

12th WORLD CONGRESS

12 - 14 May 2026 Panama City, Panama

Congress Theme

FREE ZONES IN THE NEW GLOBAL OPERATING MODEL: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The 21st-century economic landscape is being transformed by rapid technological change, shifting geopolitical dynamics, and pressing sustainability imperatives. Global trade is shifting from a long era of liberalization and hyper-globalization to a more **multipolar, security-aware, digitally mediated** system. This transition is fostering negative public sentiment toward trade, driven by detrimental distribution impact, security concerns, climate policy frictions, and shifting industrial policy. If unmanaged, these dynamics can suppress investment, fragment markets, and slow productivity. Free Zones and Special Economic Zones (SEZs) can act as **economic stabilizers and innovation sandboxes** in this transition.

Congress Vision

The 12th World Free Zones Organization (World FZO) World Congress 2026 will convene global leaders, policymakers, free zone executives, and investors to explore the new frontiers of trade, innovation, public policy, and sustainable infrastructure development.

Building upon **the success of World Congress 2025 in Hainan-China**, the World Congress 2026 positions **Panama as a global platform for transformation — the Gateway to the Americas** — this landmark edition will explore how visionary leadership, institutional collaboration, and private enterprise can unlock actionable solutions for free zones to shape the next era of global growth as laboratories of transformation.

Emerging industrial paradigms create opportunities for free zones

1. Knowledge and Innovation Economies

As intangible assets become the norm, zones must become incubators of R&D ecosystems, startups, and talent to power innovation-led industries

2. Digital and AI-Driven Manufacturing

Automation, data analytics, and intelligent systems are creating smart manufacturing operations that zones can support with high-end digital backbones

3. Green Industrial Transition

Circular economy practices, renewable energy, and carbon-neutral operations are now essential drivers of global competitiveness that free zones must be able to offer

4. Regional Value Hubs

In an era of supply chain reconfiguration, zones have a unique opportunity to serve as anchors for production resilience and regional logistics integration

The World Free Zones Organization has identified growth vectors for free zones

1. **Innovation Catalysts:** Pioneering regulatory sandboxes for technologies such as AI, blockchain, and clean tech
2. **Public-Private Collaboration:** Acting as platforms that connect governments, industries, and academia to co-design modern trade and industrial policies
3. **Sustainability Leadership:** Embedding ESG frameworks into zones operations provide a global reference for responsible industrial growth
4. **Talent and Skills Development:** Establishing continuous learning ecosystems to help build a digitally skilled and adaptable workforce

There are important challenges ahead that we will discuss in Panama

1. **Regulatory Adaptation:** Policies must evolve to address digital trade, data governance, and environmental compliance
2. **Investment Competition:** Shifting global capital dynamics mean investor trust drives investment, putting pressure on free zones to stand out
3. **Infrastructure Modernization:** Integration of digital, energy, and physical infrastructure is critical to supporting next-generation industrial clusters
4. **Inclusive Growth:** Free zones need to ensure and to demonstrate that transformation benefits local communities, SMEs, and regional economies.

These are the strategic elements that we will explore together to find ways for zones to consolidate their unique position and offer high-value solutions to their current and future tenants.

Agenda Overview

Global trade is undergoing a structural transition from pure efficiency-driven globalization to a more resilience-oriented and regionally anchored model. Firms are diversifying suppliers and production bases to manage geopolitical and logistical risks, while governments reassert themselves through industrial policies and strategic subsidies that reshape competitive advantage. At the same time, services, data, and digital trade are overtaking goods as the main growth drivers, even as divergent standards, security controls, and carbon-related trade

measures create new frictions and non-tariff barriers. These shifts raise costs but also open opportunities for regions that can combine resilience, digital integration, and sustainability.

To foster confidence and drive competitiveness, the WorldFZO will lead a pragmatic agenda that combines global openness with local values. Key measures include helping to build interoperable trade systems and digital “single windows,” channeling investment into zone-level green infrastructure and data transparency and supporting development of regional skills and mobility pipelines. In this manner, Zones can showcase a new model of resilient, low-carbon, and socially anchored trade, leveraging transparency and innovative supply architectures to demonstrate that global trade can be both sustainable and inclusive while prosperous for all involved.

