



WORLD TRADE
ORGANIZATION

Annual Report

2021



Who we are

The World Trade Organization deals with the global rules of trade between nations. Its main function is to ensure that trade flows as smoothly, predictably and freely as possible.

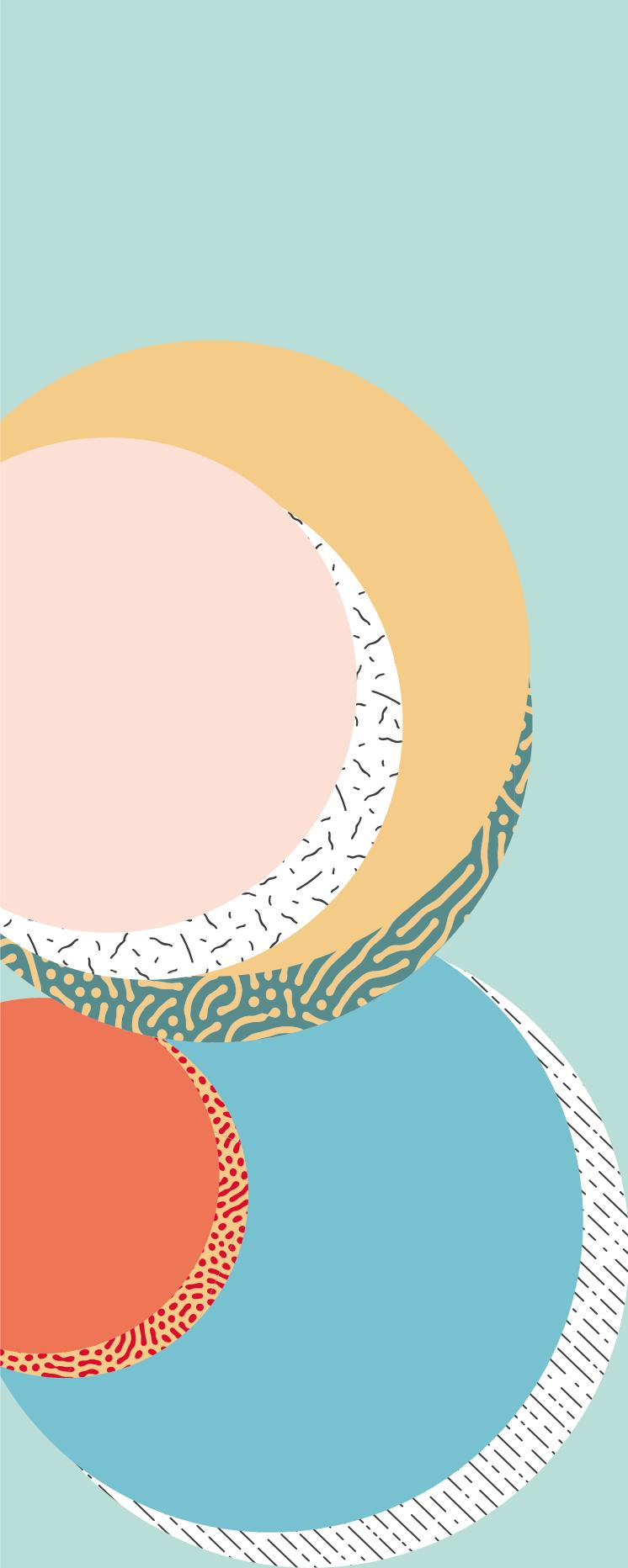
Using this report

This report covers the WTO's activities in 2020 and early 2021. It begins with a message from the Director-General and an overview of 2020. This is followed by more in-depth accounts of the WTO's areas of activity over the past year.

Find out more

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Cover image: Rice cultivation in Thailand.



Annual Report 2021

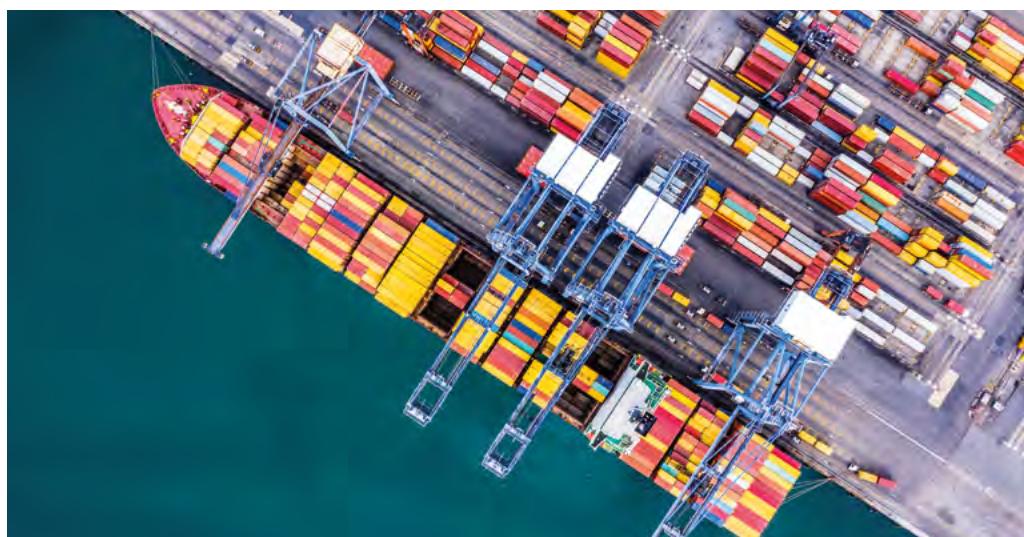
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The WTO aims to help developing countries build their trade capacity and allows them a longer time to implement trade agreements. Hundreds of training courses are organized each year for officials from developing countries.

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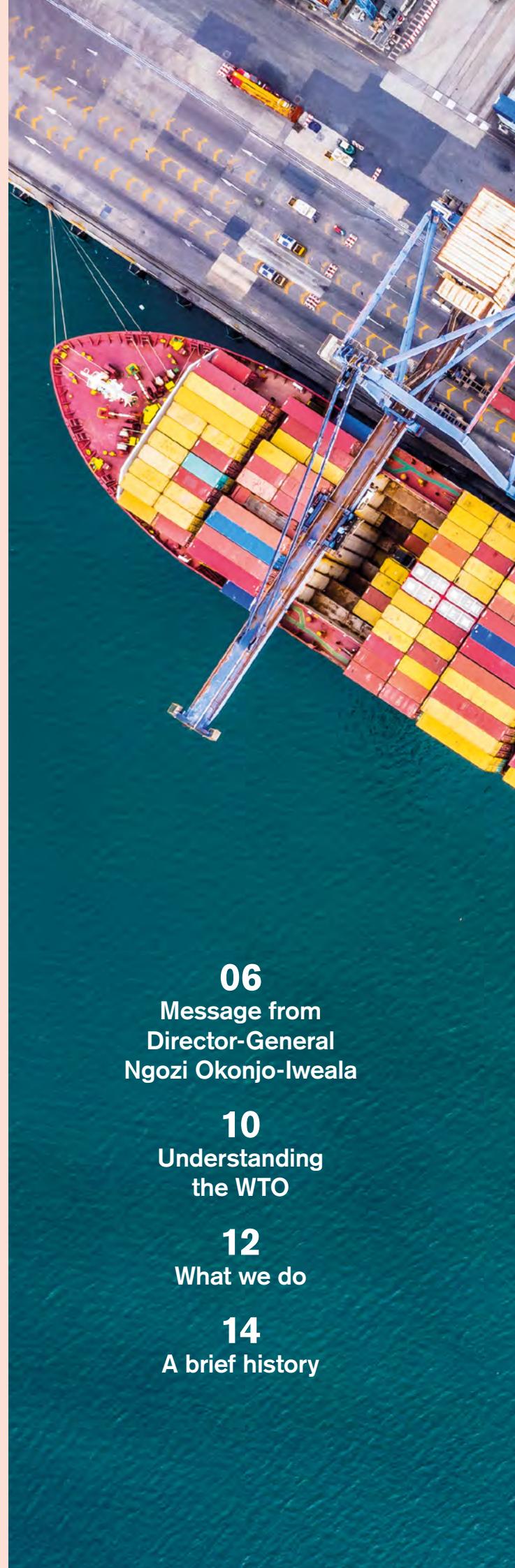
The WTO Secretariat has over 600 regular staff and coordinates the activities of the WTO. Most of the WTO's annual budget consists of contributions by its members.



1

Introduction

The overall objective of the WTO is to help its members use trade as a means to raise living standards, create jobs and improve people's lives. The WTO operates the global system of trade rules and helps developing countries build their trade capacity. It also provides a forum for its members to negotiate trade agreements and to resolve the trade problems they face with each other.



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A brief history





Key events since start of mandate

15 Feb: General Council selects Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala as the WTO's seventh Director-General.

1 Mar: On first day in office, DG calls on WTO members to adopt a "change of approach" to deliver results.

15-17 Mar: DG makes official visit to Nigeria, meets President Muhammadu Buhari and senior members of the government.

23 Mar: DG is joined by heads of WHO, IMF, World Bank, OECD, UNCTAD at Aid for Trade stocktaking event.

31 Mar: DG announces the WTO's 2021 trade forecast.

31 Mar: DG addresses G7 trade ministers.

1 Apr: DG establishes Delivery Unit to coordinate efforts to reach outcomes at 12th Ministerial Conference.

9 Apr: DG attends World Bank-IMF spring meetings in Washington DC.

14 Apr: DG calls "vaccine summit" with WTO members, vaccine manufacturers, international organizations to address vaccine inequity.

26 Apr: On EU Trade Policy Day, DG discusses WTO reform with Valdis Dombrovskis, European Commissioner for Trade.

29 Apr: DG participates in videoconference with German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

4 May: DG announces her four Deputy Directors-General: Angela Ellard (United States), Anabel González (Costa Rica), Jean-Marie Paugam (France), Xiangchen Zhang (China).

10 May: DG meets with Italy's Prime Minister Mario Draghi and senior members of the government in Rome to discuss global response to COVID-19.

18 May: DG participates in Summit on the Financing of African Economies in Paris, convened by French President Emmanuel Macron, attended by African heads of state, heads of international organizations and EU leaders.

MESSAGE FROM

Message from Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala

As I write these words, the world continues to grapple with the COVID-19 pandemic and its devastating health and economic consequences. Close to 4 million people have already lost their lives. Millions more have lost livelihoods, or had their education interrupted. Even as vaccine production and roll-out gathers speed, the supply of doses remains far below what is needed. Poorer countries are being left behind in vaccine access and economic prospects. People are dying even though the means exist to save them.

When 2020 started, we had barely heard of the novel coronavirus, and had no inkling of the impact it would go on to have on people's lives and the global economy.

The pandemic has had major effects on global trade – and on the day-to-day work of the WTO, which is the subject of this annual report. The multilateral trading system has played an important part in efforts to fight COVID-19, and I am convinced that the WTO can and must do more.

In late 2019, WTO economists were projecting 2.7% growth for world merchandise trade in 2020 – modest by historical standards, due in part to protectionist measures and continuing tensions around trade policy. By March and April 2020, much of the global economy had come to a sudden stop, amid the large-scale implementation of business closures, travel restrictions, and social distancing measures necessary to curb the spread of COVID-19. Trade went into free fall.

In the second quarter of 2020, the volume of world merchandise trade shrank 15% year-on-year, the steepest

drop on record. But in the second half of the year, as lockdowns began to ease, trade rebounded strongly, propelled by demand resulting from extraordinary levels of fiscal and monetary support, particularly in advanced economies, as well as the containment of the pandemic's impact in several Asian countries. Restraint in the use of trade protectionism was another important factor in the trade rebound: policies did not prevent supply chains from restarting operations. Ultimately, for 2020 as a whole, merchandise trade would go on to decline by 5.3% in volume terms, and 7.6% in value – a severe contraction, to be sure, but smaller than that seen in 2009, during the global financial crisis.

Importantly, trade's resilience represented a lifeline for millions, enabling access to food and other essential supplies. Despite some initial disruptions, the value of trade in medical products rose by 16%, and trade in personal protective equipment expanded by 50%. Agriculture trade was relatively unhindered, which meant vital food supplies continued to move around the world, including to net food-importing developing countries. As trade has picked up again, there have been supply shortages, logistics bottlenecks, and price spikes, but all would have been vastly more disruptive had businesses and households been compelled to look for domestic alternatives to imported products.

In Geneva, the WTO had to suspend in-person gatherings in March and April. Negotiations, regular committee meetings, and other discussions subsequently resumed in virtual and hybrid formats, in line with the health authorities' recommendations. The



Key events since start of mandate



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The WTO can and must play a critical role in accelerating COVID-19 vaccine production and in ensuring a strong, sustained, and inclusive global economic recovery.

Twelfth Ministerial Conference (MC12), originally scheduled for June 2020 in Kazakhstan, was postponed, and is now set to be held in Geneva from 30 November to 3 December 2021.

The WTO stepped up its longstanding monitoring work to shed light on trade measures governments were introducing in response to the pandemic, including an early spate of export restrictions on medical products. The analysis revealed that

many of the trade restricting measures were unwound, though too many still persist. Perhaps surprisingly, measures seeking to facilitate trade were more numerous and covered more traded merchandise, by value, than the new restrictions – US\$ 225 billion compared to US\$ 180 billion. The information on trade measures was published on a new area of the WTO website dedicated to the COVID-19 pandemic, along with members' proposals related to the pandemic,

19 May: DG meets EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and President of European Council Charles Michel in Brussels to discuss vaccine equity and role of trade in combating the pandemic

21 May: DG addresses G20 leaders at Global Health Summit on vaccine inequity.

26 May: DG delivers address at graduation ceremony for Class of 2021 of Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies.

31 May: DG meets with Kazakhstan President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev to discuss Kazakhstan's chairmanship of 12th Ministerial Conference.

1 Jun: DG joins leaders of IMF, World Bank, WHO in call for US\$ 50 billion investment in health, trade, finance to end pandemic.

2 Jun: DG meets CARICOM Secretary-General Irwin LaRocque, addresses CARICOM Council for Trade and Economic Development.

5 Jun: On World Environment Day, DG calls for sustainable trade to protect environment and ensure inclusiveness.

5 Jun: DG addresses meeting of APEC Ministers Responsible for Trade.

7 Jun: DG welcomes President Kersti Kaljulaid of Estonia to WTO.

8 Jun: On World Ocean Day, DG calls on WTO members to conclude agreement on curbing harmful fishing subsidies.

9 Jun: DG welcomes Tunisia's Head of Government, Hichem Mechichi, to WTO.

9 Jun: DG participates in Africa Roundtable with President Steinmeier (Germany) and President Macky Sall (Senegal).

11 Jun: DG discusses trade issues with prime ministers and ministers of Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States.

12 Jun: DG addresses G7 leaders at summit hosted by the United Kingdom.

and a series of papers by WTO Secretariat officials looking into different aspects of the pandemic's impact on global trade.

Other aspects of WTO work continued despite COVID-19 restrictions.

Eleven dispute settlement reports and decisions were circulated in 2020, including a long-awaited report on tobacco plain packaging. However, the system's appeals function remained blocked.

Echoing trends in the wider economy, the pandemic accelerated the move online for the WTO's training programmes for government officials from developing countries. In 2020, over 13,500 participants benefited from these activities, including new e-learning courses. The WTO also continued to support multi-agency programmes, such as the Enhanced Integrated Framework, a provider of policy diagnostics and targeted funding to least-developed countries. In addition, our Aid for Trade work programme was adapted to reflect the economic impact of COVID-19 and to respond to members' needs.

Looking ahead to 2021, the WTO can and must play a critical role in accelerating COVID-19 vaccine production and in ensuring a strong, sustained, and inclusive global economic recovery. To live up to its founding objectives of using trade to help people – to raise living standards,

create jobs, and promote sustainable development – the WTO must deliver results this year. By responding together to a global crisis without precedent in our lifetimes, members can begin to rebuild the trust needed to address future challenges.

Between now and MC12, WTO members can contribute to vaccine equity by freeing up vaccine supply chains and improving access to raw materials, working with manufacturers to increase production volumes and investment in new manufacturing capacity in developing countries, and finding pragmatic solutions to questions of technology transfer, know-how, and intellectual property, including the proposed TRIPS waiver.

Another key deliverable for 2021 is a long-awaited agreement on curbing harmful fisheries subsidies. This will be critical for marine sustainability and for the WTO's credibility as a negotiating forum – one where members are capable of jointly addressing problems of the global commons.

For many members, a successful MC12 will have to include meaningful outcomes on agriculture. By building on their discussions over the past year on public stockholding, export restrictions for humanitarian purchases by the World Food Programme, transparency, and domestic support, members can bolster food security, enhance predictability around applied tariffs,

“

The multilateral trading system has played an important part in efforts to fight COVID-19, and I am convinced that the WTO can and must do more.

and lay a foundation for subsequent work to reduce distortions in agricultural production and trade.

Finding a path forward on dispute settlement will be necessary to place rule-making at the WTO on a firmer footing. I hope that members will be able to agree this year at least on the contours of the changes they wish to see in how the system operates.

And finally, groups of WTO members have made substantial progress in areas such as investment facilitation, e-commerce, and services domestic regulation, as well as on empowering women and small businesses in the global economy. Two new initiatives on trade and environmental sustainability were launched last year, one looking at a wide range of issues including climate change, and the other focused on plastics pollution. Participating members can use these initiatives to agree on rules where international

frameworks are currently weak or absent, and to harness the power on trade for environmental sustainability and greater social inclusion.

On a personal note, I would like to thank WTO members for appointing me to serve as the seventh Director-General of this institution. I am honoured by the trust you have placed in me, and will continue to do my utmost to help members reform and revitalize the WTO, and ensure that it continues to deliver for people around the world.



DR. NGOZI OKONJO-IWEALA
DIRECTOR-GENERAL

Understanding the WTO

Who we are

Improving people's lives

The fundamental goal of the WTO is to improve the welfare of people around the world. The WTO's founding Marrakesh agreement recognizes that trade should be conducted with a view to raising standards of living, ensuring full employment, increasing real income and expanding global trade in goods and services while allowing for the optimal use of the world's resources.

Negotiating trade rules

The WTO was born out of five decades of negotiations aimed at progressively reducing obstacles to trade. Where countries have faced trade barriers and wanted them lowered, the negotiations have helped to open markets for trade. Conversely, in some circumstances, WTO rules support maintaining trade barriers – for example, to protect consumers or the environment.

Overseeing WTO agreements

At its heart are the WTO agreements, negotiated and signed by the bulk of the world's trading nations. Essentially contracts, these documents provide the rules for international commerce and bind governments to keep their trade policies within agreed limits. Their goal

is to help producers of goods and services, exporters and importers conduct their business, with a view to raising standards of living, while allowing governments to meet social and environmental objectives.

Maintaining open trade

The system's overriding purpose is to help trade flow as freely as possible – provided there are no undesirable side effects – because this stimulates economic growth and employment and supports the integration of developing countries into the international trading system. Its rules have to be transparent and predictable, to ensure that individuals, companies and governments know what the trade rules are around the world, and to assure them that there will be no sudden changes of policy.

Settling disputes

Trade relations often involve conflicting interests. Agreements, including those painstakingly negotiated in the WTO, often need interpreting. The most harmonious way to settle these differences is through a neutral procedure based on an agreed legal foundation. That is the purpose behind the dispute settlement process written into the WTO agreements.



What we stand for

The WTO agreements are lengthy and complex because they are legal texts covering a wide range of activities. But certain simple, fundamental principles run throughout all of these documents and form the foundations of the multilateral trading system.

1

Non-discrimination

A country should not discriminate between its trading partners, and it should not discriminate between its own and foreign products, services or nationals.

2

Opening trade

Lowering trade barriers is an obvious way to encourage trade; these barriers include customs duties (or tariffs) and measures such as import bans or quotas, that restrict quantities selectively.

3

Predictability and transparency

Foreign companies, investors and governments should be confident that trade barriers will not be raised arbitrarily. With stability and predictability, investment is encouraged, jobs are created and consumers can fully enjoy the benefits of competition – such as increased choice and lower prices.

4

Fair competition

Discouraging “unfair” practices, such as export subsidies and dumping products at below normal value to gain market share; the issues are complex, and the rules try to establish what is fair or unfair, and how governments can respond, in particular by charging additional import duties calculated to compensate for damage caused by unfair trade.

5

Support for less developed countries

Over three-quarters of WTO members are developing economies or in transition to market economies. The WTO agreements give them transition periods to adjust to WTO provisions and, in the case of the Trade Facilitation Agreement, provide for practical support for implementation of the Agreement.

6

Protection of the environment

The WTO agreements permit members to take measures to protect not only public, animal and plant health but also the environment. However, these measures must be applied in the same way to both national and foreign businesses: members must not use environmental protection measures as a means of introducing discriminatory trade barriers.

7

Inclusion

The WTO seeks to build a more inclusive trading system that will allow more women and small businesses to participate in trade and to reap the economic benefits of global trading.

8

Partnerships

The WTO maintains regular dialogue with civil society, labour unions, universities and the business community to enhance cooperation and build partnerships. The WTO's Trade Dialogues initiative and the annual Public Forum provide a platform for civil society and business groups to discuss the latest developments in world trade and to propose ways of enhancing the multilateral trading system.

9

Digital trade

The WTO recognizes the growing importance of e-commerce. Periodic reviews of the WTO's work programme on e-commerce are conducted by the General Council based on reports from various WTO bodies. In addition, a group of like-minded members are conducting negotiations on e-commerce, with a view to developing global digital trade rules and addressing challenges posed by the digital divide.

What we do

- › Trade negotiations
- › Implementation and monitoring
- › Dispute settlement
- › Supporting development and building trade capacity

› Outreach

- The WTO is run by its members. All major decisions are made by the membership as a whole, either by ministers (who usually meet at least once every two years) or by their ambassadors or delegates (who meet regularly in Geneva).
- While the WTO is driven by its members, it could not function without its Secretariat to coordinate the activities.
- The Secretariat employs over 600 staff, and its experts – lawyers, economists, statisticians and communications specialists – assist WTO members on a daily basis to ensure, among other things, that negotiations progress smoothly, and that the rules of international trade are correctly applied and enforced.



Trade negotiations

The WTO agreements cover goods, services and intellectual property. They spell out the principles of trade-opening and the permitted exceptions, and set procedures for settling disputes. They include countries' commitments to lower trade barriers and to open services markets. The agreements are renegotiated from time to time and new agreements can be added, as was the case at the 2013 and 2015 ministerial conferences.



Implementation and monitoring

The WTO agreements require governments to make their trade policies transparent by notifying the WTO about laws in force and measures adopted. Various WTO councils and committees seek to ensure that these requirements are being followed and that WTO agreements are being properly implemented. All WTO members must undergo periodic scrutiny of their trade policies and practices.



Supporting development and building trade capacity

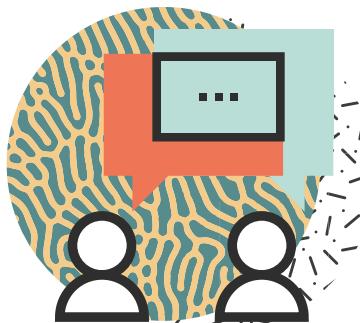
The WTO agreements contain special provisions for developing countries, including longer time periods to implement agreements and commitments, measures to increase their trading opportunities, and support to help them build their trade capacity, handle disputes and implement technical standards. The WTO organizes many technical cooperation missions to developing countries and holds numerous courses in Geneva for government officials. The Aid for Trade initiative aims to help developing countries develop the skills and infrastructure needed to expand their trade.

www.wto.org



Dispute settlement

The WTO's procedure for resolving trade disputes under the Dispute Settlement Understanding is vital for enforcing the rules and therefore for ensuring that trade flows smoothly. Countries bring disputes to the WTO if they think their rights under the WTO agreements are being infringed. Judgments by specially appointed independent experts are based on interpretations of the WTO agreements and individual countries' commitments.



Outreach

The WTO maintains regular dialogue with the business community, non-governmental organizations, labour unions, parliamentarians, the academic community, other international organizations, parliamentarians, other international organizations, the media and the general public on various aspects of the WTO and its negotiations, with the aim of enhancing cooperation and increasing awareness of WTO activities.

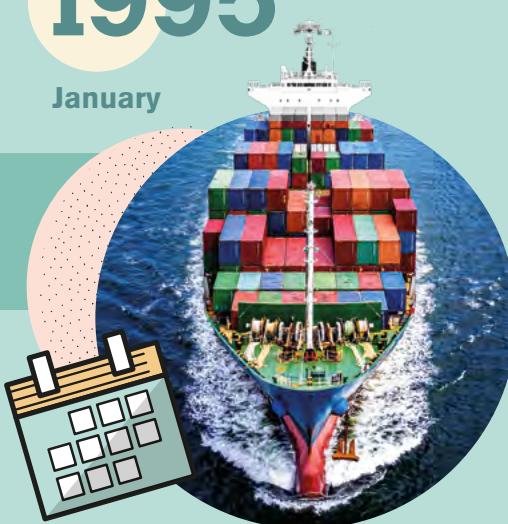
World Trade Organization

A brief history

The WTO began life on 1 January 1995, succeeding the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) which had regulated world trade since 1948. Over the past 25 years, the WTO has made a major contribution to the strength and stability of the global economy, helping to boost trade growth, resolve numerous trade disputes and support the integration of developing countries into the trading system.

1995

January



► The WTO is born on **1 January**.

1996

December

► **First Ministerial Conference** takes place in Singapore.
► **Information Technology Agreement** concluded.



1998

May

► **Second Ministerial Conference** takes place in Geneva.
► Celebration to mark **50 years of the GATT**.



1999

November

► **Third Ministerial Conference** takes place in Seattle, United States.





2001

November

- › **Fourth Ministerial Conference** in Doha, Qatar.
- › Doha Development Agenda is launched.
- › **China** becomes the WTO's 143rd member.

Fifth Ministerial Conference takes place in Cancún, Mexico.



2003

September

2005

December



- › **Sixth Ministerial Conference** takes place in Hong Kong, China.
- › **Aid for Trade** initiative is launched.



2006

September



2007

November



- › **First Global Review of Aid for Trade** takes place in Geneva.



2009

September

► First WTO Open Day in Geneva.

November

► Seventh Ministerial Conference takes place in Geneva.



2011

December

► Eighth Ministerial Conference takes place in Geneva.

2010 January



WTO CHAIRS PROGRAMME

► WTO Chairs Programme launched to support developing country universities.

2012

November

► Historic signing ends 20 years of **EU-Latin American banana dispute**, the longest-running dispute in WTO history.



2013

December

- Ninth Ministerial Conference takes place in Bali, Indonesia.



2015

December

- Tenth Ministerial Conference takes place in Nairobi, Kenya.
- “Nairobi Package” includes abolition of agricultural export subsidies and expansion of **Information Technology Agreement**.

2016

July

- Afghanistan and Liberia become the WTO's newest (163rd and 164th) members.



2017

January

- Amendment to the **TRIPS Agreement** enters into force, easing access to medicines.

February

- **Trade Facilitation Agreement** enters into force.

December

- Eleventh Ministerial Conference takes place in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

2020

November

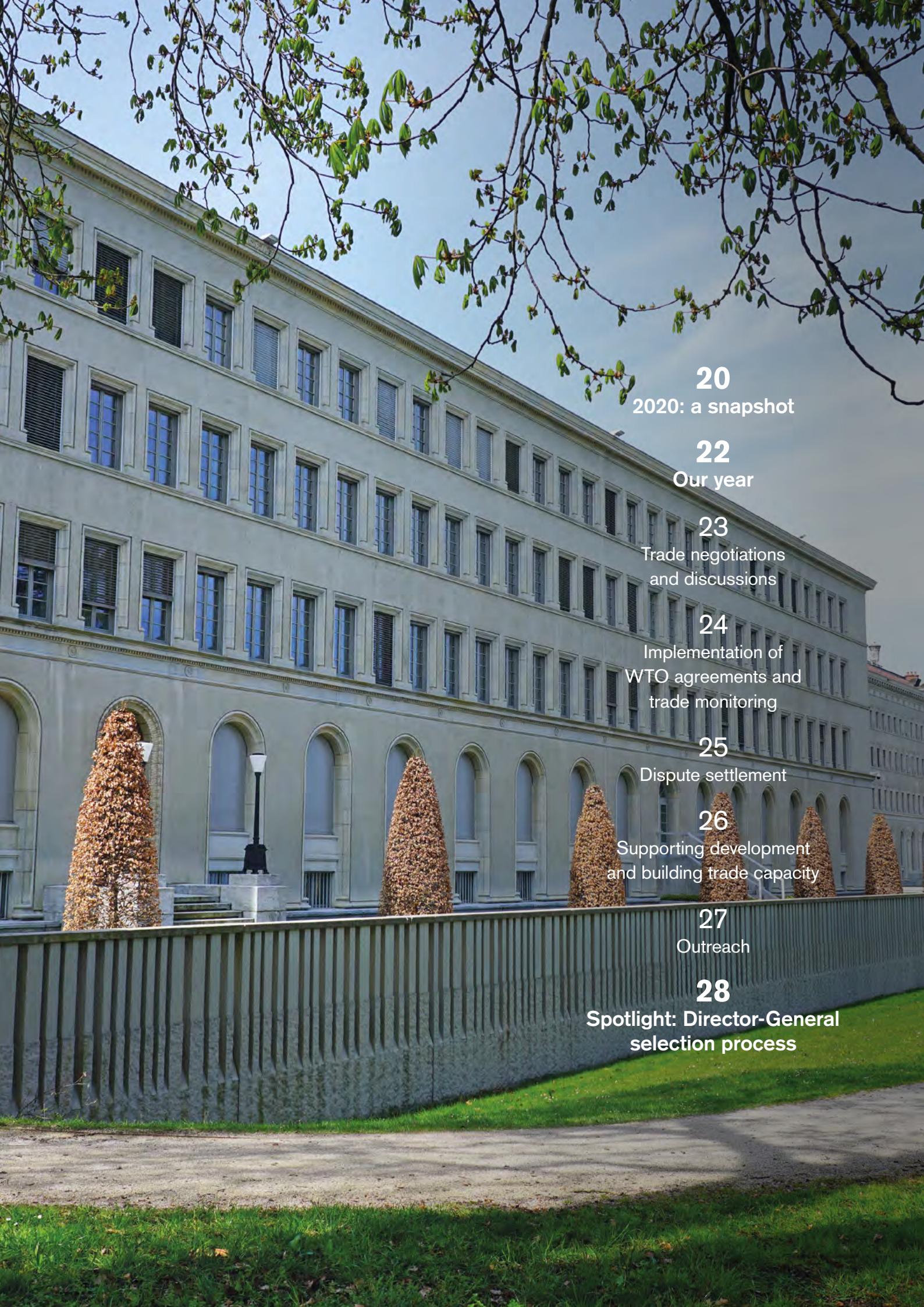
- WTO marks its **25th anniversary**.



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A year in review





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selection process

2020: a snapshot

January

DG Azevêdo attends World Economic Forum in Davos.

Ethiopia resumes WTO accession negotiations after eight-year pause.



February

United Kingdom notifies WTO members of withdrawal from the European Union.

WTO mourns the passing of former Director-General Mike Moore.

March

Suspension of on-site meetings at WTO due to COVID-19.

WTO sets up dedicated area on website for COVID-19 and trade.

DG Azevêdo welcomes G20 ministers' commitment to notify WTO of COVID-19 related trade measures.



April

Heads of WTO and WHO cite importance of open trade in ensuring flow of vital medical supplies.

IMF and WTO heads call for lifting trade restrictions on medical supplies and food.

WTO forecasts plunge in trade as COVID-19 pandemic upends global economy.

Kazakhstan offers to host postponed 12th Ministerial Conference in June 2021.

May

DG Azevêdo announces he will step down on 31 August 2020.

WTO establishes nomination window for DG selection.

Chancellor Merkel, DG Azevêdo and other agency heads discuss health, economic and social impacts of COVID-19 pandemic.



June

Mexico, Nigeria, Egypt, Moldova and Republic of Korea nominate candidates for post of WTO Director-General.

Appellate Body issues reports regarding tobacco plain packaging requirements.

July

Heads of WTO and six development banks voice support for trade finance amid COVID-19 crisis.

Kenya, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and United Kingdom nominate candidates for post of WTO Director-General.

WTO report says members are moving to facilitate imports although trade restrictions remain high.

Uzbekistan resumes WTO membership negotiations.

September

WTO data reveal 21% decline in value of world merchandise trade in second quarter of 2020 amid global lockdown.

New WTO working group established to deepen trade and gender discussions.

WTO members start text-based negotiations on fisheries subsidies.

November

New initiatives launched to intensify WTO work on trade and the environment.

WTO holds 25th anniversary event.

WTO launches 2020 World Trade Report on government policies to foster digital innovation.

WTO hosts first Trade for Peace Week.

**August**

WTO goods barometer confirms steep drop in trade but hints at nascent recovery.

DG Azevêdo steps down, cutting his second term short by exactly one year.

**October**

Timor-Leste formally kick-starts WTO accession process.

WTO sees signs of trade rebound from COVID-19 but recovery still uncertain.

WTO members indicate strong preference for Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala as DG but no overall consensus.

December

United Kingdom and Switzerland confirm participation in revised Government Procurement Agreement.

Coordinators of joint initiatives on e-commerce, investment facilitation, services domestic regulation and small business cite substantial progress in discussions.

WTO report shows marked decline in trade restrictions by WTO members amidst COVID-19 pandemic.

Our year

- The selection process for a new Director-General, launched in May 2020, culminated in February 2021 with the appointment of Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, the first African and first woman to hold the post.
- The WTO undertook comprehensive monitoring of governments' trade measures relating to COVID-19. The General Council acted as the main forum for WTO members to share information and to highlight concerns about the impact of the pandemic.
- WTO members advanced negotiations on fisheries subsidies and agriculture while initiatives on e-commerce, investment facilitation and domestic regulation of services drew interest from an increasing number of participants.
- The General Council decided that the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC12), originally due to be held in Kazakhstan in 2020, would take place from 30 November 2021 in Geneva. WTO members agreed that achieving outcomes at, if not before, MC12 was essential to support economic recovery and restore confidence in the WTO system.





14
Prohibiting fisheries subsidies that contribute to overfishing is a key component of Sustainable Development
Goal 14.



164
Trade negotiations are conducted among the WTO's 164 members.



50
Fifty WTO members announced in November 2020 their intention to intensify work on trade and environmental sustainability at the WTO.

www.wto.org/tnc



Trade negotiations and discussions

- WTO members advanced negotiations on fisheries subsidies although progress was insufficient to secure a deal in 2020.
- A high degree of engagement was seen in the agriculture negotiations.
- The joint initiatives – on e-commerce, investment facilitation, domestic regulation of services trade, and micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) – drew interest from an increasing number of WTO members. In November, two new environmental initiatives were launched.

WTO members sought to conclude negotiations on disciplines for harmful fisheries subsidies by the 12th Ministerial Conference (MC12), originally set for June 2020. Despite restrictions due to COVID-19, and the postponement of MC12, good progress was achieved. A draft text, issued by the chair in June, was used as the basis for the negotiations, with revisions released in November and December. Members said they were committed to maintaining the negotiating momentum in 2021.

In agriculture, the chair named facilitators to help narrow gaps in negotiating positions. The pandemic heightened WTO members' interest in areas such as domestic subsidies, public stockpiling and export restrictions. Members continued to emphasize the importance of an agricultural outcome at MC12.

Coordinators of the joint initiatives reported good progress on their discussions. Participants in the joint initiative on investment facilitation launched negotiations for a multilateral framework in September, with the aim of achieving a concrete outcome

by MC12. The e-commerce co-conveners released a consolidated negotiating text in December reflecting the latest progress made in their negotiations.

The chair of negotiations on services domestic regulation circulated a "far advanced" negotiating text in December while the Informal Working Group on MSMEs issued a set of six recommendations to help small businesses trade more internationally.

Two new initiatives were launched by groups of members in November to intensify discussions on plastics pollution and on trade and environmental sustainability.

WTO members pointed out that efforts towards effective and inclusive reform of the organization had to continue and accelerate. Building a solid economic recovery and restoring confidence in the WTO system required members to achieve outcomes at, if not before, MC12. Only through ongoing trade reform could members build a more resilient trading system, they emphasized.

See pages 36-63.

Implementation of WTO agreements and trade monitoring

- The selection process to appoint a new Director-General, launched in June 2020, resulted in Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala being unanimously selected in February 2021, making her the first African and first woman to hold the post.
- Global trade in goods and services was severely impacted by COVID-19. The WTO undertook extensive monitoring of the measures taken by WTO members to mitigate the crisis.

Following the decision of Roberto Azevêdo in May 2020 to step down as Director-General, General Council Chair David Walker led the selection process for a new DG. After several rounds of consultations with WTO members, he announced on 15 February 2021 that Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala of Nigeria had been selected from the eight candidates put forward by their respective governments.

The General Council acted as the main forum for WTO members to share information on trade measures related to COVID-19 and to issue statements on questions concerning the pandemic.

The WTO undertook comprehensive monitoring of governments' measures relating to COVID-19. In its report issued in December 2020, it noted that WTO members had implemented 335 measures directly linked to COVID-19 since the start of the pandemic. These included 195 measures considered as trade-facilitating, covering an estimated US\$ 227 billion of goods trade, and 140 considered to be trade-restrictive covering trade worth US\$ 180 billion.



93

Over 93 per cent of WTO members had ratified the Trade Facilitation Agreement by the end of 2020.



7

Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala is the WTO's seventh Director-General.



5.3

Merchandise trade declined by 5.3 per cent in 2020.

Around 39 per cent of the restrictive measures had been repealed by mid-October.

The WTO also produced information notes on the impact of COVID-19 on world trade and published regular trade data updates on a dedicated area of the WTO website.

Originally scheduled for June 2020 in Kazakhstan, the 12th Ministerial Conference (MC12) was postponed due to the pandemic. On 1 March 2021, the General Council decided that MC12 would take place in Geneva in the week of 29 November 2021.

By the end of 2020, over 93 per cent of WTO members had ratified the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), with the rate of implementation of TFA commitments standing at just under 70 per cent for the entire WTO. A number of members highlighted the importance of the TFA in ensuring that essential goods to combat COVID-19 can cross borders and reach their intended recipients quickly.

Merchandise trade declined by 5.3 per cent in 2020, less than foreseen earlier in the year. This can partly be explained by the announcement of new COVID-19 vaccines in November, which contributed to improved business and consumer confidence, and the quick action by many governments to provide fiscal and monetary support to help mitigate the economic effects of the pandemic. Trade in services was particularly hard hit, with travel services down 63 per cent and transport down 19 per cent in 2020.

See pages 64-135.

Dispute settlement

➤ WTO members initiated five disputes in 2020, down from 20 in 2019. On average, 37 panel and arbitral proceedings were ongoing each month.

➤ Eleven dispute settlement reports and decisions were circulated, including the Appellate Body report on the tobacco plain packaging dispute.

➤ WTO members could not reach consensus on launching the selection process for the appointment of new Appellate Body members. As of 30 November 2020, all positions on the Appellate Body were vacant, meaning that no new appeals could be heard in 2020.

The five requests for consultation in 2020 – the first stage in the dispute settlement process – was the lowest number of disputes initiated in a calendar year since the inception of the WTO in 1995. The number of 11 dispute settlement reports and decisions circulated in 2020 was down from 23 in 2019.



In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and in cooperation with the parties involved in the disputes, a number of dispute settlement panels and arbitrators used additional written procedures or remote technology to advance work, including in some cases to substitute for in-person meetings.

The Dispute Settlement Body established panels in seven proceedings. In addition, a so-called “compliance” panel was established to determine whether China had complied with previous recommendations and rulings in “China – Domestic Support for Agricultural Producers”, a case brought by the United States.

Three Appellate Body reports relating to four disputes were circulated in 2020, including the extensive “Australia – Tobacco Plain Packaging” dispute. Five appeal proceedings were initiated in 2020. However, as the Appellate Body had already been reduced to one member as of December 2019, no new appeals could be heard in 2020.

As of 30 November 2020, all seven positions on the Appellate Body were vacant. WTO members could not reach consensus on launching the selection processes for the appointment of new Appellate Body members. As of December 2020, 16 appeals were pending before the Appellate Body.

By the end of the year, a total of 598 disputes had been initiated under the WTO dispute settlement procedures since the entry into force of the WTO agreements in 1995.

See pages 136-143.



37

In 2020, there was an average of 37 ongoing panel and arbitral proceedings each month.



11

Eleven dispute settlement reports and decisions were circulated in 2020.



5

During 2020, WTO members initiated five disputes.



Supporting development and building trade capacity

- **The Committee on Trade and Development discussed the decline in exports for many WTO members due to COVID-19. Developing countries with limited resources were the most affected.**
- **Global disbursements of Aid for Trade rose to US\$ 45.1 billion in 2018 compared with US\$ 43.4 billion in 2017.**

In the first half of 2020, merchandise exports of least-developed countries (LDCs) declined by 16 per cent, steeper than the 13 per cent decline for world exports. LDC exports dropped significantly for fuels and mining products (down 26 per cent) and clothing (down 18 per cent) while their services exports dropped by around 40 per cent, mostly due to a slump in travel exports. LDCs highlighted the need for global cooperation to help them recover from the COVID-19 crisis, including through assistance for healthcare systems and economic recovery.

The total amount of Aid for Trade disbursed to developing countries reached US\$ 455.5 billion by the end of 2018. Disbursements to LDCs rose from US\$ 12.8 billion in 2017 to US\$ 13.5 billion in 2018. However, increasingly, support for LDCs is taking the

form of loans rather than grants, which raises debt sustainability concerns.

The 2020-21 Aid for Trade Work Programme, entitled “Empowering Connected, Sustainable Trade” and adopted by the Committee on Trade and Development, was extended until 2022, when the next Aid for Trade Global Review will be held. The programme is focusing on the opportunities that digital connectivity and sustainability offer for economic and export diversification. Members agreed to adapt the programme to reflect the economic impact of COVID-19.

The Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF), a multi-agency initiative, maintained support to LDCs thanks to a business continuity plan that ensured the delivery of over 90 per cent of its planned projects for 2020. A total of 28 new projects worth US\$ 21.3 million were approved in 2020.

Another multi-agency initiative, the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF), approved US\$ 3.7 million for projects aimed at improving food safety, animal and plant health and helping developing countries meet sanitary and phytosanitary requirements for world trade. Africa continued to be the biggest beneficiary of STDF projects.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the WTO developed remotely-delivered training activities and increased the number of e-learning courses offered to government officials. Approximately 13,500 participants benefited from these activities, including from the new e-learning courses.

See pages 144-165.



13.5
Aid for Trade disbursements to LDCs totalled US\$ 13.5 billion in 2018.



16%
LDC merchandise exports declined by 16 per cent in the first half of 2020.



13,500
About 13,500 participants benefited from WTO training activities in 2020.



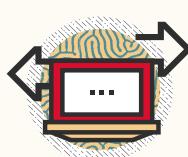
Outreach

- The WTO cooperated with other intergovernmental organizations to seek to mitigate the impact of COVID-19.
- The WTO marked its 25th anniversary with a virtual event that looked at the organization's achievements and current challenges.
- The International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) and the WTO stressed how business can help identify ways to maximize health outcomes and minimize the economic damage from COVID-19.

The WTO worked closely with other intergovernmental organizations to maintain open trade. It issued statements with the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) calling on governments to minimize export restrictions on trade in food and to ensure a cross-border flow of vital medical products.

Senior WTO officials took part in G20 and G7 summits, where they welcomed a commitment by world leaders to support global trade and investment in the face of COVID-19.

In collaboration with the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) and the B20, the WTO facilitated a Trade Dialogue event for over



70
The WTO facilitated a virtual Trade Dialogue event for over 70 business representatives to discuss trade's role in mitigating the impact of COVID-19.



3.1

The WTO website attracted a record 3.1 million monthly visits, up from 2.7 million in 2019.



25

In 2020, the WTO commemorated its 25th anniversary with a virtual event for various stakeholders.

70 business representatives on trade's role in mitigating the economic damage resulting from the pandemic.

In November, the WTO hosted a virtual event, titled "WTO at 25: Past, Present & Future", to commemorate its 25th anniversary. Participants underlined the importance of the multilateral trading system as well as the need for reform of the WTO to allow it to deal with global challenges, such as COVID-19.

Interest in the WTO continued to increase, with the WTO website attracting over 3.1 million monthly visits, over 13 per cent more than in 2019. The dedicated section on "COVID-19 and world trade" was viewed over 926,000 times. The number of WTO followers on Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram and Weibo grew by 13 per cent to over 2 million.

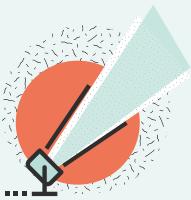
Non-governmental organizations put forward papers highlighting the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on people across the world and calling on the WTO to help address the crisis. These papers were published on the WTO website, and the WTO Secretariat organized virtual briefings to keep NGOs abreast of WTO work. Despite COVID-19 constraints, the WTO continued its outreach to parliamentarians, also mainly through virtual contacts.

See pages 166-189.

SPOTLIGHT

Director-General selection process

The process for the appointment of a new Director-General was launched in May 2020 after the then Director-General, Roberto Azevêdo, announced he would step down on 31 August 2020 – a year before the end of his term. The selection process culminated in February 2021 with the appointment of Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, the first African and first woman to hold the post.



The nomination period ran from 8 June to 8 July 2020.

The process was led by the General Council Chair, David Walker (New Zealand), and conducted in three phases: phase 1, the nomination period; phase 2, when candidates made themselves known to WTO members, including at a special General Council meeting; and phase 3, the consultation period with members. In phase 3, the General Council Chair was assisted by the Chair of the Dispute Settlement Body, Dacio Castillo (Honduras), and the Chair of the Trade Policy Review Body, Harald Aspelund (Iceland).

Period of nomination

The nomination period ran from 8 June to 8 July 2020. The following eight candidates were nominated by their respective governments: Dr Jesús Seade Kuri (Mexico); Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala (Nigeria); Abdel-Hamid

Mamdouh (Egypt); Tudor Ulianovschi (Republic of Moldova); Yoo Myung-hee (Republic of Korea); Amina C. Mohamed (Kenya); Mohammad Maziad Al-Tuwaijri (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia); and Dr Liam Fox (United Kingdom).

Presentation of candidates

Candidates were given the opportunity to make themselves known to WTO members and to engage in discussion on the issues facing the organization. Due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, the General Council shortened this normally three-month period to two months. A special General Council meeting was held on 15–17 July, at which WTO members met formally with the eight candidates. Each candidate made a presentation with their vision for the WTO and responded to questions.



The DG selection process was overseen by “the Troika” of David Walker (centre), Harald Aspelund (left) and Dacio Castillo (right).



Consultations

Consultations to narrow the field of candidates and ultimately to arrive at the membership's choice were conducted by Ambassador Walker, assisted by Ambassador Castillo and Ambassador Aspelund. They were often referred to as "the Troika".

Three rounds of consultations were held, with three candidates withdrawing after the first round and three more after the second round. This left just two candidates – Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala and Yoo Myung-hee – remaining in the third and final round.

The outcome of each round was reported to members at heads of delegation meetings on 18 September, 8 October and 28 October. The General Council Chair praised the membership for remaining fully engaged in and committed to this process. On 28 October, the General Council Chair announced that, based on consultations with all delegations, the candidate best placed to attain consensus and become the next Director-General was Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala. Ambassador Walker stressed that this was the assessment of the Troika and that a final decision had to be taken by members at a General Council meeting scheduled for 9 November. That meeting was subsequently postponed until further notice "for reasons including the health situation and current events", Ambassador Walker said.

On 15 February 2021, WTO members agreed to select Dr Okonjo-Iweala as the WTO's 7th Director-General.

Ambassador Walker continued consulting with delegations. In December, he noted that the situation had not changed. On 5 February 2021, Ms Yoo withdrew her candidacy. The administration of newly elected US President Joseph Biden then declared its "strong support" for the candidacy of Dr Okonjo-Iweala. On 15 February, WTO members made history when the General Council agreed by consensus to select Dr Okonjo-Iweala, a former Nigerian finance minister and senior World Bank official, as the organization's seventh Director-General. She is the first African and the first woman to hold the post. Dr Okonjo-Iweala began her mandate on 1 March 2021.

8

candidates were nominated for the post of DG



Dr Jesús Seade Kuri
Mexico



Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala
Nigeria



Abdel-Hamid Mamdouh
Egypt



Tudor Ulianovschi
Republic of Moldova



Yoo Myung-hee
Republic of Korea



Amina C. Mohamed
Kenya



Mohammad Maziad Al-Tuwaijri
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia



Dr Liam Fox
United Kingdom

Note: The order of the names reflects the order in which the nominations were received.

3

Membership

The WTO is open to states and customs territories with full autonomy over their external commercial relations. The accession process promotes the integration of new members into the global economy.



32
Joining
the WTO

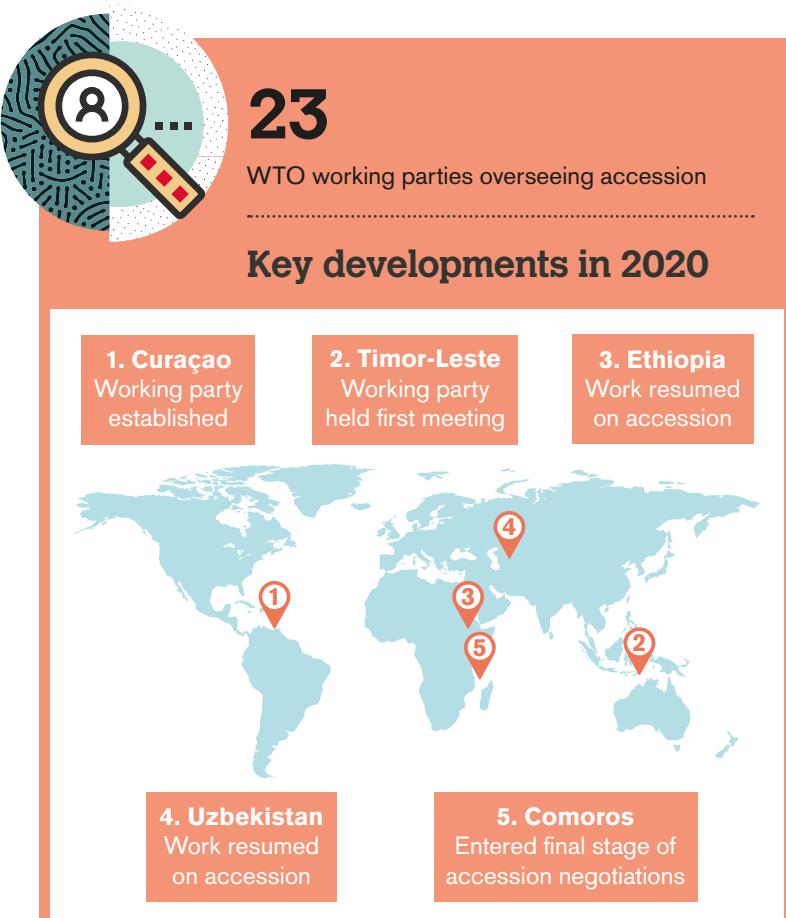
36
A global
membership



A meeting of WTO members at the WTO's headquarters in Geneva.

Joining the WTO

- A working party was established for Curaçao, taking the number of WTO working parties overseeing accession negotiations to 23.
- The working party on Timor-Leste's accession held its first meeting. Work resumed on the accessions of Ethiopia and Uzbekistan after breaks of several years. Comoros entered the final stage of its accession negotiations.
- The WTO held its first Accessions Week – a series of webinars examining how WTO accession can be a catalyst for economic reform.
- A Trade for Peace Week in December featured discussions on the impact of trade, job creation and technology on peace-building and prepared the way for further cooperation between the trade and peace communities.



Twenty-three countries and customs territories are seeking to join the WTO.

Background

The WTO is open to states or customs territories with full autonomy over their external commercial relations. To join, a government has to bring its economic and trade policies in line with WTO rules and principles and negotiate with WTO members the guaranteed minimum levels of access to its domestic markets for goods and services. The accession process promotes the integration of new members into the global economy. It begins when WTO members accept an application and establish a working party. It concludes when WTO members and the acceding government accept negotiated terms of accession.

Working party for Curaçao

A working party for Curaçao was established in March 2020, taking to 23 the number of working parties overseeing accession negotiations for countries seeking to join the WTO. Since the WTO was launched in 1995, 36 members have joined the organization.

