



AMINA MOHAMED

CANDIDATE FOR DIRECTOR GENERAL
OF THE WORLD TRADE ORGANISATION



The Government of Kenya is pleased to present the candidacy of Ambassador Amina Mohamed for the position of Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Ambassador Mohamed has served her own country and the international community with distinction for more than 30 years. She has held senior positions both at home and in international institutions.

Ambassador Mohamed has made exceptional contributions to international trade governance. She chaired the first WTO Ministerial Conference to be held in Africa and steered the meeting to a successful conclusion.

Minister Mohamed has held the most senior chairperson positions at the WTO, including that of Chairperson of the General Council. Currently, She is the President of the 14th session of the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and former Assistant Secretary General and Deputy Executive Director of the UN Environment Program (UNEP).

As we navigate the gravest public health, socio-economic and political crisis to afflict us in decades, the world needs a well-functioning, credible and effective multilateral trading system. Even before the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, the WTO faced serious challenges and calls for reform. The task facing the WTO now is enormous. The need for effective leadership is more important than ever as the institution reshapes itself to meet the current challenges that face us.

The length and breadth of her experience at the WTO and the Multilateral Trading System combined with her extensive track record in international relations and her political experience, I believe is unparalleled. My experience working with her over the years and watching her work with others has convinced me that she is a master consensus builder. She listens to advice and works hard to find common ground. In the years to come, Africa is going to play a growing role in the world economy and its interests in an effective, equitable and inclusive system of trade governance is bound to grow as well. Ambassador Mohamed has the vision and capacity to unite all WTO Members in pursuit of their common interest. She is uniquely qualified to lead the WTO at this critical time. Moreover, Ambassador Mohamed would be the first African and the first woman Director-General.

I unreservedly endorse Ambassador Mohamed's candidacy for the WTO's next Director-General and urge you to do the same.

H.E. Uhuru Kenyatta C.G.H.

President of the Republic of Kenya

VISION STATEMENT

The multilateral trading system is at a crossroads. It is being buffeted by strong head winds from many directions. It needs to be rescued and restored to its former illustrious position. I have the required political, technical, diplomatic and managerial skills to revive the WTO and strengthen the multilateral trading system for the benefit of all WTO members.

Seven decades ago, far-sighted post-war leaders shaped a new economic order. In so doing, they steered the world away from the aftermath of the Great Depression and the catastrophe of armed conflict onto a path of progress. The vision underpinning this architecture of international governance emphasized multilateral cooperation. The period from the 1950s to the early years of the twenty-first century was one of unprecedented growth and development. Trade was a big part of that story.

The GATT and now the WTO have evolved over the years, encompassing an ever-growing number of Members and a broadening range of trade-related issues. Few would question the proposition that the GATT/WTO system is the indispensable backbone of international trade cooperation. Yet today, the multilateral trading system faces difficulties that are more challenging than anything since the founding of the GATT in the late 1940s.

"The WTO should give effect to its development objectives in a practical and enabling way."



I have seen women multiply their opportunities in international trade in ways that once seemed impossible. I believe that the inclusion of women in trade will enable countries to develop faster and in a more equitable and inclusive way.

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THE REFORM



The view is widely shared that the WTO is in need of urgent reform. The Organization was already in difficulties before COVID-19 struck. Its negotiating function had faltered, yielding limited successes in the last twenty years. Trade tensions were building over this period, leading a number of major trading economies to take contested measures against one another in what was increasingly characterized as trade war. The dispute settlement system is compromised as the Appellate Body ceased to operate. On top of an already fraught situation, COVID-19 is likely to trigger the most severe economic contraction since the Great Depression. No country is in a position to manage the COVID-19 crisis alone, yet protectionist trade actions threaten collective action to beat the virus. History tells us how the stifling of trade through protectionist reactions made the Great Depression last longer and cut deeper

The GATT and subsequently the WTO were established precisely to prevent such mutually destructive behaviour. It is our duty to make sure that today the multilateral trading system is allowed to do the work for which it was established. We need to reignite the visionary inspiration of the original architects of the system.

Renewal has to start with facing up squarely to the defects that have weakened the system in recent years: the inability to update rules to reflect changing realities; the sterility of ideological standoffs; the retreat into defensiveness; and the sense of the benefits not being equitably shared



I am running on my
experience and
determination to facilitate
WTO reforms towards a
stable, transparent and an
all-inclusive trading system.

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THE RECOVERY

Governments need to breathe new life into the WTO so it can play a catalytic role in facilitating recovery from the crisis and rebuilding economic resilience. The critical issue to be addressed is how to reform the WTO to ensure that it makes a positive contribution to the global economy for the benefit of all its Members. We need to break the cycle of despair and enter into a new phase of hope and realism. Reviving trade will be essential to recovery worldwide. It will also be key to national strategies to boost growth and sustainable development, thereby easing the social and economic impact of the crisis.

Once recovery is under way, however, we will still face the need to update the trading system to respond appropriately to pressing global issues like climate change, the digital revolution, deepening poverty and sustainable development. The WTO should be where governments come together to forge trade responses based on concertation among themselves, sharing of best practices, and reaffirmation of key principles. Bilateral and Regional Trade Agreements can bring important benefits, especially where localized interests relevant to near neighbours are at stake. But a trading world networked by overlapping preferential arrangements among subsets of economies cannot be a substitute for the rules-based multilateral trading system.



THE RENEWAL

Renewal has to start with facing up squarely to the defects that have weakened the system in recent years: the inability to update rules to reflect changing commercial realities; the sterility of ideological standoffs; the retreat into defensiveness; and the sense of the benefits not being equitably shared.

