

# Supporting development and building trade capacity

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## Trade and development

- The Committee on Trade and Development discussed initiatives to boost developing economies' trade capacities and advance their integration into the global trading system.
- WTO members welcomed a decision at the 12th Ministerial Conference (MC12) to reinvigorate activities under the E-commerce Work Programme.
- The Committee looked at how to operationalize fully the mandate of the Committee to act as focal point for development work within the WTO.

**T**he Committee on Trade and Development discussed initiatives to boost developing economies' trade capacities and to advance their integration into the global trading system – including in e-commerce – at meetings in 2022. It also looked at how trade is helping developing economies and least-developed countries

### Background

The Committee on Trade and Development is the focal point for the coordination of all work on trade and development issues in the WTO. The Committee deals with a variety of issues, including all developmental issues, technical cooperation and training, and notifications under the Enabling Clause, which allows developed economies to give more favourable treatment to developing economies.

(LDCs) (see page 138) respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and build resilience to future crises. It continued its examination of duty-free, quota-free (DFQF) market access for LDCs.

On e-commerce (see page 80), members welcomed the decision at MC12 to reinvigorate activities under the Work Programme on E-Commerce with the aim of increasing the participation of developing economies and LDCs in digital trade.

Work continued on the link between trade and development, as instructed by trade ministers. In particular, the Committee looked at how to operationalize fully the mandate of the Committee to act as focal point for development work within the WTO. The Committee Chair, Ambassador Usha Chandnee Dwarka-Canabady (Mauritius), encouraged continued engagement among members to make progress on the question.

The Committee held two dedicated sessions on the monitoring mechanism on provisions for special and differential treatment (S&D) for developing economies in WTO agreements and decisions.

The mechanism is designed to be a way to review the implementation of S&D provisions, which range from longer periods for implementing agreements and commitments to providing technical assistance. However, the Chair noted that there were no written submissions, which are required for the monitoring mechanism to become fully operational. She urged members to reach agreement on how to move forward with the mechanism.

The United States, Norway and Japan notified the Committee about generalized system of preferences schemes, under which developed economies grant preferential tariffs to imports from developing economies. On regional trade agreements, the Committee received notification of a protocol to amend the Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Economic Cooperation between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and China.



Notifications were also made concerning the accession of Seychelles to the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), which was subsequently considered by the Committee, and on the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement between India and the United Arab Emirates.

Documents relating to the Latin American Integration Association were considered by the Committee. The Committee also considered the Free Trade Agreement between Morocco and the United Arab Emirates and the Free Trade Agreement between the Gulf Cooperation Council member states and Singapore.

### **Technical cooperation and training**

The WTO's Institute for Training and Technical Cooperation (see page 147) reported to the Committee that requests for local technical assistance activities dropped considerably in 2020 and 2021 amid the COVID-19 pandemic as many WTO members and observers postponed their requests until face-to-face activities could resume.

The WTO technical assistance annual report for 2021 showed that course participation fell 23 per cent compared to 2020 and requests for local activities declined to a historic low. Digital fatigue from extensive use of online solutions for meetings during the COVID-19 restrictions increased global competition for e-learners' time and the difficulties of remote working were also identified as possible contributors to the decline.



## Least-developed countries

- The UN General Assembly adopted the Doha Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries (LDCs) for the decade 2022-31, with trade being a priority area.
- The WTO signed a partnership agreement with the UN Office of the High Commissioner for LDCs (UN-OHRLLS) on implementing trade elements of the Doha Programme.
- LDCs' share in global merchandise exports stayed at 0.93 per cent in 2021, according to a WTO Secretariat note.

### Background

The Sub-Committee on LDCs, established in July 1995 as a subsidiary body to the Committee on Trade and Development, focuses its work on an agreed WTO work programme for LDCs. This programme looks at several systemic issues of importance to LDCs in the multilateral trading system, such as market access, technical assistance and accessions to the WTO.

### Doha Programme of Action for LDCs

In March 2022, the UN General Assembly adopted the Doha Programme of Action for LDCs for the decade 2022-31, with trade featuring among the six priority areas. The programme reflects LDC priorities at the WTO, including implementation of LDC decisions, doubling the LDCs' share in global trade exports, and increasing Aid for Trade (see page 141) to LDCs. Improving LDC participation in digital trade is also a target.

The programme was adopted during the first part of the Fifth UN Conference on the LDCs (LDC5), held in New York, with the second part set for Doha in March 2023. The WTO and the UN Office of the High Representative for LDCs, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing Countries (UN-OHRLLS), in cooperation with the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) and regional UN offices, conducted regional consultations to advance trade elements of the programme. Policy notes were prepared, covering digital trade and the evolving trading landscape, among other topics, for presentation at the UN conference in Doha.

