the fisheries negotiation by this summer.

Together, we can come out of the Covid crisis to change global trade for good.

Let us no longer be hampered by rules which were written a generation ago, when we need them to propel us forward, now and for the next 25 years.

Through free and fair trade, we will spark a jobs-led and exports-led recovery.

By bringing the global trading system into the 21st century, we will herald a new era rich in jobs, opportunity, and prosperity for our people.

Together, we are taking a big step in making this bright future a reality.