Day 1 - Tuesday, 12 May 2026

Registration Open	08:30 - 18:00	Vestibulo
Exhibition Open	09:00 - 18:00	America Sala 1/2
Executive Leadership Program	10:00 - 17:00	America Sala 3

An exclusive pre-inaugural program for CEOs, ministers, and Zone leaders focused on transformative leadership for an era of disruption and opportunity:

- Designed and conducted by leading global business school representatives
- **Lead with Vision and Purpose:** Gain the mindset and models to navigate disruption through an adaptive, purpose-driven leadership masterclass on strategic foresight
- **Master Complexity and Collaboration:** Build agility and emotional intelligence in immersive workshops while exploring geopolitics, trade, and trust in a multipolar world through case studies and simulations.
- **Inspire and Transform:** Capture insights from a world-renowned thought leader and earn certification recognizing your readiness to lead transformative change globally

Directors:

- **Cesare Zingone**, Chief Executive Officer, Zeta Group, Costa Rica

Keynote speaker:

- **Dr Matthew Stephenson**, Chief Executive Officer, World Free Zones Organization, United Arab Emirates
- **Jochen Knecht**, Chief Executive Officer, IFZA Global, United Arab Emirates

Session Speakers:

- **Víctor Umaña Vargas**, Consultant, Switzerland
- **Ramiro Casó**, Senior Research Fellow, INCAE, Costa Rica
- **Carla Fernández**, Senior Director of Executive Education & INCAE Online, INCAE, Costa Rica
- **Luciano Ciravegna**, Steve Aronson Chair in Strategy and Agribusiness, INCAE, Costa Rica
- **Ebba Lund**, Chief Executive Officer, International Association of Science Parks (IASP), Spain

Pioneering Next-Gen Operations for Shared Prosperity

A strategic continuation of high-level cooperation initiated during the 2024 Congress and reinforced by the Kazan Declaration of the XVI BRICS Summit. Positioned at the intersection of economic diplomacy, industrial policy, and global trade transformation, the roundtable will bring together governments, investors, SEZ developers, and industry leaders to define coordinated investment frameworks, localized manufacturing, digital and green transition strategies, and multilateral trade mechanisms among BRICS+ economies. Set against a backdrop of geopolitical tariff pressures and a growing shift toward local-currency trade through resilient supply chains, the session aims to generate actionable policy direction on free zone governance, ESG and AI-enabled operational models, intellectual property protection, and public-private collaboration. It is further expected to position Special Economic Zones as critical infrastructure for multipolar growth, South-South cooperation, and next-generation global economic integration.

Moderator: Srikanth Badiga, Chairman, EPCES, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India, India

Speakers:

- **Pan Li**, Vice Chairman, China National Association of Free Trade Zones and Export Processing Zones, China
- **Helson Cavalcante Braga**, President, ABRAZPE, Brazil

The New Role of Free Zones

A high-level ministerial platform to reposition Mercosur as a unified and competitive logistics and production bloc within the global reconfiguration of value chains and accelerating nearshoring trends. Bringing together ministers, multilateral development banks, free zone authorities, and private-sector leaders, the roundtable is strategically designed to advance policy alignment on free zone interoperability, origin certification, regulatory harmonization, and long-term legal frameworks for foreign investment. Discussions will further address coordinated financing mechanisms for sustainable Industry 4.0 free zones, infrastructure integration through bi-oceanic corridors, and enhanced compliance frameworks to position free zones as secure and transparent trade gateways. Supported by validated regional success models, the session is expected to culminate in a Ministerial Communiqué defining actionable policy direction to transform Mercosur free zones into critical infrastructure for trade integration, investment mobilization, and sustainable economic development across the region.

Speakers:

- **Lisandro Ganuza**, Public Affairs Director, Zona Franca Santafesina, Argentina
- **Enrique Buero**, President, Uruguayan Chamber of Free Trade Zones, Uruguay
- **Helson Cavalcante Braga**, President, ABRAZPE, Brazil
- **Pedro Cespedes**, President, Zona Franca Global, Paraguay

Caribbean Minister Roundtable**10:00 - 12:00****Pacifico 4/5**

A focus on the particular challenges facing island territories in the Caribbean region, particularly in light of environmental impacts on local economies, capability building opportunities, and specific trade opportunities across physical and intellectual sectors.

