



**FRIENDS OF MULTILATERALISM  
GROUP (FMG)**

**Strategic Review**

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# Contents

Introduction .....	1
FMG Strategic Review 2022 .....	2
FMG Work Review 2016-2022 .....	4
1. Membership .....	4
1) Number of Members .....	5
2) Nationality Distribution .....	6
3) Gender Distribution .....	7
2. Activities .....	8
1) Number of Activities .....	8
2) Sessions by topic (up to December 2022) .....	9
3. Publications .....	11
4. Publicity .....	11

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## Introduction

Established in 2016 in Geneva, the Friends of Multilateralism Group (FMG) is a non-profit think tank of independent experts firmly committed to promoting multilateralism and shared growth within the multilateral trading system (MTS).

FMG endeavors to buttress efforts by Members, both delegations and capital officials, on WTO reform and other issues of importance to the MTS and help restore the centrality of the WTO in the global governance of trade and investment. FMG and its members seek to provide high-quality, independent and expert advice through a series of activities and products, including research, debates, consultations and policy advice, to help build a positive eco-system that identifies and supports potential compromises and landing zones for a sustainable multilateral trading system.

Over the past six years since its establishment, FMG has been steadily growing its reach and influence through an enlarged membership, enriched activities, and expert audiences including WTO members, WTO and related organizations, and various think tanks.

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## FMG Strategic Review 2022

### Activity Plan beyond 2022

Despite its importance as the cornerstone of the multilateral rules-based trading system, the WTO and multilateralism more generally are widely considered to be suffering from a series of major challenges such as geopolitical risks, climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, and military conflicts in some parts of the world. WTO Members are calling for WTO reform to update WTO policies and processes to better suit twenty-first-century trade challenges. But views on how to achieve these objectives remain divergent. The success of the WTO 12<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference (MC12), however, has provided extra breathing space, although the way ahead remains bumpy.

The Friends of Multilateralism Group (FMG) commits to engaging all WTO members and various stakeholders to push for meaningful discussions on WTO reform and the role of multilateralism in serving the interests of countries and people around the world.

For that purpose, FMG plans to focus on the following areas in its work beyond 2022:

- 1) WTO reform in respect of all its functions, including dispute settlement, negotiations, and monitoring and transparency.
- 2) Specific issues such as:
  - a) improvement of the dispute settlement mechanism, and the Appellate Body in particular.
  - b) multilateral negotiations such as fisheries subsidies, agriculture, and industrial subsidies.
  - c) developmental aspects, including S&D, LDC concerns, and the best approach to achieving them.
- 3) Plurilateral initiatives such as those on MSMEs, trade and gender, e-commerce, and investment facilitation, and how to incorporate them into the

<https://fmg-geneva.org/>

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multilateral framework.

- 4) Trade and global challenges, including climate change, environmental sustainability, pandemics, and geopolitical tensions.
- 5) FMG initiatives to enhance understanding of members' policy perspectives and direct dialogues with capitals, such as Trade Policy Previews (TP-Ps), and dialogue with key capitals.

To better deliver its mission and better serves the WTO and its members, FMG plans to launch a Strategic Review on 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> December 2022, six years after its inception, to review its previous work and its future. Views and suggestions will be collected from FMG members, Friends of FMG (FFMG), WTO members and all stakeholders.

**To facilitate the Strategic Review, a questionnaire is prepared as below:**

- 1) Has FMG made a difference and delivered its mission to promote multilateralism and shared growth within the MTS?
- 2) What have we not done in the past, and how can we do better in the years ahead?
- 3) What should be the ideal size of FMG, and what criteria are needed for admitting new FMG members? Based on the FMG Statutes and existing practice, new members are recommended by existing FMG members, have relevant experience and expertise, have no conflict of interest, and no direct affiliation with national governments or international institutions. Decisions on admitting new members are subject to approval by the Board.
- 4) How to improve FMG diversity, including in respect of gender, geography, and youth representation?
- 5) Does FMG need to plan its publications with its own label, instead of random publications by individual members? Is it possible to get funding for that purpose?
- 6) Other than voluntary donations by FMG members, does FMG need to raise funding for its future activities and, if yes, how?

