



The WTO Building
Centre William Rappard

WORLD TRADE
ORGANIZATION



The World Trade Organization (WTO) is the only international organization dealing with the global rules of trade between nations. Its main function is to ensure that trade flows as smoothly, predictably and freely as possible. The objective is a more prosperous, peaceful and accountable world. Virtually all decisions in the WTO are taken by consensus among all Member countries and they are ratified by Members' parliaments. By lowering trade barriers, the WTO's system also breaks down other barriers between peoples and nations.

Welcome

Welcome to the Centre William Rappard, the home of the World Trade Organization. Testimony to over seventy years of international co-operation, the Centre William Rappard (CWR) was conceived as part of the effort after World War I to create a League of Nations and related institutions that would encourage multilateral exchanges and favour the peaceful resolution of human conflicts.

This building was the first erected in Geneva specifically to house an international organization. The many works of art and decorative items donated by countries over the years underline the collaborative effort its construction represented to the world, at a time when international co-operation was still an aspiration rather than a reality.

At various points in its history, the building has been home to the International Labour Office, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the library of the Institut Universitaire de Hautes Études Internationales and the Secretariat of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) which, prior to the creation of the WTO, had responsibility for the global trading system. Since 1995, it has been the headquarters of the WTO.



The entrance to the Centre William Rappard



The Wyndham White meeting room, with designated seating for WTO Members

Every day trade diplomats and the WTO Secretariat staff congregate in the Centre William Rappard to discuss trade policy, negotiate rules and seek to resolve disputes that are linked to the trade agreements which constitute the body of international trade law developed since 1947. There are 21 meeting rooms in the CWR and the adjacent conference center, with a capacity to accommodate gatherings ranging from 580 to 12 participants.

The building has 1,300 windows, 1,000 doors and 2.2 kilometres of corridors. The main governing bodies of the WTO meet in the two largest rooms: the Salle Wyndham White in the main CWR building, and the Conference Room in the new conference center.

History

The main building, known as the Centre William Rappard, was constructed on an estate which was gradually formed by the union of a number of plots of land between 1755 and 1893. In 1785, construction began on the Villa Rappard, the house that still stands next to the main WTO building and today houses a Montessori school.

In 1921, the Swiss Confederation acquired the estate and offered it to the League of Nations, which designated the site for construction of a headquarters for the International Labour Office.

Both bodies had been created in 1919 with the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, which formally ended World War I.

In 1923, an architectural competition was launched and the commission to design the ILO headquarters was offered to Swiss architect George Epitoux from Lausanne. His design was based on that of classical Florentine villas, with an interior courtyard, a grand entrance and a sweeping staircase off the main reception area. Construction began in 1923 and the building was inaugurated on June 6, 1926.

Interior courtyard of the CWR, in the Florentine style



The interior of the building was enhanced by donations from many countries, including murals in tiles and paint depicting various aspects of labour, sculpted wooden doors, elaborate fountains and exotic trees. Numerous additions followed over the years, including a new wing on the north side of the original building added in 1937, encompassing the current Salle Wyndham White and executive offices. The South Wing was further extended after World War II.

The GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) came into being in 1947 as a result of the Bretton Woods Agreement, which also created the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The GATT Secretariat was first lodged in the Villas Bocage and Fenêtre, near the Palais des Nations, the home of the United Nations in Geneva. These nineteenth-century villas had been acquired by the League of Nations after a string of illustrious owners and occupiers that included King Louis Phillipe of France, Count Leo Tolstoy (whose aunts owned the Villa Bocage), Don Carlos of Spain and the Archdukes Ferdinand and Maximilian of Austria.

The ILO occupied the Centre William Rappard until April, 1975, when it moved to its new headquarters in Grand Saconnex. It was at this time that the CWR was designated as headquarters for the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and the library of the Graduate Institute of International Studies. The UNHCR has since moved to new quarters closer to the Palais des Nations.

The building was officially named the Centre William Rappard in 1977. William Rappard (1887 – 1958) was recognized in his time as a leading internationalist, occupying senior positions in the League of Nations and in Swiss diplomacy. He is a co-founder of the Graduate Institute of International Studies, which occupies the former Villa Barton, immediately south of the WTO. There is a bust of Mr Rappard in the reception area of the WTO.

The Uruguay Round of trade negotiations conducted under the aegis of the GATT led to the creation in 1995 of the World Trade Organization. As the responsibilities of the WTO have grown to encompass new areas of work, the organization has gradually expanded to occupy most of the CWR. Delegations from the WTO's Members (see list inside back cover) meet in its historic rooms every day to discuss and negotiate the further development of trade rules and to seek peaceful resolution of trade disputes

The Centre William Rappard is officially owned by the Fondation des immeubles pour les organisations internationales (FIPOI), a foundation established by the State of Geneva to administer buildings occupied by international organizations.

