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**Review of the technical cooperation activities of UNCTAD
and their financing**

Report by the Secretary-General of UNCTAD

Annex I: Review of activities undertaken in 2023*

* Mention of any firm or licensed process does not imply the endorsement of the United Nations.
The present document has not been formally edited.



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Abbreviations

ACP	African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States
ACS	Association of Caribbean States
AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASYCUDA	Automated System for Customs Data
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
DFQF	duty free and quota free
DMFAS	Debt Management and Financial Analysis System
DTIS	Diagnostic trade integration study
EAC	East African Community
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EIF	Enhanced Integrated Framework
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FDI	foreign direct investment
GDP	gross domestic product
GSP	Generalized System of Preferences
GSTP	Global System of Trade Preferences among Developing Countries
ICT	information and communication technology
IFFs	illicit financial flows
IIA	international investment agreement
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMO	International Maritime Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPR	investment policy review
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
ITC	International Trade Centre
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
LDC	least developed country
LLDC	landlocked developing country
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MSME	Micro, small and medium-sized enterprise
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OECS	Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States
PCI	Productive Capacities Index

PIFS	Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
PPP	public-private partnership
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
STI	Science, technology and innovation
UNCITRAL	United Nations Commission on International Trade Law
UNDA	United Nations Development Account
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNECLAC	United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNESCWA	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for West Asia
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNITAR	United Nations Institute for Training and Research
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UN-OHRLLS	United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States
UNRCO	United Nations Resident Coordinator Office
UNSD	United Nations Statistics Division
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WAEMU	West African Economic and Monetary Union
WHO	World Health Organization
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

Country/territory/region codes

AFG	Afghanistan	COI	Comoros
ALB	Albania	COL	Colombia
ALG	Algeria	COS	Costa Rica
ANG	Angola	CPR	China
ANL	Anguilla	CUB	Cuba
ANT	Antigua and Barbuda	CVI	Cabo Verde
ARG	Argentina	CZE	Czechia
ARM	Armenia	DJI	Djibouti
ARU	Aruba	DMI	Dominica
AZE	Azerbaijan	DOM	Dominican Republic
BAH	Bahrain	DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
BAR	Barbados	ECU	Ecuador
BDI	Burundi	EGY	Egypt
BEN	Benin	ELS	El Salvador
BER	Bermuda	EQG	Equatorial Guinea
BES	Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba	ERI	Eritrea
BGD	Bangladesh	EST	Estonia
BHU	Bhutan	ETH	Ethiopia
BIH	Bosnia and Herzegovina	EUR	Europe
BKF	Burkina Faso	FIJ	Fiji
BOL	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	GAB	Gabon
BOT	Botswana	GAM	Gambia
BRA	Brazil	GBS	Guinea-Bissau
BRU	Brunei Darussalam	GEO	Georgia
BUL	Bulgaria	GHA	Ghana
BYE	Belarus	GIB	Gibraltar
BZE	Belize	GLO	Global
CAF	Central African Republic	GRN	Grenada
CHD	Chad	GUA	Guatemala
CHI	Chile	GUI	Guinea
CMB	Cambodia	GUY	Guyana
CMR	Cameroon	HAI	Haiti

HON	Honduras	MOT	Montserrat
HUN	Hungary	MOZ	Mozambique
IND	India	MYA	Myanmar
INS	Indonesia	NAM	Namibia
INT	Interregional	NCA	New Caledonia
IRA	Iran (Islamic Republic of)	NEP	Nepal
IRQ	Iraq	NER	Niger
IVC	Côte d'Ivoire	NIC	Nicaragua
JAM	Jamaica	NIR	Nigeria
JOR	Jordan	NIU	Niue
KAZ	Kazakhstan	OMA	Oman
KEN	Kenya	PAK	Pakistan
KIR	Kiribati	PSE	Palestinian Authority
ROK	Republic of Korea	PAN	Panama
KUW	Kuwait	PAR	Paraguay
KYR	Kyrgyzstan	PER	Peru
LAO	Lao People's Democratic Republic	PHI	Philippines
LAT	Latvia	PNG	Papua New Guinea
LEB	Lebanon	POL	Poland
LIB	Libya	PRC	Congo
LIR	Liberia	PUE	Puerto Rico
LIT	Lithuania	QAT	Qatar
LES	Lesotho	RAB	Arab (regional)
		RAF	Africa (regional)
MAG	Madagascar	RAS	Asia and the Pacific (regional)
MAL	Malaysia	RAL	Latin America (regional)
		RER	Europe (regional)
MAR	Mauritius	RLA	Latin America and the Caribbean (regional)
MAU	Mauritania	ROM	Romania
MCD	North Macedonia	RUS	Russian Federation
MDV	Maldives	RWA	Rwanda
MEX	Mexico	SAF	South Africa
MLI	Mali	SAM	Samoa
MLW	Malawi	SAU	Saudi Arabia
MOL	Republic of Moldova	SEN	Senegal
MON	Mongolia	SEY	Seychelles
MOR	Morocco	SIL	Sierra Leone
SIN	Singapore	TIM	Timor-Leste
SLO	Slovakia	TOG	Togo

SOI	Solomon Islands	TON	Tonga
SOM	Somalia	TUK	Turkmenistan
SPM	Saint Pierre and Miquelon	TUN	Tunisia
SRL	Sri Lanka	TUR	Türkiye
STH	Saint Helena	TUV	Tuvalu
STK	Saint Kitts and Nevis	UAE	United Arab Emirates
STL	Saint Lucia	UGA	Uganda
STP	Sao Tome and Principe	UKR	Ukraine
STV	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	URT	United Republic of Tanzania
SUD	Sudan	URU	Uruguay
SUR	Suriname	UZB	Uzbekistan
SVN	Slovenia	VAN	Vanuatu
SWA	Eswatini	VEN	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)
SYR	Syrian Arab Republic	VIE	Viet Nam
TAJ	Tajikistan	YEM	Yemen
TCI	Turks and Caicos Islands	ZAM	Zambia
THA	Thailand	ZIM	Zimbabwe

Introduction

1. This annex provides a description of the main technical cooperation projects undertaken by UNCTAD in 2023. It is presented in accordance with the four themes specified in the *UNCTAD Toolbox*: transforming economies, fostering sustainable development; tackling vulnerabilities, building resilience; fostering economic efficiency, improving governance; and empowering people, investing in their future. Under each theme, there are a number of products around which projects are grouped. For projects that are not linked with any of the Toolbox products,¹ they are reported under the category “Other” of the pertinent theme. A table showing the individual projects implemented under each product and under the category “Other” of each theme is provided. The technical assistance and capacity-building activities, which draw on research conducted by UNCTAD and on policy suggestions arising from the UNCTAD intergovernmental machinery, contribute to the implementation of the Bridgetown Covenant and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

I. Theme A: Transforming economies, fostering sustainable development

2. Attaining the Sustainable Development Goals requires building productive capacity and transforming economies by shifting resources to more productive and sustainable sectors and enhancing their competitiveness. Investment, trade and technology are important channels for achieving economic diversification and structural transformation. Trade and trade-related investment, combined with technology upgrading, could enable countries to improve productivity, develop productive capacities and climb regional and global value chains.

3. UNCTAD technical cooperation helps developing countries attract foreign direct investment (FDI) towards sectors that would lead to economic transformation and sustainable development; better integrate into regional and global value chains; and foster the nexus between trade, productive capacity and employment. It also supports these countries in formulating a services-driven development strategy, developing electronic commerce (e-commerce) and the digital economy, promoting sustainable trade and leveraging science, technology and innovation for productive capacity-building.

4. In this section, 9 products under the theme “Transforming economies, fostering sustainable development” are reported on². The reports highlight main technical cooperation activities carried out in 2023 and key results to date. Technical cooperation projects that are pertinent to the aforementioned theme, but not linked to any of the existing 9 products under this thematic area, are reported on under “A99 Other”.

A1 Investment policy reviews

Table A1

Investment policy reviews: List of projects

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
INT70T/3AW	Examen des Politiques d’Investissement et Programme de Suivi	2015–	Multidonors

¹ See *UNCTAD Toolbox*, available at <https://unctad.org/webflyer/unctad-toolbox-delivering-results-1>.

² The product “Investment guides” is discontinued. Work related to “Investment guides” has been subsumed in the overall work of “Business facilitation”.

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
INT/OT/H CJ2	Strategic Partnership the Netherlands	2020–	Kingdom of the Netherlands

5. **Development context.** To fully reap their associated benefits for development, which are not automatic nor evenly spread across countries, foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows should be directed towards activities and projects that lead to enhanced economic and social development, and do not affect the environment negatively. To support beneficiary countries in their efforts to diversify the economy, attract higher levels of FDI and promote sustainable development, UNCTAD conducts diagnostic studies of the strategic, legal and institutional framework for investment: the investment policy reviews (IPRs). The reviews, which are country-specific or regional, provide action-oriented policy advice and concrete recommendations. UNCTAD also provides follow-up support through technical assistance activities to foster their implementation and further build capacity for investment policymaking.

6. **Objectives and features.** The IPR process promotes ownership and capacity-building, and is conducted in five phases:

(a) *Ensuring country ownership of the IPR process.* A Review begins at the request of a government. The counterpart ministry or agency is involved throughout the process and the entire government takes ownership of the policy recommendations.

(b) *IPR evaluation and advisory report.* The diagnostic phase includes desk research and a fact-finding mission by UNCTAD staff. Policymakers at the highest level and a wide range of stakeholders are brought into the process, including line ministries and agencies, universities and other research institutions. Interviews and consultations are also held with representatives from the private sector, non-governmental institutions and development partners in the country.

(c) *Dialogue on IPR recommendations and intergovernmental review.* Once the draft report is ready, beneficiary countries agree to go through a review process which includes a national stakeholders' workshop to discuss the findings of the draft report and review its recommendations. It is followed by an intergovernmental peer review, which draws upon the experiences of other countries in attracting and benefiting from investment, including benchmarking against international best practices.

(d) *Implementation and follow-up technical assistance.* The review process is designed with one key purpose: making FDI work for sustainable development. The finalization and publication of the IPR report is the preamble to the core focus of the programme, namely the delivery of technical assistance to help beneficiary countries meet their development objectives by attracting higher levels and more diversified types of FDI inflows, whilst maximizing their developmental benefits and limiting potentially negative impact. The implementation phase is carried out through short-term action plans and multi-agency medium-term technical assistance.

(e) *Implementation report and additional follow-up actions.* Upon publication of the IPR, beneficiary countries are given access to the Live implementation matrix³, an online tool designed to assist member States to better address the challenges of a dynamic investment policymaking process at country-level and improve prospects for achieving the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. By providing timely and up-to-date information on investment policy reform, the Live implementation matrix contributes to fostering ownership of the IPR recommendations, strengthens implementation results, improves transparency, enhances accountability, strengthens the tracking of reforms, and highlights technical assistance and capacity-building needs. About five years after

³ Available to authorized users on <https://investmentpolicy.unctad.org/investment-policy-review>.

completion of the Review, UNCTAD assesses the implementation of its recommendations and identifies the need for further technical assistance.

7. **Outputs.** In 2023, the main outputs delivered by the programme included:

(a) Preparation and publication of the IPR of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU);

(b) Preparation and publication of the Report on the Implementation of the Investment Policy Review of Mauritania;

(c) Introduction to the Live implementation matrix: Mauritania;

(d) Showcasing reforms to promote SDG investment in the context of the World Investment Forum 2023 (WIF): experiences from Mauritania, Tajikistan, Togo and WAEMU;

(e) Showcasing investment opportunities in the context of the Investment Village at the WIF 2023 (63 member States);

(f) Sharing experiences on investment policymaking and strategies to tap business opportunities in the context of the Talking business sessions at the WIF 2023;

(g) Technical assistance activities and advisory services to support the implementation of the IPR recommendations and to deal more effectively with issues related to investment policies, promotion strategies, international investment agreements and business facilitation. The beneficiaries of these activities included, at country-level, Angola, Cabo Verde, The Gambia, Haiti, Republic of Korea, Mauritania, Tajikistan, and Togo. Dialogue on investment policymaking at the regional level also took place with countries from the WAEMU – Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo, and from the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) – Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa and Swaziland.

8. In 2023, the following activities were implemented at the country-level and for group of countries:

- *Cabo Verde.* UNCTAD maintained the solid cooperation developed with the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) during the preparation of the IPR. Throughout the year, UNCTAD contributed to key country assessments and programmatic documents and participated in regular meetings to effectively follow up on investment-related work.
- *The Gambia.* At the request of the Government, UNCTAD undertook research to launch the preparation of a Report on the implementation of the country’s IPR. UNCTAD also worked to strengthen cooperation with the United Nations Resident Coordinator’s Office (UNRCO) in The Gambia for the successful implementation of the project.
- *Haiti.* Focussing on investment policymaking, UNCTAD provided inputs and comments on a draft SDG Fund study (March), emphasising good practices to mobilize resources and promote investment for sustainable development. Through this work, UNCTAD also contributed to highlighting areas where the UN can further strengthen efforts through the country programme.
- *Republic of Korea.* In November 2023, as part of a training session for government officials, UNCTAD presented its key principles and guidelines aimed at enhancing investment policymaking at the country level. These principles and guidelines, compiled in the Investment Policy Framework for Sustainable Development (IPFSD), serve as the foundation for the analysis conducted for IPRs.
- *Mauritania.* Since the publication of the IPR in 2009, the Government of Mauritania has implemented several reforms aimed at enhancing the investment climate and facilitating business operations. Specifically, measures have been taken to strengthen the strategic, legal and institutional framework, notably in terms of business establishment, taxation, governance and competition. Additionally, an investment promotion agency has been established.

Upon request of the Government of Mauritania, UNCTAD prepared a Report on the Implementation of the IPR of Mauritania. In addition to analysing the implementation of the IPR recommendations, the report identifies measures to further assist the country in facilitating investment and achieving its development objectives, as well as the SDGs. Ahead of the preparation of the Report, representatives from the Mauritanian Investment Promotion Agency benefited from a training to access and use the Live Implementation Matrix, to measure and follow up on the implemented investment reforms conducted by the country.

Furthermore, Mauritania actively participated in the World Investment Forum 2023 in the context of a session dedicated to showcasing reforms for SDG investment: experience from Mauritania. The session provided an opportunity for the country to present the investment reforms undertaken in recent years and engage in dialogue with participants regarding investment opportunities. Additionally, the country hosted a booth at the Investment Village, further showcasing its investment opportunities.

- *Tajikistan*. Since the publication of the IPR in 2016, the Government of Tajikistan has adopted several policy measures to enhance the business environment. Reforms were adopted to improve the strategic, legal and institutional framework affecting investment facilitation and promotion.

At the request of the Government of Tajikistan, UNCTAD prepared a Report on the implementation of the IPR of Tajikistan. In addition to analysing the implementation of the IPR recommendations, the report assesses the progress made to strengthen the investment environment and highlights additional actions to support the country's objectives and foster sustainable development.

The conclusions of the report featured prominently during the World Investment Forum 2023, notably in the context of a session dedicated to showcasing reforms for SDG investment in Tajikistan. The session also provided an opportunity for the country to present the investment reforms undertaken in recent years and engage in dialogue with participants regarding investment opportunities. Moreover, the country hosted a booth at the Investment Village, further showcasing its investment opportunities.

- *Togo*. The IPR of Togo, forms part of a three-components project conducted by UNCTAD, with the financial contribution of UNDP. In addition to the IPR, the project encompasses the implementation of UNCTAD eRegulations and eRegistrations tools to simplify and digitalize business procedures, and capacity-building activities for investment promotion. Strong collaboration with the UNRCO in Togo facilitated the development of the IPR.

A validation workshop was held from 17 to 18 January 2023 to gather feedback from a wide array of stakeholders, including those from the public and private sectors, as well as development partners. Alongside legal, regulatory and institutional reforms, the priorities that guided the IPR included the need to promote the development of the local private sector and special economic zones. The recommendations of the report will serve as a basis in the elaboration of an Investment Policy Strategy and an Investment Promotion Strategy by the Ministry of Investment Promotion and the World Bank.

The official report was launched at a national event on 30-31 May 2023, in the presence of the Minister of Investment Promotion, with various stakeholders from the both the public and private sectors, and development partners in attendance. Following the report's publication, a workshop was conducted to strengthening the capacity of personnel tasked with the responsibility of facilitating and promoting investment in the country. Furthermore, the findings of the IPR were presented during the World Investment Forum 2023 in the context of a session dedicated to showcasing reforms for SDG investment in Togo. Togo also participated in the Investment Village, offering an opportunity to present its investment opportunities and exchange with international investors.

- *West Africa Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) member States.* Upon request of the WAEMU Commission, UNCTAD conducted an IPR for the WAEMU region. Through a participative and inclusive approach, the preparation of the IPR enabled a wide range of stakeholders to dialogue and exchange on the strategies and policies needed by the region to facilitate and promote investment.

Following an online meeting to launch the process on 7 March 2023, a fact-finding mission took place from 27 to 31 March 2023 to gather relevant information from stakeholders for drafting the IPR. Subsequently, a regional workshop (8–10 November) was held to discuss the findings and key recommendations with stakeholders to validate the report. Moreover, the key actions proposed in the IPR were highlighted during the World Investment Forum 2023 in the context of a session dedicated to showcasing reforms for SDG investment. The WAEMU Commission and six of its members States (Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Mali, Senegal and Togo) also participated in the Investment Village, providing them with an opportunity to showcase their investment opportunities and engage with international investors.

- *Southern African Customs Union (SACU).* During an online session (November), UNCTAD briefed the SACU secretariat and its member States on strategies and policies to facilitate and promote investment for sustainable development. UNCTAD also presented the potential content and process of a regional IPR, which could contribute to strengthening investment policymaking in the region. This led to the development of a detailed project document that could be used to obtain high-level buy-in from all SACU member States, and to approach development partners for their support.

9. **Results and impacts.** Overall, the IPRs have continued to play a key role to strengthen the investment policies and strategies of developing countries and least developed countries (LDCs). This has enabled them to attract higher levels of FDI and derive larger development gains, while minimizing as much as possible the potential negative effects, in line with UNCTAD’s IPFSD. Furthermore, many activities to support the implementation of the IPR recommendations have been undertaken under the programme.⁴ Evidence of impact can be illustrated at three levels – country commitment and endorsement of recommendations, implementation of IPR recommendations as well as impact on investment flows and the investment environment. The impact is also acknowledged by the willingness of member States to participate in UNCTAD activities aimed at showcasing their investment reform efforts and opportunities. Furthermore, the donors’ community also recognizes the IPR programme as a tool which “covers many policy areas of the envisioned Investment Facilitation for Development Agreement (IFDA)” and contributes to improving and strengthening the investment climate of beneficiaries.⁵

Commitment at the highest level and endorsement of recommendations

10. The importance and relevance of the IPR work is reflected by the involvement of Heads of State or Government in the process and their commitment to implementing its outcome. In most cases, the IPRs have been presented to and discussed with Heads of State and Cabinet Ministers. Furthermore, the IPR work has also enabled UNCTAD to strengthen its collaboration with UNCT through the UNRCO and the UNDP in many countries. The following endorsements show:

⁴ Further references on the IPR programme include a) UNCTAD (2020). *Live Implementation Matrix: Fostering investment reforms for sustainable development.* UNCTAD/DIAE/PCB/2020/3. December. Geneva; b) Sauvart, K. (2020). *The WIR at 30: Contributions to National and Global Investment Policymaking.* AIB Insights, vol. 20, December; c) UNCTAD (2018). *Implementation Reports: Lessons learned.* UNCTAD/DIAE/PCB/2018/3. September. Geneva.

⁵ See Reichel, M. (2023). *WTO Investment Facilitation for Development Agreement: An overview of reform measures, good practice and potential donor support.* Donor Committee for Enterprise Development. December.

(a) “The IPR is an important step to enhance the investment climate as it identified concrete recommendations, through a participative and inclusive process.” Minister of Investment Promotion, Togo, 30 May 2023.

(b) “Congratulations for the quality of the IPR. We invite member countries to implement and follow up on the recommendations. The Commission will monitor this. This work is very important for our regional integration efforts, let us make this document ours.” Director for private sector development, WAEMU Commission, Regional workshop IPR WAEMU, 10 November 2023.

(c) “UNCTAD has continued to deliver on its IPR programme, providing excellent assessments of countries’ investment environment and concrete policy recommendations to countries, including our Group. The programme contributes to improving the conditions for domestic and foreign investors.” Representative of the Republic of Namibia on behalf of the African Group, Trade and Development Board, 74th Executive session, 21 November 2023.

Implementation of IPR recommendations

11. Another benchmark of the impact of IPRs is the extent to which governments have implemented the IPR recommendations.

12. Since 1999 and the inception of the IPR programme, UNCTAD has published 53 IPRs, involving 60 economies worldwide, and 21 reports on the implementation of the IPR. Assessments conducted in some of these countries showed that to date more than 550 recommendations have been implemented, a significant number of which with the technical assistance of UNCTAD. This assistance took different forms, including advisory services on policy, legal, regulatory and institutional matters.

Direct impact on investment flows and improvement of the investment environment

13. It is difficult to assess the correlation between the implementation of an IPR’s recommendations and an increase in FDI flows, although this is one of the key objectives of the requesting country. Therefore, one of the goals of the review is also to improve the quality of FDI and ensure that it contributes more effectively to the national and sustainable development objectives of the country. Consequently, countries could experience a decline in flows but an improvement in the development impact of FDI and the operations of investors. Similarly, it is difficult to compare the FDI performance of countries that have completed an implementation report, which range widely in geographic location, income level and political context, against a similar panel of economies that have not received an IPR. Nevertheless, data show that between 2001–2011 and 2012–2022, FDI inflows rose by 34 per cent worldwide while they grew by 63 per cent in 21 countries for which an assessment of the implementation of IPR recommendations has been conducted.

14. Another indicator of the impact of the IPRs is their integration to the national policy reform efforts and how they often serve as the main platform for investment climate improvements. For many beneficiary countries, the IPR constituted the main document to guide investment climate reforms at the strategic, legal and institutional level (see statements above, for example). For example, the IPR of Angola, completed in 2019, made several recommendations including the need to strengthen investment promotion and facilitation, and to collaborate with institutional investors to enhance their impact, particularly on sustainable development. In 2023, the Sustainable Investment Facilitation Agreement (SIFA) was adopted between Angola and the EU. This agreement aligns with the principles set out in the IPR, with emphasis on sustainable development, transparency, and predictability, as well as the simplification of procedures for investment projects. It also envisages the deployment of eGovernment services and the enhancement of interactions between government authorities and investors.

15. Finally, another way to attest for the overwhelming expression of interest in the IPRs is illustrated by the number of countries that have requested to benefit from the programme, including follow-up technical assistance. Official requests for IPRs are in the pipeline for 33 countries: Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bhutan, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, the Central African Republic, Chile, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini, Fiji,

Gabon, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Malawi, Mali, Nauru, Nicaragua, Niger, Niue, Oman, Papua New Guinea, Pakistan, Philippines, Saint Lucia, Somalia, South Sudan, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkmenistan. UNCTAD also received a request for a regional IPR involving 10 countries of the Economic Cooperation Organization (i.e. Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Islamic Republic of Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Türkiye, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan).

A2 Services policy reviews

Table A2

Services policy reviews

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
	No project		

16. **Development context.** The services sector provides essential services, including health, education, water and sanitation services, energy distribution, transport, and telecommunications services. Services contribute to the achievement of several Sustainable Development Goals focusing on these areas. The services sector generates opportunities for greater income, employment, investment, and trade. The sector provides major contributions to output, jobs and investment and dynamic contributions to exports in many countries. The services sector can help improve efficiency, productivity and competitiveness in all sectors of the economy, as services constitute essential inputs to many other products and services. Services contribute directly to exports, as final products that are exported, and indirectly, as inputs that promote exports of other sectors. Transport, telecommunications, financial and other business services, among others, play a catalytic role in expanding international supply chains. Services contribute also to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals covering economic growth, industry, innovation and infrastructure. Several developing countries face important challenges in benefitting from the significant potential of the services sector. Many of these countries face limitation in their services supply capacity and in designing and implementing a coherent policy mix to strengthen services sectors.

17. **Objectives and features.** UNCTAD assists developing countries to assess their services economy and trade and to develop a services-enabling policy environment through Services Policy Reviews (SPRs). SPRs review the trade landscape and the regulatory and institutional frameworks in place to inform policymakers in developing countries of opportunities to improve the policy mix for services. This mix includes trade policies such as trade negotiations, market intelligence and trade promotion. It also includes industrial policies, regulatory and institutional frameworks, data ecosystems and skill-building strategies, among other policy dimensions, that promote domestic capacity in services. SPRs serve as a toolkit identifying challenges and opportunities to strengthen services sectors through these policies, to harvest services' potential.

18. UNCTAD undertakes SPRs as a demand-based assistance. The SPR assessment can be country or region focused or sector focused. An important objective of the process is to provide beneficiaries with the data needed to make informed policy decisions. Data support is key to analyse, design, implement and steer evidence-based services policies. Addressing limitations on trade in services data calls for a data ecosystem to better collect, compile, treat and analyse high-quality, reliable, timely, comprehensive and disaggregated data. This ecosystem needs to be paired with capacity to analyse and use trade in services data, including to support the definition of trade and industrial strategies and to serve trade policies and negotiations.

19. **Outputs.** In 2023, UNCTAD prepared, under the 16th tranche of the Development Account, a project proposal aiming to strengthen the capacity of member countries of the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) for evidence-based

polycymaking in trade in services. The proposal was approved in December 2023 and a kick-off workshop was held in the region in May 2024. The preliminary diagnosis underlying the proposal pointed to the need to support on collecting and compiling official trade in services statistics, where UNCTAD Trade-in-Services Information System (TiSSTAT) plays an important role. Developing data ecosystems needs to be paired with capacity building on how to use and analyze trade in services data for evidence-based policies.

20. UNCTAD also addressed several requests for information on technical assistance on trade in services and development by potentially interested regions and countries. Specifically, UNCTAD participated in technical meetings with the Dominican Republic on 5 April 2023 and with the secretariat of the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP) on 6 November 2023 to share information related to technical assistance options on trade in services and development. UNCTAD received a request for technical assistance on service policy review from the Government of Malawi on 18 April 2023, followed by a technical meeting to identify the technical assistance options on 10 July 2023. In addition, on 10 August 2023, the Government of Malawi requested technical assistance to identify services sectors that are critical to energy transition, as an outcome of Malawi's participation at the 10th session of the multi-year expert meeting on trade, service, and development. Upon receiving the latter request from Malawi, UNCTAD prepared and submitted a project proposal for donor support in August 2023.

21. **Results and impacts.** The assessments that UNCTAD undertook generated information about policy options that can be referenced by beneficiary countries in policy formulation and in multilateral, regional and bilateral trade negotiations. SPR assessments, customized advisory services and capacity building initiatives enhanced the technical capacity of policymakers, trade officials and other stakeholders. This contributed to strengthen services sectors and services' dual role in building export capacity in accordance with their development objectives.

A3 Trade policy framework reviews

Table A3
Trade policy framework reviews

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
ROA-2124 (F13)	Trade policies and frameworks to foster regional integration and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in selected conflict and post-conflict Arab countries	2021–	Development Account

22. **Development context.** Promoting a coherent and integrated approach to national trade policy formulation and implementation became a salient challenge for national policymakers, as an increasing number of countries reformulate their national trade policy frameworks and strategies to better draw development benefit from trade and respond to the imperatives of SDGs, including in progressing towards the achievement of SDG target 17.11 on increasing the exports of developing countries, Goal 8 (economic growth) and Goal 9 (industry, innovating and infrastructure). Developing countries continue to face significant challenges in the formulation of development-oriented trade policy frameworks that are best-fit to their national circumstances and development needs. Effectively done, trade policy can drive progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. Linking trade policy and productive capacity and structural transformation is thus crucial for the achievement of SDGs.

23. **Objectives.** Trade Policy Framework Reviews contribute to the (re)formulation and implementation of national trade policy regimes according to a country's own development priorities and needs via research and training activities. UNCTAD provides support to

individual countries in the assessment and reassessment of national trade policy regimes to help them elaborate new comprehensive, development-centred Trade Policy Frameworks. The objective of support is to assess, develop, elaborate, and implement a new generation of trade policy measures and strategies as well as to promote and strengthen self-sustainable national institutional capacities on trade policy and negotiations and to participate effectively in, and benefiting from, international trade.

24. **Outputs.** In 2023, UNCTAD delivered two training workshops and provided advisory services within the framework of a Development Account project (13th tranche) in support of trade policy formulation for post-conflict Arab countries (Iraq and the State of Palestine).

25. ESCWA National workshop on trade policy for Palestine in Amman on 28 February – 1 March was held to discuss the draft study on “Structuring trade policies on health and education services in the State of Palestine”. The purpose of the study is to assess the opportunities and challenges associated with the liberalization of services trade in health and education and support the efforts of the State of Palestine towards adopting competitive business practices, including through effective contribution of services to the sustainable national development process. Palestinian officials representing the Ministries of National Economy, Health, and Education participated in the workshop. The outcome of the workshop was the validation of the findings of the study as well as the policy recommendations to tackle the institutional constraints facing trade in health and education services. The study (in Arabic) was published on UNCTAD and ESCWA websites in July 2023.⁶

26. UNCTAD organized a Workshop on regional trade agreements and WTO accession negotiations for Iraq and Palestine trade officials in collaboration with the League of Arab States Secretariat on 14–15 May in Cairo, Egypt. The workshop aimed at upgrading the technical knowledge and skills of policymakers, trade officials and negotiators from participating countries and enabling them to adequately prepare for and negotiate bilateral, regional and multilateral trade arrangements, including WTO accession. There were 20 participants at this workshop of which 8 women. At the end of the workshop, participants confirmed having enhanced their knowledge and skills on trade negotiations and having acquired the capacity to apply these skills in their current jobs. During the workshop, UNCTAD launched a publication, which includes a training module on the scheduling of services commitments under the WTO General Agreement on Trade in Services as well as case studies and lessons from selected Arab countries’ WTO accession experiences.⁷

27. An advisory meeting on the accession of Iraq to the WTO was held in Amman on 2–4 March as a follow-up to capacity building workshop organized for Iraqi trade officials on 12–15 December 2022. UNCTAD provided technical advice to the Iraqi team in charge of the preparation of Iraq’s accession to the WTO.

28. **Results and impacts.** UNCTAD’s support on trade policy formulation and implementation has been instrumental in several respects. It has facilitated consideration, and/or adoption, by Governments, of best-fit trade policy options and strategies that can help strengthen productive capacities and increase participation in international trade in a manner that maximizes the potential of development gains, especially job creation and poverty reduction.

29. UNCTAD’s capacity building and technical assistance are contributing to the efforts deployed by the beneficiary countries, i.e. Iraq and the State of Palestine to review and reform their trade policies frameworks, including by assessing the opportunities and challenges associated with trade liberalization, in particular in the services trade. UNCTAD advisory missions and specialized training workshops have been found to be very useful in guiding the two countries towards adopting up-to-date trade-related measures and sound

⁶ The study is available at <https://www.unescwa.org/sites/default/files/pubs/pdf/restrictions-trade-educational-health-services-palestine-arabic.pdf>

⁷ The publication is available at https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/tcsditcinf2023d1_ar.pdf

business practices. In fact, impact studies completed by UNCTAD in this context, addressed the main restrictions to trade and analysed the prospects for reform to facilitate further trade in several key services sectors in both countries. Negotiating teams in the concerned recipient countries, have been trained to adequately prepare for and negotiate trade agreements, including regional trade agreements (RTAs) and accession to WTO. UNCTAD received testimonial letters from their respective governments to attest on UNCTAD's important role and appreciate the support they received from it for the conduct of their trade policy endeavours.

A4 Science, technology and innovation policy reviews

Table A4

Science, technology and innovation policy reviews

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
BOT/0T/ICH	UNCTAD STI Policy Review of Botswana	2021–	Botswana
ROA-2124 (D13)	Technology assessment in the energy and agricultural sectors in Africa to accelerate progress on Science, Technology and Innovation	2021–	Development Account

30. **Development context.** The basic assumption that underpins the science, technology and innovation (STI) policy reviews is that innovation, particularly innovation based on knowledge and technology, is a key driver of economic growth, productivity, structural transformation and sustainable development. Among the capabilities that developing countries need to generate in order to harness STI for development, sound policy frameworks leading to the development of effective innovation systems are key. While this is recognized by the Governments of many developing countries, designing and implementing national STI strategies and policies present considerable challenges for many of them. There is a clear need to support a process of STI policy learning, experimentation and the dissemination of good practices.

31. **Objectives and features.** The STI policy review programme provides policy advice to countries requesting assistance in building and maintaining a dynamic and responsive STI framework that can foster technological capabilities, create effective innovation systems, facilitate technology acquisition and improve national innovation performance. It aims to ensure that national STI programmes become an instrument for supporting the national development agenda and promoting sustainable development. The reviews assess the strengths and weaknesses of a country's innovation systems, including the policy framework, institutions, capabilities, and innovation effort as well as performance. Reviews generally include an analysis of the technology and innovation challenges and opportunities in specific industries (such as agriculture, textiles, oil and gas or pharmaceuticals) or issue areas of high priority for the beneficiary country (such as information and communications technology, biotechnology, human capital and energy). Key STI issues that affect the productivity and competitiveness of industries are identified. The reviews include recommendations for action to revamp policy frameworks, including policies, regulations, measures and practices that can improve technological and innovation capacity, increase investment in innovative activity, raise productivity and upgrade firm and industry competitiveness. The primary beneficiaries of the reviews are the major players in the national innovation system, such as policymakers (from science and technology ministries or similar bodies, trade and industry ministries and other ministries of importance to STI), the business community, academic and research institutions, civil society and development and sustainability interest groups with a role in STI, in particular those related to any specific areas to be adopted as a focus for a review.

32. **Outputs.** Based on a request from the Ministry of Tertiary Education, Research, Science and Technology of Botswana, UNCTAD has undertaken an STI policy review in

collaboration with the Ministry's Department for Research, Science and Technology (DRST). Following a restructuring of the government, the DRST was moved to the newly created Ministry for Communications, Knowledge and Technology, which is now UNCTAD's counterpart for STI policy activities. The Government of Botswana is financing the project, the first African review fully financed by the beneficiary country. Project implementation was delayed by the Covid-19 pandemic, which prevented physical travel and in-person meetings. It was decided to undertake the review entirely virtually through online interviews, discussions and research. Project implementation began with a virtual scoping mission in September 2020. Based on the experience of that mission, revisions were made to the modalities for further implementation. Research along with a series of fact-finding interviews and discussions was conducted during 2021. In 2022 a foresight exercise for STI in Botswana was undertaken to stimulate a process of identifying national priorities for research, technology and innovation that would enable Botswana to move towards the future that stakeholders saw as their desired future in 2036. This is the date for their current future vision of the Botswana as outlined in the country's Vision 2036. The lack of clear priorities was identified as a key weakness during the STI policy review process. This was the first time that UNCTAD incorporated a foresight exercise into a STI policy review process, which UNCTAD has aimed to achieve since the issuance of its 2019 methodology for STI policy reviews. Drafts of both the STI policy review report and the Foresight for STI report went through an extensive process of discussion and validation among national stakeholders during the second half of 2022. Both reports were finalized and printed during 2023. The review and the foresight exercise were jointly designed to support Botswana in the process of revising its policy framework for STI and strengthening its capacity to effectively harness STI as a key tool to support its transformation from a natural-resource based towards a knowledge-based economy. This transformation is fundamental to the country's Vision 2036 and national development plans.

33. In November 2022, work on a STI policy for Seychelles started under the project "Technology assessment in the energy and agricultural sectors in Africa to accelerate progress on Science, Technology and Innovation". The review was conducted upon request from the Seychelles in order to have a more comprehensive evaluation of its STI system than the relatively brief coverage of the innovation ecosystem undertaken as part of the technology assessment process in the other two pilot countries for the technology assessment project (namely South Africa and Zambia). The engagement with the STI policy review partners – the Ministry of Investment, Entrepreneurship and Industry and its Division on STI – was largely completed in September 2023 with a national workshop that included a stakeholder review of a final draft of the STI policy review. It also included a 2-day capacity-building session designed to establish a common understanding among stakeholders of key issues in STI policy and practice, while guiding towards a better understanding of the review findings and recommendation. The STI policy review for Seychelles was completed in December 2023. Seychelles has foundational elements for leveraging STI towards achieving the SDGs. However, its policy efforts require strengthening in order to take advantage of significant opportunities. These range from tackling typical SDG challenges for a SIDS to taking advantage of new and digital technologies and applying these in traditional sectors of tourism and, more generally, the so-called blue economy. Strengthening policy foundations for STI would require strategic interventions to enhance institutional capacities, policy implementation, and update policy frameworks to reflect contemporary technological advancements and governance needs. After the launch in 2024, UNCTAD may remain engaged to provide advisory services in succeeding policy design and implementation phases.

34. **Results.** At the end of 2023, UNCTAD had completed STI policy reviews in 22 countries, in which they had often ignited a renewal in STI policy, raised its profile in national development strategies and facilitated the inclusion of related activities in international cooperation plans. A key feature of the reviews is the systematic effort made to involve a broad range of stakeholders. This participatory process can mobilize networks of actors towards transformation through policy experimentation and learning. These activities under the STI policy reviews have enabled policymakers and other STI stakeholders in these countries to reach a better understanding of the key strengths and

weaknesses in their STI systems, policies, institutions and capacities, and identify strategic priorities and policy options for improving STI capacity and becoming more innovative.

