

# MSMEs: Key to an inclusive and sustainable recovery

Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises Day 2021

**DATE: Monday, 28 June 2021**

**TIME: 8:00 AM EDT / 14:00 CEST**

**LOCATION: Virtual**

## Background

The United Nations General Assembly designated 27 June as Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises Day (A/RES/71/279) in order to raise awareness of the contribution that small businesses make to sustainable, inclusive and resilient economic growth and, shared prosperity and decent work for all. Micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) account for 90% of businesses, 60-70% of employment, and 50% of GDP worldwide.

On MSME Day 2021, almost 18 months after the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, most countries will still be grappling with the pandemic and its severe health and socio-economic impacts, including lockdowns and the need to support those who have lost their jobs and livelihoods. In many parts of the world, the pandemic recovery efforts are being presented as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to “rebuild better”, particularly by prioritizing sustainability, resilience and inclusiveness. This virtual MSME Day event will explore how to ensure MSMEs – the bedrock of our societies - are equipped to ensure a fast, equitable and sustainable post-COVID-19 recovery, empowered to drive the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and supported to spur innovation, creativity and decent work for all.

## The global context

The COVID-19 crisis has taught us that the pandemic and containment measures do not impact everyone in the same way. Among the private sector, MSMEs, especially those led by women, youth, ethnic minorities and migrants, suffered the most.<sup>1</sup> An International Trade Centre survey on COVID-19 impact among businesses in 136 countries has shown that nearly 62% of women-led small businesses have been strongly affected by the crisis, compared to just over half of firms led by men, and women-owned are 27% more likely not to survive the pandemic. The COVID-19 crisis also taught us the value and catalytic impact of digital connectivity, particularly for MSMEs.

As governments vaccinate their populations, the world continues to deal with several other challenges that include the ongoing effects of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. If unabated, these three crises are expected to have severe negative implications for economic growth, human health and ecosystems, employment and livelihoods. Much like the pandemic, we know that without concerted global actions, climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution are likely to disrupt growth, undermine food and nutrition security, and reinforce inequalities within and among countries. Among African MSMEs, only 27% of women-led firms reported investing in at least one measure to reduce exposure to environmental risks, while 45% of men-led firms had done the same, according to the SME Competitiveness Outlook 2021.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, smaller and youth-led firms were less likely to make environmental investments compared with larger and adult-led firms. These smaller, women- and youth-led businesses have less capital at their disposal to invest in mitigating measures to prepare for external shocks like a pandemic or climate event.

What lessons can we capture from the COVID-19 response and recovery measures to ensure that MSMEs, particularly those led by women, youth and people living in vulnerable situations are able to recover from the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 crisis? Are there lessons that will help MSMEs to mitigate and adapt to the adverse impacts of environmental degradation, and participate in sustainable recovery efforts? What measures can be taken to help increase their resilience and ensure an inclusive transition to sustainable economies? How can digital connectivity be effectively harnessed for inclusiveness and sustainability?

In order to recover better, efforts and stimulus packages must target those most heavily affected by the pandemic and be aligned with the SDGs and Paris Agreement; supporting MSMEs, especially women, youth, migrants-owned, to be resilient to future shocks. We must seize the opportunity offered by the pandemic to address pre-existing biases and

<sup>1</sup> [ITC SMECO 2020](#)

<sup>2</sup> [ITC SMECO 2021 \(link forthcoming\)](#)

constraints faced by these women and men entrepreneurs and empower them to be the agent of change to achieve the SDGs. Focusing on stories from small business entrepreneurs, including women-led firms and 'ecopreneurs', this event will shed light on challenges they face, showcase solutions, and identify new approaches needed to ensure that MSMEs are change agents in driving a sustainable and inclusive recovery.