Moderator: Courtney Fingar, Founder, Fingar Direct Investment, UK

Chairperson: Aubyn Hill, Minister, Ministry of Industry, Investment, & Commerce, Jamaica

Speakers:

- **Kelli Dawn Hamilton**, Chief Executive Officer, Jamaica Special Economic Zones Authority, Jamaica
- **Kaye Greenidge**, President CAIPA & Chief Executive Officer, Invest Barbados, Barbados
- **Jeffrey J. Tafel**, CAE, President, NAFTAZ-National Association of Foreign-Trade Zones, USA
- **Nan Li Collins**, Chair, Global Alliance of Special Economic Zones (GASEZ); UNCTAD Director, Investment and Enterprise, UCTAD, Switzerland

Networking Break in Exhibition**11:00 - 11:30****America Sala 1/2****Lunch****12:30 - 13:30****America Sala 1/2****Global Ministerial Conference****14:00 - 16:00****Pacifico 4/5****New industrial development strategies and free zones**

An examination of how modern free zones combined with evolving industrial strategies can drive growth amid regulatory, logistical, and geopolitical challenges. It will focus on digitalization, green production, and investment attraction, fostering dialogue on best practices and policies for a new generation of resilient, sustainable economic zones.

Moderator: James Zhan, Chief Advisor to the Chairman of the World FZO, Switzerland

Chairperson: Julio A. Moltó A., Minister, Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MICI), Panama

Speakers:

- **Karin Larissa Herrera Aguilar**, Vice President, Guatemala
- **Martin G. Pederson**, Chairman, IFZA, United Arab Emirates

Networking Break in Exhibition**15:30 - 16:00****America Sala 1/2****WorldFZO Board Meeting****16:00 - 18:00****Caribe 6****Welcome Reception****18:00 - 20:00****America Sala 1/2**

Day 2 - Wednesday, 13 May 2026

Registration Open	08:00 - 17:00	Vestibulo
Exhibition Open	08:00 - 17:00	America Sala 1/2
Opening Remarks	08:30 - 09:00	America Sala 3

Welcome address and presentation from World FZO Chief Executive Officer **Dr. Matthew Stephenson**.

Panel One	09:00 - 10:15	America Sala 3
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Presentation: "Reimagining Investable Destinations: An Approach to Tourism Special Economic Zones"

- **Peter Janech**, Coordinator, Innovation, Education and Investments, UN Tourism, Spain

Panel 1: The New Global Operating Model – Leadership in Times of Transformation

In a rapidly changing global landscape marked by economic uncertainty, technological disruption, and shifting societal expectations, leadership is being redefined. *The New Global Operating Model – Leadership in Times of Transformation* will explore how both private and public sector leaders can navigate these complexities to drive sustainable, inclusive, and resilient growth. This high-level discussion will bring together visionary speakers to share strategies for fostering innovation, strengthening cross-sector collaboration, and building adaptive institutions that can thrive amid volatility. The panel aims to uncover new models of leadership that not only respond to transformation but actively shape it—ensuring that industrial progress goes hand in hand with social prosperity and environmental responsibility.

Moderator: **Courtney Fingar**, Founder, Fingar Direct Investment, UK

Speakers:

- **Nan Li Collins**, Chair, Global Alliance of Special Economic Zones (GASEZ); UNCTAD Director, Investment and Enterprise, UCTAD, Switzerland
- **Luisa Napolitano**, Managing Director Colon Free Zone, Panama
- **Blanca Sorigué**, Managing Director, Barcelona Free Zone, Catalonia, Spain
- **Jochen Knecht**, Chief Executive Officer, IFZA Global, United Arab Emirates

Networking Break in Exhibition	10:15 - 10:45	America Sala 1/2
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Opening Ceremony**10:45 - 11:30****America Sala 3**

Official Inauguration with World FZO Leadership and the Government of Panama.