At the 12th Ministerial Conference (MC12), the WTO signed a partnership agreement with UN-OHRLLS on implementation of the Doha Programme. Trade ministers and WTO ambassadors from over 40 LDCs attended the ceremony. "Over the last decade, our members have provided increased trade

A rice farmer at work in Battambang, Cambodia.



## 0.93%

LDC's share  
in global  
merchandise exports

opportunities to expand LDC exports, and the WTO remains the main forum to achieve the Doha Programme of Action targets in the area of trade," DG Okonjo-Iweala said at the signing.

### LDC trade trends

LDCs' share in global merchandise exports stayed at 0.93 per cent in 2021, according to a Secretariat note. LDC's share of global imports also remained unchanged at 1.39 per cent. Import growth has consistently outpaced export growth, with a widening trade deficit (US\$ 113 billion in 2021). The note found that recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic was uneven, with LDCs' share in world commercial services exports declining to 0.49 per cent in 2021 from 0.53 per cent in 2020.

### LDC priorities in global trade

LDC priorities in global trade were discussed at a seminar in December 2022. Over 60 participants, including 35 capital-based officials from over 20 LDCs, discussed MC12 outcomes, the trading environment and ways of strengthening the multilateral trading system.



**Over the last decade, our members have provided increased trade opportunities to expand LDC exports.**

DG Okonjo-Iweala

"National and regional perspectives are vital to enrich our knowledge. I hope the ideas generated at the seminar will serve as an inspiration for other technical assistance programmes of the WTO moving forward," said Ambassador Kadra Ahmed Hassan of Djibouti, Coordinator of the WTO LDC Group.

### Shared experiences

At a meeting in May of the Sub-Committee on LDCs, WTO members focused on initiatives of the International Trade Centre (ITC), the UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) aimed at helping small businesses in LDCs improve their capacity to trade. Beneficiaries in The Gambia, Madagascar and Senegal shared their experiences. In October, WTO members discussed the potential of the African Continental Free Trade Area to support economic growth and development in LDCs.

The Sub-Committee Chair, Ambassador Kirsti Kauppi of Finland, announced in October a new WTO webpage showcasing LDC successes in leveraging trade to improve people's lives. The webpage covers initiatives from East Africa, Djibouti, Togo, Madagascar and The Gambia.

### South-South dialogue

The fifth South-South Dialogue on LDCs and Development under China's LDCs and Accessions Programme was held in Geneva in May, bringing together over 80 delegates. The event offered an opportunity to discuss some forward-looking perspectives on LDC trade priorities. The challenges of graduation from LDC status were also discussed.

"We have to double down on our efforts and deliver results for people in LDCs and around the world. The long stalemate in negotiations here has shaken the WTO's credibility. When I talk to ministers and leaders, they express support for the WTO, and for strengthening it to make it more effective," DG Okonjo-Iweala said in her opening address.

## Small economies

- **Ministers reaffirmed at the 12th Ministerial Conference (MC12) their commitment to the Small Economies' Work Programme and instructed the Committee on Trade and Development to keep monitoring the progress of small economy proposals in WTO bodies.**
- **Ministers instructed the WTO Secretariat to provide relevant information and factual analysis for discussion in the Committee and to work on integrating small economies into the post COVID-19 economy.**

### Background

The Committee on Trade and Development – in dedicated sessions – oversees work on small economies and monitors the progress of proposals from small, vulnerable economies in the various WTO bodies and negotiating groups. Several small economies are small island states.

Harvesting of tea leaves in Sylhet, Bangladesh.



**M**inisters reaffirmed at MC12 their commitment to the Work Programme on Small Economies and instructed the Committee on Trade and Development to continue its work in dedicated session. They instructed the Committee to continue monitoring the progress of small economy proposals in WTO bodies and negotiating groups, with the aim of providing responses to the trade-related issues identified regarding the integration of small, vulnerable economies (SVEs) in the multilateral trading system.

Ministers took note of the work carried out since 2018, including on challenges that small economies experience in their efforts to reduce trade costs, particularly through trade facilitation, on opportunities and challenges for small economies in attracting investments and on the economic and trade impact of natural disasters on small economies.

Ministers instructed the Secretariat to provide relevant information and factual analysis for discussion among members in dedicated sessions, in particular on integrating small economies into the post COVID-19 economy – looking into the effects of the pandemic and the challenges and opportunities it generated.

At the proposal of the SVE Group, members agreed to an outline for a background document to be prepared by the Secretariat delving into trends in merchandise and services trade for small economies, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the challenges and opportunities for small economies in the post COVID-19 recovery phase.



