2026 World Trade Centers Association Member Forum Emphasizes the Importance of Trusted Relationships Amid Shifting Global Trade Landscape

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World Trade Centers Association® (WTCA®), an international trade organization connecting more than 300 World Trade Center® (WTC®) locations across nearly 100 countries and territories, successfully concluded its 2026 WTCA Member Forum, held virtually October 27-28. The two-day event brought together nearly 200 WTC colleagues representing 109 WTC businesses across 42 countries and territories to explore how shifting global trade dynamics, emerging technologies and international partnerships are shaping the future of business.

Under the theme “Connecting Ideas. Shaping What’s Next,” this year’s Member Forum emphasized that the WTCA network is most valuable when Members actively share knowledge, build relationships and collaborate across borders. Through interactive discussions, presentations and member-led sessions, participants exchanged insights on evolving trade patterns, emerging markets, artificial intelligence (AI) and strategies for strengthening their WTC businesses, while reinforcing the value of trusted relationships in driving international business growth.

The Forum also marked a new chapter for WTCA under the leadership of newly appointed CEO Annette Gregg. During the opening "WTCA Chair and CEO Briefing," Gregg and John E. Drew, WTCA Chair, Board of Directors, shared their vision for the Association's future and the value of a trusted global network, emphasizing the growing importance of bringing people together to navigate an increasingly complex global business environment.

*"What really stood out to me about WTCA was its mission – 'Connecting Businesses, **Globally.**' It symbolizes innovation and collaboration – the ability to come together to build bridges across borders instead of being polarized – which humanity needs now more than ever,"* said **Gregg, WTCA CEO.** *"Some of my biggest takeaways since joining the Association is that the brand is well-known and well-respected, but there is an opportunity for us to get the word out about what the WTC brand is doing for local communities and how WTCA can become the definitive, trusted resource for cross-border trade in the midst of constant geopolitical change."*

Drew also shared the process for Annette's selection as the Association's new CEO, and emphasized the importance of expanding WTCA's global reach while strengthening connections among its existing Members, reinforcing the long-term ambition to grow the Association's network to 500 WTC businesses over the next decade.

"Annette brings extensive experience in working with Associations like ours, and building them internationally. As WTCA enters this next chapter under new leadership, our focus is to build on the strength of our global network while positioning the Association for continued growth," said **Drew, WTCA Chair, Board of Directors**. *"This is a very exciting time as the WTCA Headquarters office has also moved to return to*

the birthplace of our Association. At next year's Member Forum, we're eager to welcome our Members to our new home at One World Trade Center."

One of the Forum's central discussions examined how global trade is evolving in response to changing policies, tariffs and supply chain dynamics. During the "Global Café: Trade in Transition" session, Alice Ancona, COO of WTC Miami, emphasized that global trade is rerouting rather than stopping. The discussion highlighted growing opportunities in emerging markets, including ASEAN economies such as Vietnam, as well as India, as businesses look beyond China to diversify supply chains, expand international partnerships and identify new opportunities for investment.

While AI and emerging technologies are transforming how businesses operate and connect, discussions during the Forum reinforced that technology cannot replace the personal relationships and trust that drive successful international partnerships. Members explored how AI can facilitate business development, streamline operations and create new opportunities, while emphasizing that behind every successful partnership is a human connection. For WTCA, the ability to build trusted relationships across borders remains one of the network's greatest strengths.

Beyond global trade trends, the Forum offered practical strategies to help Members strengthen their individual WTC businesses. Sessions included "Future-Ready WTC Businesses: Creating Places that Shape What's Next," which examined how real estate-focused WTC businesses can respond to changing market demands; "From Conversations to Collaboration: How Events Move Ideas Forward," which highlighted how conferences and exhibitions-focused WTC businesses can turn business introductions into meaningful partnerships and opportunities;

and the introduction of the “WTCA Business Club Playbook” that highlights WTC businesses at various stages of building business clubs and membership models. Additional programming focused on professional development, social media advocacy, technology adoption and maximizing the value of WTCA Membership.

Looking ahead, Members received a preview of the 2027 WTCA Global Business Forum (GBF), taking place April 4-7 in Vietnam, held in partnership with WTC Binh Duong New City. Under the theme “Forging the Future of Trade & Investment,” the event will convene international business leaders to explore emerging markets, strengthen cross-border partnerships and identify new opportunities for trade and investment both within the host market and across the global WTCA network. The upcoming GBF will combine B2B matchmaking, networking and thought-provoking programming focused on the forces shaping global trade, investment, real estate and business, providing another opportunity for the global business community to turn the connections and insights fostered through the WTCA network into meaningful business opportunities.

About World Trade Centers Association (WTCA)

World Trade Centers Association (WTCA) is a network of more than 300 highly connected, mutually supporting businesses and organizations in nearly 100 countries and territories. As the owner of the “World Trade Center” and “WTC” trademarks, WTCA licenses exclusive rights to these brands for Members to use in conjunction with their independently owned, iconic properties, facilities and trade services offerings. Through a robust portfolio of events, programming and resources that it offers its Members, the goal of WTCA is to help local economies thrive by encouraging and facilitating trade and investment across the globe, creating an ecosystem built around commerce, community and connection.

To learn more, visit www.wtca.org.