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## FMG Work Review 2016-2022

### 1. Membership

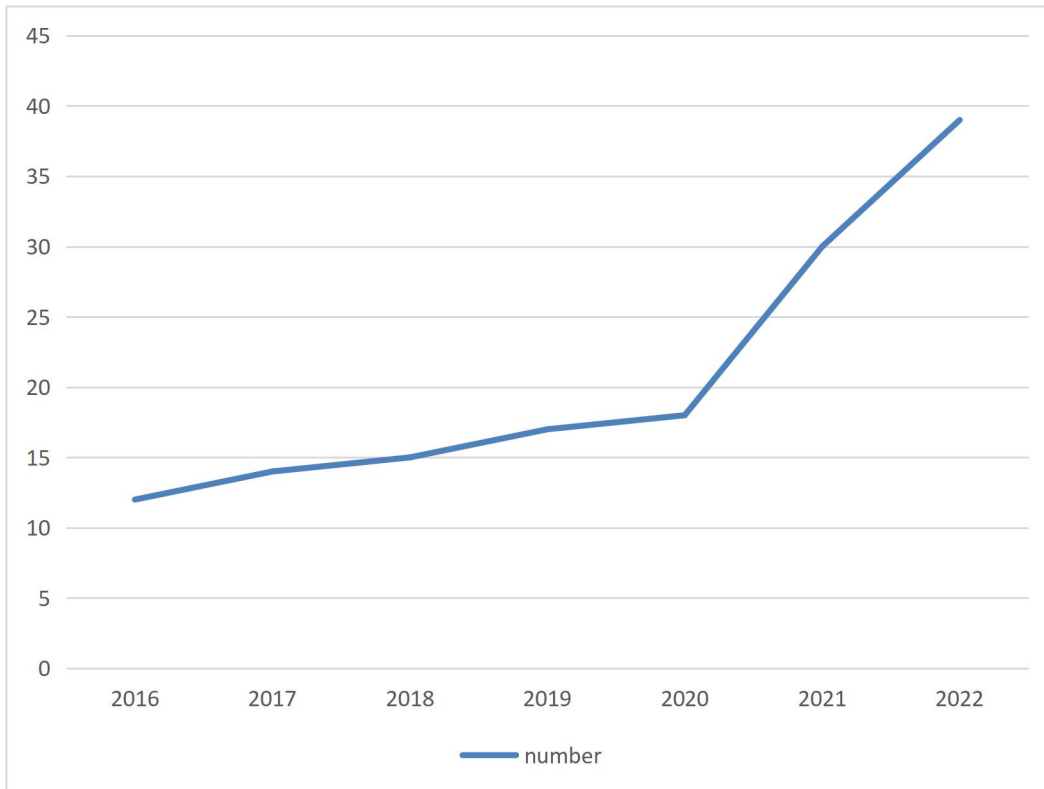
FMG is managed by a Board consisting of Alejandro JARA (Co-chair of Board) and Patrick LOW (Co-chair of Board), Xiankun LU (Chief Executive Officer), Mia MIKIC (Board Member), Stuart HARBINSON (Board Member), Sherry Stephenson (Board Member), and Daniel CROSBY (Treasurer).

Other FMG members include Axel ADDY, Mercedes ARAOZ, Richard BALDWIN, Clemens BOONEKAMP, Wendy CUTLER, Peter DRAPER, Deborah ELMS, Simon EVENETT, Jonathan T. FRIED, Bernard HOEKMAN, Eunice HUANG, Mohan KUMAR, Hamid MAMDOUH, Cecilia MALMSTROM, Sergio MARCHI, Fernando de MATEO, Mario MATUS, Maxim MEDVEDKOV, Pradeep S MEHTA, Michitaka NAKATOMI, Victor DO PRADO, Tatiana PRAZERES, Jan Yves Remy, Evan ROGERSON, Hector TORRES, Thu-Lang TRAN WASESCHA, Jayashree Watal, John M WEEKES, Peter UNGPHAKORN, Guillermo VALLES, Alan WOLFF, and Xinquan TU. FMG extensively engages with external independent experts, as needs arise.

Some representatives of related international organizations and institutions are also invited in their personal capacity as “Friends of FMG” (FFMG), to enrich the discussions and bridge effective message-passing with such organizations. FFMG members are Anabel GONZÁLEZ (WTO), Sean DOHERTY (WEF), Sacha SILVA (ITC), Crispin CONROY (ICC), Olaf WIENTZEK (KAS), Andreas ESCHE (Bertelsmann Stiftung), Hajo LANZ (FES), Brad MCDONALD (IMF), and James ZHAN (UNCTAD).