35. The STI policy reviews in Botswana and the Seychelles and related training improved the capacity of public and private stakeholders to assess their national STI capacities, with a view to identifying gaps and incoherencies in policies, and to identifying priority actions. Especially through participating in the review and follow-up activities, policymakers in these countries enhanced their capacity to design and implement coherent STI policies that align with the overall development strategies of countries for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

A5 E-commerce and the digital economy

Table A5

E-commerce and the digital economy

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
BOT/0T/HBM	ICT Policy Review: National E-Commerce Strategy for Botswana	2018–	Botswana
JOR/0T/JAM	eTrade Readiness Assessment of Jordan	2021–	Germany GIZ
MON/0T/LAA	eTrade Readiness Assessment of Mongolia	2022–	Republic of Korea
RWA/0T/FAV	ICT Policies for Development: E-Commerce Strategy for Rwanda	2017–	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
INT/0T/FAQ	eTrade for all coordination	2016–	Multi-donors
INT/0T/HCE	Strategic Partnership the Netherlands	2021–	Kingdom of the Netherlands
INT/0T/IBN	E-Commerce and the Digital Economy (ECDE) for Development	2019–	China, Germany, Sweden, Switzerland
RAF/0T/LBJ	To support the implementation of the project eTrade Readiness Assessments of Algeria and Mauritania	2022–	Germany GIZ
RAS/0T/KAJ	Pacific Digital Economy Programme	2021–	One United Nations fund
RAS/0T/KAJ2	Pacific Digital Economy Programme Support	2023–	UNCDF

36. **Development context.** In 2023 a sluggish recovery from the economic downturn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and growing geo-economic fragmentation set the scene for new technological disruptions such as the market entry of generative artificial intelligence (AI) and the ensuing race for market dominance. The growing use of digital technologies, including frontier technologies, continued to impact, change, and reshape businesses in all sectors, from agriculture through manufacturing and especially services.

37. A narrowing gap in digital connectivity worldwide, as evidenced by the estimated 0.9 billion additional people who joined the internet between 2019 and 2021, was welcome

news in light of the reported halt in progress towards the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Nevertheless, persisting disparities in countries' readiness to engage in and benefit from the fast-evolving data-driven digital economy underlined the growing need for support to developing and especially the least developed countries (LDCs) in this area.

38. Many developing countries continue to need more and better digital infrastructure, skills, resources, enabling environments and access to capital to compete and trade on an equal footing with developed countries in the digital economy. Evidence-based analysis of the policy options at the national, regional and global level, effective technical assistance and capacity-building support to law- and policymakers, entrepreneurs and other stakeholders in the digital economy, and facilitation of multilateral and multi-stakeholder consensus-building and partnerships remain key to finding solutions for harnessing e-commerce and the digital economy for sustainable development. Finding an agreeable multilateral, multi-stakeholder, and multidimensional approach to governing data and data flows that allows for gains to be shared more equitably and contributes to sustainable development outcomes is one of the main policy challenges of our time. Improving the availability of timely, robust and comparable official statistics on the digital economy and digital trade remains key for enabling policymakers to establish benchmarks and better monitor and manage their economies' digital transformation. Targeted efforts must also be made to ensure that women have equal opportunities in e-commerce and the digital economy.

39. Against this background, the E-Commerce and Digital Economy (ECDE) Programme delivered on the strengthened mandate that member States gave UNCTAD in the Bridgetown Covenant to equip policymakers and empower women digital entrepreneurs in developing countries with the knowledge, capacities, and dialogue avenues they need to shape an inclusive e-commerce and digital economy ecosystem that works for development.

40. **Objectives and features.** The ECDE programme ultimately aims to improve the ability of people and businesses in developing countries, in particular LDCs, to reap inclusive and sustainable development gains from e-commerce and the digital economy. This should be achieved through improved policy formulation at the national, regional and global level on e-commerce and the digital economy for development, in a gender sensitive manner; and improved coordination within and among Governments, together with development partners, civil society and the private sector, to implement policies on e-commerce and the digital economy that work for development, in a gender sensitive manner.

41. **Outputs.** Building on the Digital Economy Report (DER 2021) and following from its work with the G20 Digital Economy Working Group during Indonesia's G20 Presidency (2022), UNCTAD supported India's 2023 G20 Presidency as a knowledge partner for the Development Working Group. The support focused on the Working Group's priority theme on data for development (together with the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology) in view of the Indian Presidency's overall strong emphasis on data, digitalization and digital public infrastructure in multiple workstreams. This was the first G20 Presidency that recognized the role of data in the context of broader development and accelerating the SDGs.

42. Through the ECDE Programme, UNCTAD co-authored a joint report on Digital Trade for Development, prepared together with staff of the IMF, the OECD, the World Bank, and the WTO. The report explores opportunities and challenges for developing economies arising from digital trade and discusses the role of international cooperation in tackling these opportunities and challenges. It considers policy actions in the areas of digital infrastructure, skills, international support for capacity development, and the regulatory and policy environment. Specific policy issues addressed for ensuring inclusive outcomes of digital trade include trade policies, regulation of cross-border data flows, competition policies and consumer protection.

43. To support statistical compilers in their efforts to measure digital trade, the IMF-OECD-UNCTAD-WTO *Handbook on Measuring Digital Trade* was published in July

2023, with a translation in Arabic released in November. The Handbook provides clarifications on the concepts and definitions related to digital trade and offers extensive compilation guidance based on recent efforts in both developed and developing economies, covering a variety of relevant survey and non-survey sources. As such, it provides the foundation for an active programme of technical assistance and statistical capacity building in this area.

44. To ensure that statistical compilers use the latest definition of ICT goods to identify those to be included when compiling the trade of ICT goods, a new technical note was released that sets out the relevant changes to the World Customs Organisation (WCO) Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System - generally referred to as “Harmonized System” or simply “HS”. A second technical note examined the application of Digital Supply-Use Tables to improve the visibility of and information available on digital phenomena while being consistent with the existing national account statistics in developing economies.

45. UNCTAD deepened its engagement with developing countries on assessing the state-of-play of their e-commerce enabling environment through eTrade Readiness Assessments (eT Readies) and assisting them in the development of E-commerce Strategies and Action Plans to serve as roadmaps of how e-commerce can support their strategic development goals. Four eT Readies were completed in 2023 - for Ghana, Mauritania, Mongolia and Peru, bringing the total number of eT Readies conducted to date to 36. In Ghana, the eT Ready built on UNCTAD’s longstanding engagement on e-commerce with West African countries as it followed eight national assessments and two regional assessments (for WAEMU and ECOWAS). In Mongolia, the eT Ready results also fed in the current strategy of the Government for becoming a ‘Digital Nation’ by 2024 and will provide the foundation for the development of a National E-commerce Strategy, planned for 2024. In Peru, the eT Ready recommendations are aligned with the National Digital Transformation Policy (NDTP) and the country’s aspirations to join the OECD and strengthen ties within the Pacific Alliance. In Mauritania, a national launch of the report, including a high-level policy dialogue on the implementation of the eT Ready policy recommendations, is planned for early 2024. Work on new eT Readies commenced in Algeria, Timor-Leste, Trinidad & Tobago and Zimbabwe.

46. In April, Jordan’s National E-commerce Strategy was officially endorsed by the Council of Ministers and acknowledged as a powerful instrument for e-commerce expansion, while Solomon Islands’ Cabinet formally approved the country’s National E-commerce Strategy 2022-2027. The first regional E-commerce Strategy in West Africa – that of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) – was endorsed by the ECOWAS Council of Ministers in July, and the national E-commerce Strategy of Kenya was launched in December, to fortify the country’s position as a digital frontrunner in Africa. The development of national E-Commerce Strategies building on existing eT Readies got underway in Fiji and Côte d’Ivoire.

47. Through an Implementation Support Mechanism (ISM), UNCTAD continued to foster synergies among development partners, facilitate access to e-commerce capacity-building development solutions and monitor progress on the implementation of eT Ready recommendations in partner countries. The 3rd implementation review, made possible by the active participation of eT Ready Focal Points - key technical officers in trade ministries and other selected stakeholders from line ministries of 20 countries, including 13 LDCs -- was released in November. The review confirmed previous trends and uncovered novel insights regarding the implementation processes of e-commerce policy actions and the role of the eT Readies, while also singling out the urgent need to bolster the capabilities of nascent governance arrangements to fast-track implementation.

48. To further strengthen implementation, UNCTAD developed the eTrade Reform Tracker (eTRT). The tracker can serve as a valuable tool to support the effective implementation of eT Readies and similar policy documents. It provides functionalities that enable the assignment of responsibilities, tracking of task execution, and reporting on the progress of time-bound deliverables. Additionally, it allows for the recording of information related to the involvement of development partners, thereby facilitating the monitoring of resource mobilization efforts. A test version was presented to focal entities in

Kenya and Tunisia in October-November to collect preliminary feedback, and a live demonstration of the main features took place during the capacity building workshop “Towards better coordination of eTrade implementation reforms” during the UNCTAD eWeek 2023. Feedback from the 26 participants (of whom 8 women) from 24 countries will be instrumental for fine-tuning UNCTAD’s rollout strategy in 2024.

49. In partnership with the eTrade for Women Advocates for the respective regions, two in-person Masterclasses were delivered. The first benefited 23 women entrepreneurs from 6 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean on 25–28 April in Quito, Ecuador. The second saw the participation of 25 women entrepreneurs from 10 countries in Southeast Asia and the Pacific on 24–27 July in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The Masterclasses benefitted from collaboration with the World Intellectual Property Organization and of the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia. Other capacity building developments included the eTrade for Women Academy, starting with two courses on design thinking and customer experience to be rolled out in 2024.

50. eTrade for Women continued to support women digital entrepreneurs in developing countries through its five regional Communities. Key developments included the strategic selection of 15 Community Leaders - more advanced members of the Community selected to represent their fellows under a pro-bono assignment. They played a crucial role in supporting organizational activities and strengthening the network. At the end of 2023, the network had grown to reach almost 300 women-owned digital businesses in more than 40 countries. The regional approach enables a tailored response to the needs of the members of each Community.

51. eTrade for Women members took part in policy dialogues providing valuable insights into the specific needs, challenges and opportunities for women digital entrepreneurs in developing countries. This included, among others, a private hearing with the Minister of Production, Investment and Foreign Trade of Ecuador, and discussions with policymakers in charge of trade and entrepreneurship policies during the Masterclasses in Quito, Ecuador and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (April and July 2023) respectively. Damilola Olokesusi, eTrade for Women Advocate for English-speaking Africa, contributed to the 6th session of UNCTAD’s Intergovernmental Group of Experts on “How to make data work for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” (10–12 May 2023). Betty Bâ, leader of the Francophone Africa Community, was appointed by the Government of Senegal as National advisor on digital inclusion and communication. At the global level, eTrade for Women contributed to 28 advocacy actions in 2023, to raise awareness of the need for more and better targeted support for women digital entrepreneurs and to call for a bold engagement from global leaders across the board to make the digital economy more gender-inclusive, in line with SDGs 5 and 8. The four Advocates representing French-speaking Africa, English-speaking Africa, the Arab region and Southeast Asia, 14 Community Leaders, and one community member from the Pacific were also present at the UNCTAD eWeek 2023, where they took full advantage of the learning, advocacy and networking opportunities available throughout the event.

52. In the area of e-commerce and law reform, in collaboration with TrainForTrade, UNCTAD delivered two capacity building courses for Pacific SIDS in the frame of the Pacific Digital Economy Programme (PDEP). The first course focused on digital identity for trade and development and was delivered from 13 February to 31 March to 164 participants (60 per cent women). The second focused on the legal aspects of e-commerce and was delivered from October 30 to December 8, to 264 participants (60 per cent women). In partnership with the Pacific Islands Forum, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Asian Development Bank and UNCTAD, a workshop on Effective Legal Frameworks for Building the Digital Economy was delivered to 49 participants from 14 Pacific countries in Suva, Fiji, in October. UNCTAD also finalized a study titled ‘Indirect Taxation of E-Commerce and Digital Trade – Implications for Developing Countries’, to be released in early 2024.

53. UNCTAD’s Cyberlaw Tracker was updated to reflect global legislative changes across the four areas of e-transaction, data protection and privacy, cybercrime, and online consumer protection. Indirect taxation was added to the areas being tracked. A new online collection system was launched to optimize the process of collection of core indicators on

ICT usage by businesses. UNCTAD also launched an improved database on trade in digitally deliverable services, while improvements to the underlying source data coming from customs declarations enabled the improvement of UNCTAD's statistics on ICT goods trade.

54. UNCTAD worked closely with the IMF, OECD, World Bank and WTO, as well as partners from the United Nations Statistics Division, UN-ESCWA, and the Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics, to deliver training and capacity building to help improve the availability of timely, robust, and comparable official statistics on the digital economy and digital trade in developing countries. More than 340 participants (of whom at least 90 women) from countries in the Southern African Customs Union, the Gulf Cooperation Council, and other countries in Africa, central Asia, the Arab region and Latin America and the Caribbean benefited from regional workshops and dedicated sessions.

55. Following the publication of the report on Measuring the Value of E-commerce, a Task Group on Measuring E-commerce Value (TG-eCOM) was created under the Working Group on measuring e-commerce and the digital economy, to develop internationally agreed guidelines and recommendations on measuring the value of e-commerce transactions involving businesses (both sales and purchases) and thereby to support the development of internationally comparable statistics on ecommerce value (and the related concept of digitally ordered trade). The new guidelines will serve as a basis for the provision of technical assistance and capacity building support in this area.

56. Partners in the UNCTAD-led eTrade for all initiative continued to support and contribute to technical cooperation and capacity-building efforts such as the implementation of eTrade Readiness Assessments and activities implemented by the eTrade for Women initiative. Stemming from the main findings from the *COVID-19 and E-commerce: Global Review (2021)*, UNCTAD, ECLAC and selected eTrade for all partners launched a new distance learning Core E-commerce Course for policymakers from Latin America and the Caribbean, to bridge knowledge gaps in how to improve the environment for inclusive e-commerce development. Twenty-eight of the initiative's 35 partners also actively contributed to the UNCTAD eWeek 2023.

57. The 2023 edition of the UNCTAD eWeek, which addressed the theme "Shaping the Future of the Digital Economy", took place in Geneva and online in December. The event gathered more than 3,500 registered participants from 159 countries across all developing regions and country groups, making it the most widely attended and inclusive eWeek thus far and reinforcing its position as the leading global forum to discuss the development opportunities and challenges associated with the digital economy. Featuring over 150 sessions, the eWeek brought together government leaders, CEOs, heads of international organizations, civil society representatives and other key stakeholders to address critical issues such as governing digital platforms and artificial intelligence (AI), promoting eco-friendly digital practices, empowering women in the digital economy and enhancing developing countries' digital readiness. By outlining actions and steps needed to turn digital opportunities into shared and sustainable development gains, the eWeek outcome document, entitled "The Geneva Vision on the Future of the Digital Economy", is expected to send a strong message to the UN-convened Summit of the Future in September 2024.

58. UNCTAD collaborated with the Joint SDG Fund and other entities in the UN Development System on the incubation of a new investment Window on Digital Transformation for development, to support joint programmes at the country level coordinated through UN Resident Coordinator Offices (UN RCOs). The ECDE Programme contributed to the development of the concept note and investment strategy for the Window, in particular for thematic offering #3 under the investment strategy, namely "e-commerce, market access and trade enablement". As a member of the Technical Support Group, UNCTAD will continue to work with the Joint SDG Fund and other partners in the UN Development System to ensure the development and implementation of high-quality joint programmes under the Window.

59. **Results and impacts.** The ongoing work of UNCTAD on e-commerce and the digital economy continued to raise considerable interest among donors, partners and other stakeholders. In 2023 a new partnership arrangement with the Netherlands resulted in USD

6 million committed in support of UNCTAD's E-Commerce and Digital Economy (ECDE) Programme over the 2023–2026 period. In a new partnership, Australia committed AUD 3 million to the ECDE Programme for the 2023–2026 period and became the fifth member of the Programme's Core Donor Advisory Board (CDAB). Germany extended its support into 2024, while New Zealand joined Australia and the European Union in financially supporting the Pacific Digital Economy Programme (PDEP). The UNCTAD eWeek 2023 marked the beginning of a new collaboration with the African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank) and Omidyar Network which may be further expanded in 2024.

60. In 2023, the UNCTAD secretariat received 8 new requests for technical cooperation from member States from across Africa, Asia and the Pacific. These ranged from requests for support with conducting eT Readies, developing E-Commerce Strategies and providing implementation support for those, to requests for technical assistance with measuring e-commerce and the digital economy.

61. UNCTAD's Digital Economy Report (DER) 2021 continued to enrich the debate on data governance for development. Its analysis was reflected in a number of key outcomes, including a Statement on behalf of the Group of 77 and China by the delegation of the Republic of Cuba at the informal consultations on the Global Digital Compact, the T20 compendium for India's G20 presidency under core theme 2 - Our Common Digital Future, the report of the High-Level Advisory Board (HLAB) on Effective Multilateralism on digital and data governance, the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB)'s endorsement in May 2023 of "International Data Governance – Pathways to Progress" paper, and an expert report delivered to the 52nd session of the Human Rights Council among others. The DER 2021 also informed the United Nations General Assembly Resolution on information and communications technologies for sustainable development.⁸ By the end of 2023, the DER 2021 had been downloaded more than 165,000 times.

62. In the G20 Development Working Group, UNCTAD provided support to India's G20 Presidency in developing the G20 Principles on Harnessing Data for Development (D4D). The Principles were adopted by the G20 Development Ministers' Meeting in June and endorsed in the G20 New Delhi Leaders' Declaration, which also reaffirmed the role of data for development and recognized the importance of data free flow with trust and cross-border data flows.

63. In Tunisia, the implementation of an eT Ready Action Plan (launched in October 2022) catalysed increased support from development partners. For instance, GIZ contributed to digitalizing the Central Bank's information system and procedures related to foreign exchange operations which will contribute to facilitating cross-border e-commerce. ITC provided training and capacity-building workshops aiming at strengthening e-commerce skills and technical capacities of public and private sector operators. An UNCTAD-led capacity-building workshop in Tunis in October brought together 30 young e-commerce entrepreneurs (including 17 women), financial service providers, public and private Business Support Organizations, and development partners such as GIZ, SECO and the UN RCO, to explore ways to lower the barriers to accessing finance faced by SMEs.

64. Since the launch of the eTrade for Women initiative in 2019, UNCTAD has delivered Masterclasses to more than 300 women from 40 countries and created regional Communities - local chapters of the initiative that facilitate business, technical advice and networking opportunities for their members. In 2023, an entrepreneur from Nigeria – Imade Osuobeni - turned these opportunities into a prospering agri-food e-commerce business that in turn has impacted more than 4,000 rural women and youth through digital and financial literacy training, the distribution of more than 400 mobile phones and the disbursement of more than 3 million Nigerian naira (over USD 3,000) in 70 small business loans with 100 per cent loan repayment rate. The impact has been remarkable – 57 per cent average increase in income for rural female farmers and traders, 86 new bank accounts opened and an increase in savings among the women with bank accounts. Ms. Osuobeni attributes part of her achievements to the Masterclasses that she attended at the end of 2022 in Nigeria.

⁸ A/RES/78/132.

65. The 6th session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts (IGE) on E-commerce and the Digital Economy (10–12 May 2023) delivered as a main outcome a set of agreed policy recommendations on how to make data work for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The agreed policy recommendations constitute one of the first negotiated texts on how to make data work for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Building on the 36 eT Readies conducted to date and their implementation, member States decided to hold the 7th session of the IGE (6–8 May 2024) on the topic “Building digital readiness: From assessments to implementation”.

66. The etradeforall.org online platform maintained a robust performance of more than 50'000 visitors annually, with 11 out of the top 20 countries with the most visitors being developing countries. The eTrade for all newsletter continued to provide relevant content to a growing audience base (up 55 per cent from 2022). In response to the Programme’s active management of social media, its X (formerly Twitter) handle continues to be the 4th largest account in UNCTAD, boasting 8,000+ followers as of December 2023 – up 11.5 per cent from 2022, with a 58.8 per cent year on year increase in average impressions per post.

A7 Non-tariff measures

Table A7
Non-tariff measures

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
BAR/0T/LAX	Barbados. Policy-Dev Emergency FFF (OUN SDG-F Emergency Call)	2022–	One United Nations Fund
EUR/0T/KBJ	Support to CEFTA for monitoring and reporting of NTMs and implementation of Dispute Settlement Mechanism	2021–	European Union
MYA/0T/HBI	United Nations Trade Cluster Myanmar	2019–	UNOPS - Switzerland
INT/0T/CBG	Non-tariff measures trust fund (under Transparency in Trade programme)	2013–	World Bank
INT/0T/LAN	NTM Data update for selected APEC economies and AVE calculation	2022–	National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS, Japan)
INT/0T/MAI	Collection of NTMs Data with World Bank	2023–	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
INT/9X/00J	Development and Dissemination of Selected Computerized Trade Data	2000–	Multi-donors
RAF/0T/JBK	Support project for the African Continental Free Trade Area to eliminate non-tariff barriers and increase regulatory transparency – Phase 2	2021–	Germany
RAF/0T/KAH	Support Project to Increase Regulatory Transparency on Non-Tariff Measures in the AfCFTA	2021–	Germany

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
ROA-2023 (G12)	Green trade for sustainable development in Pacific small island developing States of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG)	2020–	Development Account

67. **Development context.** Regulations, including behind-the-border regulations protecting safety, health and the environment, affect 90 per cent of merchandise trade. Such non-tariff measures (NTMs) are policy measures, other than customs tariffs, often have an impact on international trade in terms of quantities traded or prices. These measures, although mostly legislated with non-protectionist and non-discriminating intents, can have important implications for international trade in terms of both increasing trade costs and the effects of trade diversion. Non-tariff measures affect trade by raising trade, compliance and procedural costs, which often disproportionately burden small enterprises and poorer countries. LDCs and smaller producers in developing countries are disproportionately affected, hampering trade and economic development. However, most non-tariff measures have important public policy objectives such as protecting health, safety and the environment. More than 40 per cent of non-tariff measures are directly and positively linked to the Sustainable Development Goals. Striking a balance between trade costs and regulatory benefits requires transparency, policy coherence and international-level regulatory convergence. Concrete actions in this regard are often coupled with regional economic integration and domestic regulatory reforms. While many of these measures are put in place for legitimate policy objectives, such as ensuring access to or safety of essential goods, they have an impact on sustainable development. For developing countries, understanding the uses and implications of such measures is essential for the formulation and implementation of effective development strategies.

68. **Objectives and features.** The UNCTAD programme on non-tariff measures aims to increase transparency and understanding of trade control measures and regulations so that policies can better promote sustainable development. The programme covers the entire chain of non-tariff measures, ranging from classification,⁹ data collection and dissemination, to research, policy advice and capacity-building in countries and regional integration groupings. UNCTAD leads international cooperation on the development and revision of the International Classification of Non-Tariff Measures and with regional and international partners on data collection. This ensures a globally coordinated and resource-saving approach. UNCTAD assists developing countries in enhancing transparency and building analytical capacity on non-tariff measures by the following means: collecting and making available online data on such measures to enhance transparency in this regard; conducting regional reviews of the integration of non-tariff measures; providing online and in-country training on data collection on non-tariff measures and on data sources, tools, methods and policy-relevant research questions on such measures; and providing advisory services upon request to countries and regional groupings in building capacities to address such measures and remove non-tariff barriers.

69. **Outputs.** In 2023, UNCTAD updated and published NTMs data for 23 countries. The UNCTAD database on non-tariff measures, the Trade Analysis and Information System (TRAINS), is the world's largest and most comprehensive, covering over 90 per cent of world trade, and data on non-tariff measures are publicly available through the dissemination tools: TRAINS Portal for non-tariff measures (for policy makers), the World Integrated Trade Solution (<https://wits.worldbank.org/>) platform (for researchers) and the Global Trade Helpdesk (for private sector users).¹⁰ TRAINS Portal¹¹, an interactive web portal that allows public users to benefit from efficient search queries, data compilation,

⁹ Classification focuses on the identification of policies and regulations that determine trade and market access and how information about non-tariff measures can be structured.

¹⁰ See <https://globaltradehelpdesk.org>

¹¹ <https://trainsonline.unctad.org>

data retrieval, as well as download customized search results, aims to strengthen the transparency of non-tariff measures across countries and reduce access to information cost of traders. Non-tariff measures and trade regulation data on TRAINS Portal are retrieved from the TRAINS Data Entry Tool¹² where data from over 120 countries have been collected using a standardized approach, endorsed by the United Nations Statistical Commission, that ensures cross-country comparability. The number of users continued to increase to exceed 23,000 in 2023.

70. The Latin American Integration Association (ALADI) continued to work in 2023 jointly with UNCTAD to provide yearly updated NTM data for all its member countries. ALADI also worked towards integrating its database with TRAINS Portal, through a tailor-made application programming interface (API) for automatic transfer of data.

71. UNCTAD in 2023 continued its capacity-building activities conducted through online training and face-to-face workshops on NTMs. UNCTAD offered the executive online training course on NTMs which graduated 147 participants from various backgrounds (academic, government officials, traders, and researchers), 79 of them are women. The online training course on NTMs and data collection enrolled around a hundred participants, 82 from them graduated the course. Tailor-made courses on the NTM data collection and trade regulations collection were conducted in Chad, Gabon and Cameroon. In addition, in-person workshops took place in Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji, Timor-Leste, Tonga, and Barbados. Overall, over 500 government officials, traders and researchers have completed the courses on non-tariff measures provided by UNCTAD, of whom more than 46 per cent are women.

72. UNCTAD continued its support to the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) on the elimination of non-tariff barriers (NTBs). All intra-African traders, including MSMEs, women, youth and informal traders, can register and report an NTB through the online platform.¹³ In previous years, UNCTAD had supported the negotiations of its legal basis, the development of the online tool, and the training of National Focal Points in Member States / State Parties. In 2023, UNCTAD focussed on raising awareness among the private sector stakeholders on this opportunity to increase trading opportunities. UNCTAD worked with the AfCFTA Secretariat to move the online tool to servers of the AfCFTA Secretariat. UNCTAD also continued seconding an expert to the Non-Tariff Barriers Coordination Unit of the AfCFTA Secretariat.

73. UNCTAD continued working with AfCFTA Member States / State Parties to increase regulatory transparency through data collection on NTMs. The work in the AfCFTA is integrated into UNCTAD's global NTM transparency initiative and promotes inter-agency coordination and policy coherence (SDG target 17.14, indicator 17.14.1). During 2023, new or updated data was published for Botswana, Burundi, the Gambia, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of Congo, Gabon, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, Niger, Rwanda, Seychelles, United Republic of Tanzania, Togo, Uganda and Zambia. National data collection efforts went hand in hand with capacity building for regulators on good regulatory practice. Furthermore, through various partnerships, UNCTAD was able to raise awareness on the importance and benefits of regulatory transparency at nine third-party events with a total of 231 participants, 39 per cent of whom were women.

74. UNCTAD works to increase the capacity of four Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) member States – Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu – to identify and strengthen synergistic linkages between green trade promotion and their sustainable development in a regionally collaborative manner. The project called “Green trade for sustainable development in Pacific SIDS of the MSG (hereafter, the MSG Green Trade project)” under the 12th Tranche of Development Account continued its remarkable progress and successfully ended on 31 December 2023. The second round of national workshops were held in Fiji (12 June), Papua New Guinea (21 June), Solomon Islands (19

¹² <https://trainsdataentry.unctad.org>

¹³ See <https://tradebarriers.africa/>

June) and Vanuatu (8 June). The second regional workshop was held virtually (16 August), while the third took place in Vanuatu (16–17 October). The NTM data of Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Japan was published¹⁴ in 2023 and that of Papua New Guinea in February 2024. Moreover, export guides on key products (ginger, kava, vanilla and virgin coconut oil) and the reports on synergistic linkages between green trade and sustainable development were prepared for all MSG member States. Voluntary sustainability standards (VSS) assessments took place in Fiji, Solomon Islands and in Papua New Guinea.¹⁵ Finally, the MSG sub-regional action plan was prepared and validated by the MSG Secretariat and the member States. Two export guides were published in 2023 and the additional reports are scheduled for publication in 2024.

75. UNCTAD works on improving trade facilitation and border/customs procedures under the “Improving Pacific Islands Customs and Trade” (IMPACT) project, which is a component of the ‘Pacific Regional Integration Support’ Programme (PRISE). Within this multi-divisional project led by ASYCUDA programme, the joint national workshops with the Pacific Community (SPC) and the trainings on the WTO SPS and TBT notification were undertaken in Fiji (13–14 June), Papua New Guinea (20, 22 June), Solomon Islands (20 June, 24 July), Timor-Leste (21–22 September), Tonga (12–13 October) and Vanuatu (7, 9 June).¹⁶ Moreover, NTM data of Samoa, Timor-Leste and Tonga was collected for the first time, pending the governments’ validation. Following the NTM data collection under the MSG Green Trade project, the effort to update the NTM data in four MSG member States was initiated. As per the donor’s request to expand the NTM component, an additional activity plan and budget allocation was proposed.

76. UNCTAD developed the Non-Tariff Measures Cost-Effectiveness Toolkit to analyse NTMs in terms of the objective they are designed for, the manner in which they are implemented, and how easy it is for the private sector to comply with them. The Toolkit was finalized and adopted by the ASEAN Economic Ministers in 2021. In 2023, UNCTAD and the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA) embarked on a call for proposals for national consultants to collect and update the NTM data in the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) countries with the aim to kick off the project in 2024.

77. The Development Emergency Modality Joint Programme (JP), titled “Barbados and OECS - Food Security and Livelihoods Resilience Through Analytical, Capacity Building and Policy Support in Response to the Global Crisis on Food, Energy, and Finance,” was implemented from October 19, 2022 to March 31, 2023. Under output 1.3, UNCTAD implemented the NTM Cost-effectiveness Toolkit on the grains value chain in Barbados. A validation workshop was held on 16 March and the report was officially published in July.

78. Under a United Nations Trade Cluster Project for Trade and Productive Capacity in Myanmar, UNCTAD identified key products for exportation for Myanmar, Shan State, which are tea, ginger, and avocado. UNCTAD supports the farmers of those products to improve the market access of their products to reach the global markets. Various online and on-ground training material has been developed for farmers to guide them with the role of NTMs and how to access them to facilitate trade, and how to address deficiencies that make the product unsuitable for the international market. Farmer groups were trained during the first half of 2023. Furthermore, in 2023, the data collection and coding of NTM data from Myanmar was concluded and data published.

79. In close cooperation with UNECE, NTM data collection had been done for Kyrgyzstan in the past, in 2021 and 2022, as well as the development of a national e-NTM platform to collect information on NTM, to share data automatically with UNCTAD TRAINS Portal containing data for all other countries. Kyrgyzstan requested assistance to

¹⁴ <https://trainsonline.unctad.org>

¹⁵ VSS assessment of Vanuatu was conducted through the previous project (the 10th Tranche Development Account project 1617AI) and published in 2020.

¹⁶ The workshops and WTO notification trainings in Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu took place back-to-back with the national workshops under the MSG Green Trade project (see para 21).

update the NTM data and this is expected to happen in 2024. If there are enough financial resources available, UNCTAD may respond to the request on training government officials for future update of the data and sustainability of NTM data collection in Kyrgyzstan.

80. UNCTAD strengthens the transparency in APEC economies and updated NTM data in Canada, started data updates of the United States, updated Latin-American APEC economies and supported transparency in a few other APEC economies. Jointly with the Global Trade Analysis project, of which UNCTAD is a board member, ad valorem equivalent tariffs (AVEs) are calculated.

81. UNCTAD supports the negotiations on a reform of the Dispute Settlement Mechanism (DSM) to resolve non-tariff barriers between Parties in Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA). The project “EU4Business support to CEFTA for Non-Tariff Measures monitoring and reporting and support to the implementation of the CEFTA Dispute Settlement Mechanism” started in June 2022. Within the framework of the project and until the end of 2023, UNCTAD organized six rounds of negotiations on Additional Protocol 7 to CEFTA on a dispute settlement mechanism, providing legal advice and logistical support. UNCTAD has organized and delivered three trainings on Dispute Settlement Mechanism in different CEFTA Parties, with participation from both public and private sector representatives. Four additional trainings are envisaged for 2024. UNCTAD also assists efforts to resolve barriers reported through the CEFTA Market Access Barriers Database (MABD). UNCTAD reviewed the portal in depth and proposed improvements aimed at enhancing its effectiveness as a tool for resolving trade claims, which also takes into account the feedback received by CEFTA Secretariat and CEFTA parties. UNCTAD also is helping CEFTA parties to enhance transparency by supporting data collection on NTMs of CEFTA economies. These data will be disseminated through UNCTAD TRAINS online database. UNCTAD also collaborates with the GIZ on the preparation of the annual report on NTMs in CEFTA economies for monitoring trade barriers within CEFTA. The private-public dialogue will also be enhanced by developing a strategy for a monitoring and reporting mechanism on NTMs by the private sector.

82. **Results and impacts.** Two projects in the Pacific – the MSG Green Trade project and the IMPACT project achieved outstanding results at both regional and national levels. Close collaboration with the MSG Secretariat for the MSG Green Trade project culminated in a MOU between UNCTAD and the MSG Secretariat for future joint projects. Also, the MSG Secretariat included the project and the MSG sub-regional action plan including the proposal for the implement mechanism as an agenda for its next Trade and Economic Officials’ Meeting (TEOM) to follow up. At the country level, Papua New Guinea fully took ownership of the MSG Green Trade project. The country launched the VSS assessment report and the export guide in East Sepik in late 2023, as well as followed up on the project’s findings by developing a vanilla standard and planning the modernization of the Spice Industry Act. After the trainings on the WTO SPS and TBT notification under the IMPACT project, Tonga submitted one notification to the WTO and Papua New Guinea initiated the process to submit six notifications. Vanuatu also submitted two notifications to the WTO in February 2024 (for reference, Tonga, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu had submitted one notification to the WTO since 2007, 1996 and 2012 respectively). Lastly, the NTM data of seven Pacific SIDS laid a solid foundation to conduct region-wide analysis and policy support that are planned in 2024.¹⁷

83. The support projects to the AfCFTA in the areas of NTB elimination and NTM regulatory transparency led to the following results: Awareness raising campaigns on the AfCFTA NTB online reporting, monitoring and eliminating mechanism increased website users from 6,400 in 2020 to 8,200 in 2021, and to 10,000 in 2022 and 2023. UNCTAD’s efforts to improve regulatory transparency in Africa has increased NTM data coverage to five additional countries in 2022 with 17 additional countries close to completion. Over 1,200 trade-related regulations were collected, analysed and classified into the International Classification of NTMs.

¹⁷ See <https://unctad.org/project/transparency-trade-regulation-and-facilitation-pacific-agreement-closer-economic-relations>

84. The Latin American Integration Association (ALADI) is continuing to promote trade through the continuous provision of updated information on non-tariff measures to policymakers, exporters and importers, based on UNCTAD methodology and technical support. Countries in Latin America are revitalizing their efforts towards deep economic integration, including based on an UNCTAD regional non-tariff measures integration review providing background data on and an analysis of non-tariff measures.

85. The dissemination of research results on NTMs has improved awareness of the importance of non-tariff measures for international trade and export-led development strategies and of the need to devise policies to minimize the negative effects of NTMs. In particular, transparency on non-tariff measures was increased through the collection and dissemination of data and through a series of studies that helped to provide better understanding of the implications of these measures for developing countries.

A9 Trade negotiations and the international trading system

Table A9

Trade negotiations and the international trading system

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
ANG/0T/FBK	European Union–UNCTAD Joint Programme for Angola: Train for Trade II	2017–	European Union
MOZ/0T/JAH	Building Competitiveness for Exports in Mozambique	2020–	EU through interagency agreement with UNIDO
INT/0T/9AU	Trust Fund on WTO Accession	2009–	Islamic Development Bank, Republic of Korea
INT/0T/9BG	Trust Fund on Services, Development and Trade	2015–	Multi-donors
INT/9X/00M	Support to the GSTP	2020–	Multi-donors
ROA-2124 (F13)	Trade policies and frameworks to foster regional integration and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in selected conflict and post-conflict Arab countries	2021–	Development Account

86. **Development context.** A universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory, and equitable multilateral trading system continues to be the cornerstone of a global trade partnership, particularly to contribute to Sustainable Development Goal 17. While international trade negotiations can open access to new markets, thus creating opportunities, they also represent daunting challenges for policymakers and trade negotiators as new rules and commitments resulting from such negotiations would define a country's participation in international trade. Continued and enhanced support on trade negotiations, including in the context of WTO accession, remains critically important for developing countries, particularly for the least developed countries, Africa and small vulnerable economies.

87. The integration of developing countries into the global services economy through increased services trade requires them to design and implement appropriate policies and regulatory frameworks, negotiate and manage trade agreements that cover services, establish institutional structures, create an enabling environment for entrepreneurship, and build competitive services supply capacities. UNCTAD work on services is expected to

contribute to achieving several Sustainable Development Goals, including Goal 8, Goal 9 and Goal 17.

88. At the South–South level, UNCTAD provides technical support to the Global System of Trade Preferences among Developing Countries (GSTP) participants. Following the successful conclusion of the Sao Paulo Round of GSTP negotiations in December 2010, UNCTAD continued to support GSTP participants in their efforts towards effective implementation of the Round and in follow-up discussions. UNCTAD assisted them in coordinating and backstopping their activities in various GSTP activities.

89. **Objective.** UNCTAD provides capacity-building support aimed at helping developing countries, particularly LDCs, and their regional groupings, Africa, and small and vulnerable economies reap benefits and handle challenges in the areas of multilateral and regional trade negotiations, services regulatory and institutional frameworks at the national level, and WTO accession. UNCTAD promotes coherence of bilateral and regional trade agreements with the multilateral trading system; and supports regional cooperation mechanisms as well as utilization of trade preferences. Given the limited progress in the Doha Round and renewed interest in regional trade arrangements, UNCTAD also places greater emphasis on development impact of regional dimension of trade (South–South and South–North).

90. UNCTAD's support in the area of services is aimed to enhance expertise and human, regulatory and institutional capacities to elaborate and implement national services regulatory frameworks, services sectoral assessments and preparations for (a) regional negotiations with a view to developing a regional framework on services trade; (b) participation in WTO General Agreement on Trade in Services negotiations; (c) responding to the challenges associated with parallel negotiations between the multilateral track and regional tracks; and (d) coordinating trade policy negotiations with other policy dimensions to ensure the best policy mix that ensures supply capacity in services for direct and indirect trade.

91. The objective of UNCTAD support for the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) and other preferential arrangements is to help developing countries, in particular LDCs, increase the utilization of GSP and other trade preferences. Such support includes raising awareness and enhancing understanding among exporters and government officials in beneficiary countries of the trading opportunities available under the schemes; strengthening understanding of technical and administrative regulations and laws governing preferential market access, in particular rules of origin; and disseminating relevant information for users of preferential schemes.

