



# WITSA NEWSLETTER

Issue 01/26

Fulfilling the Promise of the Digital, Innovation & Tech industry

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## 2026: Shaping the Global AI Agenda

- WITSA GAIN Membership Program
- WITSA Global AI Index
- WITSA at CES 2026
- New pathways for collaboration



# CEO'S CORNER



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## ***CEO's Corner:*** **Building the Next Chapter of Global AI Collaboration**

As we begin 2026, the pace of technological change continues to accelerate, reshaping economies, industries, and societies in ways that are both profound and irreversible. Artificial Intelligence is no longer a future concept; it is a defining force of today's digital economy and the choices we make now will determine whether AI becomes a multiplier of opportunity or a source of fragmentation.

Our recent global scenario-planning exercise made this clear.

The world is entering a decisive period shaped by three converging forces:

- **the rise of Long-Horizon Agentic AI**
- **the intensifying competition for compute and energy, and**
- **the growing divergence in global AI governance models.**

Depending on how nations respond, we could see a future of accelerated innovation and shared prosperity, or one marked by digital protectionism, uneven capability and widening gaps between AI leaders and AI laggards.

Across all scenarios, one conclusion stands out: no country or ecosystem can navigate this transition alone. Collaboration is no longer optional. It is the foundation of resilience, competitiveness and trust in an era defined by autonomous systems, persistent agents and rapidly evolving global standards.



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This is why WITSA is placing strong emphasis on the **WITSA Global AI Ecosystem Network (WITSA GAIN)** in the year ahead. WITSA GAIN is designed to connect AI ecosystems across six continents, bringing together policymakers, industry leaders, innovators, and investors to accelerate real-world AI adoption and impact. It is our response to a world where AI maturity, compute access and regulatory alignment will determine national competitiveness.



I would like to invite all WITSA members to be part of WITSA GAIN. There are **two membership pathways**:

- **WITSA GAIN Foundation Membership**, which provides an entry point for members to engage, stay informed on global AI developments, and be visible within our global AI ecosystem map; and
- **WITSA GAIN Premium Membership**, designed for nations and economies ready to accelerate their AI agenda through deeper collaboration, AI maturity assessment, talent development, policy engagement, and ecosystem building.







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Our scenario work also highlighted the importance of trusted global benchmarks. Beyond GAIN, 2026 will also see WITSA advancing key initiatives such as our presence at major global platforms, the development of the **WITSA Global AI Ranking Index**, and the expansion of partnerships through programs like the **WITSA Patron Program**. These initiatives reflect our commitment to ensuring that innovation and technology drive opportunity and progress for all.

The world is entering an era where AI will shape every sector, every economy and every society. WITSA's intent is to help our members not only adapt to this future, but lead it. I encourage you to engage with these initiatives, participate actively, and help shape the global technology agenda together with WITSA.

The next chapter of global AI collaboration is being written now. Let's write it together.

***Dato' Dan E Khoo, Chief Executive Officer***





# WITSA MEMBERS ENGAGEMENT

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## WITSA at CES 2026: Advancing Global Tech Dialogue

WITSA was present at CES 2026, one of the world's most influential platforms for innovation and emerging technologies. CES has always provided a valuable opportunity for WITSA to connect with global technology leaders, policymakers, startups, and investors shaping the future of AI, digital infrastructure, and the global innovation economy.

WITSA Chairman Dato' Dr. Sean Seah and WITSA Deputy Chairman Robert Janssen, together with WITSA Associate Partners participated in strategic discussions and engagements focused on strengthening international collaboration and advancing global technology dialogue.





# WITSA

## MEMBERS ENGAGEMENT

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At CES 2026, WITSA's focus centered on:

- Strengthening global partnerships and cross-border collaboration
- Highlighting the role of AI in economic growth and digital inclusion
- Advancing dialogue on responsible, sustainable, and ethical technology adoption

As a valued WITSA member in the United States, the Consumer Technology Association (CTA) played a key role during CES 2026. CTA President and CEO Gary Shapiro and CTA Vice President and WITSA Board Member Ed Brzytwa graciously hosted WITSA's Chairman and Deputy Chairman, further reinforcing the strong collaboration between WITSA and CTA.

