



6 GOAL 17: PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

6.1 Fostering partnerships to build back better trade capacity in developing countries after COVID-19

6.1.1 Aid for Trade

The WTO Secretariat and WTO members recognize the need to work in partnership with other international organizations and development partners to improve the capacity of developing countries and LDCs to participate more fully in international trade. Central to this goal is the Aid for Trade initiative, a WTO-led partnership that helps developing countries and LDCs use trade more effectively to achieve sustainable development. The 2020-22 Aid for Trade Work Programme highlights sustainable trade and focuses on how to empower developing countries, especially LDCs, to seize the trade opportunities resulting from sustainability, responsible and circular production and the green economy.

In fact, the next Aid for Trade Global Review, “Empowered Connected Sustainable Trade”, will be held at the WTO in Geneva in mid-2022. The Review is influential in highlighting areas where developing countries and LDCs need support to overcome supply-side constraints limiting their participation in global trade. It also helps galvanize support to address these issues so that developing countries derive maximum benefit from trade. The monitoring and evaluation exercise underpinning the Review will focus particularly on understanding the opportunities that green growth and digital connectivity offer to meet multiple targets in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda while promoting economic and export diversification.

Another partnership, the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) serves as a springboard for mobilizing Aid for Trade and, more recently, private sector investment in the LDCs. The efficiency of these

investments is equally important ensuring they are coherent and targeted towards national priorities. EIF projects cut across all technical areas of Aid for Trade, including trade-related infrastructure and building productive capacity for trade. Additionally, the EIF has collaborated with partners to deliver projects that advocate for trade-related policies that benefit women and increase trade capacity and access to international markets for women entrepreneurs. These include strategic partnerships with the International Trade Centre (ITC) on the SheTrades initiative, with the South Asia Women Development Forum, the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), Fair Trade International and the East Africa Women in Business Platform.

6.1.2 Strengthening partnerships for bolstering LDC trade and development

At the request of the LDC group, the WTO, jointly with the EIF, has been helping LDCs to better understand trade-related impacts of graduation from LDC status, and 2021 marked the completion of these efforts, resulting in 24 analytical reports and 30 capacity-building and outreach events benefitting close to 1,000 participants, including LDC delegations in Geneva and the high-level government officials in capitals.

A report on “Trade impacts of LDC graduation” reviewed in detail the possible implications of graduation for market access, WTO rules and development cooperation. The WTO also partnered with several trade and development experts from academia to assess health and trade impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on graduating LDCs and to shed light on emerging priorities.

In addition, in 2022 the WTO together with the EIF, ITC, UNCTAD and the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) published an interagency report “Textiles and clothing for Asian graduating LDCs: challenges and options”. This is one of the sectors that is likely to face significant

challenges for certain LDCs following graduation. The report builds on the strengths of each of the partner agencies and examines the impact of LDC graduation on market access scenario after graduation, the participation in global value chains and business perspectives, including at the firm level. This interagency effort reflects greater coordination and coherence among different UN agencies on trade-related topics of priority to LDCs. The findings contained in the reports served as an interagency input to the Fifth United Nations Conference on LDCs (LDC5), where the Doha Programme of Action for LDCs for the decade (2022 – 2031) is expected to be adopted.

In 2022, the WTO aims to strengthen its partnership with the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States UN-OHRLLS with a view to better supporting LDCs with the implementation of trade-related aspects of the Doha Programme of Action. The WTO will also continue facilitating cooperation among LDCs and their development partners, including through annual South-South Dialogues and other capacity-building activities, to support greater integration of LDCs into global trade.

6.1.3 Partnerships for the environment

Beyond the initial arrangements upon the establishment of the Organization towards achieving a greater coherence in global economic policy-making, the WTO maintains working relations with over 200 international organizations.¹ Through different types of arrangements, the WTO has embarked on more active forms of cooperation with numerous organizations, in order to assist governments in ensuring that trade, environment, and development policies work together for sustainable development.

In the context of the SPS Agreement, the WTO closely cooperates with three international standard-setting bodies (ISSBs), namely the Codex Alimentarius Commission for food safety, the Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) for issues related to animal health and zoonoses, and the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) for plant health. Most WTO members are also parties to these organizations and, under the SPS Agreement, are encouraged to take part in the standard-setting process. These ISSBs set science-based standards, guidelines and recommendations on which, according to the SPS Agreement, WTO members shall base their national legislation. The use

of harmonized standards is a core good regulatory practice and contributes to a more rational use of resources and to avoiding unnecessary divergences.

CITES, the CBD and the WTO also have a long history of cooperation and work together in areas such as technical assistance and capacity-building for government officials in charge of matters related to trade and environment, publications and events. A few years ago, the WTO and CITES launched an eLearning course giving an overview of the relationship, linkages and increasing synergies between CITES and the multilateral trading system. The CBD and CITES have observer status in the CTE and provide regular updates on their work. Both have also been invited ad hoc to its special (negotiating) sessions meetings² and have closely collaborated with the WTO through policy dialogues. For instance, the CTE has been used as a forum to discuss specific policy issues, such as illegal logging, which have benefitted from the inputs of the CITES Secretary-General. The CBD Secretariat also follows closely the discussions in other relevant WTO bodies and seeks cooperation through liaising with the WTO Secretariat and in information sessions.³ This cooperation plays an effective role in raising awareness on issues related to biodiversity and in ensuring that trade and trade policies contribute to the objectives of sustainable development and conservation efforts.