FMG has also endeavored to engage external experts to provide more perspectives and add extra value to the discussions of its sessions. Up to now, FMG has engaged 89 non-FMG experts, 1.4 on average in each session.

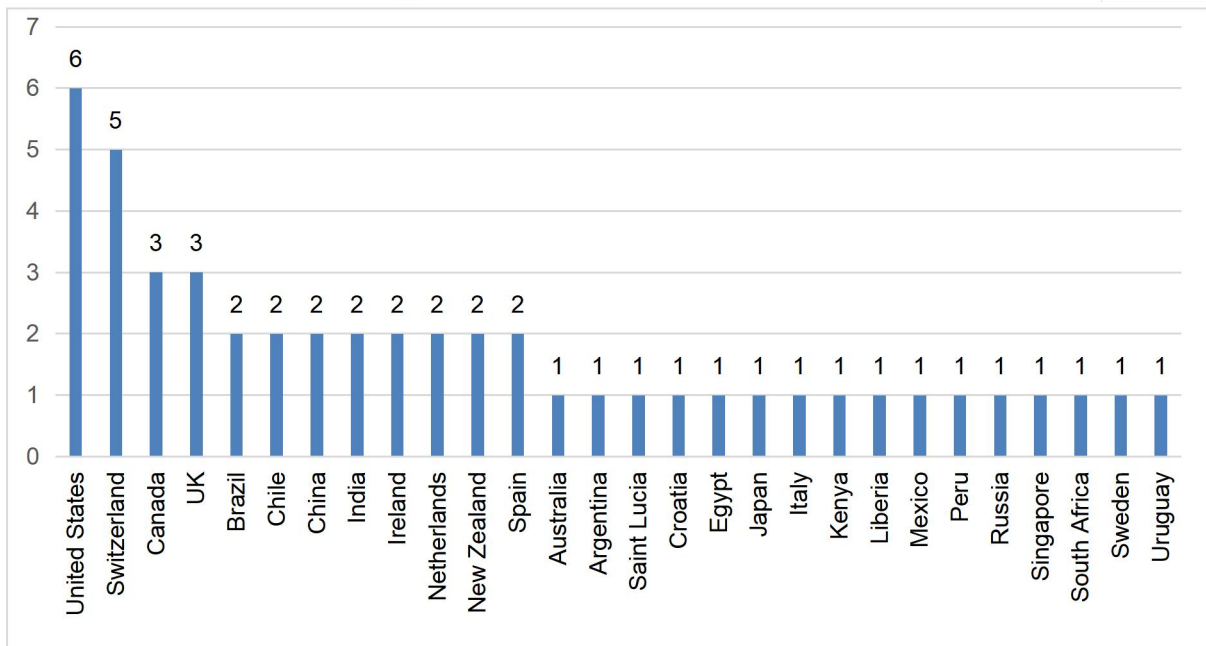
## 1) Number of Members



2016	12
2017	14
2018	15
2019	17
2020	18
2021	30
2022	39



