
2023 WTO Public Forum

Final Report

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Young Diplomats of Canada

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Executive Summary

As the Canadian youth delegation to the 2023 World Trade Organization (WTO) Public Forum, we are pleased to present the final report summarizing our achievements, key learnings, and reflections.

The WTO Public Forum is an annual, multi-sectoral event that brings together over 2,000 representatives from civil society, academia, business, government, and international organizations. It is intended to provide a unique platform to discuss the latest global trade developments and advance the WTO's agenda on enhancing the multilateral trading system.

This year's Forum theme was, "It is time for action", which focused on how trade can be leveraged towards a more resilient future. The programme consisted of 134 sessions exploring three main topics: (1) "The role of the services sector in sustainable trade," (2) "Inclusive policies for the advancement of green trade," and (3) "Digitalisation as a tool for the greening of supply chains."

The delegation explored over 40 sessions per their professional experiences and interests.

Recurring and common themes included: (1) the ongoing need to align the trade agenda to climate ambitions; (2) digitalisation to support data exchange across borders and value chains; and, (3) the meaningful participation of marginalized communities in trade and climate.

Our delegation had the opportunity to engage with and learn from Nadia B. Theodore, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Canada to the WTO, along with Deputy Martin Moen, Heather Smeeton, and Nicola Waterfield. And in true form to serendipitous connections, it was a pleasure to be acquainted with Raylene Whitford as she represented INDIGI-X alongside Indigenous leaders from Aotearoa (New Zealand), Australia, and Ecuador. Finally, our fireside chat with Anoush der Boghossian, WTO Head of Trade and Gender Office, was an impactful and inspiring discussion on the WTO, building capacity for the gender-trade nexus, and what it means to break glass ceilings. Thank you to these leaders for generously sharing your time and knowledge with our delegation.

Finally, building on key learnings from previous Young Diplomat of Canada (YDC) delegations, we provide tactical recommendations to lean on YDC alumni and broader youth networks to enrich the Forum experience.



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Achievements | Key Meetings

During the conference, our delegation had the distinct honour and valuable opportunity to engage with a diverse array of esteemed experts and high-level officials. Notably, among them was Nadia Theodore, Ambassador to the World Trade Organization (WTO) and Head of the Permanent Mission of Canada in Geneva. This encounter took place during a reception held at the Permanent Mission of Canada to the WTO, which was organized to extend a warm welcome to the representatives from INDIGI-X in advance of their panel presentation at the WTO Public Forum. Additionally, the delegation had the privilege of meeting with the following stakeholders:



The delegation's consultation with **Martin Moen**, Deputy Permanent Representative at the Permanent Mission of Canada to the WTO; **Heather Smeeton**, First Secretary (Finance Counsellor), Canada's Permanent Mission to the WTO at Global Affairs Canada; and **Nicola Waterfield**, First Secretary at the Permanent Representation of Canada to the WTO; discussed crucial topics such as governance and accountability within the WTO, as well as delved into the intricacies of multilateral negotiations, including the significance of soft law instruments. Additionally, we underscored the pivotal role of deep listening as a fundamental skill in the realm of foreign public service.



Our meeting with **Nadia Theodore**, Ambassador to the WTO and Head of the Permanent Mission of Canada to Geneva during the INDIGI-X reception, provided the opportunity for informal discussions on enhancing the ability of Indigenous peoples and Indigenous businesses to benefit from international trade and investment.



Our consultation with **Anoush der Boghossian**, Head of the WTO Trade and Gender Office, provided valuable insights into her remarkable journey at the WTO and her dedicated efforts in empowering the upcoming generation at the nexus of gender and trade.

