Outreach

The WTO maintains regular dialogue with the business community, non-governmental organizations, parliamentarians, other international organizations, the media and the general public to enhance cooperation and raise awareness of trade issues.

To commemorate its 25th anniversary, in November 2020 the WTO hosted a series of discussions to reflect on past achievements and future challenges.
168 Contact with the business community

169 Relations with non-governmental organizations

170 Contact with parliamentarians

171 Spotlight: 25th anniversary of the WTO

174 Cooperation with other intergovernmental organizations

177 Contact with the media

178 Contact with the public

182 Economic research activities

184 Statistics activities

186 Cooperation with academic institutions
Contact with the business community

- The International Chamber of Commerce and the WTO stressed how business can help identify ways to maximize health outcomes and minimize economic damage from COVID-19.

- A virtual “Trade Dialogue” debated trade policy measures to improve responses to the pandemic. It called for COVID-related restrictions to be targeted, proportionate, transparent and temporary.

Business, the global trading system and COVID-19

In a joint statement on 2 April 2020, then WTO Director General Roberto Azevêdo and International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) Secretary-General John Denton expressed concern at the severe disruptions to value chains brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. These disruptions had major implications for employment and the supply of goods, especially essential medicines and food.

The statement stressed that business can help identify solutions that maximize health outcomes while minimizing economic damage. It called for more dialogue with business to mitigate the economic damage resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly with regard to trade.

Together with the ICC and the B20, the business group of the G20, the WTO issued a statement in July warning that the diminishing availability of trade finance could hamper post-pandemic economic recovery (see page 132).

Virtual Trade Dialogue

The ICC and B20 collaborated with the then Director-General, Roberto Azevêdo, to facilitate a virtual Trade Dialogue session in May 2020 with the private sector on trade’s role in mitigating the economic damage resulting from the pandemic.

Over 70 business representatives from developed and developing countries discussed trade policy responses that could help businesses combat the effects of the crisis and debated the role the WTO could play.

They stressed the importance of maintaining an uninterrupted supply of essential goods and services and for any COVID-19-related trade restrictions to be targeted, proportionate, transparent and temporary. They also called for effective and rapid implementation of the WTO’s Trade Facilitation Agreement (see page 109).

Participants underlined the importance of international policy coordination and urged governments to resist protectionism, calls for self-sufficiency and reshoring. Governments were urged to see that trade is complementary and essential for domestic production. Participants emphasized the WTO’s role in urging members to be transparent about COVID-related measures and in gathering examples of best practice in trade-related responses to the crisis.

Support for the WTO

On the occasion of the WTO’s 25th anniversary, senior representatives from business organizations sent video messages reflecting on what the WTO and the multilateral trading system means to them (see page 171).
Relations with non-governmental organizations

- Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) put forward papers and petitions highlighting the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on people and economies across the world and calling on the WTO to help address the crisis.

- The WTO Secretariat organized virtual briefings for NGOs, enabling them to follow the work of the Trade Negotiations Committee and the General Council.

In response to the COVID-19 crisis (see page 76), civil society groups put forward papers and petitions highlighting the impact of the pandemic on economies and people across the world. They called on WTO members to work together and propose policies and measures to address the negative impact of the pandemic and facilitate trade. These papers have been published on a WTO webpage dedicated to the business and civil society response to COVID-19. NGO representatives also took part in a stakeholders’ panel at a virtual event in November to commemorate the WTO’s 25th anniversary (see page 171).

In 2020, NGOs were able to attend four WTO Secretariat briefings (one onsite and three virtual) following meetings of the Trade Negotiations Committee and the General Council. The virtual briefings enabled individuals from 28 NGOs to benefit from updates on the WTO’s work – a 55 per cent increase on the number of NGOs who benefitted from these briefings in 2019 (18 NGOs).

Background

The WTO maintains regular dialogue with civil society organizations to enhance cooperation and increase their awareness of WTO activities and the multilateral trading system. Continuing and strengthening the relationship with civil society remains important for increasing transparency and increasing public awareness of the work of the WTO.

Céline Charveriat, Executive Director of the Institute for European Environmental Policy, participated in a panel on the stakeholders’ perspective moderated by Bernie Kuiten, the WTO’s Head of External Relations, at the WTO’s 25th anniversary event in November.
Contact with parliamentarians

Despite the COVID-19 constraints, the WTO continued its outreach to parliamentarians, mainly through virtual contacts.

The Chair of the WTO General Council and senior WTO staff briefed parliamentarians on the latest developments at the WTO.

The Steering Committee of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) on WTO matters met in February 2020 in Brussels and in virtual format in October. The Chair of the General Council, senior WTO staff and Geneva-based ambassadors briefed legislators on important issues facing the multilateral trading system, particularly on ways to respond to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The IPU is the international organization of parliaments.

The WTO held many outreach activities and briefings via virtual means. The Secretary General of the IPU, Martin Chungong, spoke at an event marking the 25th anniversary of the WTO, held in November (see page 171). He highlighted the increased engagement of parliamentarians with WTO issues.