CES 2026 continues to be a critical global touchpoint, enabling WITSA to align emerging innovation trends with its mission as the global voice of the tech industry and to strengthen relationships that will drive continued collaboration in the year ahead.







# WITSA MEMBERS ENGAGEMENT

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# WITSA

## GLOBAL AI ECOSYSTEM NETWORK



**WITSA LEADING THE AI TRANSFORMATION**

[www.witsa.org](http://www.witsa.org)

### *WITSA Global AI Ecosystem Network (WITSA GAIN): Connecting AI Ecosystems Across the World*

The WITSA Global AI Ecosystem Network (WITSA GAIN) is a flagship initiative designed to connect AI ecosystems across six continents, fostering collaboration among governments, industry, startups, academia, and investors.

WITSA GAIN enables members to:

- Build and strengthen national and regional AI ecosystems
- Access global expertise, best practices, and advisory support
- Foster cross-border innovation, investment, and export opportunities
- Align local AI strategies with global trends and responsible AI frameworks

Download the WITSA GAIN information kit and membership registration form via the QR Code or connect with us at [witsa\\_gain@witsa.org](mailto:witsa_gain@witsa.org)



**WITSA**

GLOBAL **A.I.** NETWORK

**WITSA GAIN Info Kit**







# WITSA

## GLOBAL AI ECOSYSTEM NETWORK

### WITSA LEADING THE AI TRANSFORMATION

[www.witsa.org](http://www.witsa.org)

The network is structured around key AI ecosystem components, including AI infrastructure, talent development, entrepreneurship, use cases, data, public policy, and investments. Members also benefit from WITSA's AI Maturity Model, which helps assess current capabilities and define a clear roadmap for growth.

#### Two Membership Categories:

*WITSA GAIN Free Membership* – an entry-level tier for all WITSA members, offering foundational engagement, global visibility, and participation in ecosystem mapping and surveys.

*WITSA GAIN Premium Membership* – a deeper partnership for members ready to accelerate their AI agenda through maturity assessments, policy and regulatory roundtables, talent programs, and priority access to WITSA initiatives.







# WITSA

## GLOBAL AI ECOSYSTEM NETWORK

WITSA LEADING THE AI TRANSFORMATION

[www.witsa.org](http://www.witsa.org)

### WITSA GAIN Complimentary Membership for WITSA Members

WITSA is pleased to invite all WITSA member economies and partners to participate in the WITSA Global AI Ecosystem Network (WITSA GAIN) through a complimentary Membership.

This Free Membership provides members with a seat at the global AI table, offering visibility within WITSA's global AI ecosystem map, access to shared insights on AI trends, and opportunities to engage in foundational initiatives shaping the future of AI ecosystems worldwide.

Participation in WITSA GAIN is voluntary, and members are encouraged to formally confirm their interest to activate their Foundation Membership. This ensures that each member's participation is aligned with their national or organizational priorities and level of engagement.

Get your complimentary WITSA GAIN Foundation Membership: [Membership Form](#)







# WITSA PATRON PROGRAM

[www.witsa.org](http://www.witsa.org)

## INVESTING IN THE FUTURE OF GLOBAL INNOVATION: THE WITSA PATRON PROGRAM

Innovation and technology are reshaping the world at an unprecedented pace. As the global voice of the tech industry, WITSA is committed to ensuring that this transformation is inclusive, sustainable, and driven by responsible innovation. To accelerate this mission, WITSA has launched the WITSA Patron Program.

WITSA Patrons play a vital role in powering our work to:

- Advance global tech policy and advocacy
- Strengthen digital inclusion worldwide
- Convene world-class innovation platforms
- Expand the WITSA Global AI Ecosystem Network

Support from Patrons enables WITSA to scale its impact, deepen research and policy engagement, and bring together leaders shaping the next era of technology.

As Patron, organizations and individuals gain:

- Meaningful access to WITSA's global network
- Visibility across international platforms and initiatives
- Opportunities to influence conversations guiding digital transformation

The WITSA Patron Program is more than a contribution, it is a partnership in shaping a future where innovation and technology drive opportunity, prosperity, and progress for all.

Interested in becoming a WITSA Patron? Reach out to the WITSA Secretariat at [info@witsa.org](mailto:info@witsa.org) to learn more.







