



APEC Business Advisory Council

ABAC 2024

REIWG: WTO

**Presentation by Stephanie Honey, ABAC New Zealand
REIWG II, 24 April 2024**

www.abaconline.org

ABAC visit to Geneva, 10 – 12 April

Programme

- **WTO Director-General**, Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala
- **WTO Deputy Director-General** Angela Ellard
- **APEC Ambassadors***
- **Agriculture**: Chair of Agriculture, Secretariat staff
- **E-Commerce JSI**: Co-Convenors of the JSI (Japan, Singapore, Australia)
- **E-Commerce Moratorium**: WTO Deputy Director-General Johanna Hill, Facilitator of E-Commerce Work Programme
- **Sustainability**: Chair of WTO Committee on Trade & Environment, Secretariat staff on environment, convenors of TESSD and Plastic Pollution initiatives
- **Inclusion**: Chair of MSME Informal Working Group, representatives of the International Trade Centre
- **EU** Ambassador
- Representatives of **Pacific** WTO Members
- Head of Trade Policy at the **ICC**
- Senior representatives from **WEF**

*APEC Ambassadors: Australia, Chile, China, Hong Kong China, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Peru, the Philippines, Singapore, Chinese Taipei, US, Viet Nam

ABAC key messages



ABAC

- **Brett O'Riley**, ABAC NZ
- **Michaela Browning**, ABAC Australia
- **Kok Ping Soon**, ABAC Singapore
- **Monica Hardy Whaley**, ABAC USA
- Staffers **Stephanie Honey**, **Jason Lee** and **Denise Khng**

APEC

- **Tan Sri Dr Rebecca Sta Maria**, APEC Executive Director
- **Benjamin Tan**, Program Director CTI and ABAC, APEC Secretariat

Key messages during our meetings:

- ABAC strongly **supports the WTO**, and wants to see enforceable, ambitious, relevant trade rules;
- ABAC encourages **closer APEC cooperation** to drive ambitious outcomes;
- We seek opportunities for **greater engagement from business** in the WTO
 - *Not just in championing the system/ambition, but also in helping to build capacity for MSMEs and foster a sense of shared ownership of the trade agenda*
- These messages resonated strongly in Geneva

State of play

MC13 preserved the system, but failed to move the agenda forward

- The **context is challenging**: continuing headwinds for trade, signs of economic fragmentation, significant electoral politics
- **Modest MC13 wins**: pro-development gains, temporary E-Commerce Moratorium
- But also **failure to make substantive progress** on many key issues

The WTO leadership and Members are in a period of reflection ...

- The future of **plurilaterals**: tensions between keeping the rulebook relevant, Members' interests, legal status/legitimacy, "responsible consensus"
- How to progress the **core negotiating agenda and reform** of the system in the short window for action through to July 2024

...with continuing frictions on major negotiating issues

- Dispute settlement reform, **Appellate Body** reinstatement
- **E-Commerce Moratorium**
- Agriculture: **Public Stockholding** for food security
- Integration of the **Investment Facilitation** for Development Agreement

Digital trade

The E-Commerce Moratorium is in serious jeopardy...

- Temporary extension until MC14 (2026)
- But strong pressure from Indonesia, India and a few others to terminate conclusively at MC14 – for political reasons, fiscal imperatives and infant industry protection

...while the E-Commerce JSI is close to conclusion

- 90 WTO members (incl 19 APEC economies) are aiming for substantial conclusion in the week of 22-25 April
- Will not include data governance and source code (part of phase 2?)
- JSI Convenors are seeking to include a permanent E-Commerce Moratorium – but this is still contentious for some JSI members
- Even if these elements are agreed, the JSI legal status remains moot – may not be integrated into the WTO rulebook

ABAC advocacy for the Moratorium is needed

- ABAC advocacy is needed to support the Moratorium
- Recommend it be included in the press statement and in the Letter to MRT



Business engagement in the WTO

There was considerable enthusiasm for an enhanced business role – *“Governments don’t trade, businesses do”*

- Real interest in the APEC-ABAC model – compare with little structured engagement currently
- ABAC floated the idea of more formalized business activities e.g. a “Business Week”: not about lobbying, but for feedback on implementation challenges, capacity-building, and informing about trends
- Many cautioned to use “baby steps”: some WTO members see the WTO as purely governmental
- Some opportunities already e.g. in MSME Informal Working Group



