

Road to Switzerland: MWTO Experience

In November 2023, just as I began my Master's Degree at the esteemed Warwick Law School, I received an email from the Law School student experience team regarding the Model WTO conference. Instantly, visions of walking down the streets of Switzerland filled my mind. While grappling with the complexities of International Economic Law, a module I was studying in term 1, I found encouragement from both my parents and friends to apply for the conference. Eventually, on the final day, I brushed aside any doubts of rejection and submitted my application.

The application process went smoothly, the questions were straightforward. As a student studying international economic law at Warwick Law School, I was able to confidently answer the questions regarding my interest in trade law with the knowledge gained from just two classes on trade law. I uploaded my CV and conveyed my interest in trade policies, particularly given my background coming from a developing country. On 23rd of December, I received an email notifying me of my acceptance to the conference, highlighting that my application had stood out among other candidates. Excitedly, I began preparing for the upcoming event.

As an international student, obtaining a visa was a necessary step for my travel to Switzerland. Thankfully, the conference organizers efficiently provided all the necessary documents required for my visa application. We were also provided with the opportunity to choose our preferred country and committees for representation. I chose to represent Brazil, a developing country in the committee on non-actionable subsidies for developing countries flexibilities. The organizers also created WhatsApp group chats to facilitate communication before the conference. Also, my professor was readily available via email, offering guidance and sharing valuable tips to help me prepare for the conference.

The conference entailed negotiations on trade policies within specific committees, each comprising approximately 11 delegates representing their respective countries' interests. Over the course of three

days, negotiations unfolded amidst country meetings and mission calls. One valuable lesson I gleaned from this experience is the importance of actively listening to everyone's opinions, regardless of personal reservations, and endeavoring to integrate their ideas into proposals. This inclusive approach fosters a sense of involvement and ownership among all participants in the negotiation process.

During the conference, I had the privilege to closely engage with the Commission for Trade at the Permanent Mission of Brazil. The commissioner conveyed Brazil's stance on subsidies and the reintroduction of non-actionable subsidies in the WTO. On the concluding day of the conference, we received valuable feedback from a trade expert at the WTO, followed by an informative session on subsidies and the WTO facilitated by experts from the WTO, IMF, and World Bank. Additionally, I was honored to be recognized as the best delegate in my committee and one of the overall best delegates at the conference.

The conference proved to be both enlightening and captivating. Interacting with 54 individuals from 35 countries allowed me to gain insights into various cultures, prompting me to commit to learning French. My advice to fellow law students is to embrace opportunities for growth without hesitation. Always rise to challenges and aim to make a positive impact wherever you go. Don't shy away from expressing your ideas on problem-solving approaches, and remember to arm yourself with knowledge about the topics at hand at all times!

By Fareedah Mustapha