Achievements | Communications

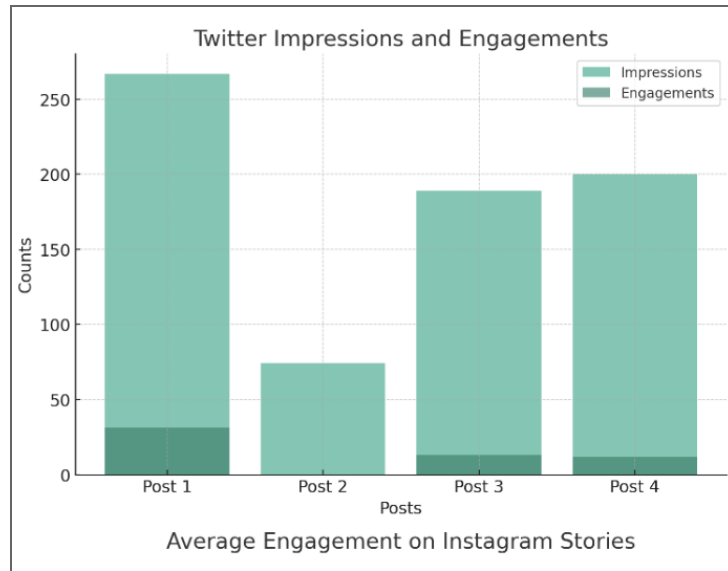
Our delegation wanted to leverage our presence at the Forum as a conduit to engage more young Canadians. Therefore, our communication efforts, through various platforms, were designed to educate youth leaders about the nexus of trade and sustainability. By sharing our experiences and key takeaways from the sessions, we provided YDC followers with a "sneak peak" into the pressing issues and transformative potential of trade and sustainability.

Educating Youth about Trade's Role in Furthering Climate Action

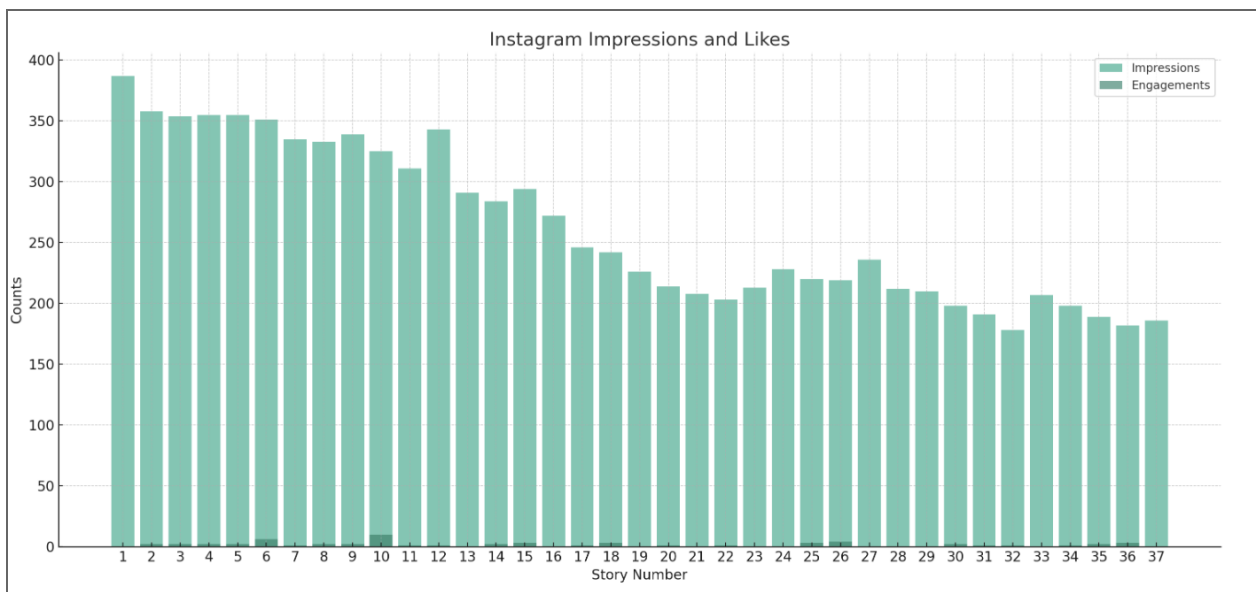


To educate more youth about the intricacies of trade and its role in sustainability, we hosted a "How Much Do You Really Know About Sustainability?" quiz series on Instagram. The series consisted of interactive posts designed to engage young leaders and prompt them to think critically about the role that trade plays in fostering sustainable development. Pictured above is an example of the poll, which challenges youth leaders to consider the terms and concepts related to sustainable trade practices.