Speakers:

- **HE José Raúl Mulino Quintero**, President of the Republic of Panama
- **HE Luis Abinader**, President of the Dominican Republic, Dominican Republic
- **Dr Mohammed Alzarooni**, Chairman, World FZO, United Arab Emirates
- **Gilbert F. Hougbo**, Director General, ILO, Switzerland.
- **Pedro Manuel Moreno**, Acting Secretary-General of UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD), Switzerland
- **Gerd Müller**, Director General, United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), Austria
- **Martin G. Pedersen**, Chairman, IFZA, United Arab Emirates
- **Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala**, Director-General, World Trade Organization, Switzerland

Panel Two**11:30 - 12:45****America Sala 3**

Presentation: Panama - Costa Rica Rail Corridor

Presenters:

- **Henry Faarup**, Secretary General, National Railway Secretariat of Panama, Panama
- **Hans Ardón**, Founder, FASTER, Costa Rica

Panel 2: Global Gateways – Redefining the Future of Trade and Connectivity

As global supply chains evolve in the face of AI advances, evolving trade dynamics, and new geopolitical realities, the world's logistics hubs are becoming the nerve centers of economic resilience and connectivity. *Global Gateways – Redefining the Future of Trade and Connectivity* will examine how Zones and their surrounding ecosystems can drive a new era of integrated, efficient, and sustainable global trade. This panel will convene leading experts, policymakers, and industry innovators to discuss how advanced infrastructure, digital trade platforms, and smart logistics are transforming global commerce. Participants will explore strategies to enhance resilience, inclusivity, and competitiveness—positioning Zones as catalysts for a more connected and agile global economy.

Moderator: **Ivana Fernandes Duarte**, Central America Regional Country Manager, The International Finance Corporation (IFC), Panama

Speakers:

- **Umberto de Pretto**, Secretary General, IRU, Switzerland
- **Angel Alberto Sanchez Chiappetto**, Vice-President, FIATA, Switzerland
- **Dr Paul Kent**, Senior Vice President/Managing Director, Ports and Logistics, Monument Economics Group, USA
- **Walter Trezek**, Founder & Chief Executive Officer, Facilitating Digital commerce & Digital Logistics, Austria

Lunch**12:45 - 14:00****America Sala 1/2**

Breakout Session One**14:00 - 15:15****America Sala 3**

Presentation: The Gateway for Regional Logistics & Business Expansion

Presenter: **Rupert Chue**, Chief Executive Officer, Tailwind Corporation (Jamaica) LTD

Emerging Technologies Foresight Lab

Explore how emerging technologies are transforming industries, value chains, and supply chains through interactive roundtables and foresight simulations inspired by Latin American case studies. This lab examines the impact of AI, advanced analytics, automation, IoT, digital twins, robotics, and other disruptive innovations on production systems, trade flows, logistics, and regional competitiveness. Designed for policymakers, business leaders, and industry stakeholders, it offers a space to anticipate technological shifts, assess strategic implications, and identify new opportunities for innovation, resilience, and growth.

Facilitator: **Juan Opertti**, Managing Director, HEMISTION S.A., Uruguay

Speakers:

- **Martin Dovat**, General Manager, Zonamerica, Uruguay
- **Lati Matata**, Director, UPU Postal Technology Center, UPU, Switzerland
- **Raimund Klein**, Chief Executive Officer, International Centre for Industrial Transformation (INCIT), Singapore
- **Aparajitha Reger-Flores**, Senior Managing Director, Ankura, USA
- **Leticia Arias**, Partner, Tax Services | Lead, Latam Office of Strategic Execution (OSE), EY Latam, Panama

Breakout Session Two**14:00 - 15:15****Istmo 1/2**

Presentation: A Truly Unique Special Zone.

Presenter: Agencia Panamá Pacífico & London & Regional Panama

Free Zones and Eco-Industrial Parks: Competitiveness and Sustainability

Explore how the implementation of ESG principles translates into measurable business impact through case studies and localized value models from across Latin America. Participants will analyze how green initiatives — from renewable energy integration to sustainable sourcing — can strengthen profitability, attract global investors, and position free zones as catalysts of responsible industrial growth.