# THE WITSA WORLD CUP ZOHARI CHALLENGE TROPHY

## The World Is Watching Who Will Raise the Zohari Challenge Trophy?

The WITSA World Cup is where the world's most promising tech scaleups compete to shape a better future through innovation. Under the global theme "AI for a Better Tomorrow: Scaleup Solutions for Global Good," national champions advance from country-level tournaments to the ultimate global stage, culminating in the crowning of a World Champion at the WITSA World Cup Grand Finals.

This is more than a competition. It is a global platform to elevate ecosystems, attract investment, and showcase how technology can drive real impact. WITSA Members are invited to step forward as National Hosts and future Grand Finals Hosts, positioning their country at the center of the global scaleup spotlight.

One champion. One world stage. One Zohari  
Challenge Trophy.

Express your interest [here](#) in hosting or  
participating in the WITSA World Cup





# THE WITSA WORLD CUP ZOHARI CHALLENGE TROPHY

## ELEVATE YOUR NATION'S TECH SCALEUPS WITH THE WITSA WORLD CUP

The WITSA World Cup is WITSA's premier global tournament, spotlighting some of the world's most promising tech scaleups under the theme "AI for a Better Tomorrow: Scaleup Solutions for Global Good."

More than a competition, the WITSA World Cup is a catalytic platform designed to elevate innovation, unlock investment, and demonstrate how technology can drive meaningful impact for economies, industries, and communities worldwide.

At the pinnacle of this global journey stands the Zohari Challenge Trophy, the prestigious award presented to the ultimate World Champion.

Competing for the Zohari Challenge Trophy represents global recognition, credibility, and momentum for scaleups ready to scale internationally and emerge as the next generation of global tech leaders.



The first WITSA World Cup Zohari Challenge Trophy saw finalists from across six continents that included Malaysia, Jordan, Bahrain, Greece, Egypt, Romania, and the United Kingdom.





# THE WITSA WORLD CUP ZOHARI CHALLENGE TROPHY

WITSA Members who step forward as National Hosts play a pivotal role in this journey. By organizing national tournaments, members identify and champion their country's most promising scaleups, giving them a pathway to compete on the world stage for the Zohari Challenge Trophy at the WITSA World Cup Grand Finals. Throughout this process, scaleups gain unparalleled global exposure, access to investors, and direct engagement with industry leaders and policymakers.

Hosting a national tournament, and ultimately the WITSA World Cup Grand Finals, is more than staging a competition. It is an opportunity to:

- Showcase the strength and maturity of your national tech ecosystem
- Attract global investors, partners, and international media attention
- Position your country as a hub for AI-driven innovation and scaleup growth
- Play a defining role in shaping the future of global tech entrepreneurship





# THE WITSA WORLD CUP ZOHARI CHALLENGE TROPHY

Spots for National Hosts and future Grand Finals Hosts are limited. This is a rare opportunity for members to secure a front-row role in fast-tracking the global expansion of their tech champions while elevating their national innovation brand.

WITSA also invites members to help bring investors and sponsors into the tournament, ensuring participating scaleups have the resources to shine, scale, and succeed globally.

Together, let us uncover the next unicorns, forge transformative global connections, and champion technology for the greater good, culminating in the crowning of the next world champion with the Zohari Challenge Trophy.

Contact the WITSA Secretariat (Ms Emily Barner) at [emily@witsa.org](mailto:emily@witsa.org) to express your interest in becoming a National Host, hosting a future WITSA World Cup Grand Finals, or connecting sponsors and investors to amplify impact at the WITSA World Cup.







# THE WITSA WORLD CUP

## ZOHARI CHALLENGE TROPHY

### The Zohari Challenge Trophy

The Zohari Challenge Trophy is the highest honor of the WITSA World Cup, awarded to the global scaleup champion that best demonstrates innovation, scalability, and real-world impact.

Winning the Zohari Challenge Trophy signifies:

- Global recognition as a world-class tech scaleup
- Credibility and visibility across WITSA's international platforms
- Access to investors, partners, and global markets
- A powerful signal of readiness for international expansion

For host nations, the Zohari Challenge Trophy represents more than a prize; it is a symbol of leadership in innovation, ecosystem strength, and commitment to technology for global good.

Host the journey. Showcase your ecosystem. Crown the next world champion.



