

World Trade Organization

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The **World Trade Organization (WTO)** (**OMC** - French: *Organisation Mondiale du Commerce*, Spanish: *Organización Mundial del Comercio*) is an international organization designed to supervise and liberalize international trade. The WTO came into being on January 1, 1995, and is the successor to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which was created in 1947, and continued to operate for almost five decades as a *de facto* international organization.

The WTO deals with the rules of trade between nations at a global or near-global level; it is responsible for negotiating and implementing new trade agreements, and is in charge of policing member countries' adherence to all the WTO agreements, signed by the bulk of the world's trading nations and ratified in their parliaments.^[3] Most of the WTO's current work comes from the 1986-94 negotiations called the Uruguay Round, and earlier negotiations under the GATT. The organization is currently the host to new negotiations, under the Doha Development Agenda (DDA) launched in 2001.^[4]

The WTO is governed by a Ministerial Conference, which meets every two years; a General Council, which implements the conference's policy decisions and is responsible for day-to-day administration; and a director-general, who is appointed by the Ministerial Conference. The WTO's headquarters are in Geneva, Switzerland.

World Trade Organization



Current members of the WTO in green

Formation	1 January 1995
Headquarters	Geneva, Switzerland
Membership	150 member states
Official languages	English, French, Spanish ^[1]
Director-General	Pascal Lamy
Budget	175 million Swiss francs
Staff	635 ^[2]
Website	www.wto.int

WTO Ministerial Conference of 1999 protest activity

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Protest activity surrounding the **WTO Ministerial Conference of 1999**, which was to be the launch of a new millennial round of trade negotiations, occurred on November 30, 1999, when the World Trade Organization (WTO) convened in Seattle, Washington, USA. The negotiations were quickly overshadowed by massive and controversial street protests outside the hotels and the Seattle Convention Center, in what became the coming-out of the anti-globalization movement in the United States. The scale of the demonstrations—even the lowest estimates put the crowd at over 40,000—dwarfed any previous demonstration in the United States against a world meeting of any of the organizations generally associated with economic globalization (such as the WTO, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), or the World Bank). The events are sometimes referred to as the **Battle of Seattle**.



A banner at Seattle during the protest.