## 2) Nationality Distribution

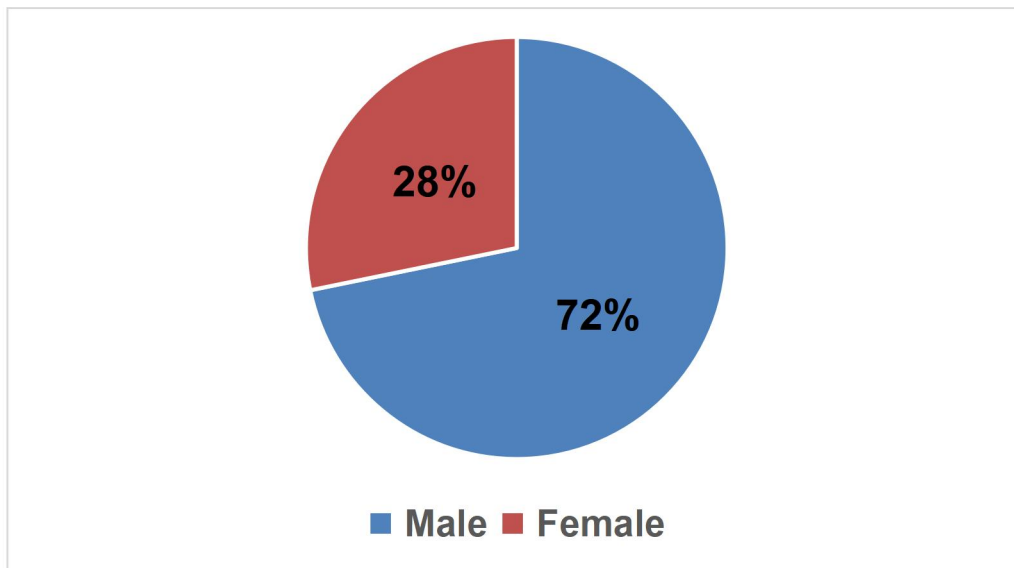


(Note: For those FMG members who have more than one nationality, we have counted all these nationalities. )



### 3) Gender Distribution

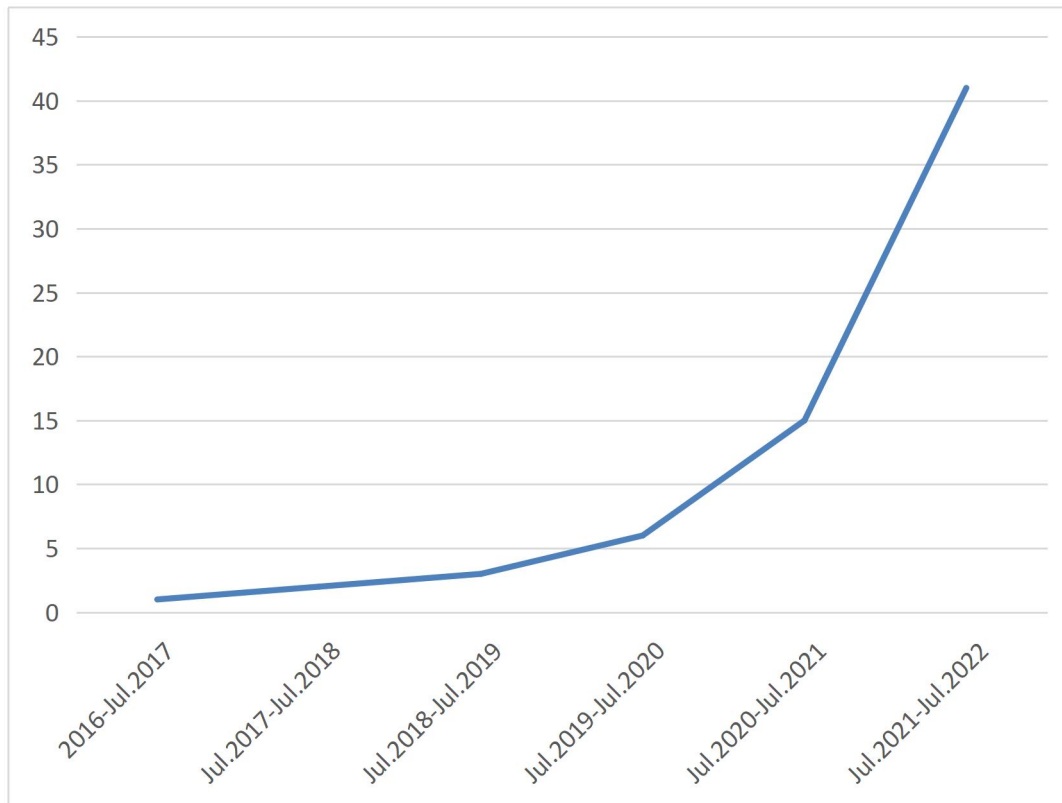
Male	28
Female	11



FMG recognizes that there is a gender balance issue in terms of its membership and are taking actions to improve it.

