

The Accra Times

Weekly
Spotlight

D I G I T A L

A portrait of Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, a woman with glasses and a blue patterned headwrap, looking slightly to the right. The background is a solid blue color.

It's her! Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala

A former Nigerian finance and foreign minister, Okonjo-Iweala has been appointed as Director General of the World Trade Organization (WTO). She becomes the first woman and the first African to lead the WTO.

INSIDE

Breaking Bounds: How a Tech NGO is Turning Young Girls from Slum Communities in Ghana into Computer Programmers

History Made as Former Nigeria Finance Minister Becomes First Woman and First African Director-General of WTO

A former-two time Nigerian finance minister, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, was appointed Monday, February 15, the next director-general of the World Trade Organization. Okonjo-Iweala is the first African and the first woman to lead the body, which governs trade rules between nations.

Her term, renewable, will start on March 1, 2021 and expire on 31 August 2025. .

"This is a very significant moment for the WTO," David Walker, the WTO's General Council chair, said in a statement.



The only second female contender in the race, Yoo Myung-hee, the South Korean trade minister who was also a finalist for the role, withdrew three days to the announcement, leaving the path open for Dr. Okonjo-Iweala, The Associated Press reported.

Okonjo-Iweala said she was "honoured" to be selected to lead the organization, and vowed to take on global economic and health challenges brought on by the coronavirus pandemic.

"A strong WTO is vital if we are to recover fully and rapidly from the devastation wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic. I look forward to working with members to shape and implement the policy responses we need to get the global economy going again," Okonjo-Iweala said.

"Our organization faces a great many challenges but working together we can collectively make the WTO stronger, more agile and better adapted to the realities of today," she added.

Okonjo-Iweala's ascension to the top of the WTO comes just months after the Trump administration moved to block her candidacy and instead throw its support behind another candidate, South Korea Trade Minister Yoo Myung-hee.

"Our organization faces a great many challenges but working together we can collectively make the WTO stronger, more agile and better adapted to the realities of today,"

NGOZI OKONJO-IWEALA

Doctor's Note: COVID-19 and Its Toll on Your Mental Health

WELLBEING

Long before the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of people around the world with ill mental health was staggering. Latest estimates by official sources indicate that close to one billion people have a mental disorder such as depression or anxiety.

With the continuing pandemic, and the health and economic consequences becoming increasingly apparent, concern for our mental health, both now and in the future, is growing.

Although we do not yet have a complete picture of how the pandemic has affected people's mental health, and indeed this picture will change over time, it is clear that the impact is widespread.

What Can You Do to Protect Your Mental Health?

We know that a hug cannot be replaced by hours of video chats and social media, but that is all we have to do for now. Physical contact is essential for human beings. But we are in the unique and unprecedented position of having to sacrifice some of the things we would typically do to stay safe.

Have a routine: Keep up with daily routines as much as possible, or make new ones. Get up and go to bed at similar times every day. Keep up with personal hygiene. Eat healthy meals at regular times. Exercise regularly. Allocate time for working and time for resting and make time for doing things you enjoy.

Stay in touch: Social contact is important. Keep in regular contact with people close to you by telephone and online channels if you cannot see them in person. Even if it is just talking to a neighbour over the fence or across the balcony, the social contact can help you stay connected to the people around you and feel part of a community. Help or support others in your community, too, if you can.

Seek Help if Necessary: Talk to someone you trust. If you feel overwhelmed with sadness or anxiety, seek professional help your community, too, if you can.

We understand that a real hug cannot be replaced by hours of video chats and social media, but that is all we have to do for now.