The WTO has to engage again in good faith negotiations, and this means openness to change and to new ideas, within a culture of inclusiveness and transparency.

Renewal should also build upon the WTO's core values and achievements. Trade has been transformational. It has helped to lift close to 1 billion people out of poverty and facilitated the attainment of higher living standards in countries at all levels of development.

These successes were possible because Members did not see trade as a zero-sum game. They understood that trade-offs needed to be made to produce outcomes. All Members should contribute to trade opening and facilitation efforts, especially those most in a position to do so.

The WTO's dispute settlement function is key to the credibility and effectiveness of the rules. We need to find a way through its problems to make it once again something that all Members can use with confidence.

The rules are the backbone of the system, but the multilateral trading system is more than just a rulebook. It is also the regular meetings of the delegates and representatives of each Member who come together to resolve trade tensions and disputes. It is the transparency and monitoring of trade developments around the world. It is our national legislators who determine the way in which each Member implements and administers their WTO obligations.

THE RENEWAL

It is non-governmental organizations which seek to make their priorities known. It is the companies that want to trade under stable and predictable conditions. It is the support provided through technical assistance for developing countries, including the least-developed ones, to boost their participation in international trade.

We need a WTO that is fair and equitable, taking into account the level of economic development of each Member. All WTO Members must therefore be prepared to contribute so that the organization is improved and strengthened to face current challenges, able to facilitate trade for the benefit of all, and capable of contributing to economic recovery from the pandemic. The WTO should give effect to its development objectives in a practical and enabling way, not forgetting its special responsibility towards African and least-developed countries, which have been operating at the periphery of the multilateral trading system. It also needs to play its part in the important task of advancing the economic empowerment of women through trade.

Having been elected by the membership to chair the top WTO bodies, I am acutely aware that it is a Member-driven organization. The role of the DG has been described as that of a facilitator. This includes overseeing the Secretariat efficiently and impartially. It also includes helping the Members deliberate and converge on issues.

If I am selected as WTO DG, I will work collaboratively and inclusively with all Members to help them reach convergence on reform and renewal of the organization. The role of Director-General can have a considerable positive influence in moving forward the work of the WTO. I would use this influence energetically, but sensitively, to help return the WTO to full effectiveness as a force for growth and stability in the world.



BIOGRAPHICAL HIGHLIGHTS

Amina Mohamed has all the qualities and experience the WTO needs in a Director-General for this decade. As a Minister and Ambassador, she has already guided the organization successfully as Chairperson of all its highest decision-making bodies, including the Ministerial Conference (2015), the General Council (2005), the Dispute Settlement Body (2004) and the Trade Policy Review Body (2004). Her skills of strategic leadership, effective communication, institutional reform and consensus building have made a major contribution to the WTO's key achievements of recent years.

Her background, knowledge and range of high-level experience give her a uniquely broad and inclusive perspective on the challenges facing the multilateral trading system and she has the ability to address them effectively. She also offers the WTO proven expertise in managing large and complex organizations

As Kenya's Foreign Affairs and International Trade Minister from 2013 to 2018, she chaired the 2015 WTO Ministerial Conference in Nairobi. As the first woman and first African to chair the WTO's highest forum, she played a crucial role in reaching positive outcomes, especially the decision to eliminate export subsidies in agriculture. This was the first fulfilment of a UN Sustainable Development Goal, under SDG2-Zero Hunger.

Ambassador Mohamed was the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Justice, National Cohesion and Constitutional Affairs from 2008 to - 2011. She was in charge of the constitutional review process that culminated in the promulgation of the 2010 Constitution of Kenya. She managed far reaching legal and Institutional reforms ever realized in Kenya. She also chaired the Annual Multi-Stakeholder Ethics and Conference.



BIOGRAPHICAL HIGHLIGHTS

From 2000 to 2006, Amina was Kenya's Permanent Representative and Ambassador to the WTO. She was the first woman to chair the General Council in 2005 and the Dispute Settlement Body.

As General Council Chair, she brokered an agreement of major importance to developing countries, an amendment to the TRIPS Agreement to assist countries with insufficient manufacturing capacities in the production of essential drugs to treat diseases such as HIV/Aids and Tuberculosis. She was also the first woman to chair the African Group at the WTO and advanced African interests successfully at the WTO and in UN bodies.


She was Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations and Deputy Executive Director of UNEP from 2011 to 2013 and helped advance its agenda to address contemporary challenges facing the organization. Given her trade background, she was particularly interested in the interface between trade and environment, believing in their complementarity and mutual supportiveness.

Amina's Ministerial portfolios have also included Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (2018-19) and Sports, Culture and Heritage (2019 to present).



From 2008 to 2011, she was Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Justice, National Cohesion and Constitutional Affairs. In all these roles, she has promoted development and diversity, particularly the educational, social and economic empowerment of women.

Amina is an Advocate of the High Court of Kenya. She obtained her Undergraduate and Masters Degree in Law from Taras Shevchenko University in Kiev, Ukraine, attended the Kenya School of Law and obtained a Postgraduate Diploma in International Relations as a Chevening Fellow at the Oxford University, United Kingdom. She is a UNITAR Fellow, is fluent in English, Kiswahili, and Russian, and has basic knowledge of French.

A photograph of Amina Mohamed, a woman with dark hair, wearing a black jacket and a patterned scarf, speaking at a podium. The podium features the United Nations logo. A quote box is overlaid on the top right of the image.

“If I am selected as WTO Director-General, I will work collaboratively and inclusively with all Members to help them reach convergence on reform and renewal of the WTO.””

Amina Mohamed

**For more information visit
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