92. The objective of UNCTAD support for GSTP is to increase trade among developing countries by facilitating market access negotiations and the operation of GSTP and benefiting from it, and to provide substantive and administrative support to GSTP participants for them to implement the results of the third round of negotiations.

93. **Outputs.** The main outputs in 2023 in the area of trade negotiations and the international trading system are reported as follows:

Trading systems

94. UNCTAD continued to monitor and assess the evolution in international trade and the trading system from a development perspective. In 2023, UNCTAD continued to deliver policy discussions and promoted focused and candid debate on new and emerging issues affecting developing countries. At multilateral level, UNCTAD continued to provide technical support to developing countries and groupings in their engagement in multilateral and regional trade negotiations and the implementation of the resulting trade agreements. Under the Commercial diplomacy component of the European Union–UNCTAD Joint Programme for Angola: Train for Trade II, UNCTAD continued to support the Government of Angola in trade negotiations, regional integration, and Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) negotiations with the European Union. UNCTAD also provided technical and advisory support to Mozambique under the European Union–UNIDO project to support Mozambique in implementing safeguards.

95. In 2023, UNCTAD organised the following events for developing countries and LDCs:

- (a) Consultation with Maldives on its accession to the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) agreements (3 February);
- (b) Angola/Mozambique – Study tour and training on safeguard measures (27–31 March);
- (c) E-learning course on trade in services for Angola (13 November–17 December).

96. UNCTAD technical assistance on WTO accession targets building human resources, regulatory, policy and institutional capacities in WTO acceding countries to deal more effectively with the challenges of the international trading system and take advantage of emerging opportunities as well as to implement their obligations associated with WTO membership. In 2023, the following activities were undertaken on WTO accession:

- (a) Workshop on WTO Accession of Iraq (Amman) (2–4 March);
- (b) Workshop on WTO accession for Iraqi negotiators: 16–17 May, Cairo, Egypt;
- (c) Technical advisory meeting for Iraqi officials on WTO accession process preparation (21–24 August, Erbil, Iraq);
- (d) Technical advisory workshop for Iraqi officials on WTO accession process (11–14 November, Erbil, Iraq).

Services, development and trade

97. UNCTAD supported countries in exploring the potential role of trade in services in building diversification and economic resilience. Trade in services allows downstream activities of all sectors to grow by building on services imports, thus contributing to structural transformation and economic diversification. This enhances resilience as the impact of shocks affecting particular sectors may be lower when the economic structure allows reliance on other sectors. Successful diversification is more important in the wake of value-chain disruptive events and the imperative in many developing countries to increase and improve jobs.

98. UNCTAD assisted member States in examining this potential of services by delivering a presentation on digital services and another one on trade in services trends at the China International Fair for Trade in Services (CIFTIS) in September 2023. UNCTAD also discussed this topic in a e-learning course on trade in services for Angola on 20 December 2023. The presentation on digital services focused on how information and communications technology (ICT) services influence the performance of downstream sectors. This underscored the importance of policies to build ICT services' capacity and to reduce the digital divide for developing countries to pursue development benefits from digitalization. UNCTAD established and convened three meetings of an informal working group on data for trade in services and development policies. The Working Group was established following suggestions from the Multi-year Expert Meeting on Trade, Services and Development. It provides a platform for data producers and users to identify pressing data needs, gaps and share good practices and examples. Preliminary findings from the Working Group were shared at the World Trade Forum held in October 2023.

99. In 2023, UNCTAD targeted more its support to countries on how services are needed in all stages of energy transition projects on the ground, from engineering, legal, and financial services to construction, operation and maintenance, and recycling services. The availability of high quality, and cost-effective services is therefore a key determinant of the success of these projects. Consequently, it is critical to foster strong capabilities in domestic service suppliers. At the same time, not all countries could be proficient in all the required service sectors. They need to procure services from foreign suppliers, including those operating locally. Trade and investment policy regimes thus critically affect the outcomes of energy transition projects.

100. UNCTAD discussed the linkages between services and renewable energy in a meeting on green Services Trade Restrictiveness Index (STRI), hosted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on 8 September 2023. The topic was also discussed by UNCTAD at the Conference of the Latin American and Caribbean Network of Services Researchers and Policy Makers (REDLAS) on 8 November 2023. Furthermore, UNCTAD organized a session on “Harnessing Services Trade for Energy Transition” at the 28th Conference of the Parties (COP28) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) on 6 December 2023.

101. UNCTAD helped countries to build on the relevant role of financial services in enabling domestic and international transactions, mobilizing and channelling domestic savings, and making credit available for business in all economic sectors and families. Financial inclusion is key to make remittances more facilitated, speedier, safer and less costly. In 2023, UNCTAD continued to participate in the Digital Currency Global Initiative, led by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), particularly on the analysis of the possible effects of digital currencies on financial inclusion. In December 2023, Bloomberg online invited UNCTAD to provide inputs to an article on remittances in Latin America.

102. In addition, a presentation was delivered on 16 November 2023 at the UNCTAD online Course on Trade, Gender, and Entrepreneurship in Indonesia. UNCTAD suggests that enhancing access to financial services will improve the productivity of women-led micro, small, and medium enterprises. Implementing inclusive and non-discriminatory policies, along with a better understanding of the risk factors by the financial institutions, is essential in enabling more access to finance by women entrepreneurs and enhancing their productivity.

103. UNCTAD highlighted the linkages between trade, services and migration. This covered the potential development benefits of these linkages for migrants, their countries of origin and of destination. These potential opportunities include strengthening trade flows through migration and diaspora engagement, facilitating safe and less costly remittance transfers, and maximizing the development impact of remittances. These benefits are aligned with promoting migration as a choice, improving the life of migrants and their families, encouraging brain circulation. Trade in services agreements can contribute to governing temporary labour migration, for example with provisions related to the recognition of qualifications.

104. On 21 July 2023, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Mexico interviewed UNCTAD on the linkages between trade, services and migration. The interview covered the issues discussed in the document published by UNCTAD in 2021 on “Financial inclusion for development: Better access to financial services for women, the poor, and migrant workers”. Also in 2023, UNCTAD continued to develop the following partnerships and initiatives to support member States in exploring the development benefits of the linkages between trade, services and migration:

(a) Participated in the United Nations Network on Migration, including in its annual meeting on 30 and 31 January 2024;

(b) Participated in the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD), including in its Summit between 23 and 26 January 2024. UNCTAD contributed to a background paper of the Summit on “Diasporas as actors of economic, social and cultural development”.

Market access and trade preferences

105. With regard to GSP and other trade preferences, UNCTAD has continued to promote enhanced awareness among developing countries on ways to better utilize the preferences available under GSP and other preferential schemes through the periodic provision of information on a dedicated website, administrative support on certificates of origin, collection of data, publication of handbooks on GSP schemes and technical cooperation and capacity-building services. UNCTAD ensured the dissemination of relevant information by updating and revising GSP handbooks of individual GSPs and related schemes and preparing related studies. UNCTAD also continued to compile and

update the GSP database based on data submitted by GSP donor countries, which provide useful information on trade conducted under each preferential scheme.

106. With regard to the Global System of Trade Preferences among Developing Countries (GSTP), UNCTAD continued to act as the secretariat of the GSTP, providing support to the participants in the operation of GSTP Agreement and their efforts to revitalize the GSTP as a unique platform of South–South trade cooperation. In 2023 UNCTAD organized the following meetings:

- (a) GSTP – Webinar for Paraguay (20 April);
- (b) GSTP Committee of Participants (19 September).

107. **Results and impacts.** Through its integrated analytical and capacity-building activities, UNCTAD has strengthened capacities of developing countries to participate effectively in the international trading system. It contributed to enhancing the understanding of developing countries’ trade negotiators, policymakers and stakeholders on developmental implications of trade negotiations and improving their ability to analyse, formulate and implement trade policies and strategies to promote their developmental interests. UNCTAD’s activities in these areas have sustained positive impact and strengthened human, institutional, and regulatory capacities in trade-related policies and negotiations in developing countries, particularly on trade and development, national trade policy formulation and implementation, and multilateral and regional trade negotiations with special focus on LDCs, Africa and small and vulnerable economies. Specifically, on WTO accession, the technical assistance provided by UNCTAD has increased the awareness among the acceding country’s negotiating team and stakeholders of the multifaceted issues in the accession process and has enabled them to better understand WTO rules and disciplines, including the special and differential treatment and other developmental provisions.

108. UNCTAD’s work on services, trade and development has helped developing countries better understand this area, and the potential opportunities this field can provide. Greater synergy was created between the three pillars of UNCTAD’s work on services. UNCTAD’s support to trade policy makers and trade negotiators in continuing to articulate their interests in the multilateral, regional and bilateral services negotiations helped them to maintain the development focus in the negotiations and ensure greater coherence in priorities pursued at multilateral, regional and bilateral levels. The developmental benefits of international migration and related remittances have received added emphasis from UNCTAD in the light of its growing impact on development prospects. UNCTAD’s assistance was important in facilitating enhanced extensive multi-stakeholder consultations on services development. Sharing of experiences and lessons learnt had been a special feature of UNCTAD’s support, which was repeatedly appreciated by member States.

109. UNCTAD’s support in the area of market access and trade preferences has contributed to building the knowledge base and to the wider dissemination of GSP-related information, including through the preparation of GSP handbooks, and collection and analysis of GSP trade data, as well as improved understanding and awareness of GSP among exporters and government officials in some individual beneficiary countries. UNCTAD contributed to making LDC preferences more effective. UNCTAD’s support provided to GSTP participants has ensured the operation of the Agreement and the effective follow-up of the Sao Paulo Round results. Further efforts are needed towards the effective implementation of the Sao Paulo Round results, which could provide an important impetus for robust expansion of South–South trade and deepening South–South cooperation.

A10 Sustainable trade and the environment

Table A10
Sustainable trade and the environment

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
ANG/0T/FBK	European Union–UNCTAD Joint Programme for Angola: Train for Trade II	2017–	European Union
INT/0T/7BS	Climate change programme	2007–	France, Portugal
INT/0T/HAI	BioTrade Facilitation Programme: Linking trade, biodiversity and sustainable development	2019–	Switzerland
INT/0T/HBD	Sustainable manufacturing and environmental pollution programme	2018–	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
RAF/0T/KBE	Inclusion of green initiatives in AfCFTA National Implementation Strategies in 10 African Countries	2022–	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

110. **Sustainable Development context.** As the world has prospered and developed over the last decades, climate change, biodiversity loss and environmental degradation have increased dramatically and impacted the most vulnerable and the poorest segments of the population of developing countries. Concomitantly, this is worsened by unsustainable and irresponsible production and consumption patterns that increase pressure over natural resources extraction and expand solid waste, pollution, and marine litter.

111. Recently, two important multilateral landmark agreements have been adopted: the WTO fisheries Subsidies Agreement (2022) and the United Nations treaty on Biodiversity in Areas Beyond Jurisdiction (2023). These two agreements have environmental sustainability at the core of their objectives, including phasing out of most harmful fisheries subsidies and the conservation of marine genetic resources and ecosystems in the high seas. Both agreements are now subject to accession and ratification process. Negotiations on outstanding issues under the WTO Fisheries Agreement on subsidies that contribute to overcapacity and overfishing will continue after the WTO 13th Ministerial Conference in February 2024 as consensus was not found.

112. Beside this, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF)¹⁸ was approved in December 2022 and negotiations for an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution are advancing steadily under the United Nations framework, with the objective to finalise negotiations by the end of this year or by early 2025.

113. Essential to those objectives are sustainable products, defined as “internationally traded goods and services that are sustainably produced and promote sustainable consumption”, as they offer considerable export opportunities for developing countries. Many sustainable products are produced in rural areas by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and by lower- and medium-skill workers, which can contribute significantly to many aspects of sustainable development including environmental

¹⁸ Available at: [15/4. Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework \(cbd.int\)](https://www.cbd.int/15/4)

protection, conservation and sustainable use of natural resources and biodiversity, economic diversification and circularity, job creation and poverty reduction. To seize these opportunities, developing countries need to strengthen their capacities to identify their production and export strengths.

114. UNCTAD – through its mandates on ocean and circular economies, biodiversity conservation, climate change, renewable energy, and plastic pollution under the Bridgetown Covenant¹⁹ – recognizes that transforming to a sustainable economy requires efforts to preserve both land and marine biodiversity, while responding to climate change mitigation and adaptation challenges. Ensuring conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas, and marine resources, including addressing the discharge of plastic litter and other waste, significantly reducing marine pollution of all kinds, as well as ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns can contribute to sustainable development and poverty eradication through economic diversification.

115. **Objectives and features.** Programmes and initiatives on sustainable trade and the environment aim to strengthen the capacity of developing countries in designing and implementing mutually supportive trade, environment, climate change and sustainable development strategies while integrating sustainable development objectives at all levels.

116. UNCTAD explores trade opportunities arising from multilateral environmental agreements, as well as trade and environment-related negotiations under the guidance of the Bridgetown Covenant. It also promotes sustainable trade in sectors that contribute to further economic growth, job creation, social inclusion, and biodiversity conservation. Countries are increasing their climate ambition to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement. The spillovers of climate policies may affect trade partners, particularly developing countries. Trade-related climate measures may increase trade costs and potentially reduce market access, especially for SMEs. UNCTAD explores the trade implications of climate policies with a view to informing and advising policymakers through data driven analysis and policy recommendations.

117. **Outputs.** The Oceans Economy Programme,²⁰ supports developing countries in seizing economic benefits from the sustainable use of marine resources. It promotes the sustainable trade of products and services in ocean-based economic sectors by developing and adopting oceans economy and trade strategies and enhancing national implementation capacities within the framework of United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). It has developed and maintains the Ocean Trade database in UNCTADstat.²¹ The main outputs of the Oceans Economy and Fisheries Programme in 2023 are reported as follows:

(a) UNCTAD released the Trade and Environment Review 2023 (TER 2023)²² dedicated to the building of a sustainable ocean economy in 2023, which points at emerging ocean-based sectors such as seaweed and molluscs culture, and the value of marine based non-plastic substitutes. The TER 2023 was launched in a special event²³ in April 2023.

(b) UNCTAD released at the UNFCCC COP 27 in United Arab Emirates in December 2023, the first mapping ever on the Energy transition of fishing fleets: opportunities and challenges for developing countries.²⁴ The report provides more recent data on CO₂ emissions by fishing fleets, analyses the applicable national determined contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement as well as relevant regulatory framework. It points out main technological options available or in R&D phase for reducing emissions including energy efficiency improvements, alternative fuels and engines, and provides a set

¹⁹ Building upon the Nairobi Maafikiano and the principles of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development.

²⁰ <https://unctad.org/topic/trade-and-environment/oceans-economy>

²¹ <https://unctadstat.unctad.org/datacentre/?folders=25>

²² <https://unctad.org/ter2023>

²³ <https://unctad.org/meeting/launch-trade-and-environment-review-2023>

²⁴ https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ditcted2023d5_en.pdf

of action-oriented recommendations to enable a just energy transition for the fisheries sector, particularly in developing countries.

(c) It co-organized a short online course: Trade and the blue economy: Caribbean case studies²⁵ with more than 100 regional participants, jointly with FAO, UNEP, Joint SDG Fund, UNDP, University of West Indies and Newcastle University in February 2023.

(d) It held a high-level segment on decarbonization opportunities and challenges in the blue economy²⁶ at the seventieth session the Trade and Development Board in June 2023.

(e) It co-organized a training workshop on adding value sustainably to fisheries and aquaculture products for exports²⁷ in Viet Nam in September 2023 with more than 50 interregional participants.

(f) It co-organized an international webinar on regional trade agreements and fisheries and aquaculture products: Today and tomorrow²⁸ with FAO and the Shanghai Ocean University in September 2023.

(g) It organized during the WTO Public Forum an event titled “Empowering waves: an ocean of opportunities for women in the blue economy”²⁹ in September 2023.

(h) It co-organized eleven side events and briefings³⁰ on fisheries, marine wildlife, ocean trade, plastic pollution, and decarbonization of the ocean-based sectors at the Basel COP, World wildlife day, CITES animal committee, the International Negotiations Committee (INC) for a treaty on Plastic Pollution, FAO sub-committee on Fisheries Trade, and the Trade House at the UNFCCC COP 27. Events on plastics were co-organized in cooperation with the UNCTAD Sustainable Manufacturing and Environmental Pollution (SMEP) Programme. These events and briefings involved more than 700 stakeholders and were implemented jointly with about twenty partners.

118. The Circular Economy Programme³¹ contributes to reducing pollution and waste to protect the environment, promote a regenerative economy, reduce pressure on strained ecosystems and conserve natural resources. Through the SMEP programme, UNCTAD is assisting developing countries in their transition to a circular economy by improving the utilization of resources, adopting cleaner production methods, diversifying exports, and reducing the levels of pollution generated by manufacturing. Both the oceans and the circular economy programmes cooperate closely to promote understanding and opportunities in plastic substitutes, pollution prevention and control services on land and at the sea.

119. The UNCTAD SMEP project³² aims to generate evidence that can improve existing knowledge of the environmental health and socioeconomic impacts of selected trade-exposed manufacturing sectors across target countries in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. It also identifies and invests in suitable technology-based solutions to address the most pressing environmental health issues associated with manufacturing in target countries. Finally, it also addresses the issue of plastic pollution, focusing on the development of solutions towards material substitution and enhanced biodegradation options. In 2023 the SMEP programme accomplished multiple outputs, such as:

²⁵ <https://unctad.org/meeting/short-online-course-trade-and-blue-economy-caribbean-case-studies>

²⁶ <https://unctad.org/meeting/trade-and-development-board-seventieth-session>

²⁷ <https://unctad.org/meeting/training-workshop-adding-value-sustainably-fisheries-and-aquaculture-products-exports>

²⁸ <https://unctad.org/meeting/international-webinar-regional-trade-agreements-and-fisheries-and-aquaculture-products>

²⁹ <https://unctad.org/meeting/wto-public-forum-2023-empowering-waves-ocean-opportunities-women-blue-economy>

³⁰ [Meetings and Events \(unctad.org\)](https://unctad.org/Meetings-and-Events)

³¹ <https://unctad.org/topic/trade-and-environment/circular-economy>.

³² <https://unctad.org/project/sustainable-manufacturing-and-environmental-pollution-smep>.

(a) Finalised production and published four technical videos³³ illustrating the environmental impacts of production and exports in Kenya, the United Republic of Tanzania, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. A fifth video was published covering the issue of plastic pollution and the important role played by plastic substitutes made by agricultural, marine, residual or mineral materials.

(b) UNCTAD co-organized a workshop³⁴ with over 40 officials, including parliaments and policymakers from seven East African Community (EAC) countries for a two-day event in Nairobi to discuss the negative effects of single-use plastics materials and regulatory harmonization via a proposed draft bill to ban single-use plastics in East Africa.

(c) UNCTAD co-organised an event³⁵ with the WTO and Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions (BRSC) Secretariats in support of the implementation of the Basel Convention Plastic Waste Amendments. The event briefed participants on some of the relevant discussions and data generated in the multilateral trading system, including better understanding of trade in plastic along the value chains as well as plastic waste trade and “hidden material flows” of plastics and facilitating access to technologies required to implement the Basel Convention Plastic Waste Amendments.

(d) UNCTAD attended the 2nd session of the International Negotiating Committee (INC) on Plastics negotiations in Paris and co-organised an official side event³⁶ featuring representatives from organizations working on trade-related aspects of the plastics challenge, shedding light on different facets of trade measures in relation to plastic pollution. UNCTAD presented insights into plastics trade statistics and the role of plastic substitutes.

(e) UNCTAD co-organized a joint briefing³⁷ on technology and innovation solutions to address marine debris in Southeast Asia with the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA)³⁸ and the International Conservation (ICCF).³⁹ The briefing brought together parliamentarians from Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam to discuss and find solutions to the pressing issue of marine debris in Southeast Asia.

(f) UNCTAD co-organized two eco-tanning workshops^{40 41} for East Africa with the Technical University of Kenya aimed at building institutional capacities through the training of key players within the regional leather tanning industry.

(g) UNCTAD co-organized with UNDP Pacific a workshop⁴² to identify opportunities and needs for States in the Indo-Pacific region on how the ocean and circular economy can support efforts to end plastic pollution. This included an analysis of the role of plastic substitutes and how local natural materials can be used to scale up their production, considering the financial resources available and how these can best be harnessed.

(h) UNCTAD co-organized with UNESCO and Africa21 a workshop⁴³ for East and West African communicators to raise awareness among African journalists of

³³ [Sustainable Manufacturing and Environmental Pollution \(SMEP\) | UNCTAD](#)

³⁴ [East Africa workshop on single use plastics and plastic substitutes | UNCTAD](#)

³⁵ [Sustainable trade and development cooperation in support of the Basel Convention Plastic Waste Amendments implementation | UNCTAD](#)

³⁶ [INC 2 Side event: The role of trade measures in the future instrument against plastic pollution | UNCTAD](#)

³⁷ [Joint briefing on technology and innovation solutions to address marine debris in Southeast Asia | UNCTAD](#)

³⁸ [AIPA Secretariat – AIPA Seretariat](#)

³⁹ [The ICCF Group \(internationalconservation.org\)](#)

⁴⁰ [1st Workshop on eco-tanning processes in Kenya and the East African region | UNCTAD](#)

⁴¹ [2nd Workshop on eco-tanning processes in Kenya and the East African region | UNCTAD](#)

⁴² [Pacific workshop on plastic pollution and material substitutes | UNCTAD](#)

⁴³ [Workshop for East and West African communicators on circular economy | UNCTAD](#)

developments in the various sectors of the Circular Economy and in plastics pollution mitigation efforts at the INC process and at the WTO dialogue on plastics.

(i) As part of INC3 on Plastics in Nairobi, UNCTAD organized an official side event⁴⁴ including representatives from countries (e.g. Barbados) and organizations (e.g. WTO, the Centre for International Environmental Law) working on trade-related aspects of the plastics challenge, including trade measures and material substitution. UNCTAD also co-organised with the African Legal Network and Deltarra a pre-INC side-event to discuss trade and development aspects of plastic pollution mitigation measures, non-plastic substitutes, and plastic alternatives.

120. In 2023, UNCTAD led the preparation of regional green value chain studies in Central, North, and West Africa to inform the preparation of green AfCFTA implementation strategies in nine beneficiary countries: Algeria, Mauritania, and Tunisia (North African cluster); Burkina Faso, The Gambia, Senegal, and Togo (West African cluster); Chad and Gabon (Central African cluster). Country-level consultations and value chain assessments were conducted during 2023 in all nine beneficiary countries as part of the development of their national strategies. Further to the finalization of the West African regional study, a series of national stakeholder workshops were held in October and November 2023 to review and validate the three (03) national strategies of the Gambia, Senegal, and Togo. These activities were conducted in cooperation with UNECA under the project “Inclusion of green initiatives in AfCFTA National Implementation Strategies in ten African Countries” which is funded by Denmark.

121. As a result of the extension of the project until December 2024, national stakeholder workshops to review and validate national green value chain strategies in the six remaining countries supported by UNCTAD will take place in 2024. Concretely, the main outputs of the project in 2023 were the following:

(a) Two draft regional value chain analysis reports focusing on trade and climate change were prepared by regional consultants in West and Central Africa under the guidance of UNCTAD staff.

(b) Nine draft national reports building on regional level findings and serving as a first step in the preparation of national green value chain strategies were produced (one in each country supported by UNCTAD).

(c) Three national validation workshops were organized in The Gambia, Senegal, and Togo to review and validate national green value chain strategies.

122. Through its BioTrade Initiative, UNCTAD has been actively engaged in supporting developing countries in enhancing their capacity to design and implement trade and biodiversity objectives in a mutually supportive manner. In 2023, UNCTAD continued coordinating the “Global BioTrade Programme: Linking trade, biodiversity, and sustainable development.”⁴⁵ The Programme supports stakeholders to seize and capitalize on trade opportunities from linking biodiversity and sustainable development; thereby advancing the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the KMGBF. As of 2023, BioTrade has been implemented in around 80 countries through the programme, its partners, and local practitioners. The main outputs in 2023 were as follows:

(a) One ASEAN⁴⁶ and one Viet Nam⁴⁷ workshops were organized to foster an enabling policy environment for BioTrade in 2023 in cooperation with with Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation (Helvetas), ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB), the Center for Rural Economy Development (CRED) and Vietnamese Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Partnership for Sustainable Agriculture.

⁴⁴ [INC-3 Side event - The role of trade measures in the future instrument: Key messages for negotiators | UNCTAD](#)

⁴⁵ [BioTrade | UNCTAD](#)

⁴⁶ [Workshop on Trade, Biodiversity and BioTrade in the ASEAN region| UNCTAD](#)

⁴⁷ [National workshop on biodiversity and voluntary sustainability standards | UNCTAD](#)

(b) Progress was also made in biodiversity and trade statistics following the launch of the Trade and Biodiversity (TraBio) statistical tool⁴⁸ in 2023, a collaborative effort with UNCTAD's Statistics Service. The Trade and Biodiversity product classification⁴⁹ was published offering methodological insights for developing biodiversity-based product classifications.

(c) The informal Working Group of Experts on Trade and Biodiversity Statistics convened for its first meeting⁵⁰ in November 2023 with over 39 participants (54 per cent female) from 15 countries in attendance. Discussions centred around strategies to enhance data collection and compilation contributing to the implementation of the KMGBF and the SDGs.

(d) UNCTAD, in collaboration with UNEP, and the TRADE Hub organized regional consultation meetings on sustainable agriculture supply chains in three key regions: Latin America and the Caribbean⁵¹, Africa⁵², and Asia⁵³

(e) UNCTAD assumed co-leadership of the Working Group on Biodiversity and Consumption within the One Planet Network. Collaborative efforts with group members will focus on advancing the implementation of the KMGBF and promoting sustainable consumption practices and trade in biodiversity-based products and services.

(f) The UNCTAD-UNFSS benchmarking study of BioTrade Principles and Criteria⁵⁴ with 11 voluntary sustainability standards was published in 2023. This publication offers insights into the correlation between these standards and the BioTrade principles and criteria.

123. **Results and impacts.** In 2023, UNCTAD sustainable trade and environment work built the capacity of and provided technical assistance and cooperation with developing countries through its robust and groundwork research (9 publications) and online and hybrid panels, trainings, workshops, and side events at the national, regional, and international levels (53 events)⁵⁵. Approximately 3,200 stakeholders participated in these events and benefited from UNCTAD support on sustainable trade and environment in 2023.

124. Such technical assistance and cooperation has: (a) increased awareness and understanding of environmental, socioeconomic impacts of sustainable trade, consumption and production across target countries; (b) strengthened the capacity of stakeholders in defining policy and regulatory options and implementing priority actions to support sustainable trade in ocean and biodiversity based economic sectors, as well as in addressing plastic pollution through the development of material substitution and biodegradation options; and (c) served as a dissemination tool in the form of 7 podcasts on ocean economy, green and renewable energy, marine wildlife, sustainable fisheries, plastic pollution, plastic substitutes, and biodiversity, with positive feedback from all stakeholders.

⁴⁸ Trade and Biodiversity (TraBio) statistical tool| UNCTAD

⁴⁹ UNCTAD/DITC/TED 2023/4, available at https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ditcted2023d4_en.pdf

⁵⁰ First meeting of the Informal Working Group on trade and biodiversity statistics| UNCTAD
⁵¹ <https://www.unep.org/ru/node/33285>

⁵² <https://www.unep.org/events/conference/regional-consultation-africa-nature-positive-trade-sustainable-supply-chains>

⁵³ Regional Stakeholders Consultation in Asia: A nature-positive trade for sustainable agriculture supply chains and inclusive development | UNCTAD

⁵⁴ UNCTAD/TCS/DITC/INF/2023/8 available at: <https://unctad.org/publication/voluntary-sustainability-standards-and-biotrade-there-connection>

⁵⁵ <https://unctad.org/topic/trade-and-environment>

A11 Investment promotion and facilitation

Table A11
Investment promotion and facilitation

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
TOG/0T/KAM	Renforcement des capacités du Ministère de la promotion de l'investissement (MPI) au Togo	2021–	United Nations Development Programme
INT/0T/1BN	Capacity Building in Investment Promotion	2001–	Multi-donors
INT/0T/BAQ	Capacity Building in Investment for Development	2015–	Multi-donors
INT/0T/HCJ2	Strategic Partnership the Netherlands - Business Facilitation	2023–	Kingdom of the Netherlands
INT/0T/KAU	Capacity Development Programme for Investment Promotion Agencies of Least Developed Countries	2021–	UNOPS - EIF
INT/0T/MAV	Capacity Building for International Investment Agreements and Facilitation	2023–	European Union

125. **Development context.** Foreign direct investment (FDI) is a critical source of finance for developing countries, but the competition for FDI is fierce. This has resulted in proactive policies by these countries to attract and retain foreign investment, including investment in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) sectors, in order to generate inclusive and sustainable economic growth and build resilient infrastructure while safeguarding the environment.

126. **Objectives and features.** UNCTAD's work on investment promotion aims to assist developing countries in strengthening their capacity to create and manage the policy and institutional framework for attracting and retaining foreign investment and in developing an operating climate in which international business can thrive and contribute to sustainable development. The investment promotion programme provides tailor-made training, advisory and networking services, and prepares publications related to investment policies, investment promotion strategies and practices, investment facilitation, aftercare services, and institutional arrangements and good governance in attracting and retaining sustainable FDI. Special attention is being paid to strengthening investment promotion programmes in least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs), and small island developing States (SIDS).

127. **Outputs.** The main outputs of the programme in 2023 are detailed below.

Publications and training material

128. *Investment Promotion and its Impact on Gender Equality: Moving the needle on SDG 5.* Issue 14 of the IPA Observer series offers an overview of investment promotion practices that contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment. This issue is based on a 2023 survey of IPAs and special economic zones (SEZs), following up on a previous study and survey conducted in 2021.

129. *Brochure on the United Nations Investment Promotion Awards 2023.* The brochure provides an overview of the themes of UNCTAD's Investment Promotion Awards since 2002, along with a list of winners for the 2023 awards for Excellence in Promoting Investment in the Energy Transition.

130. *Two pedagogical videos on the promotion and facilitation of investment* were created for a training course for LDC IPAs. One video focused on policy advocacy, featuring the case study of Invest Qatar, while the second video showcased JAMPRO, the IPA in Jamaica, and focused on aftercare services.

Workshops, seminars and conferences

131. In March 2023, UNCTAD organized a side event during LDC5 in Doha Qatar, titled ‘Building Capacity in Investment Promotion to Advance the SDGs in LDCs’. The event showcased the results of the first phase of the multi-agency Capacity Development Programme for Investment Promotion Agencies of Least Developed Countries, which included the establishment of an “Executive IPA College.” It featured high-level participation from key stakeholders serving as panellists, with a total of 39 participants, including 20 women.

132. UNCTAD organized a training workshop for investment promotion stakeholders in Qatar on 8–9 March. The objective of the workshop was to train new staff at Invest Qatar and its partners, and to share best practices, including the mainstreaming of the SDGs in investment promotion and facilitation. The workshop brought together 46 participants, including 15 women, from five different government institutions involved in promoting foreign investment in the country. Following a post-workshop survey, 94 per cent of participants indicated that the workshop was “very high” or “highly” beneficial for their work.

133. As part of the 12th edition of the Annual Investment Meeting, held in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, UNCTAD led an event titled ‘Investment Solutions in a Poly crisis Context: The Road to World Investment Forum 2023’ on 9 May 2023. The event brought together Ministers and other high-level government representatives, business executives and development partners to discuss the key themes to be addressed and lay the groundwork for impactful outcomes at the World Investment Forum 2023. The event was attended by 64 participants, including 25 women.

134. In the context of the Enhanced Integrated Framework — Capacity-development programme for IPA of LDCs, a one-week training workshop for investment promotion official from developing countries, including 7 LDCs, was hosted by ITC-ILO Training Center in Turin and organized by a consortium of UN agencies (ILO, UNCTAD, UNIDO) and international organizations (OECD, EIF, WAIPA). It brought together 39 participants from 15 countries (20 women). UNCTAD delivered in-person training on topics including investment promotion and facilitation in SDG-related projects; image building; and digital tools for investment promotion.

135. In May 2023, UNCTAD delivered a training workshop for investment promotion stakeholders in Togo. The objective of the workshop was to strengthen the investment promotion and facilitation capacities of investment stakeholders in Togo and provide them with tools and best practices to better target investment with a high SDG impact. In total, 88 government officials representing 24 government institutions including the Office of the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Investment Promotion, the investment promotion agency of Togo (API-ZF), ministries of foreign affairs, economy and finance, the Central Bank participated — 46 in-person participants, including 8 women; and 42 online, including Togolese diplomats posted overseas. Following a post-workshop survey, 83 per cent of participants stated that the workshop was “very high” or “highly” beneficial for their work.

136. Numerous events were organized in the context of the World Investment Forum 2023, including:

(a) ‘Investment Promotion and Its Impact on Gender Equality’ which showcased and discussed promising initiatives that IPAs are involved in to make an impact on gender equality. The event counted 30 participants, including 20 women.

(b) ‘Promoting Investment in the Blue Economy’, promoted awareness on the development, preservation, and regeneration of the marine environment with an exchange of strategies and best practices in the promotion and facilitation of responsible investment in the blue economy. The event had 50 participants, including 20 women.

(c) ‘SDG Model Zones’ showcased concrete examples of ahead-of-the-curve SEZs, highlighting their environmental, social and governance standards and practices, their approach to promoting sustainable-development-oriented investment, and the way in which they ensure inclusivity and benefits for their surroundings. The aim of the session was to identify replicable actions and initiatives for policymakers around the world. It counted 30 participants, including 15 women.

(d) ‘Promoting Investment in Education for Investment Promotion Executives’ (organized with the support of the Annual Investment Meeting) featured presentations by prominent figures in the investment promotion community who reflected on strategies and policies for the promotion of investment aimed at supporting the development of a competitive education system. The event had 100 executives, including 48 women.

(e) ‘Policy Advocacy for SEZs: A tripartite dialogue,’ held in partnership with the Global Alliance of Special Economic Zones (GASEZ) — established in 2022 by UNCTAD together with seven global, regional and national associations representing over 7,000 SEZs. CEOs and executives of SEZs and the business community, and high-level policymakers discussed pressing current and emerging issues including incentives, tax reforms and the regulatory framework for investment. The event had 20 participants, including 10 women.

137. The second GASEZ Annual Conference took place on 9 November 2023 in Barcelona, Spain. Two hundred stakeholders, including 80 women, from the international SEZ community representing 26 countries across Africa, Europe and Latin America attended the event. Their participation reaffirmed their support for the alliance and contributed to its future work agenda.

Advisory services

138. On 16 October 2023, the GASEZ unveiled the ‘SDG Model Zone Partner Initiative’ with three primary objectives i) raising awareness of the contributions of SEZs to sustainable development, ii) recognizing zones at the forefront of sustainable development efforts, and iii) sharing best practices of SEZs that can inspire and guide others. The initiative introduced a list of 50 “SDG Model Zone Partners” from across the world, jointly identified by GASEZ founding members and based on criteria outlined in UNCTAD’s World Investment Report 2019. These criteria include their commitment to sustainable development, promotion of investment in SDGs, adherence to ESG standards, and linkages with the local economy.

139. In June 2023, UNCTAD issued a call for nominations to IPAs and SEZs for the 2023 *United Nations Investment Promotion Awards for Excellence in Promoting Sustainable Investment in Energy Transition*. A total of 41 institutions from 38 countries responded, resulting in 10 finalists from 10 countries being short-listed. The awards ceremony took place on 16 October 2023, during the Gala Dinner of the World Investment Forum 2023. The awards went to ten winners, including three equal winners with a special distinction from the jury: Invest Minas (Brazil), Guidance Tamil Nadu (India), and Invest KOREA (Korea). The remaining seven equal winners were, Suzhou Industrial Park Administrative Committee (China), General Authority for Investment and Free Zones, GAFI (Egypt), ONLYLYON INVEST (France), Namibia Investment Promotion and Development Board (Namibia), InvestSA (South Africa), Investment Office of the Presidency (Türkiye), and KEZAD Group (United Arab Emirates).

140. An UNCTAD investment promotion and facilitation subsite,⁵⁶ designed for IPA professionals, policymakers, and other investment stakeholders accumulated 2,200 views. The platform features a resource centre, comprehensive information on UNCTAD activities on sustainable FDI, a network of IPA contacts, training materials including videos, and a showcase of best practices through the United Nations Investment Promotion Awards.

⁵⁶ See <https://unctad.org/topic/investment/investment-promotion-and-facilitation> (formerly at sustainableFDI.org).

141. **Results and impacts.** In 2023, investment promotion and facilitation training, seminars, and conferences – both in person and online - attracted 1,052 participants from over 70 countries, including IPA officials, policy makers, diplomats, SEZ representatives and other stakeholders. Forty per cent were women.

142. The UNCTAD-led Capacity Development Programme for IPAs of LDCs, funded by the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF), began in 2022 and has been praised for its usefulness and relevance:

(a) “The project’s training programme has enhanced the awareness and understanding of investor perceptions regarding conducting business and investing in LDCs among our investment promotion officials.” Promotions Officer at Centre for Facilitation of Investments, CFI-Haiti, 2023

(b) “[As a result of the programme] the investment promotion team has reshaped its strategy to be more diverse sector-wise and involve more stakeholders. The team has become better equipped to work on investor attraction, assistance and retention.” Guinea Investment Promotion Agency, 2023

143. Other selected reactions to technical assistance projects, publications, and initiatives:

(a) “CAIPA has shared a close and fruitful relationship with UNCTAD. We have attributed this to the importance that UNCTAD has placed on ensuring that small island developing states (SIDS), like those in the Caribbean, receive the support they need, given the added developmental challenges.” “I would like to take this opportunity to thank UNCTAD for the tremendous support over the years.” President of the Caribbean Association of Investment Promotion Agencies (CAIPA), 2023.