KEYNOTE BY

MIKE WALSH

LEADING FUTURIST AND CEO OF TOMORROW

"The AI Power Organisation"

# THE WITSA SPEAKERS BUREAU

## TAP INTO GLOBAL THOUGHT LEADERSHIP WITH THE WITSA SPEAKERS BUREAU

The WITSA Speakers Bureau is your gateway to global thought leadership. Our members and experts are actively shaping conversations at major tech events worldwide and we want to ensure you're part of that momentum.

Whether you're planning a conference, webinar, or industry dialogue, the Bureau makes it easy to:

- Access world-class speakers and innovators from across WITSA's global network
- Elevate your own leaders by nominating them to join the Bureau
- Strengthen partnerships by showcasing WITSA's collective expertise



By engaging with the Speakers Bureau, you help amplify WITSA's voice and expand opportunities for collaboration across industries and regions.

Contact us today to request a speaker or explore how your organization can contribute. Together, we're building a powerhouse of innovation and influence.





# WITSA WEBINAR SERIES

## THE IMPACT OF AMERICA'S TARIFFS ON THE WORLD TRADING SYSTEM (WTO)

*January 27, 2026*

Alan Wm. Wolff, Senior Fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics (PIIE) and former Deputy Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO), is one of the world's foremost authorities on international trade. An acclaimed author and expert strategist, Ambassador Wolff has served as a U.S. trade negotiator and legal practitioner, leading discussions on WTO reform and the dynamics between the U.S., EU, and China.

In this webinar, Ambassador Wolff discussed the "tariff turbulence" of 2025, the future of the multilateral trading order, and expectations for the 14th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC14).

The session focused on the historic crossroads of global trade and the unprecedented pressure on the rules-based system caused by a shift toward unilateral tariffs and reciprocal duties.

**THE IMPACT OF AMERICA'S TARIFFS ON THE WORLD TRADING SYSTEM (WTO)**



**Speaker**  
**Alan Wm. Wolff**

- Senior Fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics (PIIE) and former Deputy Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Difference"
- Acclaimed Author: *Revitalizing the World Trading System* (Cambridge University Press 2023), named a "Best Book of 2023" by the Financial Times

**Tuesday, January 27, 2026**  
9:00AM EST / 13:00 UTC  
Via Zoom

Register for the link to attend



A Webinar Series by  **WITSA**  
World Innovation, Technology and Services Alliance

Tuesday, January 27, 2026  
Recording available at:  
<https://www.witsa.org/webinars/how-to-understand-president-trumps-america-first-trade-policy>





# WITSA WEBINAR

## THE IMPACT OF AMERICA'S TARIFFS ON THE WORLD TRADING SYSTEM (WTO)

### Key Points:

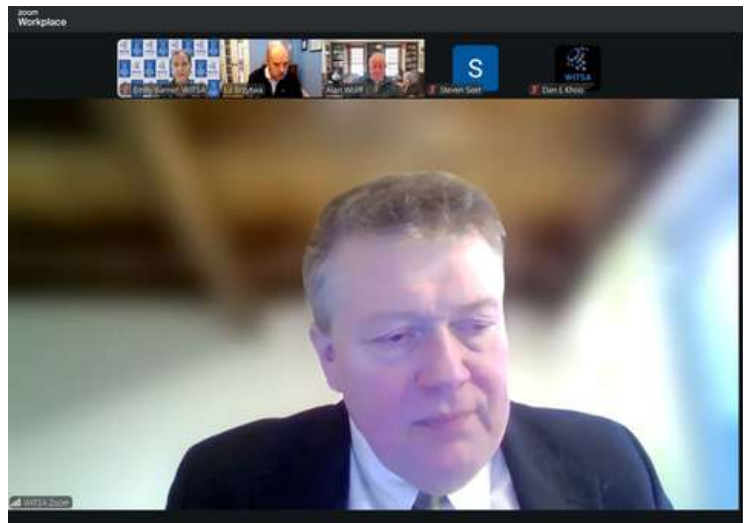
- **Review of 2025 "Tariff Turbulence":** The past year was characterized by a fundamental challenge to the multilateral order, driven by the U.S. shift toward "old-style" tariffs. These policies aimed to reduce trade deficits and incentivize domestic manufacturing but resulted in significant disruptions to global supply chains and economic growth.
- **The 2026 Outlook and Trading Blocs:** The world trading system is currently navigating a precarious path between global cooperation and the formation of isolated trading blocks. Ambassador Wolff projected that these tensions could lead to a significant reduction in global GDP if nations continue to favor unilateral actions over the rules-based system.
- **Previewing WTO MC14 in Yaoundé:** Looking ahead to the 14th WTO Ministerial Conference in March 2026, the discussion centered on the critical future of the e-commerce moratorium. Participants examined the implications of extending or ending the ban on customs duties for electronic transmissions and its broader impact on digital trade and innovation.
- **Institutional Reform and Plurilateral Agreements:** A critical priority remains the restoration of a functioning dispute settlement system. Ambassador Wolff assessed the lack of progress on the "World Trading System Code of Conduct" and debated whether the WTO can still serve as an engine of prosperity in an era of "reciprocal" duties. A primary focus of the reform discussion was the need to modernize the WTO by allowing plurilateral trade agreements. This would enable groups of member nations to move forward on specific trade issues when a full consensus of the 164 members is unattainable. Attention was also WTO's role in addressing Chinese industrial overcapacity and the resulting influx of low-priced exports (dumping) into global markets.
- **Strategic Dynamics (U.S., EU, and China):** The webinar explored the complex legal and economic dynamics between major powers. The shift toward "reciprocal" duties was identified as a primary tool for nations seeking to balance trade, though it creates significant pressure on existing international trade law.

