



We Make Global Trade Happen

July 24, 2020

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Re: Election of Director-General of World Trade Organization

Dear Mr. President:

On behalf of the members of the American Association of Exporters and Importers (AAEI), we offer the perspective of the American trade community concerning the election of a new Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO). AAEI members are directly affected by the future directions of the WTO and we urge you to continue the United States' support for the multi-lateral trading system.

AAEI has been a national voice for the international trade community in the United States since 1921. AAEI represents the entire spectrum of the international trade community across all industry sectors. Our members include manufacturers, importers, exporters, wholesalers, retailers and service providers to the industry, which is comprised of customs brokers, freight forwarders, trade advisors, insurers, security providers, transportation interests and ports. Many of these enterprises are small businesses seeking to export to foreign markets. AAEI promotes fair and open trade policy. We advocate for companies engaged in international trade, supply chain security, export controls, non-tariff barriers, import safety and Customs and Border Protection issues. AAEI is the premier trade organization representing those immediately engaged in and directly impacted by developments pertaining to international trade. We are recognized as the technical experts regarding the day-to-day facilitation of trade, including the administration of and compliance with the customs laws of the United States.

The next Director-General of the WTO will send a strong signal to the international trade community about the direction of the multi-lateral trading system. Therefore, we offer the following criteria that the United States should consider in supporting a candidate for Director-General:

- The candidate should have some technical expertise in international trade law or the multi-lateral trading system as future negotiations (e.g., e-commerce) will require leadership that understands trends in global trade so they can achieve consensus among WTO members.
- The candidate should have experience as a government minister or other political capacity that reflects democratic support rather than technical expertise as the credibility of the WTO as an international organization needs a leader that can articulate the mission of the WTO to citizens of countries who question policymaking by technocrats who are unaccountable to democratic checks and balances.

- The candidate should be a champion of free and fair trade by all WTO members in adhering to international trade rules and obligations, regardless of their level of development. A good start would be the full implementation of the WTO's Trade Facilitation Agreement, the only new treaty adopted in the WTO's history.
- The United States should support the best person for Director-General who can lead the mission of the WTO rather than external criteria of region and other political considerations.

We hope that you consider these criteria in evaluating candidates for the next Director-General of the WTO. Should you wish to reach me directly, please call 202-857-8009 ext. 1105 or e-mail mrowden@aaei.org.

Sincerely,



Marianne Rowden
President & CEO

cc: Senator Charles Grassley, Chairman, Senate Finance Committee
Representative Richard Neal, Chairman, House Ways and Means Committee
Wilbur Ross, Secretary of Commerce
Ambassador Robert Lighthizer, U.S. Trade Representative