## 2. Activities

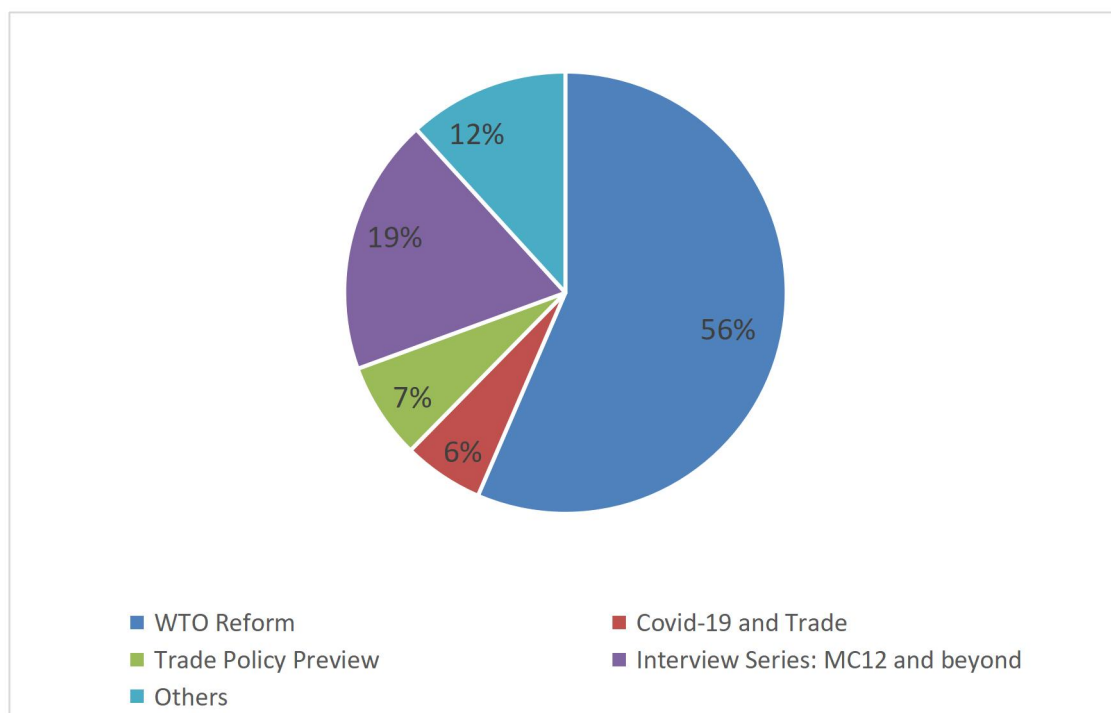
### 1) Number of Activities



2016-July 2017	1
July 2017-July 2018	2
July 2018-July 2019	3
July 2019-July 2020	6
July 2020-July 2021	15
July 2021-July 2022	41

## 2) Sessions by topic (up to December 2022)

WTO Reform	48
Covid-19 and Trade	5
Trade Policy Preview	6
Interview Series: MC12 and beyond	16
Others	10



Despite restricted attendance within the FMG community (WTO ambassadors, senior management of related organizations, representatives of various think tanks, as well as FMG and FFMG members), FMG sessions are attended by 30-80 participants, 50 on average.

Other than thematic sessions on WTO reform, FMG has also launched some innovative initiatives:

- Trade and Covid-19 pandemic, aims at further discussions particularly on how trade can best contribute to efforts to address the Covid-19 pandemic

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and its aftermath, including through actions at the WTO. (<https://fmg-geneva.org/activities-covid-19-and-trade/>)

- Trade Policy Preview (TP-P), aims to hosting a candid and forward-looking dialogue on the trade policy trends of key players of the WTO and their implications on the WTO reform discussions. (<https://fmg-geneva.org/activities-trade-policy-preview-t-pp/>)
- Dialogue with capitals, to discuss what future key members see for the WTO and how this relates to the direction of their trade policies. (<https://fmg-geneva.org/fmg-dialogue-with-key-capitals-brussels/>)
- Interview Series “MC12 and Beyond”, to hear insights from different experts and officials about MC12 outcomes and what the challenges ahead are for the multilateral trading system, and how the WTO should be reformed going forward. (<https://fmg-geneva.org/activities-interview-series-mc12-and-beyond/>)

### 3. Publications

Selected articles, papers, reports and books authored by FMG members have been reposted on the official FMG website since 2020.

Up to December 2022, 68 publications of FMG members have been shared on FMG website.

2020	28
2021	21
2022 (Up to November 2022)	19

### 4. Publicity

FMG has an official website (<https://fmg-geneva.org/>) and its own channel on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCHaQqkvZsPP5yhZ6cdAK2Ng>). Up to 16<sup>th</sup> Nov 2022, there have been 2766 YouTube views in total, ranging from 18 to 251 views for each session.

FMG activities are shared via the official website, LinkedIn and WeChat. Its public brainstorming sessions are recorded and shared via the above social channels and through YouTube FMG.

FMG has circulated four newsletters for March 2022, April-May 2022, June 2022, and July-September 2022 (<https://fmg-geneva.org/news/>).