



## 11 | Technical assistance activities of the WTO

The WTO supports African countries' capacity-building needs through its technical assistance (TA) programme. In 2019, the WTO continued to enhance human and institutional capacity development on multilateral trade issues in Africa through the biennial Training and Technical Assistance Plan (TA Plan). The TA Plan is the framework that identifies priorities and mechanisms for implementation of TA activities, sources of funding and anticipated results. African countries are accorded priority

in the implementation of many of the trade-related technical assistance activities.

In 2019, Africa benefited from numerous national, regional and global activities. These activities cover the whole spectrum of the WTO work programme, including negotiations. The activities are organized in response to specific requests from the countries based on their needs.

Activities undertaken for African countries include national and regional activities on various WTO subjects, as well as specialized courses held in Geneva. In addition to these activities, African participants completed various online courses through the WTO E-Campus. Africa has the highest number of registrations for WTO online courses.

The WTO Secretariat undertook just under 300 technical assistance activities in 2019, including both online and in-person programmes. The remaining 47 per cent were “global” activities (including online courses), mostly held in Geneva and aimed at participants from all WTO members and observers. Sixteen per cent of activities were focused on African countries, the highest of any region (WTO, 2020). There have been 50 in-person activities, both regional and national, including seminars and workshops on trade negotiation skills, e-tourism, the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), the SPS Agreement, the TBT Agreement, fisheries subsidies, and trade policy courses.

Internal issues such as funding for local costs may inhibit some countries with regard to taking advantage of all WTO Institute for Training and Technical Cooperation (ITTC) activities or opportunities. Finances remain a significant factor which can prevent African countries from taking full advantage of WTO ITTC activities. In fact, African countries are frequently affected by administrative measures due to an inability to make their annual contribution to the WTO.

African countries continue to be major beneficiaries of several other WTO TA initiatives. This includes the Netherlands Trainee Programme, which sponsors junior public officials and provides them with the opportunity to learn about matters dealt with within the WTO, under the direction of staff members of the WTO, with particular attention given to African countries. The French and Irish Mission Internship Programme which also sponsors the

attachment of officials to their countries' Geneva resident missions, gives Africa and LDCs priority consideration in selection.

The WTO Secretariat has continued to provide substantive and analytical support for African delegations' improved participation in the multilateral trading system. This support is provided at the technical, ambassadorial and ministerial-level engagements of these members. The WTO's continuous support for the work of the African and LDC groups enables these delegations to remain active in the WTO's work and to keep their needs and priorities at its forefront.

The WTO Secretariat has continued its support for Africa's integration efforts. During the negotiations of the AfCFTA, the WTO Secretariat positively responded to requests for technical assistance from the African Union Commission. The WTO Secretariat is also working closely with African Union officials and with relevant agencies towards further technical support in the implementation phase of the AfCFTA.

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**African countries are accorded priority in the implementation of many of the WTO's technical assistance activities.**