David Walker, Chair of the General Council, briefed members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and the IPU Steering Committee in July on the latest developments at the WTO and on the WTO Director-General selection process (see page 28). With the help of the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, a group of 12 MEPs were briefed in May 2020 by the WTO spokesperson on the latest development in the organization.

The IPU and the European Parliament’s Committee on International Trade organized briefings in December by the WTO on trade and gender and on attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (see page 176). The PAM organized a webinar on economic recovery post COVID-19 in July.

Martin Chungong, Secretary-General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, participated in a stakeholders panel at the WTO’s 25th anniversary event in November.
In his keynote address, Swiss Federal Councillor Guy Parmelin said the COVID-19 crisis has underlined the relevance of rules-based free trade, as open markets and uninterrupted global supply chains are fundamental for access to medicines and other essential products. General Council Chair David Walker said WTO members’ ability to update and adjust the WTO rulebook “is ultimately the only way to keep the WTO relevant to our economies and to foster our trade relations”. Deputy Director-General Alan Wolff called for institutional and substantive reforms to achieve the WTO’s mission.

A high-level panel with government officials reflected on the role of the WTO in shaping their economies (see Table 1). Speakers considered the benefits and shortcomings of the global trading system and discussed ways to make it more inclusive. Panellists agreed that WTO reform must be a priority to ensure the organization’s continued relevance. Despite differences on what the reform agenda should look like, all government representatives reiterated the need to reinvigorate the WTO’s negotiating function and deliver a meaningful outcome on fisheries subsidies (see page 53).
Some panellists called for progress in negotiations on the joint initiatives, such as e-commerce (see page 57). Others said these initiatives among groups of members give developing countries limited space to shape the agenda. They encouraged progress on trade and sustainability, development and food security.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: The political perspective – panellists</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Soraya Hakuziyaremye</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dennis Shea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wang Shouwen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheryl Spencer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sabine Weyand</td>
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<td>George Yeo</td>
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Bernie Kuiten of the WTO’s Information and External Relations Division moderated the panel on the stakeholders’ perspective.

The stakeholders’ perspective

A second panel, with prominent representatives from the private sector, international organizations, civil society and media, exchanged views on how the multilateral trading system has served society and how to ensure it better addresses society’s needs and expectations.

Speakers stressed the need to deepen public understanding of the WTO’s role and relevance by expanding its outreach activities (see Table 2). They proposed a more structured relationship with stakeholders that allowed them to give new impetus to ongoing negotiations. Several panelists underlined the increasing importance of labour and environmental standards in regional trade agreements and called on the WTO to consider these standards in its work.
Panellists agreed that WTO reform must be a priority to ensure the organization’s continued relevance.

Exhibitions and quiz

Two photo exhibitions looked back at key moments in the life of the WTO. Both collections were displayed in the WTO’s headquarters and made available on the WTO website. They were also compiled in a publication entitled “25 Years of the WTO: A Photographic Retrospective”.

Another exhibition paid tribute to the women who have played a pioneering role in the activities of the WTO. The exhibition and a series of videos of these exceptional women are available on the WTO website.

A quiz aimed at deepening understanding of the WTO was developed and published on the WTO website. Participants learn more about the WTO by answering questions at six different levels of difficulty. They can share their results via Twitter and Facebook.

Messages from stakeholders

Thirty representatives of the private sector, international organizations and non-governmental organizations sent messages of congratulations to the WTO on its 25th anniversary. In short video messages they reflected on what the multilateral trading system has meant to them, what they expect from the trading system and how to ensure trade continues to support economic growth, development and job creation.

Interviews with former WTO Directors-General

Former WTO Directors-General Supachai Panitchpakdi, Pascal Lamy and Roberto Azevêdo reflected on the WTO’s 25 years in conversations with WTO Spokesperson Keith Rockwell. The interviews are available on the WTO website.

Other 25th anniversary events

Events were also held throughout the year to mark the 25th anniversaries of the WTO Agreement on Agriculture, the Agreement on Trade-related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights, the Customs Valuation Agreement, the Agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures and the Agreement on Rules of Origin.

Table 2: The stakeholders’ perspective – panellists

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joshua Bolten</td>
<td>President and CEO, US Business Roundtable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Céline Charveriat</td>
<td>Executive Director, Institute for European Environmental Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin Chungong</td>
<td>Secretary-General, Inter-Parliamentary Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank Heemskerk</td>
<td>Secretary-General, European Round Table for Industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soumaya Keynes</td>
<td>Trade and Globalization Editor, “The Economist” magazine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guy Ryder</td>
<td>Director-General, International Labour Organization</td>
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</table>

Mari Pangestu, the World Bank’s Managing Director of Development Policy and Partnerships, contributed a video message.
Cooperation with other intergovernmental organizations

- Collective action to fight COVID-19 and minimize its economic and social impact was a major element in WTO cooperation with other intergovernmental organizations in 2020.
- The WTO worked closely with other organizations to ensure open trade in essential goods and vital medical supplies.
- G20 leaders recognized the contribution of the multilateral trading system to a global recovery from the pandemic and launched the Riyadh initiative on WTO reform.
- Senior WTO officials took part in G20 and G7 summits and events organized by the United Nations.