(b) “The thought leadership demonstrated by UNCTAD team in investment promotion, along with their admirable efforts to drive sustainable investment, particularly in addressing the needs of least developing countries, demonstrates a great example of commitment for change. I feel these series [of pedagogical videos produced by UNCTAD] will be extremely beneficial, and we are delighted to be a part of the initiative.” Senior Manager, Research and Policy Advocacy, Invest Qatar, 2023.

(c) “The success of the event [2nd annual GASEZ Conference] owes much to the meticulous organization by UNCTAD and the Free Trade Zones Association of the Americas.” Director, Secretariat of Green Partnership of Industrial Parks of China, 2023.

(d) “The Investment Promotion and its Impact on Gender Equality, and Policy Advocacy for Special Economic Zones [events]...offered a platform to showcase that developing economies are doing well in incorporating SDGs in various economic activities as well as aligning the SDGs for investments with a social impact. The collaboration with UNCTAD, enables the required support through key strategies on how to overcome related challenges.” President of Jamaica Promotions Corporation (JAMPRO), 2023.

A99 Other

Table A99

Other

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
<i>Division on Investment and Enterprise</i>			
INT/0T/3AO	Support to the UNCTAD/ICC Investment Advisory Council	2015–	Multi-donors
INT/0T/BAQ	Capacity-building in investment for development	2011–	Multi-donors
INT/0T/H CJ2	Strategic Partnership the Netherlands	2018–	Kingdom of the Netherlands

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
<i>Division on International Trade and Commodities</i>			
ANG/OT/FBK	European Union-UNCTAD Joint Programme for Angola: Train for Trade II	2017–	European Union
INT/OT/IBM	Fourth UNFSS flagship report on voluntary sustainable	2020–	Switzerland
<i>Division on Technology and Logistics</i>			
INT/OT/7CB	Activities related to the Commission on Science	2007–	Multi-donors
INT/OT/KAL	CropWatch Innovative Cooperation Programme	2021–	Aerospace Information Research Institute Chinese Academy of Sciences
INT/OT/MAA	STI Capacity Building Programs on Female Researchers and Entrepreneurs to Promote Bio-Circular-Green Economic (BCG) Model	2023–	Thailand Science Research and Innovation
INT/OT/MAG	Science, Technology and Innovation Parks for sustainable development: building expertise in policy and practice in selected Asian and African countries	2023–	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
ROA-2124 (D13)	Technology assessment in the energy and agricultural sectors in Africa to accelerate progress on Science, Technology and Innovation	2021–	Development Account
<i>Division on Globalization and Development Strategies</i>			
BAR/OT/JAX	Promoting Economic Diversification and Resilience in Barbados for Sustained Recovery from Covid-19 Shock	2021–	China
INT/OT/KBG	Integrated Policy Strategies and Regional Policy Coordination for Resilient, Green and Transformative Development: Supporting Selected Asian BRI Partner Countries to Achieve 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda	2022–	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
ROA-2124 (E13)	Mobilizing resources for a Green New Deal: partnerships in Asia for a decade of action in the area of Coronavirus	2021–	Development Account

1. Trade and creative economy

144. **Development context.** Over the last 15 years, the topic of creative economy has become well-inserted into the international economic and development agenda. Today, creative industries are among the most dynamic sectors in world trade. The UNCTAD Creative Economy Outlook 2022 shows that in 2020, creative goods and services represented 3 and 21 per cent of total merchandise and services exports, respectively. The report also shows that creative services were more resilient during the COVID-19 pandemic than other services sectors. The creative economy generates jobs, innovation and trade, while contributing to social inclusion and cultural diversity.

145. Recognition of the scope, role, and impact of the creative economy on countries' socio-economic development has accelerated, alongside increased demand for insight into

the creative economy. The creative economy is thus increasingly high on both the global agenda and that of emerging and developing economies seeking to diversify their economies.

146. In December 2019, the United Nations General Assembly adopted for the first time a resolution on the creative economy (A/RES/74/198). This resolution, which was backed by 81 countries and agreed by consensus, highlights the creative economy as an important tool for the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals and declares 2021 the International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development.

147. In December 2023, the United Nations General Assembly adopted for the second time a resolution on the creative economy (A/RES/78/133), promoting it for sustainable development. The resolution requests that UNCTAD inform the General Assembly at its eighty-first session (in 2026) in a dedicated section of the Creative Economy Outlook of UNCTAD on “how the resolution is aligned with and advances the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including recommendations on concrete actions for reinforcing the role and contribution of the creative economy in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals”.

148. **Objectives and features.** Since the creation of the creative economy programme in 2004, UNCTAD has played a leading role in supporting developing countries to enhance understanding of the economic contribution of the creative industries from a trade and development perspective through capacity-building, analysis and consensus-building.

149. The programme’s core focus is on trade in the creative industries and the role of the creative economy in the growth of developing economies. UNCTAD data-driven insights on trade in creative goods and services make a unique contribution to understanding the creative economy.

150. Reliable and consistent data on the trade in creative goods and services remain the key drivers of the UNCTAD creative economy programme. A key component of the UNCTAD creative economy programme is its proprietary statistical database on trade in creative goods and services. The dataset is one of UNCTAD’s key unique selling points. The data was last updated in 2023 and is expected to be updated during the drafting of the next Creative Economy Outlook in 2024. However, data needs to be interpreted, analysed and used to inform decision-making at both the policy and practical levels.

151. The UNCTAD creative economy programme promotes the data driven understanding of trade in creative goods and services, including intellectual property. This information is translated into insight for countries wanting to expand and support their creative economies.

152. **Outputs.** As a leading agency in the implementation of the United Nations resolution on the creative economy, UNCTAD assisted member States in 2023 to better understand the role of creative economies as drivers for sustainable development and contributed to increasing the visibility of local initiatives and best practices through many seminars, initiatives and events implemented during the year. The focus was on the contribution of the sector to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and how the creative sector can be further supported in the recovery period through the development of digital policies, educational initiatives, and financing programs.

153. UNCTAD also continued its work of updating the definition and statistical coverage of creative industries for improving the statistical framework for measuring the trade flows of creative goods and services. The informal group of experts on the creative economy (32 experts, 50 per cent female), set up by UNCTAD, with the aim to review the definition of the creative economy and creative industries (and by extension related goods and services) concluded its work in 2022. The results of the group consolidated in 2023. UNESCO and UNCTAD are co-leading a sub-group for the clarification on cultural products resulting from creative industries as part of the Inter-Agency Task Team on International Trade Statistics. The group prepared a guidance note that will be incorporated into the updated International Merchandise Trade Statistics Manual.

154. UNCTAD also launched the publication entitled “Creative Industry 4.0: Towards a New Globalized Creative Economy” as a contribution to the World Creativity and

Innovation Day. This report looks at the implications of the rapid changes in automated technology and advanced internet communication on the creative economy. UNCTAD also launched the “Creative Economy Outlook 2022: The International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development - Pathway to Resilient Creative Industries”. This report provides the latest data and trends on this fast-growing sector and explores how developing countries can capitalize on their creative talents to create new trading opportunities.

155. The creative economy programme expanded significantly the UNCTAD creative economy network, a network of creative industry professionals, Governments and organizations, to promote international cooperation, strategic alliances, research exchanges and advocacy. The network facilitated the sharing of knowledge and helped stakeholders keep up to date on industry developments.

156. UNCTAD (a) engaged virtually with counterparts of the G20 Taskforce to contribute to the T20⁵⁷ insights and policy briefs on “Jobs and Creative Economy 2030: Inclusive and resilient creative economy for sustainable development and recovery”; (b) contributed to the G20 Working Group on Tourism and Creative Economy; (c) contributed to the publication on “Effective market access for least developed countries’ services exports: An analysis of the World Trade Organization services waiver for least developed countries “; (d) Contributed to the Policy brief on Creative Economy for the United Nations Economist Network on Creative Economy organized by United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs; and (e) continued ongoing research on methodologies to measure creative industries through the UNCTAD informal working group on the creative economy and the Inter-Agency Task Team on International Trade Statistics.

European Union–UNCTAD joint Programme for Angola: Train for Trade II, Creative economy component

157. The creative economy component under the European Union–UNCTAD joint Programme for Angola: Train for Trade II is intended to support the Government’s objectives to promote the cultural and creative industries of Angola and encourage economic diversification. It will directly contribute to the implementation of Programme 1.7.2: “Promotion of Cultural and Creative Arts and Industries” under the National Development Plan 2018–2022 of Angola. The objectives of the Angola creative economy component, which are in line with the objectives of the overall Train for Trade II Programme, are: (a) to assess the trade (export) potential of the creative economy of Angola; (b) to identify key bottlenecks that undermine efforts to harness the socioeconomic potential of the creative economy of Angola; and (c) to build the institutional and human capacities of Angola to formulate and implement policies and strategies to unlock binding constraints.

158. Key deliverables of UNCTAD work in 2023 included:

(a) Workshop validating the findings and recommendations of a mapping report. UNCTAD drafted a document mapping cultural and creative industries (CCI) and products and organised a technical assistance workshop in January 2023 in Luanda. Participants validated the findings and recommendations of the report on “Mapping the cultural and creative industries in Angola” and discussed a plan for the formulation of a creative economy strategy for Angola. The workshop involved 40 participants (33 per cent female) including Angolan government officials dealing with cultural and creative industries and the tourism sector, and representatives from private institutions and enterprises in the cultural, creative, and tourism sectors. Thirty-one participants filled out a post-event survey. Eighty-seven per cent of them found the workshop content “very good” and 81 per cent found the workshop “very useful” for Angola’s creative economy.

(b) Online workshops to discuss a national strategy. As a follow-up to the face-to-face meeting, UNCTAD organized 5 online workshops between March and July 2023

⁵⁷ Think20 (T20) is an official Engagement Group of the G20. It serves as an “idea bank” for the G20 by bringing together think tanks and high-level experts to discuss policy issues relevant to the G20.

for the same public and private sector stakeholders on various issues related to the creative economy, such as branding, creating links with international cultural and creative networks, promotion, and the draft strategy for Angola's cultural and creative industries.

(c) **Workshop on intellectual property rights.** UNCTAD organized a two-day workshop in Luanda in September 2023 on intellectual property rights for 33 cultural and creative industries stakeholders (30 per cent female). The workshop allowed participants to learn in-depth about the importance of intellectual property rights (IPRs) for cultural and creative industries, the value of education, awareness raising, and national IPR strategies for developing countries such as Angola. Eighteen participants filled out the post-event survey, of which 95 per cent found the workshop good or very good, and 100 per cent would recommend it to colleagues. Participants highlighted that they learned new insights about related rights, the importance of registering trademarks and brands, IPR and copyrights in the digital environment, and international treaties on IPR. Angolan authorities organised three follow-up events on IPR after the UNCTAD workshop (between October and December 2023), integrating UNCTAD's training module.

(d) **Launch of the report on Mapping the cultural and creative industries in Angola and presentation of a draft strategy.** UNCTAD launched the report "Mapping the cultural and creative industries in Angola" on 13 September in Luanda with 41 participants (26 per cent female). The report proposed a set of recommendations for Angola for a CCI-led road toward diversification. Furthermore, the objectives and main elements of a national strategy for the CCIs were presented and discussed. Based on the comprehensive mapping report, the draft strategy was prepared in consultation with national stakeholders and with the technical support of UNCTAD.

159. **Results.** In line with UNCTAD's recommendations for a more cohesive and coordinated governance structure, the establishment of a National Agency for Cultural and Creative Industries is underway (merging two public institutes, the National Institute of Cultural and Creative Industries and the Angolan Institute of Cinema). The draft strategy is also considered implementable by the national authorities.

2. Voluntary sustainability standards

160. **Development context.** With the growing demand for sustainably produced products among consumers, major retailers are inclined to opt for products that can provide verifiable and trustable sustainability claims. This, however, has become more challenging with the growth in globalization and global value chains (GVCs). One of the tools that can be leveraged to verify product sustainability claims is voluntary sustainability standards (VSS). VSS aim to ensure that a product in question is produced, processed or transported following certain sustainability qualities, such as minimal or zero environmental impacts. VSS foster sustainable production and consumption and can also help to empower developing countries to effectively use GVCs to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The work links directly to Sustainable Development Goal 12, responsible production and consumption. UNCTAD VSS program is also the Secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Sustainability Standards (UNFSS), a joint UN platform composed of 6 agencies including the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Trade Centre, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

161. **Objectives and features.** While there are multiple instruments that enable sustainable value chains and sustainable trade, the UNCTAD VSS programme aims to pursue this objective by exploring the complementary interplay between GVCs and VSS. UNCTAD conducts analysis, provides an intergovernmental forum for discussion on issues and best practices related to VSS, and undertakes multiple capacity development programs. Further, it enables collaboration and dialogue among other United Nations agencies working on a similar agenda to support trade and strengthen the national capacities of developing countries. By establishing country-specific platforms on VSS in developing countries, UNCTAD is also supporting developing countries to understand the use of these standards and fostering sustainable trade. In addition, via the established community of academics from various disciplines, UNCTAD is pioneering the research on relevant issues

around VSS and ensuring a holistic understanding of the benefits and challenges associated with VSS.

162. **Outputs.** Within the framework of the United Nations Forum on Sustainability Standards, supported by UNCTAD, the following activities were implemented in 2023:

(a) On November 2 and 3 2023, UNCTAD jointly organized with the Quality Council of India (QCI) the 3rd International Convention on Sustainable Trade and Development (ICSTS) in New Delhi, India. The ICSTS brought together more than 400 experts and practitioners to discuss innovative ideas, best practices, policies and underlying themes for highlighting the pivotal role played by sustainability standards as an enabler for sustainable development. The convention had discussions on the drivers that can help in improving sustainability and effectively integrating small and medium size enterprises in global value chains.

(b) Under the leadership of UNCTAD and with the support of the project called “The fourth UNFSS flagship report on voluntary sustainable standards and public procurement”, the 4th UNFSS Academic Advisory Council (AAC) Meeting took place in the European University Institute (EUI), Florence, Italy on 12th October 2023. The meeting focused on understanding the implications of the upcoming due diligence regulations for developing countries and delving into the future of sustainable trade. The meeting was co-organized by UNFSS with EUI, the Leuven Centre for Global Governance Studies (KU Leuven), and the German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS). It brought together more than 50 participants (of whom 64 per cent were female), consisting of an international mix of academic and policy experts from various disciplines and backgrounds. Discussions centred on the implementation of due diligence requirements, and concerns about the potential role of VSS in these developments and the impact on developing countries. The AAC meeting addressed these concerns and assessed the interplay of VSS and due diligence under the realm of global sustainability governance, exploring their consequent impacts on developing countries and sustainable trade at large.

(c) UNCTAD published a report titled “Understanding Voluntary Sustainability Standards: A Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats Analysis“. This report delves into the realm of VSS, integral governance tools in global value chains that facilitate sustainable production and consumption practices. With the notable surge in the number of VSS in recent decades, various studies have explored different facets of these standards. However, a comprehensive analysis presenting the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) of VSS is notably absent in the existing literature. Recognizing the increasing significance of VSS, this report aims to address this gap by providing a succinct SWOT analysis. Drawing from the work of key researchers and practitioners in the field, the report distils insights to effectively comprehend the utilization, potential, and interactions of VSS with emerging trade regulations.

(d) UNCTAD produced a report titled “VSS and biotrade: Is there a relationship?“. This report synthesizes the connections between VSS and the UNCTAD biotrade principles and criteria (P&C), revealing a growing trend in VSS-compliant production, surpassing conventional production in some sectors. Despite the proliferation of VSS across various sectors, their role in trade and biodiversity requires further exploration. The BioTrade initiative, advocating for sustainable trade and investment in biodiversity-based products, remains inadequately aligned with VSS. The report analyses the alignment between selected VSS and BioTrade P&C’s biodiversity-related objectives, utilizing data from the ITC Standards Map. Findings indicate that all eleven VSS examined have links with BioTrade P&C and Minimum Eligibility Requirements (MER), suggesting a complementary relationship. This highlights the potential for mutual recognition and support, emphasizing the importance of avoiding tool proliferation and promoting sustainable trade for biodiversity conservation and protection, aligning with SDGs.

(e) On September 14, 2023, UNCTAD participated in the launch of a gender publication entitled “Making trade work for women: key findings from the World Trade Congress on Gender“ at the WTO Public Forum. UNFSS/UNCTAD contributed to the book with Chapter 2 titled “Facilitating women’s economic empowerment through trade with voluntary sustainability standards“. The book stresses the need to help women

overcome obstacles to participating in trade and reaffirms that making trade policy more gender responsive improves inclusiveness and supports sustainable growth. It highlights gender-relevant measures incorporated in governments' trade policies and covers topics such as the experiences of women entrepreneurs, gender provisions in trade agreements, the gender wage gap, the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on women's trade capacities, and the opportunities of digitalization.

(f) UNCTAD supports capacity-building efforts that are driven by the National Platforms. These National Platforms develop a multi-stakeholder engagement which institutionalizes the adoption of sustainability standards that also reflect the national priorities. Currently, there are platforms in Brazil, China, India and Mexico and initiatives in Indonesia, Malaysia, South Africa and Viet Nam. The National Platform and Initiative Cooperation Network (NPICN) met virtually twice on 21 March and 5 July 2023. These meetings provided a neutral forum to collect and exchange information on national standards, assess the needs of decision-makers and other stakeholders, link national demands with international expertise and build institutions to strengthen its communications. The national platforms and initiatives also shared ongoing initiatives and activities, including the organization of the ICSTS and the multistakeholder network on acai value chain.

(g) As part of capacity building and training, UNCTAD has co-organized or contributed to the following trainings:

(i) Graduate Institute, Geneva – Workshop on “Voluntary Sustainability Standards Dialogue on Sustainable Trade and Development Opportunities”, 14 March 2023

(ii) Graduate Institute – Guest Seminar on “VSS in International Trade”, 11 May 2023

(iii) UNECE Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards - Eighth Session, 26–27 June

(iv) Sixth Stakeholders Steering Committee (SSC) meeting for BioTrade, 30 June 2023

(v) International Training Centre of the International Labour Organization Green Business Academy, 11 July 2023

(vi) WTO Public Forum – Event on “Private Sector's Shift to Greener Trade”, 13 September 2023

(vii) Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil - Monash University Joint Symposium, Malaysia, 25–27 September 2023

(viii) World Trade Forum on “Non-economic objectives in international trade”, EUI, Florence, Italy, 13 October 2023

(ix) The Learning and Knowledge Development Facility (LKDF) forum 2023, UNIDO headquarter, Vienna, Austria, 13–14 November 2023

(x) IISD webinar on “Sustainability Standards and Commodity Prices: How to better support farmers' livelihoods”, 22 November 2023

(xi) Pisa University – Seminar on “Sustainable Value Chains, Voluntary Sustainability Standards and Development Opportunities”, 13 December 2023

163. **Results and impacts.** The UNFSS, under the guidance and leadership of UNCTAD, has served and will continue to serve as a partnership forum to enable the development of beneficial voluntary sustainability standards. The achievements are the following:

(a) Facilitating multi-stakeholder coordination: The 3rd ICSTS and two NPICN meetings brought representatives of governments, international organizations, national standard bodies, VSS organizations, think-tanks and civil society organizations together. The meetings showcased various ways of collaboration across different sectors. For example, the “Declaration of Cooperation in Sustainability Standards Ecosystem” signed by the African Organization for Standardisation at the convention will strengthen ties between

VSS national and regional platforms and also set a model for other VSS platforms and initiatives present at the conference.

(b) Raising awareness and enhancing knowledge: A series of publications and capacity building and training activities raised the awareness of the public and enhanced knowledge of the trade and sustainability community on the pivotal role of VSS in fortifying global sustainability governance and guiding environmental and social facets in global value chains (GVCs), and the contribution of UNCTAD and UNFSS in this area.

(c) Strengthening the academic network on VSS: The 4th AAC meeting paved the way for the preparation of the 6th VSS biannual report, which is planned to be published in 2024, and the organization of the next 5th AAC meeting. The AAC, a multidisciplinary group of academic researchers and with participation of policy experts, provided an opportunity for researchers to expand their network and connect their academic findings to concrete policy advice. UNCTAD will continue raising the needed awareness and, more importantly, equipping policymakers with adequate evidence-based information.

3. Investment trends and issues

3.1. *Technical assistance on data collection on foreign direct investment and activities of multinational enterprises*

164. **Development context.** The scarcity, unreliability, and inconsistency in existing data reporting systems can pose significant challenges in formulating policies and strategies concerning FDI. Additionally, there is a lack of studies addressing the role of FDI and its impact on sustainable economic development, including its contributions to technology transfer, human resource development, and export performance. In response to recommendations from the Expert Meeting on Capacity-Building in the Area of FDI: Data Compilation and Policy Formulation in Developing Countries (December 2005), endorsed by the tenth session of the Commission on Investment, Technology and Related Financial Issues (Geneva, 6–10 March 2006), UNCTAD continues to provide technical assistance in FDI statistics. Furthermore, the relevance of UNCTAD's work in this area is reaffirmed in its mandate (Nairobi Maafikiano) which requests UNCTAD to “continue to collect statistics and conduct research and policy analysis on the development impact of foreign direct investment and the activities of multinational enterprises, including through non-equity modes of international production, to keep member States abreast of developments and enable them to assess their importance for development and devise and implement appropriate policy instruments.” (UNCTAD/ISS/2016/1).

165. **Objectives and features.** The overall objective of the programme is to increase FDI inflows to developing countries, in particular LDCs, by formulating FDI policies based on quality FDI data and information on multinational enterprises (MNEs) operating in a region or country. The programme aims to enhance the capacity of government agencies in these countries to compile, disseminate and analyse data on FDI and multinational enterprise activities by implementing internationally recommended methodological standards and enabling national authorities to maintain high-quality and up-to-date databases. It also intends to strengthen networking among national authorities involved in FDI data compilation and reporting and in FDI policy issues and investment promotion activities, to facilitate the exchange of experience.

166. **Outputs.** In 2023, technical assistance focused on enhancing FDI data collection methodologies. This involved verifying data provided by national authorities and standardizing reporting methods. Countries were requested to report FDI data based on directional basis rather than asset or liability basis. This approach showcased a synergy between research conducted for the UNCTAD *World Investment Report*, the Global Investment Trends Monitor, and the technical assistance on improving FDI data.

167. In 2023, UNCTAD continued inter-agency cooperation in the area of FDI technical assistance by actively participating in the Working Group on International Investment Statistics of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the IMF Balance of Payments Committee. UNCTAD's involvement included contributing to

the finalization of three Directions Notes for the Update of the OECD Benchmark Definition of Foreign Direct Investment, fourth edition.

168. As part of World Investment Forum 2023, two activities were organized in related to investment data. The first, on FDI statistics in Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) countries, was organized in partnership with the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC), the Central Bank of Switzerland and the Central Bank of Italy. The session raised awareness about accepted standards and updates for compiling FDI and foreign affiliates' activity data, clarified definitions and methodologies in FDI/MNE statistics, and provided insights on OIC-specific challenges. The second activity, a Symposium on FDI statistics, served as a platform to discuss important issues related to FDI statistics, including the significance of high-quality investment data, recent developments in updating manuals on FDI statistics, and the role of complementary datasets such as greenfield investment. The diverse range of themes addressed in the symposium were pertinent to advancing the understanding of international production and cross-border investment.

169. In addition, in 2023 UNCTAD provided technical assistance to Togo and Qatar to improve collection of FDI statistics and activities on multinational enterprises as part a training workshop on investment promotion stakeholders. The objective of the presentations on FDI statistics was to raise the awareness of internationally accepted standards and guidelines regarding the compilation of data on FDI and the activities of multinational enterprises and to provide specific advice on specific issues and challenges of particular interest to the countries. In Togo, the session on FDI statistics was attended by 46 officials (including 8 women) from ministries and agencies and the Central Bank who deal with statistical issues on FDI. In Qatar the session of FDI statistics was attended by 46 participants, including 15 women, from five different government institutions.

170. **Results.** According to UNCTADstat data centre, in 2023 the FDI tables were the most visited tables on the UNCTAD website, accounting for more one tenth (11.5 per cent) of all pageviews.

171. UNCTAD also received positive feedback from countries and regional groupings that benefitted from UNCTAD's assistance. For example, the Director General of SESRIC highlighted in October 2023: "Accurate FDI data is essential for formulating strategies that attract and maintain investment. SESRIC acknowledges the lead role played by UNCTAD in refining FDI statistical methods. Our collaboration with UNCTAD has enhanced the FDI statistical capabilities of OIC countries. This partnership has been intensified by co-organising statistical events. The World Investment Forum (WIF) also plays a pivotal role in fostering partnerships, shaping policy, and sharing knowledge, all aimed at boosting FDI, particularly in OIC countries."

3.2. *Technical assistance on ASEAN Investment Report series*

172. **Development context.** An important pillar of UNCTAD activities is to support developments in member countries through analytical work and technical cooperation. In this context, UNCTAD has been providing technical assistance to ASEAN for the preparation of the annual ASEAN Investment Report (AIR) since 2012 and to support ASEAN in implementing an investment work programme in relation to the ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint and the ASEAN Comprehensive Investment Agreement.

173. The AIR series provides up-to-date analyses on FDI, industrial development, regional investment environment and operations of multinational enterprises in the region. It also serves as a policy input and an analytical instrument for improving the competitiveness of ASEAN to attract FDI. The preparation of AIR 2023 was undertaken at the request of the Ministry of Investment, Indonesia, and the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta.

174. **Objectives and features.** The objective of AIR is to present analyses of the latest developments in FDI, emerging industries and investment environment in an integrating ASEAN. It also aims to provide analytical inputs for discussion by relevant ASEAN bodies of emerging investment trends, industrial development, and related policy issues.

175. **Outputs.** In 2023, upon the request of the Chairman of the 26th ASEAN Investment Area Council Meeting, UNCTAD prepared a “*Special ASEAN Investment Report 2023: International investment trends – Key issues and policy options.*” The purpose of the report is to analyse FDI trends and developments in ASEAN and identify key emerging issues that will impact the region’s efforts to attract FDI. These emerging issues include international supply chain restructuring, investment in the energy transition, international tax reforms, FDI in sectors relevant to the SDGs, and investment in electric vehicle value chains. The report also examines intra-ASEAN investment, which, while remaining a major source of FDI, has experienced slower growth in recent years, highlighting the need to examine its development within the context of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC). In preparation of the report, UNCTAD benefitted from cooperation with the ASEAN Coordinating Committee on Investment, the ASEAN Secretariat and the Ministry of Investment, Indonesia. The report was published on 19 December 2023.

176. **Results.** The Special AIR 2023 served as a background document for discussion by ASEAN Investment Ministers at the 26th ASEAN Investment Area Council Meeting on 19 August 2023, in Semarang, Indonesia. The report received positive feedback from the ASEAN Ministers and other stakeholders. The Ministers “agreed that the report be released at the earliest opportunity... and expressed appreciation to UNCTAD for the preparation of the report” (paragraph 25 of the joint media statement of the 55th ASEAN Economic Ministers’ Meeting, 19 August 2023).

3.3. *World Investment Report series*

177. **Development context.** As the focal point in the United Nations system for investment, UNCTAD promotes understanding of key issues, particularly on FDI-related matters, and assists developing countries in attracting and benefiting from FDI and building their productive capacities and international competitiveness. The World Investment Report series provides up-to-date and comprehensive data on issues pertaining to FDI and multinational enterprises, analyses trends and developments in FDI, examines the implications of activities by multinational enterprises related to these trends, and assesses both international and national policy issues of relevance to developing countries. It serves as a policy decision-making input and an analytical instrument for improving national capacities to attract and benefit from FDI, and as a capacity-building tool.

178. **Objectives and features.** The World Investment Report (WIR) series is a key instrument in helping policymakers improve their understanding of emerging FDI-related issues and policy implications for development and, as a result, enhance their ability to formulate FDI policies that will contribute to development objectives. The series therefore serves as an essential tool for the formulation of FDI policies, which feeds into UNCTAD technical assistance work. The preparation involves the following interrelated activities:

(a) **Policy analysis and research:** An extensive peer review of the World Investment Report outline, drafts and final text. The preparation of each chapter and section involves dialogue with relevant stakeholders to ascertain facts and determine trends, including with experts (especially those from developing countries), on the topics analysed;

(b) **Capacity-building workshops and seminars:** These enable policymakers, researchers and other experts from developing countries to directly contribute salient experience, knowledge and information for each edition of the *World Investment Report*. As such, these activities constitute a key element of the peer review process;

(c) **Dissemination of the report’s findings and results:** Dissemination begins with the organization of press conferences in national venues and increasingly through webinars on the report’s launch date, followed by seminars/workshops for policymakers in developing countries. These workshops allow stakeholders from developing countries to discuss the results of the research and policy analysis, including ways and means of using them in concrete policymaking and implementation;

(d) **Dedicated expert networks:** In order to maintain the report’s consistent quality, dedicated networks of experts are maintained and supported through a range of activities, including seminars and conferences.

179. **Outputs.** The *World Investment Report 2023* titled *Investing in sustainable energy for all*, proposes a Global Action Compact for Investment in Sustainable Energy for All, which contains a set of guiding principles that consider all three objectives of the energy transition – meeting climate goals, providing affordable energy for all, and ensuring energy security – and puts forward six action packages covering national and international investment policymaking; global, regional and South-South partnerships and cooperation; financing mechanisms and tools, and sustainable finance markets.

180. International investment in renewable energy has nearly tripled since the adoption of the Paris Agreement in 2015. However, much of this growth has been concentrated in developed economies. Chapter four of the report addresses several bottlenecks in cross-border investments. The cost of capital for investors in developing countries is a major disincentive and calls for more international de-risking support at the country level. Another significant challenge is the often-low capacity to translate nationally determined contributions (NDCs) into energy transition investment plans and bankable projects. Additionally, international investment agreements can also act as a barrier to climate policy action, necessitating reforms to make treaties more conducive to promoting and facilitating investment in the energy sector.

181. The report was released on 5 July 2023. To facilitate global media coverage, a series of press releases were prepared and translated into official United Nations languages, as well as blogs and opinion pieces. Additionally, numerous events were organized to disseminate the findings of the WIR. These events included presentation to the Abu Dhabi Department of Economic Development, YASED Turkey International Investors Association in July 2023, and to India's Department of Economic Affairs in October 2023.

182. A special session on WIR23 was organized at the Academy of International Business (AIB) annual conference 2023, focusing on forward-looking research ideas and solutions for UNCTAD's policy-oriented research to inform member states. Furthermore, a workshop related to the theme of WIR23 took place during the "International Vienna Energy and Climate Forum Youth Solutions Day" in Austria. Participants were tasked with finding solutions for advancing green industrialization and sustainable energy value chains. They formulated a call-to-action statement, which was presented at the Forum.

183. Seminars on the theme chapter of WIF23 were also organized in India during the Institute for Trade and Development (ITD) annual forum, and online for the Centre for Prospective Studies and International Information (CEPII). Moreover, WIR23 also served as background document for an executive training organized by the United Nations Office for Sustainable Development (UNOSD), aimed at enhancing the knowledge, skills, and overall capacities of member States in implementing sustainable development planning, policymaking and policy shaping through an integrated approach.

184. Furthermore, the recommendations of the report were discussed at the World Investment Forum in October 2023. The 5-day track comprised high-level panel discussions on just energy transition, the greening of emerging markets, the role of trade and investment policies in boosting NDCs, the identification of financial instruments for early retirement of fossil fuel assets, transferred emissions, and the centrality of critical minerals and enabling infrastructure in achieving net zero emissions.

185. The findings of WIR23, particularly regarding how investment policies connect to nationally determined contributions (NDCs) and the report's Global Action Compact for Investment in Sustainable Energy for All, served as the basis for key high-level sessions at COP28. These multistakeholder events were part of the first Trade House at COP. The sessions focused on identifying the priorities and needs of investing in the energy transition, sensitization of stakeholders to mobilize funds, highlighting risk-mitigation instruments for energy transition-related investments, proposing ways to improve international cooperation frameworks, and strengthening UNCTAD's collaboration with other partners, notably the WTO.

186. **Results.** By the end of 2023, the *World Investment Report 2023*, including overview, factsheets, data, and statistics and chapters were downloaded 99,523 times. The news article published for the release of the WIR 2023 (on investment flows to Africa) generated 19,222 views.

187. In 2023, the UN General Assembly (GA) adopted a resolution on Promoting investments for sustainable development (A/RES/78/141). The resolution “Notes the policy proposals put forward by UNCTAD in its World Investment Report 2022: International Tax Reform and Sustainable Investment, in particular that the international community should support developing countries, especially in Africa and the LDCs, including through scaling up technical assistance to take advantage of international tax reforms, and calls upon UNCTAD to work in collaboration with multiple stakeholders to help developing countries to avail themselves of these recommendations.” Moreover, it requests UNCTAD “to inform the GA at its seventy-ninth session of the implementation of the present resolution, based on their ongoing research, through a dedicated section of the World Investment Report, with a special focus on promoting investments for sustainable development, as well as concrete recommendations, including on strategic sectors to invest for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.”

188. At the seventy-fourth executive session of the Trade and Development Board, on 21 November 2023, regional groups and delegates expressed appreciation for the topicality of the World Investment Report 2023, and the comprehensiveness and quality of the analysis provided therein. They highlighted the value of the FDI data and trends for investment policymaking, the significance of the research on sustainable finance for funding the SDG gap and acknowledged the Global Action Compact for Investing in Sustainable Energy for All proposed by UNCTAD, which aims at orienting investment toward a sustainable and just energy transition.

189. Positive feedback on WIR23 received during the seventy-fourth executive session of the Trade and Development Board in November 2023:

(a) “The report [WIR23] continues the commendable practice of providing us with valuable data and analysis on global investment trends as well as stabling recommendations for our consideration. The report makes some valuable analysis and recommendations in terms of boosting sustainable finance through capital markets, leveraging public private partnerships, strengthening partnerships, and reinforcing relevant national and international investment policies.” Statement by the European Union.

(b) “This is a very good and informative World Investment Report 2023, and it is very timely.” Statement by Germany.

(c) “This Report [WIR 2023] comes at an opportune time marked by global and interconnected crisis that underscore the urgent need for enhanced policy support to drive investment in an inclusive and sustainable energy transition. The African Group expresses with appreciation for UNCTAD’s comprehensive analysis of FDI in Africa, SDG investment and sustainable energy transition.” Statement by Namibia (on behalf of the African Group).

(d) “UNCTAD’s report [WIR23] outlines action plans encompassing national and investment policies, global partnerships, and regional and south-south cooperation. The suggested policy measures are robust, emphasizing tailored approaches for developing countries.” Statement by Thailand (on behalf of the Asia-Pacific Group).

(e) “We express our gratitude to UNCTAD for the World Investment Report which not only highlights critical areas for the SIDS group but also resonates with our call for increased concessional financing and expanded technical support and stimulated energy sector reform. The WIR 2023 exemplifies our collective commitment to advancing deliberations towards collective action, to address the climate crisis and enhance energy security. Leaving no one behind!” Statement by the Maldives (on behalf of the SIDS group).

(f) “We would like to thank UNCTAD for the research toolbox in the WIR23 which is indeed a reference, an important reference in the area of investment policies and sustainable development, since it provides an excellent overview of the FDI trends, Investment in sustainable development as well as the relevant policy development.” Statement by Egypt (on behalf of the Arab Group).

4. Macroeconomic and development policies

4.1. *Promoting economic diversification and resilience in Barbados for sustained recovery from COVID-19 shock*

190. **Development context.** Since 2008, when Global Financial Crisis (GFC) erupted, Barbados has been facing lasting challenge of weak economic growth, which has been exacerbated due to COVID-19 shock. In 2020 and 2021, the country experienced sharp contraction of the GDP. In 2022 and 2023, thanks to the rebound of tourism sector, the economy achieved strong recovery. But the real output remains below that of 2008. Beyond the pandemic shock, the Barbados economy is also facing other persistent challenges. For example, like many other small island developing States (SIDS), Barbadian economy structure is quite narrow and highly dependent on limited sectors like tourism and external markets. Meanwhile, some of the major macro-economic indicators are in negative territory such as limited fiscal space and high debt level. Going forward, given a more sombre prognosis for a world economy weakened by monetary tightening and continuing supply-chain bottlenecks, growth prospects in the Barbadian economy --which is heavily reliant on foreign financing and on external demand-- remain uncertain if not definitively challenging.

191. **Objectives and features.** Against this backdrop, the project aims to assist Barbados to combat COVID-19 pandemic particularly the associated economic shocks, overcome the lasting binding constraints through formulating targeted economic strategies, building policy capacities, and promoting South-South cooperation. The project will draw on the findings and recommendations from UNCTAD research work. The Bridgetown Covenant will provide overall guidance to the project implementation, in which UNCTAD member States have agreed that economic diversification can support the transformation process for a more resilient, inclusive and sustainable world.

192. The project will contribute to the project country's efforts in reaching sustained economic growth after the pandemic shock and achieving 2030 Agenda in the medium and long run. To fit the development context identified above and achieve the main objective of the project, the project strategy will therefore include three components. First, the project will conduct an in-depth and evidence-based research on Barbados economy to provide dedicated policy recommendations in enhancing economic diversification and resilience. Second, the project will assist the project country to improve the policy research and formulation capacities. Third, the project will, based on the project activities in the project country, advocate and support the economic cooperation and integration among developing countries.

193. **Outputs and results.** Implementation of the project started in 2021. Several policy papers have been prepared in 2021. These papers provide overall analysis of the project country's economy and propose policy recommendations on economic diversification and enhancing South-South economic cooperation, which provide a solid foundation for the next stage implementation. Prior to UNCTAD XV, the project organized a pre-event titled "Enhancing Economic Resilience in Small Island Developing States: Perspective from South-South Cooperation", in which high-level policymakers and researchers from government, academia and United Nations agencies discussed the vulnerabilities of SIDS, sharing national experience in promoting economic diversification and resilience, and the role of South-South cooperation in supporting efforts of SIDS in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

194. In 2022, the project delivered two promotional films themed on the South-South Cooperation, which was launched in Bangkok during the UN Global South-South Development Expo and in Geneva jointly with G77 and China.