# WITSA WEBINAR

## THE IMPACT OF AMERICA'S TARIFFS ON THE WORLD TRADING SYSTEM (WTO)

### Key Points:

- Impact on Innovation and Business: For business leaders and tech innovators, these shifts represent a "historic crossroads". Understanding the move away from the traditional multilateral order is essential for navigating the economic risks posed by current trade tensions.





# WITSA WEBINAR SERIES

## SECURING THE FUTURE OF DIGITAL TRADE

*February 03, 2026*

**Javier López-González** Head of the Digital Trade Unit, OECD

Javier López-González is Head of the Digital Trade Unit at the OECD, where he leads the Organization's work on digital trade. His research examines the challenges and opportunities that digitalization and artificial intelligence present for global trade.

This includes analyzing regulatory approaches to cross-border data flows and data localization, assessing their economic impacts, and exploring how emerging technologies—such as additive manufacturing and AI—are reshaping trade.

He also investigates the economic costs and benefits of digital connectivity and digital trade policies, and has undertaken extensive work on Global Value Chains. Javier holds a PhD in Economics from the University of Sussex.



The poster features the WITSA logo at the top right. The title 'WEBINAR: Understanding the Scope and Implications of the WTO E-Commerce Moratorium' is prominently displayed. Below the title, it identifies the featured speaker as Javier López-González, Head of the Digital Trade Unit, OECD, accompanied by a circular portrait of him. A QR code with the text 'Scan to Register' is located in the bottom right corner. The date and time 'February 03, 2026 | 9:00 AM EST' are at the bottom. The background is dark blue with a network of glowing nodes and lines.

Recording available at:  
[https://drive.google.com/open?  
id=1XUQMPxI2rd-  
TsBOxQSGEeFLxcI4s8que&usp=drive\\_fs](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1XUQMPxI2rd-TsBOxQSGEeFLxcI4s8que&usp=drive_fs)

As we approach the 14th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC14), the stakes for the digital economy have never been higher.

*Javier López-González, a premier authority on digital trade*



# WITSA WEBINAR SERIES

## **SUMMARY: UNDERSTANDING THE SCOPE AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE WTO E-COMMERCE MORATORIUM**

### **The "Double Collapse" Risk at MC14**

Since 1998, the moratorium has prohibited customs duties on electronic transmissions, allowing the internet to become the backbone of global supply chains. However, a critical legal link exists: if the moratorium is not extended at MC14, the WTO E-Commerce Work Program will also expire. This would leave the WTO with no formal mandate to even discuss digital trade, effectively ending decades of multilateral cooperation.