G7

In March 2020, the then Director-General, Roberto Azevêdo, welcomed a commitment by leaders of the G7 group of developed countries to support global trade and investment in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and to do "whatever is necessary to ensure a strong global response through closer cooperation and enhanced coordination". DG Azevêdo said: "The global challenge requires a global response, on the public health front and in the economy."

G20

The then Director-General attended an extraordinary virtual summit of G20 leaders in March 2020 on the COVID-19 crisis. He welcomed the pledge by the group of major economies to work together to combat the pandemic and "restore confidence, preserve financial stability, revive growth and recover stronger".

On 20 March 2020, the G20 launched the “Riyadh Initiative on the Future of the WTO” to promote reform of the workings of the organization. Participating in a G20 summit in November, Deputy Director-General Alan Wolff said institutional reform of the WTO should involve restoring its deliberative and negotiating functions, providing binding dispute settlement seen as legitimate by all and providing for a strong proactive Secretariat. He also urged leaders to back WTO actions to support an economic rebound in response to the pandemic.

The WTO also contributed to G20 trade discussions in meetings of G20 sherpas, the G20 Working Group on Trade and Investment and G20 agriculture ministers. It continued to monitor food crop policies under the G20 Agriculture Market Information System initiative, which aims to increase

Background

The WTO works closely with other intergovernmental organizations and regional bodies, especially those involved in trade-related issues. This cooperation helps to ensure coordinated action and a consistent approach to international trade policies.
The WTO and the IMF urged governments to refrain from trade restrictions on medical supplies and food.

transparency in international commodity markets and improve policy coordination.

With the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the WTO continued to publish six-monthly reports on trade and investment measures in G20 countries. The November report noted a slowdown in the number and coverage of these measures, primarily as a result of the sharp decline in overall global trade since the COVID-19 outbreak (see page 128).

COVID-19

The heads of the WTO, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) issued a statement on 31 March 2020 calling on governments to minimize the impact of COVID-19-related border restrictions on trade in food.

The World Customs Organization (WCO) and the WTO pledged on 6 April 2020 to work together to facilitate trade in essential goods, such as medical supplies, food and energy. Later in April, the heads of the WTO and the WHO also issued a joint statement of support for efforts to ensure the normal cross-border flow of vital medical supplies and other goods and services.

The heads of the WTO and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) urged governments in April 2020 to refrain from imposing export and other trade restrictions on key medical supplies and food and to quickly lift those put in place since the start of the year (see page 89). In July, the WTO and the World Bank also launched a joint publication, “Women and Trade: The role of trade in promoting gender equality”, at a virtual event (see page 164).

High-level meetings

In May 2020, the then Director-General, Roberto Azevêdo, took part in a meeting hosted by German Chancellor Angela Merkel in a virtual format to discuss the health, economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic along with the international policy response. The heads of the International Labour Organization (ILO), IMF, OECD and the World Bank also attended. “An unprecedented crisis requires unprecedented solidarity in response – and this includes cooperation on trade,” the then DG said after the meeting.
“Amid the COVID-19 crisis, keeping trade open and fostering a favourable business environment will be critical to spur the renewed investment needed to meet the SDGs.” - WTO Secretariat report

OECD

The OECD and the WTO cooperate in a range of areas, including in the trade in value-added (TiVA) database and in improving the measurement of digital trade (see page 185). They are working together on the development of trade facilitation indicators, with an interactive web tool covering 152 countries.

The WTO and OECD have started their joint work on the preparations for the next Global Review of Aid for Trade to be held in 2022. The OECD was also an active participant in preparing the Aid for Trade Stocktaking exercise, which was held in March 2021 (see page 152).

United Nations

DDG Wolff attended the autumn meeting of the United Nations Chief Executives Board (CEB), composed of the executive heads of UN agencies, funds and programmes and the executive heads of the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO. He made the case for reinvigorated international cooperation on trade to accelerate the response to COVID-19.

The WTO is part of the UN Secretary General-led High-Level Task Force, which brings together 23 UN agencies and international organizations to provide policy coordination and political leadership to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to food security and to sustainable agriculture and food systems.

In a report to the United Nations High-level Political Forum in July, the WTO Secretariat said that amid the COVID-19 crisis, keeping trade open and fostering a favourable business environment will be critical to spur the renewed investment needed to meet the SDGs.

UNCTAD, ITC and UN regional commissions

UNCTAD, the International Trade Centre (ITC) and the WTO jointly produce the annual World Tariff Profiles (see pages 180 and 182) and quarterly and annual statistics on international trade in services. They also combine in statistical capacity-building activities, including training and e-learning courses.