195. In February 2023, the project organized the first in-person workshop in Barbados on "*Promoting Sustained Recovery through Economic Diversification*". The workshop was attended by high-level policy makers from Barbados Government, experts from UN and other international/regional organizations, and local/international academia. There were 61 registered participants including 39 female participants. Under the overarching theme of economic diversification, the discussion was focused on the four topics namely global macroeconomic situation and implication on Barbados, digital transformation in developing

countries and lessons for SIDS, regional integration and industrialization strategy for the Caribbean region, and harnessing South-South trade and investment opportunities for Barbados. The report of the workshop has been uploaded on UNCTAD website, which provided detailed summary of discussions.

196. In 2023, UNCTAD has also completed the draft of project research paper titled “Policy Strategies Report on Promoting Economic Diversification and Resilience of Barbados” and submitted to stakeholders for internal comments. The research output is expected to be completed in the first half of 2024.

4.2. *Integrated Policy Strategies and Regional Policy Coordination for Resilient, Green and Transformative Development: Supporting Selected Asian BRI Partner Countries to Achieve 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda*

197. **Development context.** The vulnerabilities of developing countries have been acutely exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. In the short run, their already tight fiscal space has been severely squeezed due to liquidity shortages, capital flight, supply chain disruption, debt distresses, among others, which have made it particularly difficult to deploy effective stimulus policy packages. Added to this, developing countries are facing an unfavourable international trade environment at both international and regional levels, which further limits the policy space that they need to strengthen economic resilience and diversification. But maybe the most pressing issue is that countries of the developing world are unfairly and disproportionately facing the burden of rising global temperatures and attendant environmental shocks and related damage. Adapting to a changing climate and mitigating the impact will be necessary even as the efforts to shift the global economy to a carbon neutral growth path increase. Because appropriate responses will need to be on the requisite scale and link adaptation measures to wider development goals, effective strategies will need to go beyond market forces and competition to help build the necessary resilience through deliberate policy decisions and public actions, including at the international level. Given these multifaceted and complex challenges, it is more imperative than ever for developing countries to adopt innovative and integrated policy strategies to pursue resilient, green and transformative development. However, many developing country governments are constrained, not only in mobilizing resources, but also by the lack of institutional capabilities.

198. **Objectives and features.** The main objective of the project is to strengthen regional partnership and national capacities of developing integrated policy strategies in selected countries (i.e. Türkiye, Kazakhstan, Malaysia and Pakistan) to achieve the resilient, green and transformative development for 2030 Agenda. In doing so, the project has three phases. First, to undertake research, in cooperation with experts in the 4 project countries, which aims to improve the understanding of the binding constraints for project countries in pursuing resilient, green and transformative development. In addition to the research work in project countries, the project aims to conduct research on China’s policy framework in strengthening economic resilience and promoting High Quality Development (HQD) since 2015. Second phase of the project is to provide, together with national partners, tailor-made integrated green development strategies to overcome capacity gaps in project countries through experience sharing and peer-learning with China (South-South Cooperation). And lastly, phase III will build, based on the project outputs at national level in Phase I & II, a regional partnership network, Asian Green Development Partnership Network (AGDPN), which will differ from other green economic partnerships that are typically focused on national level actions, to facilitate policy coordination, and tangible economic cooperation at the regional level including shaping a more development friendly trade policy environment.

199. **Outputs.** During 2023, UNCTAD made important strides. UNCTAD ended the year with two established local partnerships in Malaysia and Kazakhstan, four finalized background papers on the binding constraints for all project countries, 4 finished sectoral papers on Pakistan, and 1 finished sectoral paper for Türkiye, and a very successful national consultation in Pakistan, and one completed regional meeting in China, and one edited publication released online on China.

200. The most prominent event for 2023 was the national consultation meeting in Pakistan which was held on 16–17 October in Islamabad, Pakistan. The project team worked together with the Pakistani counterpart, Social Protection Resource Centre in Islamabad, to ensure the successful completion of sectoral papers, as well as a successful national consultation between the local stakeholders including government representatives, academics, civil society and private sector. The meeting attracted over 100 participants to discuss ways to develop an integrated Green Industrialization Strategy for Pakistan, giving due consideration to the regional and global approaches and practices. The event was widely covered by the media, and the event trended in the top ranks in Pakistani social media on Twitter.

201. On the China component of the project, the most significant development had been the completion of the first regional meeting in China, which was organized in collaboration with the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation during 12–14 December of 2023, in Changzhou, China. The meeting was attended by 30 participants from project countries, Chinese stakeholders, including the Government of China. Additionally, as of November 2023, UNCTAD had completed 6 policy papers and updated one policy paper on various policy areas of China’s green low-carbon development which have been incorporated as chapters in the published volume of “China’s Policy Strategies for Green Low-Carbon Development: Perspective from South-South Cooperation”. The publication was launched on 5 November 2023 in Shanghai during the 6th Hongqiao International Economic Forum.

202. Another noteworthy output was establishing local partner institutes in Kazakhstan, and in Malaysia. In Kazakhstan, UNCTAD has started to collaborate with the Economic Research Institute in Astana, Kazakhstan, under the Ministry of National Economy. In Malaysia, UNCTAD has partnered up with the Khazanah Research Institute, which is sponsored by Malaysia’s sovereign wealth fund, Khazanah Nasional Berhad.

203. In the last quarter of 2023, UNCTAD determined the themes of sectoral papers to have a better understanding of the policy strategy challenges and opportunities in the context of Türkiye, Kazakhstan and Malaysia, on agriculture, transport, coal, oil and gas, nuclear energy, climate change adaptation, electric vehicles, gender and industrial policies, semiconductors, energy transition, role of government-linked investment companies, and textile. The final drafts of all sectoral papers are expected to be received by the end of June or July 2024.

204. **Results and impacts.** It is often not easy to assess the impact of such work, which is mostly based on research and policy discussion. However, based on the surveys conducted during the two national and one regional meeting so far, positive feedback has been received from participants. They confirmed that their knowledge on green industrialization policies had been enriched as a result of knowledge sharing. A bigger impact is expected after the delivery of the high-level component of the national meetings in which the integrated policies based on country sectoral studies will be discussed.

4.3. *Mobilizing resources for a Green New Deal: partnerships in Asia for a Decade of Action in the era of coronavirus*

205. **Development context.** This project focuses on how to scale up and direct finance and technical resources for a Green New Deal in Asia and the Pacific, through the interlinking use of financial and industrial policies. It continues to be topical and relevant for development given that the SDGs set out an ambitious agenda for a more sustainable and equitable future, but no road map. Reflecting this, UNCTAD has now rolled out similar projects expanding the theme in different parts of the developing world. The Green New Deal framework and its guidance on how to achieve the SDGs are particularly important in Asia and the Pacific, as this region is central to any successful efforts to combat global warming and achieve development goals. It contains countries that are already experiencing negative impacts of climate change; and countries that are experimenting with interesting and innovative new forms of development finance. The beneficiary countries in this region generally and in the project particularly have all set out ambitions relating to low-carbon or zero-carbon futures and have varying degrees of success thus far in moving towards that.

206. **Objectives and features.** The project aims to bring together the usually disconnected topics of public finance and industrial policy, to support a just transition and transformation, within the next decade. The objective is defined into two project outcomes. Firstly, at the national level, to help policymakers and leaders from the financial sector and industry enhance their technical capacities to identify, design and implement policies to help finance and implement the Sustainable Development Goals, by means of a green new deal, over the next 10 years. Secondly, at the regional level, to enhance cooperation between countries and regional financial institutions (in particular development banks), to support the development of regional policies to help finance and implement the Sustainable Development Goals by means of a green new deal, over the next 10 years.

207. **Outputs.** During 2023, UNCTAD brought together policymakers, development finance institutions (DFIs), business and civil society in a series of workshops and meetings to share findings and experiences on industrial and finance policies for green structural transition and transformation. This included a workshop in the Pacific; a regional meeting with ESCAP in Bangkok; a panel discussion at the Finance in Common Summit; contributions and support to inter-governmental negotiations on plastic pollution at the WTO and UNEP; and interventions and policy analysis for various online events and dialogues on the role of industrialisation, financial policy and structural transformation. Research reports included studies on external and internal balances of green economy initiatives and their implications; fossil fuel and palm oil transformation; and an overarching analysis of the needs for ecological transition and transformation of industrial policy. Research findings also contributed to UNCTAD expert meetings and to the Trade and Development Report.

208. **Results and impacts.** The work continues to help fill important gaps in knowledge. The Pacific workshop in 2023 resulted in a draft Action Plan that was endorsed by the Government of Fiji and a request for follow-up work, starting in 2024, that is supporting the region in global trade and environmental negotiations. The ESCAP/UNCTAD meeting identified the need for a regular forum where DFIs can discuss financial and industrial policies as this does not currently exist, and participants found they greatly appreciated the discussions in the workshop and wanted them to continue in a more formal basis. A leading DFI in the region asked UNCTAD to host this. The consultancy reports and papers contributed to findings shared at the project-related meetings throughout the year, including the negotiation process of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution and Financing for Development discussions at national and international levels. Project activities also led to UNCTAD being asked to participate with OECD on guidance for the oceans or blue economy.

5. International cooperation on science, technology and innovation under the auspices of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development

5.1. *Technology Assessment in the energy and agricultural sectors in Africa to accelerate progress on Science, Technology and Innovation*

209. **Development context.** A technology assessment (TA) can catalyze a broader social, political, and inter-institutional debate on the potential benefits and negative impacts and uncertainties associated with a country adopting for use a technology that is new to them. Models of technology assessment incorporating the participation of citizens and decision-makers with technical expertise, can make vital contributions to informing policy makers working on innovation policies and strategies, and key sectoral policies such as energy and agricultural policies. Only a few countries in the world have consolidated capacities for TA in place. Technology assessments are seldom conducted in most developing countries owing to a lack of capabilities and institutions that undertake such assessments. Many of them have never undertaken a technology assessment. The potential impacts on a country in Africa of the adoption of many new and emerging technologies are unclear, leading to the need for robust mechanisms to evaluate those impacts to inform national policymakers and national policies. Building the capacity to assess the impacts of technologies is a vital part of the process of building STI capacity, in particular the capacity to assess the potential positive and negative impacts of a technology as part of the “technology transfer” process.

210. **Objectives.** The objective of this project is to strengthen capacities of national Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) policymakers and other relevant stakeholders in three African countries (the Seychelles, South Africa and Zambia) to assess the potential impacts of adopting new and emerging technologies in the energy and agricultural sectors. This will help to inform policymakers in designing and implementing policies which are based on a clear understanding of the impacts of adopting technologies new to them, to harness their benefits and reduce the potential negative effects. In the longer term, countries can develop institutional capacities to continuously scan, monitor, and assess the impacts of technologies as part of forward-looking development strategies. The project also aims to build a network of TA practitioners in Africa and link the network to existing international networks on TA.

211. **Outputs.** The project began its implementation in three pilot countries (Seychelles, South Africa and Zambia) in 2021. The COVID-19 pandemic forced a reliance on virtual platforms for delivery of planned activities during 2021, with a transition to a mix of virtual and hybrid (both physical and virtual) meetings during 2022 and a return to fully physical activities in 2023. As a result, the project experienced implementation delays at its start. There were implementation challenges encountered in each pilot country. There were several national workshops, both virtual and hybrid, in each country in 2022. These were to build capacity in the three countries on the methodology of conducting technology assessment, discuss the current use of technology in the countries' agriculture and energy sectors and brainstorm on what new technologies could be considered in their assessments. There was also a regional virtual workshop in August 2022 to enhance knowledge of the three participating countries on conducting technology assessments and to share experiences with implementation and learning across the three countries. There was a need for consistent efforts to build adequate awareness and capacity on the assessment process and methodology issues given the lack of familiarity and any tradition of undertaking this type of assessment in the pilot countries.

212. After delays experienced in 2021 and 2022, implementation accelerated in 2023 with substantial progress made in both capacity building activities and the preparation of TA reports in all three countries. A first draft of the interim TA Report was delivered by project counterparts in Seychelles in November 2023. The TA reports in Zambia registered good progress in 2023 and the draft was finalized in early 2024. The draft TA report in South Africa progressed more gradually. Several stakeholders participated in capacity building workshops on the application of advanced technologies in Brazil held in Petrolina, Brazil at end-January 2023 and a workshop on STI policy held in Addis Ababa in mid-February 2023. A hybrid regional workshop took place in Pretoria, South Africa, during 9–10 May 2023 organized to respond to the request from the three countries for face-to-face interactions among participating countries for sharing practical insights into project implementation, fostering mutual learning, and aiding in future planning. It was also an opportunity for additional capacity building on selected aspects of TA.

213. There were virtual meetings organized with each of the pilot countries as required to discuss progress and challenges, as well as national level meetings of the expert groups in each country. Also, three virtual regional workshops for sharing of experiences were held on 8 March, 31 July and 26 October respectively. In addition, there was a physical workshop in Seychelles during 25-28 September related to an STI Policy Review for Seychelles and capacity building on STI policy (under which technology assessment is a tool). In August 2023 survey data on green hydrogen stakeholders was collected for the South Africa energy assessment during the 2023 International Conference on Electrolysis held in Sun City, South Africa. There was also a physical workshop in Zambia on 8 December 2023 to collect stakeholder survey data and hold focus group discussions with Zambian stakeholders.

214. **Results.** Progress in implementation was made in 2023 in all three countries as key stakeholders - including members of the expert groups, country focal points and local/regional consultants of the project – became more familiar with the assessment process. At the beginning of the implementation of the project, few stakeholders had a clear understanding of technology assessment. Major efforts were required to build adequate familiarity and capacity during 2022 and 2023. Towards the end of 2023 all three pilot

countries were advancing more rapidly through the assessment process than in 2022. The experiences in the three countries illustrate the challenge of implementing a new area like technology assessment in developing countries that have no established tradition of undertaking this type of assessment. This will provide in the final year of project implementation the basis for valuable learning that will be available to be harnessed by other African countries that may in future wish to undertake a technology assessment. Besides, feedback from Seychelles was very positive on the results of the TA project. The outputs in Zambia and South Africa were achieved during the subsequent year.

5.2. *Science, Technology and Innovation Parks for sustainable development: building expertise in policy and practice in selected Asian and African countries*

215. **Development context.** STI parks are an important tool of STI policy aimed at creating a dynamic cluster of research and technology-intensive production that can help spur development within a specific region. They operate by promoting linkages across universities, research institutes and firms locating in the park that create knowledge flows among them and create innovative production. Many STI parks in developing countries face challenges in developing into innovative clusters, creating space for learning from successful STI park experiences. This is important given the relatively large financial investments typically involved in establishing these parks. By focusing on STI parks as catalysts for economic and technological advancement, the project aligns with the broader goals of the UN 2030 Agenda, emphasizing the importance of science, technology, and innovation as key drivers for achieving SDGs.

216. **Objective.** The core objective of the project is to bolster the ecosystem surrounding STI parks in four beneficiary countries in Asia and Africa, namely Ghana, Mongolia, Mozambique, and Uzbekistan. The project seeks to sharing best practices, experiences, and strategies pertinent to STI park development, tailored to address the specific needs and challenges of the participating countries, and build national capacity in the four countries to design and operate successful STI parks with the aim of accelerating sustainable economic growth, supporting the development of high-tech industries, and fostering innovation-driven economies in these countries. The project is funded by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Sub-Fund.

217. **Outputs.** The project started implementation in 2023 with virtual launch meetings in each of the four countries. These were followed by physical visits to the four countries to identify key issues through engagement with a variety of national STI stakeholders, including government officials, university researchers, industry experts, and others integral to the STI ecosystem. The findings from these country visits are crucial for tailoring the project's capacity building programme to the specific contexts of the beneficiary countries.

218. **Results.** It is very early in the project's implementation, and the results so far have been limited to discussions and engagement that will deepen the understanding of stakeholders in the four countries of the current state of operation and the key issues facing STI parks in the four countries.

5.3. *Activities related to the Commission on Science and Technology for Development with regard to follow-up to the World Summit on the Information Society*

219. **Development context.** The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) (Geneva, 2003, and Tunis, 2005) was the first major United Nations event that discussed the potential opportunities and developmental impacts posed by information and communications technology. The Summit established a vision of a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented information society. In 2015, this vision was reaffirmed by the General Assembly in the outcome document of its overall review of implementation of Summit outcomes. The years since the Summit have seen significant changes in the nature of the information society. Technologies which were in their infancy at the beginning of this century have become mainstream, and in some cases already been displaced by later innovations. Digital innovations are transforming lives and offering new opportunities to reinforce and invigorate efforts to achieve the Goals. However, effective policy development and programmes are required to realize the potential of information

technology to enhance development, inclusion and empowerment, and to address the potential harms.

220. **Objectives and features.** A trust fund was established in December 2007 aimed at supporting the work of the Commission in assisting the Economic and Social Council in the system-wide follow-up to World Summit on the Information Society outcomes. The objective of the work of UNCTAD, as the secretariat of the Commission, is to support the work of the Commission as mandated by the Council in its resolution 2006/46. The Council guides the work of the Commission in this area through its annual resolution on the assessment of progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to Summit outcomes. The resources of the trust fund support the elaboration of the annual reports on the implementation of such outcomes and the participation of experts and non-State stakeholders in the work of the Commission, and other related activities.

221. **Outputs.** In 2023, the secretariat supported the 26th Commission in March to review the follow-up of the implementation of Summit outcomes. It also supported the Commission on the implementation of the request made by the General Assembly in the outcome document of its overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of the Summit (General Assembly resolution 70/125). There were two consultative meetings on a review of WSIS twenty years after the 2005 WSIS summit (or WSIS+20) during 2023, including one in Kyoto in October and a second in Geneva in December.

222. **Results.** The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2023/3, expressed its appreciation for the role of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development in assisting the Economic and Social Council as the focal point in the system-wide follow-up to the World Summit. The extension and reaffirmation of the mandate given to the Commission by the Council in its resolution 2006/46 demonstrates the recognition of the valuable work carried out by the Commission. This work has been strengthened due to the support of the Trust Fund.

5.4. *CropWatch Innovative Cooperation Programme*

223. **Development context.** Food security is a grave concern for developing countries, particularly least developed countries (LDCs). It is increasingly at risk due to climate change. More and more developing countries are tapping into science, technology and innovation solutions to monitor crops more efficiently to ensure good yields and counter increasing challenges stemming from climate change. Earth observation and crop monitoring on a massive scale are neither easy nor inexpensive exercises, but both hold immense potential for better food security planning and progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. Yet, many developing countries do not have access to the required tools, either due to technology deficits or costs. To address this challenge, UNCTAD is partnering with the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) and the Alliance of International Science Organizations (ANSO) to undertake the CropWatch Innovative Cooperation Programme (CropWatch-ICP), an initiative that resulted from discussions during the UN Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD). CropWatch is a system that uses satellite data to monitor crop conditions and integrates this with other climate-related data on drought, pest and disease for better farm management.

224. **Objectives and features.** The programme aims to build developing countries' capacities in better crop monitoring and food security early warning. It will specifically help participating countries to independently monitor their crops in real and near real-time in direct support of SDG 2 "End hunger and achieve food security". Contribution is also expected to SDG target 17.10 (trade) through increased exports of crops resulting from enhanced agricultural production thanks to crop monitoring.

225. **Outputs.** In 2023, Kenya completed the first field study on crop growth monitoring and yield prediction in June. Zimbabwe successfully concluded its initial field study on crop growth monitoring in August. Nigeria completed a field study on crop type distribution, growth monitoring, and yield prediction in October. An in-person regional workshop and field visits were organized in Mauritius in August to strengthen the capacity of participating countries in using the CropWatch system. Twenty-six participants from 11 countries attended the workshop, including Algeria, Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Lebanon,

Malawi, Mauritius, Nigeria, Syria, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. The regional workshop obtained a 100 per cent satisfaction rate from the participants. Participating countries reported benefits from the workshop, especially in geospatial analysis and the utilization of high-resolution imagery for crop classification. The incorporation of new monitoring indicators like Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) and vegetation cover was highlighted in the workshop. Participants gained insights into interpreting output from the Crop Explorer tool and conducting geospatial investigations using GPS for vegetation cover selection and acreage calculation. The programme organized a side event at the 26th session of the CSTD entitled “Application of Satellite Technology to Support Inclusive Implementation of the SDGs”. The side event introduced the CropWatch programme to CSTD member states, demonstrating the potential of satellite technology in agriculture for achieving SDG 2, while also discussing best practices, multi-stakeholder collaboration, and capacity-building opportunities.

226. **Results.** In Algeria, CropWatch has improved the indicators available for monitoring crops. Bulletins enhance visibility, while integrating ground data motivates fieldwork for cereal mapping. Ghana is to complete customization of the monitoring system for the 2024 Crop season. The programme has helped Lebanon’s crop evapotranspiration to be monitored nationwide, as well as other valuable information (such as precipitation distribution, NDVI, crop condition, etc.). In Mauritius, the programme has helped to improve the awareness of the need for proper crop monitoring to achieve SDG 2, with the ultimate aim of food security and better networking between local and international partners (researchers, academics, sponsors) involved in the agricultural sector.

227. CropWatch analysts were also used to show the yield gap of Syria’s wheat in all agricultural zone systems. CropWatch has provided Zambia with timely and accurate information related to crop conditions and agricultural trends. To its users in Zambia, CropWatch has helped with access to real-time and reliable information on crop conditions, guiding interventions such as targeted agricultural support, early warning systems, emergency response plans, monitoring and assessing the impacts of drought on crops, and assessing crop production (based on NDVI) compared to past seasons. This helps to provide information on the impact of drought in Zambia.

5.5. *Young Female Scientist Programme and Young Scientist PHD Programme*

228. **Development context.** Technology is a means of implementing the 2030 Agenda and is one of the areas for partnerships under SDG17. Science, technology and innovation (STI) plays a central role in the achievement of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) under the 2030 Agenda. Research capacity on STI is important to a country’s STI capacity and sustainability of the national STI system. The SDG Target 9.5 particularly calls for enhancing scientific research in developing countries, for this has a significant bearing on the development of productive capacities in developing countries, which in turn greatly impact on economic growth in these countries. Moreover, female engagement in STI research is still limited while closing this gender gap is necessary to harnessing STI for truly inclusive and sustainable development for all communities and all countries, which will also contribute to the achievement of gender equality and gender empowerment set forth in SDG 5. In this context, UNCTAD as the secretariat of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) joined hands with the University of Okayama (Japan) by launching two programmes in November 2020: (a) The Young Female Scientist Programme for CSTD member States in Africa and Southeast Asia, which offers short-period joint cutting-edge research activities at the University; and (b) the Young Scientist Programme offering PhD courses at the University for young scientists from developing countries.

229. **Objective and features.** The objectives of both programmes are to enhance scientific research capabilities in developing countries through contributing to building human capital in science, technology, and innovation-related fields in these countries and close the gender gap in scientific research. The programmes are featured with joint cutting-edge research as well as advanced educational programmes. The research and education courses are designed and implemented such that the outcomes would contribute to the achievement of SDGs through selected research areas and advanced study courses. The

CSTD established, through this programme, a new mode of global collaborative research which is useful for the post-COVID-19 era.

230. **Outputs.** In 2023, the Young Female Scientist programme received twenty-three young female scientists from ten CSTD member countries. They conducted cutting-edge research in their respective scientific fields guided by researchers in Okayama University for around 30 days. Under the Young Scientist Programme, three young researchers from Madagascar, Nigeria and the Philippines have benefitted from this programme in pursuing a 3-year doctoral degree. The participants from both programmes have diverse research areas, including medical and health issues, agricultural sciences, and engineering.

231. **Results** The participating young female scientists are using the knowledge and skills they have acquired through their respective research under the guidance of researchers from the Okayama University. Several of them plan to continue research collaboration between the Okayama University and their respective home institution. The programme has also improved their access to research networks in their specialties.

5.6. *Capacity Building Programme for Female Researchers and Entrepreneurs to Promote the Bio-Circular-Green Economic (BCG) Model*

232. **Development context** Female researchers and entrepreneurs can make a major contribution to sustainable development by mobilizing science, technology and innovation (STI). However, they often face barriers which hinder their efforts to take a proactive role in their countries' achievement of sustainable production and consumption. In particular, many developing countries are in need of capacity building to improve their knowledge base and ability to put STI developments into action.

233. The Government of Thailand developed the [Bio-Circular-Green Economic Model \(BCG Model\)](#) as a new economic model for inclusive and sustainable growth. The BCG model employs technology and innovation to add value to an economy while conforming with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Thailand's Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP). Through this programme, UNCTAD joined hands with the Thai Government to train researchers and entrepreneurs to apply the BCG Model. In particular UNCTAD partnered with the Thailand Science Research and Innovation (TSRI), through an agreement formalized during [the 26th session of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development](#) in March 2023.

234. **Objective and features.** The objectives of this programme are to train researchers and entrepreneurs to apply the BCG Model. Combining lectures and interactive discussions with field visits to successful Thai companies implementing the BCG Model, the training aims to provide a platform for female researchers and entrepreneurs to learn from Thailand's expertise, to share best practices in technology and innovation for BCG growth, and to network.

235. The programme overall is expected to contribute to promoting inclusive and sustainable development in participating countries by building female researchers' and entrepreneurs' capacity in developing and using science, technology and innovation to develop businesses, products, institutions, and public policies.

236. **Outputs.** The training took place from 6 to 13 August 2023 in Bangkok, gathering 17 women scientists and researchers from nine developing countries in Asia and Africa. The week-long training aimed at helping participants lead transformative change by adapting and implementing Thailand's BCG model in their respective countries. The training featured team exercises and field visits to BCG-model sites, culminating in a group activity in which participants applied their newly acquired knowledge by pitching a BCG project to a panel of judges. The women researchers and entrepreneurs also participated in Thailand's national science week, hosted by the government.

237. **Results.** The participating female scientists and entrepreneurs are using the knowledge and skills they have acquired through the programme in their own countries, applying their knowledge in terms of creating space for women to work in multidisciplinary teams, embracing diversity and inclusion to support local communities.

II. Theme B: Tackling vulnerabilities, building resilience

238. Poor people or nations are more vulnerable to external shocks. Eradicating poverty and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals would require joint and persistent efforts to tackle the specific challenges faced by weak and vulnerable economies. To build their economic resilience, structurally weak economies need to develop sound strategies to diversify economies and build productive capacity. To combat climate change, it is important to develop climate-resilient transport infrastructure and identify best approaches to mitigate climate change while enhancing economic development prospects.

239. UNCTAD technical assistance addresses the specific demand from LDCs, landlocked developing countries, small island developing States and post-conflict countries to help them better tackle vulnerabilities and build resilience. In particular, UNCTAD improves the capacities of developing countries to effectively manage debt; supports commodity-dependent developing countries in their diversification efforts; promotes sustainable and resilient transport; and assists LDCs in trade policymaking, market access and achieving structural progress towards and beyond graduation.

240. In this section, six products under the theme “Tackling vulnerabilities, building resilience” are reported on. The reports highlight the main technical cooperation activities carried out in 2023 and key results to date. Technical cooperation projects that are pertinent to the aforementioned theme but not linked with any of the existing six products under this thematic area are reported on under “B99 Other”.

B1 Support to graduation from least developed country status

Table B1

Support to graduation from least developed country status

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
ROA-2326 (E15)	Supporting structural economic progress towards and beyond graduation from least developed country status by the pre-qualified African and Asian countries	2023–	Development Account

241. **Development context.** The process of graduation out of the LDC category has gained international attention with the inclusion of a graduation target in the Doha Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries, adopted in March 2022 (contained in para. 276). Following the graduation of Bhutan in December 2023, only seven countries have graduated from the LDC category in the more than five decades of its existence (since 1971). At present 15 countries out of a total of 45 currently recognized LDCs are at various stages in the graduation process. Several countries were recommended for graduation in the past but delayed for various reasons including the impact of COVID-19 and the special circumstances of the countries. In the pipeline to graduation are Sao Tome and Principe (graduation scheduled for 2024); Bangladesh (2026); Lao PDR (2026); Nepal (2026) and Solomon Islands (2027). At the 2024 review, Cambodia, Djibouti, Kiribati, Tuvalu and Senegal were recommended for graduation by the UN Committee for Development Policy (CDP) and will be considered by the ECOSOC in 2024. A decision on Comoros and Myanmar was deferred by the CDP and the countries will be assessed at the 2027 Triennial Review. Furthermore, Rwanda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda were found to have met the graduation thresholds for the first time. Angola, Timor-Leste and Zambia were previously in the graduation process, but no longer meet the graduation criteria.

242. **Objectives and features.** Graduating from the LDC category is a milestone towards achieving structural transformation and for many countries, it also marks a significant

policy shock emanating from the loss of LDC-specific trade preferences and other international support measures. UNCTAD's technical assistance on graduation aims to assist (pre-) graduating countries to identify their policy priorities to ensure that they achieve graduation with momentum. It helps countries make progress towards the achievement of Goal 8 (promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all). This requires aligning graduation-related policies and programmes with broader and longer-term development plans. Achieving graduation with momentum makes graduation irreversible and poses the basis for continued progress towards sustainable development in the post-graduation phase. UNCTAD technical assistance work relies largely on the analytical work undertaken by UNCTAD under a mandate from the United Nations General Assembly and takes the form mainly of studies (especially vulnerability profiles, strategies for graduation with momentum and specific national thematic studies), policy dialogue with national policymakers and advisory missions.

Outputs

Vulnerability profiles of graduating countries.

243. In supporting the countries that were found pre-eligible for graduation in 2021, UNCTAD engaged in policy dialogue and discussion with development stakeholders of the beneficiary countries, namely Comoros, Djibouti, Cambodia, Senegal and Zambia. In the three latter countries, UNCTAD organized a National Validation Workshop of the Vulnerability Profile, leading to the formulation of a roadmap for graduation with momentum. The policy dialogue between UNCTAD staff and stakeholders of national development processes was reflected in national policymaking and development planning. The Vulnerability Profiles also serve as a contribution to the CDP process of monitoring and assessing the preparedness of the countries to meet the LDC graduation requirements and were utilized by the CDP during the triennial review in 2024. Moreover, these assessments continued to provide invaluable lessons in selecting suitable transition pathways and appropriate policies and strategies to address any negative impacts of losing international support measures including financial and market access privileges the countries enjoy as LDCs.

244. *Senegal.* As a result of the continuous interaction between UNCTAD and national policymakers, the latter for the first time ever included the importance of the country's taking advantage of its current LDC status as part of the latest national development plan, namely the Plan d'Actions Prioritaires 3 (PAP3) 2024–2028⁵⁸. UNCTAD is explicitly mentioned at different points of the PAP3 text. The need to diversify the economic base of the country is highlighted in UNCTAD's Vulnerability Profile and this is reflected in several initiatives foreseen by the plan to develop new sectors and new type of economic activities, e.g. by establishing Special Economic Zones and creating solid linkages between them and other sectors of the national economy. In addition, UNCTAD was asked to contribute to a dedicated section on LDC graduation to the [Common Country Analysis](#) drafted and coordinated by the UN Resident Coordinator Office.

245. *Cambodia.* UNCTAD developed good working relationships with the Cambodian Government since the inception of the above-mentioned project and the holding of the National Validation workshop. Since then, UNCTAD has started participating in the UN Advisory Group on the Graduation of Cambodia, which is providing inputs to the country's National Graduation Committee and to the national Government more generally on the preparation for the country's upcoming graduation.

246. *Zambia.* Since the inception of the project and as part of the ongoing technical cooperation with the Government of Zambia, UNCTAD prepared the Vulnerability Profile which informed the Graduation Assessment at the CDP Triennial Review of 2024. Although Zambia is no longer eligible for graduation, the policy dialogues yielded a draft roadmap that is under consideration by the focal Ministry on LDC issues. UNCTAD will

⁵⁸ <https://www.finances.gouv.sn/app/uploads/PSE-PAP-3-2024-2028.pdf>

continue consulting the government on the way forward, including supporting the policies and strategies necessary to revive growth and sustain the social development that has been achieved so far.

247. In December 2023, UNCTAD organized an expert briefing for Ambassadors of the 5 pre-qualified countries (see above) to brief them on the findings of the Vulnerability Profiles and National Productive Capacities Gap Assessments (NPCGAs) and discuss the steps towards and beyond graduation.

Other technical assistance in 2023 to LDCs facing the challenge of graduation from LDC status

248. The Least Developed Countries Report and its overview are regular activities of UNCTAD which continue to shape intergovernmental discussions around the development challenges of the LDCs, their vulnerabilities and the intentional measures required to address them. In this regard, the Least Developed Countries Report 2023 published in November 2023 has been presented to policymakers, academics and other stakeholders. The Report illustrated how comprehensive reforms in the international financial architecture, coupled with increased commitments and innovative approaches, are necessary for LDCs to finance their sustainable development and build resilience in the context of multiple global challenges.

249. Through the Regional Office for Africa, UNCTAD disseminated the key messages and policy recommendations of the Least Developed Countries Report 2023 to over 100 African-based stakeholders and fostered dialogue on the report's topical issues.

250. The Division actively participated at the 2023 Plenary Session of the Committee for Development Policy (CDP) held on 20–24 February in New York. During the Session, the CDP discussed refinements of the LDC criteria for the 2024 review of the LDC category. UNCTAD contributed to the discussions and recalled to CDP members the importance of its mandated work on the LDC graduation process, as well as its contributions to issues such as a “just transition” and external debt, which were two substantive topics on which the CDP worked during the past year.

251. 5th United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC5). UNCTAD sponsored or co-sponsored six side events organized during LDC5. The events focused on key thematic issues that are central to the sustainable and inclusive development of LDCs, as envisaged in the Doha Plan of Action for LDCs. In particular, UNCTAD events gathered national authorities and policymakers, eminent economic experts and representatives of relevant private sector entities to exchange information and build consensus on issues including productive capacities and the potential of impact investing to support the strengthening of the nutraceuticals sector, capacity building in investment promotion, e-commerce, trade and industrial policies for LDCs, as well as the holistic and inclusive approach to policymaking needed to address the systemic and structural vulnerabilities of these economies. The events were organized with key partners including the Common Fund for Commodities (CFC), the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the World Association of Investment Promotion Agencies (WAIPA), International Trade Center (ITC), the World Trade Organization (WTO) and UN-OHRLLS.

252. **Results and impacts.** In 2023, UNCTAD supported LDCs that have prequalified for graduation in their triennial review by the Committee for Development Policy (CDP). UNCTAD delivered General Assembly-mandated Vulnerability Profiles of Cambodia, Comoros, Djibouti, Senegal, and Zambia. At the December 2023 briefing, Ambassadors of the countries intervened and expressed their appreciation of UNCTAD's in-depth work and thanked UNCTAD for the detailed findings, supported by key data and evidence.

253. As part of Vulnerability Profile preparations, UNCTAD undertook strategic missions, including with CDP country rapporteurs. Including the CDP Rapporteurs was an innovation in the process and was highly appreciated by the CDP members as it gave additional insights into the country's development context and helped to connect additional stakeholders in the graduation process.

254. The demand for UNCTAD's technical support continues to rise compared to extra-budgetary resources allocated for the activities. The rising demand from Member States, UN systemwide partners and other stakeholders points to the need for further UNCTAD engagement in technical cooperation on LDC vulnerabilities and graduation issues. To meet the demand, UNCTAD has at times had to innovate, leveraging technology-based solutions, including through the organization of hybrid or virtual events to satisfy critical demands during the most challenging circumstances.

B2 DMFAS – Debt Management and Financial Analysis System

Table B2

DMFAS – Debt Management and Financial Analysis System

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
ARM/0T/LAO	Strengthening DMFAS implementation in Armenia	2023–	Asian Development Bank
CHD/0T/ICB	Renforcement des Capacités de Gestion de la Dette Publique - SYGADE 6	2021–	European Union
DJI/0T/KAK	Renforcement des capacités de gestion de la dette publique du Djibouti : SYGADE 6	2022–	World Bank
EQG/0T/IBI	SYGADE project Equatorial Guinea	2022–	African Development Bank
ERI/0T/HAB	Implementation of version 6 of DMFAS system within the Ministry of Finance of Eritrea	2018–	African Development Bank
GAB/0T/9AT	Renforcement des capacités d'études et modernisation des outils informatiques de gestion de la dette (Gabon)	2015–	Gabon
GUI/0T/IBZ	Mise en œuvre de l'assistance technique nécessaire à l'installation du SYGADE et au renforcement des capacités de gestion de la dette	2021–	France/ Expertise France
IVC/0T/BCF	Projet SYGADE - Côte d'Ivoire	2015–	Côte d'Ivoire
LAO/0T/IBR	DMFAS 6 upgrade for the Lao People's Democratic Republic	2020–	Lao PDR
MAU/0T/LAI	Renforcement des capacités de gestion du système d'information de la dette	2022–	Mauritania
NIC/0T/BAG	Strengthening Public Debt management	2012–	Nicaragua
PHI/0T/ABK	Strengthening debt management in the Bureau of the Treasury (Philippines)	2011–	Philippines
PHI/0T/HAO	DMFAS 6 implementation	2019–	Philippines
PRC/0T/AAQ	DMFAS project - Republic of Congo	2010–	Republic of Congo
PSE/0T/KBD	Implementing DMFAS 6 at the Ministry of Finance of the State of Palestine	2022–	State of Palestine

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
UGA/0T/GBC	Strengthening Integrated Debt Management Uganda	2019–	Uganda
YEM/0T/KBK	DMFAS version 6 installation at the Central Bank of Yemen	2022–	Yemen
INT/0T/2AO	Strengthening the debt management capacity of developing countries	2002–	Multi-donors
INT/0T/HCB	Strengthening Public Debt Management in Selected Low and Middle-Income countries	2018–	Switzerland
INT/0T/IAB	The Debt Management and Financial Analysis System (DMFAS) Programme	2019–	European Union
INT/0T/KAD	Support to the World Bank/IMF DMF Phase III Project	2022–	World Bank

255. **Development context.** Effective debt management is an intrinsic part of sound public financial management and overall good governance. It is crucial for ensuring sustainable debt levels, identifying risks of debt crises and limiting their impact.