Social Media Engagement Statistics



The bar graph details the impressions and engagements for each Twitter post. The graph illustrates the reach and interaction level of the audience with each tweet. The highest engagement was observed with a [post](#) reaching 267 impressions and 31 engagements, indicating a strong audience interest in specific content.



The graph effectively showcases the impressions and likes for the Instagram stories, allowing for a comprehensive comparison of engagement across the entire series. This visualization is especially useful for identifying specific stories that achieved notably high engagement or impressions, offering insights into audience preferences and interests.

Opinion Piece: Spotlighting our Perspectives on Trade and Sustainability

We had the incredible opportunity to write an opinion piece for the Young Diplomats of Canada website, capturing our profound experiences as delegates at the World Trade Organization's Public Forum in Geneva. This was not just a chance to share our learnings but also an avenue to echo our perspective as Canadian youth on the intricate dance between trade, sustainable development, and climate resilience.

Drawing from the sessions dedicated to gender, youth, and education skills development within the trade context, we highlighted the indispensable nature of inclusivity and the value of forward-thinking in shaping the future of global trade. As the world gears up for the COP 28 Summit, our piece advocated for integrating the insights from trade discussions into the broader narrative of climate action. By interweaving factual data and our reflections, we painted a vision of a world where commerce serves as a dual engine, driving economic prosperity while championing environmental guardianship. Through this feature, we aimed to amplify the aspirations and passion of our generation, asserting the role of youth as both stakeholders and visionaries in shaping tomorrow's global landscape.

Key Themes

This year's programme consisted of 134 plenary and working sessions over four days and represented a wide spread of the Forum's theme "It's time for action" and cross-cutting topics on sustainable trade. Per the delegation's professional experiences and interests, select sessions on climate, digitalization, and youth are summarized below.

Climate

Session 32: "Private Sector Adaptability to a New and Greener Trade Environment"

This session brought together trade and sustainability experts from BMJ, ICC Brazil, UNCTAD, WTO, and EMEA to highlight the profound and pressing intersections of environmental consciousness, trade legislation, and the unique challenges faced by developing countries. It was a confluence of diverse perspectives, addressing the global urgency surrounding environmental protection and the mounting pressures of climate change.

The speakers shared their concerns about the environmental impacts of international trade legislations and their implications for companies, especially within developing nations. As the global community intensifies its efforts to establish rigorous environmental protections, the private sector finds itself navigating the complexities and nuances of these newly developed legislations. Be it in the form of fresh private standards, certifications, or other regulations, companies now stand at the crossroads of compliance and adaptability. The panel's debate provided a comprehensive overview of how businesses could not just adapt but thrive amidst these regulatory challenges.

A key takeaway was that countries and companies need to maintain a delicate balance to ensure these regulations don't inadvertently manifest as trade barriers. Santiago de Cordoba's insights, representing UNCTAD, were particularly enlightening in this regard. Drawing connections to a recent [publication](#) by UNCTAD, he underscored the importance of cohesive strategies, balancing environmental sustainability standards while ensuring unhindered trade.

The essence of sustainable growth is inclusivity, and any regulation that hampers global trade collaboration contradicts the very ethos of sustainability. As we tread the path towards a greener future, it's imperative that policies meant to protect our environment don't stifle economic growth, especially in regions already grappling with developmental disparities.

The diverse panel, with voices like Leandro Barcelos from BMJ, Paula Costim from ICC Brazil, Stefan Pinter from EMEA, and Érika Watanabe from the WTO, played pivotal roles in elucidating the broader policy implications and the role of governmental and international institutions in this evolving landscape.

Overall, this session served as a testament to the multifaceted nature of international trade in an era marked by heightened environmental consciousness. It reinforced the belief that while the path ahead is paved with challenges, with collaboration and adaptability, the private sector can champion a greener, more inclusive trade environment.