Facilitator: **César Barahona**, International Coordinator, Global Eco-Industrial Park Programme, UNIDO, Austria

Speakers:

- **Christian Susan**, Cross-Disciplinary Team on Industrial Parks, Industrial Development Officer, UNIDO, Austria
- **Henry Kardonski**, Chief Executive Officer, Panama Pacifico, Panama
- **Bernard Gilchrist**, Chief Executive Officer, Zona Franca Parque Central, Colombia
- **Mónica Rivera**, Deputy General Manager, Indupark, Peru

Breakout Session Three**14:00 - 15:15****Istmo 3/4**

Presentation: Luanda Bengo Special Economic Zone - Overview and Business Opportunities

Presenter: **Ricardo de Carvalho**, Director of Business Affairs and Development, Luanda Bengo Special Economic Zone

Public-Private Collaboration for the Next Industrial Era

Discover innovative frameworks for collaboration between private enterprise and public institutions in a shifting fiscal and financial landscape. This workshop showcases Latin American examples of joint ventures, infrastructure co-financing, and policy innovation, offering participants live business modelling exercises to design resilient, inclusive partnerships for the industries of tomorrow.

Facilitator: **Nicolas Forzy**, General Manager, Malakai Consulting Group, France

Speakers:

- **José T. Contreras**, Executive Vice-President, Latin American Free Zone Investments Dominicana, Dominican Republic
- **Cesare Zingone**, Chief Executive Officer, Zeta Group, Costa Rica
- **Javier Suarez**, Administrator, Panama Pacifico Agency, Panama
- **Dr Robert Millard**, Director, Cambridge Strategy Group, United Kingdom
- **Alexander Thern-Svanberg**, Secretary, UPU Consultative Committee, Switzerland
- **Chidinma Udeogu**, General Manager, Nigeria Economic Zones Association, Nigeria

Latin America Minister Roundtable**14:30 - 16:30****Pacifico 4/5**

A similar focus on the unique challenges for free zones operating on the Latin American continent, particularly innovation, digitalization, new trends in international trade and nearshoring, along with key elements to drive foreign investment and competitiveness. Sustainability and energy efficiency will also form core topics alongside the role of public-private partnerships in long-term regulatory policies.

Moderator: **Martin Ibarra**, President, Araujo Ibarra, Colombia

Chairperson: **Julio A. Moltó A.**, Minister, Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MICI), Panama

Speakers:

- **Tomas Bermudez**, General Manager, Regional Country Department Central America, Haiti, Mexico, Panama, and the Dominican Republic, IDB, USA

Networking Break in Exhibition**15:15 - 15:45****America Sala 1/2**

Panel Three

15:45 - 17:00

America Sala 3

Panel 3: Sustainability as a Competitive Edge – The Green Industrial Transition

The global economy is progressing toward a low-carbon future where sustainability will no longer be just a moral imperative—it will become a defining source of competitive advantage. Sustainability as a Competitive Edge – The Green Industrial Transition will explore how Zones can serve as innovation laboratories for green transformation, pioneering new models of circular economy and resource efficiency. This session will bring together policymakers, industry leaders, and sustainability experts to discuss practical pathways for reducing emissions, attracting green investment, and fostering climate-smart industries. By leveraging their unique regulatory flexibility and collaborative ecosystems, Zones can accelerate the adoption of sustainable technologies and set the standard for environmentally responsible growth across global value chains.

Moderator: **Esther Corral**, Regional Head for Latin America & the Caribbean, UN Global Compact, Panama

Speakers:

- **Carlos Wong**, Former General Director, Coyol Free Zone, Costa Rica
- **Raimund Klein**, Chief Executive Officer, International Centre for Industrial Transformation (INCIT), Singapore
- **Pere Navarro**, Executive President, Barcelona Free Zone Consortium, Catalonia, Spain
- **Christian Susan**, Cross-Disciplinary Team on Industrial Parks, Industrial Development Officer, UNIDO, Austria
- **Dr Vuong Thi Minh Hieu**, Deputy General Director, Foreign Investment Agency, Ministry of Finance, Vietnam
- **Henry Kardonski**, Chief Executive Officer, Panama Pacifico, Panama

Gala Dinner

19:00 - 22:00

America Sala 3

Day 3 – Thursday, 14 May 2026

Exhibition Open

08:30 - 14:00

America Sala 1/2

Breakout Session Four

09:00 - 10:15

America Sala 3

Presentation: AECFTZ: Nigeria's Industrial Gateway to Africa

Presenter: **Dr Sanni Abdullahi Ozomata**, Technical advisor to Kogi State Governor, Ajaokuta Economic City

Unlocking Value in Agro-industries – Sustainable Resource-Based Free Zones

Explore how free zones can drive sustainable growth in agriculture and food security. This workshop focuses on creating value-added supply chains at the source, integrating green technologies, and building export-oriented clusters hand in hand with government partners that balance productivity with environmental stewardship. Attendees will examine different models for attracting investment, ensuring traceability, and leveraging digital tools to modernize resource industries.