256. The critical role of debt and good debt management has been underlined in Goal 17.4 of the Sustainable Development Goals, which recognizes the importance of assisting developing countries in attaining long-term debt sustainability and reducing the risk of debt distress. Furthermore, the United Nations General Assembly⁵⁹ has emphasized “that debt sustainability is essential for underpinning growth, underlining the importance of debt sustainability, debt transparency and effective debt management to the efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals”. It also reiterated “that timely and comprehensive data on the level and composition of debt are necessary for, inter alia, building early warning systems aimed at limiting the impact of debt crises”.

257. In 2023, the overall outlook for external debt sustainability in developing countries remains of serious concern for the international community, which was aggravated by the overlapping shocks and consequent crises: wars, climate change, high inflation related aggressive monetary policies and the COVID-19 pandemic. High public borrowing to meet necessary public spending demands was accompanied by rising levels of public debt, increasing debt repayment burdens in particular in a context of rising interest rates, which further increased vulnerabilities and risks of debt distress. Similarly, concerns related to debt data transparency in a number of countries remained very high. It is widely recognized that in such circumstances, the effective management of public resources and liabilities, including public debt, is a necessity. Capacity to record, monitor and report effectively on public debt remains crucial to mitigating the risks to debt sustainability while countries need to borrow significantly to address the socio-economic effects of the global crises.

258. Notwithstanding the increasing importance of effective debt management, many developing countries continued to lack the necessary capacity to manage their debt effectively. Faced with increasingly complex debt portfolios, significant weaknesses in legal and institutional frameworks, staffing, skills and systems undermined countries’ abilities to manage their public debt.

259. In 2023, the priority continued to be maintaining capacity to ensure that comprehensive, accurate and timely information on public debt is available in support of policy decisions and risk management.

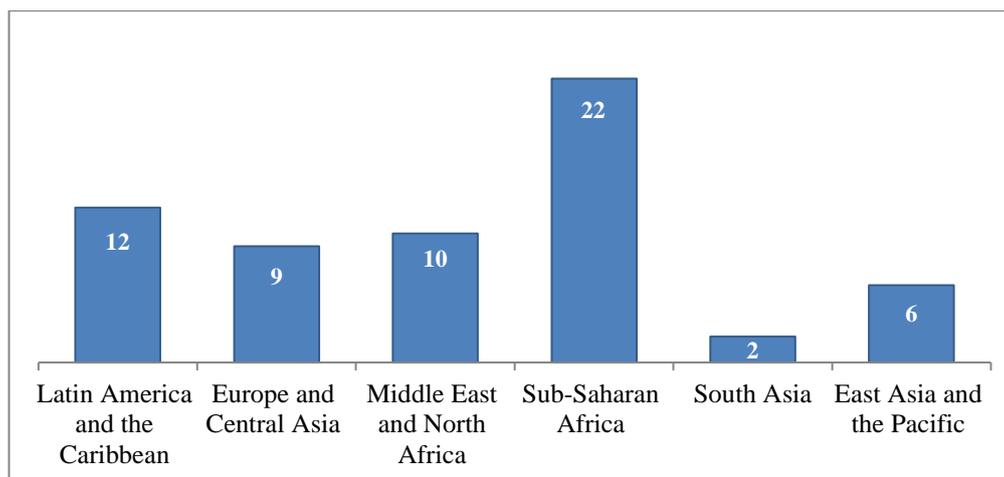
⁵⁹ United Nations General Assembly Resolution 78/137 on external debt sustainability and development, adopted on 19 December 2023.

260. In response to countries' needs, the Programme provided continuous support and guidance on ensuring the accuracy and completeness of public debt records and comprehensive and timely reporting.

261. **Objectives and features.** The DMFAS Programme is a leading provider of technical cooperation and advisory services in the area of debt management. It offers a set of proven solutions to improve the capacity of beneficiary countries to manage public debt, handle the day-to-day management of public liabilities, produce reliable debt data and perform basic debt analysis for policymaking purposes. The Programme works directly with 61 countries, including one new country, namely Niger (see figure 1).

Figure 1

Geographical distribution of active DMFAS users, 2023



262. **Outputs.** In 2023, the DMFAS Programme continued to provide effective support to the 61 countries actively using its software.

263. The Programme delivered country-specific technical assistance and trained 663 debt officers, of which 48 per cent were women, from 32 countries through 65 capacity-building activities in the field or remotely. Remote support included support through its help desk, which responded to 462 requests during the reporting period. During the year, the Programme managed 19 active technical assistance projects and signed three new projects.

264. The Programme worked in close cooperation with other international bodies, such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and regional institutions to enhance coordination and avoid duplication. For example, in 2023, as part of the partnership with the Macroeconomic and Financial Management Institute of Eastern and Southern Africa (MEFMI), the Programme jointly organized a regional workshop on DMFAS 6.2 and testing of DMFAS 7. UNCTAD is also partnering with the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) in a joint project. It participated in 7 partner events including with the African Development Bank, ESCWA, MEFMI, and the Debt Management Facility.

265. **Results.** For the DMFAS client countries, concrete and sustainable results included improved external and domestic debt data recording, enhanced reporting and improved debt analysis capacities. These results contribute to improvements in the recording and reporting components of the public financial management value chain as defined under the Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability Programme. The Programme's main results are highlighted below:

266. Complete, reliable and up-to date databases: Ninety-three per cent of DMFAS client countries have developed comprehensive and reliable debt databases in respect of government and government-guaranteed external debt. Eighty per cent of DMFAS 6 user-countries whose debt management office is responsible for monitoring domestic debt were using DMFAS to manage their entire domestic debt portfolio.

(a) Improved production of debt statistics: Forty-three countries regularly produce statistical bulletins on debt.

(b) Strengthened analytical skills: Thirty-six countries regularly produce a debt portfolio analysis.

(c) Improved capacity for effective debt reporting: the pandemic impacted the capacity of countries to fulfil their reporting requirements, many of which are still recovering. Eighty-nine per cent of DMFAS client countries with low or middle-income levels effectively reported to the World Bank through the Debtor Reporting System. In 2023, 83 per cent of DMFAS clients participating in the World Bank Quarterly External Debt Statistics database reported on a timely basis.

(d) Financing: The Programme worked actively with current donors and to attract new donors.

(e) Results-based management (RBM): The DMFAS Programme applies comprehensive RBM to its strategic planning and project implementation. This includes clearly defining the objectives, results, measurable indicators and means of verification that will be used to monitor and evaluate progress. It also defines the assumptions that represent the pre-requisites for the achievement of the expected results, and the associated risks. Where applicable, baselines are used to benchmark progress over time. In December 2022, the DMFAS Advisory Group, at its 13th session, extended the current strategic plan for an additional year, up to 2024 and reviewed the mid-term evaluation results. The evaluator found that the DMFAS Programme demonstrated a high level of overall effectiveness, efficiency and concluded that it has made a strategic contribution to strengthening debt data transparency and public accountability in user countries.

B4 UNCTAD contribution to the Enhanced Integrated Framework

Table B4

UNCTAD contribution to the Enhanced Integrated Framework

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
RAF/OT/JAU	Facilitation du transit, du transport et des échanges en Afrique de l’Ouest pour une meilleure participation aux chaînes de valeurs	2020–	UNOPS - EIF
RAS/OT/JBL	EIF – Regional Project “A New Trade Policy and Strategy for ASEAN LDCs on market access and related issues”	2020–	UNOPS - EIF

267. **Development Context.** The EIF is a multi-agency and multi-donor program for the coordinated delivery of trade-related technical assistance and institutional capacity-building for LDCs. It aims at enabling LDCs to mainstream trade into their national development plans so that countries can mobilize the potential of trade to promote economic growth, sustainable development and poverty reduction at the domestic level and to become more active players in the multilateral trading system. In this context, UNCTAD continues to actively participate in the EIF Board by contributing to the LDC-friendly operationalization of the EIF. In addition, UNCTAD assists the LDCs both in terms of capacity building for the ownership of the EIF through its Diagnostic Trade Integration Studies (DTIS) updating process and by providing advisory services on trade policy, market access and strategies.

268. **Objectives and Features.** UNCTAD provides tailored assistance in response to specific requests from EIF participating countries. More specifically, the technical assistance provided by UNCTAD under EIF is expected to contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, namely Goal 9 (Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation) and Goal 17 (Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable

Development). The main objectives of this technical assistance are the capacity-building of LDCs for better integration into multilateral trade and for their development through the DTIS studies, trade policy, market access, etc. In providing such assistance, UNCTAD uses a mix of national and international expertise to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and maximize results – the approach also contributes to national capacity-building.

Outputs

West African countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Niger and Togo.

269. In 2023 UNCTAD provided technical assistance to several Least Developed Countries (LDCs), notably: Benin, Burkina Faso, Niger and Togo through an EIF-funded regional project on “Transit, transport and trade in West Africa for better value chain participation”. The West African project organized consultative missions, in-person workshops, additional online/in-person coordination meetings, and drafted roadmaps to enhance the management of the joint border post of Manville and Cinkassé (Benin, Burkina Faso, Niger and Togo), support customs connectivity through SIGMAT⁶⁰ between the Ouagadougou-Lomé and Niamey-Cotonou corridors, enhance the understanding of the domestic reforms necessary to improve the implementation of regional conventions on transit and transport and the implementation of a functional transit program, coordinate the implementation of trade facilitation measures (selected articles from WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA)), and improve countries’ participation into global value chains and build resilience.

270. During 2023, the project resulted in several deliverables. In particular, Trade and Transport Ministers of Benin, Burkina Faso, Niger and Togo signed a quadrilateral declaration on the legal convergence of frameworks on transport, intermediation, transit and trade to enhance regional trade in West Africa.

271. In addition to the results achieved towards the implementation of a functional transit program between beneficiary countries, progress has also been made in the coordination of cross-border land transport, transit, and trade facilitation operations along the borders of the beneficiary countries. Finally, improvements in the legislation and regulatory practices on transit, land transport and trade have been identified by reviewing provisions of TFA articles. Efforts were also made to identify complementarity among the implementation of WTO TFA and the AfCFTA and consultations related to particular TFA articles were conducted.

272. Continuous collaboration and consultative meetings with the World Bank Trade Facilitation West Africa programme took place to identify activities on improving the functioning of the Malanville and the Cinkasse Joint Border Posts and developing an intervention strategy to reform the cross-border land transport sector and SIGMAT.

ASEAN LDCs: Cambodia and Lao People’s Democratic Republic

273. Under an EIF-funded regional project “A New trade policy and strategy for ASEAN LDCs on market access and related issues”, UNCTAD supports the Ministry of Commerce of Cambodia and Laos and WTO delegates of ASEAN LDCs to (1) address extended cumulation with the EU for ASEAN LDCs and improve trade relations on market access; (2) improve Japan GSP and Japan-ASEAN LDC bilateral trade relations; (3) improve SPS in accessing Chinese and neighboring markets by leveraging the WTO SPS committee; and (4) have a better understanding of WTO negotiations on e-commerce; and (5) address any other emerging issue deemed relevant in this context.

274. In 2023, UNCTAD delivered several activities. In March 2023, UNCTAD held a workshop on *What trade policy and aid for trade support for Cambodia after LDC graduation?* with 50 participants (including 25 females). The workshop addressed the

⁶⁰ SIGMAT is a French acronym for the “Système Interconnecté de Gestion des Marchandises en Transit”, which translated into English means the “Interconnected System for the Management of Goods in Transit”.

challenges faced by LDC members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), specifically Cambodia, as they face graduation prospects and changing trade-policy landscapes. The ASEAN LDCs have enjoyed successful export-led growth supported by preferential market access and rules of origin based on their LDC status, but with the proliferation of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), preference erosion is becoming a concern.

275. In October 2023, a workshop on *A new trade policy and aid for trade support programme for Cambodia after LDC graduation* was delivered for 80 participants (including 30 females). Cambodia met the LDC graduation criteria for the first time in 2021 and could graduate as early as 2027 depending on the country's assessment by the Committee for Development Policy (CDP) in 2024. The loss of LDC trade preferences for Cambodia upon graduation may hurt competitiveness and export performance as major exports, essentially garments, but also bicycles and shoes are placed in global value chains sensible to profit margins. Hence, how to manage trade preferences, trade contingency measures and rules of origin are crucial issues for Cambodia. The country has recently promulgated a new law on rules of origin and has made substantial steps to maintain viable the utilization of trade preferences in the European Union for its growing bicycle industry.

276. In March 2023, UNCTAD went on a mission to Lao PDR to (1) finalize the e-commerce publication for the challenges and opportunities on e-commerce trade negotiation for Lao PDR, (2) consult with the Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry on their views and interests regarding the prospect of Lao PDR's graduation from its LDC status, and (3) meet with the Department of Foreign Trade Policy of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce.

277. **Results and impacts.** Under the regional project on "Transit, transport and trade in West Africa for better value chain participation", the coordination between beneficiary countries for the implementation of a functional transit program has been improved with the signing by Trade and Transport Ministers of Benin, Burkina Faso, Niger and Togo of a quadrilateral declaration on the legal convergence of frameworks on transport, intermediation, transit and trade to enhance regional trade in West Africa.

278. The March 2023 event led to the submission of Cambodia to the Committee on Rules of Origin (which was held on 6th June 2023 at the WTO) entitled "The Impact of GSP Graduation on LDCs and Cumulation – The Case of Cambodia (G/RO/W/220)". Cambodia experienced a decrease in GSP utilization rates due to challenges arising from the loss of cumulation with countries that had graduated or concluded free trade agreements with the European Union.

279. The research and policy dialogue workshop that occurred in October 2023 offered a platform for participants to continue and expand the policy dialogue among supporting institutions such as Asian Development Bank (ADB) and UNCTAD and the trade policymakers and regulators of Cambodia to identify the trade policy options and related Aid for Trade assistance to address the challenges faced by Cambodia.

B5 Market access, rules of origin and geographical indications for the least developed countries

Table B5

Market access, rules of origin and geographical indications for the least developed countries

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
INT/9X/77J	Trust fund for least developed countries: Core Project	1997–	Multi-donors

280. **Development context.** Least developed countries (LDCs) are granted preferential tariff treatment in the markets of developed and developing countries under several

schemes and arrangements. Among them are initiatives such as the Generalized System of Preferences, the European Union's "Everything but Arms" initiative, the African Growth and Opportunity Act of the United States of America, trade preferences under African, Caribbean and Pacific States – European Union Partnership Agreements and other preferential trading arrangements that have rules of origin as key components. Nonetheless, LDCs are still facing significant obstacles to market access.

281. UNCTAD provides policy advice and technical assistance to help developing countries comply with requirements on rules of origin under preferential trading arrangements – focusing on product origin – with a view to improving the utilization rates of trade preferences granted to them. Since 2006, for instance, UNCTAD has assisted LDCs that are members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) on the implementation of the 2005 Ministerial Declaration adopted at the WTO Sixth Ministerial Conference (Hong Kong, China) on duty-free and quota-free market access. The declaration called on ensuring that preferential rules of origin applicable to imports from LDCs are simple and transparent and contribute to facilitating market access. UNCTAD also provides support in relation to the WTO Ministerial Decision (Bali, Indonesia) on preferential rules of origin for LDCs.

282. In addition to assisting the least developed countries with market access regulations, UNCTAD provides support on geographical indications to enhance export diversification and specialization. Overcoming the limited diversification of LDC exports, the low value-added of those exports and the continued challenge of bringing small local producers up front in the global commodity value chain remain concerns. At the same time, the rich biodiversity of several LDCs allows them to draw on their natural resources to create an array of traditional products and preparations with the potential to compete globally and secure higher returns from sales. Benefiting from that natural wealth can require taking steps to gain recognition of quality and generate a solid reputation for specific products in the eyes of consumers and buyers. One important approach can be using geographical indications in combination with a branding strategy for those products.

283. **Objectives and features.** The main objectives of UNCTAD's technical assistance under this program are to help LDCs better understand the rules and mechanisms of the multilateral trading system in order to access different markets and to assist rural communities and LDC Governments in enhancing the value of traditional products by exploiting trading opportunities such as geographical indications (GIs) and facilitating compliance with sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) requirement. In this regard, technical cooperation delivered by UNCTAD is expected to contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, principally Goal 8 (promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all), Goal 10 (Reduce inequality within and among countries, and Goal 17 (Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development). The principle of country ownership drives UNCTAD technical assistance on rules of origin, market access and geographical indications. For all schemes under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP), products exported from a country receiving such preferences must fulfil the rules of origin of the countries granting those preferences.

284. Documenting evidence of compliance with those rules is necessary for products to qualify for preferential tariff treatment. UNCTAD services in support of developing countries and LDCs in this area include (a) providing advice to Governments and the private sector to comply with origin requirements under unilateral Duty-Free and Quota-Free arrangement (DFQF) and contractual trade preferences (Free trade areas and regional trade agreements) and (b) delivering tailor-made technical assistance, such as advisory memorandums on policy options in drafting and negotiating preferential rules of origin under different trading arrangements. UNCTAD also carries out tailored services in providing LDCs with specific training material on market access trade preference made available under DFQF and regional trade agreements.

285. On geographical indications, UNCTAD provides countries with support in identifying products that could be eligible to use geographical indications – signs used on products with a specific geographical origin and possessing qualities or a reputation based on that origin – and in drafting the legal specifications for those products and introducing a branding policy.

Outputs

Building capacity among LDC Group Delegates on Rules of Origin

286. Strengthening multilateralism and the capacity of LDCs to engage in the global trading system is an important aspect of UNCTAD's work. UNCTAD continues to deliver its agreed work programme in support of the LDC Group at the World Trade Organization, which boosts their negotiating capacity and trains Delegates to more effectively participate in multilateral fora.

287. In collaboration with the European University Institute (EUI), an UNCTAD Center of Excellence, UNCTAD strengthened the capacities and assisted the WTO LDC Group delegates in preparation for the 13th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC13). UNCTAD conducts applied research, develops tools and delivers capacity building activities to assist LDC delegates in better participation and leading the work of the WTO Committee on Rules of Origin (CRO).

288. The LDC WTO group requested continued assistance from UNCTAD in terms of preparation of substantive documents and to train delegations to make statements at the sessions of the WTO Committee on Rules of Origin. UNCTAD, in partnership with the Global Governance Programme at the European University Institute, organized from 9 to 12 May 2023, an executive training workshop on negotiating and drafting rules of origin for the LDCs, with the participation of esteemed delegates from various organizations, including WTO, the World Customs Organization (WCO), and the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The event brought together 12 delegates representing the WTO LDC Group, who actively engaged in the workshop's sessions and discussions. Their presence and contributions greatly enriched the overall experience, fostering a collaborative and productive environment. During the workshop, several significant outcomes were achieved. Armed with the knowledge and skills acquired during the UNCTAD workshop, the WTO LDC Group made active contributions to the discussions of the WTO Committee on Rules of Origin on 6 June 2023. The LDC Group presented four significant proposals to the Committee on Rules of Origin, effectively outlining their vision and introducing a work program that aligns with the proven best practices employed by LDCs to enhance market access.

289. A further capacity-building training workshop was held at the European University Institute in Florence, Italy from 3 to 4 October. It focused on the report to the MC13 on rules of origin for LDCs to further strengthen the capacities of delegates to make more effective statements and defend the report at the CRO meeting held on 12 October at the WTO.

290. The [Compendium of Technical Notes II Prepared for the LDC WTO Group on Preferential Rules of Origin](#) has been published on UNCTAD's website and it has also been shared with the WTO LDC group delegates.

Geographical Indications

291. The study on the [Geographical Indication Protection of Mozambique's Cabrito de Tete \(Tete Goat\)](#) was published and is available on UNCTAD's website.

292. Support has been provided through participation in online discussions of the progress made in the implementation of the African Union Continental Strategy for Geographical Indications in Africa.

Specialized databases on trade preference utilization

293. In 2023, UNCTAD maintained a public database to provide detailed data (up to six-digit product-specific data under the Harmonized System (HS)) on interrelated trade statistics, tariff offers and rules of origin under the AfCFTA (available at <https://afcfta.unctad.org>). The database "The integrated trade statistics, tariff offers and rules of origin" aims to boost trade and economic growth. This site contains detailed information on import trends, tariff offers made by member States under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and related rules of origin. More specifically, it

contains data on: Imports by product (imports of a selected AfCFTA member State from an AfCFTA country for a selected product); top import product by country (the top ten products imported by a selected AfCFTA member State from an AfCFTA country in a selected year; and tariffs and rules of origin (tariff offers made by a selected AfCFTA member State for product-specific HS tariff lines as well as related AfCFTA rules of origin). Data are available at chapter (2-digit), heading (4-digit) and sub-heading (6-digit) level of the HS product classification.

294. UNCTAD also maintained its public database to provide detailed data (up to six-digit product-specific data under the Harmonized System) on product-specific utilization rates for the QUAD countries under the Generalized System of Preferences (available at <https://gsp.unctad.org/home>).⁶¹ “The Generalized System of Preferences Database” allows government officials, firms and researchers to retrieve in a user-friendly manner data on GSP utilization rates as well as imports by tariff treatment. The coverage is limited to the QUAD countries for the period 2004–2022. It contains data on utilization by product, top products imported from a beneficiary and utilization by country.

295. **Results and impacts.** As a result of UNCTAD’s support, key stakeholders from LDCs based in Geneva are more informed of the policy issues and challenges facing their countries with regard to rules of origin. The hands-on training and capacity building improved negotiating skills, fortified delegates’ use of evidence-based reasoning and enabled WTO LDC Group delegates to more effectively participate in the Committee on Rules of Origin. They were able to craft statements, hone negotiating tactics and form a more cohesive group perspective. As envisaged in the Bridgetown Covenant, the support of UNCTAD has helped to strengthen and transform multilateralism by raising the ability of LDC delegates to participate more effectively in multilateral trade negotiation processes. It contributed to formulating and negotiating collective positions at the WTO.

B6 Breaking the chains of commodity dependence

Table B6

Breaking the chains of commodity dependence

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
	No project		

296. **Development context.** Commodity dependence negatively affects economic development in different ways. The volatility of commodity prices affects countries’ export revenues, creating macroeconomic instability, and through the latter, affects investment, employment and economic growth. Limited value-added activities hamper economic diversification and industrial development. To ensure that commodities positively contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, it is, therefore, critical to break the chains of commodity dependence. In this regard, strengthening domestic value chains, as well as diversification and value addition are essential for commodity-dependent developing countries to reduce their economic vulnerability resulting from commodity dependence. Diversification and value addition also contribute to better jobs and livelihoods for citizens. UNCTAD assists countries to attain these objectives through its various projects under the umbrella theme of breaking the chains of commodity dependence.

297. **Objectives and features.** In response to requests for assistance, UNCTAD works with countries to evaluate their needs towards realizing the following four main thematic outcomes:

⁶¹ The database covers imports by QUAD countries, namely Canada, European Union, Japan and the USA, from their GSP beneficiaries and DFQF arrangements.

- (a) Developing value added activities in the commodity sector;
- (b) Establishing development linkages between the commodity sector and the wider economy;
- (c) Diversifying to non-commodity activities;
- (d) Integrating into global and regional value chains.

298. Breaking the chains of commodity dependence operates by strengthening the capacity of policymakers and stakeholders in project countries to assess the economic viability of investments and commercial initiatives that contribute to the four thematic outcomes, as well as to formulate evidence-based policies in support of development.

299. **Outputs.** In 2023, UNCTAD reached out to donors and to institutional capacity-building funding sources in order to obtain funding for the implementation of projects, in coordination with partners and based on beneficiary country requests for technical cooperation to UNCTAD.

300. Specifically, UNCTAD elaborated a project proposal on “Developing sustainable product export strategies and boosting traceability for transition to a green, sustainable, and inclusive economy”, which was submitted to the UN Development Account in Oct 2023. The project, a collaborative effort by UNCTAD’s Commodities Branch, Trade and Environment Branch, and Trade and Gender Service, will generate primary data and use this data to map the challenges faced by smallholder farmers, including women, to foster a sustainable arabica coffee value chain for export, including adapting to new trade regulations linked to environmental concerns like deforestation. Based on this detailed technical analysis, the project will work closely with private and public sector stakeholders to produce an action plan for strengthening the coffee value chain for export of the three beneficiary countries and implement capacity-building activities in support of the action plan. This project proposal was approved by the Steering Committee of the Development Account and UNCTAD will finalize the project document, including detailed information on beneficiary countries, by the end of 2024.

301. UNCTAD also elaborated and presented three project proposals in Oct 2023 on digitalization of agriculture in Africa for the Joint SDG Fund Digital Transformation Pathway, focusing on the provision of e-vouchers for fertilizers, as follows:

- (a) A joint proposal with FAO in Mozambique;
- (b) A joint proposal with FAO, IFAD and WFP in Ghana;
- (c) A joint proposal with FAO and UNCDF in Senegal.

302. UNCTAD also prepared a project concept note on “Improving policy coherence, value chain coordination and value addition of cotton by-products in Eastern and Southern Africa”, which was submitted for funding in February 2023 to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Sub-Fund of the United Nations Peace and Development Trust Fund.

303. In February 2024, UNCTAD signed an MOU with SENAI-PE in Brazil on Research and technical cooperation on inclusive economic diversification and energy transition in commodity dependent developing countries through value addition and innovation in commodity supply chains and outside of the commodity sectors. By this MOU, UNCTAD and SENAI-PE will jointly implement a project on economic diversification of the industrial park in the port of SUAPE in Recife.

B9 Sustainable and resilient transport and logistics services

Table B9
Sustainable and resilient transport and logistics services

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
ANG/0T/FBK	European Union–UNCTAD Joint Programme for Angola: Train for Trade II	2017–	European Union
INT/9X/31Y	Introduction of multimodal transport and microcomputer software programmes	1993–	Multi-donors
ROA-2124 (A13)	Towards integrated national financing framework	2021–	Development Account
ROA-2225 (E14)	Sustainable smart ports for African countries, including Small Islands Developing States, to “recover better” from COVID-19	2022–	Development Account

304. **Development context.** The rising occurrences of supply chain shocks and disruptions, driven by factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic, geopolitical risks, extreme weather events, cyber-risks, and freight rate spikes, underscore the critical need for enhanced resilient and sustainable transport and logistics systems. Disruptions and delays affect the performance of interconnected commercial contracts throughout the supply-chain, increase transport and transactions costs, and have far-reaching impacts on trade and sustainable development. Addressing growing environmental challenges, including climate change and marine pollution, is becoming an increasingly important imperative for the maritime industry and policymakers alike, and will be vital for the sustainable development prospects of the most vulnerable groups of countries.

305. Despite a minor contraction in maritime trade volumes in 2022, the sector witnessed a 2.4 per cent rebound in 2023 and is expected to grow above 2 per cent through 2028, highlighting the necessity for the integration of cleaner fuels, digital innovations, and sustainable practices to address ongoing emissions and regulatory challenges. The maritime sector, which facilitates over 80 per cent of global trade volume and accounts for nearly 3 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions, is under increased scrutiny to reduce its environmental footprint in the face of increased emissions and climate change events. At the same time, with climate hazards growing at an alarming rate, the need for effective adaptation of critical maritime transport infrastructure to the impacts of climate change is becoming increasingly urgent. These global challenges disproportionately impact developing countries, including Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS), due to their structural and geographical vulnerabilities.

306. In this context, UNCTAD’s efforts aim to enhance the sustainability and resilience of transport and logistics in developing countries in order to better address current challenges and cope with future crises and disruptions. UNCTAD’s dedication to advancing sustainable transport and logistics policies and solutions is a pivotal element in strengthening global resilience and sustainable development amidst an era of uncertainty.

307. **Objectives and features.** In 2023, UNCTAD continued to implement various technical assistance activities in the field of transport and logistics. Areas of focus included maritime transport (shipping and ports), transport and transit corridors, and cross-cutting issues such as sustainability, resilience, finance, and public-private partnerships (PPPs).

308. With regard to its work on sustainable and resilient freight transport and finance, UNCTAD continued its activities in Angola in the framework of the *EU-UNCTAD Joint*

Programme for Angola: Train for Trade II, under the transport and logistics component. In this context, UNCTAD has conducted an [assessment of Sustainable Freight Transport \(SFT\)](#)⁶² in Angola, including maritime, road, rail, and corridors, as well as links to agri value chain development. The assessment builds on UNCTAD methodology, which consists of quantitative and qualitative assessments that provide a comprehensive analysis of the freight transport sector's present status, performance, opportunities, and challenges within the economic, social, and environmental pillars of sustainable development in the freight transport sector. In addition, an SFT assessment for Fiji has been initiated as part of the *United Nations Development Account (UNDA) project "Promoting a shift towards sustainable freight transport in the Asia-Pacific region"*⁶³ implemented by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). The SFT assessment for Fiji, focuses on maritime and road transport as the primary modes of freight transport in Fiji.

309. In the area of sustainable ports, UNCTAD continued the implementation of the *UNDA project on Sustainable Smart Ports (SSP) for African countries, including Small Island Developing States, to "recover better" from COVID-19*⁶⁴, involving Morocco, Ghana and Mauritius. The project includes the development of a diagnostic/assessment methodology that will serve as the basis for assessing the SSP status of ports. The methodology will assess the potential for port energy transition, which includes the production and consumption of renewable energy at the port level (facilities and operations), as well as the capacity of ports to supply and distribute renewable energy for ship bunkering, and will support the implementation of selected key recommendations and priority actions resulting from the UNCTAD SSP assessments as part of the project's capacity building activities. In addition, UNCTAD continued its collaboration with the Korea Maritime Institute (KMI) under the project on *Global Port Infrastructure Sufficiency Index (PISI)*, which is supported by the Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries of the Republic of Korea. The PISI is a proposed port performance indicator articulated around three main components: Punctuality, Safety and Security, and Digitalization.

310. As part of its work in transport infrastructure finance, UNCTAD is implementing a *UNDA project entitled "Towards an Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF)"*, which aims to assist selected countries in mobilizing and aligning financing with national sustainable development priorities. The project is coordinated by UNDESA and implemented by UNCTAD together with the five regional economic commissions. As part of the project, UNCTAD is conducting capacity-building workshops on public-private partnerships (PPPs) in Zambia, with a focus on the transport sector. UNCTAD has developed a practical approach to help countries strengthen their institutional capacity to develop well-prepared and sustainable PPPs, particularly for transport and logistics infrastructure projects. This approach builds on best practices, case studies and state-of-the-art tools to support project screening, evaluation and preparation, and consists of a tailored and practical training programme that provides decision-makers, policymakers and technical staff involved in infrastructure projects with a very practical view of how to structure, contract and manage PPP contracts at both the project and process levels.

311. UNCTAD continued to provide advice and policy guidance in response to emerging contexts and requests received from various entities, including on the disruptions of the Black Sea, Panama Canal and Red Sea and their impact on maritime trade and shipping routes and implications for maritime trade logistics, decarbonization of shipping, sustainable and resilient freight transport, connectivity, transport costs, transport infrastructure finance, corridors, dry ports and transit. UNCTAD also continued to provide technical advice and assistance on the legal framework for international shipping and maritime law; the implications of COVID-19 for commercial contracts for the carriage of goods by sea and sale of goods; seafarers issues; competition law issues and the UNCTAD

⁶² <https://unctad.org/meeting/sustainable-freight-transport-national-assessment-angola>.

⁶³ <https://unctad.org/meeting/sustainable-freight-transport-national-assessment-fiji>.

⁶⁴ <https://unctad.org/project/sustainable-smart-ports-african-countries-including-small-island-developing-states-recover>.

Code of Conduct for Liner Conferences; as well as issues relevant to ship-source pollution and related environmental challenges. Where appropriate, the technical assistance provided draws on synergies and cooperation with various partners, including United Nations entities such as the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), UNECA, UNESCAP, UNESCWA, UNECE, UNECLAC, UNOHRLLS, the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the International Maritime Organization (IMO). In addition, UNCTAD works with United Nations country teams and Resident Coordinator Offices, as well as regional organizations such as the African Union, port associations, and multilateral and development banks. By leveraging these partnerships, UNCTAD is able to provide comprehensive and effective technical assistance in support of sustainable development in the transport and logistics sector.

312. **Outputs.** As part of the *EU-UNCTAD Joint Programme for Angola: Train for Trade II*, a report on the SFT assessment in Angola is being prepared for validation and publication in 2024. The SFT assessment conducted for Fiji under the UNDA “*Promoting a shift towards sustainable freight transport in the Asia-Pacific region*” is also scheduled for publication in 2024. These publications represent a key step forward in the effort to promote sustainable freight transport strategies within these regions.

313. As to the *UNDA project entitled “Towards an Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF)”*, a series of back-to-back capacity-building workshops on PPPs in Zambia were held from 12 to 16 February 2024 in collaboration with UNECA and Zambia Ministry of Planning and Finance. A total of 73 participants from 32 institutions attended the first workshop - 30 women (41 per cent) and 43 men (59 per cent) and 56 participants from 24 institutions attended the second workshop - 21 women (38 per cent) and 35 men (62 per cent).

314. Under the *UNDA SSP project*, an expert meeting⁶⁵ was held in September 2023 to validate the SSP methodology developed by UNCTAD, and a webinar on “[Sustainable smart ports for Africa: leveraging the energy transition for improved port performance](#)”⁶⁶ was held in December 2023 to raise awareness and improve understanding of the concept of Sustainable Smart Ports (SSP), its relevance and cross-sectoral policies and measures that promote SSP principles.

315. Under the framework of the *PISI project*, a [report](#) was published setting out the main findings of Phase 2 of the PISI project. Under Phase 2, the PISI concept was piloted across selected world container port terminals. The piloting of the PISI relied on two distinct data and maritime intelligence sources, namely 1) the Automated Identification System data (AIS) on vessel port calls and time spent in ports and, 2) a survey questionnaire elaborated by KMI in collaboration with UNCTAD, the International Association of Ports and Harbors (IAPH) and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP).⁶⁷

316. In 2023, UNCTAD continued to monitor and report on relevant developments in the transport sector, namely the maritime sector. This includes UNCTAD maritime data set⁶⁸, maritime country profile⁶⁹, policy briefs such as an equitable and just transition to low-carbon shipping,⁷⁰ as well as developments reflected in the annual *Review of Maritime Transport*⁷¹.

⁶⁵ <https://unctad.org/meeting/expert-meeting-review-methodology-assess-smart-and-sustainable-ssp-status-ports>.

⁶⁶ <https://unctad.org/meeting/webinar-sustainable-smart-ports-africa-leveraging-energy-transition-improved-port>.

⁶⁷ https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/tcsdtlinf2023d2_en.pdf.

⁶⁸ <https://unctadstat.unctad.org/datacentre/>

⁶⁹ <https://unctadstat.unctad.org/CountryProfile/MaritimeProfile/en-GB/004/index.html>.

⁷⁰ UNCTAD Policy Brief No. 112: An equitable and just transition to low-carbon shipping

⁷¹ <https://unctad.org/rmt>.

317. Under the international commercial transport and trade law component of the UNDA project on *Transport and trade connectivity in the age of pandemics*,⁷² a further analytical report was published in 2023 (“COVID-19 and International Sale of Goods: Contractual devices for commercial risk allocation and loss prevention”). Building on insights from earlier work under the project, it offers advice and guidance on commercial risk allocation through the use of suitably drafted contractual clauses - including latest standard form clauses developed by Industry Associations, together with recommendations for commercial parties and considerations for policymakers. Relevant recommendations and policy considerations have also informed expert deliberations at the 2023 Multi-Year Expert Meeting on Transport, Trade Logistics and Trade Facilitation, held in July 2023, and are also reflected in Chapter 7 of the Review of Maritime Transport 2023 which presents among others important regulatory developments relating to electronic bills of lading and other digital trade documents which are expected to reduce the potential for delay in ports.

318. In 2023, drawing on UNCTAD’s mandate and longstanding work on climate change adaptation for seaports, including a 2022 Policy Brief “Climate-resilience of seaports: Adequate finance is critical for developing countries but remains a major challenge”, UNCTAD continued to provide related technical advice and assistance, highlighting the urgent need for considerably scaling up of capacity-building as well as finance for infrastructure adaptation in developing countries, including in the form of grants, rather than loans, as noted in para. 87 of the Bridgetown Covenant. Relevant contributions to publications and technical reports included: 2023 GAR Special Report on Mapping Resilience for the SDGs published by the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR);⁷³ as well as the UN Global Compact Practical Guidance for Ports;⁷⁴ and Framework for Developing Just and Inclusive Green Shipping Corridors,⁷⁵ which were both launched at the COP 28. Active technical contributions to international meetings and Conferences included: the 6th UNFCCC workshop on the Global Goal on Adaptation; 2023 International Conference on Disaster Resilient Infrastructure; Santander Port Week; 2023 FAO Science and Innovation Forum; German Association of Maritime Law 125th anniversary event; Kuehne Foundation Climate change adaptation logistics workshop; and DESA/UNECE Expert Group Meeting on Sustainable Transport. UNCTAD also continued its collaboration with relevant ongoing initiatives, including the Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action and UNECE Expert Group on Climate Change Adaptation for Inland Transport; and co-organized several related official side-events at the UNFCCC COP 28 and 2023 Bonn Climate Change Conference (SB58).⁷⁶ Important areas for UNCTAD interdivisional cooperation in 2023 included contributions to the 2023 SDG Pulse,⁷⁷ and analytical work on the legal and regulatory framework for emissions from fishing vessels as part of a joint report (DITC/DTL) on “Energy transition of fishing fleets: Opportunities and challenges for developing countries”, which was first launched at COP 28 and published in 2024.⁷⁸

319. Other collaborative efforts where UNCTAD continued its active contribution and provided appropriate technical advice and assistance include the UN-Oceans and UN-DRR interagency initiatives and regulatory efforts under the auspices of the IMO Legal Committee to combat fraudulent ship registries/registration, including preparation (jointly

⁷² <https://unttc.org/stream/key-international-commercial-law-implications>

⁷³ GAR stands for Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction. The report is available at <https://www.undrr.org/gar/gar2023-special-report/>.

⁷⁴ <https://ungc-communications-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/docs/publications/UNGC-Practical-Guidance-Ports.pdf>

⁷⁵ https://cms.zerocarbonshipping.com/media/uploads/documents/Green-Corridors_2.pdf.