Session 34: “Greening the WTO: Strengthening the World Trading System as an Ally in the Quest for Inclusive Climate Policies”

“We need to align trade with climate to advance action on issues such as reform of our international trading system.”

This session underscored the need to design the trade regime in a manner that considers the implications for the developing world and their integration into the global economic system. As we move forward in the adoption of green technologies and sustainable practices, panelists highlighted the importance for inclusive climate financing by taking into account the specific needs and challenges faced by these nations. Many developing countries, heavily dependent on a limited range of commodities like oil and gas, face a disproportionate impact from climate policies implemented by Western nations. These policies often lead to disruptions in the production or export of these crucial commodities, effectively eroding the economic capacity, or "fiscal space," of these nations down to zero. In response, Dr. Chantal-Line Carpentier, Chief of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), aptly remarked on the trade-offs and benefits

involved in climate policies as she declared that “you don’t want climate advances at the expense of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).”

Currently, the WTO is geared towards negative spillovers as the incentive for member states to go green is hampered by the absence of a WTO mechanism to compensate for positive spillovers. It was noteworthy that Canada faced criticism at the Forum for maintaining environmental standards perceived as unfairly high for developing nations to meet, potentially creating trade barriers. The adoption of unilateral measures by several WTO members, negatively impacting low-income countries, remains a subject of concern for the development community. Panelists called for the need to decouple global trade from a rise in emissions and instead couple poverty reduction with carbon reduction. However, a central theme was the challenge faced by countries heavily dependent on extractive industries, such as oil & gas, in adapting to a global shift towards a just transition.

Lastly, this session highlighted the need for global mechanisms that penalize negative externalities and incentivize positive ones. On carbon pricing, panelists concurred that it is not a silver-bullet solution. While it undoubtedly helps to generate resources for addressing climate issues, it must be complemented by radical incentivization and a diverse portfolio of strategies to accelerate climate action. Dr. Carpentier urged a reconsideration of the phasing of a just transition for developing countries, ensuring that affordable access to green technology and available pathways to carbon neutrality are central to this discussion.

Session 84: “Do carbon border adjustment mechanisms make trade greener in an inclusive way?”

“We recognize that we all have to take measures to address the effects of climate change... but we need to ensure that we look at the least trade restrictive measures that can be implemented.”
- Xolelwa Mlumbi-Peter, Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the WTO, Permanent Mission of South Africa

This session focused on the implementation of the European Union’s [carbon border adjustment mechanism](#) (CBAM), which entered into its transitional phase as of October 1,

2023. The panel represented voices from developing economies, including country representatives to the WTO from Venezuela, India, and South Africa. Of particular focus for discussion were the implications of CBAMs on achieving climate targets while enabling sustainable and inclusive growth.

The CBAM was introduced by the EU and intended as a climate mitigation strategy applying additional costs on imported products in heavy-emitting sectors (e.g., iron & steel, cement, aluminum, fertilizers, hydrogen, and electricity). It is primarily designed to address 'carbon leakage' to prevent EU companies from moving carbon-intensive production to countries with less stringent climate policies and therefore leveling the playing field by ensuring equivalency to domestic production.

The overall discussion focused on the unintended consequences of CBAMs on exporters, particularly those from developing countries. Panelists honed in on the outsized regulatory, financial, and measurement requirements resulting from CBAM legislation, and agreed that these measures were both outsized and punitive in nature. As Xolelwa Mlumbi-Peter, Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the WTO for South Africa, pointed out: "[the study by the UN Conference on Trade and Development](#) shows that in terms of CBAM's contribution to an actual reduction of a carbon emission is quite limited. So you have a heavy instrument that will have a significant impact on trade and investment of developing countries but very minimal effect in terms of contribution to actual [emissions] reduction."