Facilitator: **Martin Ibarra**, President, Araujo Ibarra, Colombia

Speakers:

- **Victor Gonzalez**, Director, GA&W, Paraguay
- **Agustín Zimmermann**, Country Representative for Colombia, FAO, Italy
- **Peter R. Ramsaroop**, Chief Investment Officer, Guyana Office for Investment, Guyana

Breakout Session Five**09:00 - 10:15****Istmo 1/2**

Presentation: Agencia Panamá Pacífico & London & Regional Panama

Presenter: Architect **Javier Suárez Pinzón** – Executive Director, Agencia Panamá Pacífico

New Organisational Models for Free Zones: From Zone Authority to Ecosystem Operator

Traditional free zone models were built to deliver land, utilities, permits, and tax advantages. But zones competing for advanced industries increasingly need platform capabilities: venture-building, startup-to-scale support, university and lab partnerships, applied R&D, soft-landing programs, and integrated services that reduce time-to-market for investors. This session explores the next generation of zone governance and operating models, including holding-company structures, integrated economic zone authorities, developer-operator models, and public-private ecosystem partnerships—showing what it takes to remain competitive as investors demand speed, skills, innovation, and trusted governance.

Facilitator: **Dr Henry Loewendahl**, Founder & Chief Executive Officer, Lion Economics, UK

Speakers:

- **Paul Keely**, Chief Financial Officer, DIEZ, United Arab Emirates
- **Juan Pablo Rivera Cabal**, Presidente / CE, Grupo ZFB, Colombia
- **Khabib Abdullaev**, Counselor, Navoi International Airport Free Trade Zone., Uzbekistan
- **Rafael Molina**, SMD Practice Leader Ankura Sovereign Advisors, Ankura, USA
- **Emeka Ene**, Chairman, Empower Free trade Zone, Nigeria
- **Kaye Greenidge**, Chief Executive Officer, Invest Barbados, Barbados

Breakout Session Six**09:00 - 10:15****Istmo 4/5****Anchoring Tourism and Culture in the Knowledge Economy**

As global trade and services evolve, free zones are increasingly becoming hubs for finance, technology, and knowledge-based services. This workshop highlights opportunities for developing tourism and culture-based, service-oriented free zones with the right regulatory policies, enabling digital trade, and nurturing innovation ecosystems that attract talent and entrepreneurship. Participants will explore policy frameworks, digital infrastructure, and partnership models that position free zones as leaders in the global knowledge economy.

Facilitator: **Juliana Villegas Restrepo**, Director, International Promotion and Business Development, Colombia

Speakers:

- **Peter Janech**, Coordinator, Innovation, Education and Investments, UN Tourism, Spain
- **Liriola Pitti**, Chief Executive Officer, AEI PANAMA, Panama
- **Juan Carlos Abud**, Minister, Ministry of Economic Development, Jujuy, Argentina
- **Cory Zufelt**, Founder, Citez Grenada SEZ, Grenada

Networking Break in Exhibition**10:15 - 15:45****America Sala 1/2**

Panel Four

10:45 - 12:00

America Sala 3

Panel 4: From Supply Chains to Value Networks – Resilience and Regional Integration

In an era of geopolitical realignment and supply chain fragmentation, resilience and regional integration have become essential pillars of sustainable growth. *From Supply Chains to Value Networks – Resilience and Regional Integration* will explore how Zones can evolve from logistics and manufacturing hubs into strategic value networks that anchor regional cooperation and economic strength. The discussion will highlight how Zones can leverage their distinctive legal frameworks, geographic advantages, and investment incentives to build stronger, more agile regional ecosystems. Bringing together policymakers, investors, and industry leaders, this panel will examine how enhanced connectivity and collaboration among Zones can mitigate global disruptions, boost competitiveness, and lay the foundation for a more balanced and interlinked global economy.