The WTO’s cooperation with the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) has grown, particularly in helping least-developed countries (LDCs) that are “graduating” from LDC status to adapt to their changing situation (see page 149) and in helping developing countries prepare for Ministerial Conferences.
Contact with the media

The COVID-19 pandemic had a major impact on the work of the media team as press briefings and other events switched to virtual formats.

The impact of the pandemic on global trade and the selection process for the new Director-General were the main focus of media attention in 2020.

Media attention in 2020 was focused on the impact of the pandemic on global trade. Press officers worked closely with other divisions and with the WTO web team to ensure that reports from the WTO’s dedicated COVID-19 webpage were widely disseminated. The media team also organized press conferences with WTO economists on 2020 trade forecasts and updates, and updated journalists on discussions within WTO councils and committees on the pandemic’s impact on trade (see Figure 1).

The early departure of DG Azevêdo and the selection process for his successor (see page 28) attracted keen press interest. The media team kept journalists informed of progress in the selection process from the start and organized press conferences in July for the eight candidates as well as DG Azevêdo’s farewell press conference.

Press conferences and briefings were held in hybrid format when conditions permitted and in virtual format when restrictions were tightened. This allowed for online participation by non-Geneva journalists, which increased coverage of the WTO.

In total, journalists were invited to 42 press conferences, briefings and other events in 2020, including commemoration of the WTO’s 25th anniversary. Press officers assisted colleagues with numerous webinars and online conferences over the course of the year.

The Information and External Relations Division was cited by the Geneva Association of UN Correspondents (ACANU) as the “best media team” in 2020 among Geneva-based international organizations.

The WTO received 156 requests for registration to the online newsroom where journalists can access press releases and publications under embargo. The total number of accredited journalists registered stood at 1,951 as of the end of 2020.

Figure 1: Press briefings and conferences, by issue, 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DG press conferences</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>and other press events</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book launch – World Trade Report 2020</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DG candidates</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade policy reviews</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual property</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade forecasts</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade Negotiations Committee and Heads of Delegations</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dispute settlement</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Council</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
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</table>

1The list also includes press invitations to special events, such as the WTO’s 25th anniversary.
Contact with the public

The WTO website attracted 3.1 million monthly visits, 13 per cent more than in 2019.

The “COVID-19 and world trade” section on the website, covering measures taken by WTO members in response to the pandemic, was viewed over 926,000 times.

The total number of WTO followers on Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram and Weibo grew by 13 per cent to over 2 million.

The most viewed WTO video was Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala’s press conference on her candidacy to be Director-General.

The WTO issued 51 publications.

WTO website

The WTO website attracted over 3.1 million monthly visits in 2020, over 13 per cent more than the year before. The United States accounted for the most visits, with 16.4 per cent, followed by Russia (10.9 per cent) and China (10.4 per cent). Total page views rose to 86.3 million from 72.6 million in 2019. Over 540 news items were published on the site, 17 per cent more than in 2019.

The most downloaded files were the WTO’s flagship publications, the World Trade Statistical Review 2020 (52,000 downloads), the Annual Report 2020 (over 46,000 downloads) and the World Trade Report 2020 (over 13,500 downloads). WTO videos were viewed over 352,000 times in 2020. The most popular video, with 17,342 views, was the press conference by Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala.
The number of WTO followers on Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram and Weibo grew by 13 per cent to over 2 million, more than the 8 per cent rise of 2019 (Figure 3). Aside from the DG selection process (see page 28) and COVID-19-related information, the most popular posts were about the organization’s 25th anniversary (see page 171) and a farewell message by outgoing DG, Roberto Azevêdo.

**WTO videos**

Demands on video production increased with the pandemic as many WTO events went online. The WTO continued its “Let’s Talk Trade” series, aimed at explaining trade topics in simple, everyday language. WTO videos with messages by candidates for Director-General were widely viewed, as was a press conference in April announcing forecasts for a steep drop in trade in 2020.

To mark its 25th anniversary (see page 171), the WTO published a series of videos in November, including a “Conversation with former DGs” – Roberto Azevêdo, Pascal Lamy and Supachai Panitchpakdi. It also ran a series on 15 “women pioneers”, about women who have made significant contributions to the WTO.

**Visiting groups**

The WTO arranged presentations for 57 groups, totalling some 1,770 people. From April onwards, visits were via virtual platforms. The presentations, which cover the history, functions and work of the WTO, were given in nine languages. The majority of them (36) were in English. Seven were in French, four in Chinese and three each in Spanish and Russian.
WTO publications

The WTO issued 51 publications in 2020. Due to the pandemic, only the World Trade Report was launched at the WTO. Most WTO publications can be downloaded from the WTO’s website in the three official languages – English, French and Spanish. Printed copies can be purchased from the online bookshop. The WTO’s apps are available free from the App Store and Google Play. The WTO Publications’ Facebook page has over 51,500 followers and its Twitter page over 70,800. A digital newsletter, “Book News”, is regularly sent to over 88,300 recipients.