In addition to a robust discussion on the CBAM's anticipated outsized burdens on developing countries, a secondary theme related to the WTO's responsibility to mitigate trade-related consequences. Aashish Chandorkar, Counsellor to the Permanent Mission of India to the WTO, highlighted the need to formally define CBAM across both trade and environmental legal domains to better understand both the WTO's responsibilities as well as the application of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change principle of [Common but Differentiated Responsibilities](#). Panelists additionally voiced concerns over CBAM contributing to increased unilateralism between the EU and developing countries, and agreed that more work is needed to ensure adherence to WTO trade rules, specifically relating to fair competition.

Digitalisation

Session 6: “Harnessing Digital Tools for Sustainable Trade”

The session was convened by the [Young African TradeExperttes](#) and provided an exploration into the digital revolution across Africa and its transformative potential for sustainable trade. The very essence of the discussion underscored the power of technology as an enabler, a beacon of hope in challenging times, especially for the upcoming youth population of the continent.

A recurring theme was the role of entrepreneurship as an opportunity for those outside the formal job market. In a continent that has witnessed limited job opportunities, entrepreneurship stands as a lifeline, especially for the youth. The rapid strides in mobile technology, evident from the surge in digital payments, have opened new vistas of opportunities for SMEs and budding entrepreneurs. These digital tools are not just facilitating trade but are reshaping it to be more environmentally conscious.

The speakers emphasized the importance of the informal sector in Africa's trade landscape. This sector, often overlooked in mainstream dialogues, holds the pulse of grassroots-level trade in Africa. Recognizing and integrating the informal sector is tantamount to ensuring a truly inclusive trade ecosystem, and this was a significant focal point of the session's discourse.

A highlight of the panel was the emphasis on financial inclusion policies. As the digital wave engulfs Africa, ensuring that every individual, every entrepreneur, regardless of their stature, has access to financial instruments and opportunities is paramount. The transformative journey towards greener and sustainable trade hinges on this inclusivity.

The panelists brought an array of perspectives. Cedric Amon from the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and Sarah Frimpong, a PhD Candidate from Bielefeld University, provided academic and research-centric viewpoints, shedding light on ground realities and potential policy shifts. Barbara Kotschwar from the Visa Economic Empowerment Institute and Cecilia Malmström from the Peterson Institute for International Economics enriched the dialogue with their macroeconomic perspectives, emphasizing the importance of robust financial infrastructures. Lastly, Princess Puskas

from the Bank of Botswana underscored the interplay between digital tools and economic forecasting, highlighting the future trajectory of Africa's trade in a digital age. Our delegate, Kenisha Arora, left with a renewed optimism about the continent's trajectory and the indomitable spirit of its youth to harness the digital age for a brighter tomorrow.

Session 99: “Leveraging Blockchain for Carbon Accounting in Supply Chains”

This session explored the potential application of blockchain technology for verified carbon accounting to support sustainable trade and green supply chains while satisfying ever-evolving carbon accounting and reporting requirements. The panelists were a diverse mix of industry experts and public sector representatives, which led to an exploratory discussion around key opportunities and challenges around infrastructure, governance, and process.

Panelist Dr. Nicolas Jacquemart, Chief Legal Officer at The Cardano Foundation, kicked off the session with a concise list of benefits that blockchain technology brings to the carbon markets space. First, he highlighted that blockchains act as a “single source of truth” which enables efficiency and traceability of carbon credits across various markets and supply chains. In addition, Dr. Jacquemart reflected on how blockchain can also support standardization and interoperability – in essence, being able to conduct an “apples to apples” comparison of different carbon credit protocols.

However, while the application of blockchain technology in carbon accounting is seen as a viable solution to simplifying complex markets, the panel also honed in on three enablers required to support this shift. Governance around blockchains continues to be an issue, specifically in the face of continued regulatory uncertainty and government’s role in a relatively informal economy. Secondly, there is a need to build digital infrastructure that will support the liquidity of carbon markets, with some debate on whether this may be hindered if building off the template of current financial markets. Finally, panelists agreed that there has to be a universal carbon accounting standard, with a focus on formal requirements around measurement, reporting, and verification for all entities.

