The Geneva Nexus

Trade, Biodiversity and the Ocean Economy: Pathways to Resilience

5 November:10h30 - 12h00
World Trade Organisation - Room S2

Background and Rationale

International trade is a central component of the ocean economy. Fisheries, aquaculture, maritime transport, tourism, coastal services, marine technologies and ocean-based value chains all depend on a healthy and resilient ocean. At the same time, trade can either contribute to environmental degradation or become a driver of sustainability, innovation and economic diversification.

Biodiversity loss, climate change, marine pollution and unsustainable exploitation of marine resources increasingly affect the stability of ocean-related trade. They create risks for supply chains, food security, coastal economies, market access and long-term investment. These impacts are particularly acute for Small Island Developing States and coastal developing countries, where ocean-based sectors are often central to livelihoods, exports and economic resilience.

Stronger ocean governance can reduce long-term economic risks and support a more stable and predictable trading system. Environmental action should therefore not be seen only as a regulatory constraint on trade. When well designed, it can create clearer market conditions, support sustainable value chains, open opportunities for innovation, and strengthen the competitiveness of countries and companies that invest early in low-carbon, circular and biodiversity-positive solutions.

This event will use the unique Geneva platform to explore how trade policy can support ocean resilience, how biodiversity protection can strengthen the ocean economy, and how sustainable trade can help deliver practical benefits for countries, communities and businesses.

Objectives

This event aims to:

- Consider how **trade can contribute to a sustainable and resilient ocean economy**, including through low-carbon, circular and nature-positive ocean value chains;
- Explore how **biodiversity protection** and environmental action **can strengthen ocean-based trade** and investment;
- Showcase innovative **experiences** in supporting sustainable ocean governance and resilient ocean-based value chains;
- Contribute to the **Fourth UN Ocean Conference (UNOC-4) preparations**.

Key Themes

Trade as a driver of ocean resilience
How trade policy, market incentives and international cooperation can support more sustainable fisheries, aquaculture, maritime transport and ocean-based value chains. Particular attention will be given to the importance of successfully concluding the second phase of WTO fisheries subsidies negotiations (Fish 2), addressing subsidies that contribute to overcapacity and overfishing.

Biodiversity as economic infrastructure
The role of marine biodiversity and healthy ecosystems in sustaining exports, food systems, tourism, coastal livelihoods and long-term investment.

Environmental action and trade opportunities
How new markets can be created through stronger environmental standards, circular economy approaches and biodiversity-positive practices, to reduce risks and improve competitiveness while stimulating innovation.

Indicative Programme:

- **Opening remarks (5 mins)**
  Ambassador João Mira Gomes, Permanent Representative of Portugal

- **Scene-setting remarks (5 mins)**
  Mr. Tiago Pitta e Cunha, Chief Executive of the Oceano Azul Foundation

- **Keynote intervention (10 mins)**
  Ms. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Director-General of the World Trade Organization

- **Intervention (5 mins)**
  Ambassador François Dumont, Belgium's Special Envoy for climate and environment

- **Panel discussion (15 min)**
  Moderated by Mr. Yuvan Beejadhur (Senior Advisor WTO):

  - ✓ Mr. David Vivas, Chief of the Ocean and Circular Economy at UNCTAD
  - ✓ Ms. Minna Epps, Director Global Ocean Policy at IUCN
  - ✓ Ms. Anna Holl-Buhl, Head of Ocean Policy at WWF

- **On the road to UNOC 4 (5 mins)**
  Speaker to be confirmed.

- **General discussion - Q&A (15 mins)**

- **Closing remarks (5 mins)**
  Ambassador Doreen Debrum, Permanent Representative of the Republic of the Marshall Islands

Expected Outcomes

- Increased visibility **of the trade dimension of the sustainable ocean economy.**

- Stronger understanding of how **environmental guardrails can support and contribute to sustainable trade, investment, competitiveness and innovation.**

- Contribution to **Fourth UN Ocean Conference (UNOC-4) preparations**.

- Highlight the relevance of **integrating a multistakeholder approach to the reflexions on Ocean governance** and the development of a sustainable Ocean economy.