### **Debunking the "Revenue Myth"**

A primary argument against the moratorium is the perceived loss of customs revenue for developing nations. OECD research shows this "Revenue Myth" is statistically unfounded:

- **Minimal Fiscal Impact:** Potential revenue loss averages only 0.33% for low-income countries and a negligible 0.01% for high-income nations.
- **Efficiency of VAT/GST:** Internal consumption taxes are far more efficient than digital tariffs. In 77 of 106 countries studied, VAT/GST collections from digital services have already completely offset any revenue lost from declining physical media.
- **Inflated Figures:** Opponents often inflate loss figures by assuming all digital trade is subject to high tariffs, failing to recognize that many digital products never existed as physical goods.

**Conclusion:** The data proves that the economic costs of digital tariffs—in terms of lost GDP and competitiveness—are dozens of times higher than any potential revenue gain. For WITSA members, the mission at MC14 is clear: protect the duty-free environment that powers modern innovation.





# WITSA WEBINAR SERIES

## **Economic Burdens: A Tax on Innovation**

Lifting the moratorium would impose a "tax on competitiveness" that disproportionately harms the most vulnerable actors:

- **SME Profitability:** A simple 10% tariff could turn a profitable small business into an unprofitable one by simultaneously increasing operating costs and reducing export sales.
- **The AI Barrier:** Most countries are "AI adopters" that access tools like ChatGPT via cross-border services. Digital tariffs would raise the cost of these models, widening the digital divide for industries attempting to join the "AI revolution".

## **The Geopolitical Landscape & "Plan B"**

While traditional opponents like South Africa and Indonesia are moving toward support, others are creating a fraught political environment:

- **Holdouts:** India remains the primary holdout, using the moratorium as a bargaining chip for unrelated concessions. New opposition has recently surfaced from Brazil, Bangladesh, and Turkey.
- **The 5-Year Path:** If multilateral consensus fails, Javier proposed a "Plan B" where the 154 members favoring the moratorium agree to a unilateral political commitment to maintain duty-free status for five years, providing the tech industry with much-needed stability.

**Conclusion:** The data proves that the economic costs of digital tariffs—in terms of lost GDP and competitiveness—are dozens of times higher than any potential revenue gain. For WITSA members, the mission at MC14 is clear: protect the duty-free environment that powers modern innovation.

# WITSA WEBINAR SERIES

## WSIS+20 OUTCOME DOCUMENT — FOSTERING THE FULFILMENT OF THE PROMISE OF THE DIGITAL AGE

*February 10, 2026*

**Dr. Jimson Olufuye, PhD**

Chair/Principal Consultant, Kontemporary®  
Konsulting Ltd.

Dr. Jimson Olufuye is a globally recognized leader with over 30 years of experience in the digital ecosystem. He has a unique perspective on the WSIS+20 process, having served as a member of the UN Secretary-General's IGF Multi-stakeholder Advisory Group and the Informal Multi-Stakeholder Sounding Board (IMSB) for the WSIS+20 Review.

Cybersecurity Maturity Model (TCMM) and lead consultant to UNECA on Cybersecurity for Development.

### Career Highlights:

- Global Policy Leader: Represented the business community in the UN CSTD Working Groups on Internet Governance and Enhanced Cooperation.
- African Industry Pioneer: Founder and 1st Chair of the Africa ICT Alliance (AfICTA), leading the first African multistakeholder delegation to the UN GA WSIS+20 High-Level Meeting.
- WITSA Veteran: Former member of the WITSA Board of Directors and elected Vice-Chair (2010–2012).
- Cybersecurity Expert: Architect of the Tripod Cybersecurity Maturity Model (TCMM) and lead consultant to UNECA on Cybersecurity for Development.



Register Here:

<https://forms.gle/QxMTToogjNUxu81u7>



NEWS

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NEWS



# CALLING FOR ARTICLE FROM **MEMBERS**

Send us your events to be included in the next issue  
of the WITSA Newsletter, write to Azlina Ishak at  
[azlina@witsa.org](mailto:azlina@witsa.org)



# Be Part of WITSA's Catalytic Platforms

*Are you passionate about making a difference in the global tech community? We invite you to be a catalyst for change by participating in WITSA's nine catalytic platforms.*

*From the World Congress on Innovation & Technology to our Global Awards and AI Ecosystem Network, there's a unique opportunity for everyone to contribute, collaborate, and lead.*

*To get involved, simply reach out to [azlina@witsa.org](mailto:azlina@witsa.org) to learn how you can participate and help shape the future of technology.*



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