Curaçao is a constituent country and separate customs territory within the Kingdom of the Netherlands. It applied for accession in October 2019. "We will actively support the role of the WTO in organizing and nurturing effective global economic governance, especially where it concerns the interests of small island developing states within the WTO," said Caryl M.C. Monte, Curaçao's Chief Negotiator for WTO accession.

Timor-Leste formally starts its accession process

The first meeting of the Working Party on the Accession of Timor-Leste in October 2020 reviewed the data provided by the country on its trade regime. The WTO Secretariat was mandated to prepare a factual summary of the discussions to date, which will form the basis for further negotiations. Timor-Leste submitted its application for accession in November 2016. The working party was established in December 2016.

"Timor-Leste prioritizes WTO membership as it would help to leverage the ongoing improvements in its infrastructure, human capital and administrative capacity, and to accelerate growth and economic diversification," said Joaquim Amaral, Coordinating Minister of Economic Affairs and WTO chief negotiator.

Ethiopia and Uzbekistan reactivate accession negotiations

Members welcomed the resumption of Ethiopia's WTO membership negotiations at the fourth meeting of the working party on the



country's accession, held in January 2020. It was the first meeting in almost eight years. Mamo Mihretu, senior advisor to the Ethiopian Prime Minister and chief trade negotiator, urged members to accelerate negotiations in consideration of Ethiopia's status as a least-developed country (LDC).

WTO members welcomed the resumption of Uzbekistan's accession at the fourth working party meeting in July 2020, nearly 15 years after the previous formal meeting. Uzbekistan's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Investments and Foreign Trade, Sardor Umurzakov, stressed the government's commitment to the accession process.

A working party for Curaçao was established in March 2020.

"Timor-Leste prioritizes WTO membership as it would help to leverage the ongoing improvements in its infrastructure, human capital and administrative capacity, and to accelerate growth and economic diversification"- Joaquim Amaral, WTO chief negotiator



Comoros enters final phase of accession negotiations

At the fifth meeting of the Working Party on the Accession of the Union of the Comoros in September 2020, the Comoros reaffirmed its strong commitment to conclude accession negotiations. Members welcomed the efforts of the Comoros to bring its trade regime into conformity with WTO rules but underlined that significant progress will be needed, especially on the legislative front.

Ethiopia resumed accession negotiations after an eight-year pause.

“The efforts undertaken by acceding governments to join the organization are a force for change” - DDG Alan Wolff

Somalia submits data on trade regime

Three years after the establishment of its working party, Somalia circulated a memorandum on its trade regime, the first step in the process for negotiations with WTO members. In October 2020, Mikael Anzén of Sweden was appointed as chair of the working party.

New observer

In May 2020, Turkmenistan requested observer status in the WTO and indicated its intent to initiate accession negotiations within five years. The General Council accepted the request in July 2020. Turkmenistan becomes the last former Soviet republic to establish a formal relationship with the WTO.

Technical assistance and outreach

The WTO Secretariat organized a range of technical assistance and capacity-building activities, including through virtual platforms. These included the first Accessions Week – a series of webinars that emphasized the benefits of WTO accession as a catalyst for economic reforms.

At a time when the WTO is under heightened scrutiny and reform of the WTO is a subject of concern for all, the efforts undertaken by acceding governments to join the organization are a force for change, Deputy Director-General Alan Wolff told the opening session in June. The WTO also held a two-week virtual training course on agriculture in the context of accession negotiations.

In 2020, the Secretariat organized two regionally focused dialogues, one on Africa and another on the Arab region, where a large number of countries have yet to accede to the WTO.

The Third Regional Dialogue on WTO Accessions for Africa was held in February in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and focused on



"Deepening Economic Integration in Africa through WTO Membership and AfCFTA (African Continental Free Trade Area) Implementation".

The first Regional Dialogue on WTO Accessions for the Arab Region was organized in collaboration with the Arab Monetary Fund and the Islamic Development Bank in November on "Arab Perspectives on WTO Accessions and the Multilateral Trading System". The virtual workshop provided a platform for increasing knowledge of the WTO accession process, accession-related rules and the state of play of Arab accessions.

The ninth China Round Table on WTO Accessions took place virtually in December. Under the theme "25 years of WTO accessions in review", it paid tribute to the contribution of accessions to the organization since its establishment in 1995. It also discussed how to make WTO membership universal and what more can be done to assist the most vulnerable countries seeking WTO accession.

Under the "Trade for Peace through WTO Accessions" initiative, in December the Secretariat hosted the first edition of the

Trade for Peace Week. The discussions highlighted the impact of trade, job creation and technology on peace-building.

In remarks at the opening session, DDG Alan Wolff said the initiative could contribute to making the trading system more agile, responsive, humane and fit for purpose. There was much more that the trade and peace communities could and must do together, he added.

Launched in 2017, the Trade for Peace initiative aims to assist fragile and conflict-affected countries through WTO accession.

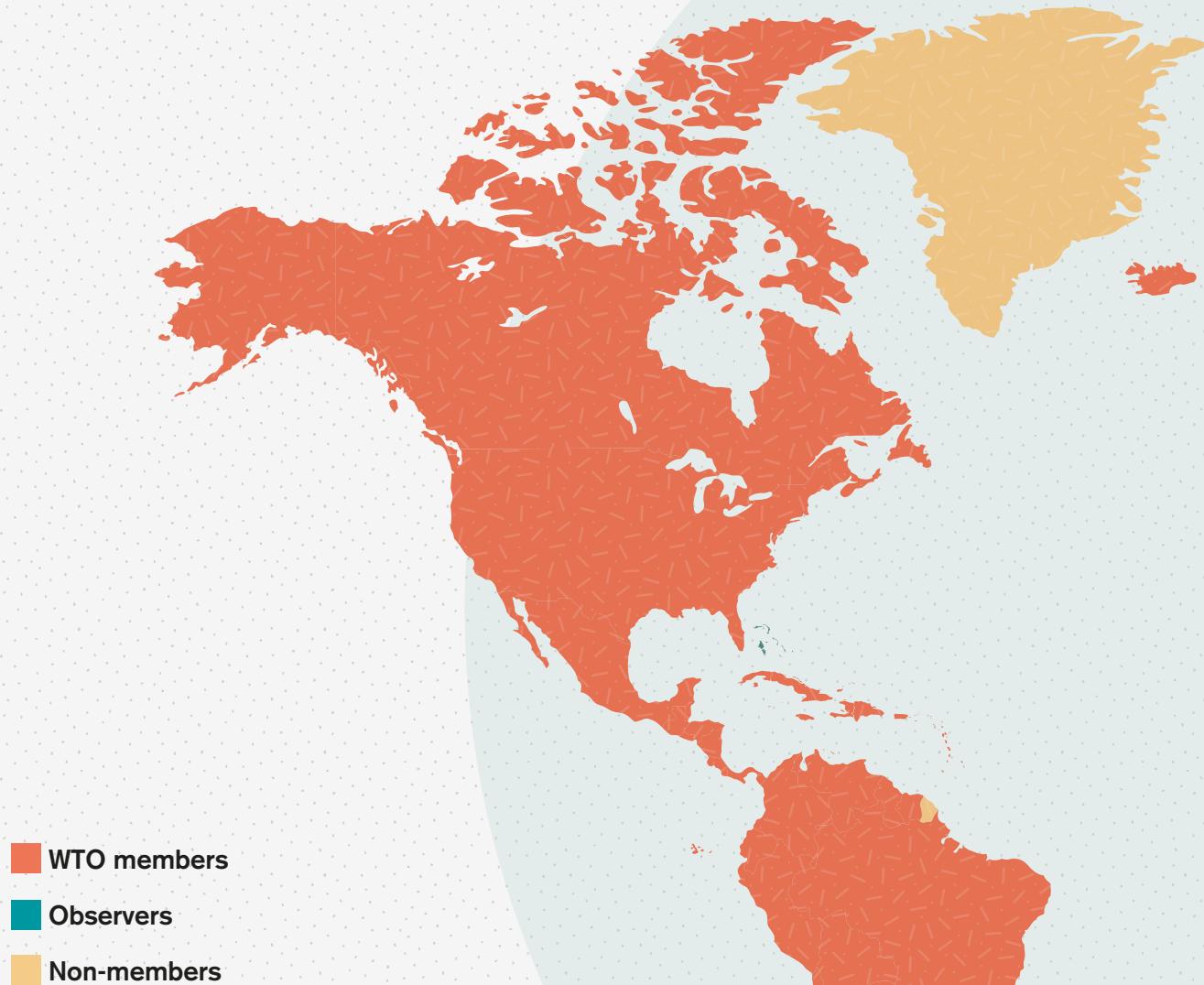
For a full list of WTO members and observers, see page 203.

A wool carpet workshop in Uzbekistan's Kachka Daria province. Uzbekistan has stressed its commitment to the country's accession process, which resumed in 2020.

The Trade for Peace initiative aims to assist fragile and conflict-affected countries through WTO accession.

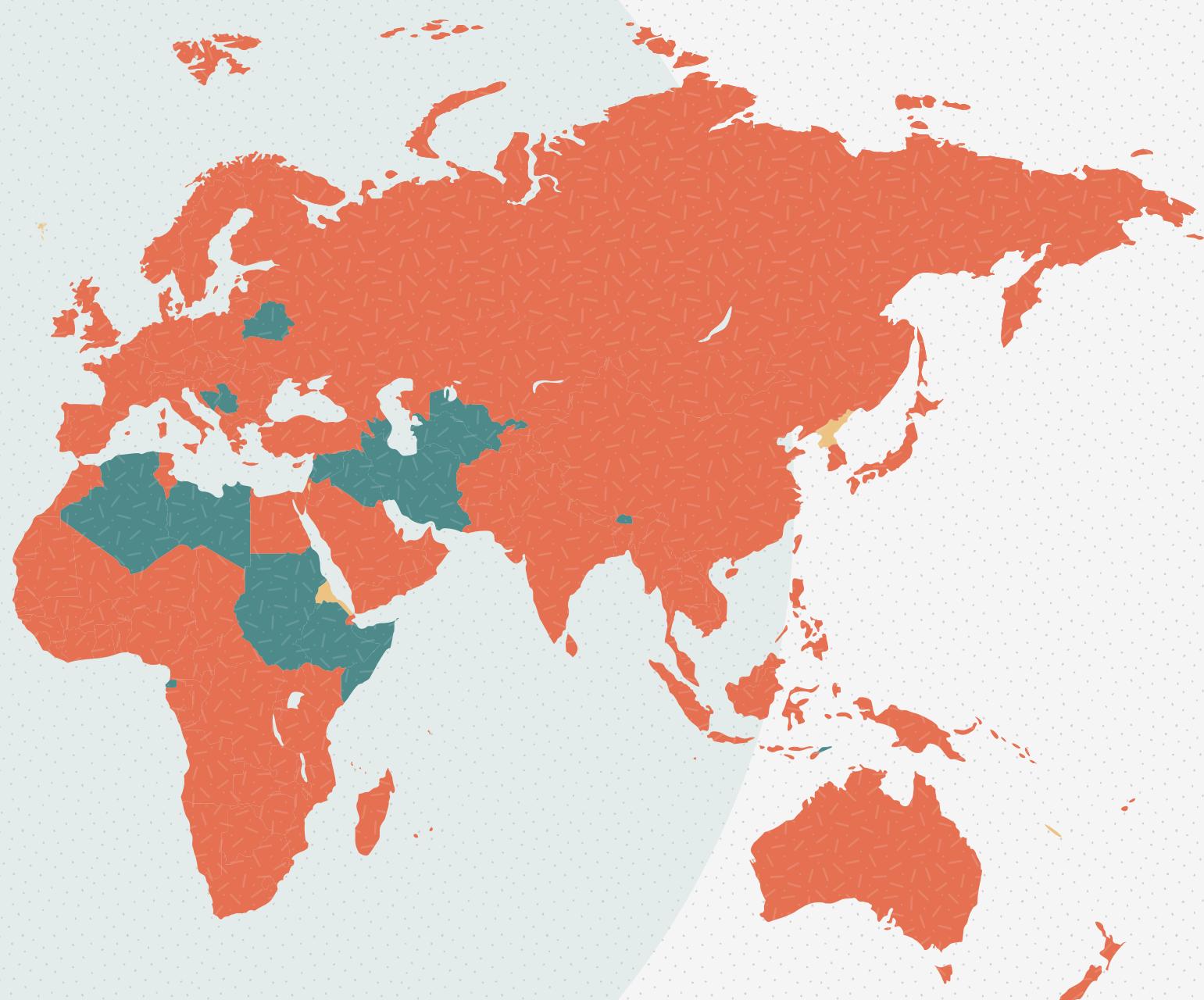
A global membership

► The WTO's 164 members represent 98 per cent of world trade.



For a full list of WTO members and observers, see page 207.

The map does not intend to show WTO members' non-metropolitan/overseas territories or the status of such territories in regard to the WTO agreements.



4

Trade negotiations and discussions

Changes to the rules of trade require the agreement of WTO members, who must reach a decision through negotiations.



A meeting of the Trade Negotiations Committee in early March 2020.



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Trade negotiations
and discussions
in 2020

44

Agriculture

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Market access for non-
agricultural products

48

Services

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Trade-related aspects
of intellectual property
rights (TRIPS)

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Trade and development

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Trade and environment

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Rules negotiations:
Fisheries subsidies, other
WTO rules

56

Dispute Settlement
Understanding

57

Joint initiatives

64

Informal Working
Group on Trade
and Gender

Trade negotiations and discussions in 2020

- The COVID-19 pandemic forced WTO negotiating bodies to adopt a variety of formats for work, including virtual meetings.
- WTO members advanced negotiations on fisheries subsidies, although progress was insufficient to secure a deal in 2020. A high degree of engagement was seen in the agriculture negotiations.
- The joint initiatives continued to draw interest from an increasing number of members in 2020. Their processes remained transparent and inclusive.
- In February 2021, Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala of Nigeria was selected as the WTO's Director-General to succeed Roberto Azevêdo, who stood down as DG and Chair of the Trade Negotiations Committee at the end of August 2020.

COVID-19 pandemic

In mid-March 2020, in line with the Swiss Government's recommendations, the then Director-General and Chair of the Trade Negotiations Committee (TNC), Roberto Azevêdo, suspended all meetings at the WTO, in coordination with the General Council Chair, until the end of April because of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the months that followed, the WTO continued its meetings through a variety of formats – in-person (with limited numbers of delegations), fully virtual or hybrid.



WTO members expressed concerns about export restrictions on medical supplies and food.

In April, May and July, DG Azevêdo reported to heads of delegation on the WTO Secretariat's efforts to respond to the pandemic and his outreach activities. He pointed out that international cooperation on trade would be critical to helping all countries

Background

Trade negotiations take place under the Trade Negotiations Committee (TNC) and its subsidiary bodies, which are councils and committees meeting in special session or other bodies especially created for negotiations. The TNC supervises the overall conduct of negotiations.





to build back better, and keeping markets open to trade would be part of achieving a post-COVID-19 economic recovery that was strong, sustainable and inclusive.

While the immediate challenge was to fight the pandemic and save lives, WTO members emphasized the importance of keeping international trade flowing. Concerns were expressed about export restrictions on medical supplies and food. All delegations stressed that international cooperation and coordination of responses were important. Various members and groups issued declarations, statements and proposals on trade and COVID-19 – highlighting challenges faced, actions needed or actions they had taken in response to the pandemic.

Members continued to emphasize the critical importance of transparency and information-sharing on trade-related COVID-19 measures. As part of its longstanding monitoring and transparency mandate, the WTO Secretariat continued to track trade

measures related to COVID-19 – both trade-facilitating and trade-restrictive. A Secretariat task force was set up to monitor how the pandemic was affecting international trade, and a dedicated area on the WTO website was created to provide up-to-the minute trade-related information on COVID-19.

A number of new initiatives and proposals by groups of WTO members was discussed at meetings of the Trade Negotiations Committee.

The WTO worked closely with other intergovernmental organizations, including the UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO), and with international business organizations to encourage effective policy responses to the COVID-19 crisis. The WTO also brought together six multilateral development banks to issue a joint statement in support of trade finance markets (see page 131).

Several new initiatives or proposals by groups of members were highlighted and discussed at TNC meetings. These included an initiative on trade and health (see page 69) and a waiver to certain provisions of the Agreement on Trade-related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) for the prevention, containment and treatment of COVID-19 (see page 113).

Negotiating work in 2020

In 2019, WTO members had looked to the 12th Ministerial Conference (MC12) as the new target date for reaching agreement on eliminating subsidies to illegal, unregulated, unreported (IUU) fishing and prohibiting certain subsidies that contribute to overfishing and overcapacity, giving due consideration to special and differential treatment (S&D) for developing countries. MC12 was due to be held in Kazakhstan in June 2020 but it was postponed due to the pandemic until the end of 2021.





Sri Lankan fishermen emptying their nets.

Fisheries was a key negotiating priority in 2020. Members worked intensively in the Rules Negotiating Group (see page 53) under the leadership of Santiago Wills (Colombia). Ambassador Wills issued a draft consolidated text which he revised twice. Despite all efforts, work could not be completed by the year's end. While this was a setback, the Chair said that the mandate remained unchanged. He said members should be encouraged by progress made, the momentum built and the opportunity to conclude the negotiations in the near future.

A high level of engagement was seen in the agriculture negotiations. Members continued to emphasize the importance of an agricultural outcome at MC12 to preserve the credibility and relevance of the organization. The challenge in 2021 would be to build consensus for an ambitious and balanced outcome.

On the S&D negotiations, the G90 group of developing countries circulated a communication containing their ten agreement-specific proposals on S&D and another with their responses to questions. Positions did not change (see page 51). Kadra Ahmed Hassan (Djibouti), Chair of the Committee on Trade and Development in special session, will continue her consultations with the membership in 2021 to explore how to move forward.

The Chair of the Council for Trade in Services in special session, Zhanar Aitzhanova (Kazakhstan), reported on exploratory discussions on market access, which focused on environmental services, agriculture-related services, logistics services and financial services. She will continue her consultations with the membership in 2021, including on any new proposals that are tabled.

There was limited activity or no progress in the other multilateral negotiations.

Work on the joint initiatives

The joint initiatives continued to draw interest from an increasing number of WTO members in 2020. Their processes remained transparent and inclusive, with open meetings and all proposals and reports made available to all members.

Some participants said that the imperative for initiatives in e-commerce, domestic regulation in services, investment facilitation for development, and micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) had been strengthened by the pandemic, and that the WTO needed to show that it could respond to crises and 21st century issues.

The co-convenors and coordinators of the initiatives provided updates on their work. The initiatives cover electronic commerce (see page 57), investment facilitation for development (see page 58), domestic regulation in services (see page 61) and MSMEs (see page 59). Members also received updates on trade and women's economic empowerment (see page 64). In November, two groups of members launched initiatives to intensify discussions on important environmental challenges at the WTO (see page 62).

The joint initiatives continued to draw interest from an increasing number of WTO members in 2020.

WTO reform discussions

At July's TNC meeting – the last chaired by DG Azevêdo before he stepped down at the end of August – the Chair noted that all international organizations were working to update themselves to remain fit for purpose amid changing economic and geopolitical circumstances. The WTO could not afford to be an exception.

WTO members pointed out that efforts towards effective and inclusive reform had to continue and accelerate. A key challenge was the different perspectives on what was required. Building a solid economic recovery and restoring confidence in the WTO system required members to achieve outcomes at, if not before, MC12. Only through ongoing trade reform could members build a more resilient trading system.

Many members said that reaching a solution on the Appellate Body impasse (see page 142) had to be a top priority. Some delegations stressed that WTO reform should promote inclusivity, address historical balances, enhance the integration of developing countries in global trade and deliver on the development mandate.

Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala selected as DG

On 14 May 2020, DG Azevêdo told Heads of Delegation (HoDs) that he was stepping down as Director-General and Chair of the Trade Negotiations Committee on 31 August 2020 – one year earlier than his mandate. His early departure would reduce the chances that the process to appoint his successor in 2021 would divert attention and energy from preparations for MC12, he said.

In October, the Chair of the General Council said until a new Director-General was in place (see page 28), it would be important to follow a "no-surprises" approach. This included continuing to provide transparency and inclusiveness through the meetings of the TNC/HoDs ahead of General Council



meetings. Two TNC/HoDs meetings – in October and December – were convened by the four Deputy DGs (Yonov Frederick Agah of Nigeria, Karl Brauner of Germany, Alan Wolff of the United States and Yi Xiaozhun of China) in coordination with the General Council Chair.

Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala was selected as Director-General in February 2021.

On 15 February 2021, WTO members made history when the General Council agreed by consensus to select Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, a former Nigerian finance minister and senior official at the World Bank, as Director-General. Dr Okonjo-Iweala becomes the first woman and the first African to hold the post.



WTO members pointed out that efforts towards effective and inclusive reform of the organization had to continue and accelerate.

Agriculture

- Agriculture negotiations resumed in September after being halted in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The Committee Chair, Gloria Abraham Peralta, named facilitators to help narrow gaps in negotiating positions and to identify negotiating options for the topics under discussion.
- The pandemic heightened WTO members' interest in negotiations in issues such as domestic support, public stockpiling and export restrictions.
- The WTO celebrated the first anniversary of World Cotton Day on 7 October.

Background

The broad objective of the agriculture negotiations is to reduce distortions in agricultural trade caused notably by high tariffs and domestic support measures as well as export subsidies and equivalent measures and export restrictions. The negotiations take place in the WTO Committee on Agriculture, meeting in special session. They are also to take into account the needs of developing countries.

The process initiated by the Chair of the Special Session of the Committee on Agriculture, John Deep Ford (Guyana), to identify potential meaningful outcomes for the 12th Ministerial Conference (MC12) was halted in March 2020 because of the COVID-19 outbreak. The Chair held a virtual meeting in May on how the agriculture negotiations should proceed in view of the pandemic and the postponement of MC12 (see page 69).

Following Ambassador Ford's departure in June, Gloria Abraham Peralta (Costa Rica) was appointed as Chair of the Special Session of the Committee on Agriculture and the Sub-Committee on Cotton in July 2020.

Negotiations resumed in September despite COVID-related constraints. Several new submissions were presented by members and examined. Members notably discussed how to factor in lessons learnt from the COVID-19 crisis. Enhancing transparency was also a cross-cutting issue.

The new Chair put in place in October a facilitator-led process on the various topics. The facilitators assist the Chair with technical work to clarify and enhance understanding of the issues and concerns, to narrow gaps in positions and to help identify the different options available. The facilitators held numerous consultations in various formats.

Public stockholding for food security purposes

During the pandemic, several members revived, enhanced or expanded purchases at market or administered (official) prices under their public stockholding programmes for food security or increased procurement prices. Discussions on public stockholding for food security continued in dedicated sessions. The issue has remained a priority for developing country proponents, who have demanded a permanent solution to guarantee their food security.



Wheat harvesting in Haryana, India.



Members discussed how to factor in lessons learnt from the COVID-19 crisis.



Other members warned of the potential for production and trade distortion, as well as for excessive accumulation of stocks under these programmes; if released on world markets, the stocks could depress prices and affect trade flows and the food security of others. They continued to call for stronger safeguards, anti-circumvention provisions and enhanced transparency.

The G-33 (a coalition of developing countries) has called for a permanent solution on the issue to be agreed at MC12. The group wants to avoid transparency and other obligations that would be too burdensome. A previous deadline for agreement was missed at MC11.

Domestic support

Domestic support (subsidies) was considered to be the priority issue by the overwhelming majority of WTO members, who continued to call for disciplining trade-distorting support and securing an outcome at MC12. Many members adopted domestic support measures or increased support under existing programmes during the year to help their farmers cope with the economic consequences of the pandemic, which heightened interest in the issue.

Several new submissions were made by members. The Cairns Group of agricultural

exporters proposed a framework for negotiations on domestic support aiming to agree on a numerical target for a reduction in trade-distorting support entitlements by 2030. Russia introduced a new submission on its formula approach to further discipline trade-distorting support. Canada updated its analytical tool on domestic support, which allows countries to do their own analysis. The United States drew attention to different methodologies used to calculate market price support.

Several members continued to argue that aggregate measurement support (AMS) entitlements (i.e. final bound total AMS) that allow certain members to provide support above their *de minimis* levels should be eliminated first to establish a level playing field. *De minimis* refers to minimal amounts of trade-distorting domestic support (expressed as a percentage of the value of agricultural production) allowed for all members.

Others believe that all components of trade-distorting support should be examined concurrently. An increasing number of members called for some kind of proportionality – those with more potential to distort global markets should contribute more to the reform. Many members also continued to call for the negotiations to take account of support provided on a *per capita* basis.



Cotton

Members agreed to focus the facilitator-led process initially on transparency-related issues. They observed "Cotton Days" in July and November, consisting of back-to-back meetings on trade-related developments and the Director-General's Consultative Framework Mechanism on cotton development assistance.

The framework meetings track development assistance programmes for cotton and act as a forum for the exchange of information on the linkages between cotton, trade and development. The trade-related dedicated discussions on cotton, which focus on transparency and monitoring, benefited from various external contributions, including from the International Cotton Advisory Committee and the International Trade Centre. An information session on COVID-19 and cotton was held in July 2020.

The WTO celebrated the first anniversary of World Cotton Day on 7 October. Most of the activities were held online. The objective was to disseminate information and generate new and enhanced collaboration throughout cotton value chains.

A joint initiative of the WTO, the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the International Trade Centre

(ITC) on cotton by-products, endorsed by WTO members in November 2018, marked the end of its first phase with the organization in September of five workshops in partner least-developed countries (LDCs). The initiative also saw the completion of feasibility studies containing new data and analysis on the potential to develop the by-products sector in those countries.

A proposal by the Cotton-4 – Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad and Mali – and Côte d'Ivoire for a General Council declaration on support for cotton by-products development was discussed at the December General Council meeting.

Market access

Discussions on market access centred on a few selected issues, targeting an incremental outcome at MC12. These included applied tariff predictability and the treatment of consignments already *en route* when tariffs change, tariff quota transparency, tariff simplification, and a framework for market access reforms. There was no serious engagement among members on tariff reduction commitments.

A written contribution by Russia on the predictability of applied tariffs and quota transparency and a joint submission by

Harvesting cotton in Côte d'Ivoire.



Cotton harvesting
in the state of
Bahia, Brazil.

Australia and Canada (later joined by Brazil and Ukraine) on consignments *en route* anchored the discussions on these issues.

The negotiations picked up in the latter part of the year, supported by the facilitator-led process. Detailed technical discussions were held on *en route* consignments, during which the proponents presented a set of best practices to improve predictability. Paraguay, Brazil and Ukraine provided a broad outline of their proposed market access reform framework.

Special safeguard mechanism

WTO members continued to discuss a special safeguard mechanism (SSM) in dedicated sessions, as mandated by the 10th Ministerial Conference. A mechanism would allow developing countries to raise tariffs temporarily to address import surges or price declines. Differences among members on the link between market access and an SSM continued to constrain progress on this issue.

Export prohibitions and restrictions

The enhancement of transparency in the imposition of export restrictions and the monitoring of these measures in the WTO attracted renewed interest with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Intense discussions on the exemption of foodstuffs purchased for non-commercial humanitarian purposes by the UN's World Food Programme (WFP) from export prohibitions or restrictions took place towards the end of the year. A draft decision was submitted for adoption at the December General Council meeting but consensus could not be achieved.

In January 2021, a group of nearly 80 WTO members issued a joint statement pledging not to impose export restrictions on foodstuffs purchased by the WFP for humanitarian aid. "We recognize the critical humanitarian support provided by the World Food Programme, made more urgent in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and other crises," the group said.

Export competition

A group of proponents circulated in March 2020 a draft proposal for a decision at MC12 on enhancing transparency in export competition. This document was considered a good reference for technical discussions in the facilitator-led process. While several members supported work towards improved transparency, others expressed concerns that new transparency obligations might be hard to implement due to resource constraints.



Enhancing transparency in the export restrictions attracted renewed interest during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We recognize the critical humanitarian support provided by the World Food

Programme, made more urgent in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and other crises"

- Group of nearly 80 WTO members



Market access for non-agricultural products

- The Negotiating Group on Market Access did not receive any papers or proposals in 2020 and did not meet during the year.

Background

Non-agricultural products are products not covered by the Agreement on Agriculture. These range from manufactured goods to fuels and fisheries. The negotiations aim to reduce or, as appropriate, eliminate tariffs as well as non-tariff barriers, particularly on goods of export interest to developing countries. The negotiations are conducted in the Negotiating Group on Market Access.

Services

- WTO members held exploratory discussions on market access for environmental services, agriculture-related services, logistics and financial services.

- The Chair, Zhanar Aitzhanova (Kazakhstan), encouraged delegations to continue engaging and to reflect on how to pursue discussions in 2021.

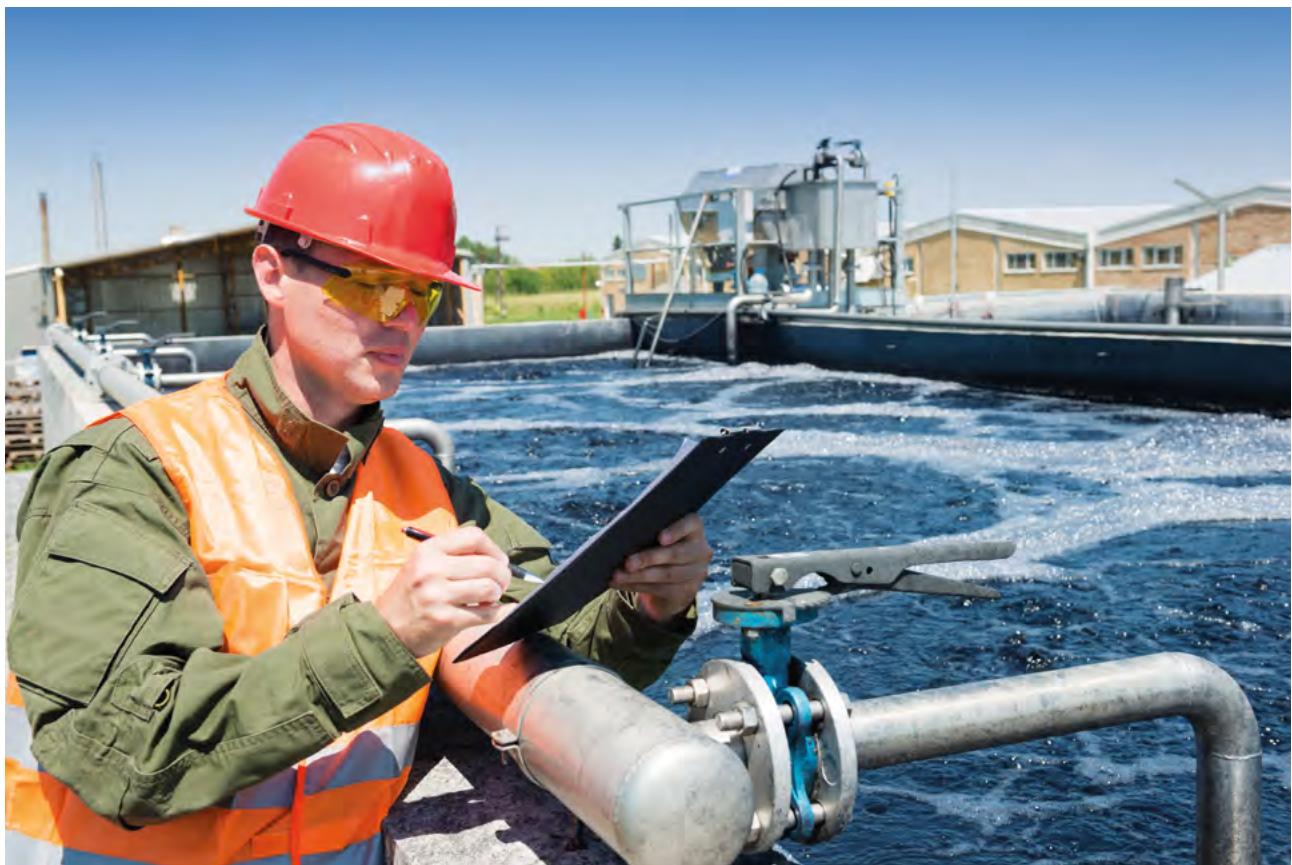
The special session of the Council for Trade in Services discussed four new communications submitted regarding exploratory discussions on market access. The communications covered environmental, agriculture-related, logistics and financial services. These discussions, initiated after the 11th Ministerial Conference in December 2017, aim to foster an exchange of views among WTO members about their current areas of interest.

Australia, Canada, Mexico, New Zealand, Switzerland and the United Kingdom put forward a communication on market access issues related to environmental services, which was originally discussed in 2019. The new communication covered additional environment-related services, including engineering, construction and consulting. The proponents underscored the positive linkages between services trade and environmental protection.

Australia, Canada, Chile, New Zealand and Uruguay highlighted the importance of agriculture-related services to agricultural production and value chains. The liberalization of agriculture-related services, including forestry, veterinary and wholesale trade

Background

The General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) mandates WTO members to progressively open up trade in services. The negotiations are overseen by the Council for Trade in Services, meeting in special session.



services, would help mitigate the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic by reducing bottlenecks in food value chains and strengthening the resilience of food systems, they said.

China submitted a paper on the economic importance of logistics services. The paper outlined the evolution of the sector, its role in facilitating trade in goods and supply chains, its contribution to e-commerce activities, and the relevance of members' commitments under the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) in this area.

WTO members also debated a communication by Australia, Canada, Switzerland and the United Kingdom on financial services, which range from insurance and banking to asset management. The paper stressed the sector's role as a key enabler for economic growth and global trade. It also drew attention to the possibility for improvements to market access commitments,

taking into account the economic, policy and technological developments the sector has undergone in recent years.

In discussions, members provided their views on market access, underscored the sectors' economic and trade contributions, including in the context of efforts to improve economic resilience and support recovery from the pandemic, and highlighted development considerations.

In her concluding remarks at a meeting in December, the Chair, Zhanar Aitzhanova, encouraged members to "continue engaging with one another and to reflect on how best to pursue discussions in the new year".

Under the Joint Initiative on Services Domestic Regulation (see page 61), participants (currently 63 members) are in the process of negotiating new disciplines to be incorporated in their respective commitments under the GATS.

Market access for environmental services was one of the topics discussed by the Council for Trade in Services.

Trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights (TRIPS)

➤ Alfredo Suescum (Panama) was appointed as Chair of the TRIPS Council special session.

➤ The Chair convened informal consultations with the most active WTO members in the negotiations on a register for geographical indications. An informal meeting open to all was held in October.



Alfredo Suescum (Panama) was appointed Chair of the TRIPS Council special session in July 2020. He convened consultations in October with the WTO members who have been most active in the negotiations on creating a register of geographical indications (GIs) for wines and spirits to facilitate the protection of GIs.

Ambassador Suescum invited members to share their views on changes in their respective position, the steps they would propose to take to fulfil the negotiating mandate and how recent developments in multilateral, bilateral and regional agreements and in domestic systems for the protection of GIs affect the work of the special session.

Background

Negotiations on a multilateral system for notifying and registering geographical indications (GIs) for wines and spirits are carried out in the special session of the TRIPS Council. The purpose of the register is to facilitate the protection of GIs for wines and spirits. These are indications (including place names or other terms or signs associated with a place) used to identify products whose place of origin contributes to their special qualities, reputation or other characteristics.

In October, an informal meeting was held to report to the whole membership on the small-group consultations. The Chair shared with delegations that while there was a common desire to fulfil the existing mandate, members' positions had not changed. No comments were made at the meeting.

Members disagree on the legal effects the register should have and whether it should create obligations for all WTO members or only those choosing to participate in it. They remain divided on product coverage and on whether, as the negotiating mandate says, the register should be confined to wines and spirits, or whether it could also apply to other products, such as food and agricultural products. Differences also remain over whether linkages should be made between the GI register negotiations and other TRIPS-related implementation issues (see page 113).



Trade and development

- The Chair initiated a process of written exchanges on the latest version of the G90's Agreement-specific proposals on special and differential treatment for developing countries.
- The Chair told the Trade Negotiations Committee that reactions to the proposals continued to be mixed. Discussions will continue in 2021.

Background

Special and differential treatment (S&D) refers to the special treatment, or flexibility, granted to developing countries in WTO agreements, such as longer implementation periods. Many WTO agreements contain provisions that give developing countries special rights and that allow developed countries to treat them more favourably than other WTO members. Differences among WTO members include the definition of who exactly should benefit from S&D. The special session of the Committee on Trade and Development is mandated to review all S&D provisions, with a view to making them more precise, effective and operational.

In April 2020, the Chair of the special session of the Committee on Trade and Development, Kadra Ahmed Hassan (Djibouti), called for a written exchange on the latest version of the G90 group of developing countries' ten agreement-specific proposals on special and differential treatment (S&D) for developing countries.

The proposals relate to S&D provisions – over 100 in all – contained in several WTO agreements and decisions on topics including transfer of technology, technical barriers to trade, sanitary and phytosanitary measures, customs valuation and the accession of least-developed countries (LDCs) to the WTO.

The Chair invited WTO members to submit questions or comments. The G90, which includes the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS), the African Group and the WTO's LDCs Group, was then invited to provide written responses, which were also shared with members. A formal meeting of the special session was held in September to allow discussions to continue.

The Chair reported to the Trade Negotiations Committee (TNC) in October that reactions to the G90 proposals continued to be mixed. Some members were supportive, but others had concerns.

The Chair told the TNC in December that there would be more scope to make progress if further discussions on the G90 proposals were to take place in an informal setting. She informed members that, after a preliminary informal meeting in December, she would hold five informal consultations starting in early 2021 to explore how to move forward on the G90 proposals.

In each consultation, she would invite participants to focus on two proposals. Over the course of the five consultations, participants would be able to have an in-depth discussion on all ten proposals.



Trade and environment

➤ The Chair continued to encourage members to consult him on topics related to the negotiations.

The Chair of the special session of the Committee on Trade and Environment, Leopold Samba (Central African Republic), continued to encourage WTO members to consult with him on topics related to the negotiations on trade and environment. No new consultations or proposals were made in 2020. Environmental services are being discussed in the WTO services negotiations (see page 48).

Following a request by the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) Group, Ambassador Samba asked the WTO Secretariat to organize a workshop on trade and environment for capital-based representatives of LDCs. The workshop had to be postponed due to COVID-19 restrictions and will be held when conditions allow.

Independently from Committee work, two groups of members launched in November new initiatives to intensify discussions at the WTO on certain trade and environment topics. The initiatives establish structured discussions on trade and environmental sustainability and an informal dialogue on plastics pollution (see page 62).



Background

The negotiations cover the relationship between existing WTO rules and specific trade obligations set out in multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), procedures for regular information exchange between MEA secretariats and the relevant WTO committees, and the reduction or, as appropriate, elimination of tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade in environmental goods and services.

Rules negotiations: Fisheries subsidies, other WTO rules

- **Fisheries subsidies remained the focus of work of the Negotiating Group on Rules. The group sought to conclude negotiations on disciplines for harmful fisheries subsidies by the 12th Ministerial Conference (MC12), originally set for June 2020.**
- **Despite restrictions on meetings and movement due to COVID-19, and the postponement of MC12, work continued throughout the year.**
- **The Chair introduced a consolidated draft document in mid-2020 which was then used as the basis for the negotiations from that point. A first revision was released in November and a second revision in December.**
- **WTO members said they were committed to maintaining the negotiating momentum in 2021.**

Background

The mandate of the WTO Negotiating Group on Rules covers anti-dumping, subsidies and countervailing measures, and fisheries subsidies. The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) called for agreement in the WTO by 2020 on eliminating subsidies to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and to prohibit certain subsidies that contribute to overfishing and overcapacity, with special and differential treatment for developing countries. Due to factors related to COVID-19, an agreement on fisheries subsidies was not reached in 2020 but negotiations are at an advanced stage, with members aiming to reach an agreement as early as possible in 2021.



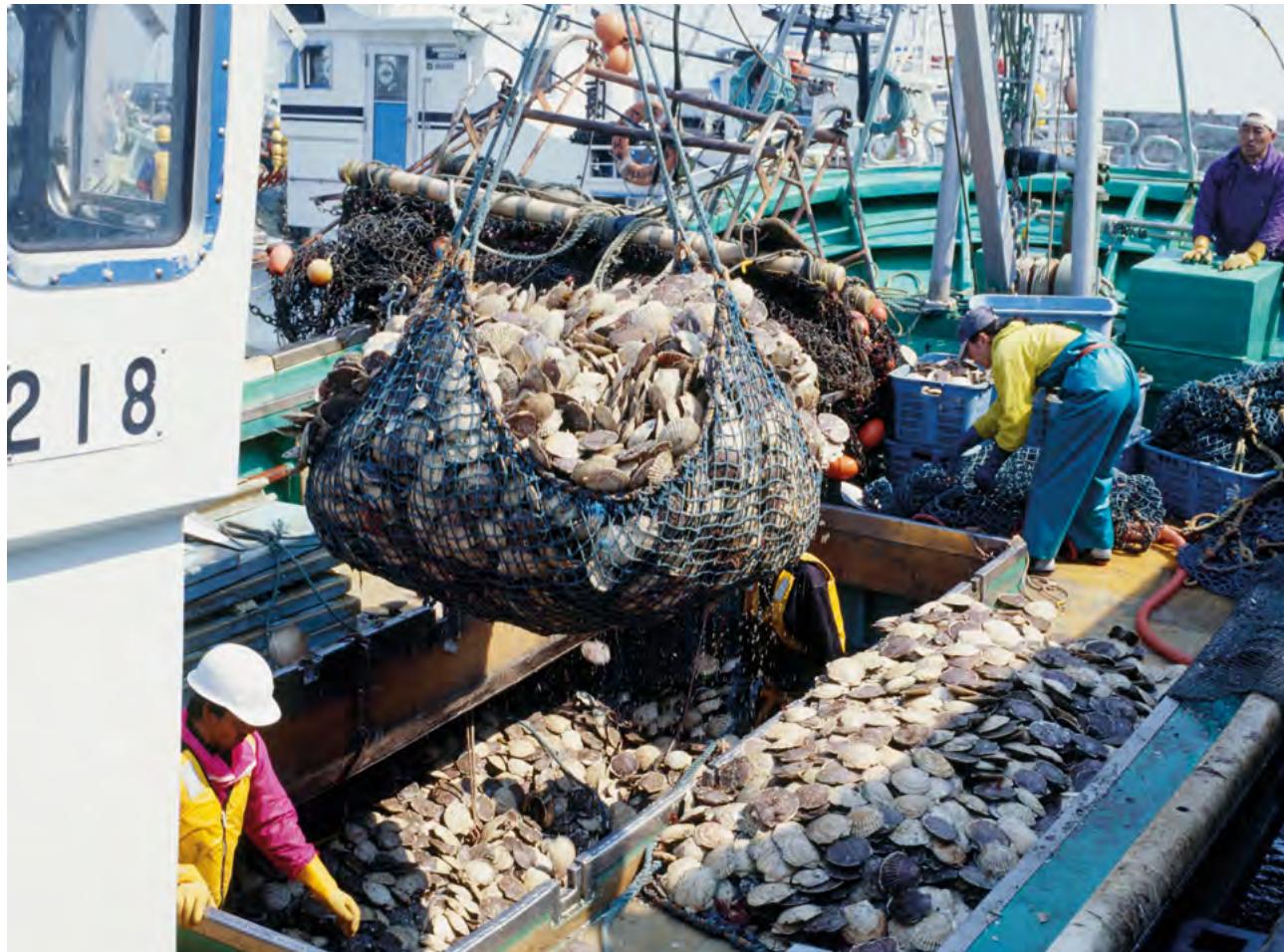
SDG 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, sea and marine resources for sustainable development.



At the end of 2019, the six facilitators who were assisting the Chair, Santiago Wills (Colombia), presented and finalized working papers on different parts of the negotiations. Work resumed in 2020 drawing on these working papers and other inputs, with a particular – although not exclusive – focus on disciplines to prohibit subsidies that contribute to overfishing and overcapacity.

Following a number of meetings of the Negotiating Group at the level of heads of delegation, the Chair focused on preparing a single consolidated document to be used as a starting point for further work. To begin this process, in early March 2020 the Chair distributed a suggested text on the prohibition element of disciplines on overfishing and overcapacity, based on the group's previous work in this area.

COVID-19 and measures taken in Switzerland and around the world to address the pandemic made immediate further progress difficult. On 12 March, it was announced that MC12 would not be held in June. At the time, virtual meetings of the Negotiating Group were not possible because of logistical and technical issues. Work continued



nevertheless, albeit at a slow pace, through a written process of comments, questions and answers on proposals that had been submitted before the lockdown.

The Chair also continued to hold consultations with delegations and groups. At a virtual meeting on 25 June, he introduced a draft consolidated document containing draft disciplines along with a detailed explanation of the origin of each provision.

The draft focused on the core disciplines of prohibitions for subsidies to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, to fishing overfished stocks and to overfishing and overcapacity. In addition, the draft included terms for the scope of the disciplines as well as some definitions needed to understand the disciplines. It also included a number of square-bracketed provisions,

signifying options or areas where there was no emerging consensus. The document contained several “placeholders” for provisions needed for implementation, such as notifications and transparency and dispute settlement. Heads of delegation agreed that the document was a starting point for resumed negotiations.

“The momentum is there, and we must not waste it. At this critical juncture, we need members to close the gaps and deliver a meaningful agreement soon” - Santiago Wills, Chair of the fisheries negotiations

Work resumed in September after the summer break, essentially in continuous mode, with a week-long meeting cluster each month punctuated by many meetings in various formats – from bilateral consultations to small groups and meetings open to all – at both technical and heads-of-delegation levels. The Chair also enlisted the help of Ambassador Didier Chambovey (Switzerland) as a “Friend of the Chair” for work on special and differential treatment for developing countries, an integral part of the negotiations.

Based on the intensive work of the Negotiating Group, the Chair circulated two revisions of the consolidated draft document, each with an accompanying explanatory note, in early November and in mid-December. These revisions filled certain placeholders and captured progress in the group’s discussions.

Ambassador Wills said in mid-December that, despite difficulties caused by COVID-19-related disruptions to the talks, real progress had been made in 2020 and that members were determined to build on the progress and bring the negotiations to a conclusion. “The momentum is there, and we must not waste it. At this critical juncture, we need members to close the gaps and deliver a meaningful agreement soon,” Ambassador Wills told the Trade Negotiations Committee at the end of the year.

At the first meeting of the Negotiating Group in January 2021, heads of delegations said they were committed to keeping up the momentum. They welcomed the second revision of the draft consolidated document circulated on 18 December by the Chair.

Tuna fishing in Zanzibar, Tanzania.





Dispute Settlement Understanding

► The Dispute Settlement Body (DSB) did not meet in special session in 2020.

Background

In November 2001, at the Doha Ministerial Conference, WTO members agreed to negotiate to improve and clarify the Dispute Settlement Understanding – the rules and procedures governing the settlement of WTO disputes. These negotiations take place in special sessions of the Dispute Settlement Body.

The DSB last met in special session in November 2019 when some WTO members signalled that resuming intense work might not be fruitful. This was because at that time participants were focused on more pressing issues, including broader discussions on the functioning of the dispute settlement system ongoing in other WTO bodies.

The Chair, Yackoley Kokou Johnson (Togo), reiterated his availability to meet with any delegation that wished to discuss the work of the special session. In the absence of indications from delegations that work should resume, the negotiating group did not meet in 2020.

In 2019, the special session concluded focused work on the 12 issues under consideration in the negotiations, which span all phases of dispute settlement proceedings from initiation to completion.

Joint initiatives

- Electronic commerce
- Investment facilitation for development
- Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises
- Domestic regulation of trade in services
- Trade and environment initiatives

Background

At the 11th Ministerial Conference in 2017, like-minded groups of WTO members issued joint statements on advancing discussions on e-commerce, on developing a multilateral framework on investment facilitation, on launching a working group on micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), and on advancing ongoing talks on domestic regulation in services trade. Also, over 100 WTO members supported the Buenos Aires Declaration on Trade and Women's Economic Empowerment, which led to the launch in September 2020 of the Informal Working Group on Trade and Gender. In November 2020, two groups of members launched initiatives to intensify discussions on important environmental challenges at the WTO. The groups are open to all WTO members.



Electronic commerce

- Members of the Joint Statement on Electronic Commerce focused on small group meetings on specific topics in 2020. Issues covered included online consumer protection, e-signatures and open internet access.
- In December, the co-conveners circulated a consolidated negotiating text reflecting progress made. The text will be the basis of negotiations in 2021.

In 2020, members of the Joint Statement on Electronic Commerce focused on small group meetings on specific issues. Topics addressed included unsolicited electronic commercial messages, online consumer protection, trade facilitation in goods, source code, open government data, e-authentication and e-signatures, customs duties, open internet access and services market access. The aim was to reduce the number of options in the negotiating text. Given the restrictions on in-person meetings and international travel due to the COVID-19 pandemic, much of the work was carried out virtually.

Negotiations on trade-related aspects of e-commerce began in 2019, with the objective of achieving "a high standard outcome that builds on existing WTO agreements and frameworks with the participation of as many WTO members as possible". The initiative is co-convened by Australia, Japan and Singapore.



86

Eighty-six WTO members are participating in the e-commerce negotiations.



The negotiations grew out of a joint statement issued by 71 trade ministers at the 11th Ministerial Conference in December 2017. Participation is open to all WTO members. The initiative had 86 WTO members at the end of 2020, accounting for over 90 per cent of global trade and representing all major geographical regions and levels of development.

The co-conveners circulated a stocktaking text in August incorporating all textual proposals submitted as well as inputs from discussions conducted by facilitators and proponents in their respective groups.

In December, the co-conveners released a consolidated negotiating text reflecting progress made in the negotiations. The text will be the basis of negotiations in 2021. Participants aim to achieve substantive progress by the 12th Ministerial Conference, scheduled to take place in late 2021. They stressed the importance of developing global digital trade rules and the critical role e-commerce would play in the global economic recovery from COVID-19.

Negotiations are based on members' textual proposals. The issues raised in members' submissions are discussed under six main themes: enabling e-commerce; openness and e-commerce; trust and e-commerce; cross-cutting issues; telecommunications; and market access.

The joint initiative on investment facilitation for development aims at fostering a more transparent, efficient and investment-friendly business climate.



106

A total of 106 WTO members are participating in negotiations on investment facilitation.

Investment facilitation for development

- WTO members participating in the joint initiative launched negotiations in September for a multilateral framework on investment facilitation for development.
- The aim is to achieve a concrete outcome by the 12th Ministerial Conference scheduled for late 2021.
- Currently, 106 WTO members are participating in the initiative, which is open to all members.

Participants in the joint initiative on investment facilitation for development began negotiations in September 2020 on a multilateral framework, with a view to achieving a concrete outcome by the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference scheduled for late 2021.

The joint initiative, which aims at fostering a more transparent, efficient and investment-friendly business climate, was launched by 70 WTO members in a ministerial statement in December 2017. In November 2019, 98 members signed another ministerial statement committing themselves "to intensify work to further develop the framework for facilitating foreign direct investments, and work towards a concrete outcome" at the next Ministerial Conference. There are currently 106 members participating in the initiative, which is open to all WTO members.

The aim of the framework is to improve the transparency and predictability of investment measures and to streamline administrative procedures and requirements. It also aims to enhance international cooperation, information sharing and the exchange of best practices. Facilitating greater participation by developing and least-developed countries in global investment flows is a core objective of the discussions. The initiative does not address market access, investment protection and investor-state dispute settlement.



The start of negotiations had initially been set for March 2020 but was delayed until September by the COVID-19 pandemic. From June to September, participating members completed a thematic review of the informal consolidated text, which incorporates all written proposals submitted by participating members and forms the basis for the negotiations.

Following the launch of the negotiations in September, WTO members made important progress in four negotiating meetings and two intersessional meetings held between September and December. In line with the open, inclusive and transparent nature of the initiative, all WTO members were invited to attend.

The Coordinator, Mathias Francke (Chile), prepared and circulated “revised draft texts” under his responsibility in those areas where discussions were more advanced – notably on transparency of investment measures, administrative procedures and domestic regulatory coherence, and cross-border cooperation. Participants also examined how to insulate a future framework on investment facilitation for development from other international investment agreements, by means of so-called “firewall” provisions.