## Aid for Trade

- Aid for Trade disbursements rose to US\$ 48.7 billion in 2020, from US\$ 47.2 billion in 2019. A total of US\$ 556.4 billion has been disbursed since 2006.
- The WTO held its 8th Global Review of Aid for Trade in July, including high-level sessions attended by heads of intergovernmental organizations and ministers. Over 1,000 people participated in the event.
- The Review discussed the role of Aid for Trade in supporting environmentally sustainable trade that leverages the potential of digital connectivity and promotes economic inclusion, especially for women.

Opening plenary session of the 8th Aid for Trade Global Review at the WTO in July.

### Background

Aid for Trade helps developing economies, and particularly least-developed countries, trade. The WTO-led Aid for Trade initiative encourages developing economy governments and donors to recognize the role that trade can play in development. In particular, the initiative seeks to mobilize resources to address the trade-related constraints identified by developing and least-developed countries.

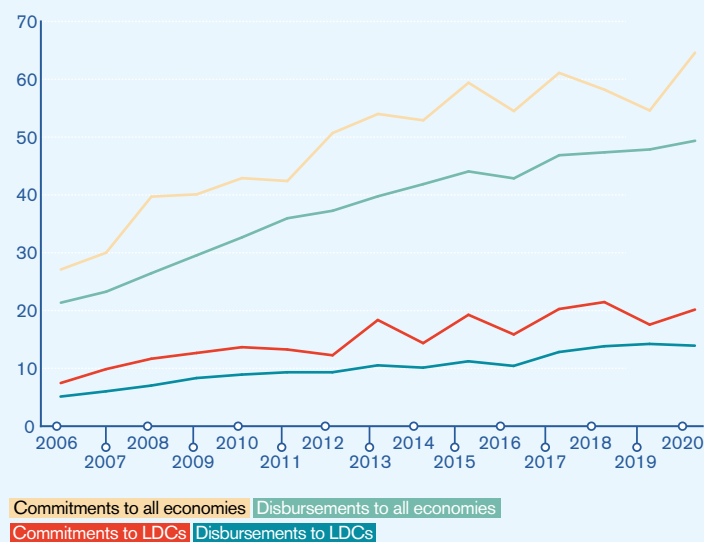
### Aid for Trade financing

The most recent Aid for Trade data published by the OECD shows that total disbursements rose to US\$ 48.7 billion in 2020, up from US\$ 47.2 billion in 2019 (see figures 16 and 17). Commitments reached US\$ 64.6 billion in 2020, up from US\$ 54.6 billion in 2019. Aid for Trade figures are in 2020 US dollar constant prices, which may account for slight variations from previous reports.

Between 2006 and 2020, the last year for which figures are available, the total amount of Aid for Trade, part of official development aid, disbursed to developing economies reached US\$ 556.4 billion. Some US\$ 480 billion in development finance was also provided at non-concessional rates.

Disbursements have increased in every region since the launch of the initiative (see Figure 17). In 2020, flows showed a small decline in Africa, Asia and Oceania but increased elsewhere, particularly to Europe. The Americas saw the most notable change, from US\$ 3.1 billion in 2019 to US\$ 4.9 billion in 2020, an increase of 58 per cent.

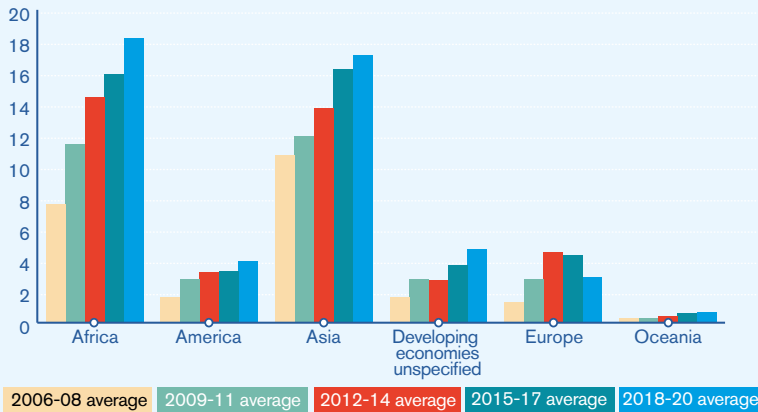
**Figure 16:** Aid for Trade commitments and disbursements by income group (in US\$ billion, 2020 prices)



Source: OECD-CRS (Creditor Reporting System).



**Figure 17: Aid for Trade disbursements by continent**  
(in US\$ billion, 2020 prices)



Source: OECD-CRS (Creditor Reporting System).

