

## **Ministerial Roundtable Program**

### **Theme:**

### ***“Reimagining Trade: Digital Solutions in an Evolving World”***

#### **Introduction**

The World Free Zones Organization (World FZO) 11<sup>th</sup> World Congress 2025 is scheduled to take place from 10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> October 2025 in Hainan, China. The key theme for this years Congress is titled: “Zones: Gateways to Global Prosperity, Trade, and Sustainable Innovation”. The **Ministerial Roundtable**, during the Congress is scheduled for **10 October at 13:00 hrs**, and it will convene ministerial officials from across the world to engage in high-level dialogue on advancing industrial and development strategies through free zones and other special economic zones. The Theme of the Ministerial Roundtable program is titled: ***“Reimagining Trade: Digital Solutions in an Evolving World”***, details of which are as follows:

Global trade stands at a critical juncture. The combined impact of accelerating digital transformation, shifting geopolitical landscapes, and evolving supply chain models is reshaping the foundations of international commerce. These forces bring forth complex challenges, ranging from trade fragmentation and rising regulatory burdens to supply chain vulnerabilities. Yet, within this complexity lies immense opportunities.

Digital technologies are unlocking new pathways for enhancing trade efficiency, resilience, and inclusivity. As economies navigate this transition, free trade zones and other special economic zones (SEZs) emerge as strategic platforms for piloting and scaling digital trade solutions. These zones can act as testbeds for innovation, attracting digital investments, improving logistics performance, and fostering inclusive growth models aligned with sustainable development goals.

In this context, the **Ministerial Roundtable** convenes senior policymakers, industry leaders, and global experts to chart a path toward a digitally enabled trade future. The discussion will centre on how tools such as artificial intelligence, blockchain, and paperless trade systems can be integrated into policy and practice to reduce transaction costs, expand market access, and boost competitiveness.

By focusing on collaboration across sectors and borders, the roundtable aims to identify practical, forward-looking strategies to harness digitalization while addressing risks related to fragmentation, digital divides, and regulatory misalignment.

#### **Key Issues for Ministerial Discussion**

##### **1. Addressing Global Trade Challenges:**

How can digital innovation help buffer global trade from external shocks, such as geopolitical tensions, climate disruptions, and post-pandemic instability? Ministers will

explore ways to build digital resilience into trade systems, ensuring continuity and adaptability in volatile times.

2. **Modernizing Free Trade Zones and Other SEZs:**

What policies, infrastructure, and digital technologies are needed to position SEZs as magnets for investment and hubs for digital trade? This session will consider how SEZs can lead in piloting smart customs, digital permits, and blockchain-enabled supply chain tracking.

3. **Digital Trade Facilitation:**

How can governments and the private sector work together to implement interoperable digital systems—such as e-commerce platforms, customs automation, and smart logistics? This topic will address scalability, integration, and public-private coordination.

4. **Inclusive Digital Trade:**

What targeted measures are needed to ensure that small and medium enterprises (SMEs), women entrepreneurs, and developing economies can meaningfully participate in and benefit from digital trade ecosystems? The discussion will highlight capacity-building, digital skilling, and financial inclusion.

5. **Regulatory Cooperation and Governance:**

How can countries develop coherent frameworks for cross-border data flows, cybersecurity, and digital standards? Ministers will examine approaches to regulatory harmonization that uphold data privacy, consumer protection, and trust.

## **Expected Outcomes**

The roundtable aims to achieve the following:

- **Policy insights** on integrating emerging digital tools into national and regional trade strategies.
- **Actionable recommendations** for leveraging SEZs as enablers of digital innovation in trade.
- **Commitment** to developing interoperable digital trade frameworks that promote collaboration, trust, and shared prosperity.

The session will conclude with a **Ministerial Communiqué** on the takeaway messages or a **Call to action**—urging stakeholders to pursue coordinated, inclusive, and tech-enabled trade strategies for a dynamic and interconnected global economy.