The WTO iLibrary includes over 1,000 titles published by the WTO or co-published with Cambridge University Press, over 200 WTO working papers, comprehensive statistical data on world trade, and every dispute settlement report issued under the WTO.

Flagship publications

Annual Report 2020
The Report focuses on the main activities of the WTO and details of its current structure, staff and budget.

World Trade Report 2020: Government policies to promote innovation in the digital age
The Report looks at policy trends supporting the transition towards a digital economy and how trade and the WTO fit with them (see page 182).

World Trade Statistical Review 2020
ISBN 978-92-870-5032-8 | CHF 50
A comprehensive overview of the latest developments in world trade, covering both merchandise trade and trade in commercial services.

World Tariff Profiles 2020
Comprehensive information on tariffs and non-tariff measures imposed by over 170 countries and customs territories. Co-published with ITC and UNCTAD.

Other annual publications

Trade Profiles 2020
ISBN 978-92-870-5038-0 | CHF 50
Key indicators on trade in goods and services for 196 economies. Highlights each economy’s major exports and imports and its main trading partners.

Trade Policy Reviews
The Trade Policy Reviews for Bangladesh, Suriname, North Macedonia, Costa Rica, Peru, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic and Australia were published in 2020, analysing their trade policies and practices (see page 126).

Dispute Settlement Reports 2019
Twelve publications were issued in 2020, providing the full texts of panel reports, Appellate Body reports and arbitration awards issued by the WTO in 2019. Co-published with Cambridge University Press.
New publications

Promoting Access to Medical Technologies and Innovation
ISBN 978-92-870-4996-4 | CHF 60
As part of their efforts to help countries develop the capacity to deal with multi-dimensional challenges in the public health sector, the WHO, WIPO and WTO have launched a 2nd edition of this trilateral study.

Trade Adjustment in Asia: Past Experiences and Lessons Learned
Edited by Marc Bacchetta and Matthias Helble.
This publication aims to provide new insights into how Asia’s labour markets and firms have adjusted to trade-opening. Co-published with the Asian Development Bank Institute.

Trade Impacts of LDC Graduation (two volumes)
ISBN 978-92-870-5106-6 | CHF 30 (Vol. 1), digital only (Vol. 2)
The report finds that the impact of graduation from LDC status varies depending on factors such as export structure, use of preferential treatment and terms of entry into the WTO. The companion volume examines in greater detail the impact of graduation for each of the 12 graduating LDCs.

Women and Trade: The Role of Trade in Promoting Gender Equality
ISBN 978-92-870-4994-0 | CHF 40
This report, co-published by the WTO and the World Bank, gathers new data to advance understanding of the relationship between trade and gender equality and to identify how trade can improve the lives of women (see page 164).

This second edition describes the historical and legal background to the TRIPS Agreement, its role in the WTO and its institutional framework, and covers the public health revision of the Agreement that entered into force in 2017. Co-published with Cambridge University Press.

GATT Dispute Settlement Reports: Disputes Initiated in 1948–1993
These six volumes compile all dispute settlement reports issued under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) from 1948 to 1995. Co-published with Cambridge University Press.

Dictionary of Trade Policy Terms (sixth edition)
By Walter Goode.
The dictionary explains, in simple language, over 3,000 terms used in international trade. Co-published with Cambridge University Press.

Adapting to the Digital Trade Era: Challenges and Opportunities
Edited by Maarten Smeets.
ISBN 978-92-870-4302-3 | CHF 40
This publication, which marks the conclusion of the second phase of the WTO Chairs Programme, looks at how the rapid adoption of digital technologies can create challenges and opportunities for developing countries.

Blockchain and DLT in Trade: Where Do We Stand?
Digital only
The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated digitalization in all sectors, including international trade. Of particular interest for trade digitalization are projects leveraging distributed ledger technology (DLT). This publication looks at the current situation.

Short Answers to Big Questions on the WTO and the Environment
This publication seeks to answer, in easy-to-understand terms, some of the key questions of the trade and environment debate as they relate to the multilateral trading system.

ANNUAL REPORT 2021
Economic research activities

The WTO’s flagship “World Trade Report” looked at government innovation policies in the digital field and how trade and the WTO fit with them.

The WTO finalized building of the Global Trade Cost Index, which will allow members to monitor the evolution of trade costs globally.

The WTO and the World Bank issued “Women and Trade: The Role of Trade in Promoting Gender Equality”, which shows that trade can substantially benefit women.

The Trade Economist Thematic Award (TETA) was launched, focusing in 2020 on how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected trade and trade policy.

The WTO’s flagship publication, the “World Trade Report 2020”, explores governments’ increasing use of policies to foster digital innovation. It examines how policy instruments, including trade policy, adapt to the characteristics of the digital economy and underlines the importance of countries working together to encourage positive outcomes while minimizing negative spill-overs from national policies.

