

## Spotlight:

## Aid for Trade Global Review 2019

On 3-5 July 2019, the WTO hosted the Global Review of Aid for Trade on “Supporting economic diversification and empowerment”. In 84 sessions, spread over three days, some 1,500 participants discussed the many facets of trade and development, with economic diversification and empowerment as the main threads.

High-level panellists included the prime minister of Cambodia, over 30 ministers or deputy ministers and 20 heads or deputy heads of agencies and international organizations. The conference also brought together a large number of officials from WTO members and professionals from the development arena.

#### High-level opening session

The opening session featured remarks from DG Azevêdo and General Council Chair Sunanta Kangvalkulkij before a keynote address by Samdech Hun Sen, Cambodia’s Prime Minister, who highlighted the economic progress his country has made since its WTO accession. “As a small economy, Cambodia believes in the benefits of globalization and international cooperation based on multilateral rules,” he said. Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Secretary-General Ángel Gurría, the Secretary General of the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), Mukhisa Kituyi, Chief Executive Officer Philippe Le Houérou of the International Finance Corporation (IFC), then International Trade Centre (ITC) Executive Director Arancha González, and Hani Sonbol, CEO of the International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation, were also on the opening panel.

Participants emphasized the importance of Aid for Trade in achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including through generating economic growth, poverty reduction, and the economic empowerment of women, youth and micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs). The initiative also helps integrate developing countries into the multilateral trading system, particularly low-income, fragile and vulnerable economies, they said.

#### Launch of “Aid for Trade at a Glance”

The opening session saw the launch of the 2019 edition of “Aid for Trade at a Glance” – a joint OECD/WTO publication with contributions from the Enhanced Integrated Framework, the ITC, UNCTAD, the UN Development Programme, the UN Industrial Development Organization and the World Bank (see page 159). The report analyses the 2019 monitoring and evaluation exercise, which showed that economic diversification and empowerment are core objectives of the trade and development strategies and policies of WTO members.

**The opening session was attended by Samdech Hun Sen, Cambodia’s Prime Minister, DG Azevêdo and OECD Secretary-General Ángel Gurría.**



DG Azevêdo participated in a session on “Women entrepreneurs: Making the Buenos Aires declaration happen”.



DG Azevêdo told the Global Review that diversification and empowerment help countries increase their participation in global trade flows and facilitate opportunities to move up the value chain. “In turn, all this helps to build better prospects and opportunities for improved livelihoods,” he said.

Many of the 133 respondents to the monitoring exercise highlighted how economic diversification is a gateway to economic empowerment, with respondents seeing empowerment in turn stimulating economic diversification. Also included in the publication was a breakdown of the US\$ 410 billion disbursed in Aid for Trade since the launch of the initiative in 2006 (see page 132).

Several other reports were launched at the Review. A lack of trade finance is severely hindering the trade opportunities of small businesses in developing countries, according to a co-publication released by the WTO and the IFC (see page 110).

### Main themes

Themes that emerged strongly from the Review included the importance of digital connectivity for diversification and inclusion, the need to promote greater economic sustainability, building diversification in climate-sensitive sectors, and how to promote adaptation measures that increase resilience to natural and other disasters. Inclusion and empowerment also featured prominently in the debates, including many on women’s economic empowerment. Other debates around inclusivity and empowerment included a particular focus on ways to empower least-developed countries.

### Adapting to modern realities

The Global Review concluded with participating members reaffirming their commitment to, and the importance of, Aid for Trade, and with calls for the initiative to continue promoting economic development, sustainability and inclusiveness, while adapting to modern realities. “The richness of the debate clearly reflects two things: first, that Aid for Trade continues to be a fundamental tool to help economic empowerment; second, that there is much scope for this initiative to adapt, change, improve and evolve in order to keep helping members to address structural challenges, both old and new,” DG Azevêdo said in concluding remarks.



**A session entitled “Africa focus: Supporting economic diversification and empowerment” was held on 3 July.**