Youth

Session 51 - “Inclusive Strategies for Sustainable Trade”

“A seat at the table is the bare minimum. What we need is to develop the tools and resources that marginalized communities need to engage [with trade] successfully.” - Dr. Margot Brown, Senior Vice President of the Environmental Defense Fund

This session underscored that empowering underrepresented groups enables them to gain the necessary tools and resources to actively engage in policy debate and advocate for climate justice. Dr. Margot Brown, Senior Vice President of the Environmental Defense Fund, provided compelling insights on how to rethink our engagement approach in climate justice, she said “people who are closest to the problem are the ones who are closest to the solution.”

UN Secretary General's Youth Climate Advisor Vladislav Kaim, emphasized that achieving a meaningful redistribution of political and economic power away from extractive companies involves a far more complex process than simply raising awareness of their involvement in the climate movement. In essence, Kaim is highlighting that true progress in combating climate change and ensuring sustainable development demands a deeper level of transformation within the global political and economic systems. This shift could involve changes in regulatory frameworks, policies, and international agreements to create an environment that encourages sustainable practices and discourages environmentally detrimental ones. It may also entail reevaluating the influence and authority of extractive industries in decision-making processes, making way for more inclusive and environmentally conscious stakeholders. Likewise, the multi-generational approach emphasized by Te Ohu Kaimoana Director Rangimarie Hunia, coupled with a collective emphasis on equitable models of development, servitude and the practice of radical listening - elements essential to help us meet the challenges of tomorrow - stood out as critical takeaways.

The discussions on empowering youth towards a green economy highlighted the need for an ecosystem that fosters youth engagement, innovation and trade. One of our delegates, Emel Tabaku, was also impressed by Indonesia's strategies for involving Gen Z in digital economy advancements within the fisheries sector, noted in Session 38: Global Environmental Challenges – Inclusive Solutions. These initiatives which aim to address

climate change effects on fishermen and their roles as suppliers are now being disseminated widely and poised for further development into programs across various environmental ministries. The significant contributions of the younger generation in advancing WTO agreements cannot be overstated!

Advice and Recommendations for Future Delegations

The team was privileged to build on the advice and recommendations from previous YDC delegations to the WTO. In addition to the [sound guidance](#) found in prior reports, the team is pleased to pass on three pieces of tactical recommendations to enrich the Forum experience for future YDC delegations.

1. Prioritize alumni meetings with previous YDC delegations to the WTO.

YDC alumni, especially those from previous delegations to the WTO, are some of your greatest resources when getting started as a new delegation. For example, YDC alumni shared key tips and suggestions to support initial stakeholder mapping and engagement, especially in regards to recurring meetings with key stakeholders (i.e., the Canadian Ambassador to the WTO). In addition, the team also received a variety of logistical advice - from budget-friendly places to eat and stay in Geneva to what to expect in regards to security and the environment of the Forum. While these meetings can be tricky to manage based on schedules, we highly recommend using YDC alumni to the WTO as a resource throughout your delegation experience.

2. Leverage YDC alumni and other youth networks when in Geneva.

Do not be afraid to reach out to YDC alumni and other youth networks who might also be on the ground in Geneva during the Public Forum. This year's team benefited from meet-ups with counterparts from YDC, [Fora](#), [Developing Young Leaders of Tomorrow, Today](#), and [Global Shapers](#). In addition to expanding your network of other young professionals, these connections can also lead to further opportunities down the road - whether in Geneva or more globally!

3. Research key attendees via the WTO Public Forum website and LinkedIn.

In addition to research on the WTO and international trade developments, research who will be in attendance during the Forum via the event website and LinkedIn. This will not only support the delegation's stakeholder consultations, but is also an opportunity to put faces to names and set up more informal coffee chats and meet-ups during the course of the Forum.

Delegate Reflections

Delegate Reflection | Marie Sereneo



I am incredibly grateful to have served as YDC's Head Delegate to the WTO Public Forum this year. At the center of my time in Geneva - a sincere thank you to my co-delegates for your trust in my leadership and for inspiring me every day by stepping out of your comfort zones and representing Canadian youth with dedication, passion, and the courage to speak up.