Moderator: Angelica Peña, Executive Director, Chamber of Free Trade Zone Users, Colombia

Speakers:

- **Wamkele Mene**, Secretary General, AfCFTA, Ghana
- **Srikanth Badiga**, Chairman, EPCES, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India, India
- **Eduardo A. Arango**, Vice Minister of Domestic Trade and Industries, Ministry of Commerce and Industries, Panama
- **Ahmed Bennis**, Managing Director, Tanger Med Zones and Secretary General, Africa Economic Zones Organization (AEZO), Morocco
- **Pan Li**, Vice Chairman, China National Association of Free Trade Zones and Export Processing Zones, China

Closing Ceremony

12:00 - 12:30

America Sala 3

Lunch

12:45 - 14:00

America Sala 1/2

World FZO AGM

14:30 - 16:30

America Sala 3

WORLD FZO MEMBERS ONLY

Day 4 – Friday, 15 May 2026

Site Tour

09:00 - 18:00

Vestibulo

Site Visit Program – Atlantic Corridor

09:00 – Departure from Panama Convention Center (approx. 1 hour 20 minutes)

10:20 – 11:20 – **Agua Clara Locks – Panama Canal (Atlantic Site)** (1 hour)

Located near Colón, the Agua Clara Locks are a visitor attraction on the Atlantic side of the Panama Canal. The site offers panoramic views of the expanded Neopanamax locks and Gatun Lake. Visitors will have the opportunity to observe the transit of large vessels up close, alongside access to ecological trails, viewing platforms, and visitor facilities.

En route – **Colón Free Zone Drive-Through Tour** (approx. 20 minutes)

A non-stop guided drive through the Colón Free Zone and France Field area, providing participants with a first-hand view of one of the world's largest free trade zones and its commercial activity.

11:40 – 13:00 – **Manzanillo International Terminal (Caribbean Site)** (1 hour 20 minutes)

Visit one of the region's most strategic container and transshipment terminals, located at the Atlantic entrance of the Panama Canal. The terminal plays a critical role in connecting cargo flows across Central America, the Caribbean, and South America. Participants will observe live port operations, including the functioning of advanced container cranes. The visit includes light refreshments and a short presentation providing further insight into terminal operations.

13:25 – 14:30 – **Colón Arts Center – Colón City** (1 hour 5 minutes)

A cultural welcome at the Colón Arts Center, featuring a traditional folkloric performance. The program concludes with a hosted lunch for participants.

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Exhibitors

Confirmed Speakers and Moderators

The following list reflects the speakers and moderators confirmed as of 10 March 2026. Additional participants are currently being finalized, and more names will be announced as confirmations are received.