### Aid for Trade work programme

The Committee on Trade and Development continued implementing its 2020-22 Aid for Trade work programme – “Empowering Connected, Sustainable Trade” – the theme of the 8th Aid for Trade Global Review (see below). Members, development institutions, UN agencies and multilateral development banks reported on their activities.

The Committee organized workshops on the themes of digital connectivity and economic diversification, maximizing the economic diversification impact of Aid for Trade and on the findings of the 2022 Aid for Trade monitoring and evaluation exercise – self-assessment questionnaires submitted by governments from developing economies and least-developed countries, donors, regional economic communities and South-South partners. Members were able to exchange views on how Aid for Trade can support the transition towards environmentally sustainable development and promote digital connectivity and women’s economic empowerment (see page 150).



**1,000+**  
participants at the  
biennial Aid for  
Trade Global  
Review in July

### 2022 Global Review of Aid for Trade

The WTO held its biennial Aid for Trade Global Review in July, with the focus on helping developing economies and least-developed countries recover from multiple crises and build resilience to ensure long-term sustainable development. The review included 53 sessions, attended by over 1,000 participants, including 25 heads of international agencies or ministers.

The event was structured around three themes – women’s economic empowerment, digital connectivity, and environmental sustainability. “The Aid for Trade initiative can and should aim to help develop critical trade infrastructure while supporting climate friendly, resilient and socio economically inclusive outcomes,” DG Okonjo-Iweala declared.

“The Aid for Trade Global Review 2022” publication, launched by the WTO at the opening plenary session, found that the COVID-19 pandemic had prompted a readjustment of Aid for Trade priorities, with both recipients and donors citing strategies developed specifically to support recovery from the economic impact of the pandemic. Digital connectivity emerged as an important factor for economic resilience during the pandemic. Along with e-commerce, these are areas where public-private partnerships are flourishing, yet there is still considerable scope to expand Aid for Trade financing in this area, the report said.

The DG told the opening session that the pandemic, combined with numerous contemporary challenges, had highlighted the need for increasing trade capacities of developing economies and least-developed countries (LDCs). The Aid for Trade initiative was responding to these crises, with record high disbursements and commitments. She called for increased private sector involvement in trade-related development assistance to support recovery and resilience. She also suggested rebranding “Aid for Trade” as “Investment for Trade” to underline the importance of greater public-private sector cooperation.

## Enhanced Integrated Framework

- **US\$ 90 million worth of projects were supported by the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) as at the end of 2022, with the aim of harnessing trade to promote the development of least-developed countries (LDCs).**
- **EIF, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation (ITFC) launched a project to help eight African countries integrate into the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).**
- **Building capacity remained a central feature of EIF support, with a focus on building skills around monitoring, evaluation and learning, project implementation and effective communication.**

**T**he EIF continued to build on the twin pillars of institutional and policy support and catalysing productive capacity in LDCs. Since the start of EIF operations in 2010, over 16,000 micro,

### Background

The EIF is the only multilateral partnership dedicated exclusively to assisting LDCs in their use of trade as an engine for growth, sustainable development and poverty reduction. The EIF partnership of 51 countries, 24 donors and eight partner agencies works closely with governments, development organizations, civil society and academia. Together, they leverage know-how to tackle the world's most pressing trade-for-development issues. The WTO houses the Executive Secretariat of the EIF.

small and medium-sized enterprises have received support. This has helped to generate US\$ 600 million in additional exports and contributed to the creation of more than 36,000 jobs.

Gender and environment remain priority cross-cutting issues, with women constituting over 60 per cent of beneficiaries. EIF resources have leveraged more than US\$ 100 million in co-finance from LDC governments, development partners and the private sector. EIF capacity-building work with trade ministries has helped to create 59 trade and investment-promoting regulations, such as a new intellectual property law in Rwanda.

### Delivering on support to LDCs

The total value of projects supported by the EIF in phase two of its work stood at US\$ 90 million at the end of 2022, with projects totalling US\$ 64 million under implementation. The EIF has secured over US\$ 52 million in co-financing from partners in phase two, with all ongoing projects to be closed in 2023.



## 36,000+

The EIF has contributed to the creation of more than 36,000 jobs since 2010

Processing of tea leaves for export in Phongsaly, Lao PDR, a project financed by EIF.





Targeting a wide range of LDC priorities, projects include institutional and policy support, such as assisting Timor-Leste in its accession to the WTO (see page 42). Other projects include linking postal and customs services, trade policy development, leveraging of climate and trade financing, and women's economic empowerment (see page 150).