“In very recent years, spurring innovation in the digital field is at the core of many new government policies, which have been adapted at all levels of development,” Deputy DG Yi Xiaozhun said during the virtual launch of the report in November. “Just as the WTO fostered broadly open, predictable and competitive markets in the wider global economy, it can in the future play an important role in reducing uncertainty in the market for digital goods and services. But this will require updating the WTO framework to address new challenges and demands,” he added.

Global Trade Cost Index

In 2020, the Economics Research and Statistics Division finalized a two-year project to build a WTO Global Trade Cost Index. This research uses the estimates of bilateral trade costs for 43 countries and 33 sectors between 2000 and 2018. The index, which is expected to be launched in the first half of 2021, will allow WTO members to monitor the evolution of global trade costs and understand what the main components of trade costs are and who faces the largest trade costs.

New joint WTO-World Bank publication on trade and gender

The WTO and the World Bank jointly produced a report – “Women and Trade: The Role of Trade in Promoting Gender Equality” – which shows that trade can substantially benefit women. Firms that engage in international trade employ more women than non-exporting firms (33 per cent...
of their workforce on average compared with 24 per cent for non-exporting firms). Trade brings better-paid jobs and improved working conditions. In general, open economies have higher levels of gender equality. Trade creates an incentive to extend women’s access to education, technology and legal rights.

The report identifies three trends that can further empower women economically: the rise of the services economy, the development of global value chains and the adoption of digital technologies. The WTO has a key role to play, the report stresses. Ongoing talks related to services, agriculture (which employs a large number of women in developing countries), electronic commerce and micro, small and medium sized enterprises are key to identifying and eliminating barriers to women’s participation in trade.

**Trade Economist Thematic Award**

The WTO launched a new competition for thematic research, which focused in 2020 on how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected trade and trade policy. Majune Kraido Socrates of the University of Nairobi won the Trade Economist Thematic Award for 2020. His paper, “The Effect of Lockdown Policies on International Trade Flows from Developing Countries: Event Study Evidence from Kenya”, was praised by the Selection Committee. He received a prize of CHF 5,000.

**WTO Essay Award for Young Economists**

The winner of the 2020 WTO Essay Award for Young Economists was Xiang Ding of Harvard University for his paper “Industry Linkages from Joint Production”. He received a prize of CHF 5,000.

Xiang Ding’s paper provides novel and important evidence on cross-industry linkages, particularly joint production arising from industries sharing knowledge inputs, such as research and development, information technology and other professional services.

The paper finds that in multiple product firms, a rise in demand in one client industry also increases the firm’s sales to other industries. These positive cross-product linkages are only found where industries share knowledge inputs. Knowledge inputs have a special role in joint production because they allow capital to be more flexibly deployed across a firm’s various products to find its best match.

These findings have implications for the re-evaluation of trade restrictions. It finds that there is less of a tendency for protectionist policies to raise consumer prices if the measures are focused on knowledge-intensive industries. When industries share knowledge, producer prices fall or increase less not only in industries that are directly protected, but also in industries that are jointly produced. According to the Selection Panel, the paper is likely to have a substantial impact on trade policy.

Xiang Ding is from Hong Kong, China. He received his Ph.D. from Harvard University in 2020. He is currently Assistant Professor at Georgetown University, Walsh School of Foreign Service.

**Selection panel**

The Selection Panel for 2020 comprised Beata Javorcik (Professor of Economics, University of Oxford), Robert Koopman (Director, Economic Research and Statistics Division, WTO), Robert Staiger (Professor of Economics, Dartmouth University) and Alberto Trejos (Professor of Economics, INCAE Business School). Roberta Piermartini (Chief of Trade Cost Analysis, Economic Research and Statistics Division, WTO) coordinated the work of the Selection Panel.
Statistics activities

WTO statisticians prepared reports for two Secretariat information notes on trade in medical goods in the context of tackling COVID-19 and helped monitor the impact of the pandemic on merchandise and services trade.

Annual statistical publications – the “World Trade Statistical Review”, “Trade Profiles” and “World Tariff Profiles” – were complemented by a revamped WTO Data online portal (https://data.wto.org/).

The WTO, with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), published the first “Handbook on Measuring Digital Trade”.

Statistical developments related to COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted international trade and global supply chains on an unprecedented scale. WTO statistics on trade flows, services and market access barriers provided accurate and timely information for policymakers. WTO statisticians contributed to various reports and studies to provide information on the significant impact on economies and people.

Two WTO Secretariat information notes on medical goods trade – “Trade in Medical Goods in the Context of Tackling COVID-19” – released in April and December were among the most consulted of the Secretariat’s COVID-19 notes and WTO statistics added insights to various other studies published by the Secretariat.

Monthly and quarterly analyses of a large range of products and services helped monitor trade flows during the COVID-19 pandemic and track trade recovery. Statistics on trade in personal protective equipment, such as face masks, stressed the key role of trade in allowing countries to secure access to critical medical supplies.

