

# REINVIGORATING THE WTO FROM THE INSIDE OUT — REVISITING THE ROLE OF THE SECRETARIAT

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## ABSTRACT

*As it enters its second decade of operation, the World Trade Organization (hereinafter “WTO”) is operating in a vastly different context to that which was present at its creation in 1995. There seems to be a consensus that, although difficult, reform is necessary to reinvigorate the WTO. On the other hand, successful reform to the formal rules of the WTO Agreements has so far been largely elusive. This paper focuses on how to revitalize the WTO in an absence of formal rule change, by focusing on the backbone of the WTO organism — its Secretariat. The paper argues that reinvigorating the Secretariat in terms of its mandate, powers and composition are a comparatively simple but effective mechanism for improving the vitality of the WTO as a whole. In doing so, it offers a new metaphor by which the relationship between members, organization and community could be described, namely one of stewardship. The stewardship model reconceptualizes thought leadership in the WTO as a joint, rather than competitive process, led by the Secretariat, with great potential to revitalize the WTO.*

**KEYWORDS:** *WTO, world trade organization secretariat, director-general, WTO reform*

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