March saw the launch of a new project aimed at helping eight African countries integrate into the AfCFTA, which came into force in 2019. Led by the EIF, UNECA and the ITFC, the project was launched at a virtual event bringing together the ministers of trade of Niger, Senegal and Togo and other government representatives of Burkina Faso, Guinea and Mauritania. The remaining two countries, financed through the partner organizations, are Côte d'Ivoire and Tunisia.

"This programme illustrates the spirit of partnership needed to support the implementation of the AfCFTA," DG Okonjo-Iweala said in her opening remarks at the event.



**US\$ 90 million**

The total value of projects supported by the EIF as of end-2022

### Independent evaluation

Building on the findings of an independent evaluation of the EIF, which ended in January 2022, the EIF Board increased the focus on finalizing remaining operations under phase two of its work. The EIF partnership also began work on identifying options for the future of trade-related technical assistance (see page 147) to LDCs.

### Focus on sustainability of results

A core focus of the EIF has been to establish local implementation units in LDCs to coordinate Aid for Trade projects and support the objective of mainstreaming trade in government policy. By 2022, 41 of the 51 EIF countries had integrated these units into their government structures. In addition to the support these units provide for the sustainability of projects, there has been a focus on broader sustainability, including dedicated sustainability reviews in Cambodia, Senegal and Tanzania.

### Stimulating South-South learning

Capacity-building remained a central feature of EIF support, with a focus on building skills around monitoring, evaluation and learning, project implementation and closure, and effective communication. Three capacity-building events brought together over 140 EIF partners from LDCs and other implementing partners in Bangkok, Addis Ababa and Lome to share lessons and best practices.

### Trade, climate change and LDCs

Interest and engagement around trade and climate change issues accelerated, with the EIF collaborating with partners to work with The Gambia on linking trade and climate policies and financing mechanisms. A seven-part series of articles on trade and climate change in LDCs was published on the EIF's Trade for Development website.



## Standards and Trade Development Facility

- The Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) Working Group approved eight projects and seven project preparation grants, totalling US\$ 7 million, to help developing economies meet international standards on food safety, plant and animal health and access international markets.
- Lessons from STDF projects and other work were shared at over 60 in-person and virtual events, attended by some 5,000 participants from international and regional organizations, government authorities and the private sector.
- An external assessment recognized STDF efforts to promote gender equality but called for more action to mainstream gender considerations across STDF activities.
- Sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) experts participated in May in the STDF's first climate change week, which explored the implications of climate change on STDF areas of activity.

A biopesticide development project funded by the STDF in Limpopo, South Africa.

# STDF

## US\$ 7 million

The value of projects approved by the STDF in 2022

**G**uided by the 2020-24 Strategy – “Safe and Inclusive Trade Horizons for Developing Countries” – the STDF worked to promote increased and sustainable SPS capacity in developing economies. With STDF support, government authorities in Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean upgraded SPS legislation, rolled out new procedures for surveillance of plant and animal diseases, introduced new technologies for improved management of SPS risks, and improved public-private cooperation.

Good practices developed with the STDF's support are responding to SPS challenges, as called for in the MC12 SPS Declaration (see page 91) in support of global food security.

### STDF projects deliver safe trade

In 2022, 13 project grants (PGs) and ten project preparation grants (PPGs) were completed. In Burkina Faso, the STDF helped farmers to control aflatoxins in maize, reducing contamination by up to 92 per cent and contributing to an increase in maize exports. In Uganda, STDF financing supported a

### Background

The STDF is a global partnership helping developing economies improve food safety, animal and plant health and meet sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) requirements for trade, based on international standards. Established by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH), the World Bank, the World Health Organization and the WTO, the STDF contributes to sustainable economic growth, poverty reduction and food security. In 2022, it was financed by voluntary contributions from Australia, Canada, the European Union, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the United States.

public-private approach for surveillance and certification systems, dramatically reducing the threat posed by plant pests to horticulture exports (see page 23).

In Latin America and the Caribbean, a regional project enabled 28 laboratories in eight countries to meet international testing standards, improving detection of transboundary diseases. In Mongolia, the STDF piloted an animal identification and registration system, strengthening animal disease control and export certification.

**New projects**

The STDF Working Group, made up of partners, donors and developing-economy experts, approved eight new project grants and seven PPGs worth over US\$ 7 million, up from US\$ 3.6 million in 2021. Eight of these new projects and preparation grants are regional and will aim to promote harmonized approaches for improved SPS outcomes.

Since 2004, more than US\$ 67 million has been approved for 238 projects, a third of them regional. Least-developed and other low-income economies have benefited from 64 per cent of STDF project funds (see Figure 18).