Statistical publications and data series

The “World Trade Statistical Review 2020”, the WTO’s flagship statistical publication, offered a detailed analysis of trends for world trade in goods and services, including in value-added terms. It also provided insights into the impact of COVID-19 on trade. “Trade Profiles 2020” provided a series of key indicators on trade in goods and services for 197 economies while “World Tariff Profiles 2020” supplied information on tariffs and non-tariff measures taken by over 170 countries and customs territories.

The WTO Data Portal was revamped and a new Application Programming Interface was launched to improve access to WTO
Statistics. New short-term data on monthly and quarterly trade in commercial services by sector were included in the online database as well as bilateral trade flows detailed by product categories.

**Statistical capacity-building**

The Secretariat set up a new project to improve access to trade and market access statistics. A software module integrated into the UN Conference on Trade and Development’s customs management software “Automated System for Customs Data” aims at facilitating the aggregation, compilation and submission of WTO notifications in an automated and timely way.

A project on developing statistical capacity in Africa for integration into trade in value-added (TiVA) databases was launched in collaboration with the OECD and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, with the goal of improving the coverage of Africa in the OECD and other global TiVA databases. Training activities for African statisticians and a regional seminar involving Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire, Egypt, Nigeria and Senegal were held online in 2020.

WTO statisticians contributed to joint online courses and webinars with UNCTAD, the United Nations and regional statistical agencies for developing economies, exchanging knowledge on best practices in data collection, compilation and analysis of merchandise trade and trade in services statistics. Online tools to obtain and disseminate market access information and trade statistics are regularly presented in thematic courses, regional and advanced trade policy courses and seminars tailored to national needs.

The WTO Secretariat provided capacity building on trade in value added and global value chain indicators and continued its assistance to the African Union Commission in providing support to members in regional trade negotiations.

**International cooperation**

The WTO published jointly with the OECD and the IMF the first version of the “Handbook on Measuring Digital Trade”, which includes a conceptual framework for measuring digital cross-border transactions around which national efforts can be targeted. It also provides a mechanism to bring together existing national and international efforts on measuring digital trade or dimensions of it that could be used to identify and develop best practice.

A dedicated online portal for tracking trade-related Sustainable Development Goals was launched (https://sdgtrade.org/). The initiative streamlines reporting and has led to enhanced cooperation with the International Trade Centre and UNCTAD.

The WTO joined the international statistics community in the effort to assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. It contributed to the UN publication on “How COVID-19 is Changing the World: A Statistical Perspective”, published in May and September, focusing on trade in medical goods and on export restrictions.

**I-TIP**

The WTO’s Integrated Trade Intelligence Portal (I-TIP) is regularly updated to increase the information available on non-tariff measures, services trade policies and trade statistics. As of the end of 2020, more than 62,000 non-tariff measures on trade in goods had been included, up from 56,000 at the end of 2019.
Cooperation with academic institutions

The WTO Chairs Programme (WCP) generated substantial research on trade issues. Chairs from the last four-year cycle of the WCP published 56 articles in peer-reviewed journals and issued seven books.

The year saw a significant increase in WCP outreach events involving governmental policymakers, businesses and civil society groups. The 59 activities organized by the chairs of Phase II represent a threefold increase compared with the previous year.

In December, applications were invited for a third phase of the Chairs Programme. The WTO received a strong increase in applicants compared with the previous four-year cycle.

An independent evaluation recommended doubling the size of the programme to 40 chairs, with a special focus on universities from least-developed countries.

Activities of the Chairs Programme

The 19 academic chairs from the first two four-year phases of the WTO's Chairs Programme (WCP) continued research, teaching and outreach to policy-makers in 2020 on topics related to the multilateral trading system. Phase II chairs alone delivered 28 trade-related courses and diploma programmes, reaching over 2,100 students and Ph.D. candidates.

The research output of the WCP was again substantial. Phase II chairs published 56 articles in peer-reviewed journals, issued seven books on WTO matters and prepared 45 working papers with policy relevance for governments and other stakeholders.

The year also saw a high number of outreach events, with 59 activities organized by phase II chairs. The wider use of webinars and other virtual formats because of the COVID-19 pandemic attracted a large number of participants, including policymakers, the business community, civil society groups and academic networks.

The WCP e-Platform, a dedicated website, continued to facilitate information-sharing to encourage discussion and to promote networking among institutions and individuals associated with the programme.

Preparing for phase III

An independent external evaluation of the WCP was commissioned at the conclusion of phase II at the end of 2018. The report was very positive. It recommended a significant scaling up of the programme to 40 chairs, with a special focus on universities from least-developed countries and from countries that have not yet benefited from the programme, including recently acceding WTO members.

In July, the WTO created the Knowledge Management Academic Outreach Division.