A new conference center was opened in 1998, adjacent to the main building, based on a design conceived by Swiss architect Ugo Brunoni. The classical form of the Greek theatre was the inspiration for the design, which also drew on the natural setting of the surrounding park as the basis for the materials used in its construction.

Works of art

at the Centre William Rappard

The two imposing statues on either side of the CWR main entrance represent “Peace” (right side) and “Justice”. They were sculpted by the Geneva artist Luc Jaggi.



Depictions of “Peace” (right) and “Justice” (left) flank the main entrance to the home of the WTO



Artist Maurice Denis putting finishing touches to his mural “The Dignity of Work”

A broad staircase takes the visitor from the reception area to the first floor landing, which is decorated on both sides with large murals depicting various trades, crafts and professions. On the east side wall the French artist Maurice Denis painted “The dignity of work”.

On the west side of the landing the Irish artist Sean Keating continued in his mural the theme of representing labour in all its forms.



Mural on labour by artist Sean Keating

Moving up the next flight of stairs brings the visitor to another vision of labour on land and sea, conceived in painted tiles by the Portuguese artist Jorge Collaco.

To the right of the tiled fresco is the WTO Library, which is decorated with fine
woodwork and offers access to a unique
collection of works on the multilateral
trading system.



WTO Library

The open courtyard on the main floor of
the CWR is occupied by an ornamental
fountain conceived by the artist Gilbert
Bayes.



WTO courtyard with fountain
by artist Gilbert Bayes

The Park



The William Rappard Park on the east side of the CWR

The William Rappard Park, situated between the Villa Barton and the Geneva Botanical Gardens, offers one of the most beautiful views of Lake Geneva and the Alps rising from the opposite shore. The park is equally remarkable for its gigantic twin cedars, well over a hundred

years old, as well as a magnificent blue Arizona cypress. The most-visited tree is the giant Latvian oak planted in 1923. Other trees of interest include the blue cedar from the Atlas mountains, Lebanon cedars, and beech trees.

The largest sculpture in the park is titled "The human effort" and was sculpted by the Geneva artist James Vibert in 1935. You will also find in the park other gifts of statuary, including an ornamental fountain surmounted by a giant Neptune, a delicate statue "The young girl at the piano" as well as a fine sculpted horse.



Artist James Vibert's "The Human Effort", in the William Rappard Park

Au Revoir

The WTO receives thousands of visitors every year at the Centre William Rappard, including students, Ministers and trade officials from national governments who participate in meetings, Heads of State on official business, and members of the general public who are simply interested in visiting the home of the WTO. Our hope is that everyone will take away from this visit a better understanding of the WTO's role in the world, and a sense of the history of this building, which has been so closely linked to the development of co-operation and understanding between nations and peoples from around the world.



The Centre William Rappard, home of the WTO

Timeline

- 1785 - construction of the original Villa Rappard (now a school)
 - 1919 - signature of the Treaty of Versailles and creation of the League of Nations and the ILO.
 - 1923 - Swiss architect George Epitoux selected to design new Headquarters for the International Labour Office.
 - 1926 - inauguration of the new ILO building.
 - 1947 - establishment of the GATT as a result of the Bretton Woods Agreements.
 - 1975 - ILO moves to new HQ in Grand Saconnex.
 - 1977 - GATT moves to the Centre William Rappard.
 - 1995 - WTO becomes the successor to the GATT and main occupant of the CWR.
 - 1998 - Construction of the conference center adjacent to the CWR.
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Map

Please find below a map of Geneva and the WTO, as well as some of the other organizations and locations of interest.



WTO Members and Observers

(as of 13 October 2004)

148 members

Albania, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Estonia, European Communities, Fiji, Finland, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), France, Gabon, The Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hong Kong China, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Korea, Kuwait, Kyrgyz Republic, Latvia, Lesotho, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Macao, China, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Moldova, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Romania, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent & the Grenadines, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Chinese Taipei, Tanzania, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States of America, Uruguay, Venezuela, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Observer governments

Algeria, Andorra, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Belarus, Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cape Verde, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Holy See (Vatican), Iraq, Kazakhstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanese Republic, Libya, Russian Federation, Samoa, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Serbia and Montenegro, Seychelles, Sudan, Tajikistan, Tonga, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Viet Nam, Yemen

International organizations observers to General Council:

United Nations (UN)

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

International Monetary Fund (IMF)

World Bank

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

World Trade Organization
rue de Lausanne, 154
CH-1211 Geneva 21 - Switzerland
Tel. (4122) 739 5111
Fax (4122) 731 4206
enquiries@wto.org
publications@wto.org