

Speech of ICC Secretary General Mr. John Danilovich SDG9 Review

His Excellency the President of ECOSOC,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

As the Secretary General of the International Chamber of Commerce, the world's largest business organization, it's a great honor to be invited to deliver remarks at the start of the High-Level Political Forum's review of SDG 9.

Since their inception, I have consistently said that the SDGs should be known within the global business community as the "BDGs", the "Business Development Goals". And the reason for this is because the SDGs represent a clear economic imperative. Their achievement would mean greater productivity, increased employment, and stronger economic growth.

In short, they could pull the global economy out of its current malaise of "secular stagnation". This is particularly true of Goal 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure)—the economic centerpiece of the SDGs.

The downside risks to the implementation of SDG 9 are apparent to us all: from weak trade growth, which is projected to remain under 3 percent for the fifth year in a row; to tighter global financial conditions, that could trigger disruptive capital outflows from developing economies.

So how do we respond to these challenges? And, more specifically, how do we turn the Goal 9 targets into concerted action – and, ultimately, achievement? For us, the central answer is policy coherence.

To deliver fully on the objectives of building resilient infrastructure, promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and fostering innovation we must work to ensure that local, national, and global policies all meet the "SDG 9 test."

Policy coherence means a foundation of sound domestic policies coordinated across government, combined with a steadfast commitment to international cooperation. Here, I'd like to focus on two areas where there is significant scope to enhance policy coherence between the targets of the SDGs and real-world policymaking when it comes to promoting trade, innovation, and investment.

The first is on the issue of global trade reform. We all know the political debate around trade is strained in many countries today. And in this context, it's important to acknowledge that the benefits of trade don't reach as many people as they could—or should. We must respond to this real problem, not by attacking trade, or by raising tariffs, or by closing our borders; but, rather, by making trade policies work to drive inclusive growth.

That means committing to real, pro-market reforms underpinned by the rules-based, multilateral system. Reforms which place the interests of small business at their very heart. If we want to achieve the SDGs, we must foster trade policies that enable entrepreneurship and allow businesses to create new jobs.

The scale of the jobs challenge is daunting: India alone is adding over 1 million people to the labour market each month.

From an ICC perspective, we see three priority areas to meet the “SDG 9 test” when it comes to trade:

First, a focus on trade facilitation reforms to ensure that businesses of all sizes can access global markets. Our analysis shows that implementation of the WTO’s Trade Facilitation Agreement could boost SME exports by upwards of 60%, creating around 20 million jobs in developing economies. Accelerating the implementation of that agreement would represent a significant boost to the implementation of SDG 9.

Second, we must find ways to better utilise trade policies to harness the potential of the Internet to unleash a new era of “inclusive trade”. It is often said that the Internet has democratised “voice”, but it has also most certainly democratised global trade. Recent years have witnessed remarkable developments in the digital economy, creating unprecedented opportunities for small businesses to enter global markets for the first time.

Data from the eBay platform shows that SMEs that use on-line platforms are more than five times more likely to export than those in the traditional economy. That’s a tremendous transformation to the very fabric of global trade. New global rules for e-commerce could play a major role in helping boost small business growth, by establishing an international level-playing field that enables all businesses, regardless of size, location or sector, to compete on an equal footing in global markets.

And finally, we need to see a concerted effort to ensure that small businesses can access the finance they need to grow and operate internationally. [ICC research](#) shows that 60% of small businesses currently struggle to access the finance they need to grow, with an estimated \$1.6 trillion shortfall in trade finance globally. In this context we applaud the mandate given to the UN’s Interagency Task Force at this year’s [Financing for Development Forum to review the now chronic trade finance gap](#), and we encourage all governments and international agencies to engage constructively in this process.

The second theme I would like to highlight is the need for policy coherence nationally and globally to enhance connectivity, meaningful access, and bridge the digital divide. Meeting the Goal 9 targets on the deployment of information communication technologies can provide a central foundation for the realization of all of the SDGs. ICTs are already being deployed with a strong social purpose to deliver improvements in so many areas: health, education, women’s economic empowerment, business development, agricultural production, and peace-building.

But to fully leverage ICT for sustainable development, policy approaches must be consistent with the mutually supporting layers of the ICT ecosystem, spanning economic, technical, social, cultural, and governance issues.

Ahead of the HLPF, the International Chamber of Commerce published a [new roadmap](#), based on extensive consultations with businesses large and small, to support governments in developing an interoperable, open, seamless and secure ICT ecosystem underpinned by private sector investment and robust multi-stakeholder dialogue.

And we encourage all governments to consider these recommendations in the development of enhanced policy frameworks to harness the power of ICTs to drive economic, social and environmental progress towards realisation of the SDGs.

To be clear, my remarks are not a “wish-list” from the private sector, for we will fail or succeed together in meeting the SDGs. Working together, through open and inclusive dialogue and cooperation, we can succeed. And the global business community is ready to support all governments, in every possible way, to support the development of policies and frameworks that meet the “SDG 9 test”.

Policies which foster enabling environments that all businesses to do what they do best: innovate, invest and create good jobs.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to me this morning. We hope you will join us at the [SDG Business Forum](#) on 18 July, which has seen an [unprecedented mobilization of the global business community](#), with over one thousand business leaders joining us from around the world.

Thank you.