

Over 400 Leaders from More Than 50 Countries/Territories Attend World Trade Centers Association's 55th Annual Global Business Forum in Marseille, France

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[World Trade Centers Association \(WTCA\)](#) – an international trade organization connecting more than 300 World Trade Center (WTC) locations in nearly 100 countries and territories – and [World Trade Center Marseille Provence](#) have successfully concluded the [55th annual WTCA Global Business Forum \(GBF\)](#) in Marseille, France.



The World Trade Centers Association's 55th Annual Global Business Forum in Marseille, France, hosted by World Trade Center Marseille Provence focused on Navigating Global Trade

The four-day event, which took place April 6-9, brought together WTCA members and their global networks, including leaders from business, government, academia, and international organizations. Each gleaned new insights on shifting global trade dynamics, cross-border real estate investments, the importance of Free Trade Zones (FTZs) and sustainability efforts. Over 400 attendees across more than 50 countries and territories, and nearly 120 WTC businesses, gathered to forge new global business connections, and to learn about specific opportunities in Marseille, a popular Mediterranean port city and the oldest city in France.

With the theme, **"Gateway to the Mediterranean,"** the Forum helped attendees amplify their businesses' growth and international reach, further elevating WTCA's core mission, **"Connecting Businesses, Globally."** The event included more than 20 workshops, plus various keynotes, panels, local company tours and over 500 business-to-business (B2B) meetings. In addition, GBF attendees learned more about the Marseille region's business climate, including: its strategic

position as a gateway to Southern Europe, North Africa, and Middle Eastern markets; the city's wide range of thriving industries, from maritime and logistics, to digital technology and biotechnology; and its ongoing infrastructure investments. Select WTC businesses also participated in the **"Connections Showcase"** to formally acknowledge the meaningful connections and promising conversations initiated with those they met at the WTCA GBF.

This year also marked WTCA's first dedicated Real Estate Summit during the GBF. During this portion of the event, global experts analyzed the state of commercial real estate, including its role in driving economic growth, and ways in which sustainable infrastructure and energy innovation continue to shape the future of developments. Additional topics of discussion included hyper-growth areas like data centers and logistics facilities.

Amid shifting global policies and economic uncertainties, the WTCA network showcased at this year's Forum how it continues to be a vital and resilient force, fostering dialogue collaboration and trust across borders. Sessions held throughout the GBF focused on how the role of trade organizations is not only increasingly relevant, but is more indispensable than ever as businesses are actively seeking guidance, access and a global perspective. Leveraging its unparalleled global network, WTCA showcased how its members bridge market gaps and open doors to new business opportunities, while also elevating a city's global profile and connecting it to the world economy. To help in strategic business planning, WTCA's members around the world are able to provide on-the-ground information and valuable resources that can be shared throughout the network to create more cross-border connections.

"Our annual Forum stands as a powerful reminder of what is possible when business leaders from around the world come together in the spirit of collaboration – and that's precisely

where the WTCA network excels,” said **John E. Drew, Chair, WTCA Board of Directors**. “In today’s climate, WTCA remains committed to promoting free and fair trade, open markets and healthy competition. We believe these principles foster an environment that attracts investment, drives prosperity and fuels economic growth. Through our global network of independent WTC operations – built on trust and collaboration – we actively support these principles by facilitating international business connections and trade opportunities worldwide. This year’s GBF showcased the real value of connection: forging strategic partnerships between our WTCA members and local/international business delegates; opening new pathways to trade; and reaffirming our shared commitment to free, fair, and open commerce. Together, we will continue to ‘Keep Calm and Trade On.’ We are thankful to WTC Marseille Provence for hosting such a wonderful event to demonstrate the power of our global network.”

Speaking during one GBF session titled “**Global Outlook: Navigating Trade and Investment Trends in 2025**,” Angela Ellard, Deputy Director General of the World Trade Organization (WTO), outlined the intergovernmental organization’s role in navigating new trade policies, including the implementation or threat of tariffs. Her advice for GBF attendees was to remain level-headed and to consider not just the immediate effects, but the broader, long-term effects on global stakeholders.

Benoit Vincent, CEO of WTC Marseille Provence, also said of the event, “This year’s GBF underscored the vital role the Marseille region plays in shaping the future of international trade – we offer a thriving environment for innovation, industry and global collaboration. In partnership with the International Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI Internationale) Provence Alpes Cte d’Azur, we united to host a B2B matchmaking platform that resulted in over 500 B2B meetings, connecting delegates from around the world with each

other as well as with local Marseillaise companies. We are proud to have hosted an event that actually goes beyond dialogue – sparking real connections to catalyze regional and international business growth.”

The 2025 WTCA GBF concluded with a ceremonial announcement of next year’s host during a Gala Dinner sponsored by Turkish Airlines. The 56th annual WTCA GBF is scheduled to take place in Philadelphia, USA from April 19-22, 2026, and will be hosted by WTC Greater Philadelphia.