As a sustainability professional currently working in the Canadian energy sector, I was asked many times: "why is a sustainability practitioner at an international trade conference?" As per the Forum's theme, "It is time for action", the 2023 WTO Public Forum was a perfect storm of tackling international trade's opportunities (and shortcomings)

around climate change, the energy transition, gender equality, and economic inclusion of Indigenous Peoples. In summary, all topics that I live and breathe in my professional roles contextualized within a trade-based lens and on an international stage.

Unsurprisingly, the issue of trade and sustainability is complex and nuanced. Global problems continue to show the importance of a diversified and interconnected world through trade, especially in light of rising geopolitical tensions, increasing unilateralism and protectionist policies, climate change, and other issues. However, while a diversified and interconnected world through trade can represent many opportunities, in many ways it contradicts our ability to reduce our environmental impacts, be inclusive for all, and meet the needs of future generations. While the WTO remains adamant that trade is integral to decarbonization, tensions and skepticism remain on the WTO's overall effectiveness for the modern world in its current state.

Overall, the 2023 WTO Public Forum was a challenging and thought-provoking week with many learnings that continue to highlight the complexity of a world in transition. A profound thank you goes to the Young Diplomats of Canada for paving the way for diverse, Canadian youth voices to participate in these high-level, international spaces. As I continue to make sense of the key learnings, connections, and "aha" moments of the Forum, I feel both privileged and grateful for this unique opportunity. I look forward to supporting the cross-sector collaboration needed to create

the multi-faceted solutions the world requires across my roles at ARC Resources, Clean Resource Innovation Network (CRIN), Energy Futures Lab, and Global Shapers Calgary.

Delegate Reflection | Emel Tabaku



I am deeply honoured to have been selected as one of the four Canadian youth delegates to the 2023 World Trade Organization (WTO) Public Forum. As a young policymaker with a strong passion for advancing global sustainability and a background in international affairs, the world of global trade was a thrilling new frontier for me. This experience not only provided an exceptional opportunity to explore the intricate ways in which trade can actively contribute to a greener and more sustainable future, but it also marked a profound milestone in my professional growth.

As a delegate, I found myself immersed in a whirlwind of intense discussions and incredibly inspiring interactions. The privilege of engaging with global leaders and fellow participants in a wide range of

high-level sessions and seminars ignited a surge of ideas, insights, and innovative thinking. Meeting with Nadia B. Theodore, the Ambassador of Canada to the WTO, alongside Deputy Martin Moen, Deputy Permanent Representative at the Permanent Mission of Canada to the WTO, and Anoush der Boghossian, the Head of the Trade and Gender Office at the WTO, was the highlight of the Forum for me. These meetings provided a deep dive into the dynamics of global trade, international diplomacy, and gender-related matters, offering invaluable insights that have shaped my understanding of the world. They also shed light on how international organizations are increasingly emphasizing grassroots innovation to drive collective action and forge resilient systems for addressing sustainable development challenges.

One of the most significant lessons I took away was the pivotal role of the WTO in navigating the transition towards a greener future. Recognizing the need to empower youth as catalysts for a sustainable economy and acknowledging the gaps in policy dialogues on trade and climate were eye-opening revelations that will undoubtedly guide my future endeavours. This is particularly pertinent as I embark on my new role as a Junior Policy Analyst with Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, and step into the final year of my graduate studies in public policy at the University of Toronto - Munk School of Global Affairs & Public Policy. Moreover, this experience has further solidified my commitment to expanding the programming of my non-profit, RCAD Initiative, towards the convergence of art, digitalization, and storytelling for a sustainable and inclusive future. Together, let us embark on a journey towards a more equitable and forward-thinking WTO, where the youth are not just spectators, but active agents of change in shaping the future of global trade and climate policy.

Delegate Reflection | Kenisha Arora



I am deeply honored to have served as the Young Diplomats of Canada's representative to the WTO Public Forum 2023. As the Communications Coordinator for our team, I was privileged to have the opportunity to not only shine a light on our experiences as a delegation but educate more young people about the critical relationship between trade and the evolution of green economies through our communication efforts.