Background

The WTO Chairs Programme (WCP), launched in 2010, aims to enhance understanding of the trading system among academics and policymakers in developing and least-developed countries. Chair-holders are selected through a competitive process. The main objectives of the WCP are to create a network fostering research on trade issues, to provide teaching support for the development and delivery of courses on trade policy and WTO matters, to organize outreach activities to disseminate research, and to provide policy advice to governmental and other stakeholders. The WCP is housed in the WTO’s Knowledge Management Academic Outreach Division.
Advisory Board members and chair-holders

“One of the unsung virtues of the WTO Chairs Programme has been its catalytic role in prompting South-South discussions of trade and cross-country learning.”

Richard Newfarmer, Country Director for Rwanda, Uganda and South Sudan, International Growth Centre.

“The WTO Chairs Programme is the only one among the WTO’s many technical assistance programmes designed to boost the capacity of developing countries by training the next generation of policymakers. The chairs in many countries have become the ‘go-to’ think-tanks on trade issues.”

Henry Gao, Associate Professor of Law at Singapore Management University, Dongfang Scholar Chair Professor at Shanghai Institute of Foreign Trade

“The WTO Chairs Programme has been a valuable tool to enhance the knowledge of the trading system in developing countries.”

Désirée van Gorp, Professor of International Business at Nyenrode Business Universiteit, Visiting Professor at MIP Politecnico di Milano, Italy, and at Renmin University in Beijing, China.

“Where governments are open to broadening their policymaking perimeters, partnering with chair-holders and their teams promotes better informed views on trade policy formulation and its evaluation, enhancing its quality and legitimacy. The Chairs Programme has … heightened the policy relevance of academic research and helped attract promising talent to a field that is central to sustained progress in governance and development.”

Pierre Sauvé, Senior Trade Specialist, Trade and Competitiveness Practice, World Bank Group

“With the recognition that we have received from the WTO for our research … we have been able to form close and strategic partnerships, not only in Southern Africa, but also in East, West and North Africa. Because of the Chairs Programme, we are in a very different place from where we would have been.”

Wilma Viviers, Research Professor of International Trade, North-West University, South Africa

(KMD). It has a section dedicated to academic outreach activities and the launch of the WCP’s third phase, providing a solid institutional footing for the future of the programme. A call for applications for chairs for the next four-year cycle of the programme was issued in December 2020. This generated a strong response, with applicants far exceeding the number for the previous phase.

The WTO Secretariat continued its close interaction with the WCP Advisory Board, an external body composed of scholars who mentor the current chairs. The Board is providing advice and assistance to the Secretariat for the next four-year cycle of the programme.

A WTO book compiling various contributions by chairs, Advisory Board members and WTO staff, entitled “Adapting to the Digital Trade Era: Challenges and Opportunities”, was published in January 2021. The book, the third published under the Chairs Programme, considers how technological advancement, such as the growth of e-commerce and the development of blockchain technology, may contribute to inclusive growth.

The publication contains a foreword by Sigrid Kaag, the Netherlands’ Minister for Foreign Trade and Economic Attractiveness, representing two key donors of phase II of the programme.

Academic Support Programme

WTO staff delivered lectures for undergraduate and postgraduate courses as part of activities implemented in 2020 under the Academic Support Programme (ASP). The cooperation was undertaken in virtual formats because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The ASP engages with academic institutions from developing countries and least-developed countries that are not part of the WTO Chairs Programme.

Several of the activities were related to supporting university competitions on WTO law and increasing knowledge of dispute settlement procedures among students and professors. In particular, the WTO provided support to the John Jackson Moot Court competition (see page 143), including by providing staff to act as panellists in regional inter-university competitions and for the final round of the competition. A particular challenge was adapting the competition to a virtual format due to the pandemic.

In addition, the WTO continued encouraging universities to register academics as participants in online courses offered by the WTO’s E-campus.
Universities participating in the WTO Chairs Programme

Phase I chairs – established in 2010

1. Argentina
   Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO)

2. Barbados
   University of the West Indies, Shridath Ramphal Centre for International Trade Law, Policy and Services

3. Chile
   University of Chile, Institute of International Studies

4. China
   Shanghai Institute of Foreign Trade, School of WTO Research and Education

5. Indonesia
   Universitas Gadjah Mada, Centre for World Trade Studies

6. Jordan
   University of Jordan, Faculty of Business

7. Kenya
   University of Nairobi, School of Economics

8. Mauritius
   University of Mauritius, Department of Economics and Statistics

9. Mexico
   Autonomous Institute of Technology, Centre for International Economic Law

10. Morocco
    Mohammed V-Souissi University, Faculty of Legal, Economic and Social Sciences

11. Russian Federation
    St. Petersburg State University, Faculty of Economics, World Economy Department

12. Senegal
    Cheikh Anta Diop University, Faculty of Economics and Management

13. Singapore
    National University of Singapore, Faculty of Law
Phase II chairs – established in 2014

14 Benin
University
Abomey-Calavi

15 Brazil
Getulio Vargas
Foundation,
São Paulo School
of Economics

16 Oman
Sultan Qaboos
University

17 South Africa
North-West
University

18 Tunisia
University
of Tunis, Tunis
Business School

19 Turkey
Istanbul
Bilgi University