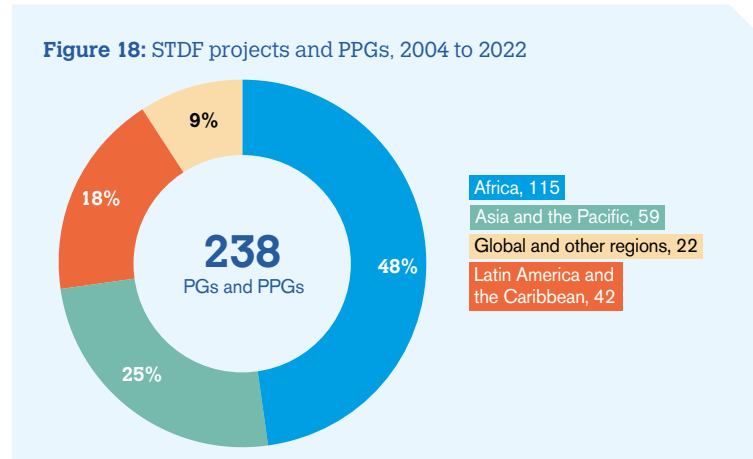
**Spreading knowledge**

The STDF continued to promote awareness of cross-cutting topics, including public-private partnerships, e-certification, good regulatory practices and the STDF's P-IMA framework, which offers an evidence-based approach to improve SPS planning.

Experiences and lessons from STDF's projects and other work were shared at over 60 events, attended by some 5,000 participants from international and regional organizations, government authorities and the private sector. Over 90 Working Group members and other experts from some 40 organizations participated in STDF practitioner groups, hosting online webinars to share experiences on SPS themes.

The STDF guide on good regulatory practices has been downloaded more than 800 times since its publication in late 2021.

**Figure 18: STDF projects and PPGs, 2004 to 2022**



**External gender assessment**

In November, the STDF released the results of an external gender assessment that looked at how gender equality is being addressed in the STDF's work. The assessment should help define an STDF gender action plan, complementing the WTO's work on trade and gender (see page 150).

The assessment stemmed from a realization that women, especially those in low-income economies, face more difficulties in accessing the resources and skills required to comply with SPS standards.

The assessment urged the Working Group to raise awareness on gender issues across the STDF partnership and to give greater visibility to these issues.

**First STDF climate change week**

In May, SPS experts participated in the first-ever STDF climate change week. In a series of webinars, participants explored the challenges of climate change for food safety, and animal and plant health capacity, and identified opportunities to respond to emerging risks and to facilitate safe trade.

The week showcased how trade can play a positive role in helping tackle the effects of climate change on the world's food supply. Due to climate change, regions will increasingly face food deficits, requiring increased trade to meet demand.



## Technical cooperation and training

- The WTO Secretariat gradually resumed face-to-face technical assistance activities while continuing to offer virtual delivery methods.
- The Secretariat conducted approximately 120 technical assistance activities, 50 per cent more than in 2021. E-learning courses increased to 139, with eight new courses added.
- Approximately 5,500 participants benefited from local, regional and global technical assistance activities, and over 3,400 e-learning course enrolments were completed.
- Africa remained the region with the highest participation in e-learning courses, with 37 per cent of total participants.

The WTO Secretariat resumed face-to-face technical assistance in 2022 in response to the improved COVID-19 situation.

**D**ue to the improved COVID-19 situation, the WTO Secretariat resumed face-to-face local, regional and global technical assistance activities while also maintaining virtual methods of delivery. This resulted in 120 technical assistance activities during the year (excluding e-learning courses), which was 50 per cent more than in 2021.

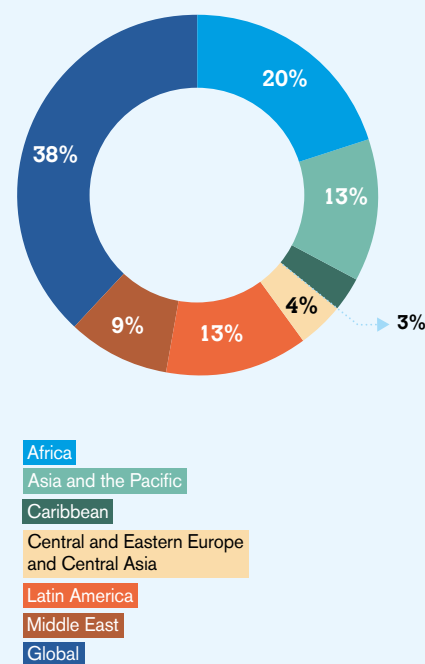
The number of e-learning courses offered by the Secretariat increased to 139, with eight new courses added. Over 50 per cent of all participants accessed their training through e-learning on the WTO's online platform.