⁷⁶ Coordinating for greater ocean-based climate change ambition: A UN-Oceans perspective. Available at <https://unctad.org/meeting/cop28-side-event-coordinating-greater-ocean-based-climate-change-ambition-un-oceans>. Bonn Climate Change Conference (SB58) side event: Options for Scaling Climate Finance – Exploring Article 2.1c, the NCQG and JETPs. Available at <https://unctad.org/meeting/bonn-climate-change-conference-sb58-side-event-options-scaling-climate-finance-exploring>.

⁷⁷ <https://sdgpulse.unctad.org/sustainable-transport/>.

⁷⁸ https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ditcted2023d5_en.pdf

with WMU and IMLI) of an analytical study for consideration by the Committee at its 111th session in 2024; as well as UNCITRAL work towards the development of an international legal instrument on negotiable cargo documents.

320. **Results and impacts.** The delivery of technical assistance, along with the dissemination of valuable information, insights, data, guidance materials and tools, proved to be both timely and essential in assisting policymakers and stakeholders in developing countries to enhance their capacity to address current transport and logistics challenges and to formulate and implement effective policies and solutions.

321. Following targeted workshops on public-private partnerships (PPPs) in Zambia, both the Government of Zambia and the PPP Council of Ministers expressed a strong interest in receiving further technical assistance. This request underscores the recognized value and impact of the initial support and highlights a growing desire among participants for continued engagement and a deeper understanding of the importance of well-designed and implemented PPPs in supporting sustainable infrastructure development. In addition, a Phase 3 of the Global Port Infrastructure Sufficiency Index (PISI) is being developed with KMI to support further development and improvement of the index. As a result of UNCTAD's technical assistance activities in Angola on PPPs, the Agence Française de Développement⁷⁹ (AFD) supported the request of the Angolan government to fund the implementation of the SOURCE platform, a multilateral platform for the preparation and management of infrastructure projects for PPPs, customized to Angolan legislation. In addition, there has been increased interest and requests from various countries for further support and assistance in moving their transport sectors towards greater sustainability and resilience, including the conduct of Sustainable System Performance (SSP) assessments.

322. Technical advice and guidance on key transport law and policy issues, has helped to improve the relevant knowledge base of a broad range of public and private stakeholders and has informed intergovernmental deliberations under the auspices of the IMO, UNFCCC, UNECE and UNCITRAL, as well as expert discussions in different fora. Relevant technical advice and related recommendations are reflected in substantive contributions to a number of publications and technical and analytical reports.

B99 Other

Table B99

Other

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
<i>Division on Globalization and Development Strategies</i>			
PSE/OT/GAA	Assessment of the economic costs of the Israeli occupation for the Palestinian people	2020–	Saudi Arabia
INT/OT/MAP	G77 - Development Priorities for a Climate-Resilient Financial System at COP28	2023–	Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors Inc.
ROA-2225 (D14)	Mobilizing external financial resources beyond COVID-19 for greener, more equal and sustainable development in selected vulnerable SIDS in Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean	2022–	Development Account

⁷⁹ French Development Agency in English.

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
<i>Division for Africa, Least Developed Countries and Special Programmes</i>			
ANG/0T/FBK	European Union–UNCTAD Joint Programme for Angola: Train for Trade II	2017–	European Union
HAI/0T/JAO	Haiti SDGs: Policy and Financing Options	2020–	One United Nations Fund
HAI/0T/LAU	Policy-Development Emergency FFF (SDG-F Emergency Call)	2022–	One United Nations Fund
INT/0T/IAH	Finding Opportunities for Niche Commodities from DC in Health Food Markets	2021–	Common Fund for Commodities
RAF/0T/JBS	Developing Integrated Programmes to Alleviate Binding Constraints to Development by Fostering Structural Transformation, Building Productive Capacities and Enhancing Investment Opportunities and Linkages with China	2021–	2030 Agenda PDF Sub-Fund
ROA-2023 (E12)	Coherent strategies for productive capacity development in African Least Developed Countries	2020–	Development Account

1. Assistance to the Palestinian people

323. **Development context.** The already fragile socioeconomic conditions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory deteriorated, during 2022 and 2023, as a result of worsening political tensions, the military confrontation in Gaza and security crises that affected all regions, the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Restrictions on investment and the movement of Palestinian people and goods persisted, with unilateral fiscal deductions by the occupying Power and the further loss of land and natural resources to settlements. As the economy continued to operate well below potential, other persistent challenges intensified, including deepening dependency on the economy of the occupying power, inflation, poverty, shrinking fiscal space, a decline in foreign aid and the build-up of public and private debt. With heightened political tensions and a long-stalled peace process, the two years were some of the worst years for Palestinians in recent history.

324. The latest Israeli military operation in Gaza, ongoing since 7 October 2023, and the newly introduced measures and restrictions in the West Bank set the Palestinian economy further back and impede its return to pre-pandemic levels. UNCTAD's (2024) preliminary assessment of the impact of the Israeli military operation in Gaza estimated the resulting GDP loss, recovery timelines under different scenarios and the enduring effects on poverty and household expenditure. The assessment paints a daunting picture of the development challenges ahead for both the Palestinian people and the international community.

325. The above-mentioned military operation has so far displaced 85 per cent of Gaza's population, halted economic activities and further worsened poverty and unemployment. As of December 2023, 37,379 buildings – equivalent to 18 per cent of the Gaza Strip's total structures – have been damaged or destroyed by the military operation. The Gaza Strip, half of whose population are children, is now rendered almost uninhabitable, with people lacking sources of income and access to water, sanitation, health or education.

326. UNCTAD (2024) estimates that Gaza's economy had already contracted by 4.5 per cent in the first three quarters of 2023. However, the military operation greatly accelerated this decline, resulting in a 24 per cent contraction of GDP and a 26.1 per cent

drop in GDP per capita for the entire year. Since October 2023, unemployment surged to 79.3 per cent in Gaza and almost tripled in the West Bank from 13 per cent as Israel imposed restrictions on Palestinian workers previously employed in Israel and settlements.

327. If the current military operation were to end by January 2024, with reconstruction starting right away, and the 2007–2022 growth trends were to persist at an average growth rate of 0.4 per cent, it would take Gaza until 2092 just to restore the GDP levels of 2022. However, even with the most optimistic scenario that GDP could grow at 10 per cent annually, it would still take Gaza's GDP per capita until 2035 to return to its pre-blockade level of 2006.

328. The Paris Protocol establishes the framework that shapes Palestinian economic reality. The customs union, de facto monetary union and fiscal arrangements enshrined in the Protocol tie the Palestinian economy to that of Israel, cultivating conditions of significant dependency and vulnerability.

329. The restrictions imposed under occupation on Palestinian trade inflate costs and serve as significant non-tariff barriers. They erode the competitiveness of Palestinian exports; with the average trade cost per transaction for a Palestinian firm nearly three times as high as for an Israeli firm and the average duration of the import process nearly four times as long compared to an Israeli firm. In addition, the restrictions and closures, in effect since 2007, have severed the trade links of Gaza with the West Bank, East Jerusalem and regional and global markets. The barriers to trade with the rest of the world create an uneven dependency on Israel as the dominant trading partner. In 2022, Israel accounted for 72 per cent of total Palestinian trade, and the bilateral trade deficit with Israel reached \$5.3 billion, or 28 per cent of Palestinian GDP.

330. Occupation implies that the Palestinian economy is incorporated into the more advanced economy of Israel, with the new Israeli shekel as the main currency in circulation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Geographical proximity, the customs union and the de facto "currency union" combine to tie prices and costs with those in Israel despite the significant difference in income, whereby the average Palestinian earns 8 cents for every dollar earned by an Israeli citizen.

331. UNCTAD warned repeatedly that the overreliance on precarious employment in Israel and settlements exposes the Palestinian economy to shocks in an environment characterized by frequent political tensions and security crises. In addition, it decouples domestic wages from productivity growth, undermines competitiveness and stunts the tradable goods sector.

332. Since its formation in 1994, the Palestinian Government has been operating within an extremely narrow policy space, and has been tasked with managing economic, political and social responsibilities far greater than the economic and political resources at its disposal.

333. Since November 2021, the Palestinian Government has been paying partial salaries to public sector employees, ranging between 75 and 85 per cent of monthly salaries. Salary cuts have pushed public employees to borrow from banks and informal sources. By mid-2022, 43 per cent of households in the West Bank and 83 per cent in Gaza declared a burden of incurred debt.

334. **Objectives and features.** The UNCTAD programme of assistance to the Palestinian people responds to paragraph 127 (bb) of the Bridgetown Covenant, which requests UNCTAD to "continue to assess the economic development prospects of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and examine economic costs of the occupation and obstacles to trade and development... with a view to alleviating the adverse economic and social conditions imposed on the Palestinian people". Furthermore, the United Nations General Assembly, in eight resolutions (69/20, 70/12, 71/20, 72/13, 73/18, 74/10, 75/20 and 77/22), requests UNCTAD to report to the General Assembly on the economic costs of the Israeli occupation for the Palestinian people.

335. For over three and a half decades, UNCTAD has been supporting the Palestinian people through policy-oriented research, the implementation of capacity-building and

technical cooperation projects, the provision of advisory services and the promotion of international consensus on the needs of the Palestinian people and their economy.

336. The UNCTAD programme, which aims to build and strengthen the institutional capacities of the Palestinian public and private sectors, addresses the constraints to and emerging needs of the Palestinian economy through the following four clusters:

- (a) Trade and macroeconomic policies and development strategies;
- (b) Trade facilitation and logistics;
- (c) Finance and development;
- (d) Enterprise, investment and competition policy.

337. **Outputs and results.** In 2023, UNCTAD continued its support to the Palestinian people in coordination with the Government of the State of Palestine, Palestinian civil society, international organizations, donors and the United Nations country team, with the goal of reviving the war-torn economy and pursuing the Sustainable Development Goals. The programme continued its ongoing support for the Palestinian people despite adverse and increasingly difficult field conditions.

338. In October 2022, UNCTAD signed a grant agreement with the Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS), which will serve as UNCTAD local partner.⁸⁰ MAS, among other deliverables, worked with UNCTAD to update the latter's macro-econometric model and train Palestinian government staff and researchers on the structure and the use of UNCTAD's quantitative framework ISFII.

339. In May 2023, UNCTAD's macro-econometric model was updated and UNCTAD, in collaboration with MAS, trained Palestinian researchers and officials - from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, the Palestinian Monetary authority, Ministry of Finance and Planning and MAS - on using the updated macroeconomic model.

340. In response to the above-mentioned General Assembly resolutions, in 2023, UNCTAD submitted a report (A/78/303) to the General Assembly entitled "Economic costs of the Israeli occupation for the Palestinian people: The welfare cost of the fragmentation of the occupied West Bank". The report focused on the economic cost of the Israeli occupation of Area C, which accounts for about 60 per cent of the total area of the occupied West Bank. It estimated the cost of the additional restrictions on economic activities in Area C on household welfare.

341. In November 2023, UNCTAD provided advisory services to MAS through a series of online meetings on assessing the impact of the Israeli military operation in Gaza on the Palestinian economy.

342. In late 2020, UNCTAD received a grant from the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to sustain UNCTAD's professional capacity required for supporting the Palestinian people's efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The grant funded a project that provided systematic, evidence-based assessments of the economic cost of the occupation for the Palestinian people. The goal of the project is to facilitate future negotiations towards achieving a just and lasting peace in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the Middle East. The project ended on June 30th, 2023.

2. Productive capacity-building in vulnerable economies

2.1. *Finding opportunities for niche commodities from developing countries in health food markets*

343. **Development context.** For several decades structurally weak and vulnerable economies including landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and Least Developed

⁸⁰ MAS specializes in applied economic research and social policies and has a well-established capacity and knowledge of the Palestinian economy, its unique context, its constraints and data sources, as well as access to leading domestic and international experts.

Countries (LDCs) have not been able to take full advantage of global trade opportunities and improved market access conditions. This is partly due to their weak productive and supply capacities, and partly due to their weak trade policy formulation and implementation capacities. Beyond domestic constraints, market entry barriers such as non-tariff measures remain hindrances to enhancing their export opportunities. This is despite the fact that many of them, particularly LDCs, enjoy preferential market access for their exports to major developed country markets particularly in the European Union. Furthermore, geographical challenges such as remoteness from regional and international markets, high cost of transportation and lack of transit-transport systems are detrimental to export competitiveness and development of landlocked developing countries. In some cases, beyond the domestic challenges, regional integration processes have also created complex rules of origin especially in Africa, resulting in trade loss and high transactions costs. Furthermore, many LLDCs and LDCs remain dependent on primary commodities for most of their export revenue, rendering them highly vulnerable to external shocks. Their persistent underdevelopment and in many cases, long term decline, illustrates how trade could not uplift these countries' socio-economic conditions. This also indicates the complexity and inter-related nature of the challenges, which undermine the potential and national policy efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

344. The COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 has further exacerbated these development obstacles. The lack of productive capacities particularly in LDCs undermined their ability to respond to the coronavirus disease both in terms of the health response and in terms of building socioeconomic resilience. Furthermore, their vulnerability to external shocks amplified the impact of the fall in commodity prices. In this way, the coronavirus pandemic has demonstrated the need to diversify the economy and build productive capacities. This project aims to support these goals by exploring the potential of new products.

345. There is significant potential for horizontal diversification in many of these countries in producing and exporting new and dynamic products, such as health-enhancing foods. In 2020 it was decided to enlarge the scope of this project to include bioprospecting, i.e. the exploration of biodiversity for commercially valuable genetic and biochemical resources. If fully exploited such a potential could help LLDCs and LDCs, as well as SIDS, to maximize the benefits from international trade, build export competitiveness and join the group of successful exporters.

346. Against this background, this project intends to help: (a) to identify export potential and competitiveness of a number of structurally weak and vulnerable economies in health-enhancing specialty foods; (b) to map the new and dynamic products as well as export potential with market opportunities, primarily in the European Union; and (c) to build regulatory and institutional capacities of the selected countries to monitor and certify conformity with specialty food standards.

347. **Objectives.** The project aims to build the capacities of selected landlocked developing countries and least developed countries to foster productive capacities and diversify their exports by identifying and harnessing the export potential of health food commodities and nutraceuticals, as well as of bioprospecting. The project draws on global and national studies of the potential of selected LLDCs, some of which are also LDCs, in developing the health food or nutraceutical sector, as well as bioprospecting, and potential export markets. In addition, the project aims to identify the principal obstacles to the development and expansion of exports in these sectors and propose policies and measures to address them. In this way, the project assists policymakers from selected countries in designing and implementing policies to build productive capacities, expand and diversify their exports, and achieve structural transformation.

348. **Outputs and results.** In 2023, UNCTAD and the Common Fund for Commodities (CFC) organized a joint side-event at the LDC5 Conference, held in Doha, Qatar, from 5 to 9 March 2023. The side event, entitled "Productive Capacities and Impact Investing in LDCs: The Case of Nutraceuticals" aimed to raise awareness about the role of productive capacities and export diversification in development, and outlined concrete investment instruments (impact investment) as well as sectors with unexploited potential for value-added and export diversification, such as the nutraceuticals. It drew on the UNCTAD-

CFC report “Harnessing the potential of nutraceutical products for export diversification and development in landlocked developing countries: Assessment of Comparative Advantages and Binding Constraints”. The publication reviewed the potential of three nutraceutical products in each of six LLDCs (i.e. Azerbaijan, Bhutan, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, and Nepal), three of which are currently also LDCs, and identified policies and measures required to increase exports and strengthen the value added in their production. The publication also identified relevant standards to be met by nutraceuticals exports of developing countries in key export markets.

2.2. *Coherent strategies for productive capacity development in selected African least developed countries*

349. **Development context.** UNCTAD implemented a 12th Tranche Development Account project entitled “Coherent strategies for productive capacity development in African least developed countries” with Burkina Faso, Rwanda, and Tanzania as beneficiaries. The project was implemented over the period 2020–2023. The three beneficiary countries had a strong commitment to fostering sustained growth, creating decent jobs, and building resilience to shocks through developing productive capacities and transforming the structure of their economies from low to high productivity activities. While some progress had been made over the past few decades, manufacturing continued to play a relatively small role in these economies both in terms of its share of output and contribution to exports.

350. Although the governments of the beneficiary countries understood the importance of productive capacities and the crucial role of trade and industrial policies in fostering them, there was an urgent need for an operational strategy on how to build such capacities in African LDCs. Existing strategic frameworks to develop productive capacities tended to be fragmented, ad hoc and hard to operationalize at the country level. In addition, there tended to be more focus on building new capacities and less on how to maintain and make better use of existing capacities. In this context, there was a dire need for a more holistic and coherent approach to productive capacity development that struck a good balance between the need to build and utilize existing capacities. The project sought to strengthen the capacities of beneficiary countries to formulate and implement such holistic and coherent strategies to develop and utilize productive capacities to enhance their prospects of meeting the Sustainable Development Goals. More specifically, the project was expected to contribute to Goal 8 (promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all) and Goal 9 (build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation).

351. **Objectives.** The main objective of the project is to strengthen the capacities of beneficiary countries to build, utilize and maintain productive capacities to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

352. **Outputs.** In 2023, the main deliverables under the project were two study tours to special economic zones (SEZs) and Industrial Parks (IPs) organized by UNCTAD in collaboration with Morocco and Mauritius as host countries. The first study tour to an agricultural industrial park (AGROPOLIS) in Meknes, Morocco, was held on 23–25 May 2023, and was specifically meant for selected francophone African countries, namely Burkina Faso, Mali, Morocco, and Madagascar. The second study tour to Mauritius was held on 10–12 October 2023 and was for selected anglophone African countries, namely: Botswana, Rwanda, Tanzania, Mauritius, and Zimbabwe. The study tours involved visits to industrial parks and selected domestic manufacturing firms followed by a seminar on special economic zones which permitted participants to share experiences in designing and managing special economic zones at the national level. In an evaluation conducted at the end of the second study tour, 81.3 per cent of the participants rated the event as excellent, and 100 per cent indicated that the lessons learned from the event would be useful in improving the design and operation of special economic zones in their countries. In addition, 100 per cent of the participants either agreed or strongly agreed that the subject matter was timely and relevant. Through these study tours and seminars, 42 people were trained.

353. **Results and impacts.** The project enhanced the capacities of beneficiary countries to formulate and implement coherent policies geared towards developing productive capacities. About 444 officials and experts were trained during the period of implementation of the project, of which 33 per cent were females. In surveys conducted at the national workshops, participants provided very positive feedback on the training received. In addition, more than 80 per cent of the participants surveyed indicated that the events improved their ability to formulate quality policies and strategies aimed at enhancing productive capacities and structural transformation.

354. The project also contributed to ongoing reviews of trade and industrial development strategies in the beneficiary countries. It provided beneficiary countries with useful inputs on how to strengthen inter-ministerial collaboration and public-private dialogue with a view to enhancing policy coherence and facilitating economic transformation.

355. One of the main lessons learned from the implementation of project is the need to have interconnected implementation strategies to enhance the likelihood of achieving desired outcomes. In the project, we had background or diagnostic studies, national workshops, and regional workshops. These were complemented with study tours to provide participants with practical knowledge and exposure on how the various instruments discussed at the workshops have been implemented in specific contexts. During project implementation, we observed that the study tours were one of the popular activities for the participants. In this regard, in future projects, it would be desirable to integrate study tours into project design and implementation to enhance project delivery and results.

2.3. *European Union–UNCTAD Joint Programme for Angola: Train for Trade II*

356. **Development context.** Angola is an LDC whose economy – while having grown fast in the previous decades – is characterized by overdependence on extractive sectors, weak productive capacities and lack of structural economic transformation. The COVID-19 pandemic and mounting geopolitical tensions further deepened and exacerbated the country's trade and development challenges.

357. In 2022, Angola had a GDP of 106,8 billion, up from \$67.4 billion in 2021, while significantly below the peak in 2014. This can be partially attributed to a collapse in international oil demand and prices (the country's main export) and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Nonetheless, Angola is among the top ten economies in sub-Saharan Africa, and a GDP growth rate of 3 per cent was recorded in 2022, driven by a recovery of the oil sector. At the same time, agriculture and fisheries grew almost 4 per cent and the services sector recovered to pre-COVID-19 levels in 2022. In 2023, Angola became again the second largest exporter of oil in Africa, behind Nigeria, which it had surpassed temporarily in 2022. On the other hand, while the diversification trend is positive with a growth in non-oil exports in real terms since 2016, the country's economy-wide productive capacities remain below the average for LDCs. Furthermore, FDI in Angola has been especially volatile since 2013, following a downward trend and predominantly linked to the petroleum industry. Key gaps and bottlenecks in the investment climate persist, including a complex system for FDI entry and establishment, burdensome operational regulations, persistence of restrictive business practices and a lack of institutional capacity and coordination.

358. In 2022, the population of Angola was expected to reach 33'086'278 people. Despite an increase of GDP in 2022, poverty and inequality among its population remain pervasive. In 2018, 78 per cent of the population was living on \$6.85 or less per day, and around a third of the population was living at or below the international poverty line. Further, in terms of human development, Angola ranks 149th among 191 countries and is categorized in the lower end of the medium human development range.

359. Based on its score on UNCTAD Productive Capacities Index (PCI), Angola ranks 172nd globally with an overall PCI score of 29.2. In comparison with the LDC group of countries, Angola ranked below their average (30.9) globally, while ahead of African LDCs (27.6), and far behind other developing economies' average (43.4). There are differences in performances in Angola between the eight different PCI categories. While the PCI is relatively high for energy, it is still lower than the LDC average for structural

change, natural capital, human capital, ICT, transport, the private sector and institutions. The country's score in the human capital category has been steadily increasing, but Angola still performs below its peers. While the natural capital category is overall high performing, it has fallen behind the LDC average and stagnated since 2015.

360. **Objectives and features.** UNCTAD implemented the cross-divisional EU-UNCTAD Joint Programme for Angola from 2017 to 2023, with the objective of supporting Angola to foster productive capacities and structural transformation, including diversification, and help the country link to global and regional value chains through training, technical advice and support to policy development and implementation.

361. The Programme supported Angola in its efforts towards structural transformation, identification of potential non-oil export products and diversification of the economy as well as integration into the regional and global economy. It provided training, capacity building and advisory activities, as well as knowledge sharing and study tour opportunities for Angolan stakeholders.

362. Train for Trade II aimed to improve the capacity of Angola in policy formulation and implementation, which was expected to directly contribute to economic growth, diversification of the economy, job creation, poverty reduction, and improved living conditions for the population. It also aimed to ensure equal opportunities for women and young people. In collaboration with the national coordinating entity Ministry of Industry and Commerce (MINDCOM), the Train for Trade II Programme worked with various ministries, agencies, private sector entities and non-governmental organizations at the national level.

363. The Programme consisted of seven components, including (a) commercial diplomacy; (b) creative economy; (c) Empretec entrepreneurship training and entrepreneurship policy development; (d) national green export review; (e) green exports; (f) trade facilitation; and (g) transport and logistics components.

364. **Outputs.** Research and training materials developed under the Programme in 2023 include a Conceptual Guide to develop a National Honey Policy and a Honey Residue Monitoring Plan; a Sustainability Integration Framework for Institutional Investors; and a Mapping of the Cultural and Creative Industries in Angola.

365. Various additional policy support processes were finalized in 2023, including a National Entrepreneurship Strategy Review, providing the basis for a National Entrepreneurship Strategy of Angola; a Draft Strategy for the Cultural and Creative Industries in Angola; a Trade Facilitation Roadmap; Gaps Assessments of the National Quality Infrastructure in the fisheries, tropical fruits and coffee sectors; a Sustainable Freight Transport (SFT) Rapid Assessment; and a national position paper on the fisheries and aquaculture development and exports strategy.

366. Capacity building trainings in Angola in 2023 covered the following areas: trade in services; National Entrepreneurship Strategy development; trade facilitation (launch of the Roadmap and two trainings of trainers); National Quality Infrastructure – focusing on the National Quality Policy and on gaps and action plans for the National Quality Infrastructure in the fisheries, tropical fruits and coffee sectors; adding value sustainably to fisheries and aquaculture products for exports, implemented in triangular and south-south collaboration format with the Nha Trang University of Viet Nam; English for Trade and Investment Negotiators, implemented in collaboration with the National School of Commerce (Escola Nacional de Comércio, ENCO); Intellectual Property Rights in cultural and creative industries, meetings to draft and launch the Cultural and Creative Industries mapping and draft strategy; technical assistance sessions to draft the Honey Residue Monitoring Plan; developing sustainable value chains for citrus fruits; and trade remedies and safeguard measures (with a study visit to South Africa).

367. The Programme collaborated closely with various international organizations and UNCTAD's Centres of Excellence (CoE). In this regard, for instance, UNCTAD collaborated with UNCTAD's CoE in Viet Nam, the Nha Trang University, the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), and Marine Stewardship Council

(MSC) for the workshops on the National Quality Infrastructure and Adding Value to Fisheries and Aquaculture Products for Exports.

368. In May 2023, a meeting of the project ministerial-level Steering Committee was held where UNCTAD presented the results achieved by the Programme, challenges, lessons learned, and recommendations, and discussions were held with a view to the necessity to continue and expand the Programme in its next phase, foreseen to start in 2025. Further, the Programme's groundbreaking results were presented in a dedicated side event during the LDC-5 Conference in Doha, Qatar, in March 2023, and in conjunction with the launch of the UN Secretary General's High Impact Initiative Transforming4Trade: Paradigm Shift to boost Economic Development in the margins of the UN General Assembly's 78th session in New York in September 2023.

369. **Results and impacts.** The EU-UNCTAD Programme for Angola has, to date, built the capacities of 3,301 Angolans (34 per cent female) from public sector (49 per cent), private sector (39 per cent), academia (5 per cent), NGOs (4 per cent) and others. Out of these, 747 were trained in 2023, where 31 training activities and action-oriented research on green and creative value chains and sustainable legal and policy frameworks guiding the transition were undertaken. Seventy-three trainers were trained, out of which 37 received continuous training in 2023, in entrepreneurship, apiculture sector development, identification of green sectors for diversification, trade facilitation and Non-Trade Measures.

370. National institutions have been supported to lead training programmes and policy development processes. Policy support has been provided through 15 policy and legislative reviews and technical advice to policy development and policy influence. The Programme has helped to map value chains of eight promising green products and support their development towards exportability. Eighty-five per cent of entrepreneurs trained through Empretec report on increased revenues, and a 72 per cent yearly gross evolution in job creation in Empretec-trained enterprises in Angola is observed. Support was provided to develop PPP projects for financing transport and logistics infrastructure for green sectors' development and for the country to move towards more organized, evidence-based trade and investment policies.

371. More importantly, UNCTAD's work in Angola has contributed to improved policy coordination, formulation and implementation by bringing 23 ministries and public and private institutions to work together. It has also enabled all relevant UNCTAD's divisions and experts to deliver as one on several areas of trade and development that are of interest to Angola.

372. The Programme has helped to draft better policies⁸¹ and assisted in their implementation, as well as trained entrepreneurs to reap the newly upcoming opportunities. It has successfully handed over the management of the Empretec entrepreneurship training programme to a national private sector association now functioning as the Empretec Host Institution in the country. At the impact level, the exports of non-oil products of Angola have grown since 2016 in real terms. The Programme was selected as a global success story in SDG implementation in 2022, and provides the basis for the UN Secretary General's High Impact Initiative - Transforming4Trade: Paradigm Shift to boost Economic Development.

2.4. *Developing programmes to build productive capacities and enhance linkages with China*

373. **Development context.** Many African countries face significant development challenges and have often been unable to harness their economic growth for broader development. Low levels of education and health services, inadequate transport, energy and ICT infrastructure, weak institutions and conflict are some of the challenging factors for many African countries. Furthermore, their dependence on the exports of few commodities means that the benefits of growth are often highly concentrated in one sector, and that they

⁸¹ See interactive charts in [EU-UNCTAD joint programme for Angola: Train for Trade II | UNCTAD](#); [EU-UNCTAD joint programme for Angola: Train for Trade II | UNCTAD](#)

are vulnerable to external shocks. In the case of landlocked countries, high trade costs compound their existing challenges to achieve market access and make it difficult for them to establish competitive manufacturing industries as a basis for broad-based growth.

374. Overcoming these challenges and achieving inclusive development requires the building of productive capacities, which can support export diversification and structural transformation. The UNCTAD Productive Capacities Index (PCI) provides an analytical tool that can complement qualitative assessments of the most binding constraints to be overcome in each country.

375. **Objectives and features.** The project aims to assist eight developing economies in Africa in harnessing the transformative potential of Chinese partnership in Africa, including in the context of the Belt and Road Initiative, for their economic development.

376. By identifying and analysing the key binding constraints to the fostering of productive capacities and structural transformation in the eight developing countries, the project will assist in multiplying the potential development benefits of the trade and investment relations with China and contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The project also assists in developing concrete capacity-building programmes and policy-oriented support to the eight countries to harness closer trade and investment links with China.

377. **Outputs.** In 2023, UNCTAD continued to implement the Project and, in this context, cooperated with the following countries: Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The productive capacities' gaps and binding constraints to development are now at various stages of being identified and examined. These serve as the background for the subsequent policy formulation, which is taking place, to alleviate the constraints to development by fostering structural transformation, building productive capacities and enhancing investment opportunities and linkages with China.

378. In 2023, the capacity building of policymakers, statisticians and technical experts was conducted in Lilongwe, Malawi (October, 2023). It aimed at providing technical knowledge on how to use the Productive Capacities Index and mainstream productive capacities into policy formulation and institution building to enable economic diversification, structural transformation and greater engagement in the global economy, including through building links with China.

379. The National Productive Capacities of Kenya - the document depicting key challenges to building national productive capacities – was validated by the Government of Kenya (May, 2023), during a policy dialogue in Nairobi on the ways of addressing countries' development challenges through adequate policy formulation and institution building. A National Productive Capacities Gap Assessment of Nigeria was drafted (December, 2023), its content being subject to validation by the Federal Government in 2024, to be used for further technical support on formulating development policies for the country. Similar documents – National Productive Capacities Gap Assessments – were prepared for Cambodia, Comoros and Djibouti, outside of the scope of the Project.

380. The Holistic Productive Capacities Development Programmes (HPCDP) for Kenya (May, 2023), Ethiopia (July, 2023) and Zambia (October, 2023) were validated by respective Governments during policy dialogues aiming at creating capacity among the policymakers in the implementation of pillar interventions and addressing key binding constraints as per the content of each HPCDP.

381. UNCTAD continued interacting with the Governments of Mozambique and Zimbabwe in preparation of technical capacity building scheduled for May 2024 and aimed at diffusing expertise on mainstreaming productive capacities into policy formulation. Similar consultations, outside of the scope of the Project, were conducted with the Governments of Honduras, Mongolia and Nepal.

382. **Results and impact.** The progress means that countries are increasingly aware of their development challenges and increasingly informed in terms of adequate policy responses to ensure sustainable and inclusive development and achieving Sustainable Development Goals through economy-wide impactful interventions. For Angola, Ethiopia,

Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia the process enhances the preparation for the graduation from the LDC category by ensuring smooth transition and graduation with momentum.

383. Through the implementation of various activities, the Project has so far substantially increased awareness of and expertise in identifying gaps and limitations to sustainable development in the targeted countries and enhanced knowledge of policy makers, technical experts, and representatives of private sector and academia in adequate policy response and policy formulation. As a result, up until the end of 2023, over 600 policymakers and other stakeholders were trained through the Project.

2.5. *United Nations joint programme Global Crisis Emergency support for Haiti: sustainable trade and value chain development for diversification of the economy, improved working conditions, rural employment creation and food security*

384. **Development context.** Approximately 90,000 people are directly engaged in the fisheries sector in Haiti, 28 per cent of whom are women who operate in the informal sector and provide livelihoods for over 416,000 people. However, fishing and aquaculture are mainly artisanal in the country, with a significant lack of productive capacity despite their potential. The fisheries and aquaculture sectors have very important economic, social, cultural and food security impacts, particularly in rural communities. These sectors offer real opportunities for sustainable growth, investment, improved post-harvest processing, value addition and employment creation, particularly for women and youth.

385. **Objectives and features.** In June 2022, UNCTAD jointly with the ILO developed a new UN Joint Programme (UNJP) to respond to the call under the UN Joint SDG Fund Development Emergency Modality in response to the global crisis on food, energy and finance. The UNJP worked from July 2022 to April 2023 to support enterprise creation and access to employment in the breadfruit sector (lead ILO) and develop the fisheries and aquaculture sector (lead UNCTAD) in selected priority zones of Haiti.

386. UNCTAD's support under this Joint Programme focused on fisheries and aquaculture sector development, with the objective of mapping the regulatory, policy, and productive capacities needs in priority fishing zones, preparing a project document, and forming strategic partnerships with international financial institutions for the funding of future support.

387. **Outputs and results.** In 2023, UNCTAD helped to develop sector-specific research reports and needs assessments on fisheries and aquaculture sectors' potential and binding constraints in selected priority zones in Haiti. The reports call for improved public policy, legislative frameworks and their implementation, modernization of main infrastructures, facilitation of public and private investments in fisheries, reinforcement of government capacity, and incentives to capitalize on the potential of this industry to contribute to the livelihood of coastal communities while improving Haitian food security and generating export earnings. Further, a study on the status and impacts of international fisheries access agreements was finalized, providing guidance and elements particularly for officials engaged in fisheries access negotiations, with a view to negotiating more balanced and mutually beneficial international fisheries access agreements.

3. Mobilizing financial resources for development

3.1. *United Nations joint programme Haiti in Crisis: A National Consultation on Reform Priorities and Financing Options for Accelerated Sustainable Development Goal Achievement*

388. **Development context.** The development landscape in Haiti is highly challenging. About 6 million Haitians out of the total population of 11.3 million live below the poverty line. This figure is only marginally better than at the start of this Millennium, and the limited progress is expected to have been entirely eroded as a result of the most recent crises. Haiti had set an objective of becoming a middle-income country by 2030, with extreme poverty then at 3 per cent. Considering demographic growth, it would require the country to grow at 7 per cent per year from now on to reach this target. Since the formulation of the Strategic Development Plan of Haiti, growth has been just above 1 per

cent in the better years, and negative as of 2019. After two successive years of negative GDP growth (mainly as a result of uninterrupted expressions of wide-spread discontent), 2020 saw an additional and major impact of COVID-19 on the economy, with the economy estimated to have lost between 1 to 2 per cent of its value in 2021. The GDP of Haiti was at \$20,25 billion (current United States dollars) in 2022. The country's exports are highly concentrated, with around 90 per cent of merchandise exports in textiles mainly targeting the United States market.

389. The February 2020 Integrated Strategic Framework for Haiti, as requested by the Security Council, underlines the importance and urgency for Haiti of addressing the development financing challenge. This includes structural, policy and reform issues. The important responsibility assigned to the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti (Bureau Intégré des Nations Unies en Haïti or BINUH), in terms of the Secretary-General's Special Representative's and Deputy Special Representative's "Good Offices" function, provides a major value added to the capacity of the United Nations system in Haiti to advocate for – and obtain commitment towards – those policy changes and reform imperatives and is thus particularly important and timely for this project.

390. **Objectives and features.** The project which closed with a final Steering Committee meeting in December 2023, helped Haiti assess financing options for an Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF) with its actions plans by producing a comprehensive Development Finance Assessment, with the identification of policy reforms to mobilize such funding in a way that is best aligned to the aims of the country's national Sustainable Development Goals strategy.

391. While the project implementation was, on the United Nations side, co-led by UNDP and UNCTAD, the entire Haiti UN Country Team (UNCT), as well as non-resident agencies with a particularly strong mandate or expertise in this subject area, were associated with the project and under the leadership of the Regional Coordinator, as co-implementing partners or by sharing their accumulated global and Haiti-specific relevant expertise and lessons learned.

392. The project ensured a broad-based national consultation in defining strategies, priorities and goals, as well as regular exchange with other key partners from the private, the non-governmental or financial sector, multilateral development banks and international partners.

393. At the end of the project, the continuation of regular strategy updating was fully institutionalized and capacities to support this strengthened. Monitoring and evaluation capacity, coordinated by the Ministry of Planning and External Cooperation (MPCE) was developed, in close association with the Ministries of Economy and Finance, of Commerce and Industry; of Agriculture; of Social Affairs and Labour and others, so as to ensure continuous and joint assessment and strategic updating of financing strategies as well as the fullest possible contribution of all mobilized financing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

394. **Outputs and results.** UNCTAD's contribution focused on exploring and stimulating the potential of the private sector to become a stronger pillar generating funds for the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals in Haiti. UNCTAD was responsible for preparing five studies to assess the development and financing landscape of Haiti, providing a solid evidence-base for the development of strategies and plans. While one of the studies was published in 2022, four of them were finalized in the course of 2023, including on innovative financing opportunities, production and export potential and national productive capacities.

395. The Haitian government, represented by the Minister of Planning and External Cooperation, and the Minister of Finance, have agreed on a joint declaration recognizing the INFF as a central mechanism for planning, programming and financing sustainable development in Haiti. The joint declaration was also endorsed by the Resident Coordinator on behalf of the UN country team.

396. The Joint Programme demonstrated the added value of coordination in that it teamed up the RCO, UNDP and UNCTAD. Thanks to key activities under the joint programme

(such as the SDG perception survey, thematic and sector studies informing the development finance assessment, stakeholder workshops and launch event etc.) as well as the joint programme acting as a catalytic convalescent platform, the administration and civil society have embraced the SDG framework as an instrument to structure and guide national development planning. There is now hope that this time, thanks to a results-based approach, strategic development planning guided by the SDGs and innovative, structured development financing can lead to concrete sustainable development results.

3.2. *G77 - development priorities for a climate-resilient financial system at COP28*

397. **Development context.** The outcome of the 27th session of the Conference of the Parties of the UNFCCC (COP 27) included a recognition of the need to better connect the climate regime with the broader context of global economic governance. The final text proposes that meeting climate goals “will require a transformation of the financial system and its structures and processes, engaging governments, central banks, commercial banks, institutional investors and other financial actors” (para 34, Sharm El-Sheikh Implementation Plan), and makes specific references to managing debt distress, reforming multilateral development banks, and scaling grant and concessional financing.

