



## Structural Challenges and Emerging Cooperation Agenda

Manila, 5 May 2026

Organized by the President of the Institute for Small Markets in Law and Economies (ISLE), Johanne Peyre, the inaugural edition of the Small Economies Forum (SEF) was held in Manila on 5 May 2026, bringing together representatives of competition authorities, regulators, academics and practitioners from across the world to discuss the specific economic and institutional challenges faced by small and insular economies.

Conceived as an open and practical forum for dialogue, the SEF aimed to create a dedicated space where jurisdictions often underrepresented in international discussions could exchange experiences, identify common structural constraints, and explore adapted regulatory approaches.

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### Opening Session

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The Forum opened with introductory remarks by Marah Victoria S. Querol, who welcomed participants to Manila and emphasized the importance of strengthening international dialogue between competition authorities operating in structurally constrained markets.

The opening session then featured keynote interventions by:

#### **William Kovacic and Johanne Peyre**



Both speakers highlighted a central theme of the Forum: small economies cannot simply be understood as « reduced versions » of large continental markets. Their structural characteristics require nuanced approaches capable of reconciling universal principles with contextual adaptation. ISLE was created to meet this need for exchange and sharing of best practices.

## Structural Challenges

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Throughout the day, participants engaged in a series of discussions focusing on the realities faced by small economies in competition law and economic regulation.

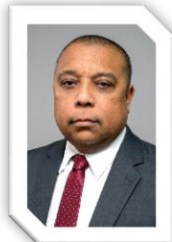
Moderated by Ernesto Kross, the first panel explored the structural characteristics common to many small jurisdictions.

**Ernesto Kross**



*Director, Aruba Fair Trade Authority*

**Bevan Narinesingh**



*Executive Director, Fair Trade Commission, Trinidad and Tobago*

**Roy Daggy**



*Commissioner & CEO, Independent Consumer & Competition Commission, Papua New Guinea*

**Vipin Naugah**



*Executive Director, Competition Commission, Mauritius*

Discussions addressed issues such as market concentration, transport dependency, vulnerability to external shocks, barriers to entry, and the challenges of maintaining effective competition in environments where rivalry may structurally remain limited.

Participants repeatedly emphasized that small economies should not be treated as marginal exceptions to global economic governance, but as jurisdictions requiring dedicated analytical frameworks and adapted policy instruments.



Following the first panel, participants took part in a series of small-group discussions designed to deepen the exchanges on the structural realities faced by small and insular economies.

The workshop sessions provided an opportunity for representatives from different jurisdictions to compare experiences relating to market concentration, geographic fragmentation, logistical dependency and limited economies of scale.

## Governance and Institutional Design

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Moderated by Ng Ee Kia, the second panel examined governance models, institutional cooperation, and the operational challenges faced by competition authorities in small and developing economies.

**Ng Ee Kia**



*Assistant Chief Executive  
(Economics, Policy and  
Data),  
Competition and  
Consumer Commission of  
Singapore*

**Christina Choy**



*Manager  
Enforcement,  
Fijian Competition  
and Consumer  
Commission*

**Willard Mwemba**



*Chief Executive Officer,  
COMESA Competition  
Commission*

**Maria Elena  
Vasquez Taveras**



*Member, Consejo  
Directivo de  
Procompetencia,  
Dominican Republic*

Discussions focused on institutional resilience, regional cooperation mechanisms, advocacy strategies, and the practical realities of enforcing competition law in jurisdictions facing limited resources and structural market constraints.

Speakers emphasized the importance of peer learning, capacity-building, and the development of adapted governance frameworks capable of strengthening both the legitimacy and effectiveness of competition authorities operating in small economies.



The panel was followed by a collaborative workshop aimed at identifying governance-related priorities for future cooperation and shared reflection within the ISLE network. Participants were invited to reflect collectively on the following guiding question: Which governance or institutional issues would most benefit from shared reflection, exchange of practices or common guidance?

The discussions emphasized the importance of institutional credibility, operational independence, advocacy capacity and access to technical expertise in ensuring effective competition enforcement within small economies.

## **International Perspectives: Reflections from France, Australia and the Netherlands**

The afternoon session featured reflections from major competition authorities and international experts, including:

**Benoît Cœuré**



*President of the Autorité de la concurrence (France)*

**Gina Cass-Gottlieb**



*Chair, Australian Competition and Consumer Commission*

**Martijn Snoep**



*Chair, Netherlands Authority for Consumers & Markets*

These interventions underscored the importance of maintaining strong competition principles while acknowledging the necessity of proportionate and context-sensitive implementation. The exchanges also highlighted the growing relevance of small economies in global discussions on economic resilience, sustainability, connectivity and innovation.



## Publication of the Collective Book

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The Forum also marked the official release of the collective volume: *Competition Law in Small and Insular Economies – Unity of Principles, Diversity of Approaches*.

Published by Johanne Peyre, Vivien Terrien and Ernesto Kross, with the support of Concurrences, George Washington University Law School, International Chamber of Commerce, Primerio and Freshfields, the book brings together contributions from competition authorities, academics and practitioners from multiple jurisdictions across the world.

The publication explores how competition law and regulation may be adapted to structurally constrained markets while preserving the coherence of fundamental principles. The release of the book represents a major milestone in ISLE's efforts to structure an international intellectual and institutional network dedicated to small economies.

## A Growing International Network

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The first edition of the Small Economies Forum confirmed the existence of a genuine international community of authorities and experts confronting similar structural realities.

Beyond the formal discussions, the Forum enabled numerous bilateral exchanges and opened perspectives for future cooperation in areas such as:

- economic regulation;
- digital connectivity;
- transport and logistics;
- competition enforcement;
- advocacy strategies;
- institutional capacity-building;
- sustainable development in insular territories.

ISLE intends to continue developing this network in the coming months through research initiatives, publications, training activities and future international meetings.