## Theme

This MSME Day 2021 virtual event will focus on placing MSMEs at the centre of resilient, inclusive and sustainable recovery and growth. **Achieving the SDGs, and an economy that is greener and fairer, requires resilient and flourishing MSMEs everywhere.**

The event and social media campaign will feature small business entrepreneurs, including women and youth led firms and "ecopreneurs" alongside global leaders to address **barriers**, showcase **best practices** and identify **big ideas** with MSMEs at the centre of achieving the SDGs.

## Objectives

1. Strengthen awareness and capacities of policymakers and micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises in achieving fairer, resilient and sustainable recovery that contributes to achieving the SDGs.
2. Contribute to global debates on MSMEs in the post-pandemic recovery, including through environmental sustainability, and empowerment of youth, women, migrants and refugees.
3. Create space for action, recommendations and practical tools that lead to more targeted policies and measures, including stimulus packages, supportive ecosystems and opportunities for MSMEs, especially women and youth owned MSMEs and sustainable MSMEs.

## Programme & Speakers

### Opening Statements & Remarks [40 minutes]

*Moderator: Mr. Winslow Sargeant, Incoming Chair, ICSB*

- H.E. Ambassador María del Carmen Squeff, Permanent Representative of Argentina to the United Nations
- Mr. Liu Zhenmin, Under-Secretary-General, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs
- Ms. Pamela Coke-Hamilton, Executive Director, International Trade Centre
- Ms. Isabelle Durant, Acting Secretary General, UN Conference on Trade and Development
- Mr. Bernardo Calzadilla-Sarmiento, Managing Director, UN Industrial Development Organization
- Mr. Ahmed Osman, Chair, International Council for Small Business

### Plenary I [45 minutes]

*Moderator: Ms. Chantal-Line Carpentier, Chief, New York Office of the Secretary General, UNCTAD*

- H.E. Nevine Gamea, Minister of Trade and Industry, Egypt
- H.E. Seedy Keita, Minister of Trade, Industry, Employment and Regional Integration, The Gambia
- H.E. Stuart Nash, Minister for Economic and Regional Development, Small Business, Tourism and Forestry and Chair of the OECD Digital for SME Initiative, New Zealand
- H.E. Guillermo Merediz, Secretary of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises and Entrepreneurs, Ministry of Productive Development, Republic of Argentina
- H.E. Ms. Blesila Lantayona, Undersecretary, Department of Trade and Industry, Philippines
- Ms. Rachel Bendayan, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Canada
- Mr. Lei Yao, Director-General, Development Research Center, State Administration for Market Regulations, China
- Mr. Layhy Chhea, Director, SME Department, Ministry of Industry, Science, Technology and Innovations, Cambodia

### Video Messages from Partners [10 minutes]

- Ms. Lindsay Elin, Vice President of Public Policy, External Affairs, Facebook
- Mr. Josh Kallmer, Head of Global Public Policy and Government Relations, Zoom
- UNIDO video message for MSME Day

### Moderated Panel: **Supporting MSMEs to build a more resilient, sustainable, and inclusive economy** [60 minutes]

*Moderator: Ms. Barbara Ramos, Chief of Research and Export Strategies, International Trade Centre*

- Ms. Paula Itati de la Vega Sanchez, Founder, Bioita (Argentina)
- Ms. Helianti Hilman, Founder, Javara (Indonesia)

- Ms. Yvonne Otieno, Miyonga (Kenya)
- Mr. Moulaye Biaye, Casadeliz (Senegal)
- Ms. Alisa Osei Asamoah, Riali Consult Travel and Tour (Ghana)

### **Video Message from AlterContacts featuring MSMEs from around the world** [5 minutes]

Ms. Julia Skupchenko and Massimo Mercuri, Think Tank AlterContacts

### **Plenary II** [45 minutes]

*Moderator: Mr. Amson Sibanda, Chief, National Strategies and Capacity Building Branch, Division for Sustainable Development Goals, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs*