At the first meeting in 2021, members taking part in the initiative endorsed the work plan for the first half of the year proposed by the Coordinator. He defined two mid-term objectives: circulating around Easter time a text compiling all the revised draft texts put forward by the Coordinator and discussed by participating members; and taking stock of progress and planning for the second half of the year at a meeting in July 2021. The work plan also provides a framework for participants to meet in small groups or “discussion groups” to accelerate progress on some key provisions.

Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises

- The Informal Working Group on Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) formally endorsed a set of six recommendations and declarations to help MSMEs trade more internationally.
- Recognizing the devastating impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on small businesses, members of the Informal Working Group and several non-members issued a statement in support of MSMEs and their participation in trade.
- An MSME web platform, Trade4MSMEs, with useful trade tools for small business and policymakers is expected to be launched in 2021.

In view of the devastating impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on small businesses, many members of the MSME Informal Working Group, along with several non-members, issued a statement in May 2020 in support of MSMEs and their participation in trade. It was the first of a series of concrete WTO outcomes specific to MSMEs during the year.

In the statement, the group said that, in cooperation with other international organizations and stakeholders, it will explore solutions and share good practices to facilitate trade for MSMEs, accelerate efforts towards trade digitalization, including access to digital tools, and improve MSMEs' access to trade finance (see page 131) and to trade-related information through online platforms.



A shoe-making small business in Serbia.

The Informal Working Group, launched in December 2017 by 88 WTO members, comprises 91 members representing all levels of development and all regions of the world. Members of the group account for around 80 per cent of world exports. The group, which is open to all members, continues to be chaired by Uruguay.

The working group met regularly in a virtual format to complete technical work on a draft package of six non-binding recommendations and declarations aimed at addressing challenges smaller businesses face when they trade internationally. This package, the first concrete outcome of the 2017 joint initiative, was formally endorsed in December at the group's final meeting of the year. The six recommendations and declarations are:

- a recommendation that WTO members provide, on a voluntary basis, information on policies related to MSMEs during their trade policy reviews
- a declaration on access to information through support for the Global Trade Helpdesk (a joint online resource of the International Trade Centre, the UN Conference on Development and Trade and the WTO to simplify market research for companies)
- a recommendation for full implementation of the WTO's Trade Facilitation Agreement (see page 109) because burdensome customs procedures can be especially hard on MSMEs
- a recommendation to promote MSME inclusion in the development of trade-related regulations
- a recommendation on MSMEs and the WTO integrated database supporting the

voluntary submission of tariff and other trade-related information to this resource

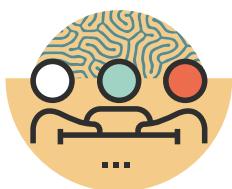
- a declaration addressing the trade-related aspects of MSME access to finance and cross-border payments.

Increasing the availability of online trade information is an important objective.

Funding from the UK Trade and Investment Advocacy Fund, financed by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, was secured for a proposed MSME web platform to link to useful trade tools for MSMEs and policymakers. The platform, called Trade4MSMEs, entered the initial stages of development at the end of the year. It is expected to be completed in 2021. In addition, the WTO Secretariat issued a public webpage dedicated to MSMEs as well as a database of MSME-related provisions in regional trade agreements.

The group convened several webinars on MSMEs to inform discussions and to mark the fourth annual United Nations' MSME Day. Topics included cross-border payments, MSMEs and paperless trade, and supporting small business resilience through digital tools. MSME Day 2020 events included two webinars dedicated to presentations on "Helping MSMEs in the time of COVID-19".

Understanding the needs of the private sector and small business traders is an important element of the group's work. The group met representatives of MSMEs, Chambers of Commerce and other MSME representative organizations at the end of the year to inform them of the recently endorsed MSME package and to gather inputs for future work. To keep the business community updated on the group's efforts, the coordinator issued three newsletters, with updates on the group's work and its response to the pandemic.



91

The Informal Working Group on MSMEs comprises 91 members.

Domestic regulation of trade in services

- The Chair of negotiations under the Joint Initiative on Services Domestic Regulation circulated a "far advanced" negotiating text in December.
- WTO members aim to finalize negotiations by the 12th Ministerial Conference scheduled for late 2021.

The Chair of negotiations on services domestic regulation, Jaime Coghi Arias (Costa Rica), circulated a "far advanced" negotiating text on 18 December capturing progress made in 2020 on domestic regulation disciplines. Next year will be "crucial" for the talks, he stressed, given the commitment of "all participants to deliver a significant outcome" at the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference, scheduled for late 2021.

The Chair said that the revised text reflects the resolution of remaining drafting issues although a small number of brackets remain where agreement still needs to be reached. Further discussions will be needed before the group can conclude its work.

The disciplines apply to licensing and qualification requirements as well as procedures and technical standards for trade in services. The objective is to create good regulatory practices that help mitigate any unintended trade-restrictive effects of procedures for authorizing the supply of services.

The joint initiative was launched by 57 trade ministers at the 11th Ministerial Conference in Buenos Aires in December 2017. The work is organized outside the WTO Working Party on Domestic Regulation, which is mandated to develop any necessary disciplines to ensure



Participating members – both developing and developed countries – account for 73 per cent of world services trade.

that members' domestic regulations do not constitute unnecessary barriers to trade in services. Participation in the meetings of the initiative is open to all WTO members and observer governments.

Participants are in the process of submitting indicative draft schedules outlining how the disciplines will be incorporated in their respective commitments under the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). A total of 30 draft schedules (representing 57 WTO members) had been submitted as of end-2020. The additional regulatory disciplines would be binding on all participants, who would apply the improved disciplines to services exporters from all WTO members.

At a meeting on 10 December, participants agreed to clarify in the negotiating text that the disciplines build upon the GATS and do not diminish any obligations contained in that agreement.

In 2020, participation in the initiative grew to 63 members with the incorporation of Thailand, the first member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to join. Participating members — both developing and developed countries — account for 73 per cent of world services trade.



63

Sixty-three WTO members are participating in the negotiations on domestic regulation of services.

Trade and environment initiatives

- A group of WTO members began “structured discussions” on trade and environmental sustainability to work on possible “actions and deliverables” in this area.
- Another group launched an “informal dialogue” to explore how trade could support domestic and global efforts to tackle plastics pollution.

Two groups of members launched two new initiatives during the WTO's Trade and Environment Week in 2020 (see page 117) to intensify discussions on important environmental challenges at the WTO.

Plastics pollution and environmentally sustainable plastics trade

Participants in an “informal dialogue” on plastics pollution and environmentally sustainable plastics trade held their first meeting in November. The dialogue, open to all members, aims to complement and enhance existing discussions within the Committee on Trade and Environment and other fora on plastics pollution. The initiative was borne out of the recognition of the need for coordinated global action on the rising environmental, health and economic costs of plastics pollution and the importance of trade to any solution.

The dialogue will explore how improved trade cooperation, within the rules and mechanisms of the WTO, could contribute to domestic, regional and global efforts to reduce plastics pollution and the transition to a more circular (see page 117) and environmentally sustainable global plastics economy.

Among possible subjects for discussion are improving transparency, monitoring trade trends, promoting best practices, strengthening policy coherence, identifying scope for collective approaches, assessing capacity and technical assistance needs and cooperating with other international efforts. Participants plan to work towards a concrete outcome for the 12th Ministerial Conference (MC12) scheduled for late 2021.

“This is a good moment to deepen our dialogue on the role of trade to address pressing global challenges – certainly COVID-19 but also the scourge of plastic pollution,” said Deputy Director-General Alan Wolff.

Australia, Barbados, Cabo Verde, Canada, Central African Republic, China, Ecuador, Fiji, The Gambia, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Morocco, New Zealand, Switzerland, Thailand and the United Kingdom currently participate in the informal dialogue.

Trade and environmental sustainability

Another group of 53 members began “structured discussions” on trade and environmental sustainability. Stephen de Boer (Canada) and Gloria Abraham Peralta (Costa Rica) jointly coordinate the initiative. The discussions seek to identify areas of common interest and work towards concrete outcomes on trade and sustainability.

The discussions will include promoting transparency and information-sharing,



“This is a good moment to deepen our dialogue on the role of trade to address pressing global challenges – certainly COVID-19 but also the scourge of plastic pollution”

- DDG Alan Wolff



identifying areas for future work within the WTO, supporting technical assistance and capacity-building needs, particularly for least-developed countries, and working on “deliverables” of environmental sustainability in the various areas of the WTO. The participants intend to report to ministers by MC12.

Topics could include trade and climate change, the circular economy and fossil fuel subsidies (see page 119). The group meetings will be open to all WTO members. The initiative aims to complement and enhance discussions within the Committee on Trade and Environment and other WTO bodies and to work alongside relevant international organizations, the business community, civil society and academic institutions.

“Climate change and other major environmental crises are not problems that can be solved by governments alone. We need all hands on deck, including businesses, consumers, civil society and other stakeholders,” DDG Wolff said.



53

Fifty-three WTO members are participating in the discussions on trade and environmental sustainability.

Plastic pollution alongside the Panama Canal.

Informal Working Group on Trade and Gender

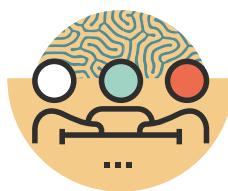
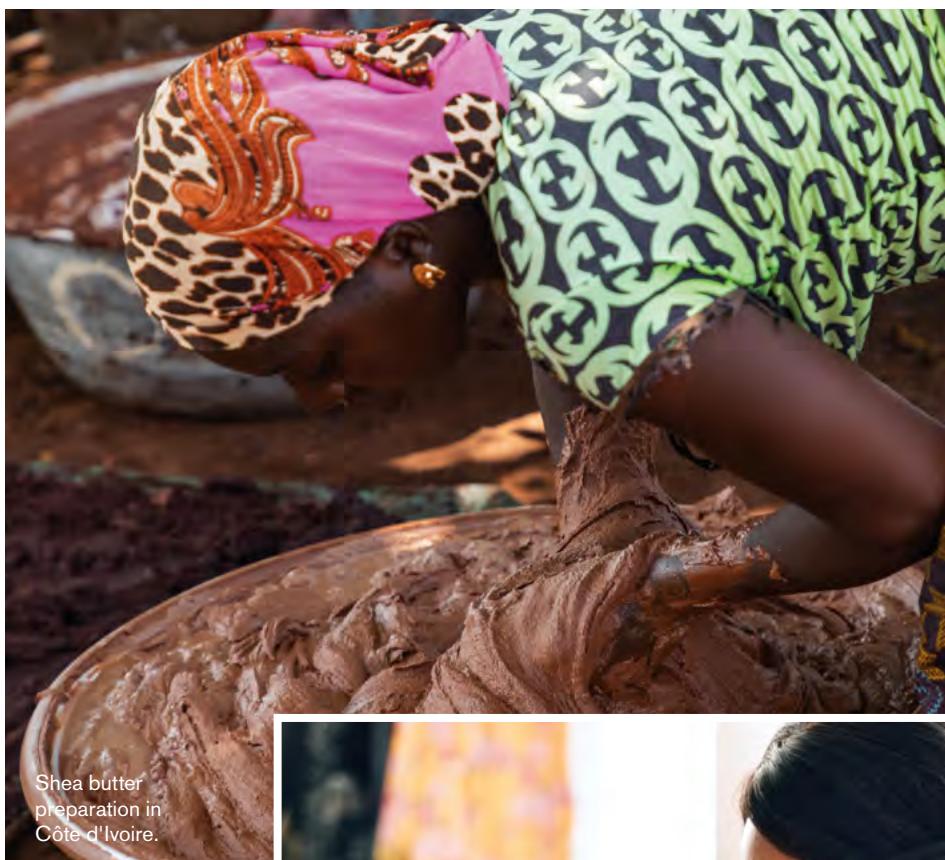
➤ The Informal Working Group on Trade and Gender was launched in September to intensify efforts to increase women's participation in trade.

➤ The group published a report in December with best practices and recommendations on trade and gender.

The Informal Working Group on Trade and Gender was launched in September 2020 to intensify efforts to increase women's participation in global commerce. It is the next phase of an initiative, the Joint Declaration on Trade and Women's Economic Empowerment, launched at the 11th Ministerial Conference in Buenos Aires in 2017. "Today marks an important new phase in moving this work forward on a continued transparent, collaborative and open basis," said Deputy Director-General Yonov Frederick Agah.

The working group, which is open to all WTO members and observers, was established following requests from WTO members for a more transparent and structured process to deliver concrete elements for further consideration in time for the 12th Ministerial Conference scheduled for late 2021. The Buenos Aires declaration, initially supported by 118 WTO members and observers, counts 127 proponents, who constitute the current membership of the working group.

The working group met on 10 December 2020 for the first time. It will focus on four key elements: experience-sharing; considering the concept and scope for a "gender lens" to apply to the work of the WTO; reviewing gender-related analytical work undertaken by the WTO and other intergovernmental organizations; and contributing to the Aid for Trade (see page 151) work programme.



127
A total of 127 WTO members constitutes the membership of the Informal Working Group on Trade and Gender.





“Today marks an important new phase in moving this work forward on a continued transparent, collaborative and open basis”.

DDG Yonov Frederick Agah

Members considered a suggestion for the group to organize a session at the Aid for Trade stocktaking event in March 2021 (see page 152) and heard a report from the WTO Trade and Gender Focal Point (see page 164) on research work being undertaken. Members also urged the WTO to work with other organizations with expertise on trade and gender and to continue its research partnerships.

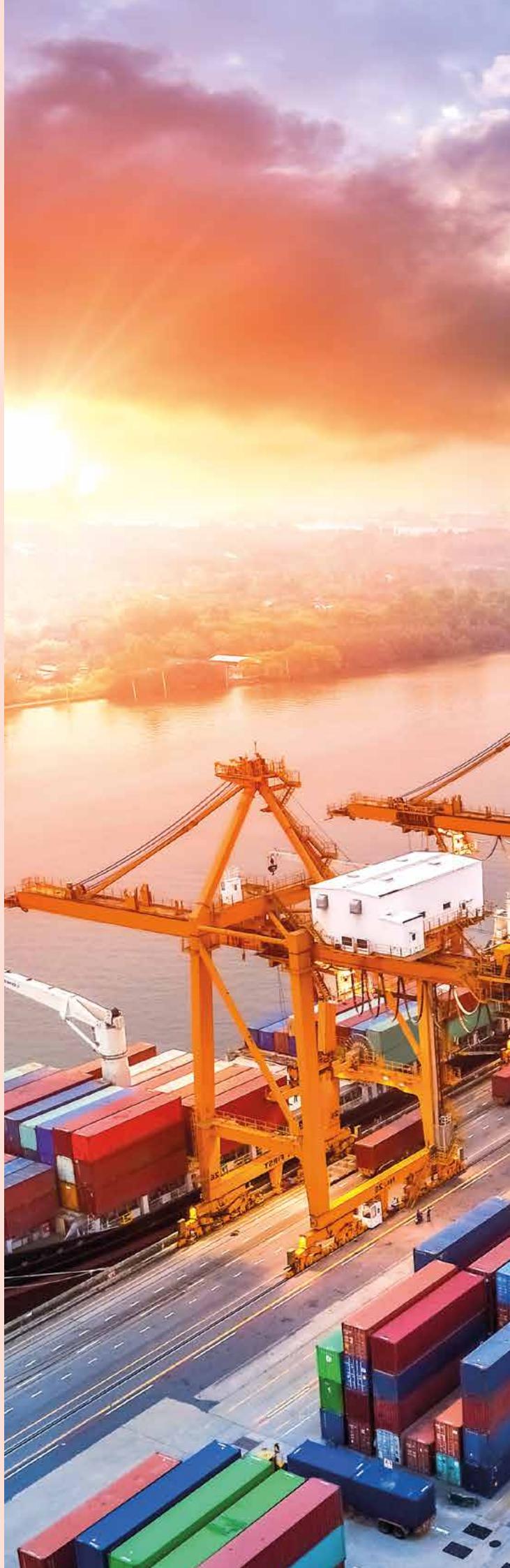
At the meeting, members published a report on the implementation of the Buenos Aires

declaration. It compiles 32 best practices and recommendations on trade and gender, ranging from data-collection methods to impact assessments of trade agreements, government procurement and financial inclusion tools for women entrepreneurs. These themes had been discussed in six workshops organized between 2018 and 2019, one of the commitments made in Buenos Aires. The report was produced in collaboration with the International Gender Champions Trade Impact Group and the International Trade Centre.

5

Implementation and monitoring

Various WTO councils and committees seek to ensure that WTO agreements are being properly implemented. All WTO members undergo periodic scrutiny of their trade policies and practices.



The background of the entire page is a photograph of a bustling port at dusk or dawn. The sky is filled with dramatic, colorful clouds ranging from deep blue to bright orange and yellow. In the foreground and middle ground, numerous shipping containers in various colors (blue, green, red, white) are stacked in long rows. Large yellow industrial cranes with long metal booms are positioned between the stacks, some with their arms raised. A river or body of water is visible to the left, with a few small boats on it. In the far distance, the city skyline of a large metropolis is visible under the hazy light.

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General Council

➤ The process for selecting a new Director-General began in May 2020 and culminated in the selection by consensus of Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala of Nigeria in February 2021. She is the first African and first woman to head the WTO.

➤ The General Council was a prime forum in 2020 for WTO members to share information and views on trade measures related to COVID-19. A number of statements on questions related to the pandemic were made during the year.

➤ The 12th Ministerial Conference (MC12), originally scheduled for Kazakhstan in June 2020, was postponed due to the pandemic. On 1 March 2021, the General Council agreed that MC12 would take place in the week of 29 November 2021 in Geneva.

➤ Members held extensive discussions on the Work Programme on Electronic Commerce. Views continue to differ on the moratorium on imposing duties on electronic transmissions.

Background

The General Council is entrusted with carrying out the functions of the WTO and taking actions necessary to this effect between Ministerial Conferences in addition to carrying out the specific tasks assigned to it by the Agreement Establishing the WTO. As part of its overall oversight function, the General Council conducts a year-end review of WTO activities on the basis of annual reports from its subsidiary bodies.

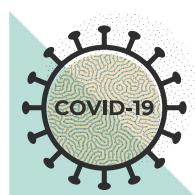


COVID-19 trade-related matters

Amid the global pandemic, the General Council provided a prime forum for WTO members to share information and exchange views on COVID-19 trade-related measures.

In May 2020, a special General Council meeting was convened in virtual format to discuss the trade-policy aspects and effects of the global crisis, with 62 WTO members and three WTO observers sharing their experiences and views. This was the WTO's first formal virtual meeting and paved the way for the organization to continue working through virtual means when physical meetings were not possible.

Throughout the year, matters related to COVID-19 were at the centre of discussions. WTO members presented several communications and statements. These included a joint ministerial statement by Australia, Canada, the Republic of Korea, New Zealand and Singapore on sustaining global value chains, facilitating the movement of people and minimizing the pandemic's impact on trade and investment. The Cairns Group of farm goods exporters called for the protection of global food security through open trade.



13

A group of 13 WTO members proposed the creation of a Trade and Health Initiative.

Dr Okonjo-Iweala was appointed as the WTO's 7th Director-General in February 2021.

A group of 13 developing and developed country members proposed the creation of a WTO Trade and Health Initiative. As a first step, they urged all members to back a joint declaration on enhancing the capacity of the trading system to deal with COVID-19 and any future pandemic (see page 41).

Bangladesh drew attention to the plight of the garments and textile sector while Afghanistan called for action to support fragile and conflict-affected countries. Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) ministers responsible for trade urged members to adopt digital solutions to strengthen supply chain resilience.

At the December meeting, members held an exchange on a status report by the Chair of the Council for Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) on the consideration by the TRIPS Council of a proposal for a waiver from certain provisions of the TRIPS Agreement for the prevention, containment and treatment of COVID-19 (see page 113).

Selection of a new Director-General

Following the resignation of DG Roberto Azevêdo in May 2020 (see page 43), General

Council Chair David Walker led the selection process for a new Director-General (see page 28). After three rounds of consultations, the choice came down to two candidates – Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala of Nigeria and Yoo Myung-hee of the Republic of Korea.

For several months, the General Council was unable to reach a consensus. But on 5 February 2021, Ms Yoo withdrew her candidacy and Dr Okonjo-Iweala was appointed as the WTO's seventh Director-General on 15 February. "This is a very significant moment for the WTO. On behalf of the General Council, I extend our warmest congratulations to Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala on her appointment," Ambassador Walker said. She is the first woman and the first African to lead the WTO.

Current trade debates

WTO members continued to discuss issues such as the negotiating function of the WTO, development – inclusivity and special and differential treatment for developing countries, the importance of market-oriented conditions to the world trading system, transparency and the deliberative function of the WTO, including strengthening the role of WTO committees.

In December, an extensive debate took place on a draft decision, co-sponsored by more than 80 members, on agriculture export prohibitions relating to the World Food Programme (see page 47). Other draft decisions presented for consideration included an action plan to enhance support for cotton by-product development in least developed countries (LDCs – see page 148).

Twelfth WTO Ministerial Conference (MC12)

Originally scheduled for June 2020 in Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan, MC12 was postponed due to the pandemic. Kazakhstan offered to host the conference in June 2021. However, due to the uncertainties caused by the pandemic and the current situation,

members decided that Geneva would be a more realistic option. On 1 March 2021, the General Council agreed that MC12 would take place in the week of 29 November 2021 in Geneva.

Implementation of Bali, Nairobi and Buenos Aires outcomes

The General Council regularly reviewed progress in the implementation of decisions taken by ministers at the 9th, 10th and 11th Ministerial Conferences. The reviews included: progress in the implementation of the Nairobi decision on export subsidies in agriculture (see page 84); the Bali decision on tariff rate quotas; LDC preferential rules of origin and the LDC services waiver (see pages 99 and 111); implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement (see page 109); and Aid for Trade (see page 151).

Work Programme on Electronic Commerce

Members agreed in December 2019 to reinvigorate the Work Programme on Electronic Commerce, including with structured discussions based on all topics of interest brought forward by members. Members also agreed to extend the moratorium on customs duties on electronic transmissions until MC12. Early in 2020, the Chair of the General Council held consultations and convened an informal meeting to hear members' views on how to structure the work.

In July 2020, an informal meeting was held to look at two submissions. One was from India and South Africa, and the other from a group of 13 delegations: Australia; Canada; Chile; Colombia; Hong Kong, China; Iceland; the Republic of Korea; New Zealand; Norway; Singapore; Switzerland; Thailand; and Uruguay. The submissions presented different views and perspectives on the scope and impact of the moratorium on customs duties on electronic transmission. The WTO

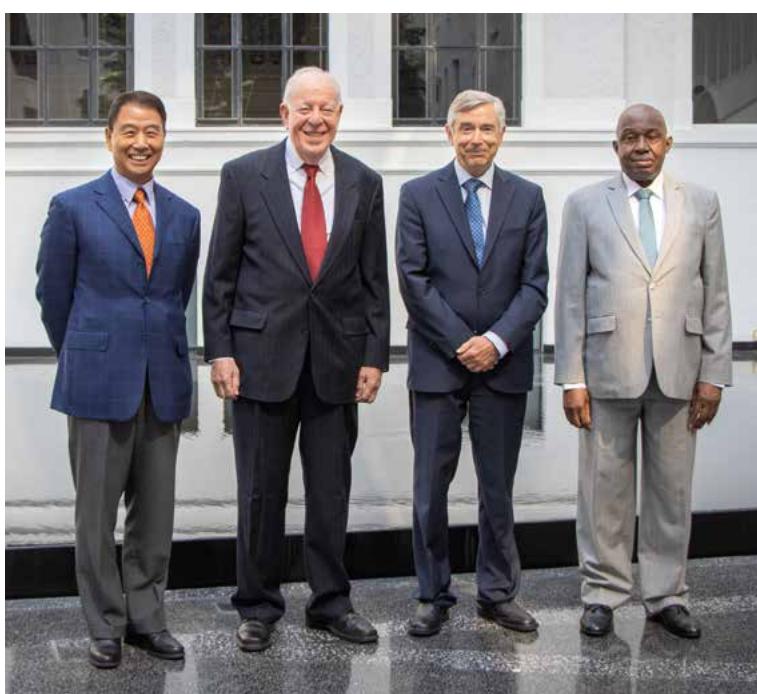
Secretariat organized a webinar on quantifying the moratorium and its impact on economic development.

Members' views continued to differ, with some calling for a permanent moratorium to give predictability to e-commerce, some calling for it to be lifted to allow members policy space, and others arguing for a continuation of the current periodic renewals.

At the October meeting, India highlighted the importance of continuing discussions on the Work Programme and the moratorium and suggested having a standing item on the Council agenda. In December, members considered a joint submission by India and South Africa highlighting the need for a multilateral discussion to promote an inclusive and development-oriented approach to electronic commerce.

The joint submission suggested that the Work Programme be a standing item not only in the General Council but also in the relevant

At the General Council on 31 July 2020, it was agreed that, following the departure of Roberto Azevêdo as Director-General on 31 August 2020, all four Deputy Directors-General would stay on and continue their existing responsibilities until the new Director-General took office. From left to right: Yi Xiaozhun, Alan Wm. Wolff, Karl Brauner, Yonov Frederick Agah.





WTO bodies. It further proposed that the General Council should play a central role in the discussions and keep the programme under continuous review, and that members continue structured thematic discussions.

At that same December meeting, the General Council also heard the reports from the chairs of the Council for Trade in Services, the Council for Trade in Goods and the TRIPS Council, where issues under the Work Programme were also discussed.

Requests for accession and observer status

In 2020, the General Council established a working party to examine the request for accession of Curaçao and granted observer status to Turkmenistan.

Other reports

The General Council in 2020 considered the regular reports on the Work Programme on Small Economies, the report on the Development Assistance Aspects of Cotton and the Annual Review of the Special Compulsory Licensing System.

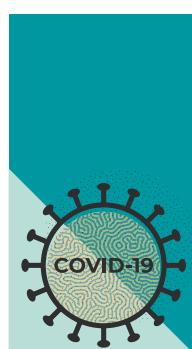
David Walker chaired the General Council in 2020.

Waivers under Article IX of the WTO Agreement

The General Council considered and granted four waivers from obligations under the WTO Agreement, as set out in Table 1.

It also reviewed the following multi-year waivers:

- LDC members – Obligations under Article 70.8 and Article 70.9 of the TRIPS Agreement with respect to pharmaceutical products, granted on 30 November 2015 until 1 January 2033
- Kimberley Process Certification Scheme for Rough Diamonds, granted on 26 July 2018 up to 31 December 2024
- Canada – CARIBCAN, granted on 28 July 2015 until 31 December 2023
- Preferential Treatment in favour of Services and Service Suppliers of Least-Developed Countries, granted on 17 December 2011 until 31 December 2030
- Preferential Tariff Treatment for Least-Developed Countries, granted on 16 October 2019 until 30 June 2029
- Cuba – Article Xv:6 – Extension of Waiver, granted on 7 December 2016 until 31 December 2021



Many delegations stressed the important role of e-commerce in supporting economic recovery from the pandemic and the need to address current vulnerabilities and bridge the digital divide.

- European Union – Application of Autonomous Preferential Treatment to the Western Balkans, granted on 7 December 2016 until 31 December 2021
- United States – African Growth and Opportunity Act, granted on 30 November 2015 until 30 September 2025
- United States – Caribbean Basin Economic Recovery Act, granted on 16 October 2019 until 30 September 2025
- United States – Former Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, granted on 7 December 2016 until 31 December 2026
- United States – Trade Preferences Granted to Nepal, granted on 7 December 2016 until 31 December 2025

Other issues

As part of its overall oversight function, the General Council conducted a year-end review of WTO activities on the basis of annual reports from its subsidiary bodies. In addition, the General Council approved the WTO budget for 2021.

Table 1: Waivers under Article IX (decision-making) of the WTO Agreement.

In 2020, the General Council granted the following waivers from obligations under the WTO agreements.

Member	Type	Decision	Date of adoption	Expiry date
China	Introduction of Harmonized System 2002 Changes into WTO Schedules of Tariff Concessions	WT/L/1104	18 December 2020	31 December 2021
Argentina; Brazil; China; Dominican Republic; European Union; Malaysia; Philippines; and Thailand	Introduction of Harmonized System 2007 Changes into WTO Schedules of Tariff Concessions	WT/L/1105	18 December 2020	31 December 2021
Argentina; Australia; Brazil; China; Colombia; Costa Rica; Dominican Republic; Ecuador; European Union; Guatemala; India; Kazakhstan; Republic of Korea; Malaysia; Mexico; New Zealand; Norway; Philippines; Russian Federation; Singapore; Switzerland; Thailand; and United States	Introduction of Harmonized System 2012 Changes into WTO Schedules of Tariff Concessions	WT/L/1106	18 December 2020	31 December 2021
Argentina; Australia; Brazil; Canada; China; Colombia; Costa Rica; Dominican Republic; Ecuador; El Salvador; European Union; Guatemala; Honduras; Hong Kong, China; India; Israel; Kazakhstan; Republic of Korea; Macao, China; Montenegro; New Zealand; Norway; Pakistan; Paraguay; Philippines; Russian Federation; Switzerland; Separate Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu; Thailand; United States; and Uruguay	Introduction of Harmonized System 2017 Changes into WTO Schedules of Tariff Concessions	WT/L/1107	18 December 2020	31 December 2021

Trade in goods

- Thirteen new trade concerns were raised in the Council for Trade in Goods, up from 12 in 2019.
- Several WTO members proposed that the Council discuss in a systemic manner trade-related measures taken over COVID-19.
- A proposal was made for an authoritative interpretation of the Enabling Clause to provide greater legal certainty to non-reciprocal preferences granted by developing countries to least-developed countries (LDCs).

Background

The Council for Trade in Goods is responsible for the workings of WTO agreements on trade in goods. It consists of the full WTO membership and reports to the WTO General Council. The Goods Council has 12 subsidiary committees dealing with specific subjects, such as agriculture, market access, subsidies, technical barriers to trade, sanitary and phytosanitary measures, import licensing, customs valuation and trade facilitation. These committees also comprise all WTO members. Working parties on state trading enterprises and the Information Technology Agreement also report to the Goods Council.



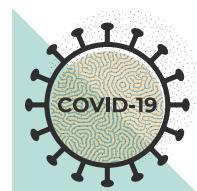
WTO members raised 13 new trade concerns in 2020 (see Table 2), little changed from 12 in 2019.

An engine manufacturing facility in Jakarta, Indonesia.

Among the new issues brought before the Council, Russia – supported by Armenia, China, Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic – expressed concerns regarding the European Union's proposed carbon border adjustment mechanism. Under the mechanism, the European Union will impose a levy corresponding to the carbon footprint of an import from outside the European Union. Members expressed concerns as to whether the proposed measure would be consistent with WTO rules against discrimination.

Australia expressed concerns over measures implemented by China on a range of goods imported from Australia, including live rock lobster, barley, wine, timber logs, cotton and other agricultural commodities. Turkey expressed concerns over the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's trade policies, including what it said were long delays in customs clearance and increased safety inspections applied to perishable goods. Hong Kong, China expressed concerns over a revised US requirement that goods produced in Hong Kong, China could no longer indicate "Hong Kong" as their origin but had to indicate "China" instead.

In addition to previous concerns regarding the European Union's renegotiation of tariff rate quota (TRQ) commitments as a consequence of the United Kingdom leaving the European Union (Brexit), nine members expressed new concerns regarding the TRQ commitments of the United Kingdom following Brexit.



9

Nine WTO members proposed discussion in a systemic manner of COVID-19 trade measures.



13

Thirteen new trade concerns were raised by WTO members in 2020.

Face mask production in Pune, India.

Other previously raised concerns included: Indonesia's import and export-restricting policies and practices; India's restrictions on imports of pulses; EU quality schemes for agricultural products; China's measures restricting the import of scrap materials; the European Union's renewable energy directive; and Russia's trade-restricting practices.

COVID-19 and measures relating to trade in goods

Nine WTO members proposed that the Council provide a platform for members to discuss, in a systemic manner, the trade-related measures adopted in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Issues would include the expiry date and notification of measures, the list of products, an indication of trade-facilitating measures, good practices in monitoring those measures in the Council's subsidiary bodies and collaboration with other international organizations.



Authoritative interpretation of the Enabling Clause

The Republic of Korea introduced a proposal for an authoritative interpretation of the Enabling Clause, which allows for preferential trade arrangements between developed and developing countries and among developing countries. The aim is to provide greater legal certainty to non-reciprocal preferences granted by developing countries to LDCs.

Transparency

Proponents introduced a revised proposal on transparency to enhance members' compliance with notification requirements, adding flexibilities and clarifications with respect to the previous revision. In particular, LDCs would no longer be covered by proposed administrative sanctions if they requested technical assistance to address challenges in submitting notifications in a timely manner.

Some members reiterated their opposition to administrative measures and the differential treatment of notifications on agriculture. Other delegations referred to the need for an inclusive approach that considers the challenges faced by developing and least-developed countries.

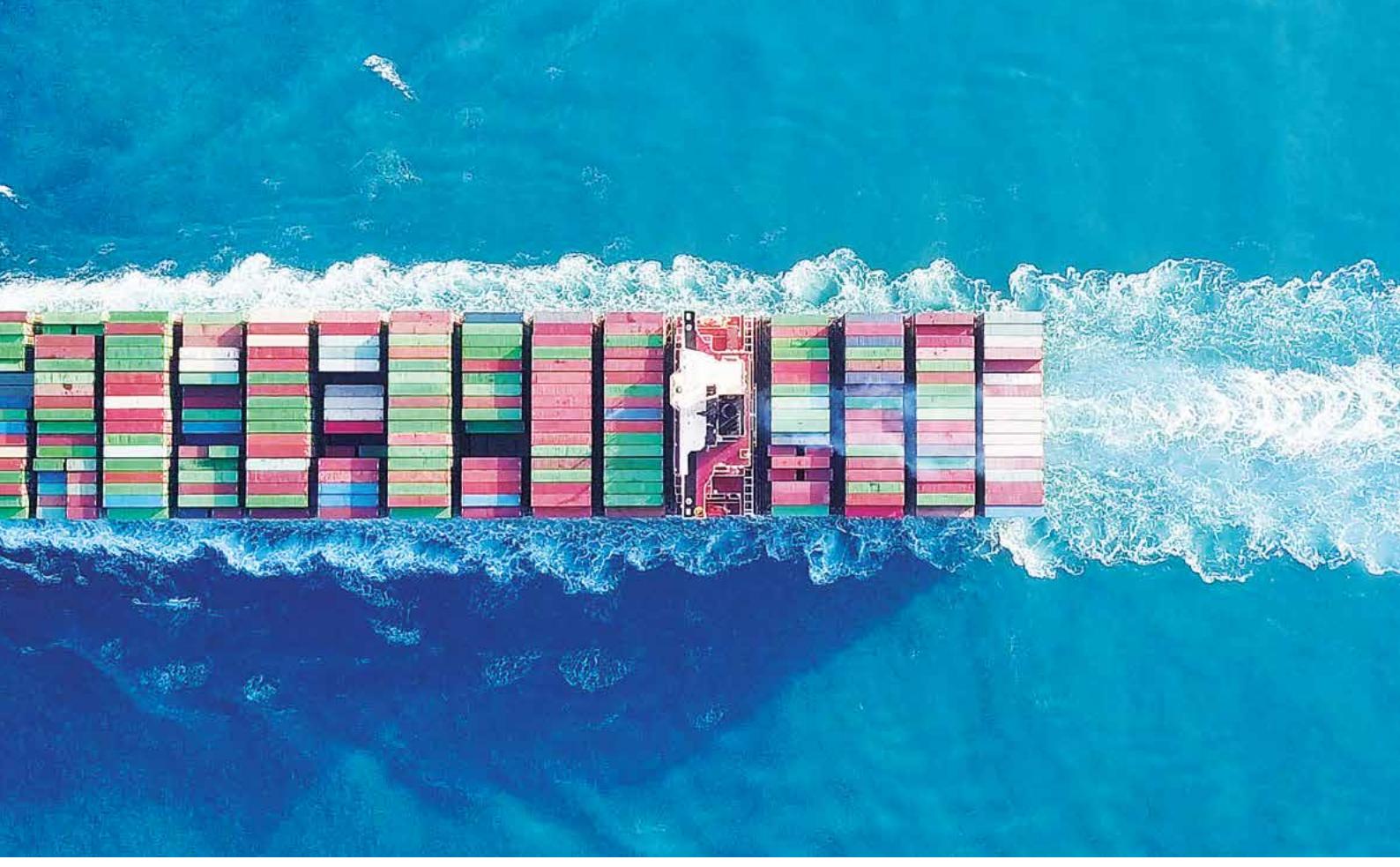


Table 2: New trade concerns raised in the Council for Trade in Goods in 2020

Member(s) raising the concern	Topic
Russian Federation	EU's proposed carbon border adjustment mechanism
Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, New Zealand, Russian Federation, Switzerland, United States and Uruguay	UK draft goods schedule and proposed tariff rate quota commitments post-Brexit
European Union	US import restrictions on apples and pears
United States	Mexico's front of pack nutrition-labelling (NOM 51)
China	US Executive Order on securing the bulk-power system
Russian Federation	EU safeguard measures on imports of certain steel products
Australia	China's implementation of trade disruptive and restrictive measures
European Union	Egypt's import restrictions for sugar
European Union	Nigeria's foreign exchange restrictions affecting dairy imports
Costa Rica	Panama's import restricting practices
Turkey	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's trade-restrictive policies and practices concerning Turkey
European Union	Sri Lanka's import ban on various products
Hong Kong, China	US revised origin marking requirement for goods produced in Hong Kong, China

E-commerce

The Council continued discussing e-commerce in response to the call from the 11th Ministerial Conference to reinvigorate the WTO's work in this area (see page 70).

Functioning of the Council

Discussions continued on how to improve the work of the Council and its subsidiary bodies.

Proponents introduced a revised proposal on transparency to enhance members' compliance with notification requirements.

SPOTLIGHT

COVID-19 and world trade

Global trade in goods and services was severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic that erupted in early 2020 and the adoption of global health measures taken by WTO members to try and mitigate the crisis.



335

■
WTO trade monitoring reports identified 335 COVID-19 trade measures imposed by WTO members.



Trade in goods declined by 5.3 per cent in 2020 (see also page 73). Trade in services also declined as limits to travel and other health-related restrictions prevented or severely curtailed face-to-face service delivery activities. Travel and transport services declined by 63 per cent and 19 per cent respectively.

Most of the 335 COVID-19 trade and trade-related measures identified in WTO trade monitoring reports were adopted on a temporary basis. In the early stages of the pandemic, most of the measures taken by WTO members restricted trade. But by mid-October, 195 (58 per cent) of the measures were trade-facilitating compared with 140 (42 per cent) that could be considered trade-restrictive.

Around 39 per cent of the restrictive measures implemented in response to the pandemic had been repealed by mid-October. Some 18 per cent of trade-facilitating measures related to COVID-19 had also been eliminated. The trade coverage of pandemic-related trade-facilitating measures implemented since the beginning of the pandemic was estimated at US\$ 227 billion while trade-restrictive measures stood at US\$ 180 billion.

To help respond to trade issues arising from the global health crisis, the WTO established an internal, cross-cutting working group. This was directed to help ensure comprehensive monitoring of COVID-19-related trade measures touching on WTO work.





“

Travel and transport services were particularly hard hit.

These ranged from sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures and technical barrier to trade (TBT) regulations to intellectual property measures. The group produced 20 information notes on the impact of COVID-19 on world trade, provided regular trade data updates and closely monitored members' trade-related policy developments. It focused on ensuring transparency around trade and trade policy developments while providing substantive information on trade issues relevant for policymakers and businesses as they attempted to navigate the rapidly evolving global trading environment.

The first paper produced by the group was on "Trade in Medical Goods in the Context of Tackling COVID-19". It was published in April and updated in December (see box).

Other topics covered by group notes included transparency and why it matters at times of crisis, trade in services, trade costs, agriculture, what measures WTO members used to expedite access to COVID-19 medical goods and services, and trade-related issues concerned with vaccine distribution.

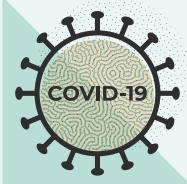
As of November 2020, there had been over 270,000 downloads of the group's reports.

The WTO also created a dedicated section on its website to provide up-to-the-minute information on COVID-19 and world trade, including relevant notifications by WTO members, the impact of the virus on exports and imports, and how WTO activities have responded to the pandemic.

The General Council spent much time discussing COVID-19. It held a special virtual meeting in May for WTO members to share information and views on COVID-19 trade-related matters. It was the first time that a special General Council meeting had been convened to discuss the trade-policy aspects and effects of a global crisis (see page 68). The Council continued to address the issue in subsequent meetings.

Trade and health

COVID-19 has placed health systems worldwide under extraordinary pressure. In the early phase of the pandemic, many countries faced a shortage in essential personal protective equipment (PPE). As production increased to meet the unparalleled spike in demand, trade played an important role in getting supplies to those most in need. In the first half of 2020, imports of face protection products jumped by 90 per cent while trade in medical goods increased by 16 per cent (see box).



Trade in medical goods



- Imports of face masks jumped 80.9% in 2020 to reach US\$ 141.4 billion.
- Imports and exports of medical goods increased by 16 per cent in 2020, reaching US\$ 2,343 billion – at the same time as total world merchandise trade declined by 7.6% in value.
- The world's average tariff applied on textile face masks is 14.3%.
- Export restrictions on personal protective equipment, such as gloves and masks, drugs and medicine taken in the early stages of the pandemic were gradually phased out.
- Many countries took measures to exempt imports from tariffs and to streamline customs and other procedures.

Source: WTO Secretariat Information Note – "Trade in Medical Goods in the Context of Tackling COVID-19".

As the pandemic took hold, WTO members shared information with the WTO about their trade-restrictive and trade-facilitating measures.

Duties, taxes and charges on COVID-19-critical medical goods and other essential supplies were temporarily removed or deferred by 40 WTO members. These trade-facilitating actions helped reduce the cost of the goods needed to fight the pandemic, both for the health sector and for the public. Measures to reduce or eliminate import tariffs made up around two-thirds of the import trade-facilitating measures reported to the WTO.

In addition, members expedited customs procedures and border clearance for COVID-19-critical medical goods by cutting back red tape. Actions taken included establishing priority clearance channels, lessening and simplifying documentary requirements and electronic processing, and improving border agency cooperation.

Members also took steps to enhance regulatory approval and cooperation on standards for traded goods, including measures to expedite regulatory assessments, recognizing the results of foreign regulators, and allowing remote or electronic conformity assessment procedures. Many members improved access to COVID-19-critical medical services. The international movement of health workers was facilitated, together with new rules on telemedicine.

Export restrictions on PPE and medical goods taken by some countries in the early stages of the pandemic were gradually phased out as supplies

became more readily available. However, certain measures remain in place.

More information on members' responses to the crisis is available in the information note "How WTO members have used trade measures to expedite access to COVID-19 critical medical goods and services" and on the WTO's dedicated webpage on COVID-19 and world trade.

Vaccine production and distribution

Successive waves of coronavirus infection led to increased efforts to develop and manufacture vaccines and diagnostics to combat the pandemic, with the aim of meeting national needs and providing equitable access worldwide. However, demand far exceeded supply, leading to export limitations in some countries as producers struggled to fulfil orders.

Vaccine production is supported by complex value chains for raw materials and components. A typical vaccine manufacturing plant will use in the region of 9,000 different materials sourced from some 300 suppliers across approximately 30 different countries, according to an estimate from the International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers and Associations.

WTO trade statistics suggest that global exports of some particularly critical raw materials for vaccine production (including nucleic acids, amino acid phenols, acyclic amides, lecithins and sterols) grew by 49 per cent in the first six months of 2020 to reach some US\$ 15.5 billion in value.



In view of the complexity of raw material and component value chains and limited production capacity in many countries, export controls, border clearance and transit issues affecting the sourcing of imported raw materials and other essential components posed difficulties for scaling up vaccine manufacturing operations and ensuring equitable access.

At the WTO, members discussed a proposal, initially submitted in October 2020, for a waiver of certain provisions of the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) in relation to the “prevention, containment or treatment” of COVID-19. According to the proponents, the objective is to avoid barriers to timely access to affordable medical products including vaccines and medicines or to scaling-up of research, development, manufacturing and supply of essential medical products (see page 113).

In November 2020, a group of developing and developed countries proposed the creation of a WTO Trade

and Health Initiative. As a first step, they urged all members to back a joint declaration on enhancing the capacity of the trading system to deal with COVID-19 and any future pandemic (see page 69).

Discussions have continued in 2021 in response to revised proposals submitted by WTO members.

Impact of COVID-19 on world trade

Global merchandise trade volumes declined by 14.3 per cent in the second quarter of 2020 compared to the previous period as COVID-19 containment measures affected economies around the world. This contraction is sharper than the 10.2 per cent drop recorded during the financial crisis between the third quarter of 2008 and first quarter of 2009.

However, most categories of manufactured goods saw significant gains in the second half of 2020. World trade in iron and steel was down 17 per cent in the third quarter

but this decline was reduced to 2 per cent by the fourth quarter. Iron and steel trade is indicative of broader economic conditions as these products are heavily used in both automobile manufacturing and building construction, both of which were hit hard by the pandemic.

Strong growth in textiles trade in both the third and fourth quarter partly reflected high demand for medical face coverings. Electronic goods including computers also saw steady growth of 12 per cent in the second half of 2020, reflecting strong demand for upgraded equipment to facilitate working remotely.

Travel and transport services, down 63 per cent and 19 per cent respectively in 2020, were directly impacted by containment measures designed to limit the spread of COVID-19, many of which remain in place or have been tightened in response to the resurgence of the disease.

The number of daily international flights fell around 80 per cent in the first quarter of 2020 as countries closed their borders to reduce the spread of COVID-19. This number gradually picked up as cases declined and people resumed limited travel. The end of 2020 saw an uptick in flights as people travelled to meet friends and family for seasonal holidays, but a resurgence of the virus has reduced flights again in 2021.

WTO economists estimate the volume of world merchandise trade will increase by 8.0 per cent in 2021. Travel services are not expected to fully recover until the pandemic wanes.

Market access

➤ The Committee discussed 19 trade concerns, one more than in 2019.

➤ The WTO launched a new goods schedules e-library, facilitating access to all legal instruments recording tariff and other commitments made by WTO members.

➤ A record 35 members submitted notifications on quantitative restrictions, up from 14 in 2019. Many of these notifications referred to export restrictions on products essential to combating COVID-19. Several members also notified when the restrictions were subsequently lifted.

Background

The Committee on Market Access supervises the implementation of tariff and non-tariff measures not covered by any other WTO body. In addition, it seeks to ensure that WTO members' schedules of concessions are up to date, including changes required to reflect amendments to the Harmonized System (HS). The HS allows countries to classify traded goods on a common basis. Without this technical work at the Committee, it would be difficult to compare members' tariff obligations with the tariffs they apply in practice.



19

WTO members raised 19 trade concerns on market access issues.



Trade concerns

WTO members raised 19 trade concerns on issues such as border delays, applied tariffs allegedly in excess of WTO commitments, procedures to modify schedules of concessions, discriminatory internal taxation and, in particular, prohibitions and restrictions on imports and exports. Many concerns had been raised previously but a number were new.

Russia submitted a proposal on enhancing transparency on applied tariffs. Australia, Brazil and Canada submitted a proposal on transparency in tariff rate changes and their impact on shipments *en route*. Colombia and other members called for enhancing transparency of trade-restricting measures adopted in response to COVID-19. The Committee requested the WTO Secretariat to provide additional information on the COVID-19-related measures notified.

COVID-19

WTO members commended efforts by the Secretariat to monitor governments' trade-related measures during the COVID-19 crisis (see page 76). They discussed ways to ensure that the emergency measures introduced to restrict exports are lifted once they are no longer deemed necessary and asked the Secretariat to produce a more detailed report.

Agreement on pharmaceuticals

The WTO Secretariat presented a consolidated list of products covered by a plurilateral agreement on pharmaceuticals, known as the Pharma Agreement. The European Union said the participation of signatory parties in global pharmaceutical trade had fallen from over 90 per cent in 1994 to only

64 per cent. Since export curbs and tariffs are depriving many of life-saving medicines, the EU invited WTO members to rethink the relevance of maintaining tariffs on such products.

Databases

In 2020, the Secretariat launched a goods schedules e-library (<https://goods-schedules.wto.org>), an online platform with access to thousands of files and legal instruments recording tariff and other commitments made by WTO members, known as their schedules of concessions. The platform also shows the various changes that have taken place, such as renegotiated schedules, transpositions of schedules, sectoral initiatives and other rectifications and modifications.

The WTO's Integrated Database, the main source of tariff and import data, began automatic data transmission with interested members. This procedure significantly simplifies data notification both for members and the Secretariat.

The Secretariat presented a revised version of the quantitative restrictions database, which transforms notifications into a machine-readable format and makes it easy to search and display data. It is expected that this revised system will be released to the public in 2021.

Harmonized System

The Committee works to ensure that members' schedules of concessions reflect the latest amendments to the World Customs Organization's Harmonized System (HS), the system used to classify traded goods on a common basis. This technical work at the WTO seeks to ensure that WTO schedules are up to date, thereby facilitating the comparison of a member's applied tariff regime with its WTO obligations.

The HS96, HS2002 and HS2007 "transposition exercises" – amendments are typically referred to by the year in which they

enter into force – have been nearly concluded for all members. The Committee made good progress on the HS2012 transposition, with the schedules of 99 members updated. In addition, 54 schedules were transposed to HS2017 in 2020, of which 18 were certified. The Committee was informed by the WCO that a new amendment will enter into force on 1 January 2022.

Together with the WCO Secretariat, the Committee organized a workshop on the Harmonized System, including sessions on its practical application, its role in the WTO and on the new amendments that will enter into force on 1 January 2022.

Quantitative restrictions

The Committee received quantitative restrictions notifications from a record 35 members, up from 14 in 2019. These notifications include information on prohibitions and other restrictions that do not take the form of a tariff, tax, fee or charge, and are allowed by the WTO in specific circumstances only. Many related to temporary export restrictions introduced by WTO members to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. The number of these temporary measures peaked in the second quarter of 2020 and many have since been phased out.



35

The Committee received quantitative restrictions notifications from a record 35 members.



Agriculture

- The Committee received 351 notifications from members in 2020, the second-highest number after 2019's 439, and a sign of members' commitment to increased transparency.
- Members raised 547 questions on individual notifications and on members' implementation of commitments, the highest figure ever.
- A special meeting of the Committee was convened in June 2020 on COVID-19 and agricultural trade policies. Many members called for enhanced transparency on COVID-related trade measures.

Background

The Agreement on Agriculture aims to reform trade and make WTO members' policies more market oriented. The rules and commitments apply to market access, domestic support and export competition as well as export restrictions and prohibitions. The Committee on Agriculture oversees the implementation of the Agreement. The Committee also monitors follow-up to the Marrakesh ministerial decision regarding the least-developed and net food-importing developing countries, which sets out objectives and mechanisms on the provision of food aid and other assistance.

Rice farming in Sylhet, Bangladesh.



The Committee on Agriculture reviewed 133 notifications from WTO members and discussed 116 specific implementation matters concerning members' agricultural policies under Article 18.6 of the Agreement on Agriculture, which allows members to raise questions on any matters relevant to the implementation of commitments.

A total of 547 questions were raised in the Committee in these two areas, significantly more than the 404 questions raised in 2019 and an all-time high. As Figure 1 shows, agricultural policy developments in developing countries have been increasingly subject to the Committee's review over recent years.



133

The Committee reviewed 133 notifications from WTO members.