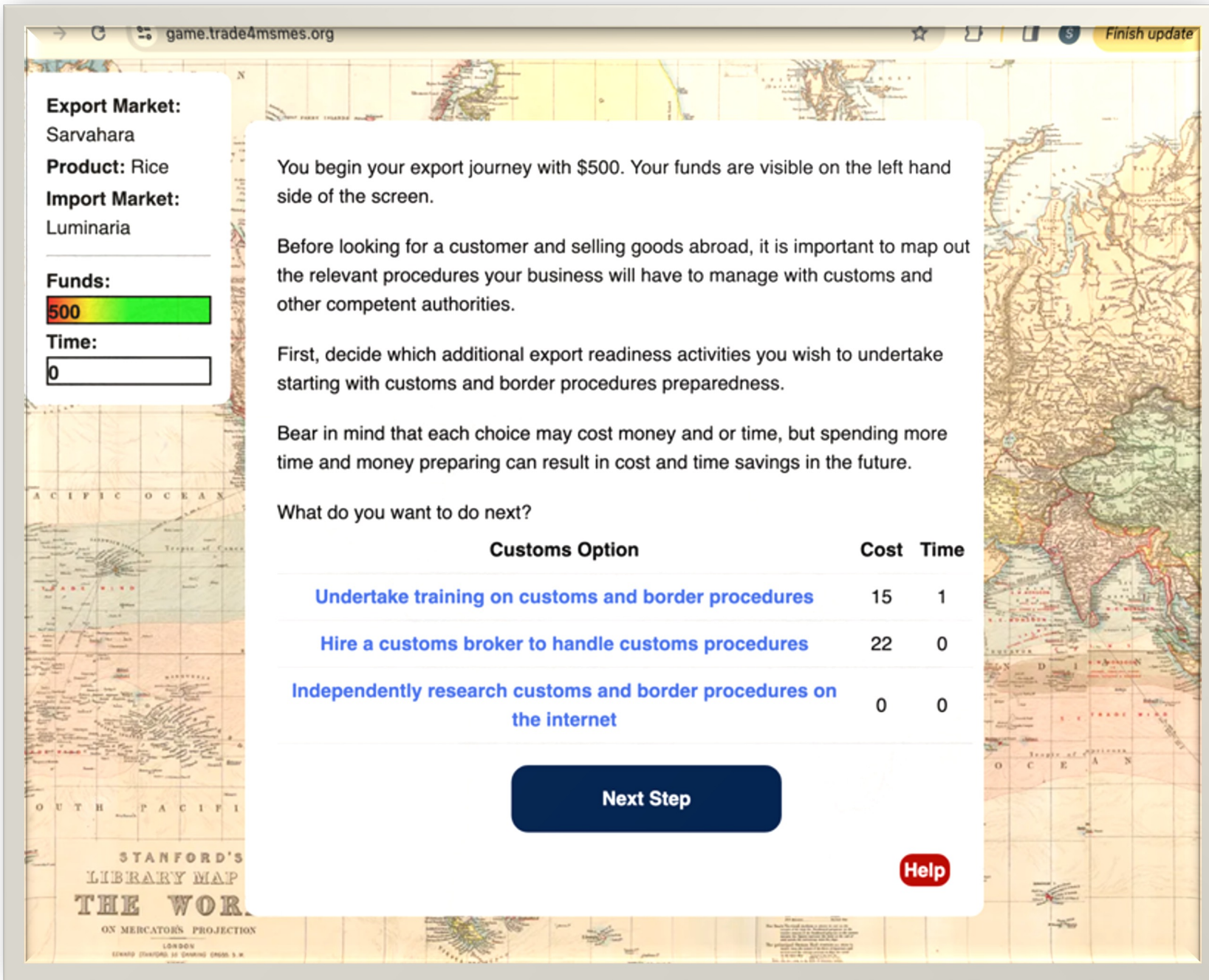


WTO MSME thought-leadership

Small Business Champions
Applications close 26 April

MSME Gateway:
<https://trade4msmes.org/>
MSME guides for policymakers and business

Trade Game:
<https://game.trade4msmes.org/>



game.trade4msmes.org

Export Market: Sarvahara
Product: Rice
Import Market: Luminaria

Funds: 500
Time: 0

You begin your export journey with \$500. Your funds are visible on the left hand side of the screen.

Before looking for a customer and selling goods abroad, it is important to map out the relevant procedures your business will have to manage with customs and other competent authorities.

First, decide which additional export readiness activities you wish to undertake starting with customs and border procedures preparedness.

Bear in mind that each choice may cost money and or time, but spending more time and money preparing can result in cost and time savings in the future.

What do you want to do next?

Customs Option	Cost	Time
Undertake training on customs and border procedures	15	1
Hire a customs broker to handle customs procedures	22	0
Independently research customs and border procedures on the internet	0	0

Next Step

Help

STANFORD'S LIBRARY MAP THE WORLD ON MERCATOR'S PROJECTION

Additional observations from other delegation members



Recommendations

- Members to note the WTO update
- Members to strongly champion a permanent E-Commerce Moratorium
- Members to continue advocacy for greater business engagement in the WTO