As a passionate advocate for gender equality and education, I delved deep into the nexus between these areas and the broader trade landscape. Embracing an intersectional lens to comprehend trade, I recognized how education, especially in underserved regions, stands as a potent force for re-globalizing. It can empower youth, nurture their potential, sharpen their acumen, and arm them with the skills requisite for the dynamic realm of international trade. By investing in the education of young minds, we're essentially sowing seeds for the future – ensuring that they burgeon into proactive contributors to global trade, championing innovation and fresh, ground-breaking perspectives. Therefore, by bridging the educational divide, we are not only fostering inclusivity but also laying the groundwork for a resilient and equitable trade system that can adapt to, and thrive amidst, global shifts.

The conference was an enlightening exploration into the current challenges and opportunities in global trade, particularly spotlighting the intricate dynamics in regions like Africa. One of the pressing narratives was the surge in entrepreneurship as a viable response to the scarcity of traditional job opportunities. It was eye-opening to observe how, in the face of adversity, SMEs and entrepreneurs have harnessed the power of mobile technologies and digital payment mechanisms. This digital adoption is not just enhancing their trade capabilities but is also setting the stage for a more eco-friendly trade environment and highlighting the need for investment in digital education.

Outside the structured sessions, the forum allowed for invaluable interactions with leaders from a plethora of organizations such as the World Bank and DHL which underscored the multifaceted nature of international diplomacy. This gathering was a testament to the power of collaboration, bringing together the diverse perspectives of agents driving global trade. But among these enlightening discussions, the role of youth stood out. Recognizing the potential that the youth hold in steering the re-globalization towards sustainable avenues was empowering. The Forum emphasized the need for harnessing the potential of youth and building capacity through education to ensure a green, prosperous future.

Overall, the WTO Public Forum was more than just a conference; it was a call to action. The world's challenges, from geopolitical shifts to the ever-present threat of climate change, were analyzed through the lens of trade. While the landscape of trade is quite intricate and complex, its alignment with sustainability is an imperative that offers unprecedented opportunities.

I am deeply thankful to the Young Diplomats of Canada for giving us this opportunity and facilitating our participation in such esteemed international circles. Empowered to act on the insights and connections from the forum, I am motivated to further my advocacy from an intersectional lens, bridging education for sustainable development and trade.



Delegate Reflection | Arianna Crawford



I am beyond grateful for the opportunity to participate as a Young Diplomats of Canada (YDC) delegate to the 2023 World Trade Organization (WTO) Public Forum. It was a unique experience that provided tremendous learning, professional development and personal growth opportunities that I will carry with me into future endeavors.

I came to the event not as a trade expert, but as a young Canadian public servant with a strong interest in international affairs, public policy and Canada’s place on the global stage. A striking, but unsurprising, aspect from the experience was the sheer scale and diversity of the international trade landscape. The Public Forum brought together individuals, organizations and governments from all corners of the world, each with unique perspectives, motives and challenges, to discuss the latest developments in global trade and proposals to enhance the global trading system.

While attending panels on a range of topics, from Harmonized System codes, to the service sector and the sporting goods industry, I gained insights on the complexity and intricacies of global trade. A key theme spanning each session was the urgency required to address sustainability concerns. Here, the growing consensus of linkages between long term environmental and social well being with economic prosperity were made clear. Overall, it encouraged me to think critically, deepened my understanding of the interconnectivity of economies, trade policies, and the importance of multilateral cooperation to address global challenges.

In addition to the panel discussions, our delegation was able to meet with several key stakeholders, participate in side events and socialize with individuals from other youth based groups and YDC alumni in Geneva. Amongst many, one memorable experience was the reception hosted at the Canadian Permanent Mission to the WTO, that included presentations from representatives of Indigenous communities and organizations globally. This space to learn and engage on issues of inclusive trade resonated profoundly with me as it brought a different lens to the generally technical nature of several other parts of the Public Forum.

I am appreciative to the YDC for providing opportunities for young Canadians to actively participate in international fora, and feel privileged to have gained the on-the ground experience and connections I've made throughout the entirety of the event.