Around 71 per cent of the questions raised concerned domestic support (subsidy) notifications, including from Brazil, the European Union, India, Israel and Turkey. For the first time since 2011, the Committee reviewed notifications concerning export restrictions or prohibitions, most of which related to measures implemented in

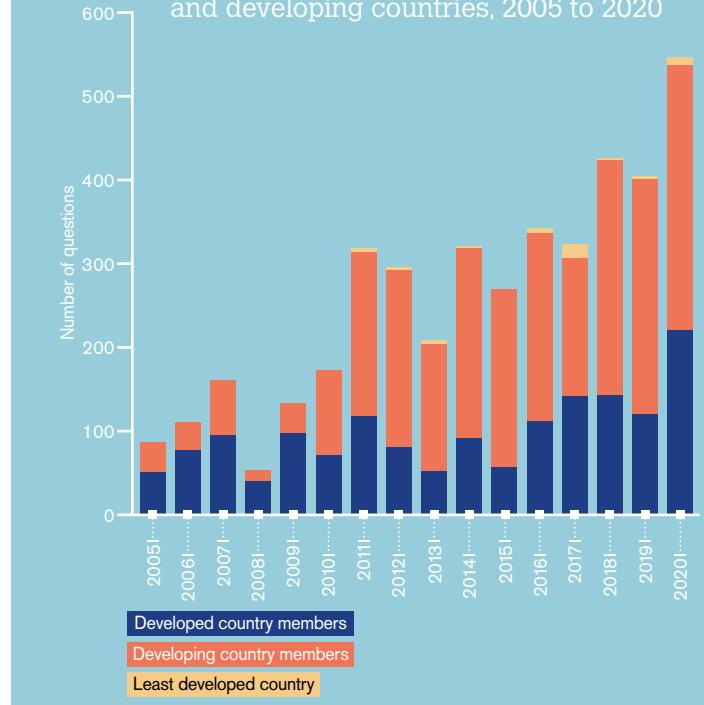


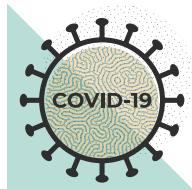
response to COVID-19. Figure 2 provides a snapshot of the questions on notifications by subject area.

Transparency continued to be an important topic in 2020, and compliance with notification obligations, particularly for domestic support and export subsidies, was subject to specific scrutiny in the Committee. Eighteen questions were raised concerning pending notifications from Australia, China, Egypt, the European Union, India, Kenya, the Republic of Korea, Morocco, South Africa, Turkey and the United States.

Thirty-four per cent of domestic support notifications (848) and 30 per cent of export subsidy notifications (874) remained outstanding as of 31 December 2020. Nevertheless, Figure 3 shows a rising trend in the number of annual notifications, with the total reaching 351 in 2020, the second-highest since 1995 after 1995's 439 and a sign of members' continuing commitment to increased transparency.

Figure 1: Questions addressed to developed and developing countries, 2005 to 2020





Several members called for enhanced transparency on COVID-19 measures.

COVID-19 and agriculture

In March 2020, as the COVID-19 crisis deepened, the heads of the WTO, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Health Organization issued a joint statement calling on governments to minimize the impact of COVID-19-related border restrictions on trade in food (see page 175).

In response to members' requests, a special meeting of the Committee was convened in June 2020 on COVID-19 and agricultural trade policies. Members agreed to include "COVID-19 and agriculture" as a standing item on the Committee's agenda. It was also agreed to invite observer international organizations to contribute to the discussions.

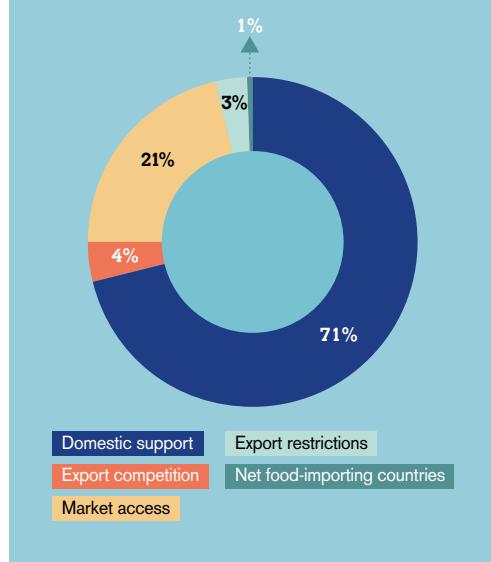
Several written contributions were submitted by members on COVID-19 and agriculture, including specific notifications and *ad hoc* reports on measures taken in the agricultural sector in response to the pandemic. Some observer international organizations also circulated contributions on this theme.

Several members called for enhanced transparency on COVID-19 measures at a Committee meeting in July. In a subsequent information session dedicated to COVID-19, members also heard from several international organizations about their research work.

In August, the WTO Secretariat published an information note on the impact of the pandemic on world agricultural trade. It said that agricultural trade had fared better than other sectors and that initial measures

"The lessons from the pandemic for global foods systems are clear. The continued strengthening of the WTO Agreement on Agriculture is absolutely vital" - DDG Alan Wolff

Figure 2: Questions on notifications raised in the Committee on Agriculture in 2020, by subject area



focused on guaranteeing the immediate availability of food had been followed by a second phase of policies seeking to mend broken supply chains and help producers.

Export competition

The Committee held its annual dedicated discussion on export competition in September. Export competition covers export subsidies, export credits, export credit guarantees or insurance programmes, international food aid and agricultural exporting state trading enterprises.

The 2015 Ministerial Conference decided to eliminate agricultural export subsidies and established disciplines on similar export measures. Of the 16 WTO members that had export subsidy reduction commitments at the time, 12 have modified their schedules of commitments in line with the decision. Canada and the European Union have already circulated draft revised schedules and

certification is expected in due course. Brazil and Venezuela are yet to submit their draft revised schedules incorporating the decision.

Transparency tools

The WTO Secretariat continued its work on the improvement of its online tools, including the new online system for submission of agriculture notifications released at the end of 2019.

The Secretariat added new features to the question and answers function of the Agriculture Information Management System (AG-IMS), which allows members to pose questions and provide answers to be discussed at Committee meetings.

Outreach and information exchange

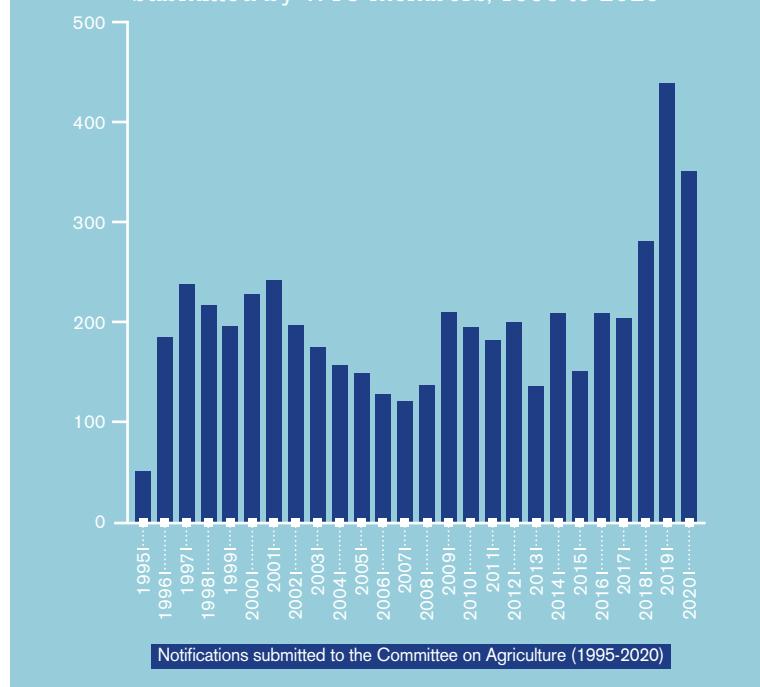
The WTO Secretariat organized a 2020 edition of the WTO Agriculture Symposium, in virtual mode, exploring the role of international trade in agriculture in food system transformation. The symposium marked 25 years of the Agreement on Agriculture. It assessed and drew lessons from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on agricultural trade.

"The lessons from the pandemic for global foods systems are clear. The continued strengthening of the WTO Agreement on Agriculture is absolutely vital," Deputy Director-General Alan Wolff said in an address to the symposium. The virtual meeting was attended by WTO

members, academics, civil society, farmers and agri-business.

In addition, the Secretariat launched the WTO Trade Dialogues on Food in April 2020. This will become a regular feature of virtual outreach conducted by the Agriculture and Commodities Division designed to explore topical issues in food and agricultural trade.

Figure 3: Number of agriculture notifications submitted by WTO members, 1995 to 2020



Sanitary and phytosanitary measures

- The Committee adopted the Report of the Fifth Review of the Agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Measures, with recommendations for tackling new issues and continuing existing activities.
- Committee members began using a new online platform – eAgenda – to submit and share agenda items, statements and specific trade concerns.
- The number of new specific trade concerns raised by WTO members rose to 36 – more than double 2019’s 17 – covering a wide range of issues, such as pesticide-related policies and COVID-related restrictions.
- Members notified 2,122 new or changed SPS regulations, an all-time high, and up from 1,762 the previous year.

Tending seedlings at a community nursery on the island of 'Eua, Tonga.



Adoption of the Fifth Review Report

In 2020, the SPS Committee adopted the Report of the Fifth Review of the SPS Agreement, concluding a process launched in March 2018. Members showed a high level of engagement, submitting 22 proposals covering ten topics (see Box 1).

The Fifth Review Report contains recommendations for tackling new issues and continuing existing SPS activities. It includes an overview of work undertaken from 2014 to 2019.

Implementation of the Fifth Review recommendations

The SPS Committee commenced implementing several recommendations in the report. A Working Group on Approval Procedures was established to enhance implementation of approval procedures that facilitate trade while meeting an importer’s appropriate level of SPS protection. This working group, led by Canada and Paraguay, held its first meeting in November.

The SPS Committee held a thematic session on voluntary third-party assurance programmes – formal, documented food-safety systems to improve food-safety outcomes – to increase awareness of the work of international standard-setting bodies and share approaches to third-party assurance in official controls.

Background

The Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Measures establishes the rights and obligations of WTO members regarding measures taken to ensure food safety, protect human health from plant or animal-spread diseases, protect plant and animal health from pests and diseases, or prevent other damage from pests. Governments must ensure that their SPS measures are necessary for health protection and based on scientific principles.



36

WTO members raised 36 new specific trade concerns, more than double 2019’s total.



In addition, the Committee continued to exchange information on various topics, including under the new standing agenda item on control, inspection and approval procedures.

New eAgenda platform

Because of the pandemic, several changes were made to Committee meetings to facilitate virtual participation. Starting in June, members could use a new online platform – eAgenda – to submit and share agenda items, statements and specific trade concerns (STCs).

Proposed SPS declaration for 12th Ministerial Conference

The Committee discussed a proposal on an SPS declaration for the 12th Ministerial Conference, initially submitted by Brazil, Canada and the United States, and subsequently co-sponsored by 22 members. This declaration aims to initiate a work programme to deal with future regulatory challenges, including emerging pests and diseases, climate change and technological innovation. Proponents responded to members' queries, and indicated their intention to hold further discussions, including in smaller group settings.

SPS issues related to COVID-19

Members shared information on SPS issues pertaining to the pandemic in Committee

Box 1: Review of the SPS Agreement

Every four years, WTO members evaluate how they are applying the SPS Agreement. The Fifth Review proposes new or continued work on the following topics:



Appropriate level of protection, risk assessment and science



Control, inspection and approval procedures (Annex C)



Equivalence (encourages members to accept others' SPS measures offering equivalent protection)



Fall armyworm (a crop-damaging pest native to tropical and sub-tropical regions in the Americas)



National SPS coordination mechanisms



Notification procedures and transparency



Maximum (pesticide) residue levels (MRLs) for plant protection products



Regionalization

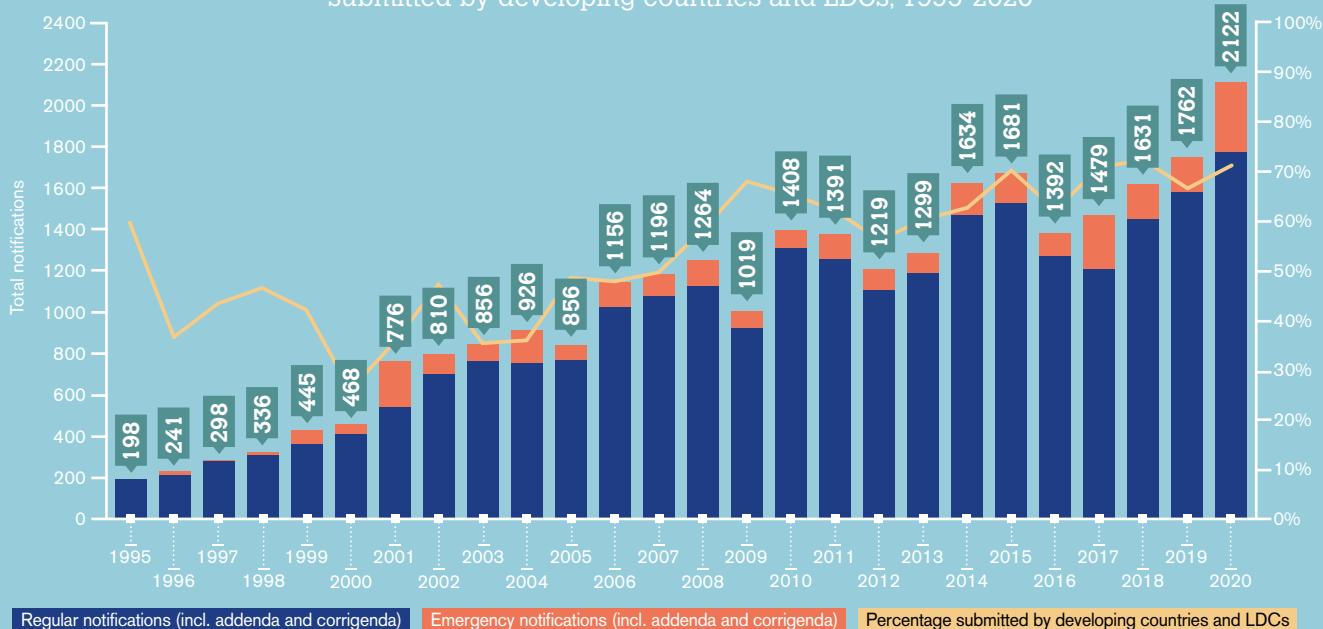


Role of standard-setting bodies Codex, the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) with respect to specific trade concerns



Voluntary third-party assurance schemes (see page 86).

Figure 4: Total number of SPS notifications and percentage of notifications submitted by developing countries and LDCs, 1995-2020



An event to mark 25 years of the SPS Agreement underlined its central role in enhancing trade in safe food.

meetings and at an informal information-sharing session held in June. Codex, OIE, IPPC and the World Health Organization (WHO) provided updates on COVID-related activities. Many members underscored the need to respect the core principles of the SPS Agreement, such as transparency and scientific basis, in the design and implementation of COVID-19 measures and highlighted the role of guidance from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), WHO and OIE.

SPS@25 event

Members participated in a special event to mark 25 years of the SPS Agreement. The event underlined the central role the Agreement has played to enhance trade in safe food. Negotiators of the Agreement, the former Secretary of the SPS Committee and Chair of the working group, former Committee chairs, experts and delegates reflected on the work done and tried to anticipate the challenges the next 25 years will bring.

"In these uncertain times, the SPS Committee has shown that its work and the SPS

Agreement are more relevant than ever," Deputy Director-General Alan Wolff said in opening remarks.

New observer organization

The SPS Committee agreed to grant observer status to the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development.

Specific trade concerns

WTO members raised 36 new specific trade concerns – more than double 2019's 17 – covering a wide range of issues, such as pesticide-related policies, COVID-related restrictions on agricultural products and phytosanitary restrictions on fresh vegetables and fruits. The Committee also considered 17 previously raised concerns.

Following an exercise conducted by the WTO Secretariat in September on the status of certain specific trade concerns, members reported 35 resolved and 42 as partially resolved. This brings the total number of fully or partially resolved concerns to 272 (over 50 per cent of the 516 concerns raised since 1995 – see Box 2).

Notifications

The SPS Agreement requires notification of draft regulations that are not “substantially the same” as an international standard. In 2020, members notified 2,122 new or changed SPS regulations, an all-time high, and up from 1,762 the previous year. Of these, 1,253 were regular notifications (up from 1,118 in 2019) and 265 were emergency notifications (up from 119 in 2019). Developing countries submitted 71 per cent of SPS notifications compared with 67 per cent in 2019 (see Figure 4).

Out of 294 COVID-related WTO notifications, 28 per cent were submitted under the SPS Agreement. At the onset of the crisis, emergency trade restrictions on imports of animals and animal products from affected areas were the most common. But since April 2020, most notifications and communications relate to measures to facilitate trade (see page 109). Some trade-facilitating examples include the acceptance of electronic/scanned certificates and the identification of dedicated websites to verify the validity of, or to submit, certificates.

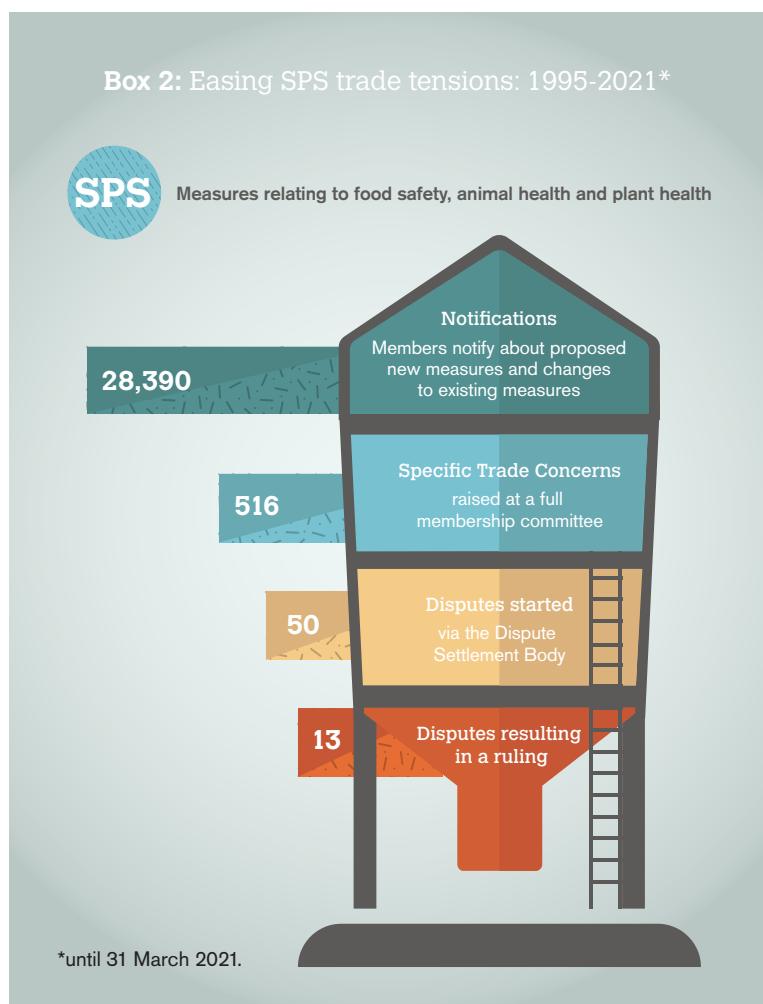
Capacity-building

Despite the challenges of organizing technical assistance activities, due to the pandemic, the WTO Secretariat held 12 SPS technical assistance activities in virtual formats.

Publications

In 2020, the WTO Secretariat published an information note, “Future resilience to diseases of animal origin: the role of trade”, noting that the impact of COVID-19 has far eclipsed that of other recent outbreaks of such diseases. This note maps out the international framework in place to address these issues along with efforts to ensure safe trade in animals and animal products, including wildlife. It is clear from the current pandemic that international cooperation is essential in global animal health and world trade, the publication notes.

Box 2: Easing SPS trade tensions: 1995-2021*



The note was part of a series on COVID-19 (see page 76). The Secretariat released another on “Standards, regulations and COVID-19 – what actions taken by WTO members?”. Around two-thirds of notifications by WTO members in response to COVID-19 are related to product standards and regulations, or procedures to assess conformity with such measures (i.e. technical barriers to trade and SPS measures).

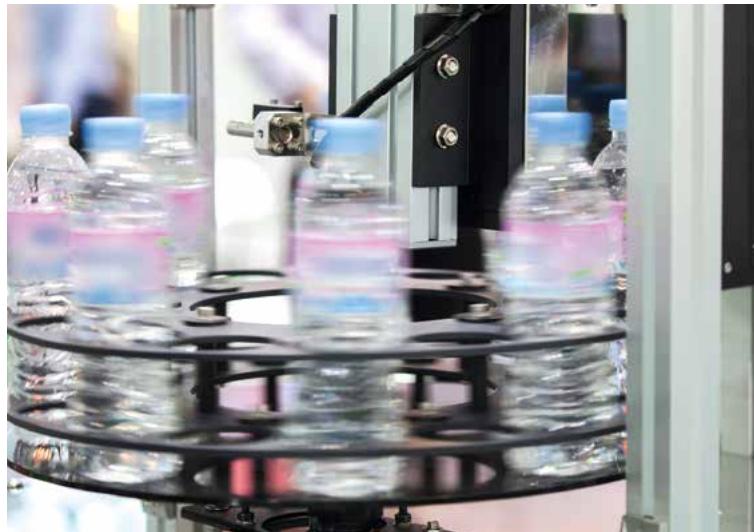
“In these uncertain times, the SPS Committee has shown that its work and the SPS Agreement are more relevant than ever” - DDG Alan Wolff

Technical barriers to trade

- The Committee used new IT tools, such as the eAgenda online platform, to continue its work despite the restrictions stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The Committee's implementation of its current 2019-21 workplan continued, including on developing guidelines on the choice and design of appropriate and proportionate conformity assessment procedures.
- The Committee held a number of thematic sessions on various topics, including mandatory marking and labelling, technical assistance, conformity assessment and good regulatory practices.
- The Committee adopted a timeline for the completion in 2021 of the ninth triennial review of the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Agreement, which will lay down its 2022-24 workplan.
- Members' TBT notifications and specific trade concerns rose to record levels, indicating increasing use of the Committee's transparency and monitoring mechanisms.

Background

The Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Agreement aims to ensure that regulations, standards, testing and certification procedures followed by WTO members do not create unnecessary obstacles to trade. The number of regulations adopted by WTO members has continued to grow in response to consumers' demands for safe, high-quality products, the protection of health and the need to curb pollution and environmental degradation.



Progress on several fronts

The TBT Committee continued implementing its 2019-21 workplan, adopted in November 2018. Alongside its regular meetings, the Committee also held several thematic sessions on various issues, such as technical regulations (mandatory marking and labelling), technical assistance, conformity assessment procedures and good regulatory practices. The Committee also agreed on the timeline for the completion of its ninth Triennial Review in 2021, which will adopt its 2022-24 workplan.

The adoption of enhanced procedures and its use of new IT tools, such as the eAgenda online platform, allowed the Committee to continue its work despite disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Members considered that the eAgenda in particular greatly facilitated discussing specific trade concerns (STCs). Engagement in STCs increased, including by LDCs.

The Committee's work continued with respect to its mandate for developing guidelines on the choice and design of appropriate and proportionate conformity assessment

procedures. Significant interest was expressed on this issue, with submissions on draft guidelines by the European Union, the United States, Australia, Japan, Canada and China.

At an informal meeting in December, WTO members shared experiences and views on TBT measures they have adopted, or were planning to adopt, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The WTO Secretariat presented an information note, "Standards, Regulations and COVID-19 – What Actions Taken by WTO Members". The Committee also held a workshop on the role of gender in the development of standards.

The ePing alert system for tracking TBT and sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) notifications – which was upgraded in 2020 to facilitate the sharing of comments on notifications – had 12,360 registered users from 183 countries/territories, up from 8,820 users in 2019.

Specific trade concerns (STCs)

In 2020, the Committee discussed a record 214 STCs – new and previously raised concerns regarding draft or adopted TBT measures. This is a significant jump from the already high number of STCs (185) discussed in 2019 (see Figure 5). Compared with 2019, the number of new STCs (57) grew by over 60 per cent, with a slight increase in previously raised STCs (157).

The new STCs covered a wide range of product regulations, including those dealing with cybersecurity, environmental protection (on solid waste, plastics, eco-design requirements, energy conservation) and the description and labelling of various products. Of the new STCs, 33 were raised by developing countries (21 independently and 12 in conjunction with developed countries).



214

The Committee discussed a record 214 specific trade concerns.

Figure 5: Specific trade concerns raised in the TBT Committee, 1995 to 2020

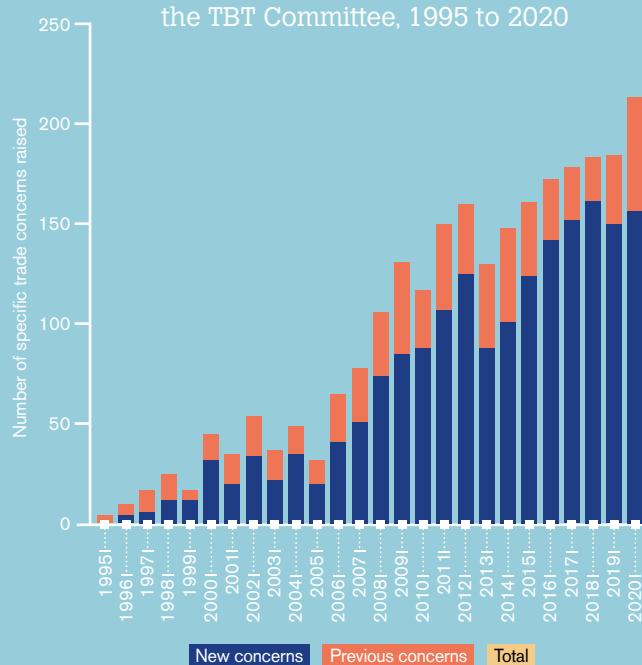
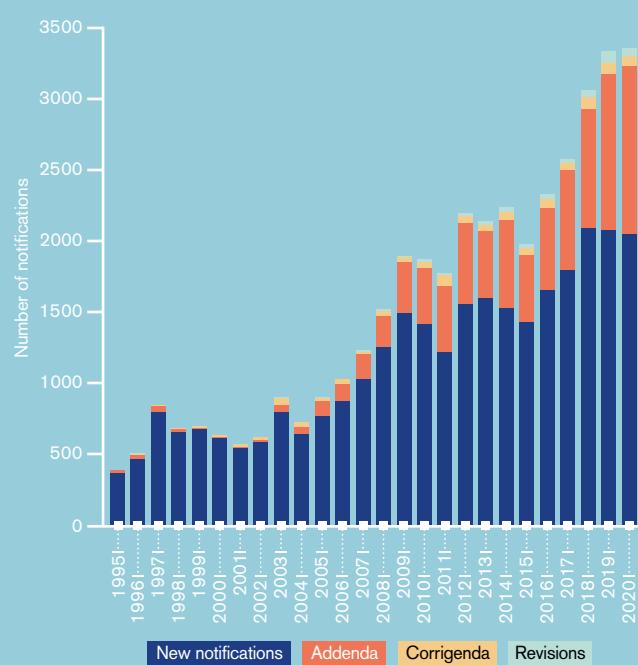


Figure 6: TBT notifications, 1995 to 2020



Notifications

Notifications rose to a record 3,354 draft measures (see Figure 6). However, the number of notifying members decreased from 93 to 82. The United States submitted the most notifications. Africa was again particularly active, with Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda and Egypt among the top ten notifying members.

Almost all notifications (93 per cent) were submitted through the WTO's online portal, which enables the WTO Secretariat to publish notifications within two days of receipt. The portal also allows members to track the status of submitted notifications and facilitates the preparation of notifications via templates (see also Box 3).

TBT@40

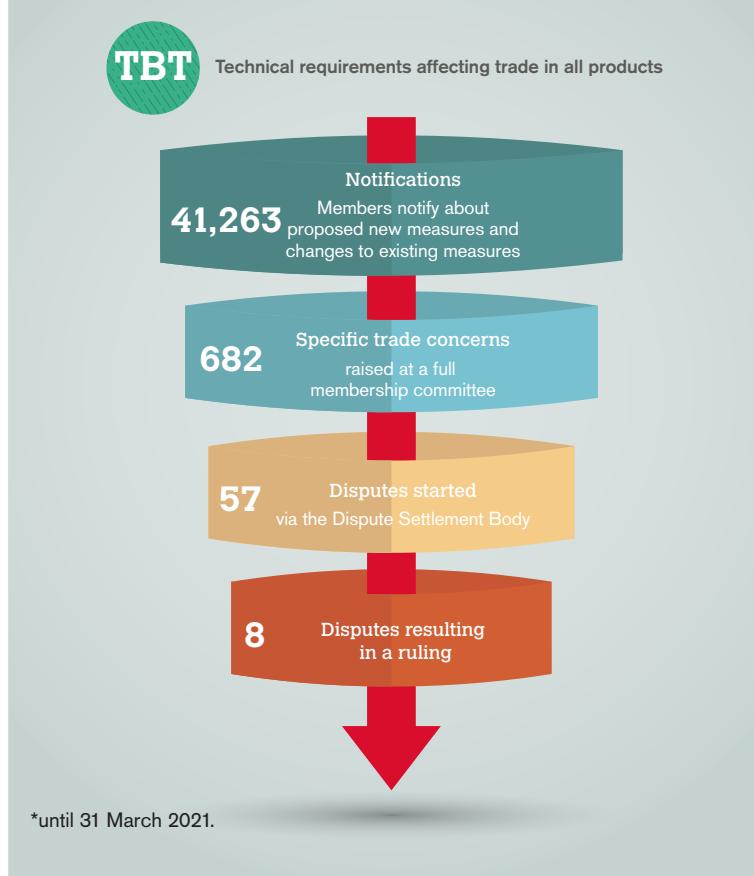
The WTO Secretariat organized a TBT@40 dialogue series to mark 40 years of the TBT Agreement, with three online events. The first focused on how SPS/TBT transparency mechanisms reduce trade tensions. The second looked at how members use the TBT Committee to raise and discuss STCs for addressing trade frictions without having to resort to formal WTO disputes.

The third looked at whether the Committee's "six principles" on international standardization (transparency, openness, impartiality and consensus, effectiveness and relevance, coherence, and the development dimension) remain fit for purpose 20 years after their adoption.

Capacity-building

In 2020, demand for – and delivery of – TBT technical assistance activities was severely affected by the pandemic. As a result, many such activities had to be postponed to 2021. The WTO Secretariat was nonetheless able to hold various TBT activities via virtual workshops or seminars, including three

Box 3: Easing trade tensions: 1995-2021*



national workshops on the TBT Agreement (in Paraguay, Peru and Zimbabwe) and one national workshop on the TBT and SPS Agreements (in Brazil). In addition, training on the TBT and SPS Agreements was provided as part of the first online Regional Trade Policy Course for Caribbean members.

As in previous years, there was strong demand for training on TBT transparency and on ePing in particular. Fifteen virtual ePing training activities were organized, including on how to submit and track notifications related to COVID-19.

Subsidies and countervailing measures

- The Committee reviewed WTO members' notifications of subsidies, and countervailing duty legislation and actions.
- The Chair alerted WTO members to the continuing "chronic" low compliance with notification obligations on subsidies.
- Initiations of countervailing duty investigations rose to 27 in the first half of 2020, compared with 15 in the same period of 2019.

Background

The Subsidies and Countervailing Measures (SCM) Agreement regulates WTO members' use of subsidies and countervailing measures on subsidized imports of a product found to be injuring domestic producers of that product. The SCM Committee reviews WTO members' notifications of specific subsidies, notifications of countervailing duty legislation, semi-annual reports of countervailing actions and *ad hoc* notifications of preliminary and final countervailing measures taken. It serves as a forum for members to discuss the implementation of the SCM Agreement and any matters arising from this.



Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Subsidies and Countervailing Measures (SCM) Committee held only one regular and one special meeting in 2020, in the autumn. The Committee reviewed WTO members' notifications of specific subsidies, notifications of countervailing duty legislation, semi-annual reports of countervailing actions and *ad hoc* notifications of preliminary and final countervailing measures taken.

The Chair of the Committee, Michèle Legault Dooley (Canada), spoke of the "chronic" low compliance with the fundamental transparency obligation to notify subsidies, saying it constitutes a serious problem for the proper functioning of the SCM Agreement. Numerous members underlined the importance of transparency, citing poor compliance with notification obligations. Only 83 of the WTO's 164 members had submitted their 2019 subsidies notifications. In addition, 67 members had not submitted their 2017 notifications.

The Committee continued to discuss ways to improve the timeliness and completeness of notifications and other information flows on trade measures. It also considered a revised proposal by the United States on procedures for questions and answers on programmes not included in WTO members' notifications.

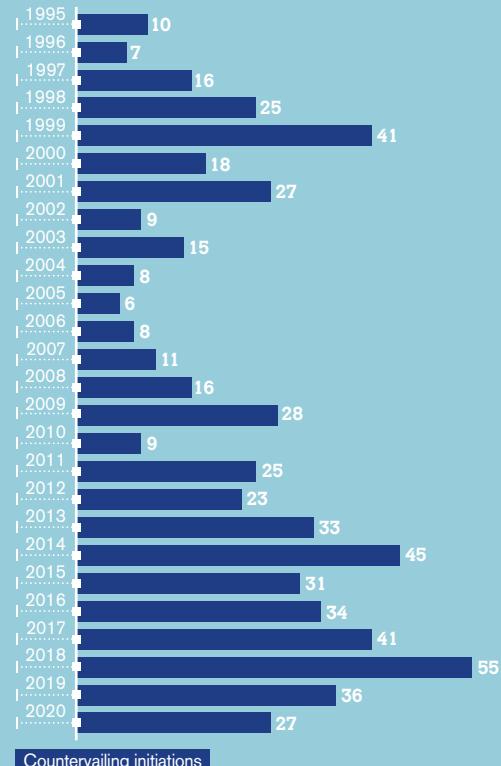
The Chair recalled the 31 December 2015 deadline for the extended transition given to 19 developing countries to eliminate export subsidies. The Chair noted that the beneficiaries should have made their final transparency notifications by 30 June 2016 but only 15 had done so. The Committee agreed to continue to discuss this issue in 2021. Least-developed countries and ten of the developing members listed in Annex VII(b) of the SCM Agreement continue to be exempted from the export subsidy prohibition.



The Committee also reviewed notifications of countervailing actions taken (see Figure 7). The number of initiations of countervailing duty investigations increased to 27 in the first half of 2020, compared with 15 in the same period of 2019. As of 30 June 2020, there were 228 notified measures (definitive duties and undertakings) in force.

The issue “subsidies and overcapacity” was discussed in the Committee for the eighth time at the request of Canada, the European Union, Japan, Norway and the United States. Members continued their discussions on whether subsidies contribute to overcapacity in certain sectors.

Figure 7: Countervailing initiations by WTO members, 1 January 1995 to end-June 2020*



Note: Figure 7 covers initiations up to the end of June 2020.
Data for the second half of 2020 are not yet available.

Anti-dumping practices

- WTO members initiated 188 new anti-dumping investigations from January to June 2020, nearly double the 99 registered in the same period in 2019 (see Figure 9).
- India and the United States were again the leading initiators, accounting for more than 60 per cent of the new investigations.
- Investigations involving steel products continued to be a main focus of discussion in the Committee.

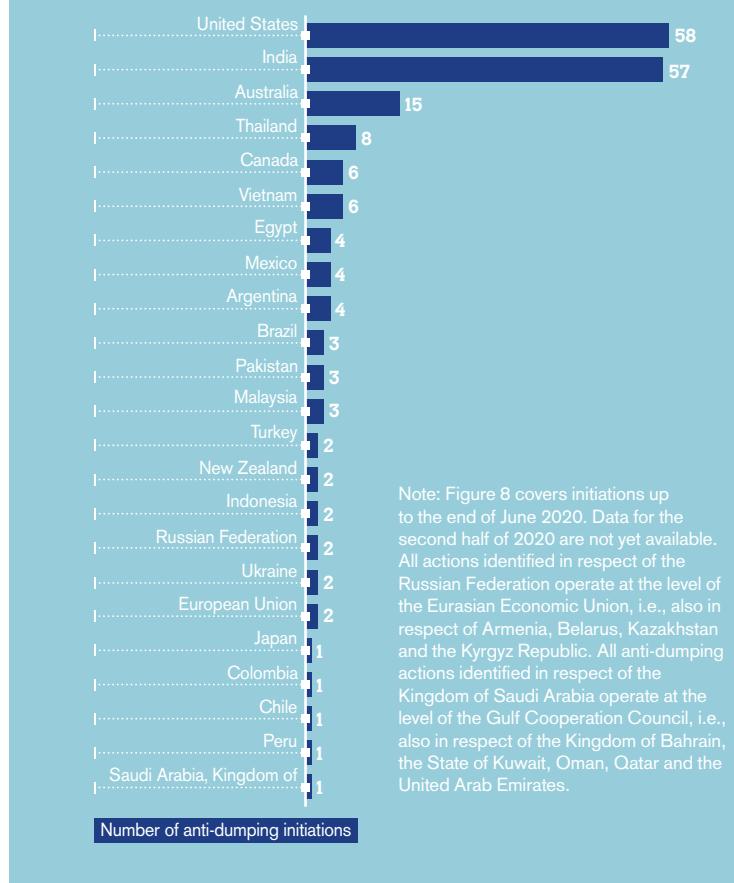
Background

WTO members can apply anti-dumping measures on imports of a product where the exporting company exports the product at a price lower than its normal value, generally the price it charges in its home market, and the dumped imports cause or threaten to cause injury to the domestic industry. The Committee on Anti-Dumping Practices provides WTO members with the opportunity to discuss any matters relating to the Anti-Dumping Agreement.

In the first six months of 2020, the United States initiated 58 new anti-dumping investigations and India 57, up from 20 and 18 each, respectively, in the same period of the previous year.

Australia, Brazil, Canada, Egypt, Indonesia, Mexico, New Zealand, Pakistan, Thailand, Turkey and Viet Nam also initiated more investigations than in the first half of 2019. Other users of anti-dumping investigations, including Argentina, the European Union, Malaysia, Ukraine and the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states

Figure 8: Anti-dumping investigations by reporting WTO member, 1 January 2020 to end-June 2020*





Steel products accounted for more than a quarter of all new anti-dumping investigations in the first six months of 2020.

(Kingdom of Bahrain, State of Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates) initiated fewer investigations while China, the Republic of Korea and South Africa did not initiate any in the first half of 2020.

After India and the United States, the top initiators in the first half of 2020 were Australia (15), Thailand (eight), Canada (six) and Viet Nam (six) (see Figure 8).

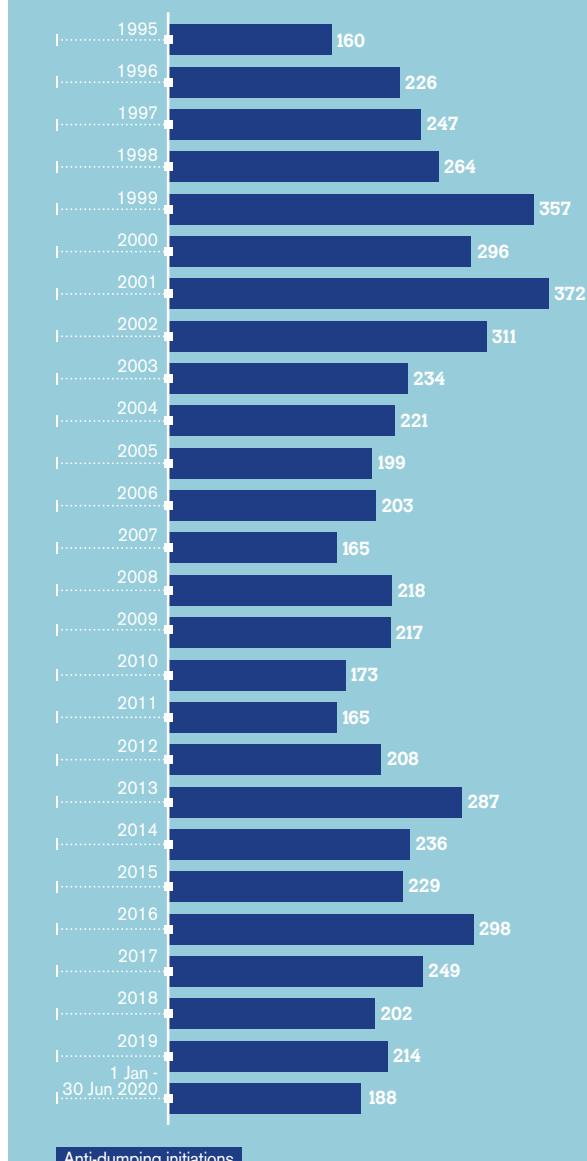
Investigations involving steel products continued to be the subject of extensive debate in the Committee. These products accounted for more than a quarter of all new investigations in the first six months of 2020.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Committee only met once in 2020. It reviewed semi-annual reports for the second half of 2019 submitted by 47 members and semi-annual reports for the first half of 2020 submitted by 48 members. Committee Chair Lenka Šustrová (Czech Republic) noted at the October meeting that some members had failed to submit semi-annual reports for the second half of 2019 and the first half of 2020. Australia and the United States introduced an informal discussion on members' anti-dumping procedures during the pandemic.

The Secretariat's new online portal for submission of anti-dumping semi-annual reports is now available, starting for reports for the second half of 2020.

Due to the heavy agenda of the only Committee meeting held in 2020, the Informal Group on Anti-Circumvention and the Working Group on Implementation did not convene in 2020.

Figure 9: Anti-dumping investigations by year, 1 January 1995 to end-June 2020



Note: Figure 9 covers initiations up to the end of June 2020.
Data for the second half of 2020 are not yet available.

Customs valuation

- National legislation was notified for the first time by three members. The Committee continued the review of legislation of 21 members.
- The Committee hosted a webinar in November celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the Customs Valuation Agreement.



105

A total of 105 WTO members have notified their national legislation.

Background

The WTO's Agreement on Customs Valuation seeks to establish a fair, uniform and neutral system for the valuation of goods for customs purposes, precluding the use of arbitrary or fictitious values. The Committee on Customs Valuation reviews implementation and administration of the Agreement as well as the Agreement on Preshipment Inspection.

The Committee on Customs Valuation received three first-time notifications of national legislation, from Afghanistan, Tonga and Vanuatu, bringing to 105 the number of WTO members that have notified their legislation (representing over three-quarters of the membership).

The Committee is currently reviewing the legislation of 21 members based on notifications provided. The Committee also received first-time notifications from Israel and Namibia of the checklist of issues related to their legislation, bringing to 71 the number of members that have submitted this notification (representing over half of the membership).

In commemoration of the 25th Anniversary of the Customs Valuation Agreement (CVA), the Chair of the Committee, Carlos Guevara (Ecuador), hosted a virtual seminar in November with WTO members and customs experts. The seminar comprised two sessions – “Experience with the CVA over the past 25 years” and “Looking ahead at the future of the CVA”. Each session was followed by discussion among participating members.

The Committee also monitors the Agreement on Preshipment Inspection and reviews notifications from members regarding their preshipment inspection measures. In 2020, the Committee received five notifications. The Committee also launched a triennial review as required by the Agreement.

The Livingstone border crossing between Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Rules of origin

- WTO members marked the 25th anniversary of the Agreement on Rules of Origin with an event in March 2020.
- The Committee continued its consideration of a proposal to enhance transparency in non-preferential rules of origin.
- Members discussed preferential rules of origin for least-developed countries (LDCs) and considered notes by the WTO Secretariat on the underutilization of trade preferences.



Background

Rules of origin are the criteria used to determine the country in which a product is made. They are used in the implementation of many trade measures, including trade preferences, customs duties, labelling of country of origin and the application of anti-dumping measures. The main objective of the Agreement on Rules of Origin is to harmonize the rules that all WTO members use to determine origin in their non-preferential trade. This work is conducted by the Committee on Rules of Origin. The Committee also reviews the implementation of the 2013 and 2015 ministerial decisions on preferential rules of origin for LDCs.

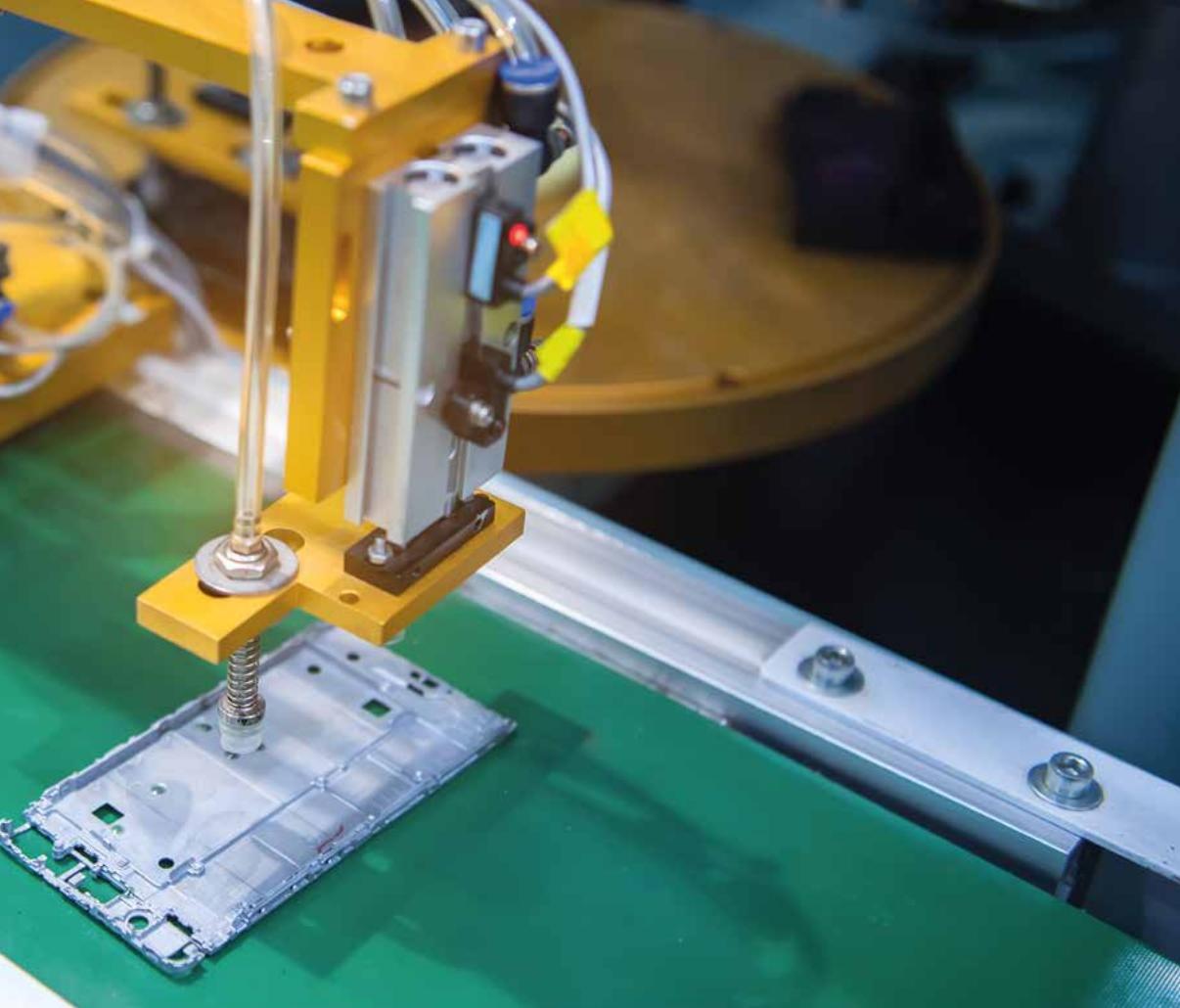
The Agreement on Rules of Origin marked its 25th anniversary in March 2020 with an event bringing together WTO members, the Secretariat, former chairs of the Committee on Rules of Origin and private sector representatives.

Rules of origin are used to define where a product is made; they are critical in determining what the import conditions, such as tariffs, quotas or anti-dumping duties, should be. But work is unfinished on harmonizing non-preferential rules of origin – those applying to trade on a most-favoured-nation (MFN) basis.

The Chair of the Committee, Uma Shankari Muniandy (Singapore), said that rules of origin have become increasingly important — and complicated. “Regional and global value chains fragmented the production of goods and made the determination of origin a more complex exercise,” she noted.

Non-preferential rules of origin

WTO members continued considering a proposal to streamline notifications of non-preferential rules of origin, used for the implementation of trade policy measures such as quotas, anti-dumping or “made in” labels.



Rules of origin are particularly important in the production of complex, high-technology products, such as mobile phones.

The proposal aims at updating the information held by the WTO Secretariat, standardizing the way the information is notified (by using a template) and enhancing the role of the Committee in examining such notifications. Despite widening support, some developing countries expressed concerns that the proposal would increase their administrative burden by adding new notification obligations.

No discussions were held on the work programme for the harmonization of non-preferential rules of origin.

Preferential rules of origin

WTO ministers have laid down guidelines to make it easier for LDCs to qualify for preferential treatment and better utilize market access opportunities. Members continued to discuss ways to ensure that preferential rules of origin for LDCs are “transparent and simple”.

In 2020, WTO members initiated an examination of preference-granting members' rules of origin based on the *ad valorem* percentage criterion, whereby the degree of manufacturing or processing carried out in a country is calculated by the value it adds to the product or products. They also heard updates about new developments regarding the preferential

rules of origin of the European Union, Russia, Thailand and the United Kingdom.

The Committee continued examining the link between origin requirements and the underutilization of preferences by LDCs. The Secretariat prepared a note on the minerals and metals sector that found that underutilization was surprisingly high, with only about a third of all preference-eligible imports receiving a tariff preference.

Another note examined requirements for direct consignment – whether goods are shipped directly or transhipped. It found that consignment requirements seem to affect LDC utilization of preferences: for instance, 52 per cent of all imports from landlocked LDCs do not receive any preferential treatment, more than double the 21 per cent for LDCs with sea access.

“Regional and global value chains fragmented the production of goods and made the determination of origin a more complex exercise” - Uma Shankari Muniandy, Chair of the Committee

Import licensing

- The Committee reviewed 197 notifications from WTO members under the Agreement on Import Licensing Procedures, a sharp increase from 43 in 2019.
- In October, the Committee launched an import licensing website, which can be publicly accessed.
- The Committee heard specific trade concerns about import licensing rules and procedures.



197

Import licensing notifications quadrupled in 2020, rising to an annual total of 197.

The Committee received 173 notifications from 12 members on new import licensing procedures or changes in these procedures. It also reviewed 24 notifications from 22 members regarding responses to a questionnaire on import licensing procedures. No notifications were received regarding publications and/or legislation on import licensing procedures, compared with two in 2019.

Notifications on new import licensing procedures or changes increased almost nine-fold compared with 2019. The increase could be attributed, among other things, to the introduction of a new format for notifications and technical assistance activities conducted in some WTO members. In contrast, the absence of notifications on publications and/or legislation could be attributed to the fact that these can now be incorporated into notifications on new or changed licensing procedures.

As of the end of 2020, 14 WTO members had not submitted any notification on import licensing. In addition, 23 members had never submitted responses to the annual questionnaire on licensing procedures. WTO trade monitoring reports have identified import licensing as one of the main trade-restricting measures introduced by governments.

WTO members raised several new and recurring specific trade concerns before the Committee on Import Licensing Procedures. Australia and Canada questioned India's import requirements on certain pulses. The European Union questioned Brazil's import licensing on industrial nitrocellulose; Egypt's import licensing on certain agricultural and processed products; India's import licensing regime for pneumatic tyres; Indonesia's import licensing regimes for certain textiles products and for alcoholic beverages; and Thailand's import procedures on feed wheat.

Japan questioned Indonesia's import licensing regime for rice. The United States questioned

Background

The Agreement on Import Licensing Procedures establishes disciplines on import licensing systems, with the objective of ensuring that the procedures applied for granting import licences do not in themselves restrict trade. It aims to simplify the administrative requirements necessary to obtain licences and to ensure fair and transparent administration of the procedures. The Agreement requires WTO members to notify publications and legislation on import licensing procedures and any changes thereof as well as submit an annual questionnaire on import licensing procedures.



Argentina's and Egypt's import licensing systems; China's changes to import licensing for solid waste and certain recoverable materials; the Dominican Republic's import licensing regime for agricultural products and livestock; India's import licensing

requirements on boric acid; Indonesia's import licensing regime for cell phones, handheld computers and tablets; and Kenya's import licensing regime for agricultural products.

At the meeting of the Committee in October 2020, members launched an import licensing website. The site (<https://importlicensing.wto.org>) is publicly available and provides a user-friendly interface to access WTO members' information on licensing requirements. It is based on members' notifications and the work carried out in the committee since 1995.

An import licensing website was launched in 2020.

Safeguards

- The level of safeguard actions by WTO members remained high, with 13 investigations launched in the first six months of 2020 and seven measures imposed.
- Members reviewed more than 60 specific safeguard investigations in October at the sole meeting of the Committee in 2020.

