WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

AID FOR TRADE WEBINAR ON LEVERAGING SOUTH-SOUTH TRADE AND TRIANGULAR COOPERATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

23 JUNE 2023

1. On 23 June 2023, the WTO Secretariat organized a webinar titled "Leveraging South-South Trade and Triangular Cooperation for Sustainable Development". It was attended by approximately 60 participants online, mostly drawn from Geneva-based delegations. This was in accordance with the 2023-2024 Aid-for-Trade Work Programme agreed by Members on 10 February 2023.

2. The webinar explored how South-South trade and Triangular cooperation can help developing countries address trade-related infrastructure constraints and so grow their trade. Panellists, including, academics, representatives from international organizations, and beneficiaries from the private sector, engaged in discussions on policy perspectives and shared practical experiences at global, regional, and national levels.

3. DDG Zhang and the Director of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) delivered opening remarks, acknowledging the tremendous value and growth potential of South-South and Triangular cooperation. DDG Zhang highlighted the growing importance of South-South trade, which has increased from 17% in 2005 to 28% in 2021, representing a 50% growth since 2019. South Asia and East Asia have witnessed a growth of over 65 percent and Latin America of about 45 percent. DDG Zhang encouraged partners engaged in South-South and triangular cooperation to utilize the Aid-for-Trade platform as a means to exchange their experiences, expertise, and good practices. He emphasized the importance of seizing this opportunity to establish enduring collaborations, share best practices, and develop innovative solutions that will contribute to a brighter and more prosperous future for all.

4. Recognizing that trade had emerged as a prominent focus in South-South cooperation initiatives, the director of UNOSSC stated their commitment to enhancing collaboration with the WTO and Aid-for-Trade Initiative, towards strengthening the capabilities of developing countries to effectively engage in global trade.

5. The initial session focused on policy perspectives regarding the trends in South-South cooperation, particularly in supporting trade growth objectives and sustainable development.

6. The discussions highlighted the significant role of South-South and Triangular cooperation in mobilizing foreign direct investments (FDI). Professor Ge ShunQi from Naikai University in China emphasized China's efforts in strengthening FDI in Africa through Special Economic Zones, while calling for

increased FDI to Southern partners. Professor Sachin Chaturvedi, the Director General of India's Research and Information System for Developing Countries, echoed the call for more FDI to be mobilized and emphasized the importance of enhancing participation in global value chains. He also highlighted the need to improve South-South partners' access to trade finance, technology, and development assistance.

7. The OECD representative highlighted that development financing through triangular cooperation is experiencing a positive upward trend. However, there is much more that can be done to scale up partnerships. The OECD will delve further into this topics during its 7th International Meeting on Triangular Cooperation, scheduled in October 2023.

8. The Director-General of Thailand International Cooperation Agency (TICA) presented Thailand's journey from being a recipient of technical and economic assistance to becoming an active contributor in the field of development cooperation. Agriculture, food security, and adaptation to climate change have been highlighted as the priorities for their technical assistance activities.

9. The subsequent session of the webinar showcased practical experiences and insights from Aid for Trade delivery organizations and their project beneficiaries. The representative from the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) presented a project named PAMPAT Tunisia, which aims to boost industrial production in Tunisian export-based sectors by increasing value and diversifying exports with the objective of deepening companies' access to global markets. UNIDO also referred to the opening of a dedicated office for South-South and Triangular Industrial Cooperation and the growing focus on sustainability in their work.

10. The International Trade Centre (ITC) described how it is helping micro, small and medium-sized (MSMEs) enterprises in developing countries harness the benefits that South-South cooperation brings for business development. ITC is engaged in a triangular cooperation project with the United Kingdom and China to increase foreign investments and business partnerships in agro-processing and light manufacturing in Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, and Zambia.

11. The representative from Quality Pulse Exporters, Tanzania, highlighted the positive impact of a triangular cooperation project between the UK and ITC, called SITA (Supporting Indian trade and investment for Africa). This project has greatly assisted the export company, specializing in processed agro commodities, in addressing challenges related to credit access, buyer connections, and the establishment of reliable procurement and distribution systems.

12. Copies of presentations are available at the event webpage on the WTO website.