The adoption of the Trade Facilitation Agreement has opened up new opportunities for collaboration between the WTO and other international organizations. To help WTO developing country members access the support they need to reap the benefits of the Agreement, the Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility was launched in 2014. In the context of CITES, for instance, work on trade facilitation can act as a catalyst for cooperation among customs, wildlife and trade officials at the national and international levels. It can thus help minimize the incidence and complexity of formalities affecting legal trade in wildlife, strengthen the capacity to obtain real-time data on such trade, and make it easier to detect potentially illegal or unsustainable trade in wildlife.

Another specific example of interlinkages is the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the CBD, which is based on the precautionary approach and establishes a set of procedures relating to import and export of living modified organisms. As such, the Protocol has trade implications and relates to ongoing discussions under the SPS and TBT Committees.

Finally, the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) currently being discussed within the CBD identifies new action-oriented targets, including on trade issues covering wildlife and flora. Trade is to be better integrated in the GBF as some of the indicators⁴ that are currently being elaborated and will be used to monitor implementation nationally and track progress globally refer to trade-related objectives. With the adoption of the Post-2020 GBF, enhanced discussions regarding the role of trade, trade policy and the WTO in its implementation are to be expected. This underscores the strong need for further multilateral and regional dialogue and cooperation to ensure that all countries are able to participate and benefit from efforts to address the global and urgent challenge of protecting biodiversity.

6.1.4 Other partnerships

The WTO also engages in other SDG and sustainable development-related partnerships with other international organizations. At the highest level, the WTO Director-General participates regularly in the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (UN-CEB), convened by the UNSG. In October 2020 ITC, UNCTAD and WTO launched the SDG Trade Monitor.⁵ The SDG Trade Monitor is an online repository of trade-specific development indicators, including most-favoured-nation and preferential tariff rates. This open data repository will allow policymakers, trade professionals and researchers to explore the relationship between trade and sustainable development, and to support data-driven trade policies. The SDG Trade Monitor will also help to further streamline the statistical coordination process of the three agencies involved providing a centralized and interactive one-stop-shop for most of the SDG trade indicators. It will now be possible to conduct customized analysis, including at the regional and country levels, and to perform various data comparisons using also complementary measurements, which assist in obtaining a more comprehensive understanding of the SDG agenda's trade-development relationship. This new instrument will make it much easier for countries to track their progress on various trade-related indicators and adjust their policies to optimize their developmental effects.

After the economic shock of the COVID-19 pandemic, data-driven policies have become more important than ever to help accelerate the global economic recovery. The statistics presented in the SDG Trade Monitor will allow governments, policy

professionals and trade professionals to make clear, evidence-based decisions and to back effective programmes and policies. The SDG Trade monitor as the result of a collective effort between UNCTAD, ITC and the WTO is also an excellent example of the types of partnerships that are necessary to help in the delivery on the Agenda 2030. This multi-agency collaboration demonstrates the value proposition of the Geneva trade hub, further proving that multi-lateral efforts in trade are effective and worthwhile.

The WTO is also partnered with the UN with the aim of further integrating LLDCs into the multilateral trading system. The Vienna Programme of Action of the United Nations has coordinated the development and implementation of programmes of action to address the unique challenges LLDCs face and in turn to contribute to the eradication of poverty in LLDCs. Of the six priority areas of the VPoA (2014-2024), Priority 3 is international trade and trade facilitation. The VPoA flows from the Almaty Programme of Action (2003-2013), which aimed to develop partnerships to overcome specific problems LLDCs face.

The Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) is a global partnership that supports developing and least developed countries to meet international standards to facilitate safe trade. In January 2020, just months before COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic, the STDF launched its new strategy for 2020-24, "Safe and Inclusive Trade Horizons for Developing Countries". The strategy shows how the STDF's work to drive catalytic sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) improvements in developing countries supports the UN Global Goals of no poverty, zero hunger, good health and well-being, decent work and economic growth, and partnerships. It also outlines how the STDF's work contributes to gender equity, reduced inequalities, responsible consumption and production, life below water and life on land.

Finally, the WTO supports the capacity-building needs of developing countries, especially LDCs and African countries, through its technical assistance 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. The Technical Assistance Plan is the framework that identifies priorities and mechanisms for implementation of technical assistance activities, sources of funding and anticipated results.

Endnotes

- 1 The WTO and other organizations.
- 2 At the Doha Ministerial Conference in November 2001, it was agreed to start negotiations on the relationship between existing WTO rules and specific trade obligations set out in MEAs, procedures for regular information exchange between MEA secretariats and the relevant WTO committees, and criteria for the granting of observer status.
- 3 CBD Secretariat: Cooperation with WTO.
- 4 Indicators for the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.
- 5 https://sdgtrade.org/entessd_e.htm.



© World Trade Organization, 2022.

World Trade Organization
Centre William Rappard
Rue de Lausanne 154
CH-1211 Geneva 2
Switzerland
Tel.: +41 (0)22 739 51 11
email: enquiries@wto.org
www.wto.org

ISBN 978-92-870-7182-8