Background

WTO members may take safeguard actions (impose temporary additional duties, quantitative restrictions or other measures on a product) to protect a specific domestic industry from an increase in imports of the product that is causing, or threatening to cause, serious injury to the industry. Under these circumstances, WTO members have the right to apply safeguard measures on imports of the product from all sources (but not from a specific member or group of members). The Agreement on Safeguards provides rules concerning the investigation that must be conducted as well as the application of safeguard measures.



13

WTO members initiated 13 safeguard initiations in the first six months of 2020.



7

WTO members imposed seven safeguard measures over the same period.



The first half (January-June) of 2020 saw 13 safeguard investigations initiated and seven safeguard measures imposed by WTO members. The number of investigations had risen to 30 in full-year 2019, when 13 new safeguard measures were imposed (see Figure 10).

Members that initiated two or more investigations during the six months were: Philippines (four), Ukraine (three), South Africa (two) and Turkey (two). Indonesia imposed four final measures during the January-June period and Madagascar, Morocco and South Africa imposed one each.

The share of investigations initiated in the metals sector (the vast majority of which involved steel products) continued to decrease, falling from 44 per cent in the July 2017-June 2018 period to 25 per cent in the July 2019-June 2020 period.

More than 60 specific safeguard investigations by WTO members were reviewed by the Safeguards Committee at its meeting in October. The large number of



Safeguard investigations in the metals sector represented 25 per cent of all investigations from July 2019 to June 2020.

the United Kingdom would need to conduct its own new safeguard investigation on the products in question.

Other matters addressed as separate agenda items at the Committee meeting included US measures on steel and aluminium (requested by India, Japan, the European Union and Turkey) and members' procedures during the COVID-19 pandemic (requested by Australia and the United States).

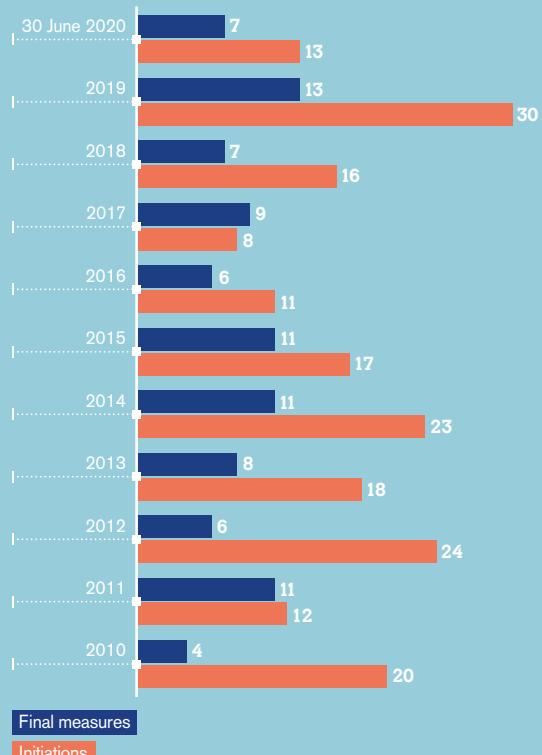
Several members raised concerns over the rising number of safeguard measures taken.

actions under review was partly due to the spring meeting not taking place because of the COVID-19 lockdown.

Australia, China, Japan and the Republic of Korea highlighted general concerns over the rising number of safeguard measures taken and called on members to strictly abide by the provisions of the Safeguards Agreement. In this context, some members raised concerns regarding safeguard actions in the steel sector while others referred to the economic situation brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The United Kingdom submitted to the Committee its new legislation governing trade remedies instruments, including safeguards. The United Kingdom explained how the new system would operate following the end of the transition period for its exit from the European Union on 31 December 2020. The United Kingdom also indicated that an EU safeguard measure on certain steel products would be "transitioned" and would continue to apply in respect of the United Kingdom's territory. Some members queried whether

Figure 10: Safeguard investigations by year (for all WTO members)



Information Technology Agreement

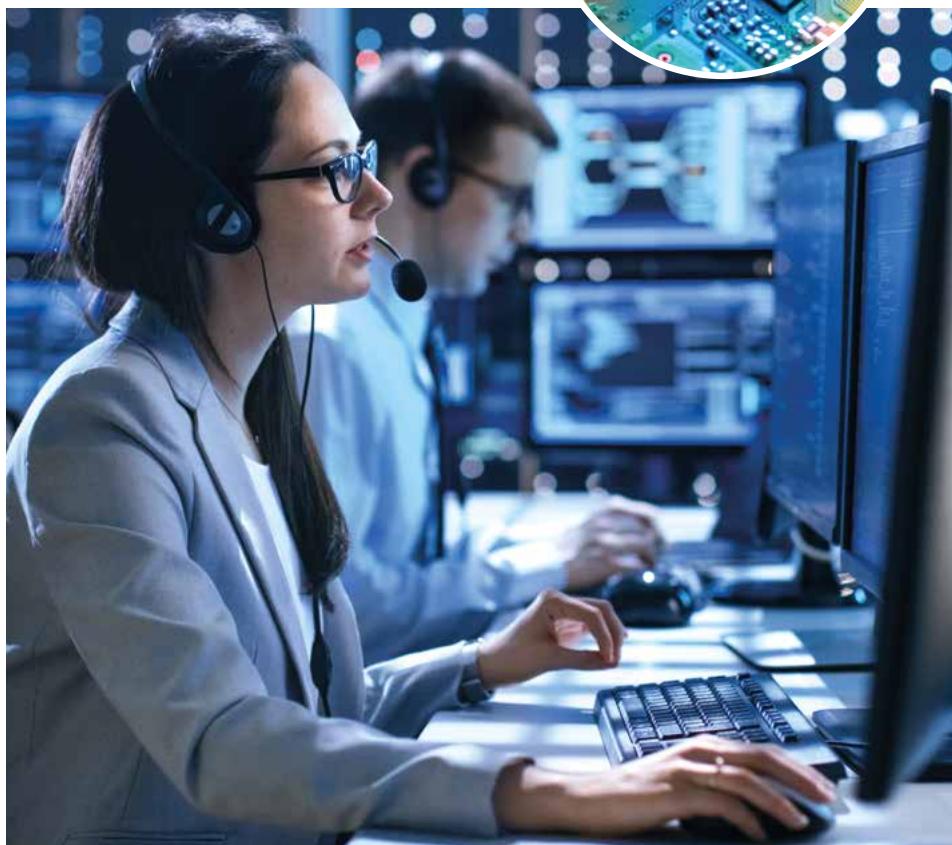
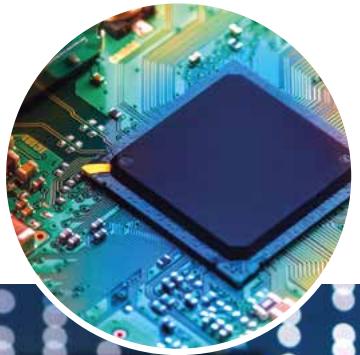
- Several participants in the Information Technology Agreement (ITA) again raised concerns about import duties applied by India, China and Indonesia on information and communication technology (ICT) products.
- The Committee continued its discussions on non-tariff barriers and improving market access.
- WTO members agreed to hold a workshop in September 2021 to explore developments in information and communications technology (ICT) and to discuss how ICT products have contributed to the global response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

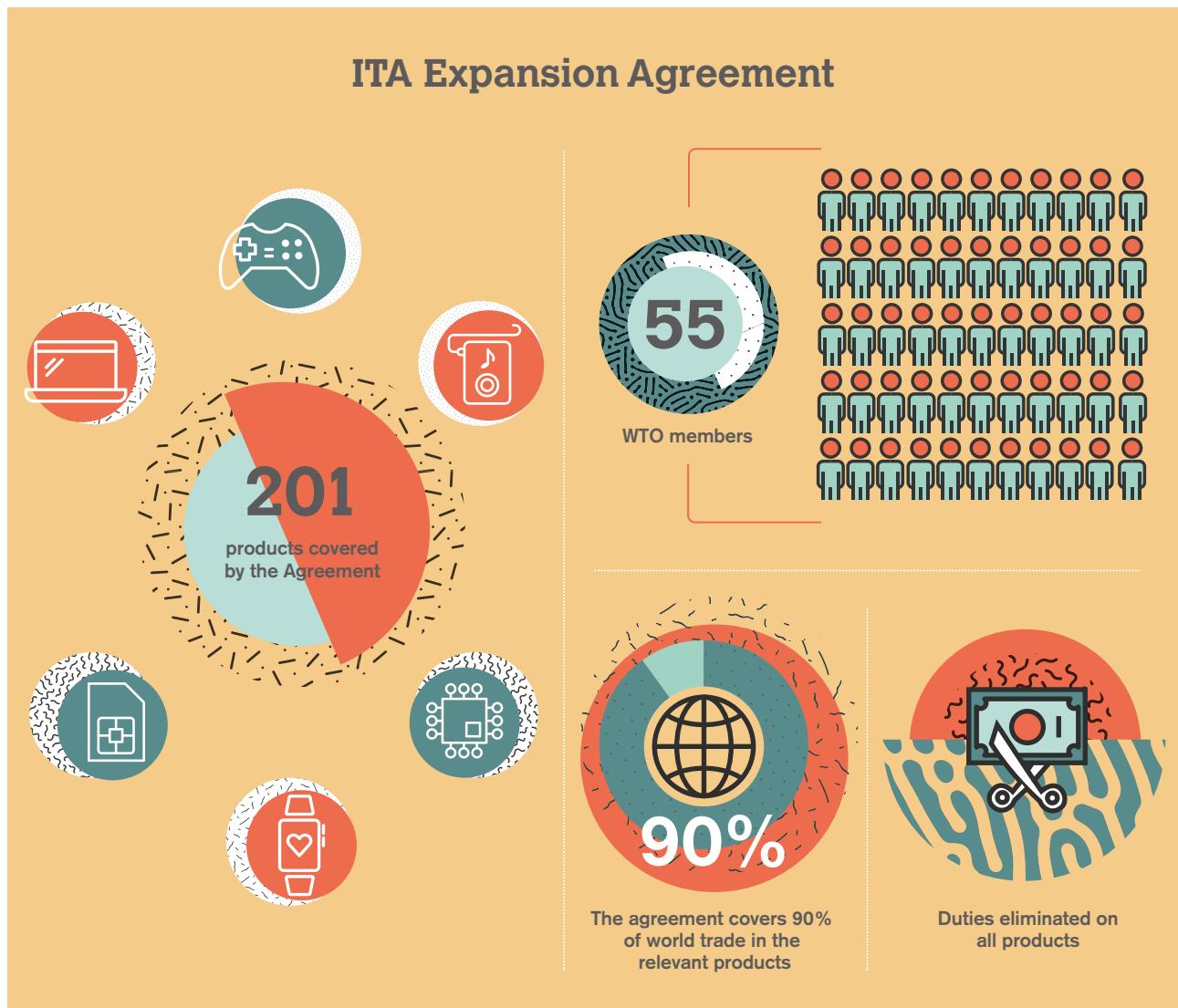
Background

The ITA requires participants to eliminate duties on IT products on a most-favoured nation basis, meaning that all WTO members benefit from it. The ITA covers a large number of ICT products, including computers, telecommunications equipment and semiconductors. The Committee of Participants on the Expansion of Trade in Information Technology Products oversees the Agreement and reviews its implementation. The number of participants has grown to 82, representing about 97 per cent of world trade in IT products. In 2015, over 50 members concluded the expansion of the Agreement, which now covers an additional 201 products valued at over \$1.3 trillion per year.

Several ITA participants again expressed concerns over import duties applied by India, China and Indonesia on certain ICT products and their parts, which they consider to be covered by the ITA. The ITA Committee, which met in May and October, continued its discussions on non-tariff barriers and improving market access for information technology products. The industry wants harmonized technical and administrative regulations to reduce compliance costs.

A key area of the non-tariff measures (NTMs) work programme is a survey of conformity assessment procedures for electromagnetic compatibility (EMC) and electromagnetic interference (EMI) adopted and used by ITA participants. Regarding its work on an EMC/





EMI pilot project, the Committee noted that, of the 53 participants representing 82 WTO members in the ITA, 43 had provided survey responses. It encouraged the remaining ten participants to provide theirs as soon as possible.

WTO members agreed to hold a workshop in 2021 to explore developments in the ITA industry and to discuss how IT products have contributed to the global response to the COVID 19 pandemic.

The Committee continued the discussion regarding the possible HS 2007 classification of "Attachment B" products of the 1996 Ministerial Declaration, for which there is no agreed tariff classification. The WTO Secretariat also provided a new technical note to update the

ITA model list, which helps participants to monitor and track implementation issues and trade flows in ITA products.

2015 ITA expansion

Members of the ITA expansion group continued to implement tariff reduction commitments with respect to the 201 IT products covered by the Expansion Agreement reached in 2015. The new products include integrated circuits and touch screens. All current participants in the 2015 ITA expansion have submitted their expansion commitments and modified their tariff schedules.

The Expansion Agreement covers 90 per cent of world trade in the relevant products. It has 26 participants, representing 55 WTO members.



Local content requirements in automobile products featured among the concerns raised by WTO members in 2020.

Trade-related investment measures

► The Committee continued to discuss concerns regarding alleged local content requirements.

Background

The Agreement on Trade-Related Investment Measures recognizes that certain measures aimed at promoting foreign or domestic investments can restrict and distort trade. It states that WTO members may not apply any trade-related investment measure that discriminates against foreign products or that leads to quantitative restrictions, both of which violate basic WTO principles. An illustrative list of prohibited TRIMs, which often take the form of local content requirements, is part of the Agreement. The TRIMs Committee monitors the implementation of the Agreement and allows members to consult on any relevant matters.

At its only meeting in 2020, the Committee on Trade-related Investment Measures (TRIMs) continued its discussion of investment measures raised by WTO members in previous years. The concerns expressed by members are related to local content obligations allegedly contained in these measures.

These concerns included measures adopted by Russia, allegedly directing private companies to give priority to Russian-sourced goods, services and works over imports. The Committee also further examined alleged implementation by Indonesia of local content requirements in a wide range of sectors – 4G LTE (i.e. long term evolution) mobile devices and base stations; telecommunication services; retail and franchising; and the pharmaceutical and medical device sectors – together with alleged investment restrictions in Indonesia's energy and mining sectors.

The Committee took note of notifications submitted by Vanuatu and Myanmar under Article 6.2 of the TRIMs Agreement, which requires WTO members to notify the Committee of all publications in which TRIMs may be found, including those applied by regional and local governments within their territory.

State trading enterprises

- The Working Party reviewed 59 new and full notifications from 31 WTO members.
- Compliance with notification obligations remained poor although a number of members provided missing notifications covering earlier periods.



Background

State trading enterprises are defined as governmental or non-governmental enterprises, including marketing boards, which have been granted exclusive or special rights or privileges that give them an influence on imports and/or exports of goods. They are required to act in a manner consistent with the WTO principle of non-discriminatory treatment. The Working Party on State Trading Enterprises reviews notifications by WTO members of their state trading activities.

At its sole meeting in 2020, held in November, the Working Party on State Trading Enterprises (STEs) reviewed 59 new and full notifications from 31 WTO members regarding the activities of their STEs during the most recent notification period or earlier notification periods. Members also asked questions about specific aspects of notifications made at previous meetings. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Working Party did not hold the meeting originally scheduled for April 2020.

Compliance with notification obligations remained low although some members provided notifications for previously missing earlier periods. For the most recent notification period, covering 2018 and 2019, only 33 new and full notifications were received. For the previous notification period, covering 2016 and 2017, only 48 new and full notifications were received out of a total of 136 WTO members subject to this obligation. WTO members were encouraged by the Working Party to continue to work with their respective capitals and the WTO Secretariat to improve their notification record.



33

Compliance with notification requirements remained low, with only 33 notifications submitted by WTO members.





Trade in civil aircraft

► The Committee met once in 2020.

Background

The Agreement on Trade in Civil Aircraft is a plurilateral agreement that aims to achieve maximum freedom of world trade in civil aircraft, parts and related equipment – such as engines, radar, flight recorders and ground flight simulators – by, among other things, eliminating tariffs on goods listed in its product annex. The Committee on Trade in Civil Aircraft provides signatories with an opportunity to consult on any matters relating to the operation of the Agreement.

At its one regular meeting in 2020, the Committee on Trade in Civil Aircraft took note of the Chair's report on developments concerning the November 2015 protocol. This relates to updating the product annex in line with the 2007 update of the harmonized system (HS transposition), the system used for classifying goods for customs purposes (see page 81).

At the request of certain WTO members, the Chair of the Committee, Damaris Carnal (Switzerland), said that she will hold informal consultations on how to proceed regarding the next HS transposition of the product annex.

The Agreement on Trade in Civil Aircraft, signed by 32 WTO members, eliminates import duties on all aircraft products covered by the Agreement.

Trade facilitation

- Over 93 per cent of WTO members had ratified the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) by the end of 2020.
- Members submitted 53 implementation notifications informing the Committee of their commitments with respect to fully implementing the TFA.
- The Committee devoted much time to the COVID-19 pandemic. A number of members highlighted how the TFA can help ensure essential treatments and equipment can cross borders.
- The Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility (TFAF) assisted over 60 developing countries and least-developed countries.

Background

The Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) entered into force in February 2017. The TFA aims to expedite the movement, release and clearance of goods, including goods in transit. It also establishes measures for effective cooperation between customs and other appropriate authorities on trade facilitation and customs compliance issues. The Agreement also contains provisions for technical assistance and capacity building. The Committee on Trade Facilitation oversees the TFA and reviews its implementation.



Members highlighted how trade facilitation can help COVID-19 treatments cross borders quickly.

TO members submitted 53 implementation notifications informing the Committee of their commitments with respect to fully implementing the TFA. Thirty-eight members also provided transparency notifications on such matters as publication of information, "single window" operations (where multiple transactions can be accomplished at one contact point), use of customs brokers and contact points for customs cooperation. Notifications were also received on technical assistance and capacity building, both from donors and recipients of aid.

Ninety-five per cent of developing and least-developed countries provided their roadmap for the full implementation of the Agreement through a series of implementation notifications.

Overall, the rate of implementation of TFA commitments stood at just under 70 per cent for the entire WTO, the Secretariat reported in January 2021. For developing and least-developed countries the rate is just over 60 per cent.

Marking the third anniversary of the TFA in February 2020, DG Azevêdo said: "Through this landmark reform, WTO members are working to ensure that the global trading system creates more prosperity for people." The TFA will reduce trade costs globally by expediting the movement, release and clearance of goods across borders.

Experience-sharing formed part of all regular Committee meetings. Members compared notes on their implementation efforts and engaged in thematic discussions, including on national trade facilitation committees. Special attention was paid to matters arising from the COVID-19 pandemic in regular Committee meetings and in a special informal session.

A number of members highlighted how trade facilitation — and the TFA in particular — can help authorities ensure that essential goods related to COVID-19 treatments and equipment can cross borders and reach their intended recipients quickly.



As required under the Agreement, the Committee will undertake the first review of the operation and implementation of the TFA in 2021. This will be a first milestone in the Committee's oversight work.

An annual dedicated session was held on technical assistance and capacity building where members discussed implementation challenges and reviewed progress in the provision of related support.

TFA Facility

The Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility (TFAF) aims to help developing countries

and LDCs to implement the TFA. Training and presentations by WTO officials were delivered to over 1,000 participants in the course of 25 activities. TFAF assisted over 60 developing countries and LDCs.

The TFAF also awarded seven project preparation grants to members that were unable to identify assistance elsewhere for their TFA commitments.

The TFAF website provides ratification and notification updates, TFA resources, case studies, news, contact points, implementation support and coordination of technical assistance efforts. In 2020, a TFAF grant award page was added.

The site also hosts a COVID-19 Trade Facilitation Repository, a platform of trade facilitation actions and initiatives adopted by key stakeholders, broken down by organization, type of measure and subject matter.

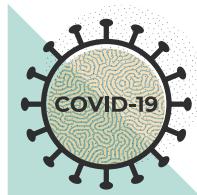
“Through this landmark reform, WTO members are working to ensure that the global trading system creates more prosperity for people” - Former DG, Roberto Azevêdo

Trade in services

- WTO members discussed how to advance the usefulness of the services waiver, which allows more favourable treatment for suppliers from least-developed countries.
- Members engaged in e-commerce discussions throughout the year, focusing mainly on how to improve digital capabilities.
- Members identified transport and tourism as being among the services sectors most hurt by the COVID-19 crisis.

Background

The General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) defines trade in services in terms of four types of transactions: mode 1 – cross-border supply (a supplier in one WTO member provides services to a consumer in another member's territory); mode 2 – consumption abroad (a consumer from one member consumes services in another member's territory); mode 3 – commercial presence (a foreign company provides services through establishment in another member's territory); and mode 4 – presence of natural persons (individuals move to supply services in another member's territory). The Council for Trade in Services oversees the operation of the GATS.



WTO members identified transport and tourism as among the sectors most hurt by COVID-19.

Services waiver

The Least Developed Countries (LDC) Group put forward a number of ideas to advance the usefulness of a services waiver for least-developed countries during Services Council discussions. The Council is under instructions from trade ministers “to review and promote the operationalization of the waiver”. The waiver allows WTO members to grant more favourable treatment to LDC service suppliers.

The LDC Group proposed that the Council organize a workshop to bring together LDC service suppliers and consumers of LDC services in preference-granting members. The Council agreed that the WTO Secretariat prepare a draft programme for the event.

The WTO has received 24 notifications of preferential treatment in favour of LDC services and service suppliers from 51 members (counting EU members as one), unchanged from 2019.

E-commerce

The work programme on e-commerce occupied the Council throughout the year. A communication by a dozen WTO members calling for discussions on how to support digital capabilities generated substantive engagement, with many delegations presenting their own experiences and initiatives in this area.

Members said that e-commerce plays a vital role in fostering economic growth and development, a fact underscored during the COVID-19 pandemic. While acknowledging the benefits of e-commerce, some members called for the Council to address also the challenges it poses and to focus on constraints faced by developing countries and LDCs in the digital sphere.



The services sector, ranging from financial services to distribution, has become the most dynamic component of international trade.



Other issues addressed by the Council

Members discussed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on trade in services (see page 130). They identified transport and tourism as among the sectors most hurt by the crisis and noted that economies whose exports are concentrated in those services have suffered most. The pandemic has resulted in increased trade in online services, while also highlighting the importance of addressing disparities in digital connectivity.

Japan and the United States reiterated concerns about cybersecurity measures of both China and Viet Nam. China expressed preoccupations about Australian 5G measures, US and Indian measures on certain mobile apps and Indian measures on investment approval. The United States raised concerns about Russian measures regarding the allocation of radio frequency bands for foreign satellite operators, the pre-installation of software and certain tax benefits for domestic IT companies. Some of the concerns expressed were echoed by other members.

The Council received 36 notifications of new or revised measures that could significantly affect trade in services where the notifying members have commitments. Nine other notifications dealt with economic integration agreements covering services trade and another 12 concerned recognition measures in services sectors.

Financial services

The Committee on Trade in Financial Services organized a thematic seminar on "FinTech:

"Trade, Financial Inclusion and Development" in July. At a Committee meeting following the seminar, some members shared their domestic experiences, while others suggested topics for further discussion.

Specific commitments

The United States proposed that the Committee on Specific Commitments examine commitments under the General Agreement on Trade in Services, whose entry into force, implementation or updating had been made conditional on the adoption of new legislation or the review of pre-existing regimes. The Secretariat prepared a factual compilation of conditional commitments in members' schedules and the Committee agreed to continue the discussion.

The Committee also briefly returned to the issue previously raised by the Kyrgyz Republic that some members' schedules of commitments on mode 4 – the movement of individuals across borders to supply services – are ambiguous and opaque.



Trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights (TRIPS)

- Barbados, The Gambia and Niger confirmed their acceptances of the amendment to the TRIPS Agreement making it easier for developing countries to access affordable medicines. The number of acceptances rose to 132 members.
- Twenty-one members notified the TRIPS Council of new or revised IP legislation. To date, 138 WTO members have notified their TRIPS implementing legislation.
- Senior government officials, intellectual property (IP) experts and representatives from academia marked in November the 25th anniversary of the TRIPS Agreement.
- The Council discussed IP measures members have taken over the COVID-19 pandemic and considered a request for a waiver of certain parts of the TRIPS Agreement for the prevention, containment and treatment of COVID-19.



WTO members share a common goal of providing access to high-quality, safe, efficacious and affordable vaccines and medicines for all.

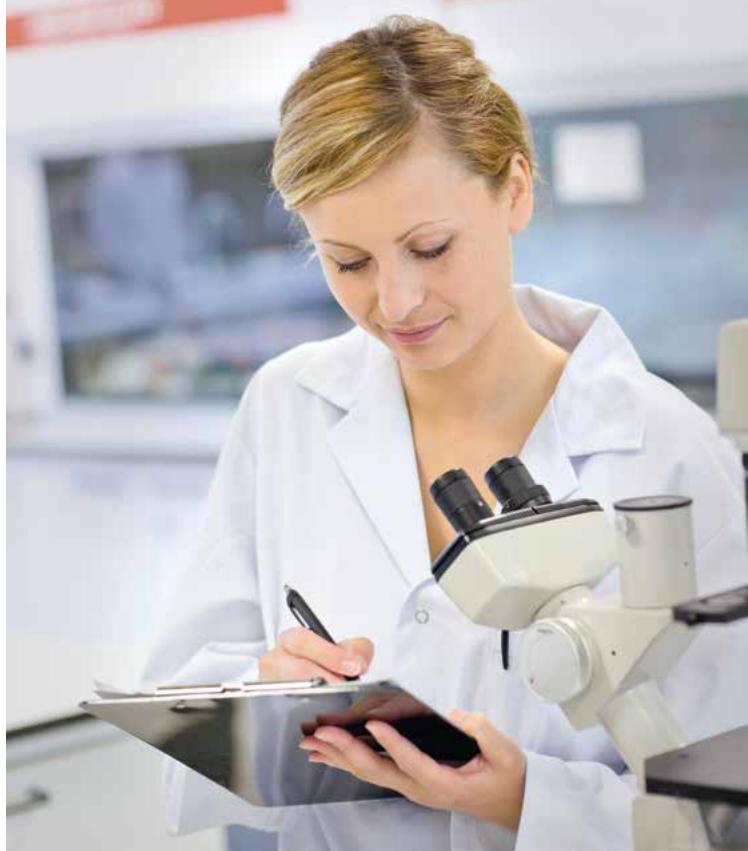
Public health

Barbados, The Gambia and Niger deposited their acceptances of the protocol amending the TRIPS Agreement. The amendment, the first to a multilateral WTO agreement, makes a special compulsory licensing system an integral part of the agreement and gives developing countries and least-developed countries (LDCs) an additional, secure legal avenue to procure affordable medicines from third-country sources.

To date, 132 members have accepted the protocol; the remaining members continue to benefit from a 2003 waiver decision that first established the mechanism.

Background

The intellectual property system has become central to the debate about economic development and broader public policy questions, such as innovation policy and public health. The TRIPS Agreement is the most comprehensive international treaty governing the protection, administration and enforcement of intellectual property rights. The Council for TRIPS, a body also open to certain observers, administers the TRIPS Agreement, provides a forum for debate on policy issues and reviews the intellectual property legislation of individual WTO members.



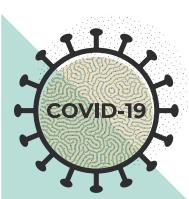
They have until 31 December 2021 to accept the amendment.

Senior government officials, intellectual property (IP) experts and representatives from academia marked in November the 25th anniversary of the TRIPS Agreement. In a virtual symposium, participants reflected on the evolution and impact of the most comprehensive multilateral treaty on IP protection and on the challenges ahead at a time of crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In July, the second edition of a trilateral study, "Promoting Access to Medical Technologies and Innovation: Intersections between public health, intellectual property and trade", was launched by the WTO, the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and the World Health Organization (WHO). An introductory section entitled "An integrated health, trade and IP approach to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic" maps the multiple challenges posed by the pandemic in relation to the health, trade and IP policy frameworks set out in the study.

The WTO Secretariat issued a note in October on the role and key contributions that the global IP system can make to address COVID-19. The note also provides an overview of measures taken by WTO members since the start of the pandemic. In the same month, the WTO published a working paper on "Patent-related actions taken in WTO members in response to the

A report submitted to the General Council in December 2020 highlighted WTO members' common goal of providing access to affordable vaccines and medicines for all.



The TRIPS Council discussed IP measures members have taken in response to COVID-19.

COVID-19 pandemic". It provides an overview of the patent landscape of medical treatments and technologies related to COVID-19 and presents various patent-related actions taken by legislators, policymakers, industry and civil society organizations in WTO members since the outbreak.

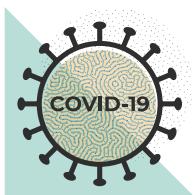
TRIPS and public health continued to be addressed in various technical cooperation activities organized by the WTO Secretariat as part of cooperation with the WHO and WIPO and with other multilateral and regional partners.

In October, the Secretariat organized, at the request of members, a technical workshop on "An Integrated Health, Trade and Intellectual Property Approach to Address the COVID-19 Pandemic" with the cooperation of the WHO and WIPO secretariats. The objective was to build capacity to assess domestic health systems, intellectual property regimes and trade policy and to use these tools effectively in an integrated way to respond to the pandemic.

COVID-19

The TRIPS Council discussed IP-related measures members have taken in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, based on a compilation entitled "COVID-19: Measures Regarding Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights" maintained by the Secretariat on the WTO website.

At its October and December meetings, the Council discussed a proposal by India and South Africa for a temporary waiver of certain TRIPS obligations in relation to the "prevention, containment or treatment" of COVID-19. A status report was submitted to the General Council in December (see page 69) indicating a lack of consensus on the issue and highlighting the common goal shared by WTO members of providing access to high-quality, safe, efficacious and affordable vaccines and medicines for all.



The Council discussed a proposal by India and South Africa for a temporary waiver of certain TRIPS obligations.

Promoting transparency

In 2020, 21 WTO members notified the TRIPS Council of new or updated IP legislation. To date, 138 WTO members have notified their TRIPS implementing legislation. In addition, 112 members have provided responses to a checklist notifying the essential elements of their systems for enforcement of IP rights and 145 have notified contact points for cooperating with each other on eliminating trade in IP-infringing goods. Members' notifications constitute an important source of information.

At the Council meetings, several members provided further background on their respective notified legislation. The Council was also briefed on IP policy matters raised in Trade Policy Reviews and TRIPS-related measures covered in G20 and WTO-wide trade monitoring reports (see page 128).

The e-TRIPS gateway and the online submission system for WTO members are

streamlining the submission and management of notifications and other transparency materials and providing user-friendly access to all TRIPS-related materials. Transparency training webinars were held in July 2020 with the aim of explaining to members how to use the system to submit reports on technology transfer and technical cooperation to the TRIPS Council. The Secretariat has also provided tailor-made training to delegates on the use of e-TRIPS.

Incentives for technology transfer

In February 2020, the Council concluded its 17th annual review of reports provided by developed countries on incentives granted to promote and encourage the transfer of technology to LDCs, as provided for by Article 66.2 of the TRIPS Agreement. The capital-based experts who had attended a preceding workshop contributed to discussions during the Council's conclusion of the review and presented a proposal to streamline reporting procedures. The Council started its 18th review in October.

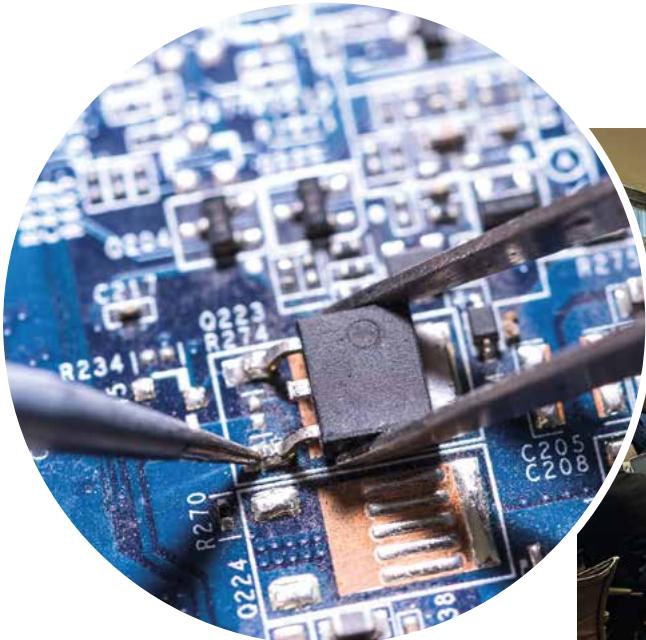
TRIPS non-violation and situation complaints

The TRIPS Council continued its discussion of the application of so-called non-violation and situation complaints. The question is whether members can bring disputes where an expected benefit from the TRIPS Agreement has been nullified, even if there is no specific violation. The current moratorium on such complaints has been further extended until the 12th Ministerial Conference.

Plants, animals, biodiversity and traditional knowledge

The Council continued its discussion on the patentability of plant and animal inventions, the relationship between the TRIPS Agreement and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the protection of traditional knowledge and folklore.





WTO members reiterated their positions on whether the TRIPS Agreement should be amended to prohibit the patentability of life forms and whether – and, if so, how – it should do more to promote the CBD objectives of authorized access and equitable sharing of the benefits from the use of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge in other members' jurisdictions.

Technical cooperation and capacity-building

The WTO Secretariat organized briefings for delegates on non-violation and situation complaints and, for newly arrived delegates, on the work and mission of the TRIPS Council. A national seminar requested by Uzbekistan helped to increase awareness of TRIPS-related issues in preparation for the country's WTO accession negotiations and domestic implementation of legislation.

The WTO continued its IP and Trade Policy Today Seminar series, including an edition in February 2020 on the protection of non-traditional trademarks under international and comparative IP law and another in June on internet platform liability for copyright infringement.

The TRIPS Council undertook the review of technical cooperation and capacity building on the basis of reports submitted by developed countries and international organizations.

New publications

The second edition of "A Handbook on the WTO TRIPS Agreement" was published in November. It describes the historical and legal background to the TRIPS Agreement, its role in the WTO and its institutional framework. In addition, in 2020 WIPO and the WTO jointly published the ninth and tenth editions of the WIPO-WTO Colloquium Papers, a series of peer-reviewed academic papers resulting from the WIPO-WTO Colloquium for IP Professors.

IP and innovation

The Council continued its information exchange on IP and innovation, focusing on public-private collaborations. Members shared their experiences and domestic policies designed to promote IP commercialization and making micro, small and medium-sized enterprises more competitive through trademarks and the protection of IP.

IP and the public interest

WTO members continued their discussions on the relationship between IP and the public interest. They focused on research and development costs and the pricing of medicines and health technologies, the so-called three-step test regarding copyright and a more holistic approach to TRIPS flexibilities.

A workshop on incentives for technology transfer to LDCs under the TRIPS Agreement was held in Geneva on 4–6 February 2020.

Trade and environment

- The Committee discussed key trade and environment topics, including the circular economy, plastics pollution and post-COVID-19 green economic recovery plans.
- For the second year, a WTO Trade and Environment week was held.
- Together with the UN Environment Programme, the WTO hosted a high-level event on the environment and sustainable and inclusive economic recovery from COVID-19.
- Two groups of WTO members launched new initiatives on trade and environmental sustainability and on plastics pollution.



At meetings in July and November, the Committee on Trade and Environment discussed important trade and environment topics, such as fossil fuels subsidy reform, plastics pollution, sustainable agricultural practices, biodiversity, climate change and trade-related aspects of post-COVID-19 green recovery plans. Several WTO members and international organizations presented their national and international initiatives related to the circular economy, which favours keeping materials in use and improving resource efficiency.

Trade and Environment Week

At the time of the November Committee meeting, a number of side-events were organized for the second year running in what has become known as the WTO Trade and Environment Week. The virtual events covered key topics under discussion in the Committee. Participants took the opportunity to share views on the work of the Committee and on the wider perspective of trade and environment discussions at the WTO. One session involved interaction with Geneva students on the future of trade and the environment.

Background

Sustainable development and protection and preservation of the environment are fundamental goals of the WTO. The Committee on Trade and Environment is responsible for examining the relationship between trade and the environment.



“Trade and environmental policies working in concert are vital for unlocking a sustainable recovery from the pandemic.” - UNEP/WTO event on the environment and recovery from COVID-19 (Switzerland)

Together with the UN Environment Programme, the WTO hosted a high-level event on “Environment and Trade for a Sustainable and Inclusive Recovery from COVID-19”. Trade and environmental policies working in concert are vital for unlocking a sustainable recovery from the pandemic and ensuring future resilience to climate change and other environmental disruptions, speakers said.

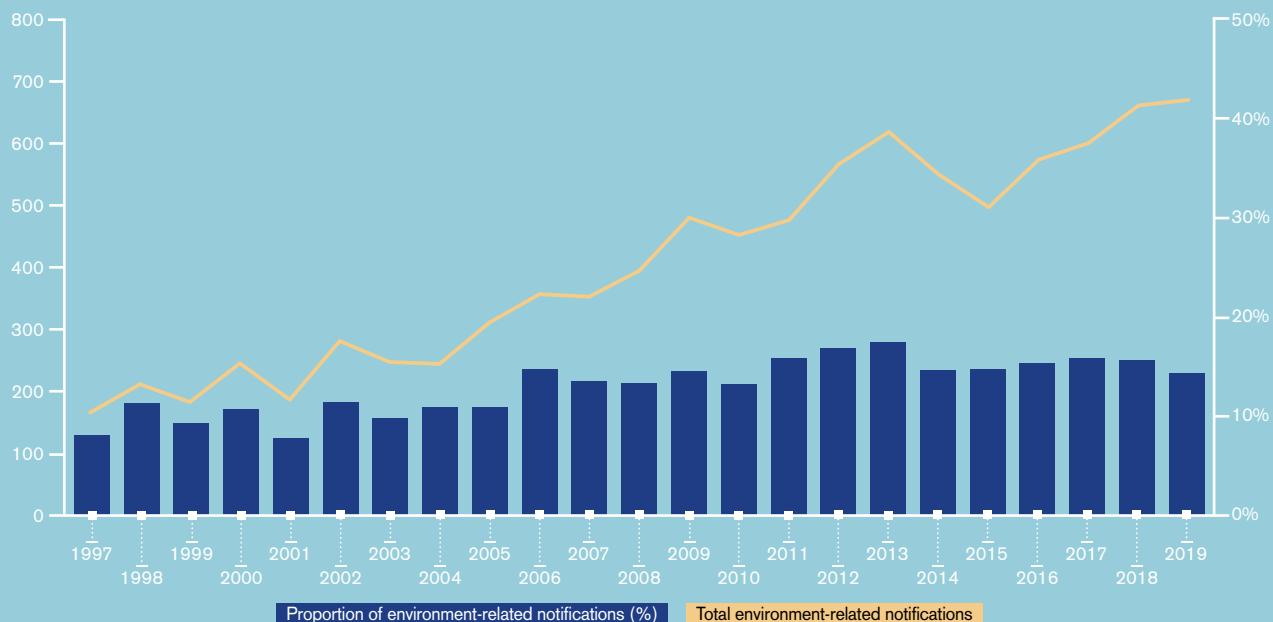
Launch of new initiatives

At the November Committee meeting, two groups of WTO members launched new initiatives aimed at concrete trade and environment outcomes by the 12th Ministerial Conference scheduled for late 2021. The first consists of structured discussions on trade and environmental sustainability; the second is an informal dialogue on plastics pollution and environmentally sustainable plastics trade (see page 62).

Trade-related aspects of post-COVID-19 green recovery plans

At the November Committee meeting and during Trade and Environment Week, several WTO members presented trade policies adopted to ensure a sustainable economic recovery from COVID-19. Speakers noted the importance of aligning trade policies with efforts to “build back better” and accelerate the transition to greener, lower-carbon economies.

Costa Rica shared its experience on combining sustainable living and international trade. The European Union briefed delegations on its European Green Deal, which aims at achieving net zero emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050. It includes plans for a carbon border adjustment mechanism (see page 73). Several delegations welcomed the transparency exercise and underlined the importance of respecting WTO rules.

Figure 11: Environment-related notifications, 1997 to 2019

Climate change and trade

New Zealand briefed delegates on the proposed Agreement on Climate Change, Trade and Sustainability (ACCTS). The discussions would cover the elimination of tariffs on environmental goods, new commitments on environmental services, disciplines to eliminate fossil fuel subsidies and guidelines for eco-labelling programmes. Switzerland announced it had joined the ACCTS discussions, launched in 2019 by New Zealand, Norway, Iceland, Costa Rica and Fiji.

The United Kingdom briefed delegations on planning for the next UN climate conference (COP 26) in November 2021. It underscored the need for action in the wake of COVID-19 through multilateral institutions – including the WTO – to support a clean, inclusive and resilient recovery built on the principles of the 2016 Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Switzerland informed the Committee of its commitment to net zero emissions by 2050. The European Union announced it was considering launching a trade and climate initiative to support action on

climate change. Some delegations reiterated their view that climate change issues should not be discussed in the Committee.

Reform of fossil fuel subsidies

New Zealand continued to update WTO members on recent developments related to fossil fuel subsidy reform, which seeks to rationalize and phase out subsidies that encourage wasteful consumption. A group of ministers issued a statement at the 11th WTO Ministerial Conference urging “ambitious and effective disciplines on inefficient fossil fuel subsidies”.

New Zealand said renewed efforts would be made to introduce subsidy reforms in the context of unprecedented economic stimulus packages being launched for the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Some members reiterated their view that the WTO is not an appropriate venue for such matters.

Other policy developments

Russia briefed delegations on its “Ecology” national project, with its five main elements: waste management, water, air, biodiversity and technologies.

Canada, as a co-sponsor, updated the Committee on recent discussions and its submission on environmental services at the Council for Trade in Services in special session (see page 48).

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) briefed delegations on zoonotic diseases – those that spread from animals to people – and the role CITES could play in addressing the risks they pose.

The Convention on Biological Diversity presented preparatory work for the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties in May 2021. China, as the host country, encouraged all members and stakeholders to make concrete and determinable commitments and contributions to biodiversity conservation.

Several other observer institutions briefed members on their trade and environment work. These included the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the International Trade Centre, UN Environment and the World Customs Organization.

WTO environmental database

The WTO Secretariat briefed members on the latest information available in the environmental database (www.wto.org/edb), which covers all environment-related notifications (see Figure 11) and environmental measures and policies mentioned in Trade Policy Reviews.

Outreach and training activities

A webinar organized on 4 June to mark World Environment Day highlighted the important role trade and the WTO have to play in steering global recovery on a sustainable course in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis.

Various training activities were delivered online, including trade policy courses and



dedicated webinars. A new course on "Trade and Circular Economy" was made available in the WTO e-learning platform. A new booklet, "Short Answers to Big Questions on the WTO and the Environment", was published providing easy-to-understand answers to some of the key questions of the trade and environment debate.

The WTO maintains an active outreach programme with multilateral environmental agreement (MEA) secretariats, other intergovernmental organizations, universities and think tanks. The WTO took part in many online events on how WTO agreements relate to environmental objectives.

The UK underscored the need for action in the wake of COVID-19 through multilateral institutions – including the WTO – to support a clean, inclusive and resilient recovery.

Trade and transfer of technology

- The Working Group focused on WTO members' presentations of initiatives and programmes undertaken to promote technology transfer.
- The Least Developed Countries Group noted that those countries most technologically equipped were best prepared to deal with COVID-19.

In 2020, activities in the Working Group on Trade and Transfer of Technology proceeded on the basis of presentations made by El Salvador, Saint Lucia and South Africa. Two of these involved descriptions of initiatives and programmes undertaken to promote the generation, management and transfer of technology. The third presentation was on the relationship between trade and technology transfer.

Background

The Working Group on Trade and Transfer of Technology was established at the Doha Ministerial Conference in 2001 "to examine the relationship between trade and transfer of technology and to make recommendations on steps that might be taken, within the mandate of the WTO, to increase flows of technology to developing countries".



The Least Developed Countries Group underscored the critical role technology plays in increasing productivity and output, and in diversifying economies so they can better integrate into regional and global value chains and enhance their development. It noted that those countries most technologically equipped are best prepared to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic and its related challenges.

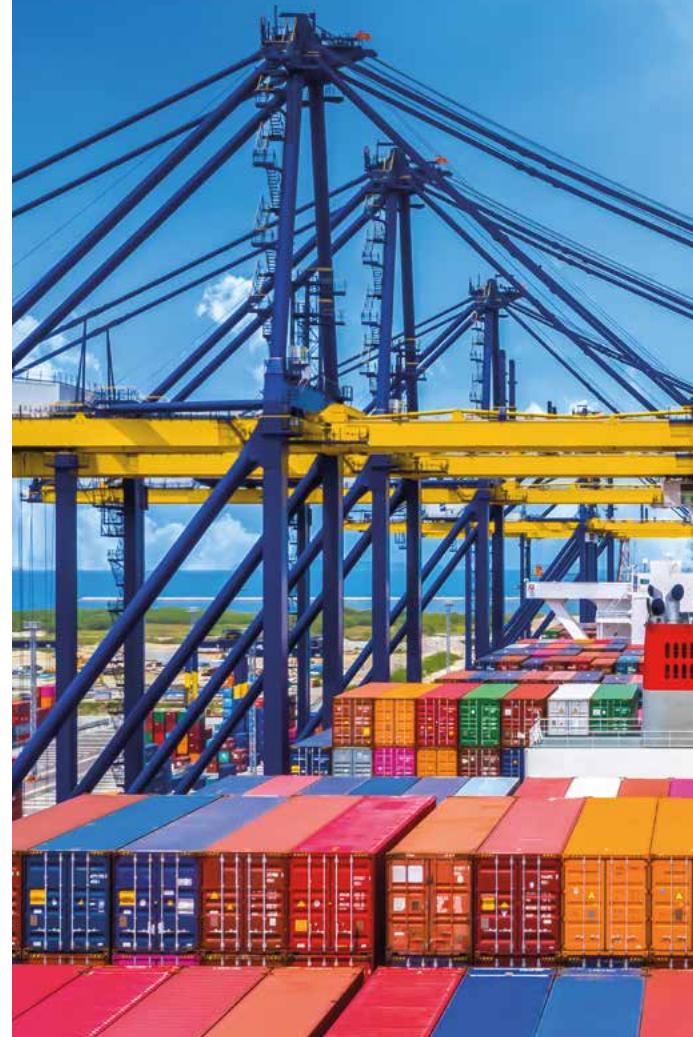
The Working Group on Trade and Transfer of Technology continued its examination of the relationship between trade and transfer of technology and possible recommendations that might be made within the mandate of the WTO to increase flows of technology to developing countries.

A group of members stated their willingness and availability to assist in updating a proposal entitled "Facilitating Access to Information on Appropriate Technology Sourcing – A Step to Increase Flows of Technology to Developing Countries". The proposal was initially submitted by India, Pakistan and the Philippines.

 "Those countries most technologically equipped were best prepared to deal with COVID-19."
- Least Developed Countries Group

Regional trade agreements

- The WTO received 59 notifications of regional trade agreements (RTAs) currently in force, compared with 15 in 2019. Of these notifications, 45 involved the United Kingdom.
- The 59 notifications concern 37 RTAs, of which 30 involve the UK.
- The number of RTAs (including accessions to existing RTAs) reviewed by WTO members under the transparency mechanism for RTAs rose to 200, involving 124 members.



Background

The Committee on Regional Trade Agreements (CRTA) monitors all RTAs notified to the WTO, except those notified under special provisions for agreements between developing countries (the Enabling Clause), which are considered by the Committee on Trade and Development. The CRTA considers RTAs individually and considers the systemic implications of RTAs for the multilateral trading system.



45
Of the 59
notifications
received from
WTO members,
45 involved the
United Kingdom.

Notifications

WTO members submitted 59 notifications of regional trade agreements (RTAs), with 45 of them involving the United Kingdom. Excluding agreements with the UK, which left the European Union on 31 January 2020, notifications would have been little changed with regard to the 15 received in 2019. The 59 notifications concern 37 RTAs, of which 19 cover trade in goods only and 18 cover trade in goods and services.

Twenty-nine of the RTAs are between developing and developed partners, while seven are between developed partners. One involves developing partners. Because of the UK, Europe was involved in the highest number of RTAs (32), followed by the Americas and the Asia Pacific regions (11 each), Africa (seven), the Middle East (four) and the Commonwealth of Independent States (three). Twenty-eight of the agreements covered members from two different regions.

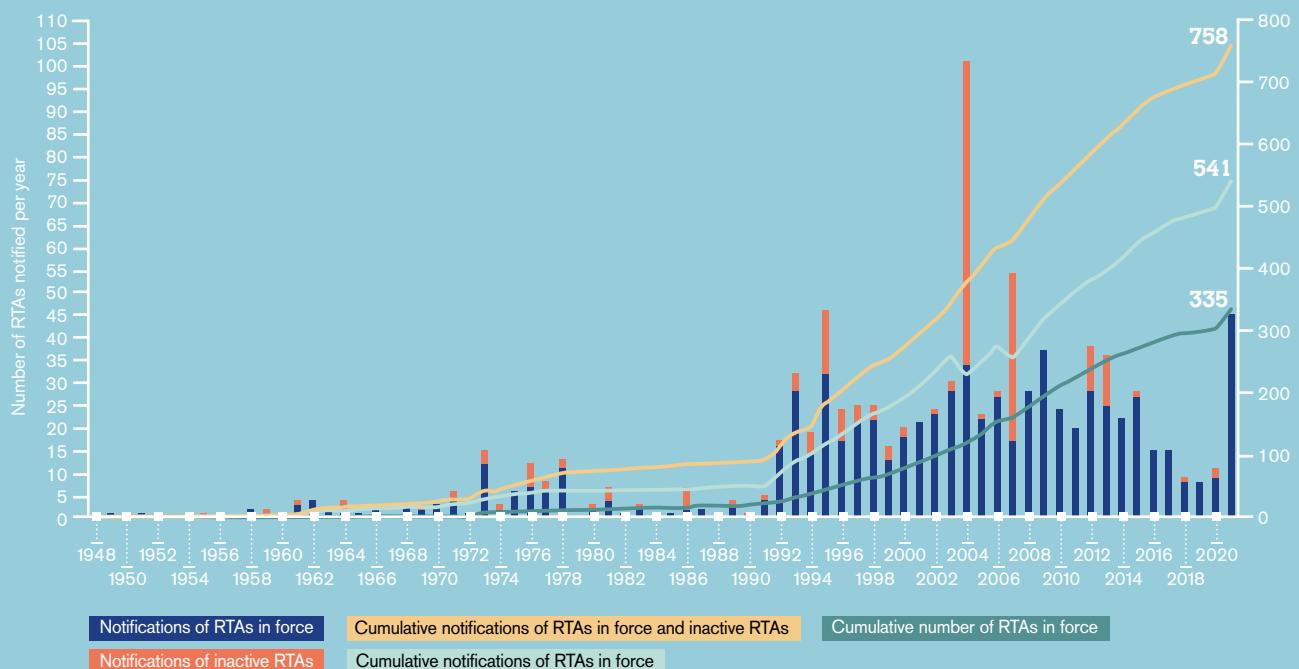
Total RTA notifications stood at 758 on 31 December 2020, of which 541 concern RTAs in force (see Figure 12). RTAs are reciprocal preferential trade



agreements between two or more partners. The goods and services aspects of RTAs and accessions to existing RTAs are notified and counted separately. If all three elements are counted together, the notifications involved 532 individual RTAs, of which 335 were in force.

WTO members continued to urge that RTAs should be notified in a timely manner. The number of RTAs not notified stood at 54 in November, down from 81 in October 2019. The WTO Secretariat issues a list of RTAs in force but not notified before each meeting of the Committee on Regional Trade Agreements. The number decreased considerably following the notification of changes made by parties to the Latin American Integration Association.

Figure 12: RTAs notified to the GATT/WTO (1948 to 2020) by year of entry into force



Note: For notifications, goods, services and accessions to an RTA are counted separately. The cumulative lines show the number of RTAs/notifications in force for a given year. The notifications of RTAs in force are shown by year of entry into force and the notifications of inactive RTAs are shown by the year they became inactive.



