

Joint Seminar

11 DECEMBER 2013, WEDNESDAY, 4.00PM – 5.30PM

Seminar Room 4-1, Level 4, Block B, NUS Bukit Timah Campus

469 Bukit Timah Road, Singapore 259756

AFTER BALI, WHAT NEXT FOR THE WTO

SPEAKER



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Since 1996, Keith has been a Director at the World Trade Organization and the spokesman for the organization. He is responsible for the overall co-ordination of the WTO's interaction with media, civil society, Parliamentarians and the United Nations. As Director of the Media and External Relations Division, Keith works closely with the Director General and his office to fashion messages reflecting the objectives and activities of the WTO. He appears before media regularly through press conferences, briefings and television and radio appearances. In managing a division of 32 professional and support staff, Keith is responsible for co-ordinating WTO outreach activities that include the organization of seminars for parliamentarians, journalists and NGOs in developing countries. He has oversight responsibilities as well for the design and layout of the WTO website and publications. Prior to joining the WTO, Keith worked as an editor, reporter and columnist for The Journal of Commerce, a New York-based financial daily. He focused on international economic issues, US and European politics. He worked in New York City as the editorial page editor in the early 1980s before transferring to Washington where he was a White House and Congressional correspondent. He covered the 1988 Presidential Campaign. In his last two assignments at the JOC, Keith served as the London-based chief of European Bureaus and as the Washington Bureau Chief. He received his Masters in Business Administration in International Business from George Washington University in 1991 and his Bachelor's Degree in History and Political Science from Tufts University in 1980. In 1989, he was invited by the European Commission to participate in the EU Visitors Programme during which he spent three weeks studying EU integration and the creation of the Single Market. In 1990 he authored 1992 AND BEYOND: How to Prosper in the World's Biggest Market, which was published by Knight-Ridder Inc.

ABSTRACT

The WTO is at a crossroads and the December Ministerial Conference in Bali will very likely have profound impact on the organization's future as a forum for trade negotiations. The longstanding impasse in the trade round of global trade talks has damaged the WTO's credibility and with a proliferation of regional and bilateral trade negotiations under way, there is a danger that multilateralism in trade will be consigned to the side-lines.

Yet, agreement on an important roster of issues -- streamlining customs procedures, some elements of agricultural and developing related measures -- is achievable. Such a deal would deliver economic benefits that experts say could produce economic gains of anywhere from \$400 billion to \$1 trillion. Just as importantly, success at Bali would generate negotiating momentum and put the WTO back on track to address remaining Doha issues and other trade matters currently confronting the organization's 159 member governments.

Inability to negotiate a positive Bali outcome would, however, come at a heavy price. Many WTO Members have already suggested that such a result would lead them to turn away from multilateral trade negotiations in favour of what all agree would be less attractive bilateral or regional alternatives.

Whether the WTO succeeds or fails at Bali the question before governments will be "What Next for the WTO?" At this stage the outcome remains in the balance. But what is certain is that success would generate a far more appealing list of possibilities.

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