Approximately 5,500 participants benefited from local, regional and global technical assistance activities and over 3,400 e-learning course enrolments were completed (with most participants doing multiple courses). Compared with the previous year, the overall number of training activities increased by one-third but was still short of pre-COVID-19 levels.

### Background

The Institute for Training and Technical Cooperation coordinates the WTO's technical assistance programmes. Its activities include e-learning, global and regional training courses, academic programmes and workshops at local and regional level. The technical assistance programmes help WTO members better understand their rights and obligations in the multilateral trading system. This strengthens their capacity to benefit from participation in the system.

Figure 19: Technical assistance activities by region in 2022



## French and Irish Mission Internship Programme



**Mohammed Wakil Bukar,**  
Nigeria

The programme was an eye-opener, with a great amount of experience and knowledge. The training activities, experience and exchange of knowledge and ideas across trade policy and negotiation processes at the WTO and the multilateral trading system in general are unquantifiable. I had helpful learning opportunities on different thematic areas of the WTO and hope to contribute positively towards promotion of the multilateral trading system. It is an honour and privilege to be part of this great programme and thanks to the WTO and the sponsors (France and Ireland) for the opportunity."

## Netherlands Trainee Programme



**Alice Tumbo,**  
Kenya

"My journey through the Netherlands Trainee Programme has been a career and character-building experience. The exposure that I gained at the WTO Secretariat in terms of facilitating both regular work and negotiations in a multilateral setting was invaluable. The programme also provided an opportunity to build useful networks among colleagues at the Secretariat and fellow trainees. The numerous meetings and discussions with other institutions have broadened my outlook on the multilateral trading system. My capacity to deliver on my country's trade agenda has been greatly enhanced."

Consistent with past trends, Africa had the highest percentage of overall technical assistance activities (20 per cent) followed by the Asia-Pacific region and Latin America (13 per cent each), Arab and Middle East region (9 per cent), Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia (4 per cent) and the Caribbean (3 per cent). Africa also had the highest participation in e-learning courses (37 per cent) followed by Asia-Pacific (28 per cent). Twenty-seven per cent of e-learning courses were undertaken by participants from least-developed countries (LDCs).

Activities were implemented under the 2022-23 technical assistance and training plan, which has continued with the "results-based management" approach to training activities. Guidelines and benchmarks helped to maintain a high standard of content, consistent teaching methods and regular evaluation of all WTO technical assistance activities.

The largest number of activities implemented in 2022 (38 per cent) were "global" activities for participants from all WTO beneficiary members and observers and not targeted at any specific region or economy. The remaining 62 per cent were local and regional activities (see Figure 19), with the majority delivered at local level, in line with the Secretariat's demand-driven approach.

### Participation in technical assistance activities

Women represented nearly 50 per cent of participants for all WTO technical assistance activities. Roughly 63 per cent of technical assistance activities (including e-learning courses) were delivered in English, 20 per cent in French, 7 per cent in Spanish and the remaining 11 per cent in more than one language, using interpreters.

Technical assistance continued to be provided for countries seeking to join the WTO (see page 45), with several government officials from acceding countries participating in face-to-face and remotely delivered technical assistance events.

### Internship programmes

In 2022, consistent with past trends, most government officials completing WTO internships were from LDCs and other low-income countries in Africa and the Asia-Pacific region, with participation reflecting gender balance, in line with the objectives of the programmes.

Nineteen participants (eight women and eleven men) completed the French and Irish Mission Internship Programme, which offers a ten-month placement to a capital-based official at the selected member's mission in Geneva. Twelve participants (eight women and four men) completed the Netherlands Trainee Programme, which also runs for ten months. Five officials (three women and two men) participated in the Regional Coordinator Internship Programme, and three interns (two women and one man) were engaged in the Accession Internship Programme.

Twelve young professionals (seven women and five men) were recruited for the Young Professionals Programme in 2022, using a merit-based selection process. The young professionals come from WTO members with no more than one professional staff in the WTO Secretariat to improve opportunities for young professionals from members under-represented at the WTO (see page 189).

### Financing technical assistance

The bulk of the technical assistance programme is financed by the Global Trust Fund through voluntary contributions from WTO members. There has been a gradual decrease in voluntary contributions for over a decade. In 2022, total contributions were CHF 3.9 million, down from CHF 5.4 million in 2021.

Other funding sources include the WTO regular budget for Geneva-based courses and local technical assistance activities – CHF 4.8 million for 2022 – and contributions from other trust funds (such as the French and Irish Mission Internship Programme and the Netherlands Trainee Programme), which totalled CHF 2.5 million in 2022.

## Regional Coordinator Internship



**Jonah Taravaki,**  
Vanuatu

“The RCI Programme gave me opportunities to explore important WTO meetings, such as the General Council, TRIPS Council, Committee on Customs Valuation, Committee on Agriculture, Budget and Finance, Market Access, etc, and learn from the discussions.