Out of the 59 notifications of regional trade agreements submitted to the WTO in 2020, 19 covered trade in goods only while 18 covered trade in goods and services.

Non-discrimination among trading partners is a core principle of the WTO. RTAs are authorized providing they adhere to a number of rules under WTO agreements.

Monitoring RTAs

All RTAs are subject to the WTO's transparency mechanism for RTAs. The mechanism provides specific guidelines on when a new RTA should be notified to the WTO Secretariat and the related information and data to be provided. It also requires the Secretariat to prepare a factual presentation on each RTA, and that each RTA be reviewed by WTO members.

By the end of 2020, 200 RTAs currently in force (including accessions to RTAs), involving 124 WTO members, had been reviewed.

RTAs notified under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) are considered by the Committee on Regional Trade Agreements (CRTA), while RTAs notified under the Enabling Clause (see page 73) are considered by the Committee on Trade and Development (CTD), based on the WTO Secretariat's factual presentation (see Table 3).

Under the transparency mechanism, WTO members are encouraged to inform the Secretariat of any agreements being negotiated or that have been signed but have not entered into force (so-called early announcements). They are required to inform the Secretariat of any changes to a notified agreement and to provide a report once an agreement is fully implemented.



335

As of the end of 2020, 335 regional trade agreements were in force.

In 2020, the CRTA considered 17 notifications of RTAs, counting goods, services and accessions separately, compared with 20 in 2019 and 22 in 2018. The CTD considered six RTAs.

The transparency mechanism also requires the WTO Secretariat to prepare "factual abstracts" on RTAs already examined by the Committee. By the end of 2020, 70 factual abstracts of agreements in force and two of inactive agreements (counting goods and services notifications separately) had been prepared in consultation with the relevant RTA parties and posted in the RTA database. The Secretariat has completed all the factual abstracts required under the mechanism.

In 2020, no early announcements were received from members, maintaining at 110 the total number received as of December 2020. Seventy-two of these were subsequently notified to the WTO following entry into force of the agreements.

Under the transparency mechanism, the CRTA also discusses end-of-implementation reports for RTAs, which are short written reports on how the liberalization commitments have been put into effect. They are important for understanding whether RTAs accomplish what they set out to do. The CRTA Chair, Mārtiņš Kreitūs (Latvia), noted that reports had been due for 145 RTAs as of 15 April 2020, up from 139 the year before. Only one report was received during the year.

The General Council established the transparency mechanism on a provisional basis in 2006. Members are required to review the legal relationship between the mechanism and relevant WTO provisions on RTAs. The Negotiating Group on Rules started the review in 2011. At the 10th Ministerial Conference in Nairobi in December 2015, ministers called on WTO members to work towards making the mechanism permanent.

Table 3: RTAs (including accessions to existing RTAs) considered in 2020

Considered in the CRTA
Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) – Japan (goods)
Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) – Republic of Korea (goods)*
Hong Kong, China – Georgia (goods and services)
Peru – Honduras (goods and services)
Agreement between the Guam participating states (Republic of Moldova, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Ukraine) (goods)
European Union – Armenia (services)
Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) – Israel (goods)
European Union – Cameroon (goods)
European Union – Southern African Development Community (SADC) states (Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Eswatini) (goods)
Republic of Korea – India (goods)*
European Free Trade Association (EFTA) – Philippines (goods and services)
Hong Kong, China – Australia (goods and services)
Chile – Indonesia (goods)
Considered in the CTD
Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) – Accession of Egypt (goods)
India – Afghanistan (goods)
Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) – Southern African Customs Union (SACU) (goods)
Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) – Republic of Korea (goods)*
Mexico – Plurinational State of Bolivia (goods)
Republic of Korea – India (goods)*

* In accordance with the notifications of the ASEAN – Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea – India agreements made under both Article XXIV of the GATT and the Enabling Clause, these agreements were considered in the CRTA and the CTD.

Note: The table refers to 19 agreements, four of which covered goods and services, 14 covered only goods and one covered only services. Further information on these agreements may be found in the WTO Database on RTAs: <http://rtais.wto.org>.

Trade Policy Reviews

► In 2020, the Trade Policy Review Body reviewed the trade policies of seven WTO members. The other 12 reviews due to take place in 2020 were rescheduled for 2021 because of COVID-19.

► In 2021, 28 members are scheduled for review, including the 12 deferred from 2020.

A tobacco plantation in Bromley, Zimbabwe. The Trade Policy Review of Zimbabwe was one of the seven TPRs conducted in 2020.



508

The WTO has conducted 508 reviews of the trade policies of WTO members.



28

Twenty-eight WTO members are scheduled for review in 2021.

The Trade Policy Review Body (TPRB) reviewed the trade policies of seven members in 2020: Australia; the European Union; Indonesia; Japan; Macao, China; Thailand; and Zimbabwe. Most of the reviews were held virtually. The TPRB rescheduled 12 other reviews for 2021 because of the pandemic. The review of Tajikistan, which would have been its first, was suspended at the country's request. The TPRB has conducted 508 reviews since 1989, with a balanced regional representation (see Figure 13).

Trade and investment policies and the overall economic situation were discussed during the review meetings. In-depth discussions took place on key trade issues, such as tariffs, use of trade remedies, regional trade agreements, non-tariff trade barriers, protection of intellectual property, and the role of state-owned enterprises.

The TPRs also provided an important opportunity for dialogue on issues such as fisheries subsidies negotiations, the joint declaration on trade and women's economic empowerment, and the joint initiatives on e-commerce, investment facilitation, micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), and services domestic regulation. COVID-19 measures have also been a consistent theme since the start of the pandemic.

The European Union's TPR attracted high interest, with 62 members taking the floor

Background

The Trade Policy Review Mechanism is the WTO's transparency pillar, aiming to improve members' adherence to WTO rules and thus to the functioning of the multilateral trading system. Through its regular Trade Policy Reviews, the mechanism enables members to collectively examine the trade policies and practices of individual members in all trade-related areas. Reviews are not intended to serve as a basis for the enforcement of obligations or for dispute settlement procedures.



Table 4: Key issues raised in TPRs of 2020

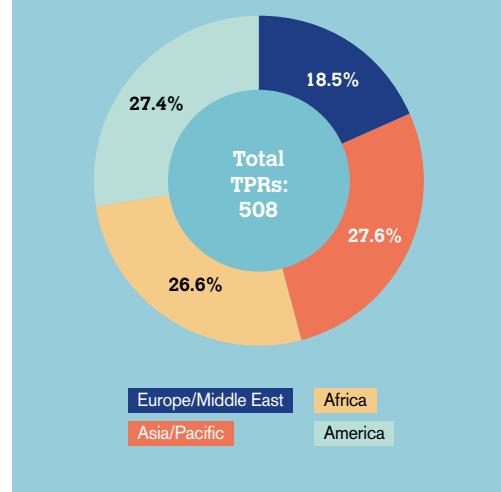
Member	Key issues
Australia	Tariffs, sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures, screening of foreign direct investment, use of anti-dumping and countervailing measures, indirect taxation.
European Union	SPS measures, technical barriers to trade (TBT), frequent use of trade remedies, agriculture protection, import barriers for fish products, the impact of the United Kingdom's departure from the European Union.
Indonesia	Trade facilitation measures, tariffs, use of anti-dumping and countervailing measures, illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, non-tariff measures, TBT and SPS measures, the intellectual property (IP) regime, domestic fossil fuel subsidies, telecommunications services, and market access barriers for financial services.
Japan	Tariffs, digital privacy, export restrictions, foreign participation in government procurement, protection of agriculture, fisheries subsidies, SPS measures, medical care reform, trade facilitation, subsidies, notifications, non-tariff measures, and market access for services.
Macao, China	Regional cooperation, trade facilitation measures, tariffs, import-licensing regime, SPS certificate requirements, SME support schemes, regulatory regime, public procurement, and developments in IP.
Thailand	Foreign business licences, investment incentives, customs procedures, tariffs, tariff quota allocation system, import licensing, standards and SPS measures, IP protection, government procurement, agriculture trade protection, IUU fishing, investment regime for services, services in relation to General Agreement on Trade in Services commitments.
Zimbabwe	Governance of state-owned enterprises, reduction in investment restrictions, tariffs, quantitative restrictions, the conformity assessment system, non-automatic import licensing, SPS requirements, modernization of government procurement, the energy crisis, the mining regime, IP developments, and government intervention in agriculture.

and more than 1,600 “advanced” questions posed ahead of the meeting. The European Union was complimented for being a strong defender of the rules-based system but a number of trade issues and concerns were raised (see Table 4). The key issues raised in the other TPRs in 2020 are also shown in Table 4.

Programme for 2021

In 2021, 28 WTO members are scheduled for review, including the 12 deferred from 2020. They are: India; Nicaragua; Myanmar; Mongolia; Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; Qatar; Tonga; Viet Nam; Kyrgyz Republic; China; Argentina; Singapore; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; Mauritius; Oman; Antigua & Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts & Nevis, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines (grouped as members of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States); Kingdom of Bahrain; and Cameroon, Congo, Gabon, Central African Republic and Chad (grouped as members of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa).

Figure 13: Trade policy reviews, by region, 1989 to 2020



Trade monitoring reports

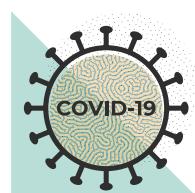
- Between mid-October 2019 and mid-October 2020, the number of trade-restrictive and trade-facilitating measures introduced by WTO members saw a marked slowdown. This was mainly the result of the sharp decline in overall global trade since the start of the COVID-19 outbreak.
- The trade coverage of import-facilitating measures over the 12-month period was US\$ 731.3 billion (up from US\$ 544.7 in the previous period) while import-restrictive measures stood at US\$ 440.9 billion (down from US\$ 746.9 billion).
- Trade remedy initiations, such as anti-dumping investigations, significantly increased, with the trade coverage of such actions estimated at US\$ 68.8 billion, up from US\$ 46.2 billion.
- In addition, WTO members implemented 335 measures directly linked to the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 related trade-facilitating measures covered an estimated US\$ 227.2 billion of goods trade while COVID-19 trade-restrictive measures covered trade worth US\$ 179.8 billion.
- In response to the pandemic, WTO members also adopted measures relating to trade in services and intellectual property, mostly with the aim of facilitating trade. Governments also put in place over 1,000 economic support measures worth several trillion US dollars to address the economic downturn caused by the pandemic and to prepare the ground for economic recovery.

Between mid-October 2019 and mid-October 2020, WTO members introduced the lowest number of “regular” trade-restrictive and trade-facilitating measures on goods since 2012 – that is, those unrelated to the COVID-19 pandemic. The trade coverage of import-restrictive measures fell to US\$ 440.9 billion, from US\$ 746.9 billion in the previous period (see Figure 14) while the coverage of import-facilitating measures rose to US\$ 731.3 billion, up from US\$ 544.7 billion (see Figure 15).

The fall in the trade coverage of import-restrictive measures was mainly the result of the sharp decline in global trade flows, governments shifting attention to fighting the pandemic, and a general commitment to keep trade flowing (see page 76).

Background

The WTO began regular monitoring of global trade developments in early 2009, covering all trade-related measures implemented by WTO members and observers. Initially launched in the context of the global financial crisis, the trade monitoring exercise has become a regular function in the WTO that further strengthens the transparency aims of the Trade Policy Review Mechanism by shedding light on the latest trends in the implementation of policy measures that facilitate as well as restrict the flow of trade. The trade monitoring is overseen by the Trade Policy Review Body.



335

WTO members implemented 335 measures directly linked to COVID-19.

Figure 14: Trade coverage of import-restrictive measures (US\$ billion)



Figure 15: Trade coverage of import-facilitating measures (US\$ billion)



Note: These figures are estimates and represent the trade coverage of the measures (i.e. annual imports of the products concerned from economies affected by the measures) and not the cumulative impact of the trade measures. Liberalization associated with the 2015 Expansion of the WTO's Information Technology Agreement is not included in the figures. Trade measures related to COVID-19 are not included.

The stockpile of import restrictions implemented since 2009, and still in force, stood at around 8.7 per cent of world imports at the end of 2019, up from 7.5 per cent in 2018 (see Figure 16). By mid-October 2020, the trade coverage of the stockpile was estimated at US\$ 1.7 trillion, compared with US\$ 1.6 trillion at the end of 2019. Trade measures related to COVID-19 are not included in the stockpile data.

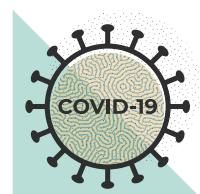
WTO members implemented 699 "regular" trade measures over the latest period, of which 89 were trade-restrictive, 88 trade-facilitating (e.g. eliminating or reducing tariffs and simplifying customs procedures for imports and exports). A total of 522 were trade remedy actions, such as anti-dumping investigations, countervailing measures and safeguards, confirming that these measures remain an important policy tool for WTO members.

The trade coverage of trade remedy actions initiated over the review period was estimated at US\$ 68.8 billion, up from US\$ 46.2 billion in the previous period. Trade remedy terminations fell to US\$ 9.9 billion from US\$ 24.8 billion. Trade remedy actions account

for 75 per cent of trade measures recorded on goods in the latest monitoring report.

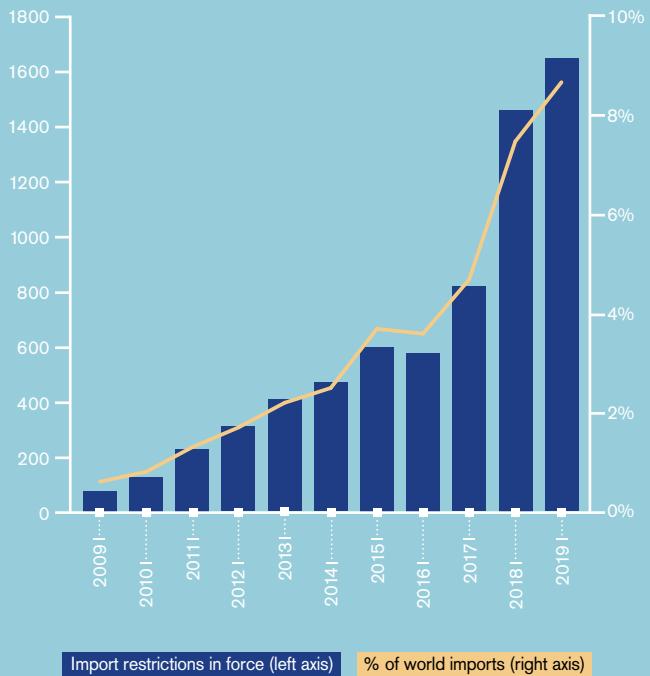
At the same time, WTO members implemented 335 measures directly linked to the COVID-19 pandemic, including 195 considered as trade-facilitating and 140 which could be considered trade-restrictive. The trade coverage of COVID-19 trade-facilitating measures implemented since the beginning of the pandemic was estimated at US\$ 227.2 billion while the coverage of COVID-19 trade-restrictive measures was an estimated US\$ 179.8 billion. Around 39 per cent of the restrictive measures implemented in response to the pandemic had been repealed by mid-October.

In addition, WTO members put in place over 1,000 COVID-related economic support measures. The number and variety of support measures implemented in response to the pandemic is greater than that witnessed during the 2008-09 global financial crisis. These measures target sectors of the economy heavily affected by the crisis, including health, aviation, tourism and catering. They include monetary, fiscal and financial measures as well as broader stimulus packages.



1,000
WTO members put in place over 1,000 COVID-related support measures, exceeding the total during the 2008-09 financial crisis.

Figure 16: Cumulative trade coverage of import-restrictive measures on goods in force since 2009 (US\$ billion and % of world merchandise imports)



Note: The cumulative trade coverage estimated by the WTO Secretariat is based on information available in the Trade Monitoring Database (TMDB) on import measures recorded since 2009 and considered to have a trade-restrictive effect. The estimates include import measures for which HS codes were available. The figures do not include trade remedy measures. Measures related to COVID-19 are not included. The import values were sourced from the UNSD Comtrade database.

The latest monitoring report also showed that services sectors were heavily affected by the COVID-19 pandemic although the extent varied across sectors and modes of supply. Most of the 124 COVID-related measures adopted by WTO members in the services sector appeared to be trade-facilitating. Many intellectual property measures were also introduced to promote innovation and facilitate access to COVID-related health technologies.

Status of the reports

The WTO Secretariat prepared four reports on global trade policy developments in 2020, including two on trade measures by G20 economies. The trade monitoring reports have no legal effect on the rights and obligations of WTO members and do not seek to pronounce on whether a trade measure is protectionist or question the explicit right of members to take certain trade measures.

Consultations

In November, an informal consultation on the trade monitoring exercise took place among WTO members. The objective of the meeting was to continue discussions from the July informal meeting of the Trade Policy Review Body (see page 126) on the Director-General's Trade Monitoring Report regarding ways to further improve this transparency exercise.

During the consultations, suggestions were made with respect to both procedural and substantive issues. Further consultations will be held during 2021.



Most of the 124 COVID-related measures adopted by WTO members in the services sector were considered to be trade-facilitating.

Trade, debt and finance

- The WTO joined multilateral development banks and private sector organizations to mobilize trade finance and keep essential goods and medicines flowing during the pandemic.
- WTO members presented policy steps implemented by their governments to address the situation, such as trade loan repayment extensions and deferral schemes.
- Together with six heads of multilateral development banks, the WTO Director-General issued a statement in July pledging greater coordination in providing support to trade finance markets, particularly towards developing countries.

Background

WTO ministers decided in 2001 to establish a Working Group on Trade, Debt and Finance to look at how the WTO could contribute to finding a durable solution to the external debt problems of many developing countries and to avoid having WTO members' trade opportunities undercut by financial instabilities. The Working Group has been focusing its attention on a range of financial issues with an impact on trade, including the provision of trade finance and the relationship between exchange rates and trade.

The availability of trade finance, already in short supply in developing countries and for smaller businesses, was further disrupted in 2020 by the COVID-19 pandemic. The situation became critical again 12 years after the great financial crisis had seriously limited financing flows.

At the July meeting of the WTO Working Group on Trade, Debt and Finance, several members from Africa, Latin America and Asia noted that since the beginning of the global pandemic in March, trade finance shortages had increased. The shortages were impeding imports of goods and medical equipment necessary to fight the pandemic and the export of essential goods from their countries. They described operational difficulties, including the lack of availability of documents for the processing of trade finance requests, payment refusals by buyers and increased difficulties for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in obtaining trade loans and repaying them.

The MSME dimension was particularly emphasized since a large majority of traders in developing countries are MSMEs. WTO members also described policy steps implemented by their governments to address the situation, such as trade loan repayment extensions, deferral schemes and credit guarantee schemes.

DG Azevêdo, until he resigned the post at the end of August, was active in raising the profile



The availability of trade finance, already in short supply in developing countries and for smaller businesses, was further disrupted in 2020 by the COVID-19 pandemic.



of trade finance as a pressing issue requiring international support and cooperation. Together with six heads of multilateral development banks, he issued a statement in July pledging greater coordination in providing support to trade finance markets, particularly towards developing countries. "This marks the first time the major multilateral development banks have lined up together in support of trade finance markets. This will serve as a force multiplier for their future efforts," the DG said.

The WTO issued a similar statement with private sector leaders – the International Chamber of Commerce and B20, the business arm of the G20 – warning that gaps between trade finance supply and demand could seriously impede the ability of trade to support post COVID-19 economic recovery.

The presence in markets of public entities, such as national export credit agencies and multilateral development banks, has had a stabilizing effect on trade finance markets, notably in low-income and developing countries. In all, multilateral development banks supported at least 12,000 trade

transactions, many of them linked to essential products, worth more than US\$ 40 billion.

Senior WTO officials continued to highlight the issue of trade finance at international meetings. "Trade finance for the developing world needs to be restored," Deputy DG Alan Wolff said in remarks to a virtual summit of G20 leaders in November.

Expert Group on Trade Finance

Chaired by WTO senior management, the Expert Group on Trade Finance continued to evaluate gaps in trade finance markets. The group includes the International Finance Corporation, regional development banks, export credit agencies, big commercial banks and other international organizations.

Strengthening multilateral cooperation

Senior WTO management participated at International Monetary Fund and World Bank gatherings and the G20, mostly virtually. They argued for keeping trade open to allow for essential goods and medicines to flow during the pandemic.

A pottery workshop in Bhaktapur, Nepal. Access to trade finance is particularly important for small businesses in developing countries.

Agreement on Government Procurement

- Switzerland accepted the revised Agreement on Government Procurement (GPA), meaning it has come into force for all parties.
- The United Kingdom acceded to the Agreement in its own right after leaving the European Union.
- Brazil became the first Latin American country to apply to join the GPA.
- Parties continued to discuss China's sixth revised market access offer and examined a new update of its checklist of issues.
- Côte d'Ivoire became an observer to the Committee.

Background

The GPA aims to open up, based on principles of reciprocity, and to the extent agreed between WTO members, government procurement markets to foreign competition, and to make government procurement more transparent. It provides legal guarantees of non-discrimination for the products, services and suppliers of GPA parties in procurement covered by the Agreement. The GPA is a plurilateral agreement — open to all interested WTO members and binding only the parties to it. Currently, 48 WTO members are covered by the Agreement. Any WTO member can apply for accession. The Committee on Government Procurement administers the GPA.

Entry into force of the revised GPA for all parties

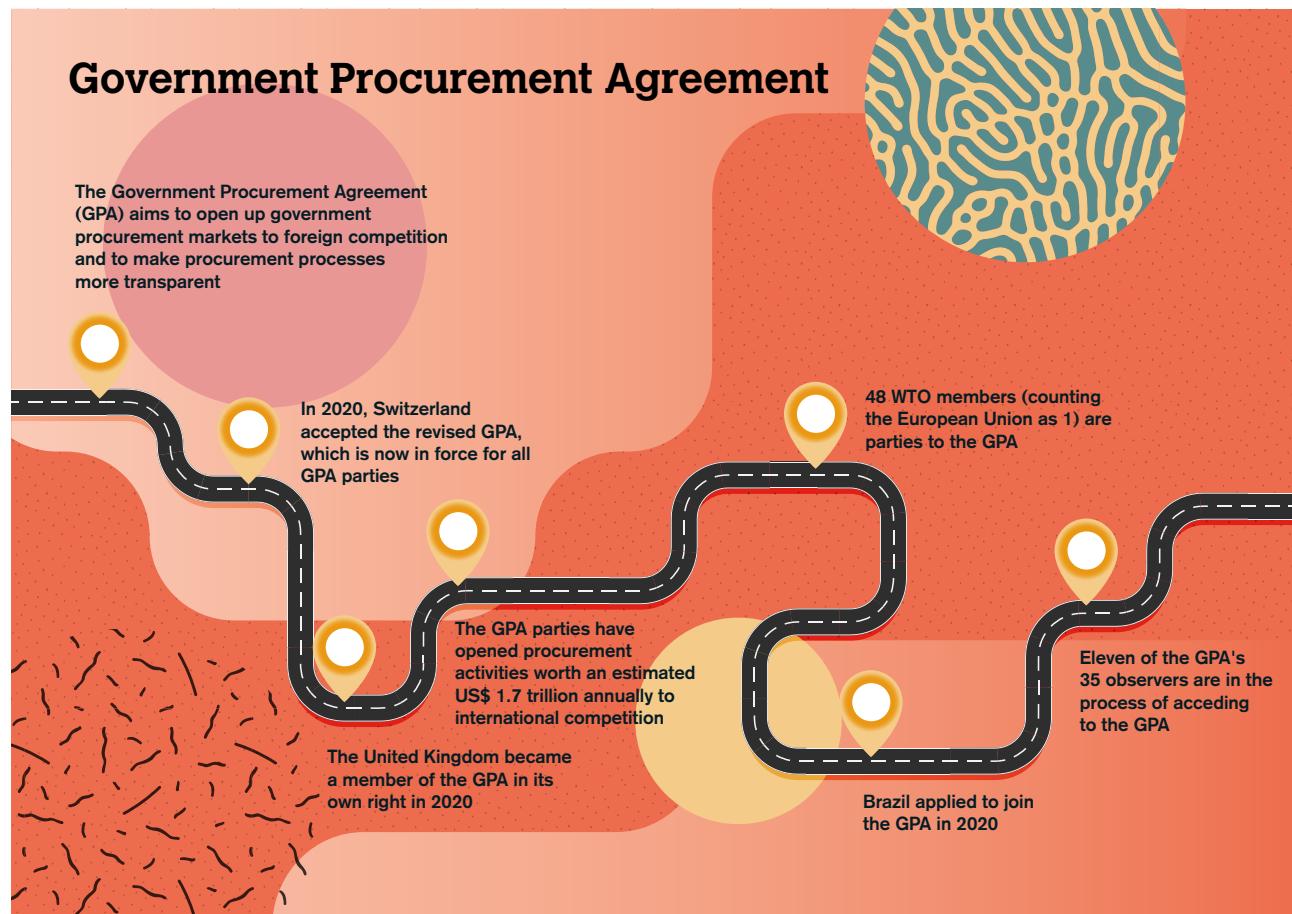
Switzerland completed the final step for its participation in the revised Government Procurement Agreement, submitting its instrument of acceptance to the WTO on 2 December 2020. This means that, as of 1 January 2021, the revised GPA is in force for all parties, replacing the previous text.

The revised version, which was adopted in 2012, strengthens the GPA's role in promoting good governance, including through e-procurement, combating corruption and protecting the environment. Switzerland's ambassador to the WTO, Didier Chambovey, said: "Switzerland attaches great importance to a strong rules-based trading system, including through plurilateral agreements such as the GPA."

Accessions to the GPA

Following a decision adopted by the WTO Committee on Government Procurement in October 2020 regarding the United Kingdom's accession to the GPA in its own right, the United Kingdom deposited its instrument of accession on 2 December 2020. On 1 January 2021, the Agreement entered into force for the United Kingdom, whose transition period for its exit from the European Union ended on 31 December. United Kingdom Ambassador Julian Braithwaite said accession would ensure continued access for foreign suppliers to the United Kingdom's procurement markets, worth GBP 68 billion annually under its market access offer.

In May 2020, Brazil submitted its application to join the GPA – the first Latin American country to do so. The Committee praised Brazil for sending a powerful signal of market opening amid the COVID-19 crisis. Parties also applauded Brazil for quickly circulating



replies to the checklist of issues regarding its government procurement legislation and copies of relevant public procurement laws and regulations, an initial step toward launching accession negotiations.

The Committee continued to discuss China's sixth revised market access offer and examined its update of its checklist of issues, submitted in May to reflect current legislation.

Discussion on the accessions of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, North Macedonia, the Russian Federation and Tajikistan also continued. Albania, Georgia, Jordan and Oman initiated the process of acceding to the GPA several years ago. Four other



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Forty-eight WTO members currently participate in the GPA.

WTO members – Afghanistan, Mongolia, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Seychelles – have GPA-related commitments in their respective protocols of accession to the WTO.

Côte d'Ivoire joined the Committee as an observer. The Chair of the Committee, Carlos Vanderloo (Canada), stressed the importance of Africa's increased representation in the Committee and encouraged Côte d'Ivoire "to participate actively". Côte d'Ivoire is the third African country to become an observer, after Cameroon and the Seychelles.

Government procurement typically accounts for about 15 per cent of developed and developing country economies. The GPA as a whole has been estimated to cover government procurement opportunities worth over US\$ 1.7 trillion annually.

The GPA currently has 21 parties, covering 48 WTO members (counting the European Union as one). Another 35 WTO members and WTO observers and four international organizations participate in the Committee as observers. The WTO's e-GPA web portal

“Accession will ensure continued access for foreign suppliers to the United Kingdom’s procurement markets, worth GBP 68 billion annually under its market access offer.”-

Ambassador Julian Braithwaite (United Kingdom)



provides an integrated point of access to GPA market access information.

Work programmes

In the Committee's work programmes, attention focused on sustainable procurement, the collection and reporting of statistical data and small and medium-sized enterprises. The work programmes are intended to promote transparency, improve the Agreement's administration and assist with preparations for possible future negotiations. The revised GPA calls for further negotiations to improve the Agreement and to progressively reduce and eliminate remaining discriminatory measures.

Technical assistance and international cooperation

The WTO Secretariat delivered several technical assistance events – including in virtual mode after the outbreak of the pandemic. A regional workshop was held for Caribbean economies in February 2020 and national workshops organized for China in January 2020 and for Aruba in February.

The Secretariat delivered the fourth edition of its Advanced Global Workshop on the WTO Plurilateral Agreement on Government Procurement in December. This e-workshop familiarized participants with the objectives, content and benefits of the revised GPA and policy-related issues on international government procurement, good governance and inclusive and sustainable development.

The Secretariat participated in the Institute for the Integration of Latin America and the Caribbean/Inter-American Development Bank's Advanced Online Training Course on Government Procurement and Trade in July.

Construction of a new bridge over the Firth of Forth in Scotland.



1.7

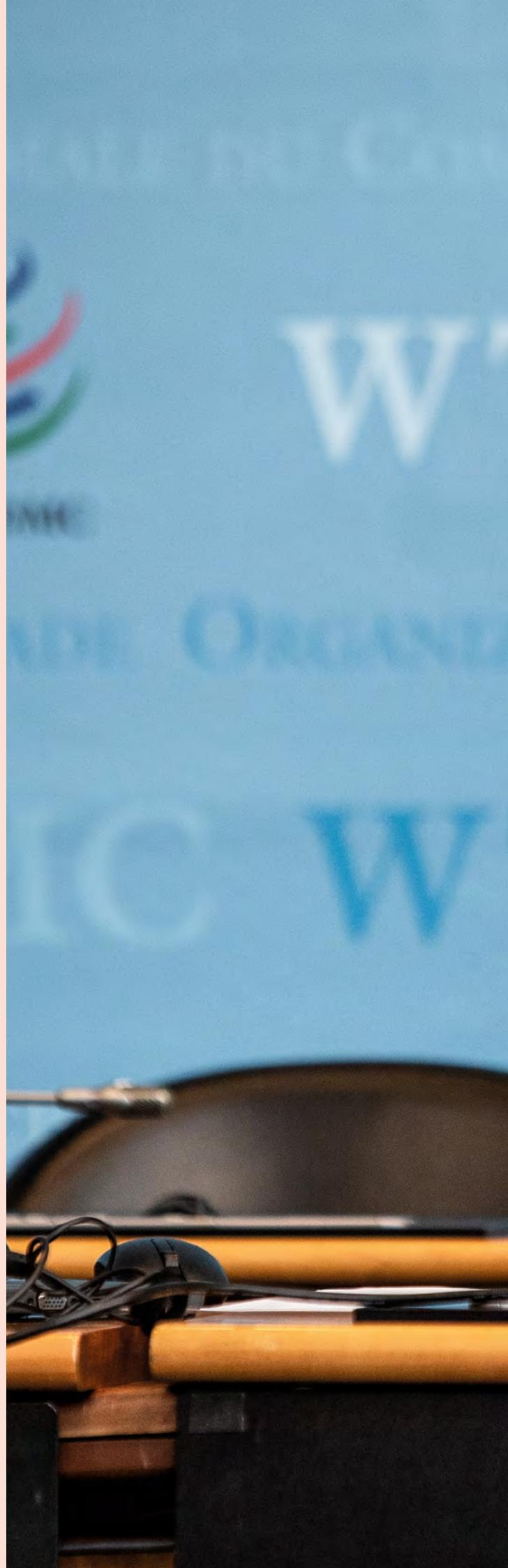
US\$ 1.7 trillion
of government
procurement
opportunities are
annually covered
by the GPA.

“Switzerland attaches great importance to a strong rules-based trading system, including through plurilateral agreements such as the GPA.” - Ambassador Didier Chambovey (Switzerland)



Dispute settlement activity in 2020

WTO members bring disputes to the WTO if they think their rights under trade agreements are being infringed. Settling disputes is the responsibility of the Dispute Settlement Body.





Dacio Castillo chaired
the Dispute Settlement
Body in 2020.

Dispute settlement activity in 2020

- WTO members initiated five disputes in 2020, down from 20 in 2019. On average, 37 panel and arbitral proceedings were ongoing each month.
- Eleven dispute settlement reports and decisions were circulated.
- Dispute settlement proceedings continued despite COVID-19 restrictions, with panels and arbitrators using additional written procedures or remote technology to advance work.
- Members did not reach consensus on launching the selection process for the appointment of new Appellate Body members. No new appeals could be heard in 2020.
- The WTO issued a new “GATT Dispute Settlement Reports” compendium, bringing together for the first time all dispute settlement reports issued under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade between 1948 and 1995.

Background

WTO members can bring disputes when they consider their rights are being infringed with respect to any agreement contained in the Final Act of the Uruguay Round that is subject to the Understanding on Rules and Procedures Governing the Settlement of Disputes (DSU). The General Council convenes as the Dispute Settlement Body (DSB) to deal with disputes. The DSB has authority to establish dispute settlement panels, to adopt panel and Appellate Body reports, to maintain surveillance over the implementation of recommendations and rulings, and to authorize suspension of concessions and other obligations in the event of non-compliance with those recommendations and rulings.

Activities in 2020

In 2020, there was an average of 37 ongoing panel and arbitral proceedings each month (see Figure 4).

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic affected the functioning of the dispute settlement system. Lockdowns and travel restrictions prevented panellists, arbitrators and delegations of WTO members from participating in in-person meetings in Geneva. In cooperation with parties, and with assistance from the WTO Secretariat, a number of panels and arbitrators used additional written procedures or remote technology to advance work, including in some cases to substitute for in-person meetings.

The Appellate Body was reduced to one member as of December 2019 and was therefore unable to hear new appeals in 2020. As of 30 November 2020, all seven positions on the Appellate Body were vacant. WTO members did not reach consensus to launch the selection processes for the appointment of new Appellate Body members.

New disputes

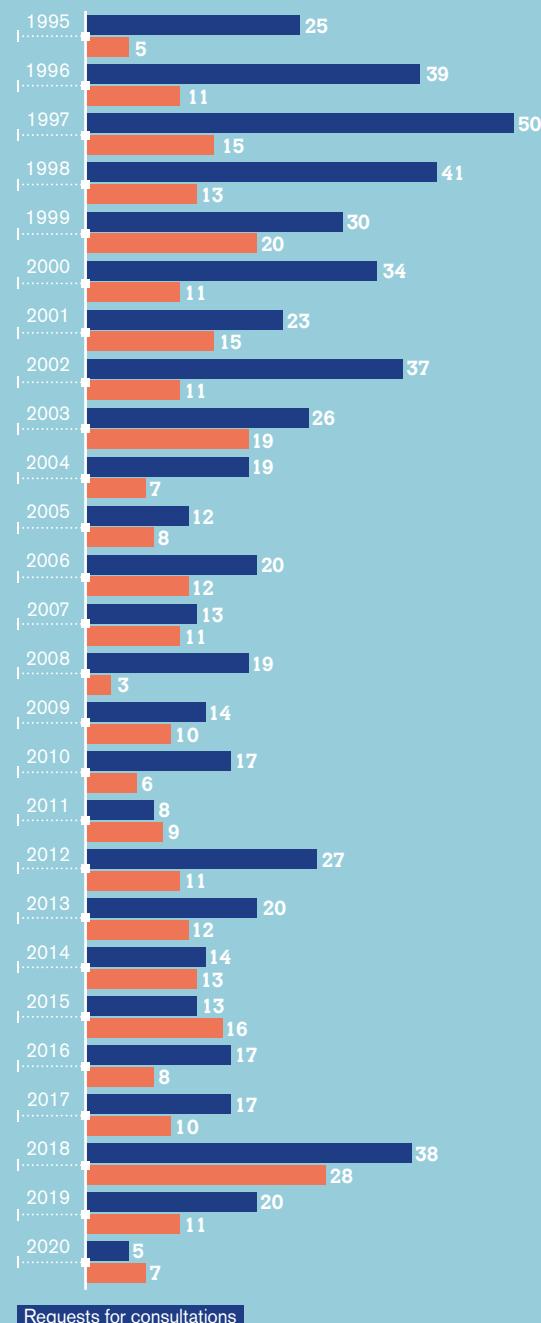
During 2020, WTO members filed five requests for consultations – the first stage in the dispute settlement process – concerning allegedly WTO-inconsistent measures (see Table 1). This figure, down from 20 in 2019, is the lowest level of disputes initiated in a calendar year since the inception of the WTO.



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Five disputes were initiated in 2020, compared with 20 in 2019.

Figure 1: Total number of disputes initiated and original panels established, 1995 to 2020



By the end of 2020, a total of 598 disputes had been initiated under the WTO dispute settlement procedures since the entry into force of the WTO agreements in 1995 (see Figure 1).

Dispute settlement proceedings

If the parties to a dispute are unable to resolve their differences through consultations, the complainant can ask for a dispute settlement panel to be established by the Dispute Settlement Body (DSB).

In 2020, the DSB established panels in seven proceedings (see Table 2). In addition, a so-called “compliance” panel (China – Agricultural Producers, DS511) was established to determine whether China had complied with previous recommendations and rulings. In one panel proceeding, EU – Price Comparison Methodologies (DS516), the panel’s authority lapsed on 15 June 2020 as the work of the panel had been suspended for more than 12 months.

Two requests on the permissible level of retaliation – as a temporary remedy in the event of non-compliance – were referred to arbitration (see Table 3).

Reports and decisions

In total, 11 dispute settlement reports and decisions were circulated in 2020, down

Table 1: Disputes initiated in 2020 (requests for consultations)

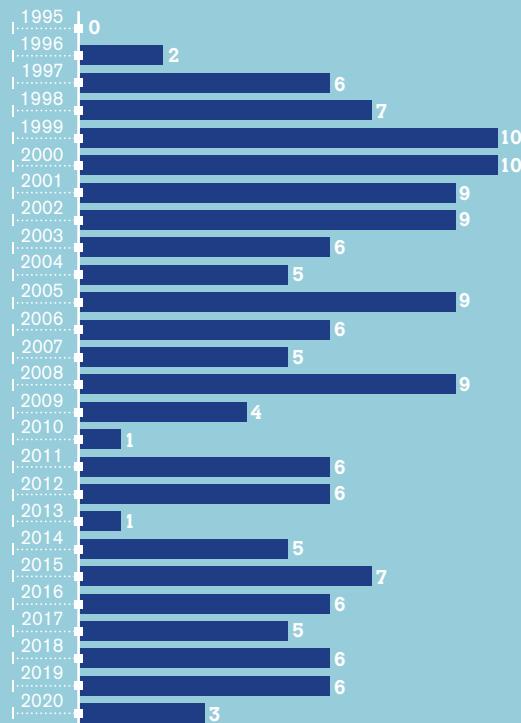
Dispute settlement number	Short title	Date of initial request	Status on 31 December 2020
DS594 ►	Korea – Commercial Vessels (Second Complaint) (Japan)	31/01/2020	In consultations
DS595 ►	EU – Certain Steel Products (Turkey)	13/03/2020	Panel composed, panel proceedings ongoing
DS596 ►	Brazil – PET Film and Other Products	10/07/2020	In consultations
DS597 ►	US – Origin Marking Requirement	30/10/2020	In consultations
DS598 ►	China – AD/CVD on Barley (Australia)	16/12/2020	In consultations

Table 2: Original panels established in 2020

Dispute settlement number	Short title	Complainant	Date established
DS582 ►	India – Tariffs on ICT Goods (EU)	European Union	29/06/2020
DS584 ►	India – Tariffs on ICT Goods (Japan)	Japan	29/07/2020
DS588 ►	India – Tariffs on ICT Goods (Chinese Taipei)	Chinese Taipei	29/07/2020
DS590 ►	Japan - Products and Technology (Korea)	Korea	29/07/2020
DS591 ►	Colombia – Frozen Fries	European Union	29/06/2020
DS593 ►	EU – Palm Oil (Indonesia)	Indonesia	29/07/2020
DS595 ►	EU – Certain Steel Products (Turkey)	Turkey	28/08/2020

Table 3: Disputes referred to arbitration on the suspension of obligations, 2020

Dispute settlement number	Short title	Date of recourse to arbitration/date of composition
DS505 ►	US – Supercalendered Paper	Recourse to Article 22.6 by the US on 26/06/2020. Arbitrator composed on 06/08/2020
DS511 ►	China – Agricultural Producers	Recourse to Article 22.6 by China on 27/07/2020. Arbitrator not yet composed

Figure 2: Number of Appellate Body reports circulated, 1995 to 2020*

Note: Some Appellate Body reports were issued as a single document covering two or more disputes.

from 23 in 2019. This covered five original panel reports and one compliance panel report (see Table 4), three Appellate Body reports covering four disputes (see Table 6), one arbitration decision on the reasonable period of time for implementation of DSB recommendations and rulings and one arbitration decision on the permissible level of retaliation as a temporary remedy in the event of non-compliance (see Table 5).

In 2020, the DSB adopted five panel reports relating to six disputes and four Appellate Body reports relating to five disputes, including an Appellate Body report that had been circulated in 2019 (see Table 4 and Table 6).

In the US – Large Civil Aircraft (2nd complaint) (DS353) dispute, the DSB authorized in October the European Union to impose countermeasures – known as suspension of concessions – on US goods and services trade with the EU.

Appeals

Three Appellate Body reports relating to four disputes were circulated in 2020, including the extensive Australia – Tobacco Plain Packaging disputes (see Figure 2 and Table 6) concerning Australia's requirements for plain packaging on tobacco products.

Table 4: Panel reports circulated and/or adopted in 2020

Dispute settlement number	Short title	Date circulated	Date adopted by the DSB if applicable
DS435 ►	Australia – Tobacco Plain Packaging (Honduras)*	28/06/2018	29/06/2020
DS441 ►	Australia – Tobacco Plain Packaging (Dominican Republic)*		
DS494 ►	EU – Cost Adjustment Methodologies II (Russia)	24/07/2020	Report appealed 28/08/2020 (EU) 02/09/2020 (Russia)
DS499 ►	Russia – Railway Equipment*	30/07/2018	05/03/2020
DS505 ►	US – Supercalendered Paper*	05/08/2018	05/03/2020
DS513 ►	Morocco – Hot-Rolled Steel (Turkey)*	31/10/2018	08/01/2020
DS529 ►	Australia – A4 Copy Paper	04/12/2019	27/01/2020
DS533 ►	US – Softwood Lumber VII	24/08/2020	Report appealed 28/09/2020 (US)
DS543 ►	US – Tariff Measures on Certain Goods (China)	15/09/2020	Report appealed 26/10/2020 (US)
DS553 ►	Korea – Stainless Steel Bars	30/11/2020	Report appealed 22/01/2021 (Korea)
DS567 ►	Saudi Arabia – IPRs	16/06/2020	Report appealed 28/07/2020 (Saudi Arabia)
DS484 ►	Indonesia – Chicken (Article 21.5)	10/11/2020	Report appealed 17/12/2020 (Indonesia)

* Panel report adopted as modified or upheld by the Appellate Body following an appeal.

In those three reports, the Appellate Body addressed several provisions of systemic significance under the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Agreement, the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement, the Subsidies and Countervailing Measures (SCM) Agreement and the Dispute Settlement Understanding (DSU).

Background

Under the Dispute Settlement Understanding, the Appellate Body is composed of seven members appointed by the DSB. Each member is appointed for a term of four years, with the possibility of being appointed for one further four-year term. Three members of the Appellate Body hear an appeal of a panel's ruling. Any party to a dispute may appeal the panel report to the Appellate Body. The appeal is limited to issues of law covered in the panel report and legal interpretations developed by the panel.





The Appellate Body Report on the tobacco plain packaging disputes was circulated in 2020.

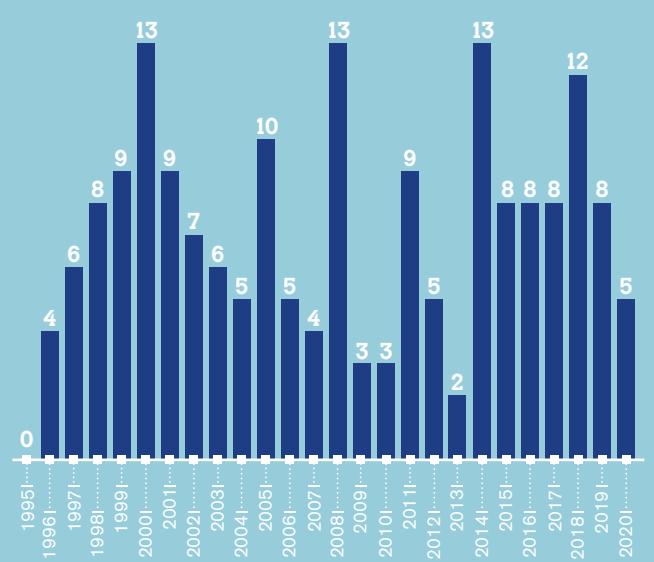
Table 5: Arbitration reports circulated in 2020

Dispute settlement number	Short title	Date circulated
DS493 ▶	Ukraine – Ammonium Nitrate (Article 21.3(c) of the DSU)	08/04/2020
DS353 ▶	US – Large Civil Aircraft (2nd complaint) (Article 22.6 of the DSU)	10/11/2020

Table 6: Appellate Body reports circulated in 2020

Dispute	Dispute settlement number	Date circulated	Date adopted by the DSB
Russia – Railway Equipment	WT/DS499/AB/R	04/02/2020	05/03/2020
US – Supercalendered Paper	WT/DS505/AB/R	06/02/2020	05/03/2020
Australia – Tobacco Plain Packaging (Honduras)	WT/DS435/AB/R		
Australia – Tobacco Plain Packaging (Dominican Republic)	WT/DS441/AB/R	09/06/2020	29/06/2020

Figure 3: Number of notices of appeal filed, 1995 to 2020



Five appeal proceedings were initiated in 2020 (see Figure 3 and Table 7). However, as of the end of 2020, members had not reached consensus on launching the selection processes for the appointment of new Appellate Body members. Following the expiry of the term of office of Appellate Body member Zhao Hong on 30 November 2020, all the positions on the Appellate Body were vacant. No new appeals could be heard in 2020. As of December 2020, 16 appeals were pending before the Appellate Body (see Table 7).

Intensity of dispute settlement activities

Figure 4 shows the intensity of dispute settlement activities since the inception of the WTO in 1995.

For the purposes of Figure 4, each proceeding (original panel or appeal, Article 21.5 panel on compliance or appeal and arbitration) is counted as a single instance where it relates to the same matter, regardless of the number of complainants involved. This provides a quantitative indication of the number of distinct issues that are subject to active dispute settlement proceedings. Figure 4 does not seek to reflect the relative complexity of different proceedings, which has also tended to increase over time.

WTO issues compendium of GATT dispute settlement reports

In 2020, the WTO issued a new "GATT Dispute Settlement Reports" compendium, bringing together for the first time all dispute settlement reports issued between 1948 and 1995 under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and related instruments, including the Tokyo Round plurilateral codes. The six-volume set complements "GATT Disputes 1948-1995", a two-volume publication that looks into the evolution of dispute settlement under the GATT.



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Eleven dispute settlement reports were circulated in 2020, down from 23 in 2019.

Table 7: Appeals filed and pending as of December 2020

Panel report appealed	Date of appeal	Appellant ^a	Document symbol	Other appellant ^b	Document symbol
EU – Energy Package	21/09/2018	European Union	WT/DS476/6	Russia	WT/DS476/7
Colombia – Textiles (Article 21.5 – Colombia) / Colombia – Textiles (Article 21.5 – Panama)	20/11/2018	Panama	WT/DS461/28	Colombia	WT/DS461/29
India – Iron and Steel Products	14/12/2018	India	WT/DS518/8	Japan	WT/DS518/9
Thailand – Cigarettes (Philippines) (Article 21.5 – Philippines)	09/01/2019	Thailand	WT/DS371/27	---	---
US – Pipes and Tubes (Turkey)	25/01/2019	United States	WT/DS523/5	Turkey	WT/DS523/6
US – Differential Pricing Methodology	04/01/2019	Canada	WT/DS534/5	---	---
US – Renewable Energy	15/08/2019	United States	WT/DS510/5	India	WT/DS510/6
Thailand – Cigarettes (Philippines) (Article 21.5 – Philippines II)	09/09/2019	Thailand	WT/DS371/30	---	---
India – Export Related Measures	19/11/2019	India	WT/DS541/7	---	---
EC and certain member states – Large Civil Aircraft (Article 21.5 – EU)	06/12/2019	European Union	WT/DS316/43	---	---
US – Carbon Steel (India) (Article 21.5 – India)	18/12/2019	United States	WT/DS436/21	---	---
Saudi Arabia – Protection of IPR	28/07/2020	Saudi Arabia	WT/DS567/7	---	---
EU – Cost Adjustment Methodologies II (Russia)	28/08/2020	European Union	WT/DS494/7	Russia	WT/DS494/8
US – Softwood Lumber VII	28/09/2020	United States	WT/DS533/5	---	---
US – Tariff Measures (China)	26/10/2020	United States	WT/DS543/10	---	---
Indonesia - Chicken (Article 21.5 – Brazil)	17/12/2020	Indonesia	WT/DS484/25	Brazil	WT/DS484/26

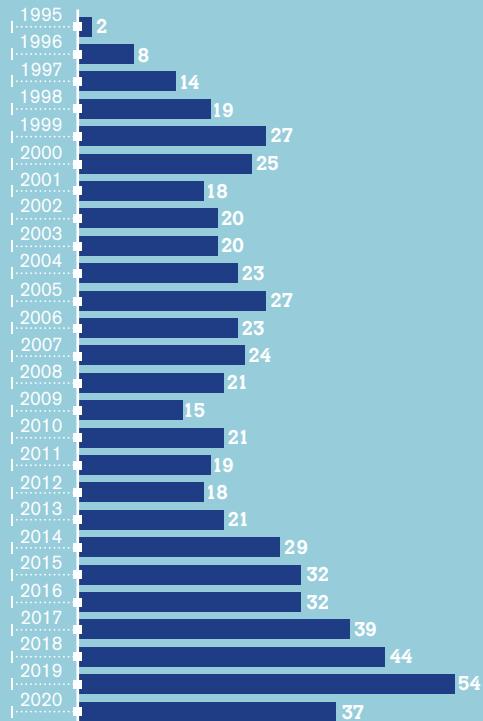
a. Pursuant to Rule 20(1) of the Working Procedures.

b. Pursuant to Rule 23(1) of the Working Procedures.

Jackson Moot Court Competition on WTO law

A total of 76 universities representing 37 WTO members and observers participated in regional rounds held in February and May 2020 of the annual John H. Jackson Moot Court Competition. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, four regional rounds (American, African, and South and East Asian) took place virtually. The top 20 teams qualified for the final round held in June. After four days of competition, four teams went through to the semi-finals, with the winning team being the Government Law College, Mumbai (India).

The John H. Jackson Moot Court Competition is a simulated hearing under the rules of the WTO dispute settlement system involving exchanges of written submissions and adversarial hearings before panellists on international trade law issues. The competition is organized by the European Law Students' Association (ELSA) with the technical support of the WTO. In 2018, the competition was named after John H. Jackson, an eminent scholar and a forefather of the multilateral trading system.

Figure 4: Average of monthly active proceedings, 1995 to 2020

Note: The figure for 2020 does not include any appellate proceedings.

7

Supporting development and building trade capacity

The WTO aims to help developing countries build their trade capacity and allows them a longer time to implement trade agreements. Hundreds of training courses are organized each year for officials from developing countries.



A photograph showing two people harvesting tea leaves from a bush. A man in the foreground, wearing a light blue jacket, yellow gloves, and a red and blue beanie, holds a red plastic basket and reaches for leaves. A woman in the background, wearing a purple shirt and a yellow headscarf, also harvests leaves. They are in a lush green tea plantation under a bright blue sky with white clouds.

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Technical cooperation and training

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Harvesting tea leaves at a plantation in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

Trade and development



- The Committee discussed in May 2020 the decline in exports for many WTO members due to COVID-19. Developing countries with limited resources were the most affected.
- The WTO, the International Trade Centre and the UN Conference on Trade and Development launched the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Trade Monitor, which collates progress on meeting trade-related SDGs.



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 countries to give more favourable treatment to developing countries.

Activities in 2020

WTO members discussed the COVID-19 outbreak at a virtual session of the Committee on Trade and Development in May 2020. Several members reported a decline in their exports, noting that developing countries with limited resources were the most affected by the crisis, especially those whose exports are concentrated in a small range of goods.

The Committee continued work on the link between trade and development, as instructed by trade ministers. It also continued discussions on electronic commerce and duty-free and quota-free (DFQF) market access for least-developed countries (LDCs).