- Mr. Ayman El Tarabishy, President, International Council for Small Business, ICSB
- Mr. Mathias Cormann, Secretary General, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
- Mr. John Denton, Secretary-General, International Chamber of Commerce
- Mr. Ratnakar Adhikari, Executive Director, Enhanced Integrated Framework
- Mr. Jürgen Riegerink First Vice President and Head of Client Services Group, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
- Mr. Charles Ocici, President, Enterprise Uganda
- Ms. Gulbakhor Makhkamova, Chair of the Board of Directors of the National Association of Business Women of Tajikistan
- Mr. Dragon Radic, Head of the Small and Medium Enterprises Unit, International Labour Organization, ILO

### **Closing** [30 minutes]

- Ms. Virpi Stucki, Chief, Division of Rural Entrepreneurship, Job Creation and Human Security, Department of Agri-Business, UNIDO
- Mr. Ayman El Tarabishy, President, International Council for Small Business, ICSB
- Videos featuring MSMEs from around the world

## **Content sources**

[2020 Report of the UN Secretary-General: Entrepreneurship for sustainable development](#)

[Guidance for MSMEs business recovery in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic](#)

[2020 Empretec Women in Business Awards](#)

[UNDESA – MSME Policy Report](#)

[ITC 2021 SMECO report](#)

[ICSB 2021 Global MSME Report](#)

[OECD 2021 SME and Entrepreneurship Outlook](#)

## **Format**

The virtual event will be hosted on the [online platform Zoom](#) and broadcast live on [UN WebTV](#). Limited interactivity is possible through a chat function. The recording will be made available via UN TV as of 29 June 2021.

**Social Media Campaign:** <https://trello.com/b/ix1ZYLza/un-msme-day>

## **Organizers:**

### **Permanent Mission of Argentina to the United Nations**

**United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA):** Rooted in the United Nations Charter and guided by the transformative 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) upholds the development pillar of the United Nations. As the think tank of the UN, DESA, generates and analyses a wide range of data on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and provide intergovernmental and capacity building support to Member States and other stakeholder groups as they take stock of trends and policy options to accelerate the global progress towards SDGs.

**International Council for Small Business (ICSB)** is a non-profit organization devoted to continuing management education for entrepreneurs and small business. Founded in 1955, the International Council for Small Business (ICSB) was the first international membership organization to promote the growth and development of small businesses worldwide. The organization brings together educators, researchers, policy-makers and practitioners from around the world to share knowledge and expertise in their respective fields through publications, programs, workshops, training sessions and certifications

**The International Trade Centre (ITC)** is the joint agency of the World Trade Organization and the United Nations. ITC enables micro, small and medium-sized enterprises in developing and transition economies to become more

competitive and connect to international markets for trade and investment, thus raising incomes and creating job opportunities, especially for women, young people, and poor communities. ITC contributes to sustainable economic development within the frameworks of the Aid-for-Trade agenda and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

**The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)** is the United Nations body responsible for dealing with development issues, particularly international trade – the main driver of development. UNCTAD is also a forum where representatives of all countries can freely engage in dialogue and discuss ways to establish a better balance in the global economy. In addition, UNCTAD offers direct technical assistance to developing countries and countries with economies in transition, helping them to build the capacities they need to become equitably integrated into the global economy and improve the well-being of their populations.

**The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)** is the specialized agency of the United Nations that promotes inclusive and sustainable industrial development for poverty reduction, inclusive globalization and environmental sustainability. UNIDO's programmatic focus is structured in four strategic priorities: creating shared prosperity, advancing economic competitiveness, safeguarding the environment and strengthening knowledge and institutions.

**United Nations Office for Partnerships (UNOP)** serves as the global gateway to catalyze and co-create collaborations that accelerate solutions to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals. The Office mobilizes international, regional and local stakeholders, engaging public sector, private sector, civil society, academia and philanthropic entities in the work of the UN system.

**Social Media #MSMEDay #MSMEDay2021**

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