I had the privilege to take part in the retreats organized by the WTO on fisheries and agriculture.

These retreats are important for the Pacific in addressing fisheries issues in relation to the MC12 outcomes and agriculture, especially with regards to the food security crisis. The experience is amazing, building courage and confidence.”

## Young Professionals Programme



**Anastasiia Koltunova,**  
Ukraine

“During my tenure, I had the privilege to contribute to the multifaceted and dynamic work of the Trade and Environment Division, both in the areas of technical barriers to trade (TBT) and trade and environment. I had a unique opportunity to broaden my knowledge on linkages between trade, on the one hand, and climate change, public health and digital issues, on the other, and to expand my expertise in WTO dispute settlement.”



## Trade and women's empowerment

- The WTO and the WTO Gender Research Hub launched the first World Trade Congress on Gender to discuss women's empowerment through trade.
- The Trade and Gender Unit focused on promoting gender-responsive trade policy making, driving research on trade and gender and making Aid for Trade work for women.
- The WTO launched the WTO Research Database on Trade and Gender, a one-stop source for examining the trade and gender nexus from various angles.

The WTO and the WTO Gender Research Hub in December organized the inaugural edition of the World Trade Congress on Gender, the first time the WTO has brought together researchers and government officials to discuss women's empowerment through trade.

Under the theme "Gender Equality for Sustainable Trade and Recovery," the congress attracted more than 80 speakers for its 15 sessions covering the latest findings on harnessing gender-responsive trade policies to help the world recover from multiple crises created by the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, high energy and fuel prices and climate change.

Women are harder hit by global crises and research is vital to ensure trade policy makes an effective contribution to a gender-responsive recovery, the congress heard. "Crises are not gender neutral. We need to act, and we need to act now," DG Okonjo-Iweala said at the opening session. "We are moving in the right direction but we have a long way to go. We need good research to show us the way," she added.

The Gender Research Hub is a global network of trade and gender experts, whose core participants include the OECD, UNCTAD, the IMF, the World Bank, the ITC, the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and

DG Okonjo-Iweala opens the inaugural World Trade Congress on Gender at the WTO on 5 December.

the Caribbean, the WTO Chairs Programme and prestigious universities.

### Priority areas

In 2022, the WTO Trade and Gender Unit focused its work on three priority areas – promoting gender-responsive trade policy making, driving research on trade and gender globally, and making Aid for Trade (see page 141) work for women.

The Unit's Trade&Gender360° Strategy, a capacity-building programme on trade and gender for government officials and women entrepreneurs, aims to enhance members' knowledge of trade and gender equality and to provide training programmes for government officials. The programmes enable officials to address women's trade-related challenges and to participate in the formulation and implementation of gender policies, strategies and programmes.

A total of 53 government officials from over 30 WTO members completed a training course on trade and gender held in March and April. Participants were given guidance on integrating gender considerations into their work and local trade policies.

The Research Hub organized three workshops where trade and gender experts and external stakeholders discussed current issues related to trade and gender. The workshops focused on access to trade finance for women entrepreneurs, gender data collection and the integration of gender issues into WTO work.

### Women's Day

In a video message to mark International Women's Day on 8 March 2022, the DG said that trade must be used as a vehicle for ending the marginalization of women in the global economy amid widening gender inequalities stemming from the COVID-19 crisis. "Narrowing gender gaps in trade and the wider economy is not just the morally right thing to do, it is the smart economic thing to do," she said.

The DG announced that an independent agency will make recommendations for

specific gender-responsive programmes and actions by the WTO Secretariat. "Achieving gender balance and inclusiveness both internally and externally are two sides of the same coin. Both are part of the WTO's efforts to become gender-responsive," she said.

### Database and monitoring exercise

In April, the WTO launched the WTO Research Database on Trade and Gender, a one-stop source with more than 140 research papers and publications examining the trade and gender nexus from various angles. The new policy tool complements work of the Informal Working Group on Trade and Gender (see page 72) on issues related to gender data collection in trade.

The Aid for Trade monitoring and evaluation exercise (see page 141) shows that more than 90 per cent of WTO members integrate gender issues in their programmes, supporting women entrepreneurs through capacity building. For the first time, members have introduced "non-trade" issues in their programming, such as gender-based violence. The challenges faced by members pertain mostly to impact assessment and data collection.



## 90%+

Aid for Trade monitoring showed that more than 90 per cent of WTO members integrate gender issues in their programmes

Panellists at the World Trade Congress on Gender in a session on the economic implications of gender-based violence.