A dedicated session was held on the monitoring mechanism on implementation of special and differential treatment (S&D) provisions, such as technical assistance, for developing countries in WTO agreements and decisions. The Chair, Mohammad Qurban Haqjo (Afghanistan), noted that no written inputs or submissions, which are required for the exercise, had been presented. He urged members to come to a common understanding on how to move forward with the mechanism.

Montenegro notified the Committee of its DFQF scheme for LDCs and Kazakhstan notified its Generalized System of Preferences, under which developed countries grant preferential tariffs to developing countries. Documents relating to the Latin American Integration Association were circulated and considered by the Committee.

The Committee considered the preferential trade agreement between the Southern



Unloading sacks of tea leaves at a tea factory in Nuwara Eliya, Sri Lanka.

Common Market (MERCOSUR) and the Southern African Customs Union, the free trade agreement between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the Republic of Korea, the preferential trade agreement between India and Afghanistan and the accession of Egypt to the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa. The Committee also considered the economic complementarity agreement between Mexico and the Plurinational State of Bolivia, and the comprehensive economic partnership agreement between India and the Republic of Korea.

SDGs Trade Monitor

In October, the WTO, the International Trade Centre (ITC) and the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) launched the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Trade Monitor. The online portal collates the latest progress in achieving the trade-related SDGs of the United Nations. It allows users to conduct customized analysis of trade-related SDG indicators, with the objective of improving understanding of the relationship between trade and development in the SDG agenda and highlighting the latest state of play in achieving the relevant SDG targets.

Technical cooperation and training

The Institute for Training and Technical Cooperation (ITTC) provided updates on technical assistance. Face-to-face technical assistance activities were disrupted in mid-March 2020 by the COVID-19 outbreak. However, online training courses continued through the e-Campus.

The WTO Secretariat undertook 278 technical assistance activities in 2019 and participated in several other related activities. Overall, 14,500 participants received training, representing a decrease of 37 per cent on 2018. This decline was partly due, particularly among LDC beneficiaries, to participants having to use a new cloud-based platform and registration process. The WTO provided guidance to address the problems.

The Committee took note of the Secretariat's technical assistance monitoring and evaluation plan and was briefed by the ITTC on a new simplified procedure to request national technical assistance activities online. In addition, the Committee was introduced to the new format for the annual performance report on technical assistance and training. Prepared by the Secretariat, it includes testimonials, quotes and interviews with various stakeholders and showcases good practice.

The ITTC presented new technical assistance dashboards, launched to help members, donors and others track the implementation of WTO technical assistance and training programmes. They will help developing countries strengthen their trade capacity and participate more effectively in global trade.



278

The WTO
undertook 278
technical assistance
activities in 2019 for
developing countries.



In October 2020, the WTO, the ITC and UNCTAD launched the SDGs Trade Monitor, which collates the latest progress in achieving the trade-related SDGs.

Least-developed countries

- **The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the economies of least-developed countries (LDCs) featured prominently in the work of the Sub-Committee.**
- **In the first half of 2020, LDCs' merchandise exports fell 16 per cent. Services exports dropped by around 40 per cent.**
- **The WTO Secretariat updated members on the ongoing EIF-WTO project, which aims to help LDCs better comprehend the trade-related implications of graduation from LDC status.**

COVID-19 and support for LDCs

In addition to discussing standing items on the agenda, the Sub-Committee on LDCs provided an opportunity to exchange views on the trade-related impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on LDCs. The UN Conference on Trade and Development and the World Bank shared their respective analyses, warning of severe consequences for LDCs due to their vulnerabilities and lack of financial resources. The LDCs highlighted the need for global cooperation to help them recover from the crisis, including through assistance for healthcare systems and economic recovery.

Market access for LDCs

The trade-related impact of the pandemic took centre stage in WTO members' discussions on market access.

The WTO Secretariat's yearly report on market access for LDCs included a special chapter on trade developments during the first half of 2020. LDCs entered the pandemic with a trade deficit of US\$ 100 billion and a decline in exports of goods and services of 1.5 per cent in 2019. LDCs' share of global exports was only 0.96 per cent in 2019, little changed over the past few years.

In the first half of 2020, LDCs' merchandise exports declined by 16 per cent, steeper than the 13 per cent decline for world exports. LDCs' exports dropped significantly for fuels and mining products (down 26 per cent) and clothing (down 18 per cent), while exports of agricultural products were less affected (down 1 per cent). LDCs' services exports dropped

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 a number of systemic issues of importance to LDCs in the multilateral trading system, such as market access, technical assistance and accession to the WTO.

LDCs and other low-income countries benefited from 71 per cent of STDF's project funds in 2019, well above its target of 40 per cent.



by around 40 per cent, mostly due to a slump in travel exports which contracted by around 60 per cent.

The LDCs highlighted the steep decline in exports and their dependence on the economic conditions of trading partners. They called on WTO members to continue making progress in the implementation of ministerial decisions on duty-free and quota-free market access (see page 146), preferential rules of origin (see page 99) and the LDC services waiver (see page 111) to enhance their exports. Members underlined the need to continue to monitor trade developments in LDCs during the pandemic.

Technical assistance and capacity-building

The Executive Secretariat of the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) updated members on EIF activities, including actions taken to mitigate the impact of the pandemic (see page 154). LDCs highlighted the importance of the current EIF programme for trade capacity-building and commended the EIF for taking measures during the pandemic to continue project implementation and activities under the programme.

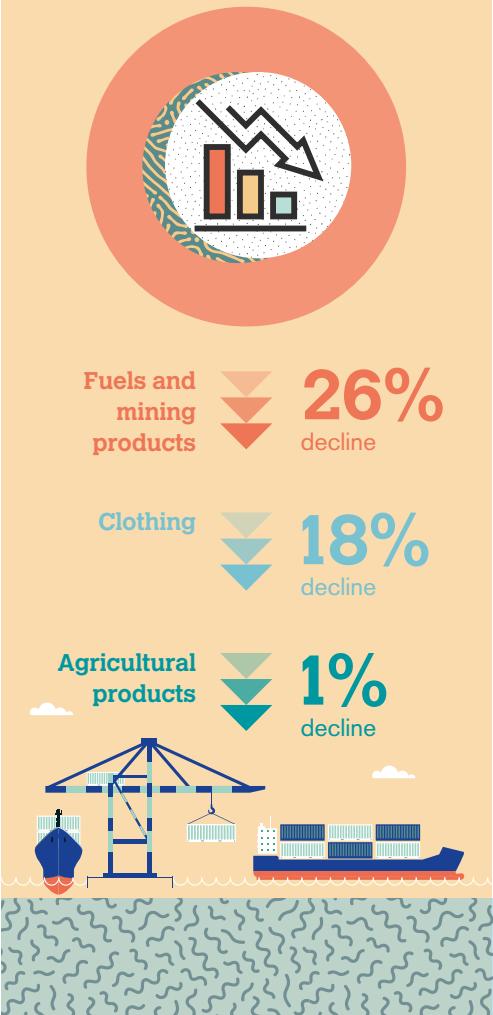
The Secretariat of the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) noted that LDCs and other low-income countries benefited from 71 per cent of project funds in 2019, well above the STDF target of 40 per cent (see page 157). The LDCs underlined the important role played by the STDF in helping them to comply with sanitary and phytosanitary requirements to access international markets.

Accession of LDCs to the WTO

The WTO Secretariat briefed WTO members on the state of play of eight ongoing LDC accessions (Bhutan, Comoros, Ethiopia, São Tomé and Príncipe, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Timor-Leste) (see page 32).

Silk weaving in Thailand. In the first half of 2020, LDCs' clothing exports declined by 18 per cent.

LDCs' exports
in first half of 2020



LDCs highlighted the importance of the LDC accession guidelines and technical assistance for facilitating the accession process.

LDC graduation

The WTO Secretariat briefed members on progress in the implementation of the EIF-WTO project on graduation from LDC status, including the publication of the report "Trade Impacts of LDC Graduation". The project helps LDCs better comprehend the trade-related implications of graduation from LDC status.

The LDCs expressed appreciation for the WTO's work in support of graduating LDCs. They also called on WTO members to be responsive to their demands for adequate transition periods to allow for a smooth transition from LDC status. Members underlined the importance of a smooth transition to help graduating LDCs integrate into the global economy.

Small economies

- The Group on Small, Vulnerable Economies highlighted the challenges faced by small economies in attracting foreign investment, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Three WTO members presented steps they are taking to increase foreign direct investment.

The Committee on Trade and Development held a dedicated session on small economies in November at which members and international organizations highlighted the challenges faced by small economies in attracting foreign investment — particularly amid the COVID-19 crisis — and discussed ways to facilitate investment.

Members heard presentations from the International Trade Centre (ITC), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the WTO on the opportunities and challenges for small economies in attracting investment.

Presentations were also made by three members of the Small, Vulnerable Economies



(SVE) Group – El Salvador, Guatemala and Saint Lucia – on their initiatives to increase foreign direct investment (FDI) in order to expand trading capacity and support economic diversification. These initiatives included creating incentive packages, modernizing the delivery of governmental services through digitalization, collecting feedback from stakeholders, disseminating investment-related data and improving institutional coordination domestically.

A farmer watering his crops at Lake Atitlan, Guatemala.

Members of the SVE Group highlighted the negative impact of the pandemic on their economies. Some ideas were shared on what could be done to improve the position of small economies in dealing with the negative effects of the health crisis. The three countries expressed concern about rising protectionist measures and plummeting FDI as a result of the pandemic. They stressed the significance of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the WTO negotiations for an agreement on investment facilitation for development (see page 58).

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.

Members of the Small, Vulnerable Economies Group expressed concern about rising protectionist measures and plummeting FDI as a result of the pandemic.

Aid for Trade

- The Committee on Trade and Development adopted the 2020-21 Aid for Trade Work Programme on “Empowering Connected, Sustainable Trade”. It subsequently extended it to 2022.
- Global disbursements of Aid for Trade rose to US\$ 45.1 billion in 2018 compared with US\$ 43.4 billion in 2017.
- A stocktaking event was held virtually on 23-25 March 2021 on members’ Aid for Trade needs arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Aid for Trade financing

From 2006 to 2018, the total amount of Aid for Trade disbursed to developing countries reached US\$ 455.5 billion. An additional US\$ 356 billion was provided as part of other official flows, development finance that is provided at non-concessional rates.

Background

Aid for Trade helps developing countries, and particularly least-developed countries, trade. The WTO-led Aid for Trade initiative encourages developing-country 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.



13.5
Aid for Trade
disbursements
to LDCs rose to
US\$ 13.5 billion
in 2018.

Figure 1: Aid for Trade disbursements by category (in US\$ billion, 2018 prices)

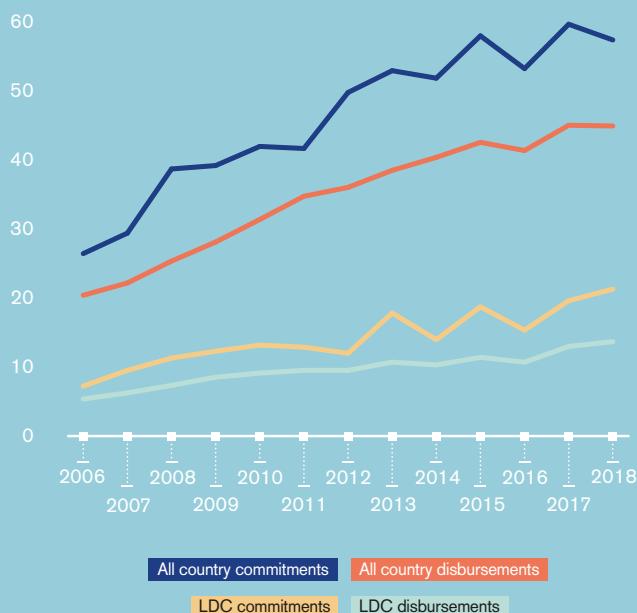


Source: OECD-CRS, Creditor Reporting System.

The latest data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) show that global disbursements rose to US\$ 45.1 billion in 2018 compared with US\$ 43.4 billion in 2017 (see Figure 1). Commitments totalled US\$ 57.7 billion in 2018, down from US\$ 60.0 billion in 2017 (see Figure 2).

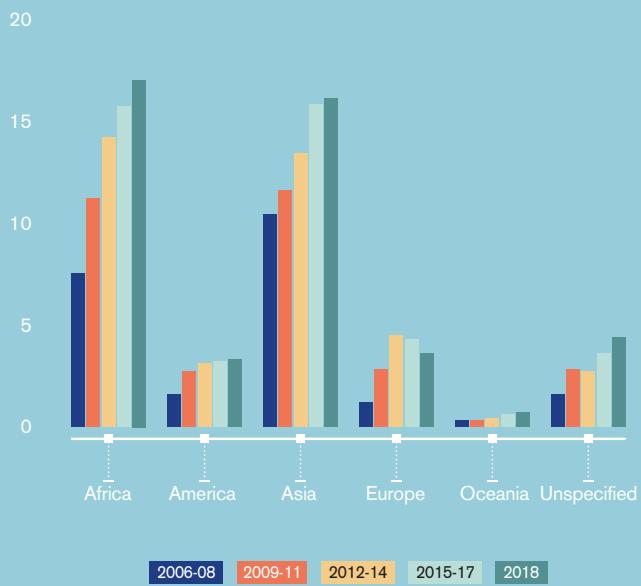
Disbursements increased for Africa, Asia and Oceania (see Figure 3). Disbursements to least-developed countries (LDCs) rose from US\$ 12.8 billion in 2017 to US\$ 13.5 billion in 2018. Increasingly, support for LDCs is taking the form of loans (58 per cent of disbursements in 2018) rather than grants, which raises debt sustainability concerns.

Figure 2: Aid for Trade commitments and disbursements by category (in US\$ billion, 2018 prices)



Source: OECD-CRS, Creditor Reporting System.

Figure 3: Aid for Trade disbursements by region (in US\$ billion, 2018 prices)



Work Programme

The Committee on Trade and Development adopted the 2020-21 Aid for Trade Work Programme entitled “Empowering Connected, Sustainable Trade”. It subsequently extended it until 2022 when the next Aid for Trade Global Review will be held.

The work programme will focus on the opportunities that digital connectivity and sustainability offer for economic and export diversification and how Aid for Trade can help empower different economic actors to realize these opportunities. Members agreed to adapt the programme to reflect the economic impact of COVID-19.

An Aid for Trade stocktaking event was held virtually on 23-25 March 2021 on members' Aid for Trade needs and responses to the trade-related challenges posed by the pandemic. The event had seven themes: COVID-19, debt and financing; promoting an inclusive, green recovery; digital connectivity and e-commerce; global value chains, supply-side capacity in times of pandemic;



promoting recovery among micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, including in tourism; adapting trade formalities, such as customs and conformity assessment procedures, to combat COVID-19 and future pandemic risk; and regional approaches to COVID-19 recovery.

Committee on Trade and Development

The Committee on Trade and Development held three sessions on Aid for Trade at which the negative impact of COVID-19 on the participation of developing countries in world trade and their access to trade finance emerged as key concerns. A number of members and international organizations updated the Committee on Aid for Trade activities, implementation and resource mobilization.

Thematic events

In 2020, the WTO held two Aid for Trade thematic events. The first was a workshop on the role of Aid for Trade in transforming and promoting rural economies through capacity building, financing programmes and multi-stakeholder dialogue. The second surveyed research on the economic and trade impact of COVID-19 (see page 76) and measures being taken to support the response to the pandemic and economic recovery.

Harvesting blue agave for Tequila production in Jalisco, Mexico.



WTO members expressed concern about the negative impact of COVID-19 on developing countries' access to trade finance.

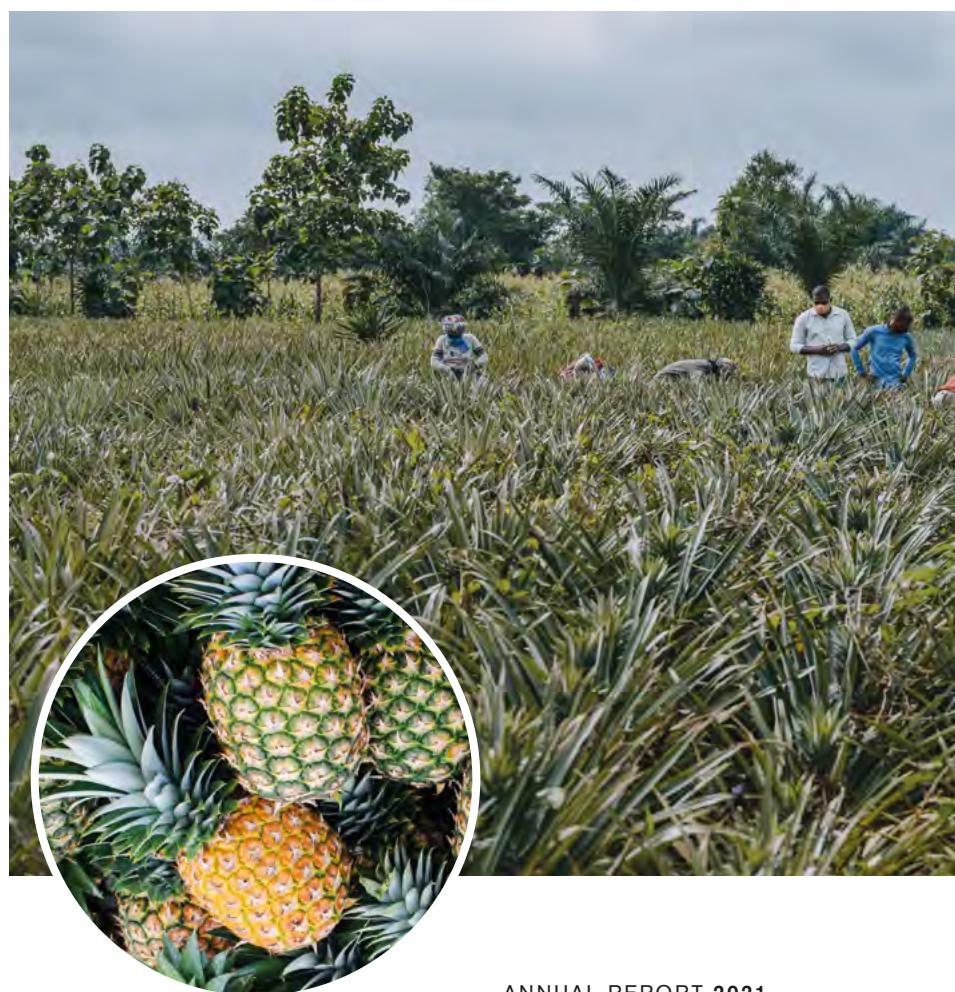
Enhanced Integrated Framework

- Early in the COVID-19 pandemic, the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) launched a business continuity plan to address risks and to maintain support for least-developed countries. The aim was to ensure the continued rollout of EIF projects.
- In 2020, 28 new projects worth US\$ 21.3 million were approved.

Support for LDCs during COVID-19

Early in the COVID-19 crisis, the EIF established a business continuity plan that identified and addressed risks and set out measures to maintain support to least-developed countries (LDCs). Ongoing EIF projects allowed swift analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on trade in the LDCs.

In Zambia, an EIF project implemented through the International Trade Centre (ITC) facilitated assessment of new challenges faced by women-led businesses and provided support, such as training in e-commerce. In Cambodia, the pandemic accelerated interest in e-commerce, resulting in the adoption of a national e-commerce strategy.



Background

The Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) is the only multilateral partnership dedicated exclusively to assisting least-developed countries 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 collective know-how to tackle the world's most pressing trade for development issues. The WTO houses the Executive Secretariat for the EIF.

The business continuity plan also focused on ensuring the continued rollout of EIF projects, contributing to the delivery of over 90 per cent of planned projects for the year. In total, 28 new projects worth US\$ 21.3 million were approved in 2020. Projects included institutional capacity support for Vanuatu to ease its transition from LDC status, development of key agriculture export sectors in the Central African Republic and enhanced sustainability in Nepal's tea sector.

Four projects were approved under the EIF's "Empower Women, Power Trade" initiative, launched in 2019. A new partnership with the World Association of Investment Promotion Agencies focused on improving the business climate to attract sustainable investment and leverage additional resources in the LDCs.



Making it easier for South Asian women to take businesses online

A new e-commerce training programme will help hundreds of women entrepreneurs in South Asia become part of regional and global supply chains.

Developed by the EIF, in partnership with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), the training programme is helping women entrepreneurs across South Asia to better understand the challenges involved in implementing e-commerce. Workshops have already been organized in Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal, helping at least 100 female entrepreneurs sell their goods and services online and become part of regional and global supply chains.

An e-commerce portal is also being developed to host the online shops of women entrepreneurs participating in the programme. "The portal will assist women with digitizing and cataloguing their goods and services. It will provide a single payment gateway and it will give their businesses international exposure. This is all the more important for women entrepreneurs in this hour of crisis due to COVID-19," said Rajan Sudesh Ratna from UNESCAP.

Thinley Yangzom, an entrepreneur in Bhutan, said: "Being able to sell online will make it possible for me to reach international customers, and will also make my products more affordable for local people. With the support provided by this programme, it will be faster and easier to grow my business than if I was to do it alone."

Photo source: "Trade for Development News", <https://trade4devnews.enhancedif.org/en/impact-story/making-it-faster-and-easier-south-asian-women-take-businesses-online>

Donor commitments reached US\$ 141 million, with cumulative allocations standing at around 93 per cent of the total. The 2020 edition of the EIF's Resource Mobilization Guidebook provides information on how COVID-19 can impact official development assistance (ODA) funding opportunities for LDCs.

Delivering results

In Bhutan, an electronic auctioning system enabled potato farmers to overcome COVID-19-related restrictions. In The Gambia, over 300 women entrepreneurs and farmers were helped to adapt their businesses to the challenges of COVID-19, including moving into new areas of activity, such as the production of face masks. In Vanuatu, an EIF project ensured the continuation of biosecurity clearances critical for food products.

Building human capacity through partnerships

The EIF conducted several online training courses on topics such as monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL), resource mobilization, risk management and EIF evaluations. An innovative secondment programme saw MEL staff from LDCs attached to the EIF Executive Secretariat, with the first secondees coming from Senegal and Tanzania. Partnering with the International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation, the EIF launched "Building Trade Finance Capabilities in LDCs", under which LDC government officials are mentored to support their countries' resource mobilization efforts.

Global engagement during COVID-19

With nearly 100 stories published on its Trade for Development News platform, the EIF became an important source of information during the pandemic, gathering more than 80,000 views.



The EIF launched a social media campaign, #PowerUpTrade, encouraging LDC businesses to share how COVID-19 was affecting their participation in global value chains. Contributions ranged from information on a coffee supply chain in Ethiopia to the impact of the pandemic on garment workers in Bangladesh. The EIF worked with international partners, including the ITC and the WTO, on the project, which reached over 318,000 users on Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook.

A cooperative coffee farm at Lake Kivu, Rwanda.

The EIF co-hosted four digital COVID-19 events on tourism, graduation, fragility and conflict, and foreign direct investment and innovating financing, with over 2,300 live participants and on-demand viewers.

LDC graduation

In May 2020, the EIF and the WTO published "Trade Impacts of LDC Graduation" looking at how graduation may affect LDCs' participation in world trade, including their access to export markets and implications for their WTO commitments (see page 181).

Delivering strong project systems

Strengthened project evaluation guidelines were rolled out to support accountability and learning processes across EIF projects. Innovative monitoring mechanisms are being piloted, with increased linkages with local partners, to closely follow implementation in remote areas.

Standards and Trade Development Facility

- The new five-year strategy of the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) aims to strengthen its role as a global platform for dialogue and learning on sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) capacity development.
- Organizations implementing STDF projects as well as beneficiaries demonstrated flexibility and commitment in responding to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The STDF approved five project and seven project preparation grants (PPGs) totalling US\$ 3.7 million. Africa continued to be the biggest beneficiary of STDF projects, which help traders in developing countries to meet international standards on food safety, plant and animal health and to access international markets.

Background

The STDF is a global partnership helping developing countries 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 (OIE), the World Bank, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the WTO, the STDF contributes to sustainable economic growth, poverty reduction and food security. It is financed by voluntary contributions from Australia, Canada, Denmark, the European Union, Finland, Germany, France, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States. Further information is available at www.standardsfacility.org.



5

Five project grants were approved in 2020.



7

Seven project preparation grants were approved.



3.7

US\$ 3.7 million of grants were approved.

New STDF strategy (2020-24)

The STDF launched a new five-year strategy, "Safe and Inclusive Trade Horizons for Developing Countries", in January 2020. The strategy aims to expand the STDF's reach and resources and strengthen its role as a global platform for dialogue and learning on sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) capacity development.

The STDF will continue to finance the development and implementation of collaborative and innovative SPS projects, with the potential to influence and catalyse SPS improvements. Members also adopted a new communications plan and monitoring, evaluation and learning framework to track progress in achieving results and provide feedback on the management of the STDF.

Ensuring continuity and results

The STDF Secretariat took action to mitigate and manage the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on STDF operations across the world. Members convened in virtual meetings and practitioner groups to identify and discuss new opportunities for collaboration on selected topics. These included:

- use of evidence-based approaches to inform and improve SPS planning and decision-making
- development of a practical checklist on good regulatory practice for developing countries to ensure SPS measures avoid creating non-tariff barriers
- promotion of public-private partnerships to facilitate safe trade
- use of electronic SPS certification.

Figure 4: STDF regional projects and PPGs (number), 2004 to 2020

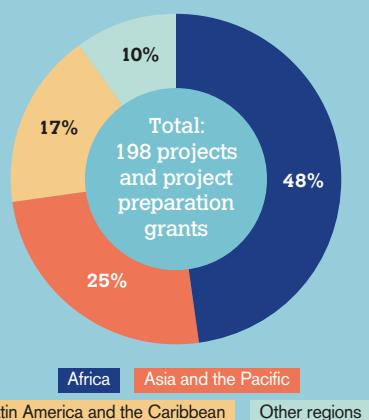
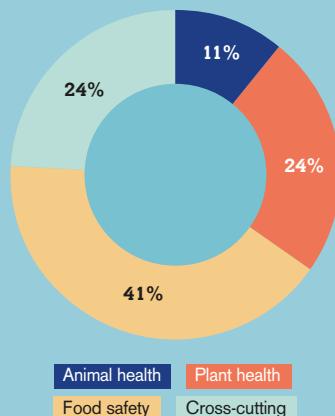


Figure 5: STDF projects and PPGs by topic (number), 2004 to 2020



Note: The figures comprise total STDF funding and non-STDF funding.

The STDF organized several webinars to discuss the challenges posed by COVID-19 for SPS capacity development and to increase access to guidance materials and other resources available.

Electronic and digital solutions are playing an increasing role in keeping food and agriculture products moving across global supply chains. STDF projects on electronic SPS certification helped developing countries to improve transparency, reduce trade costs and speed up trade flows. Over 80 countries are currently using the “ePhyto” solution, developed with STDF funding, with more than 50,000 certificates exchanged every month.

New project and project preparation grants

The STDF approved five project and seven project preparation grants (PPGs) totalling US\$ 3.7 million. Two projects will pilot the use of voluntary third-party assurance programmes (see page 86) to improve food safety in Africa and Central America. Other projects in Africa will enhance trade through biopesticide-based residue mitigation in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and promote food safety in the smoked fish sector in Mali.



Extracting cocoa beans for the production of chocolate in Bahia, Brazil.

► Success story



In Latin America, a project was approved to improve coordination and support management of cadmium levels in cocoa.

Through PPGs, projects will be developed to:

- enhance seed trade in the Asia-Pacific region
- assess the impact and viability of mobile food-safety testing laboratories in the SADC region
- promote the use of biopesticides for residue mitigation in Latin America.

Other proposals focus on strengthening biosecurity and food safety in Bhutan, establishing an Avian influenza-free zone in Egypt and conducting a feasibility study on aquaculture zoning in Peru. A regional PPG in the Caribbean will help Caribbean Community members in SPS planning and decision-making.

STDF projects mostly benefit Africa, followed by Asia-Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean (see Figure 4). Since its founding in 2004, the STDF has provided US\$ 56.8 million to strengthen the SPS capacity of producers, traders and governments in developing countries to meet international standards for food safety, plant and animal health and access international markets (see Figure 5). Of these funds, over US\$ 37.5 million have been allocated to projects in least-developed and other low-income countries.

STDF projects mostly benefit Africa, followed by Asia-Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean.

STDF project in India supports spices trade

Women farmers in India are improving their livelihoods thanks to a new STDF project supporting trade in spices. The project was launched in Kerala in February 2020, with the Spices Board India and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, as part of five new projects aiming to boost the growth of trade in spices in India.

At the launch, India's Minister of State for Commerce and Industry, Som Parkash, said the new projects have the potential to double the incomes of spice farmers, integrate them into global value chains and allow them to compete in the world market. Women are heavily involved in spices in India, from sowing to harvesting and pre-processing. The project, which will run over three years, will help women farmers to produce higher-quality products and obtain higher prices, improving their social and financial status.

“The project is expected to help boost incomes of small-scale farmers, empower women and other marginalized communities, and support efforts to reduce poverty in the selected project areas in India.”

Ramesh Babu Natarajan,
a scientist at the Spices Board India

Technical cooperation and training

- The WTO Secretariat developed national, regional and global virtual seminars to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. It conducted some 80 technical assistance activities between April and December.
- The number of e-learning courses rose by more than 20 per cent to 106.
- Approximately 13,500 participants benefited from national, regional and global activities, including new e-learning courses.
- Africa remained the region with the highest participation (38 per cent) in e-learning courses.

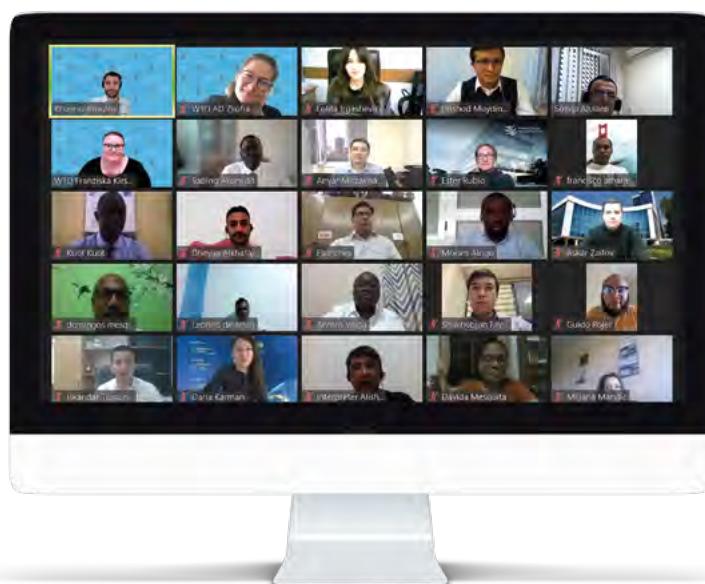
Background

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 national and regional level. The technical assistance programmes help WTO members better understand their rights and obligations in the multilateral trading system. This strengthens countries' capacity to benefit from participation in the system.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the WTO Secretariat designed and implemented national, regional and global virtual seminars and workshops, including three-month regional trade policy courses. This made it possible to conduct around 80 technical assistance activities between April and December.

While the number of face-to-face activities fell considerably due to their abrupt suspension from March 2020, the number of remotely delivered activities rose sharply compared with 2019. The number of e-learning courses offered by the Secretariat also increased by more than 20 per cent to 106. In 2020, approximately 50 per cent of all participants accessed their training through e-learning on the WTO's online platform.

The WTO Secretariat undertook 217 technical assistance activities in 2020 – remotely, face-to-face and through e-learning – to help government officials gain a better understanding of WTO rules and the



Young Professional

Seven women and five men were recruited for the Young Professionals Programme in 2020.

multilateral trading system. Approximately 13,500 participants benefited from these national, regional and global activities, including new e-learning courses. Compared with the previous year, the number of activities was 22 per cent lower and the number of participants about 7 per cent fewer, mostly due to the suspension of face-to-face activities as a result of the pandemic.

Of the total e-learning courses undertaken, Africa remained the region with the highest participation (38 per cent), followed by Asia-Pacific (25 per cent). Thirty per cent of e-learning courses were undertaken by participants from least-developed countries (LDCs).

The WTO's 2020-21 technical assistance and training plan follows a "results-based management" approach to ensure that training is delivered in the most effective way. Guidelines and benchmarks help to maintain a high standard of content, consistent teaching methods and regular evaluation of all WTO technical assistance activities.

In November, the WTO launched new electronic dashboards to help members, donors and others track the implementation of WTO technical assistance and training programmes. They display the level of training provided, the objectives, the nationality of participants and the gender breakdown.

Most of the activities implemented in 2020 (68 per cent) were "global" activities aimed at



"Faced with unique challenges and circumstances due to COVID-19, the 2020 experience has been an extremely transformative year for all the Young Professionals.

Not only have we developed skills and expertise in the field of international trade policy, we have also learned how integral trade is to global economic growth and a stable economic recovery.

The broad experience and practical knowledge I have gained during my tenure here is invaluable and will serve me for many years to come. I look forward to applying the knowledge I have acquired at the Secretariat to my future career in international trade policy."

**Maryam Aldoseri,
a Young Professional from Bahrain**

Regional Trade Policy Course

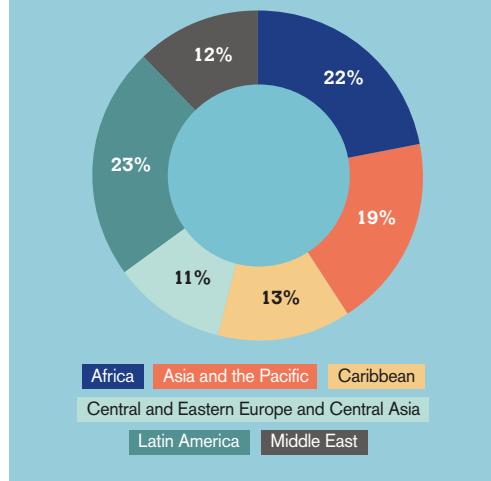


“There are a lot of key subjects that I learned on the course: I enhanced my knowledge in different areas, especially tariffs and the set of rules and regulations governing trade. I was also introduced to the new concept of online courses through the WTO’s platform.

I have already started applying what I have learned in my daily work. Furthermore, on a personal level, I found it a thrilling experience to meet new colleagues with whom I can share knowledge in order to make the best out of the course in the long run.”

**Violette Abi Abboud (Lebanon),
who took part in the online Regional
Trade Policy Course for the Arab and
Middle Eastern region from December
2020 to March 2021**

Figure 6: Technical assistance activities (national and regional) by region in 2020



participants from all WTO beneficiary members and observers and not targeting any specific region or country. The remaining 32 per cent focused on national and regional activities (see Figure 6). In line with a demand-driven approach, most activities were delivered at the national level in countries where a specific need was identified.

Participation in technical assistance activities

Women represented 45 per cent of participants for all WTO technical assistance activities. Roughly 52 per cent of technical assistance activities (including e-learning courses) were delivered in English, 20 per cent in Spanish, 17 per cent in French and the remainder (11 per cent) with interpretation.

Technical assistance continued to be provided for countries seeking to join the WTO (see page 32), with several government officials from acceding countries participating in face-to-face and remotely delivered technical assistance events.

E-learning



Internship programmes

In 2020, the majority of government officials completing WTO internship programmes were from LDCs and other low-income countries in Africa and the Asia and Pacific regions. Nineteen participants completed the French and Irish Missions Internship Programme and 16 participants completed the Netherlands Trainee Programme. Both programmes lasted ten months. Six interns participated in the Regional Coordinator Internship Programme and four in the Accession Internship Programme.

Young Professionals Programme

Following a merit-based selection process, 12 young professionals (seven women and five men) were recruited for the Young Professionals Programme in 2020. All came from members currently without any professional staff in the WTO Secretariat. Funded by the Global Trust Fund, the programme aims to improve the opportunities for young professionals from nationalities under-represented at the WTO to be recruited by the WTO or other international organizations.

Financing technical assistance

The bulk of the technical assistance programme is financed by the Global Trust Fund through voluntary contributions from WTO members. Excluding some fluctuations, there has been a steady decrease in voluntary contributions for a decade. In 2020, total contributions were CHF 5.6 million, down from CHF 6.2 million in 2019.

Other funding sources include the WTO regular budget for Geneva-based courses and national technical assistance activities – CHF 4.5 million for 2020 – and contributions from other trust funds (such as the French and Irish Missions Internship Programme, the Netherlands Trainee Programme and the China Programme), which totalled CHF 2.4 million in 2020.

“I was thrilled to learn about the new series of courses released in 2020 by the WTO e-learning unit. I had high expectations of both the content and structure, and I was not disappointed.

I completed eight courses covering WTO subjects such as trade in services, sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures, trade and development, the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) and intellectual property rights.

All of the courses were relevant. The SPS course has guided me in policy discussions at work while the TFA course helped me to propose policies aimed at reducing bureaucratic procedures at our ports. This will help The Gambia have better access to production inputs and support companies’ participation in global value chains.

I have recommended this course to my colleagues because it is perfect for busy working professionals in terms of the time needed to undertake it and the content.”

**Kutubo Jarju, Economist in
The Gambia’s Ministry of Trade**

Trade and women's empowerment

► The WTO continued its work on understanding how trade can create opportunities for women entrepreneurs and examined how COVID-19 has impacted women's ability to trade.

► The WTO launched a joint report with the World Bank on "Women and Trade: The role of trade in promoting gender equality".

The WTO Trade and Gender Action Plan 2017-19 was extended to 2020, with work continuing on its four key objectives: raising awareness on the link between trade and gender; facilitating WTO members' actions on trade and gender; generating new data and research on the impact of trade on women; and providing training on these issues.

Background

In 2017, the WTO appointed a Trade and Gender Focal Point to lead work on trade and gender in the WTO. The WTO seeks to build a more inclusive trading system, raise awareness on the link between trade and gender, facilitate WTO members' actions on trade and gender, generate new data on the impact of trade on women and provide training to government officials.



Key objectives of the Action Plan

Raising awareness on the link between trade and gender

Facilitating WTO members' actions on trade and gender

Generating new data and research on the impact of trade on women

Providing training on these issues



In July, the WTO and the World Bank published a joint report on "Women and Trade: The role of trade in promoting gender equality". It was launched by the then WTO Director-General, Roberto Azevêdo, and World Bank Managing Director Mari Pangestu. "The report comes out at an opportune time. The COVID-19 pandemic has provoked the deepest economic recession of our lifetimes. Recent WTO analysis shows that women risk losing some really hard-won progress towards greater gender equality because of this crisis," DG Azevêdo said.

Building on new analysis and data broken down by gender, the report aims to identify ways that trade can improve the lives of women. It shows how trade and trade policy can affect men and women differently – in terms of wages, consumption and welfare and in the quality of jobs available to them. The new analysis suggests that expanding trade can act as an impetus for countries to improve women's rights and boost their participation in the economy.

A WTO Secretariat information note (see page 77) issued in August – "The economic impact of COVID-19 on women in vulnerable sectors and economies" – showed



that women are likely to be harder hit than men by trade disruptions caused by the pandemic. The risks are particularly acute in developing countries.

The WTO, the International Trade Centre and the UN Conference on Trade and Development organized a webinar on “Applying a gender lens to WTO”. Presentations were made by experts on defining the concepts behind a “gender lens” – the examining of all aspects of work from a gender perspective. Presentations included how to apply a gender lens when implementing WTO rules and agreements. Over 100 representatives of WTO members and observers attended the event.

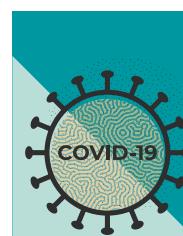
International Women’s Day has become a highlight in the WTO Secretariat’s calendar. The 2020 international women’s day campaign put the spotlight on “Generation Equality: Realizing Women’s Rights”. The then Director-General, Roberto Azevêdo, told a special WTO event on 6 March: “Promoting women’s empowerment and gender equality is a moral imperative as well as an economic one.”

In 2020, the WTO continued its work on understanding how trade can create opportunities for women entrepreneurs.

Together with partners, it conducted a survey in Latin America, complementing data collected in similar surveys in 2019 in South Asia and East Africa. Over 350 women entrepreneurs were surveyed. The findings confirmed results of the previous surveys that lack of knowledge about trade rules and procedures is an important barrier to women entrepreneurs in integrating into international markets.

The WTO evaluated 20 training programmes of regional and international institutions, including the private sector, finding that none adequately address lack of knowledge about trade rules among women entrepreneurs. During 2020, the WTO also conducted interviews with women entrepreneurs in South Asia to understand how COVID-19 impacted their businesses, trade and lives. The WTO has gathered this information into a database.

A report issued by the WTO and the World Bank in 2020 aimed to identify ways in which trade can improve the lives of women.



A WTO Secretariat note highlighted that women are likely to be harder hit than men by trade disruptions caused by the pandemic.

8

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.

at 25: Past, Present & Future



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

OMC WTO



OMC WTO



OMC WTO

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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.

Background

Business and the WTO have always been closely connected. The private sector is a major beneficiary of transparent and predictable trade rules and obligations. Business is an important interlocutor for both governments and the WTO. It is actively involved in the multilateral trading system and participates in public activities of the WTO.

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).



70

In a virtual Trade Dialogue, over 70 business representatives discussed how trade policy responses could help businesses combat the pandemic.

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.

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.



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).

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 WTO participated in other virtual formats in activities held by the IPU and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM). 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.

Background

Parliamentarians play an important role in the multilateral trading system. Any deal resulting from intergovernmental negotiations at the WTO will, in most cases, need approval from legislators. The WTO seeks to maintain an open dialogue with parliamentarians and to help them gain a deeper understanding of the organization and its work.



SPOTLIGHT

25th anniversary of the WTO

On 19 November, the WTO hosted a virtual event to commemorate its 25th anniversary. “WTO at 25: Past, Present & Future” looked at the organization’s achievements and current challenges. Participants underlined the importance of the multilateral trading system as well as the need for reform to strengthen the WTO to deal with global challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.



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 political perspective

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).



Vonai Muyambo of the WTO’s Information and External Relations Division moderated the panel on political perspectives.



Table 1: The political perspective – panellists

Soraya Hakuziyaremye	► Rwanda's Minister for Trade and Industry
Dennis Shea	► United States Deputy Trade Representative and Ambassador to the WTO
Wang Shouwen	► China's Vice Minister and Deputy International Trade Representative, Ministry of Commerce
Cheryl Spencer	► Jamaica's Ambassador to the WTO; Coordinator of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group
Sabine Weyand	► European Union Director-General, Trade
George Yeo	► Formerly Singapore's Minister for Foreign Affairs and for Trade and Industry

Bernie Kuiten of the WTO's Information and External Relations Division moderated the panel on the stakeholders' perspective.

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.

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 panellists 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

Table 2: The stakeholders' perspective – panellists

Joshua Bolten	► President and CEO, US Business Roundtable
Céline Charveriat	► Executive Director, Institute for European Environmental Policy
Martin Chungong	► Secretary-General, Inter-Parliamentary Union
Frank Heemskerk	► Secretary-General, European Round Table for Industry
Soumaya Keynes	► Trade and Globalization Editor, "The Economist" magazine
Guy Ryder	► Director-General, International Labour Organization

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.



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.

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.

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.”



20

The G20 launched the “Riyadh Initiative on the future of the WTO” to promote reform of the organization.

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



German Chancellor Angela Merkel invited the heads of the WTO, ILO, IMF, OECD and the World Bank to a virtual meeting in May 2020 to discuss the health, economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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).



The WTO and the IMF urged governments to refrain from trade restrictions on medical supplies and food.

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).

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

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.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Contact with the media

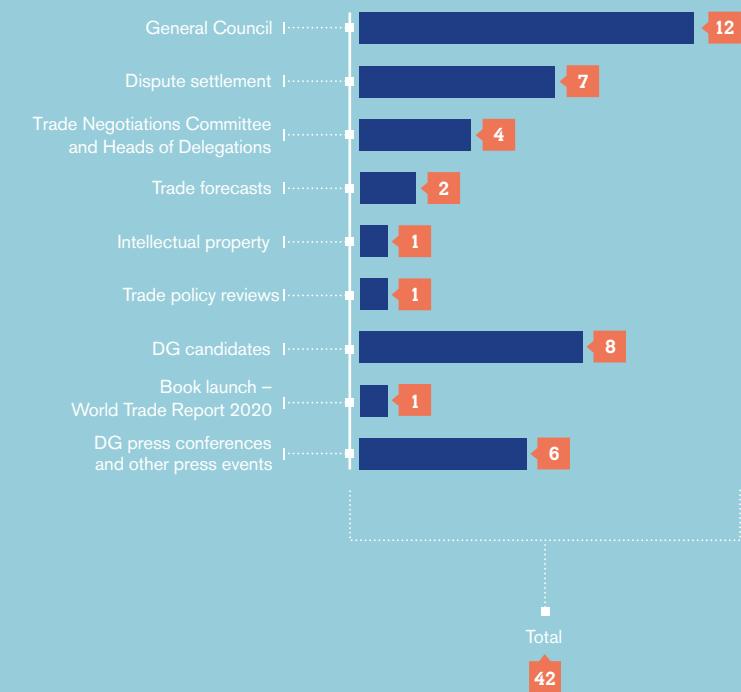
- The COVID-19 pandemic had a major impact on the work of the media team as press briefings and other events switched to virtual formats.
- The impact of the pandemic on global trade and the selection process for the new Director-General were the main focus of media attention in 2020.

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).

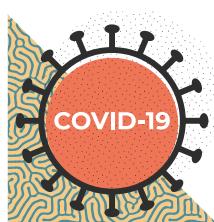
The early departure of DG Azevêdo and the selection process for his successor (see page 28) attracted keen press interest. The media team kept journalists informed of progress in the selection process from the start and organized press conferences in July for the eight candidates as well as DG Azevêdo's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

Figure 1: Press briefings and conferences, by issue, 2020¹



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



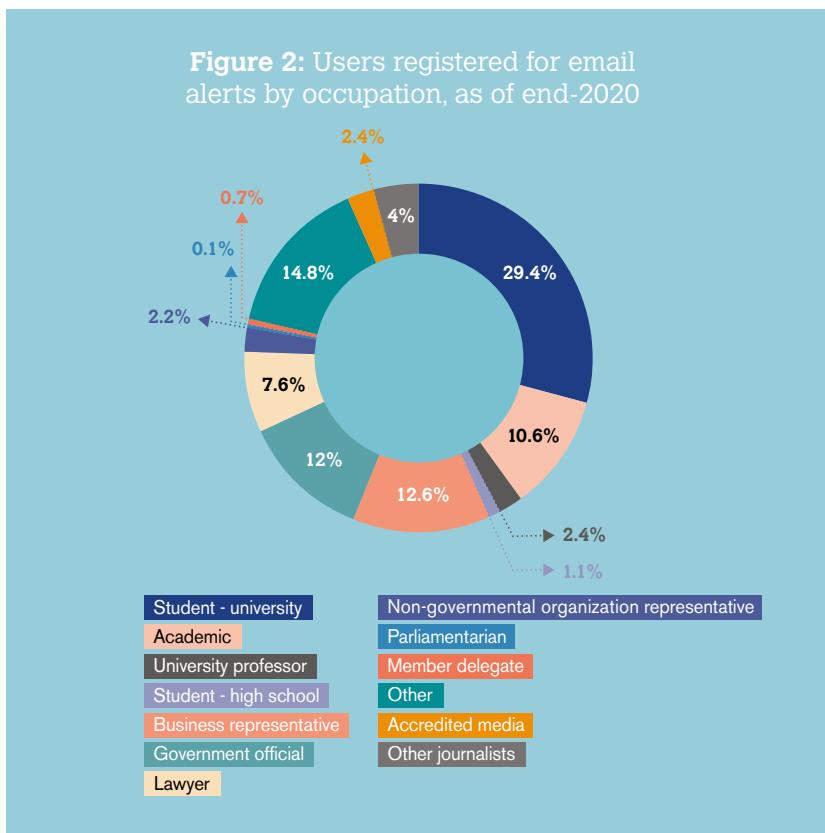
In total, journalists were invited to 42 press conferences, briefings and other events in 2020, including commemoration of the WTO's 25th anniversary. Press officers assisted colleagues with numerous webinars and online conferences over the course of the year.

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.

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.



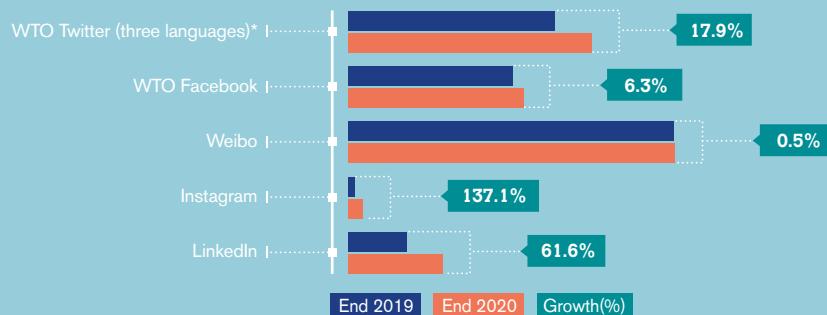
WTO website

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



Figure 3: Percentage of growth in the number of followers of the WTO on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter and Weibo



*Either in English only or together with French and Spanish.

after she presented her candidacy to the General Council to be WTO Director-General (see page 28).

Some 79,600 people have registered to receive email alerts for WTO news items (see Figure 2). The largest numbers of registrations are from India (10.5 per cent), followed by the United States, Mexico, Colombia, France and Peru.

The WTO's "COVID-19 and world trade" (see page 76) section on the website, created to provide up-to-the-minute information on the impact of the pandemic on world trade and on measures members have taken in response to it, was viewed over 926,000 times. The most downloaded WTO Secretariat reports about COVID-19 and trade were "E-commerce, trade and the COVID-19 pandemic" (over 70,000 downloads), "Trade in Medical Goods in the Context of Tackling COVID-19" (56,500) and "Export prohibitions and restrictions" (37,500).

Social media

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.



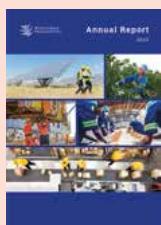
The number of followers on WTO social media channels grew by 13 per cent.

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

ISBN 978-92-870-5023-6 | CHF 50

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

Annual Report 2020 app

Free.

The app features an interactive quiz that tests users' knowledge of the WTO and links to the full text of the report.



World Trade Report 2020: Government policies to promote innovation in the digital age

ISBN 978-92-870-5044-1 | CHF 50

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.



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.

World Tariff Profiles 2020

ISBN 978-92-870-5051-9 | CHF 50

Comprehensive information on tariffs and non-tariff measures imposed by over 170 countries and customs territories.



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.



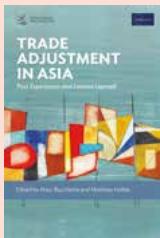


New publications

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.

ISBN 978-92-870-5021-2 | CHF 30

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.



25 Years of the WTO: A Photographic Retrospective

ISBN 978-92-870-4419-8 | CHF 40

This book captures some of the key moments in the life of the WTO since it came into being on 1 January 1995. Over 150 photos provide insights into the work of the WTO over 25 years of challenges, successes and perseverance.



A Handbook on the WTO TRIPS Agreement (second edition)

ISBN 978-1-10879-992-8 | CHF 55

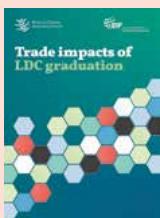
This second edition describes the historical and legal background to the TRIPS Agreement, its role in the WTO and its institutional framework, and covers the public health revision of the Agreement that entered into force in 2017. Co-published with Cambridge University Press.



Short Answers to Big Questions on the WTO and the Environment

ISBN 978-92-870-5118-9 | Free

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.



Trade Impacts of LDC Graduation (two volumes)

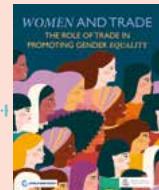
ISBN 978-92-870-5106-6 | CHF 30 (Vol. 1), digital only (Vol. 2)

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).



Dictionary of Trade Policy Terms (sixth edition)

By Walter Goode.

ISBN 978-1-108-82319-7 | CHF 55

The dictionary explains, in simple language, over 3,000 terms used in international trade. Co-published with Cambridge University Press.