- Dr Mohammed Alzarooni, Chairman, World FZO, United Arab Emirates
- HE José Raúl Mulino Quintero, President of the Republic of Panama, Panama
- HE Luis Abinader, President of the Dominican Republic, Dominican Republic
- Agustín Zimmermann, Country Representative for Colombia, FAO, Italy
- Ahmed Bennis, Managing Director, Tanger Med Zones and Secretary General, Africa Economic Zones Organization (AEZO), Morocco
- Alexander Thern-Svanberg, Secretary, UPU Consultative Committee, Switzerland
- Angel Alberto Sanchez Chiappetto, Vice-President, FIATA, Switzerland
- Angelica Peña, Executive Director, Chamber of Free Trade Zone Users, Colombia
- Aparajitha Reger-Flores, Senior Managing Director, Ankura, USA
- Aubyn Hill, Minister, Minister of Industry, Investment, & Commerce, Jamaica
- Bernard Gilchrist, Chief Economic Officer, Zona Franca Parque Central, Colombia
- Blanca Sorigué, Managing Director, Barcelona Free Zone, Catalonia, Spain
- Carla Fernández, Senior Director of Executive Education & INCAE Online, INCAE, Costa Rica.
- Carlos Wong, General Director, Coyol Free Zone, Costa Rica
- César Barahona, International Coordinator, Global Eco-Industrial Park Programme, UNIDO, Austria
- Cesare Zingone, Chief Economic Officer, Zeta Group, Costa Rica
- Christian Susan, Cross-Disciplinary Team on Industrial Parks, Industrial Development Officer, UNIDO, Austria
- Cory Zufelt, Founder, Citez Grenada SEZ, Grenada
- Courtney Fingar, Founder, Fingar Direct Investment, United Kingdom
- Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Director-General, World Trade Organization, Switzerland
- Dr Robert Millard, Director, Cambridge Strategy Group, United Kingdom
- Dr Henry Loewendah, Founder & CEO, Lion Economics, United Kingdom
- Dr Matthew Stephenson, Chief Economic Officer, World Free Zones Organization, United Arab Emirates
- Dr Paul Kent, Senior Vice President/Managing Director, Ports and Logistics, Monument Economics Group, USA
- Ebba Lund, Chief Executive Officer, International Association of Science Parks (IASP), Spain
- Eduardo A. Arango, Vice Minister of Domestic Trade and Industries, Ministry of Commerce and Industries, Panama
- Emeka Ene, Chairman, Empower Free trade Zone, Nigeria
- Enrique Buero, President, Uruguayan Chamber of Free Trade Zones, Uruguay
- Esther Corral, Regional Head for Latin America & the Caribbean, UN Global Compact, Panama
- Gerd Müller, Director General, United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), Austria
- Gilbert F. Hougbo, Director General, ILO, Switzerland.
- Helson Cavalcante Braga, President, ABRAZPE, Brazil
- Hans Ardón, Founder, FASTER, Costa Rica
- Henry Faarup, Secretary General, National Railway Secretariat of Panama, Panama
- Henry Kardonski, Chief Economic Officer, Panama Pacifico, Panama
- Ivana Fernandes Duarte, Central America Regional Country Manager, The International Finance Corporation (IFC), Panama
- James Zhan, Chief Advisor to the Chairman of the World FZO, Switzerland
- Javier Suarez, Administrator, Panama Pacifico Agency, Panama
- Jeffrey J. Tafel, CAE, President, NAFTAZ-National Association of Foreign-Trade Zones, USA
- Jochen Knecht, Chief Economic Officer, IFZA Global, United Arab Emirates
- José T. Contreras, Executive Vice-President, Latin American Free Zone Investments Dominicana, Dominican Republic
- Juan Carlos Abud, Minister, Ministry of Economic Development, Jujuy, Argentina
- Juan Operti, Managing Director, HEMISTION S.A., Uruguay
- Juan Pablo Rivera Cabal, Presidente / CE, Grupo ZFB, Colombia
- Juliana Villegas Restrepo, Director, International Promotion and Business Development, Colombia
- Julio A. Moltó A., Minister, Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MICI), Panama
- Kaye Greenidge, Chief Economic Officer, Invest Barbados, Barbados
- Kelli Dawn Hamilton, Chief Economic Officer, Jamaica Special Economic Zones Authority, Jamaica
- Khabib Abdullaev, Counselor, Navoi International Airport Free Trade Zone., Uzbekistan
- Lati Matata, Director, UPU Postal Technology Center, UPU, Switzerland
- Liriola Pitti, Chief Economic Officer, AEI PANAMA, Panama
- Lisandro Ganuza, Public Affairs Director, Zona Franca Santafesina, Argentina
- Luciano Ciravegna, Steve Aronson Chair in Strategy and Agribusiness, INCAE, Costa Rica
- Luisa Napolitano, Managing Director Colon Free Zone, Panama
- Martin Dovat, General Manager, Zonamerica, Uruguay
- Martin G. Pedersen, Chairman, IFZA, United Arab Emirates
- Martin Ibarra, President, Araujo Ibarra, Colombia
- Mónica Rivera, Deputy General Manager, Indupark, Peru.
- Nan Li Collins, Chair, Global Alliance of Special Economic Zones (GASEZ); UNCTAD Director, Investment and Enterprise, UCTAD, Switzerland
- Nicolas Forzy, General Manager, Malakai Consulting Group, France

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- Wamkele Mene, Secretary General, AfCFTA, Ghana

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