GATT Dispute Settlement Reports: Disputes Initiated in 1948–1993

ISBN 978-1-108-49542-4 (complete archive set of six volumes) | CHF 700

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.



Adapting to the Digital Trade Era: Challenges and Opportunities

Edited by Maarten Smeets.

ISBN 978-92-870-4302-3 | CHF 40

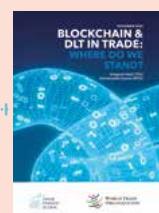
This publication, which marks the conclusion of the second phase of the WTO Chairs Programme, looks at how the rapid adoption of digital technologies can create challenges and opportunities for developing countries.



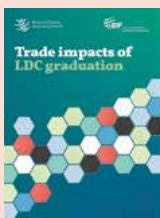
Blockchain and DLT in Trade: Where Do We Stand?

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.



Trade Impacts of LDC Graduation



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.

Background

The WTO's Economic Research and Statistics Division organizes regular seminars and conferences as well as online forums involving academics and researchers in Geneva and around the world. These activities include the Geneva Trade and Development Workshop programme. It is responsible for the WTO's flagship publication, the "World Trade Report", which aims to deepen understanding about trends in trade, trade policy issues and the multilateral trading system.

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.

DDG Yi Xiaozhun launches the World Trade Report in November 2020.

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



► Essay Award



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”.



The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted international trade and global supply chains on an unprecedented scale.

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

Background

The Economic Research and Statistics Division supports WTO members and the WTO Secretariat with data on economic and trade policy issues and with technical advisory services on market access negotiations and on the maintenance of goods schedules. The division is the principal supplier of WTO trade statistics and information on tariffs and non-tariff measures. It provides technical assistance for trade policy courses and national workshops and contributes to inter-organizational statistical activities.



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.

The WTO's trade forecast press conference in October 2020.



WTO CHAIRS
PROGRAMME

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.

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.

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

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 Development Cooperation, and Franck Riester, France’s Minister Delegate for

Foreign Trade and Economic Attractiveness, representing two key donors of phase II of the programme.

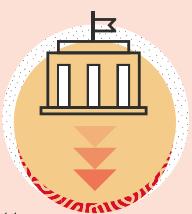
Academic Support Programme

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





9

Secretariat and budget

The WTO Secretariat has over 600 regular staff who coordinate the activities of the WTO. Most of the WTO's annual budget consists of contributions by its members.



The atrium of the
WTO's headquarters
in Geneva.



192
WTO
Secretariat

200
Budget,
finance
and
administration

WTO Secretariat

- In spite of the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Human Resources Division was fully operational in 2020, with no disruptions to core activities.
- Support was provided to staff during the pandemic via a health task force and through the medical service.
- WTO recruitment activity remained high, with 49 vacancies filled in 2020. The Human Resources Division continued to reallocate resources to high-priority areas.
- Work began on the “Workday Implementation and Service Enhancement” project, a cloud-based HR/payroll system which will go live in 2021.

In spite of the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, activities remained high in all areas of the Human Resources Division, with no disruptions to core activities.

A Health Task Force (HTF) was established in response to the pandemic. This played a key role in ensuring the health and safety of WTO staff and the smooth running of the organization's main activities.

The HTF included representatives from various divisions, the Medical Service and the Staff Council. Its role included keeping staff abreast of new COVID-19 developments, following up with staff members suffering from COVID-19 symptoms, and coordinating with other international organizations and the Swiss authorities.



The WTO established a Health Task Force to ensure the health and safety of WTO staff during the pandemic.



624

The WTO has a total of 624 staff.

The Medical Service introduced measures to support staff affected by the pandemic and to keep the premises safe. It also provided statistics on COVID-19 cases within the WTO and proposed measures to mitigate risks to staff.

Due to the pandemic, all learning and development initiatives were conducted virtually. These included workshops on ethics, learning networks, peer coaching, executive coaching, mentoring, information technology (IT) and language training, and external management programmes. New virtual initiatives included webinars on virtual training techniques for technical assistance trainers and managing teams virtually, a motivational speakers series and activities on diversity and inclusion.

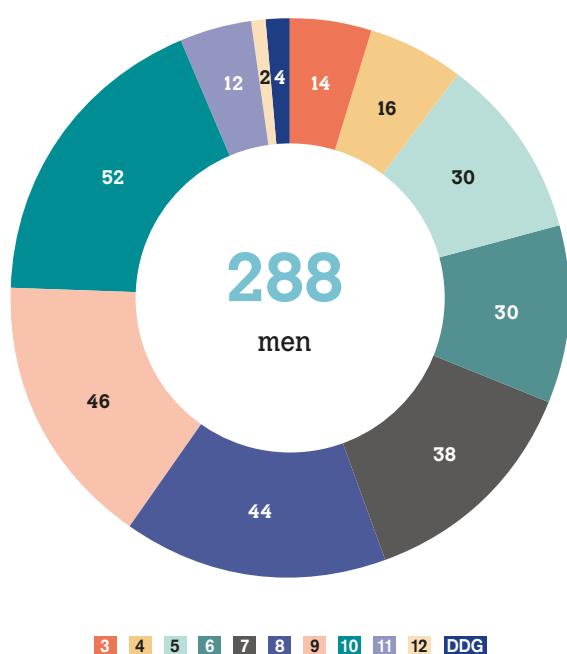
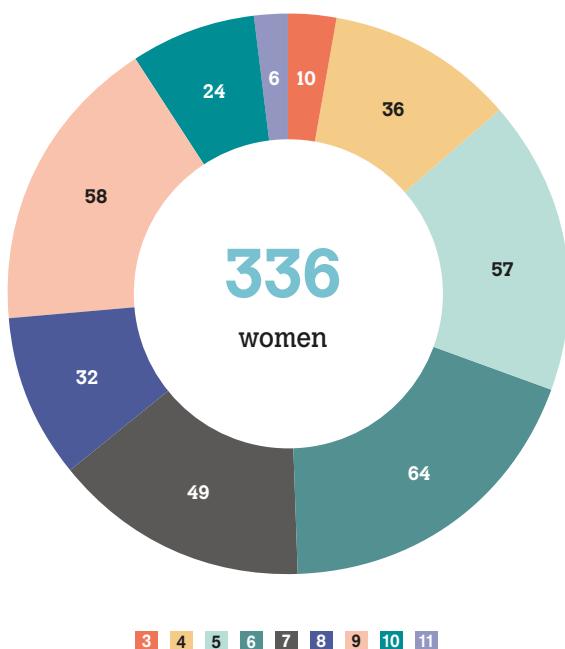
The WTO's recruitment activity remained high, with 49 vacancies filled in 2020. The overall number of staff increased to 624. Secretariat staff come from 79 WTO members (see Figure 4).

The Secretariat is composed mostly of economists, lawyers and specialists in international trade policy. There are also specialists in IT, communications, statistics, finance, human resources and language services (see Figure 3 and Table 1). The working languages of the WTO are English, French and Spanish.

Secretariat staff on the regular budget comprise professional and support service categories (Figure 2). Professional staff account for 62 per cent of the total and support service staff 38 per cent. Women continue to outnumber men at the WTO, by 336 to 288 (see Figure 1). Among professional staff, 45 per cent are female and 55 per cent male, compared with 42 per cent and 58 per cent, respectively, in 2014.

The Human Resources Division continues to respond to the evolving needs of the Secretariat by reallocating resources to high-

Figure 1: WTO staff on regular budget by grade and gender, as of 31 December 2020



► New recruit



Astghik Solomonyan

Technical Assistance Officer | Intellectual Property, Government Procurement and Competition Division

Nationality: Armenian

Joining date: 1 September 2020

I recall learning about the WTO when I joined the international trade module at the University of Groningen (Netherlands). That was when I decided I wanted to work at the WTO. After returning to Armenia, I became involved in government procurement through my work and additional studies, and I have kept to that path ever since.

Before joining the WTO, I obtained my PhD in Public Procurement Law from the University of Nottingham and worked at several international organizations, such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). There, I worked as a consultant for countries wishing to reform their government procurement systems in line with international best practices, including the WTO Agreement on Government Procurement.

Here at the WTO, my main duty is to help to organize different workshops and other events for beneficiary countries. I am also involved in delivering training programmes, working with delegations, and contributing to the wider work of the Intellectual Property, Government Procurement and Competition Division.

► New recruit

**Mateo Reyes-Chiappe**

Interpreter | Administration and General Services Division

Nationality: Colombian

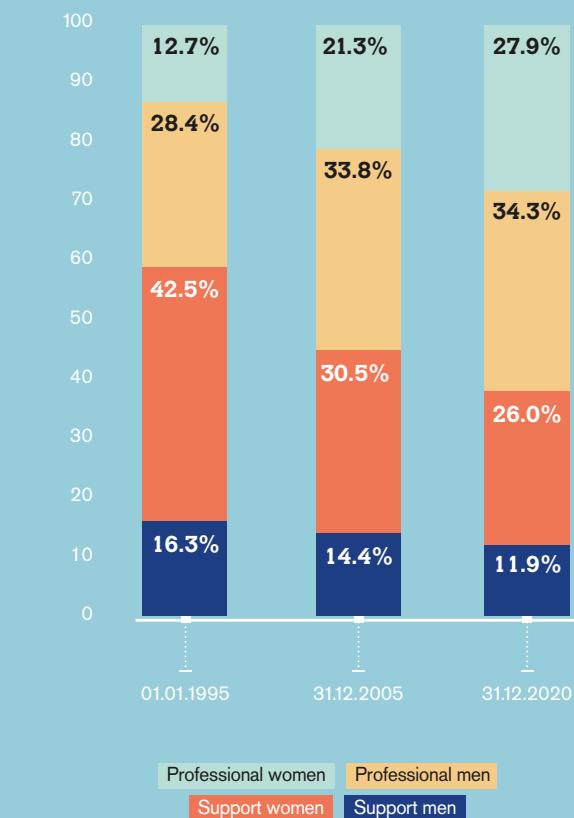
Joining date: 1 May 2020

Interpreting for the WTO is not for the faint-hearted. From my earliest days as an interpreter in Colombia, I was aware of the reputation of WTO interpreters, known for their rigour, expertise and skill at handling complex, high-stakes, fast-paced meetings. Coming here was like joining an all-star team.

For 15 years I was a freelance conference interpreter in Ottawa, Boston and Bogotá. I worked for the United Nations, International Monetary Fund and World Bank, as well as for medical conferences, presidential debates, literary festivals, field expeditions and peace agreement ceremonies.

WTO delegates appreciate being able to express themselves in any of the three official languages, secure in the knowledge that their messages will be delivered intact. For interpreters, this necessitates delving into the literature, keeping abreast of an ever-changing range of subjects, making split-second decisions and using textual and contextual cues to deliver a clear, accurate rendition. Sometimes we work up a sweat, but it's deeply gratifying.

Figure 2: Percentage of WTO staff by professional/support category



priority areas, such as the legal sections, particularly the Rules Division. Staffing measures take into account the limitations imposed by WTO members, including the overall cap on the budget and personnel.

Various methods of informal resolution of workplace disputes continue to be available to staff. The WTO has an independent psychologist for staff seeking assistance with psychological and social support. This is in addition to the external and internal mediators, the Head of the Office of Internal Oversight (OIO) and the Legal Counsel to the Administration.

Fourteen new young professionals joined the Young Professionals Programme in January 2021, working in 11 different divisions. The programme aims to increase the number of professionals in the WTO Secretariat from developing and least-developed countries under-represented in the organization (see page 163).

A new division was created in July – the Division for Knowledge and Information Management, Academic Outreach and WTO

► New recruit

Chairs Programme (see page 186). The division develops and coordinates WTO knowledge information management policies and is responsible for academic outreach activities.

In 2017, HR embarked on an initiative to provide a more modern and effective service to staff. The strategy has two elements: improve and streamline processes, identifying gaps and areas for improvement within HR operations; and implement a new cloud-based HR information system with self-service functionalities.

The implementation of a user-friendly, cloud-based HR/payroll platform called "Workday" began in August 2020. The first phase consists of HR core activities within the areas of recruitment, absence, payroll, benefits and compensation. Self-service functionalities will be available for employees and managers, with a launch date scheduled for the latter half of 2021.

The second phase, involving learning and development, performance management and advanced compensation, will be available from mid-2022. Workday will offer a simpler way of carrying out HR interactions, with the platform accessible from desktops and mobile devices. It will also provide access to additional data, such as development opportunities, making it easier for staff to take informed decisions.

Based on the policy, "Right to Work in an Environment free from Discrimination, Harassment and Abuse of Authority", launched in 2018, the Learning Service worked in conjunction with an external learning provider to produce a four-part "Respect & Harmony" e-learning course. To date, approximately 80 per cent of staff members have taken it.

Webinars entitled "Conversations about Ethics", including scenarios on everyday ethical dilemmas, were developed for all staff in 2020. Issues pertaining to discrimination are being addressed via a series of virtual learning events on diversity and inclusion.

**Ayten Dersan**

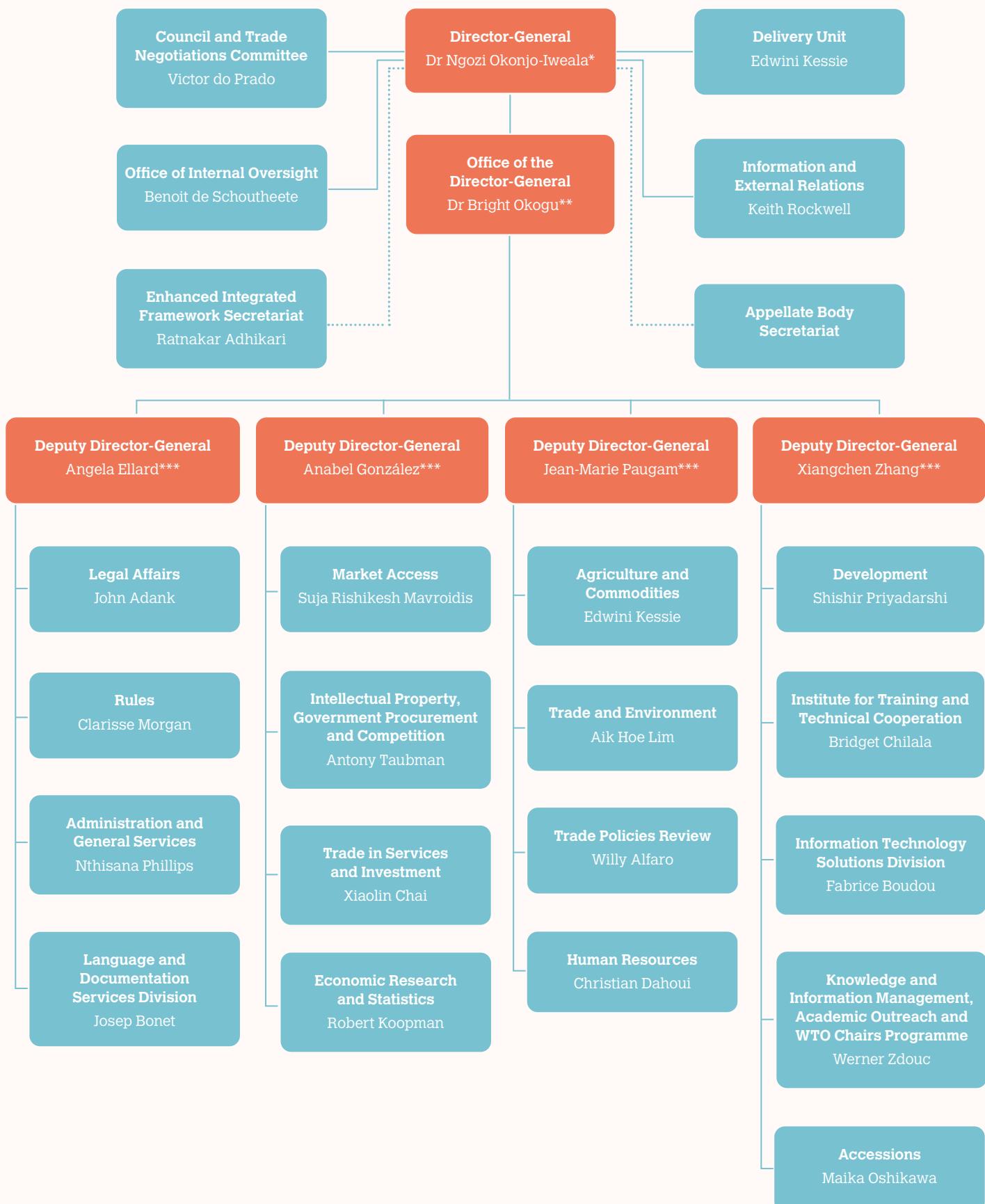
Chief of Documents Management, Monitoring and Production Section | Language and Documentation Services Division

Nationality: Belgian

Joining date: 16 April 2020

Before joining the WTO, I worked at the Translation Centre for the Bodies of the European Union, a Luxembourg-based agency offering language services to EU institutional customers. I joined the Translation Centre in 2004 as a translations workflow administrator, managing the planning of documents and translations. Subsequently, I managed the team that revamped the EU terminology database. I then became a business development manager. In my last two years in that role, I was engaged in implementing a "transformation programme" to analyse, evaluate and overhaul our division's working practices, processes and technology.

I feel privileged to have joined the team of specialists that manages the WTO language and documents requests. Recently, we launched a programme called "Astra" to transform and develop our processes, technology and team structure. I am excited to have participated in this programme and to be contributing, together with my colleagues, to giving new momentum to our working methods and tools. I strongly believe that, by committing ourselves to targeted excellence, our team can implement best practices in our working methods.

Figure 3: WTO Secretariat organizational chart, as of 31 May 2021

* DG Okonjo-Iweala took office on 1 March 2021. Roberto Azevêdo was Director-General up to 31 August 2020.

** Dr Bright Okogu took office as Chief of Staff on 2 May 2021. Tim Yeend served as Chief of Staff until 30 April 2021.

*** DG Okonjo-Iweala announced the appointment of her four DDGs on 4 May 2021. Their divisional responsibilities were agreed on 1 June.

DDGs Yonov Frederick Agah, Karl Brauner, Alan Wolff and Xiaozhun Yi ended their term of office on 31 March 2021.



The WTO's headquarters in Geneva.

Table 1: Allocation of posts by division, as of 31 December 2020 (number of posts)*

Division	Grades 1-10 (including vacancies)	Senior management and directors	Grand total
Senior Management (DG, DDGs and their assistants)	5.0	5.0	10.0
Accessions Division	9.0	1.0	10.0
Administration and General Services Division	60.2	1.0	61.2
Agriculture and Commodities Division	21.8	1.0	22.8
Council and TNC Division	13.0	1.0	14.0
Development Division	19.7	1.0	20.7
Economic Research and Statistics Division	37.6	1.0	38.6
Human Resources Division	27.7	1.0	28.7
Information and External Relations Division	29.8	1.0	30.8
Information Technology Solutions Division	37.0	1.0	38.0
Institute for Training and Technical Cooperation	29.3	1.0	30.3
Intellectual Property, Government Procurement and Competition Division	15.3	1.0	16.3
Knowledge and Information Management, Academic Outreach and WTO Chairs Programme	16.8	1.0	17.8
Language and Documentation Services Division	107.9	1.0	108.9
Legal Affairs Division	38.0	1.0	39.0
Market Access Division	20.8	1.0	21.8
Office of Internal Oversight	2.0	1.0	3.0
Office of the Director-General	13.8	1.0	14.8
Rules Division	34.2	1.0	35.2
Trade and Environment Division	14.6	1.0	15.6
Trade in Services and Investment Division	16.1	1.0	17.1
Trade Policies Review Division	49.9	1.0	50.9
Total	614.5	26.0	645.5

*Includes posts not yet filled. Figures in decimals indicate staff members who work a percentage of the working week (e.g. 80 per cent).

Figure 4: WTO staff on regular budget by gender and nationality, as of 31 December 2020

► North America			
Member	Women	Men	Total
Canada	5	14	19
Mexico	2	5	7
United States of America	19	13	32
Total	26	32	58



336

Women



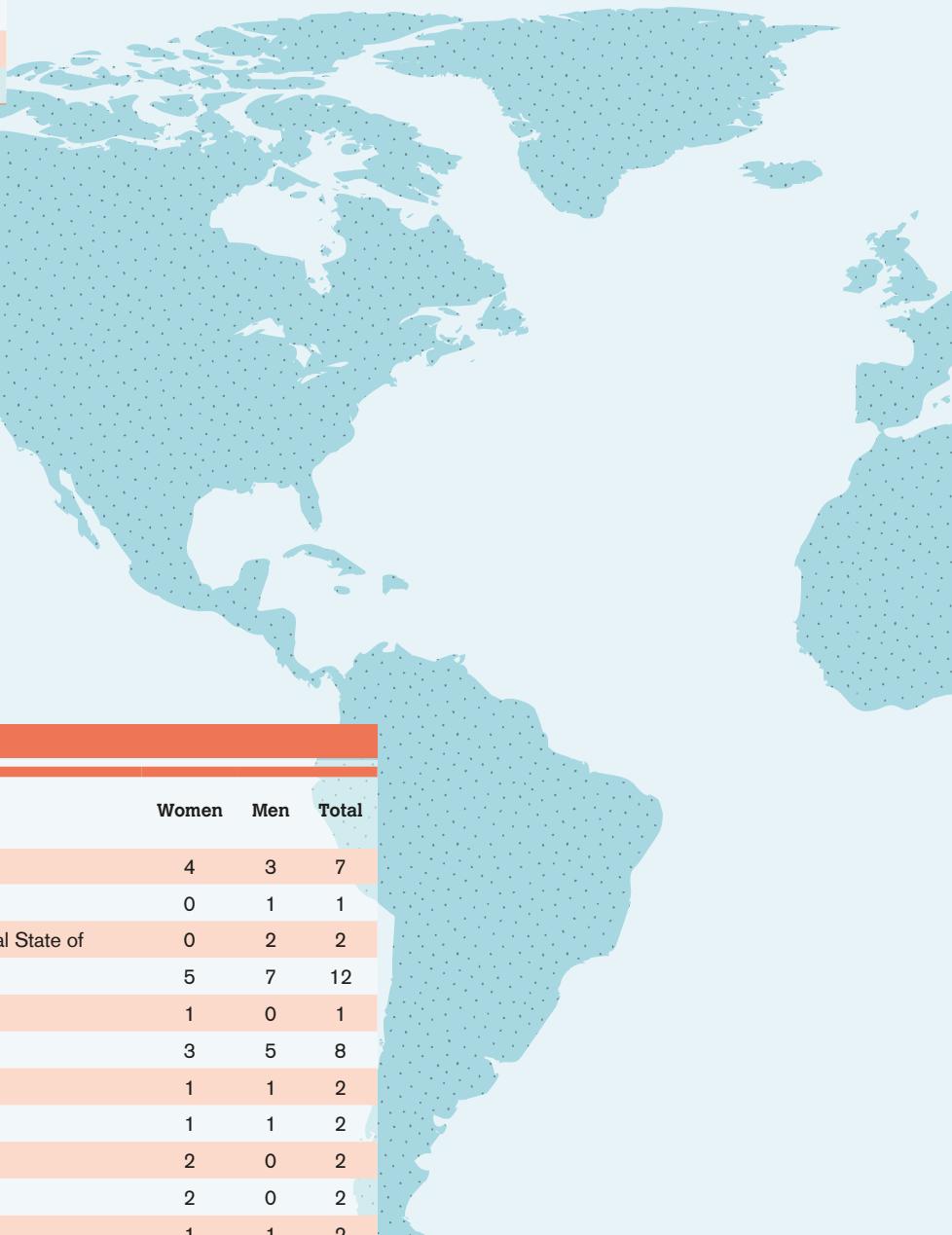
288

Men



Total

624



► Latin America			
Member	Women	Men	Total
Argentina	4	3	7
Barbados	0	1	1
Bolivia, Plurinational State of	0	2	2
Brazil	5	7	12
Chile	1	0	1
Colombia	3	5	8
Costa Rica	1	1	2
Ecuador	1	1	2
Guatemala	2	0	2
Honduras	2	0	2
Jamaica	1	1	2
Paraguay	1	0	1
Peru	4	4	8
Trinidad and Tobago	2	0	2
Uruguay	0	3	3
Venezuela, Bolivarian Republic of	0	3	3
Total	27	31	58

▶ Europe

Member	Women	Men	Total	Member	Women	Men	Total
Austria	2	2	4	Lithuania	0	1	1
Belgium	4	2	6	Netherlands	1	5	6
Bulgaria	2	4	6	Norway	0	2	2
Croatia	1	0	1	Poland	2	1	3
Czech Republic	1	0	1	Portugal	0	4	4
Denmark	1	1	2	Romania	2	0	2
Estonia	1	0	1	Russian Federation	4	2	6
Finland	2	3	5	Spain	30	13	43
France	100	65	165	Sweden	1	2	3
Germany	8	14	22	Switzerland	9	9	18
Greece	3	2	5	Ukraine	1	0	1
Hungary	1	3	4	United Kingdom	36	10	46
Ireland	11	1	12	Total	233	159	392
Italy	10	13	23				

▶ Africa

Member	Women	Men	Total
Benin	0	2	2
Botswana	1	0	1
Cameroon	1	0	1
Democratic Republic of the Congo	2	2	4
Egypt	3	1	4
Guinea	0	1	1
Kenya	2	0	2
Malawi	0	1	1
Mauritius	0	2	2
Morocco	1	3	4
Nigeria	0	1	1
Rwanda	0	1	1
Senegal	0	1	1
South Africa	0	1	1
Tanzania	2	0	2
The Gambia	2	0	2
Tunisia	2	2	4
Uganda	1	1	2
Zambia	1	0	1
Zimbabwe	2	0	2
Total	20	19	39

▶ Asia

Member	Women	Men	Total
Bangladesh	0	1	1
China	9	7	16
India	2	11	13
Japan	2	2	4
Jordan	1	0	1
Korea, Republic of	4	0	4
Malaysia	0	2	2
Nepal	0	1	1
Pakistan	0	3	3
Philippines	6	8	14
Sri Lanka	2	0	2
Turkey	1	3	4
Total	27	38	65

▶ Oceania

Member	Women	Men	Total
Australia	3	8	11
New Zealand	0	1	1
Total	3	9	12

Budget, finance and administration

- The Committee recommended that the General Council approve the 2021 budget.
- The Committee recommended that the accumulated budgetary surplus be transferred to the Working Capital Fund.

The Committee on Budget, Finance and Administration recommended that the General Council approve the 2021 budgets for the WTO and the International Trade Centre (see Table 2).

The Committee reviewed the quarterly reports on the financial and extra-budgetary situation of the WTO, the 2020 WTO salary survey and dependency allowances, updates from the chair of the WTO Pension Plan management board and a report on the status of the implementation of the external audit recommendations. It also reviewed an update on the WTO medical insurance plan and After Service Health Insurance, the 2018 and 2019 annual report on the grading structure in the WTO Secretariat, the annual strategic facilities plan, the report of the Office of Internal Oversight for 2019-20, the annual report on diversity in the WTO Secretariat for 2019 and an update on WTO Secretariat training in standards of conduct.

The Committee took note of outstanding contributions from WTO members and observers and invited the General Council to urge those under administrative measures to liquidate their arrears.

The WTO Secretariat presented the WTO 2019 Financial Performance Report. The Committee proposed that the General Council approve the transfers between budgetary sections outlined in the report. The external auditors presented their report for 2019 and the Committee recommended that the General Council approve the 2019 WTO audited financial statements.

The Office of Internal Oversight presented its report on internal audit activities for 2019-20 and a report on the review of Appellate Body members' and panellists' fees.

Background

The Committee on Budget, Finance and Administration monitors the WTO's budgetary and financial matters. It considers issues concerning human resources management, hears progress reports on the WTO pension plan and deals with financial and administrative matters concerning the WTO Secretariat. The Committee reports to the General Council.

The Committee recommended the General Council approve that the accumulated budgetary surplus, as at 31 December 2019, be transferred to the Working Capital Fund, which can be used to cover short-term cash shortages.

The Committee discussed other topics, such as coherence in the establishment and management of WTO trust funds, enhancing strategic planning and horizontal coordination in the WTO, enhancing output reporting and the planned update of the online documents platform. This new version of the platform will be a secure and intuitive application that helps

users easily find the information they need. Preparatory work for implementation of the project began in early 2021.

WTO budget 2021

The WTO derives its income from annual contributions from its 164 members (see Table 3) and miscellaneous income. These contributions are based on a formula that takes into account each member's share of international trade. Miscellaneous income mainly consists of contributions from observer countries, income from the sale of publications and rental of meeting rooms.



164

The WTO derives its income from annual contributions from its 164 members.

The WTO's budget for 2021 is:

CHF 197,204,000

Table 2: Consolidated budget for 2021

Section	Budget 2021
Staff expenditure (including staff remuneration, pension and post-employment benefits, health and invalidity insurance, family and international benefits)	131,565,000
Temporary assistance (including short-term staff, consultants, translators, panellists and Appellate Body member fees)	17,275,000
General services (including telecommunications and post, contractual services and maintenance, energy and supplies, documentation and publication)	15,826,000
Travel and hospitality	8,207,000
Implementing partners (includes any activity or event partly/jointly/fully funded by the WTO but executed by a third-party organization)	213,000
Capital expenditure (including procurement of fixed assets and rental and leasing of equipment)	2,895,000
Financial expenditure (including bank and interest charges and building loan reimbursement)	1,780,000
Contributions to International Trade Centre and special reserves (including Appellate Body operating fund, Ministerial Conference operating fund)	19,443,000
Grand total	197,204,000

Table 3: WTO members' contributions to the consolidated budget 2021 (in Swiss Francs)

Member	2021 contribution CHF	2021 contribution %	Member	2021 contribution CHF	2021 contribution %
Afghanistan	41,055	0.021%	Ecuador	213,095	0.109%
Albania	43,010	0.022%	Egypt	496,570	0.254%
Angola	326,485	0.167%	El Salvador	80,155	0.041%
Antigua and Barbuda	29,325	0.015%	Estonia	175,950	0.090%
Argentina	692,070	0.354%	Eswatini	29,325	0.015%
Armenia	41,055	0.021%	European Union ¹	0	0.000%
Australia	2,521,950	1.290%	Fiji	29,325	0.015%
Austria	1,927,630	0.986%	Finland	850,425	0.435%
Bahrain, Kingdom of	230,690	0.118%	France	7,458,325	3.815%
Bangladesh	391,000	0.200%	Gabon	64,515	0.033%
Barbados	29,325	0.015%	The Gambia	29,325	0.015%
Belgium	3,587,425	1.835%	Georgia	72,335	0.037%
Belize	29,325	0.015%	Germany	14,031,035	7.177%
Benin	31,280	0.016%	Ghana	172,040	0.088%
Bolivia, Plurinational State of	99,705	0.051%	Greece	635,375	0.325%
Botswana	68,425	0.035%	Grenada	29,325	0.015%
Brazil	2,189,600	1.120%	Guatemala	142,715	0.073%
Brunei Darussalam	54,740	0.028%	Guinea	31,280	0.016%
Bulgaria	324,530	0.166%	Guinea-Bissau	29,325	0.015%
Burkina Faso	35,190	0.018%	Guyana	29,325	0.015%
Burundi	29,325	0.015%	Haiti	29,325	0.015%
Cabo Verde	29,325	0.015%	Honduras	78,200	0.040%
Cambodia	140,760	0.072%	Hong Kong, China	5,575,660	2.852%
Cameroon	66,470	0.034%	Hungary	1,024,420	0.524%
Canada	4,779,975	2.445%	Iceland	86,020	0.044%
Central African Republic	29,325	0.015%	India	4,510,185	2.307%
Chad	39,100	0.020%	Indonesia	1,657,840	0.848%
Chile	684,250	0.350%	Ireland	2,955,960	1.512%
China	20,419,975	10.445%	Israel	860,200	0.440%
Colombia	502,435	0.257%	Italy	5,034,125	2.575%
Congo	70,380	0.036%	Jamaica	52,785	0.027%
Costa Rica	162,265	0.083%	Japan	7,599,085	3.887%
Côte d'Ivoire	107,525	0.055%	Jordan	164,220	0.084%
Croatia	232,645	0.119%	Kazakhstan	461,380	0.236%
Cuba	121,210	0.062%	Kenya	123,165	0.063%
Cyprus	136,850	0.070%	Korea, Republic of	5,577,615	2.853%
Czech Republic	1,431,060	0.732%	Kuwait, the State of	568,905	0.291%
Democratic Republic of the Congo	119,255	0.061%	Kyrgyz Republic	35,190	0.018%
Denmark	1,509,260	0.772%	Lao People's Democratic Republic	52,785	0.027%
Djibouti	31,280	0.016%	Latvia	164,220	0.084%
Dominica	29,325	0.015%	Lesotho	29,325	0.015%
Dominican Republic	172,040	0.088%	Liberia	29,325	0.015%
			Liechtenstein	62,560	0.032%

Member	2021 contribution CHF	2021 contribution %	Member	2021 contribution CHF	2021 contribution %
Lithuania	310,845	0.159%	Saint Kitts and Nevis	29,325	0.015%
Luxembourg	1,018,555	0.521%	Saint Lucia	29,325	0.015%
Macao, China	256,105	0.131%	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	29,325	0.015%
Madagascar	33,235	0.017%	Samoa	29,325	0.015%
Malawi	29,325	0.015%	Saudi Arabia, Kingdom of	2,037,110	1.042%
Malaysia	1,896,350	0.970%	Senegal	50,830	0.026%
Maldives	29,325	0.015%	Seychelles	29,325	0.015%
Mali	35,190	0.018%	Sierra Leone	29,325	0.015%
Malta	152,490	0.078%	Singapore	4,803,435	2.457%
Mauritania	29,325	0.015%	Slovak Republic	783,955	0.401%
Mauritius	54,740	0.028%	Slovenia	324,530	0.166%
Mexico	3,884,585	1.987%	Solomon Islands	29,325	0.015%
Moldova, Republic of	37,145	0.019%	South Africa	905,165	0.463%
Mongolia	56,695	0.029%	Spain	3,782,925	1.935%
Montenegro	29,325	0.015%	Sri Lanka	187,680	0.096%
Morocco	371,450	0.190%	Suriname	29,325	0.015%
Mozambique	64,515	0.033%	Sweden	2,037,110	1.042%
Myanmar	134,895	0.069%	Switzerland	3,573,740	1.828%
Namibia	48,875	0.025%	Chinese Taipei	3,165,145	1.619%
Nepal	56,695	0.029%	Tajikistan	29,325	0.015%
Netherlands	5,741,835	2.937%	Tanzania	87,975	0.045%
New Zealand	467,245	0.239%	Thailand	2,389,010	1.222%
Nicaragua	54,740	0.028%	Togo	29,325	0.015%
Niger	29,325	0.015%	Tonga	29,325	0.015%
Nigeria	543,490	0.278%	Trinidad and Tobago	97,750	0.050%
North Macedonia	60,605	0.031%	Tunisia	183,770	0.094%
Norway	1,282,480	0.656%	Turkey	2,050,795	1.049%
Oman	342,125	0.175%	Uganda	54,740	0.028%
Pakistan	369,495	0.189%	Ukraine	508,300	0.260%
Panama	242,420	0.124%	United Arab Emirates	3,059,575	1.565%
Papua New Guinea	60,605	0.031%	United Kingdom	7,473,965	3.823%
Paraguay	113,390	0.058%	United States of America	22,949,745	11.739%
Peru	418,370	0.214%	Uruguay	130,985	0.067%
Philippines	821,100	0.420%	Vanuatu	29,325	0.015%
Poland	2,326,450	1.190%	Venezuela, Bolivarian Republic of	559,130	0.286%
Portugal	803,505	0.411%	Viet Nam	1,757,545	0.899%
Qatar	703,800	0.360%	Yemen	78,200	0.040%
Romania	766,360	0.392%	Zambia	80,155	0.041%
Russian Federation	3,407,565	1.743%	Zimbabwe	50,830	0.026%
Rwanda	29,325	0.015%	TOTAL	195,500,000	100.000%

¹ The European Union is not subject to contributions. However, its 27 members are assessed individually.
The total share of members of the European Union represents 30.45% of the total assessed contributions for 2021.

How the WTO is structured

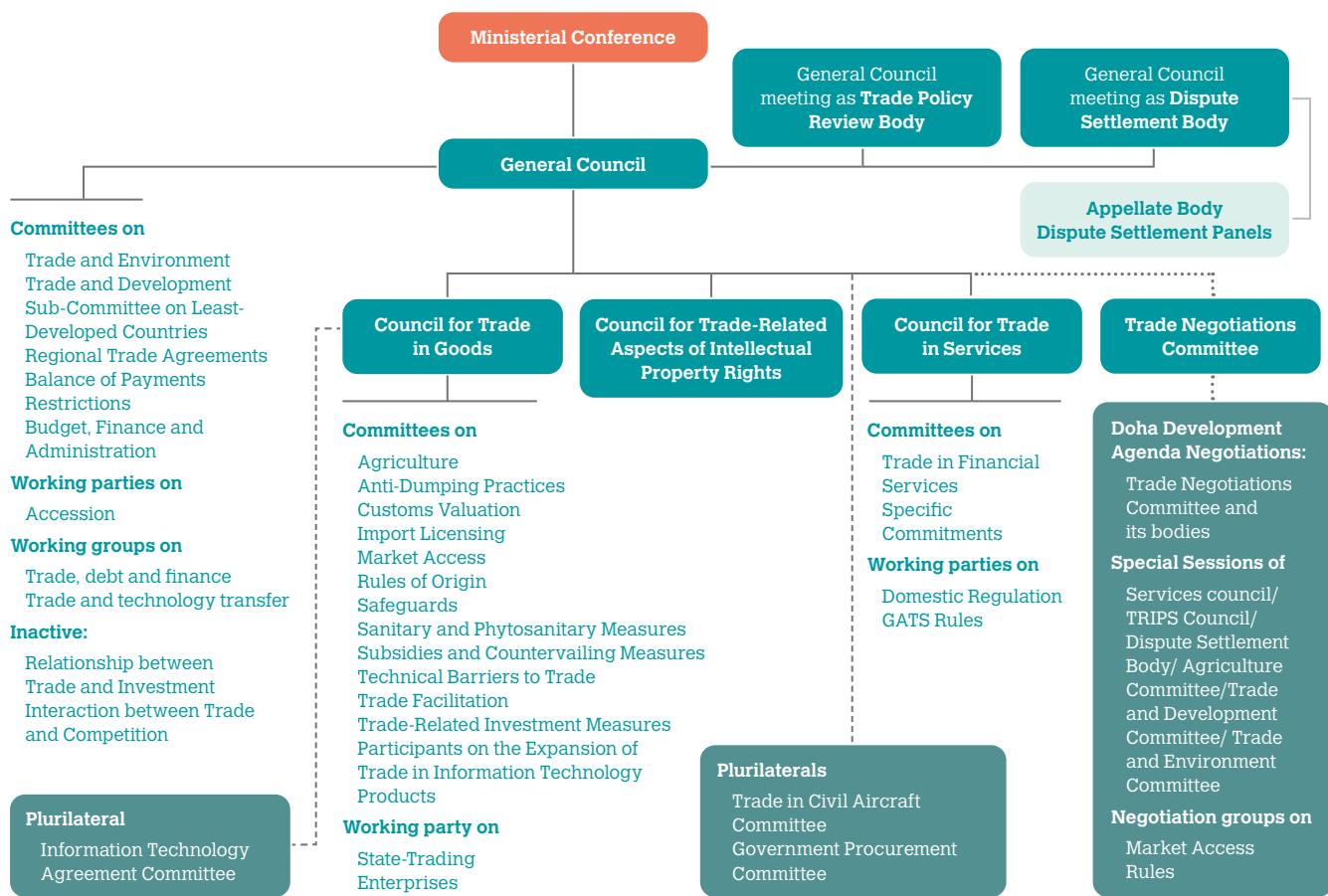
- The WTO's top-level decision-making body is the Ministerial Conference, which usually meets every two years.

Below this is the General Council (normally ambassadors and heads of delegation in Geneva, and sometimes officials sent from members' capitals), which meets several times a year in the Geneva headquarters. The General Council also meets as the Trade Policy Review Body and the Dispute Settlement Body.

At the next level, the Goods Council, Services Council and Intellectual Property (TRIPS) Council report to the General Council.

Numerous specialized committees, working groups and working parties deal with the individual agreements and other areas such as the environment, development, membership applications and regional trade agreements.

All WTO members may participate in all councils and committees, with the exceptions of the Appellate Body, Dispute Settlement panels and plurilateral committees.



Key

- Reporting to General Council (or a subsidiary)
 - Reporting to Dispute Settlement Body
 - - - Plurilateral committees inform the General Council or Goods Council of their activities, although these agreements are not signed by all WTO members
 - Trade Negotiations Committee reports to General Council

WTO Chairpersons (as of 31 December 2020)

Chairpersons of the General Council and bodies reporting to it

General Council	Ambassador David Walker (New Zealand)
Dispute Settlement Body	Ambassador Dacio Castillo (Honduras)
Trade Policy Review Body	Ambassador Harald Aspelund (Iceland)
Council for Trade in Goods	Ambassador Mikael Anzén (Sweden)
Council for Trade in Services	Ambassador Tan Hung Seng (Singapore)
Council for Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights	Ambassador Xolelwa Mlumbi-Peter (South Africa)
Committee on Trade and Environment	Ambassador Chad Blackman (Barbados)
Committee on Trade and Development	Ambassador Mohammad Qurban Hajjo (Afghanistan)
Sub-Committee on Least-Developed Countries	Ambassador Monique T.G. Van Daalen (Netherlands)
Committee on Balance-of Payments Restrictions	Ambassador Refiloe Litjobo (Lesotho)
Committee on Regional Trade Agreements	Ambassador Mārtiņš Kreitūns (Latvia)
Committee on Budget, Finance and Administration	Ambassador Manuel Teehankee (Philippines)
Working Group on Trade and Transfer of Technology	Ambassador Stephen Fevrier (Saint Lucia)
Working Group on Trade, Debt and Finance	Ambassador Rashidi Said (Malaysia)
Trade Negotiations Committee	Director-General Roberto Azevêdo (until 31 August 2020)

Chairpersons of bodies established under the Trade Negotiations Committee

Negotiating Group on Market Access	Ambassador Didier Chambovey (Switzerland)
Negotiating Group on Rules	Ambassador Santiago Wills (Colombia)
Special Session of the Council for Trade in Services	Ambassador Zhanar Aitzhanova (Kazakhstan)
Special Session of the Council for TRIPS	Ambassador Alfredo Suescum (Panama)
Special Session of the Dispute Settlement Body	Ambassador Yackoley Kokou Johnson (Togo)
Special Session of the Committee on Agriculture	Ambassador Gloria Abraham Peralta (Costa Rica)
Sub-Committee on Cotton	Ambassador Gloria Abraham Peralta (Costa Rica)

Special Session of the Committee on Trade and Environment

Ambassador Leopold Samba (Central African Republic)

Special Session of the Committee on Trade and Development

Ambassador Kadra Ahmed Hassan (Djibouti)

Chairpersons of subsidiary bodies of the Council for Trade in Goods

Committee on Agriculture	Ms Maria Escandor (Philippines)
Committee on Anti-Dumping Practices	Ms Maarit Keitanen (Finland)
Committee on Customs Valuation	Mr Carlos Guevara (Ecuador)
Committee on Import Licensing	Dr Muhammad Irfan (Pakistan)
Committee on Market Access	Mr Anatoly Chaplin (Russian Federation)
Committee on Rules of Origin	Mr Han-Ming Huang (Chinese Taipei)
Committee on Safeguards	Mr Mustafa Tuzcu (Turkey)
Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures	Mr Gregory MacDonald (Canada)
Committee on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures	Ms Sungyo Choi (Republic of Korea)
Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade	Mr Laurence Sandal (Australia)
Committee on Trade Facilitation	Ambassador Katrina Naut (Dominican Republic)
Committee on Trade-Related Investment Measures	Mr Manuel Chacon (Colombia)
Working Party on State Trading Enterprises	Ms Johana Méndez (Panama)
Committee of Participants on the Expansion of Trade in Information Technology Products	Ms Uma Shankari Muniandy (Singapore)

Chairpersons of subsidiary bodies of the Council for Trade in Services

Committee on Trade in Financial Services	Mr Seo-jin Yang (Republic of Korea)
Working Party on Domestic Regulation	Ms Verónica Bogarín Closs (Paraguay)
Committee on Specific Commitments	Mr Toshihide Aotake (Japan)
Working Party on GATS Rules	Mr Connor Harrington (United States)

Chairpersons of Committees of Plurilateral Agreements

Committee on Trade in Civil Aircraft	Ms Damaris Carnal (Switzerland)
Committee on Government Procurement	Mr Carlos Vanderloo (Canada)

Directors-general

1995-2021



Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala (Nigeria),
seventh WTO Director-General,
as of 1 March 2021.



Roberto Azevêdo (Brazil),
sixth WTO Director-General,
September 2013 to August 2020.



Pascal Lamy (France),
fifth WTO Director-General,
September 2005 to August 2013.



Supachai Panitchpakdi (Thailand),
fourth WTO Director-General,
September 2002 to August 2005.



Peter Sutherland (Ireland),
first WTO Director-General,
January 1995 to April 1995.



Renato Ruggiero (Italy),
second WTO Director-General,
May 1995 to April 1999.



Mike Moore (New Zealand),
third WTO Director-General,
September 1999 to August 2002.

Membership of the WTO: 164 members (as of 31 December 2020)

Member*	Year of accession	Member*	Year of accession	Member*	Year of accession
Afghanistan	2016	Cyprus	1995	Israel	1995
Albania	2000	Czech Republic	1995	Italy	1995
Angola	1996	Democratic Republic of the Congo	1997	Jamaica	1995
Antigua and Barbuda	1995	Denmark	1995	Japan	1995
Argentina	1995	Djibouti	1995	Jordan	2000
Armenia	2003	Dominica	1995	Kazakhstan	2015
Australia	1995	Dominican Republic	1995	Kenya	1995
Austria	1995	Ecuador	1996	Korea, Republic of	1995
Bahrain, Kingdom of	1995	Egypt	1995	Kuwait, the State of	1995
Bangladesh	1995	El Salvador	1995	Kyrgyz Republic	1998
Barbados	1995	Estonia	1999	Latvia	1999
Belgium	1995	Eswatini	1995	Lao People's Democratic Republic	2013
Belize	1995	European Union	1995	Lesotho	1995
Benin	1996	Fiji	1996	Liberia	2016
Bolivia, Plurinational State of	1995	Finland	1995	Liechtenstein	1995
Botswana	1995	France	1995	Lithuania	2001
Brazil	1995	Gabon	1995	Luxembourg	1995
Brunei Darussalam	1995	The Gambia	1996	Macao, China	1995
Bulgaria	1996	Georgia	2000	Madagascar	1995
Burkina Faso	1995	Germany	1995	Malawi	1995
Burundi	1995	Ghana	1995	Malaysia	1995
Cambodia	2004	Greece	1995	Maldives	1995
Cameroon	1995	Grenada	1996	Mali	1995
Canada	1995	Guatemala	1995	Malta	1995
Cabo Verde	2008	Guinea	1995	Mauritania	1995
Central African Republic	1995	Guinea-Bissau	1995	Mauritius	1995
Chad	1996	Guyana	1995	Mexico	1995
Chile	1995	Haiti	1996	Moldova, Republic of	2001
China	2001	Honduras	1995	Mongolia	1997
Colombia	1995	Hong Kong, China	1995	Montenegro	2012
Congo	1997	Hungary	1995	Morocco	1995
Costa Rica	1995	Iceland	1995	Mozambique	1995
Côte d'Ivoire	1995	India	1995	Myanmar	1995
Croatia	2000	Indonesia	1995	Namibia	1995
Cuba	1995	Ireland	1995	Nepal	2004

*Members are mostly states but can also be customs territories with full autonomy over their external commercial relations.

Member*	Year of accession	Member*	Year of accession	Observers** (as of 9 March 2021)
Netherlands	1995	Slovenia	1995	Algeria
New Zealand	1995	Solomon Islands	1996	Andorra
Nicaragua	1995	South Africa	1995	Azerbaijan
Niger	1996	Spain	1995	Bahamas
Nigeria	1995	Sri Lanka	1995	Belarus
Norway	1995	Suriname	1995	Bhutan
Republic of North Macedonia	2003	Sweden	1995	Bosnia and Herzegovina
Oman	2000	Switzerland	1995	Comoros
Pakistan	1995	Chinese Taipei	2002	Curaçao
Panama	1997	Tajikistan	2013	Equatorial Guinea
Papua New Guinea	1996	Tanzania	1995	Ethiopia
Paraguay	1995	Thailand	1995	Holy See
Peru	1995	Togo	1995	Iran
Philippines	1995	Tonga	2007	Iraq
Poland	1995	Trinidad and Tobago	1995	Lebanese Republic
Portugal	1995	Tunisia	1995	Libya
Qatar	1996	Turkey	1995	São Tomé and Príncipe
Romania	1995	Uganda	1995	Serbia
Russian Federation	2012	Ukraine	2008	Somalia
Rwanda	1996	United Arab Emirates	1996	South Sudan
Saint Kitts and Nevis	1996	United Kingdom	1995	Sudan
Saint Lucia	1995	United States of America	1995	Syrian Arab Republic
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	1995	Uruguay	1995	Timor-Leste
Samoa	2012	Vanuatu	2012	Turkmenistan
Saudi Arabia, Kingdom of	2005	Venezuela, Bolivarian Republic of	1995	Uzbekistan
Senegal	1995	Viet Nam	2007	
Seychelles	2015	Yemen	2014	
Sierra Leone	1995	Zambia	1995	
Singapore	1995	Zimbabwe	1995	
Slovak Republic	1995			

*Members are mostly states but can also be customs territories with full autonomy over their external commercial relations.

**With the exception of the Holy See, observers must start accession negotiations within five years of becoming observers.

Abbreviations

ADP	anti-dumping practices	MSMEs	micro, small and medium-sized enterprises
CTD	Committee on Trade and Development	NAMA	non-agricultural market access
DSB	Dispute Settlement Body	NGO	non-governmental organization
DSU	Dispute Settlement Understanding	NTMs	non-tariff measures
EIF	Enhanced Integrated Framework	OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization	PSI	Agreement on Preshipment Inspection
FDI	foreign direct investment	PTAs	preferential trade arrangements
GATS	General Agreement on Trade in Services	RTAs	regional trade agreements
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade	SCM	Subsidies and Countervailing Measures
GDP	gross domestic product	SG	Agreement on Safeguards
GIs	geographical indications	SPS	sanitary and phytosanitary measures
GPA	Government Procurement Agreement	STDF	Standards and Trade Development Facility
HS	Harmonized System	SVE	small, vulnerable economy
ICC	International Chamber of Commerce	TBT	technical barriers to trade
ILO	International Labour Organization	TNC	Trade Negotiations Committee
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union	TPR	Trade Policy Review
ISO	International Organization for Standardization	TPRM	Trade Policy Review Mechanism
ITA	Information Technology Agreement	TRIMs	trade-related investment measures
ITC	International Trade Centre	TRIPS	Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights
ITTC	Institute for Training and Technical Cooperation	UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
ITU	International Telecommunication Union	WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization
LDCs	least-developed countries		
MEAs	multilateral environmental agreements		
MFN	most-favoured nation		

0 is zero or became zero due to rounding.

Billion means one thousand million.

Minor discrepancies between constituent figures and totals are due to rounding.

Unless otherwise indicated, (i) all value figures are expressed in US dollars; (ii) trade figures include the intra-trade of free trade areas, customs unions, regional and other country groupings.

Note This report covers the WTO's activities in 2020 and early 2021. The word "country" is frequently used to describe WTO members whereas a few members are officially "customs territories", and not necessarily countries in the usual sense of the word.

Further information

Further information about the organization and its activities can be found on the WTO website: www.wto.org

General information about the WTO is available in the following publications, which may all be downloaded free of charge from the website:

WTO in Brief

WTO in Brief provides a starting point for essential information about the WTO. Concise and practical, this short brochure is an ideal introduction to the WTO.

10 things the WTO can do

This publication highlights some of the benefits of the trading system, but it does not claim that everything is perfect – otherwise there would be no need for further negotiations and for the system to evolve and reform continually.

Online bookshop

Printed publications can be purchased through the WTO's online bookshop: <https://onlinebookshop.wto.org>

Many publications may be downloaded free of charge from the WTO website: www.wto.org

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