398. With upcoming negotiations on a New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) and more ambitious proposals for governance reform gathering momentum, key discussions at the multilateral level are likely to involve the interplay of development finance, debt, macroeconomics, and climate change. However, barriers between the development, finance and climate communities continue to exist. In this context, it is critical that climate negotiators, as key stakeholders in driving substantive outcomes within the UNFCCC framework, are fully conversant with the range of financing challenges that have moved to the forefront of multilateral discussions, including in the climate arena. Considering the increased centrality of climate change to development challenges and UNCTAD’s mandate and its long history focused on development outcomes, UNCTAD is uniquely positioned to support developing countries in building the case for a climate-consistent financial architecture that can advance climate and development goals simultaneously.

399. **Objectives and features.** Responding to the mandates contained in the Bridgetown Covenant, paragraphs 127 (kk), 127 (ll) and 127 (oo), the project aims at filling the gap in the knowledge about links between climate, finance and economic development challenges amongst G77 countries’ climate finance negotiators so that they are better equipped to foster common positions on key policy debates on climate and finance towards COP28 and future COPs. UNCTAD works with relevant agencies and organizations to deliver an inclusive programme in the form of two workshops and four papers that responds to the most pressing questions related to the interlinkages between climate change and economic development: the loss and damage fund; Article 2.1(c) of the Paris Agreement; Just Transition; and the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) on climate finance.

400. **Outputs.** In 2023, four papers were prepared and three published within the project. Specifically, UNCTAD delivered the following publications:

- (a) Taking responsibility: Towards a fit-for-purpose Loss and Damage Fund
- (b) Making sense of Article 2.1(c): What role for private finance in achieving climate goals?
- (c) Considerations for a New Collective Quantified Goal. Bringing accountability, trust and developing country needs to climate finance

401. In addition, UNCTAD organized two workshops ahead of COP28. The first workshop took place on August 27 in Santo Domingo, ahead of the Third meeting of the Transitional Committee on the operationalization of new funding arrangements for loss and damage, in order to maximize attendance of developing countries’ delegates. It addressed decisions 2/CP.27 and 2/CMA.4 on the operationalization of new funding arrangements for responding to Loss and Damage in the context of financial architecture reform discussions that have moved to the forefront of multilateral forums. More than 30 participants attended the workshop, of which 13 females. The gender balance among speakers was almost reached with 9 male and 8 female panellists.

402. The second workshop took place on September 29 in Geneva, ahead of the 7th Technical Expert Dialogue of the New Collective Quantified Goal and the second workshop under the Sharm el-Sheikh Dialogue on Article 2, paragraph 1(c) of the Paris Agreement [from now on Article 2.1C for the sake of simplicity] and its complementarity with Article 9. It covered the topics of the New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance (NCQG), Just Transition and Article 2.1c. Thirty-one climate finance negotiators (24 males and 7 females) and further four civil society representatives (two women, two men) attended the workshop. Considering the more male oriented representation of Parties delegate, ensuring a gender balance in the panels has been challenging, with a total of 11 male and 5 female speakers.

403. In order to present the findings of the project, UNCTAD participated in the UNFCCC 28th Conference of Parties held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. UNCTAD engaged with negotiators, the Brazilian delegation in view of their COP30 Presidency, and other developing countries such as Colombia and China. COP28 was the first one dedicating an entire day to the thematic issue of trade. UNCTAD co-hosted one pavilion, the Trade House, together with the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), and the International Trade Centre (ITC). In this context, UNCTAD Division on Globalization and Development Strategies (GDS) organized three events in the Trade House:

- (a) A positive agenda for trade, climate and development goals;
- (b) Key elements of a just transition that leave no one behind, co-organised with UNCTAD Division on International Trade and Commodities (DITC);
- (c) Trade and fiscal space - The finance question.

404. UNCTAD also co-organized with the UN Development Programme (UNDP) one side event titled “Investing in the future: Transforming financing for the Paris Agreement and Development Goals”.

405. **Results and impact.** On two workshops organized under this project, a survey was circulated among participants after each workshop to collect feedback. For the first workshop, 12 out of 15 survey respondents were very satisfied and some comments highlighted the important role of UNCTAD in supporting developing countries, emphasizing the growing relevance of UNCTAD in the climate space, and the need to increase this work. On the second workshop, 20 out of 22 survey respondents found the papers useful or extremely useful in the context of the upcoming meeting. Sixteen out of 22 survey respondents indicated the workshop increased their understanding of the development aspects of the three issues discussed. Some participants expressed their interest in “more workshops like this on relevant issues and maybe another session just before COP28”. Building on the success of the two workshops and upon explicit requests from developing country climate finance negotiators, UNCTAD strengthened its participation at COP28 in Dubai.

406. The importance of links among climate, finance and economic development challenges is being recognized in both the general debates in the international community and in negotiating spaces. The [COP28 UAE Consensus](#) included a recognition that it “builds momentum towards reform of the global financial architecture, recognizing the role of credit rating agencies for the first time, and calling for the scaling up of concessional and grant finance”. The project has contributed to that outcome by providing negotiators from developing countries with analysis and knowledge to promote outcomes which would result in a global economic governance that would enable climate-resilient development.

407. The issue of climate finance will be the main topic of COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan, which in part is expressed by the new collective quantified goal (NCQG) workstream. As per Decision 1/CP21 Paragraph 53, countries decided to deliberate on a NCQG to raise the floor on climate finance above the current \$100 billion annual target, taking into account the needs and priorities of developing countries. In the paper on NCQG, which resulted from this project and was published in 2023, UNCTAD provided an analysis of the lessons from the ongoing challenges with climate finance and more specifically the \$100 billion goal, and a proposal of a set of considerations and structure for the NCQG to ensure it is an

improved target. This publication is therefore providing negotiators from developing countries with elements needed for successful negotiations on the topic which is expected to be one of the most important outcomes of the COP29.

3.3. *Mobilizing external financial resources beyond COVID-19 for greener, more equal, and sustainable development in selected vulnerable SIDS in Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean.*

408. **Development context.** The harmful impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has been recognised by the General Assembly in its resolution 74/270, which called upon the United Nations system to work with all relevant actors to mobilise a coordinated global response to the pandemic and its adverse social, economic, and financial impact on all societies. The scale of the challenges faced is especially acute in Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Amid sharp falls in tourism revenues and remittances flows, the pandemic has reinforced many of SIDS's unique and particular vulnerabilities to economic and climatic shock that the Samoa Pathway addresses. Achieving resilient prosperity in SIDS relies significantly on the ability to identify their financing needs and gaps to achieve the 2030 Agenda goals, which take into consideration the country-specific circumstances of SIDS.

409. **Objectives and features.** Against this backdrop, this project aims to strengthen the national capacities of selected vulnerable SIDS in Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean to mobilise affordable external financial resources for greener and sustainable development and a more equitable society beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, simultaneously achieving climate priorities with external financial sustainability. It is coordinated by UNCTAD and carried out by UNCTAD in partnership with the Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). The beneficiary countries are four SIDS from two regions especially hit by the COVID-19 pandemic: Belize and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines from Latin America and the Caribbean, and Cabo Verde and Comoros from Africa.

410. The project will identify the underlying reasons for these countries' current inability to secure such external finance and devise appropriate mechanisms to address them within the capabilities of these countries. It will provide two main outputs to the beneficiary countries: (i) a UNCTAD Sustainable Development Finance Assessment (SDFA) Framework Mark II considering the funding gaps related to the climate-related SDGs; (ii) a national external financial strategy and related roadmap that will encompass climate-related innovative financial instruments, such as green bonds and debt-to-climate or nature swaps.

411. **Outputs and results.** The project's implementation started in 2022. In 2023, the UNCTAD SDFA Framework Mark II was finalised. It builds on an earlier Mark I version (developed under the DA project Response and Recovery: Mobilizing Financial Resources for Development in the time of COVID-19) and enables policymakers in SIDS and other developing countries to assess the macroeconomic implications of implementing policies to tackle climate change through the climate-related SDGs for a country's external and public sector financial sustainability. It allows users to analyze the interaction between spending on climate change mitigation and adaptation, the production structure of the economy, and the country's external and public sector financial sustainability.

412. Moreover, a detailed outline of the climate adaptation and mitigation report that will be provided for each beneficiary country was finalised. The country reports will consider the direct and indirect climate risks and costs in each beneficiary country, the climate adaptation and mitigation strategies to face these risks and the financing needs to achieve the climate-related SDGs. The assessment of the climate risks, costs and financing needs will be integrated into the UNCTAD SDFA Framework Mark II country reports. Country-level consultations commenced in 2023 and missions engaging directly with government and development-oriented stakeholders in country will be held throughout 2024. This ongoing work is being closely coordinated in partnership with the two regional commissions, ECLAC and ECA, as well as the Resident Coordinator Offices to ensure unified collaboration and comprehensive insights.

III. Theme C: Fostering economic efficiency, improving governance

413. Efficient market and effective and development-focused States are indispensable for the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The market can play a useful role in the allocation of resources. However, without proper regulatory mechanisms, there are risks of market failures including abuses of monopoly power, negative externalities and inequality. It is the role of the States to correct market failures, create an enabling legal, regulatory and institutional framework and provide right incentives for market players to contribute more effectively towards sustainable development.

414. UNCTAD technical cooperation supports developing countries in fostering economic efficiency and improving governance. In particular, it helps to establish pro-competitive regulations, facilitate trade and business by removing bureaucratic barriers to trade and investment, mainstream sustainability into international investment agreements and strengthen statistical capacity to formulate sound economic policies.

415. In this section, nine products under the theme “Fostering economic efficiency, improving governance” are reported on. The reports highlight main technical cooperation activities carried out in 2023 and key results to date. Technical cooperation projects that are pertinent to the aforementioned theme, but not linked with any of the existing nine products in this thematic area are reported on under “C99 Other”.

C1 Voluntary peer reviews of competition and consumer protection laws and policies

Table C1

Voluntary peer reviews of competition and consumer protection laws and policies

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
INT/8X/603	Training programmes on restrictive business practices (competition and consumer protection policies)	1986–	Multi-donors

416. **Development context.** UNCTAD voluntary peer reviews of competition and consumer protection laws and policies allow developing countries to benchmark their legislative and institutional frameworks against international best practices. They also provide an opportunity for reviewed authorities to self-evaluate their enforcement performance. The exercises are conducted using an interactive method combining the exchange of experiences between member States with recommendations for possible improvements either in the formulation of laws or in their enforcement. This interactive method has been reviewed at the request of member States by the informal Working Group on modalities of UNCTAD voluntary peer reviews of competition and consumer protection laws and policies.⁸² Its outcome, the “Revised Methodological Guidelines for Peer Reviews”⁸³ was presented and agreed on at the sixth session of the Intergovernmental Groups of Experts (IGE) on Consumer Protection Law and Policy and the twentieth session of the IGE on Competition Law and Policy in 2022.

⁸² The informal working group on modalities of the voluntary peer review exercises was established by the Eighth United Nations Conference to Review All Aspects of the Set of Multilaterally Agreed Equitable Principles and Rules for the Control of Restrictive Business Practices in 2020.

⁸³ [The Report of the Working Group on Modalities of the voluntary peer review exercises to the twentieth session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Competition Law and Policy, June 2022 \(unctad.org\)](https://unctad.org/publication/the-report-of-the-working-group-on-modalities-of-the-voluntary-peer-review-exercises-to-the-twentieth-session-of-the-intergovernmental-group-of-experts-on-competition-law-and-policy-june-2022)

417. **Objectives and features.** The reviews assess the features of the legal and institutional frameworks, the enforcement record and the policy implementation, and the perceptions of these laws and policies by relevant stakeholders. The reviews identify major legislative, procedural and institutional measures that might be necessary for a more effective law enforcement and policy implementation and for the optimum functioning of the competition and consumer protection authorities. They provide insights into country-specific strong features as areas for improvement, including those related to political and economic challenges that prevent effective enforcement of the laws in question. The reports serve as a basis for the peer review examination during the annual meetings of the IGE on Competition Law and Policy and on Consumer Protection Law and Policy and during the United Nations Review Conferences⁸⁴ of the United Nations Set of Multilaterally Agreed Equitable Principles and Rules for the Control of Restrictive Business Practices⁸⁵. The presentation and discussion of the peer review report is usually followed by a dissemination of the findings and recommendations in the country and by a technical cooperation project led by UNCTAD to support the implementation of the report's key recommendations.

418. **Outputs.** In 2023, UNCTAD conducted the voluntary peer review of the consumer protection law and policy of Gabon as well as the voluntary peer review of competition law and policy of Paraguay. UNCTAD also started preparing the voluntary peer review of competition law and policy of Egypt.

419. *Voluntary peer review of consumer protection law and policy of Gabon.*⁸⁶ The voluntary peer review on consumer protection law and policy of Gabon, the sixth exercise facilitated by UNCTAD until now, was held in July 2023. The assessment of the country's consumer protection law and policy outlined legislative and regulatory framework for consumer protection, including a bill drafted in 2022. Consumer protection appears to be an ongoing concern of the Gabonese authorities. Consumer rights in Gabon are protected by domestic laws and community laws, being community laws more developed. Enablers of effective consumer protection include preventive mechanisms such as consumer information and education, prior control of product quality and the promotion of sustainable consumption patterns, and corrective mechanisms, including the financial, administrative, and criminal penalties set forth in regulations.

420. In terms of the legislative and public policy framework, it was recommended to develop a comprehensive policy and strategy on consumer protection. This should outline the vision for the consumer protection system that the Gabonese government aimed to establish, ensuring the well-being of its people. The proposed recommendations included streamlining the legislative framework, extending consumer protection to all economic sectors, promoting a culture of consumer protection, encouraging amicable dispute resolution, and enhancing access to justice for consumers. Special attention was given to topics related to the digital market, such as data protection, and the incorporation of consumer protection into the digital strategy.

421. Other recommendations were formulated to strengthen the institutional framework of consumer protection. This involved designating the government authority, namely the Directorate General for Competition, Consumer Affairs, and Fraud Prevention, as the focal point for consumer protection. The peer review also suggested establishing administrative bodies to facilitate dialogue between the state government, civil society, and the private sector. This was noted as essential for safeguarding the interests of consumers in Gabon and reinforcing the framework for interministerial dialogue. It was also recommended to raise awareness among judiciary and the private sector, promoting good business practices. The support for the professionalization of consumer associations was noted as crucial, alongside increasing the financial and human resources of the decentralized service of the Directorate General for Competition, Consumer Affairs, and Fraud Prevention.

⁸⁴ <https://unctad.org/meeting/eighth-United-nations-conference-competition-and-consumer-protection>

⁸⁵ <https://unctad.org/topic/competition-and-consumer-protection/the-united-nations-set-of-principles-on-competition>

⁸⁶ https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ditccplp2023d1_en_1.pdf

422. Moreover, the peer review recommended intensifying efforts to inform the public and raise awareness to the activities of the Directorate General for Competition, Consumer Affairs, and Fraud Prevention. This involves increasing the capacities of law enforcement officers, strengthening mechanisms to warn consumers about dangerous products, and enhancing the quality control laboratory of the Directorate General for Competition, Consumer Affairs, and Fraud Prevention in the operational framework.

423. During the presentation of the peer review report at the seventh session of the IGE on Consumer Protection Law and Policy, the delegation of Gabon expressed the support for the recommendations. The UNCTAD secretariat subsequently presented a technical assistance project proposal for the implementation of the recommendations, with the overall goal of assisting Gabon in enhancing consumer protection legislation and policy and strengthening the institutional framework.

424. *Voluntary peer review of competition law and policy of Paraguay.*⁸⁷ The voluntary peer review of competition law and policy of Paraguay was held in July 2023. The peer review report analysed substantive competition law issues including prohibited agreements, abusive conducts, concentrations as well as institutional aspects related to the competition authority, Board of Directors and the Directorate of Investigations, including its powers and duties. Based on the analysis, it provided recommendations, including the establishment of a *per se* rule for hard-core cartels, the removal of consciously parallel practices from the list of prohibited agreements, explicit determination that the list of abusive conducts is indicative and not restrictive, and the incorporation of a leniency programme for companies cooperating in investigations. Additional suggested improvements included establishing a sectoral regulator for electricity and disqualifying participants engaged in collusive conduct from public procurement processes.

425. During the presentation of the peer review report at the twenty-first session of the IGE on Competition Law and Policy, the delegation of Paraguay expressed the support for the recommendations. Also, two reviewers offered to cooperate on improving technological tools for competition enforcement in public procurement.

426. UNCTAD subsequently presented a proposal for a technical assistance project to implement the recommendations on reviewing the competition law and building human and institutional capacity to improve competition enforcement. The project also includes assistance with advocacy, through training and collaboration agreements with other official bodies, such as regulators, public authorities and the judiciary.

427. For the voluntary peer reviews of consumer protection law and policy, UNCTAD is conducting a report to assess the implementation of the recommendations issued so far since 2018. The report is to evaluate the degree of implementation of the peer review recommendations and to draw conclusions that will enhance UNCTAD's capacity to provide improved assistance to the reviewed countries in the follow-up and implementation of the recommendations, while comprehending the challenges and constraints faced by these countries in this process. In the meantime, the process for the voluntary peer review of competition law and policy of Egypt has also started, and UNCTAD conducted a fact-finding mission to collect data and information; identified the panel of peer reviewers; and worked on the peer review report.

428. **Results and impacts.** The UNCTAD secretariat outlined two tailor-made technical assistance projects, respectively for Gabon and Paraguay, for the implementation of the respective peer review recommendations, and invited other authorities and development partners to assist Gabon and Paraguay in improving policies, enhancing enforcement capacities, and developing a competition and consumer protection culture. In addition to the official kick-off event in December 2022,⁸⁸ in February 2024,⁸⁹ UNCTAD disseminated the findings and recommendations emanating from the review to raise awareness among

⁸⁷ https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ditcclp2023d4_es.pdf

⁸⁸ <https://unctad.org/meeting/kick-voluntary-peer-review-consumer-protection-law-and-policy-gabon>

⁸⁹ <https://unctad.org/meeting/dissemination-unctads-voluntary-peer-review-consumer-protection-law-and-policy-gabon>

stakeholders on the importance of implementing the recommended actions for Gabon. Gabon still has to enact a consumer protection law. The Gabonese government expressed interest in requesting UNCTAD's support to draft a text and implementing regulations and raise awareness about the need to adopt a legal framework to protect consumers. The dissemination event in Paraguay took place in October 2023.⁹⁰ Following the report's recommendations for competition law reforms, UNCTAD conducted high-level meetings with executive, legislative and judicial officials. Moreover, the recommendations were also presented to business organizations and in the media to amplify outreach and raise awareness among citizens. In 2023, Paraguay reached a significant milestone in its competition culture, commemorating the tenth anniversary of Paraguay's law - a process in which UNCTAD played a key role by providing advisory services.

429. Regarding the voluntary peer review on consumer protection law and policy of Peru, which took place in 2020, UNCTAD and the National Institute for the Defence of Competition and Protection of Intellectual Property (Indecopi) of Peru hosted a public event in Peru in March 2023. The purpose was to share the findings and recommendations from the review and to increase awareness of the National Consumer Protection Council on the impact that those recommended actions can have in improving consumer policies and welfare. The ultimate goal is to support policy and institutional reform and to strengthen consumer protection in the country.

430. Following the voluntary peer review of consumer protection law and policy of Thailand, which took place in 2022, the dissemination of the findings and recommendations emanating from the review was held in April 2023, jointly by UNCTAD and the Office of the Consumer Protection Board of Thailand (OCPB), in Thailand. The peer review dissemination coincided with the Consumer's Day celebrations in Thailand and aimed to raise awareness envisaging the future implementation of suggested actions to improve consumer policies and welfare. Also on this occasion, the OCPB, in co-operation with UNCTAD, organized a workshop on Cross-border Consumer Dispute Resolution (CDR), focused on CDRs systems, Software Requirements Specification and how to build a strategic plan for policy making and implementation. Considering the key findings of the voluntary peer review, the workshop aimed to compare and contrast the design and implementation of CDR systems and ecosystems and identify their advantages, challenges, and good practices to draw out lessons learnt.

431. As a follow-up of the voluntary peer review of competition law and policy of Bangladesh, which took place in 2022, UNCTAD and Bangladesh Competition Commission organized the dissemination of the findings and recommendations in March 2024. UNCTAD presented a proposal for a technical assistance project to implement the peer review recommendations. During the visit, UNCTAD also delivered presentations on diverse aspects of competition law enforcement, covering mergers, cartels, agency effectiveness, and digital markets. These presentations featured insightful case discussions tailored to enhance the enforcement capacities of the Bangladesh Competition Commission staff.

C2 Business facilitation

Table C2

Business facilitation

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
BEN/0T/MAT	eRegistration Benin Phase II	2023–	Kingdom of the Netherlands

⁹⁰ <https://unctad.org/meeting/dissemination-peer-review-competition-law-and-policy-recommendations>

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
CMR/OT/JBD	E-registrations Cameroon Phase III	2021–	Cameroon
KEN/OT/MBI	eRegistrations Kenya Investment Single Window	2023–	Kingdom of the Netherlands
LES/OT/LAW	Joint Programme on National Response to the Food Security Crisis in Lesotho	2022–	One United Nations fund
LIB/OT/LAT	eRegistration Libya	2022–	Expertise France
PSE/OT/MAE	The Innovative Private Sector Development Project Palestine	2023–	DAI Global UK LTD
URT/OT/FBC	UNDAF II, inclusive Growth 2016 DRTF	2017–	One United Nations fund
INT/OT/6AT	Business Facilitation Multi-donor Fund	2006–	Multi-donors
INT/OT/H CJ	Strategic Partnership the Netherlands	2020–	Kingdom of the Netherlands
RAF/OT/IAO	UNCTAD – TMEA Cooperation on Trade Facilitation	2019–	TradeMark Africa

432. **Development context.** Simple and transparent government procedures help businesses formalize and grow, integrate into regional trading systems, invest, create jobs, support vulnerable communities and help governments increase revenue. The business facilitation section has developed a series of web-based digital government systems to help countries improve their investment, trade and business climates through transparency, simplification and the automation of rules and procedures related to enterprise creation and operations. The programme builds the capacity of government staff to see procedures from the user’s perspective, simplify them and place them online. It also helps them to train their colleagues to progressively make entire governments digital, using its easy-to-customize platform that does not require programming skills.

433. The programme helps countries create investment information portals, trade information portals and online single windows. Investment information portals show investors how to register a business and obtain all mandatory licenses step-by-step and with full transparency. Trade information portals show detailed information on import, export and transit procedures and allow countries to comply with article 1, Bali agreement, WTO. For both types of portals, the programme trains and works with national civil servants to thoroughly analyse and document all procedures and then to significantly simplify those procedures by cutting the number of forms, requirements, steps, time, costs, overlaps and redundancies. These can then be automated through online single windows which allow users to create companies entirely online, with one form, one upload of documents and one payment.

434. **Objectives and features.** All tools and services developed by the business facilitation programme aim to make administrations more service oriented, user-centric and efficient, improving the business and investment climate and legal frameworks; lower administrative barriers to business development, in particular for small businesses; and increase domestic and foreign investment and trade, promoting good governance and reducing corruption.

435. The work of the programme contributes to the following Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets: 1.3 (implement appropriate social protection systems), 8.3 (encourage the formalization and growth of MSMEs); 16.3 (promote the rule of law); 16.5 (sustainably

reduce corruption and bribery); 16.6 (develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions); 16.10 (ensure public access to information); 17.1 (strengthen domestic resource mobilization). The Bridgetown Covenant, paragraph 127r (ii) reinforces the relevance of the programme and calls on the UNCTAD “business facilitation initiatives to assist Governments to improve the business, investment and trade climate, for example, by enhancing transparency and access to trade-related information and regulations and simplification of trade-related administrative procedures”. Further, it has shown to have a clear impact on women and young entrepreneurs as well as rural and vulnerable communities.

436. **Outputs.** In 2023, the programme benefited 15 countries and territories. The main outputs include:

(a) Online single windows and new online services were developed or implemented in Benin, Bhutan, Colombia, Jordan, Libya, Mali, Palestine, Syria for business registration and licensing. The electronic single windows serve as a centralized access point for businesses to access and submit all the necessary forms, applications, and documents required by different government agencies.

(b) Exchange of good practices and South–South cooperation. National experts in Benin, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cuba, El Salvador, Jordan, Kenya, Lesotho, Mali, Rwanda, Palestine, Syria, have trained civil servants of their countries or provinces on the use of UNCTAD business facilitation tools and methodologies.

437. UNCTAD also continued to support trade and investment information portals in over 50 countries through hotline and technical support.

438. Below are some highlights in 2023.

439. In Colombia, UNCTAD in collaboration with a high-level team from the Ministry of Environment started developing an online calculator allowing companies to assess emissions of greenhouse gasses according to their activities (consumption of fossil fuels, industrial processes, water treatment, air conditioning, etc.), based on the standards and recommendations of the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Concurrently, UNCTAD also started the development of a prototype for an online registry where Colombian companies can yearly report their emissions, in application of the Paris agreement.

440. The Kenya Investment Authority (KenInvest) and UNCTAD started expanding their partnership to build a Single Window for Investment (SWI). International and local businesses will use the SWI to obtain online required authorizations to implement their investment projects starting with the investment certificate and the needed initial licenses issued by various government entities at national and county level. UNCTAD presented the project to the stakeholders and conducted induction meetings with the KenInvest staff on the scope of the project.

441. The SWI is expected to significantly improve the way government services are delivered to businesses. It will be an opportunity for national and local authorities to optimize their collaboration to facilitate investment, while building better oversight mechanisms to maximize societal impact. Finally, it will serve as a model of “simplifying, speeding up and coordinating processes” for other WTO countries currently considering the Investment Facilitation for Development agreement (IFD), which demonstrates its scalability.

442. In Mali, UNCTAD and the Ministry of Health started developing a digital licensing process for the production and commercialization of pharmaceuticals. The system will enable the online licensing of the import, distribution and local production of pharmaceuticals. Digitization will make the process quicker and more transparent, leading to faster approval times. It will reduce the cost and improve access to essential medicines, including vaccines, in particular for low income and vulnerable populations. It will also enable the government to regulate the quality of pharmaceuticals entering the country given the high rate of expired or counterfeit batches.

443. The challenges faced in this sector by Mali are shared across the region and more broadly among LDCs. There is therefore a regional scalability potential for this digital solution.

444. In the State of Palestine, UNCTAD launched the development of an integrated business licensing system, in collaboration with the Ministry of National Economy to completely digitalize the Companies Registry. Investors and entrepreneurs will be able to create, modify, float, merge, acquire and close any type of company online. This will provide Palestine with one of the world's most advanced business registries. UNCTAD conducted several online and in-person presentations and technical workshops and developed a prototype for the name reservation and Limited Liability Company (LLC) registration services.

445. In Syria, UNCTAD developed a functional prototype with the Ministry of Internal Economy to digitize the creation of companies. This project is undertaken jointly with ESCWA and is aimed at simplification of the registration procedure and at helping national and foreign entrepreneurs set up their business swiftly. Several online and in-person workshops were organized for the design and testing of LLC company registration service.

446. UNCTAD created the Digital Government Academy in partnership with UNITAR. Combining UNCTAD's expertise with UNITAR's training know-how will enable more governments to benefit from training in online service design thus multiplying the reach of UNCTAD's business facilitation programme.

447. **Results and impacts.** Over 6 million people visited information portals worldwide in 2023, enabling the creation of about 100,000 new businesses through online licensing. In addition, over 730 government officials, 54 per cent of whom were women, were trained on the basic principles of simplification and automation of government services. Furthermore, the programme generated considerable impact on the ground, particularly with regard to the economic and social benefits.

448. In Benin, for example, APIEx (Agency for Investment and Export Promotion) and UNCTAD have built a successful Single Window for Business Registration which has contributed to the formalization of a growing number of businesses (increase of 94 per cent in two years, with an increase of 30 per cent among young people under 30). That system has since been deployed in other countries, demonstrating a strong global return on the donor's initial investment. APIEx wants to expand this cooperation and implement a Single Window for Investment. The new Single Window will allow businesses additionally to comply online with the requirements of local Special Economic Zones and to benefit from investment incentives.

C3 Trade facilitation

Table C3

Trade facilitation

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
ANG/0T/FBK	European Union–UNCTAD Joint Programme for Angola: Train for Trade II	2017–	European Union
INT/0T/4CO	Capacity Building in Developing Countries and Least Developed Countries to support their effective participation in the WTO Negotiations Process on Trade Facilitation	2004–	Multi-donors
INT/0T/LAL	Accelerate Trade Facilitation	2022–	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
			Ireland
RAF/0T/IAO	UNCTAD-TMEA Cooperation on Trade Facilitation	2019–	TradeMark Africa
RAF/0T/LAP	Strengthening Capacity of the National Trade Facilitation Committees in the ECOWAS Region	2022–	World Bank
RAS/0T/LAK	PACER Plus UNCTAD Capacity Building Programme 2022	2022–	PACER Plus Implementation Unit
ROA-2225U (U14)	Blockchains for facilitating trade and enhancing competitiveness	2022–	Development Account
ROA-2326 (F15)	Automated System for Relief Emergency Consignments for innovative coordination and facilitation of relief consignments in times of disaster in the Pacific region	2023–	Development Account

449. **Development context.** Trade of goods is important for developing and least developed countries in the context of socio-economic development and an important vector in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Trade facilitation reforms make cross-border trade of goods faster, cheaper and more transparent, and if implemented correctly enhance efficient compliance controls such as ensuring collection of duties, taxes, and observing standards of imported goods for the safety of the general population.

450. Trade facilitation is based on the core principles of simplification, standardization, harmonization, and modernization, mainly achieved through digitalization and cooperation. With the adoption of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), the issue is at the core of national trade policy and therefore a fundamental factor in the national development framework.

451. To date [18 March 2024], 156 out of 164 WTO Members have ratified the agreement. The provisions of the TFA are not only reflected in national trade facilitation implementation but also through many regional agreements on trade facilitation, for example the African Continental Free Trade Area.

452. Beyond the already mentioned objectives, trade facilitation also improves efficiency of government agencies, assist small cross-border traders, often women, to enter the formal sector, promote good governance, generate better quality employment, and advance implementation of digitalization. These reforms are prerequisites for developing countries and LDCs integrating in and taking advantage of global supply and value chains.

453. Trade facilitation reforms are directly contributing to the achievement of several Sustainable Development Goals, including Goal 10, aiming at reducing inequality within and among countries, and Goal 16, which promotes inclusive societies, with access to justice for all and effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels. UNCTAD's work supporting national trade facilitation committees (NTFCs) directly supports Goal 17 on "effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships".

454. **Objectives and features.** In line with the UNCTAD Bridgetown Covenant, the Trade Facilitation Programme of UNCTAD aims at simplifying trade facilitation processes, reducing trade transaction costs, and improving competitiveness of developing countries, including LDCs, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States. The goal is to improve the capacity of countries to implement trade facilitation reforms, including compliance with international and regional rules and standards relating to trade facilitation, principally the World Trade Organization commitments and contribute to

creating a transparent and well governed global cross-border trading environment with a view to facilitating global supply and value chains.

455. UNCTAD assists developing countries with a range of activities as follows: (1) elaboration of needs assessments and national and regional trade facilitation implementation plans; (2) assistance with the ratification, categorization and notification of national implementation obligations; (3) development of project proposals and implementation plans; (4) advisory services and capacity-building for countries and their national trade facilitation committees (NTFCs); (5) implementation of management, monitoring and evaluation tools for trade facilitation implementation; (6) assistance to roll out transparency and simplification tools such as Trade Information Portals; (7) provide capacity-building and technical assistance on trade facilitation reforms and simplification; (8) assistance with the implementation of trade facilitation measures at national and regional levels; and finally (9) promoting sustainable and climate-smart trade facilitation reforms.

456. A main feature of UNCTAD's technical and capacity-building in trade facilitation is to assist with the establishment, and sustainable operation of NTFCs. Apart from NTFCs being obligatory as a national coordination body according to the TFA, the recent supply chain disruptions have showcased the role NTFCs to be even more important.

457. UNCTAD has established a comprehensive technical assistance and capacity-building programme consisting of a variety of trainings and tools to assist countries in improving decision-making capacity and implementing skills to fulfil their mandate to establish and operate such committees. This includes a training programme to professionalize NTFCs and other national trade facilitation stakeholders, the Empowerment Programme for National Trade Facilitation Committees. The main objective of the Empowerment programme is to help the committees to implement, in a coordinated manner, trade facilitation reforms, including the provisions of the TFA, and regional or sub-regional agreements and to be able to efficiently manage, monitor and report on the implementation of these. UNCTAD further implemented the Trade Facilitation Reform Tracker tool which provides NTFCs with a professional online project management and monitoring tool to manage and track trade facilitation reforms, including the simplification of trade procedures. The tool is operational in more than 25 countries.

458. UNCTAD also assists developing countries in the implementation of specific trade facilitation measures. UNCTAD has assisted with the following activities in 2023: establishing a legal framework for trade-related single windows; undertaking simplification of trade-related procedures; training national transit coordinators; establishing national and regional trade information portals for transparency in cross-border trade procedures which is implemented in around 30 countries; simplifying trade facilitation procedures; establishing national monitoring tools for efficient trade facilitation implementation; supporting regional trade facilitation initiatives; supporting countries in reviewing trade facilitation preparedness in crisis situations; and finally assisting countries in greening trade facilitation reforms through focusing on climate-smart trade facilitation procedures.

459. The success of the programme is largely due to the focus on building and sustaining national capacity through knowledge and technology transfer. In this respect the close collaboration with national partners and donors, as well as strong South-South collaborative learning focus are key success factors. This is inter alia done through regular webinars between partner countries sharing good practice cases. Moreover, the program also relies on an integrated collaborative approach with other fields of expertise within UNCTAD, working on the crossroads of trade facilitation with customs and trade automation, e-commerce, e-governance, transport, business facilitation and non-tariff measures, as well as with external partners such as United Nations regional commissions, United Nations country teams, the International Trade Centre, the World Bank, the World Trade Organization, the World Customs Organization, the Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation and a host of other international and regional organizations.

460. **Outputs.** During 2023, UNCTAD issued 1,100 training certificates to trade facilitation stakeholders (around 50 per cent of these were women) from 70 countries (Abu Dhabi, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Benin, Plurinational State of Bolivia, Botswana,

Burkina Fasso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Dominica, Ecuador, Egypt, Eswatini, Equatorial Guinea, Fiji, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Honduras, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kiribati, Kyrgyzstan, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Maldives, Mali, Mongolia, Namibia, Nauru, Niger, Nigeria, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, Rwanda, Salomon Islands, Samoa, Sao Tomé and Príncipe, Somalia, St. Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and Grenadines, Senegal, Sierre Leone, Tajikistan, United Republic of Tanzania, Timor-Leste , Togo, Tonga, Tuvalu, Uganda, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Zambia and Zimbabwe) through its empowerment programme. Participants were members of national trade facilitation committees; secretariat staff and other staff of relevant entities involved with trade facilitation and representing both public (80 per cent) and private sectors and academia (20 per cent). In 2022, the UNCTAD e-learning platform recorded more than 160,000 downloads.

461. In addition, UNCTAD supports trade facilitation reforms at regional levels. This includes work with the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the East African Community (EAC), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Latin American Integration Association (ALADI), the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER) Plus and the Central American Economic Integration Secretariat (SIECA). As an example, UNCTAD has for several years been advising the EAC on a regional trade facilitation strategy and how to align and harmonize this strategy with national policies through NTFCs.

462. **Results and impacts.** UNCTAD's hybrid capacity building approach in trade facilitation, largely focused on supporting NTFCs with professional digitalized management tools, continues to be highly appreciated according to the beneficiary countries.

463. Seventy countries and national trade facilitation committees received assistance from UNCTAD during 2023 in the area of trade facilitation. This included inter alia the drafting or implementing key trade facilitation policy documents, such as international standards, legal instruments, procedures, Terms of Reference and work plans of NTFCs, etc.

464. Nine implementation notifications were sent to the WTO Trade Facilitation Committee in 2023 by countries that had received UNCTAD technical assistance in the preparation of those notifications.

465. For the Reform Tracker, users made 80,337 page visits and 252 TFA reforms were marked as completed.

466. The relevance and importance of UNCTAD work on trade facilitation is reflected in the following testimonials of stakeholders:

(a) "I am expressing here, our deepest and most sincere gratitude to UNCTAD on behalf of our National Coalition for Advancing Trade Facilitation and Chairman Matt Walters. The enormous effort and task which UNCTAD have contributed in bringing us the wonderful and brilliant trade facilitation courses should not go unnoticed. We should appreciate, embrace and apply what we have all learned in our daily work routines to effect continuous and effective change in our country's trade facilitation progressive image." Representative of National Coalition for Advancing Trade Facilitation, Dominica, 2023.

(b) "The Reform Tracker has significantly strengthened project management and the implementation of trade facilitation measures in Honduras, especially within the framework of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement. In recent years, the Reform Tracker has been a crucial digital tool in advancing and achieving goals in a timely manner, by automating the distribution of tasks and the coordinated implementation of key trade facilitation initiatives. Moreover, the Reform Tracker facilitates the engagement, communication, and participation of all stakeholders operating at the border, both from the public and private sectors." Trade Facilitation Coordinator and Negotiator of Customs Procedures and Trade Facilitation, Vice Ministry of Economic Integration and Foreign

Trade, Ministry of Economic Development, Technical Secretariat and representative of the National Trade Facilitation Committee of Honduras (CONFACO), 2023.

(c) “Thanks to UNCTAD’s support the simplification process has reduced the administrative cost, saving businesses approximately 62 per cent of the total cost for the procedures involved.” Acting Chief Executive Officer, KenTrade, 2023.

C4 ASYCUDA – Automated System for Customs Data

Table C4
ASYCUDA – Automated System for Customs Data

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
AFG/0T/HBU3	Afghanistan Fiscal Performance Improvement Support Project (FSP)	2018–	UNDP
AFG/0T/LAB	Supporting Community Resilience Programming Strategy (ABADEI Strategy)	2021–	One United Nations Fund
AFG/0T/LAV	Afghanistan’s Private Sector Capacities and Capabilities for Food Security	2022–	One United Nations Fund
ALB/0T/LBL	ASYHUB & ASYCUDA World systems in the Albanian Customs Administration	2023–	Albania
ANT/0T/KBC	ASYCUDA World Upgrade in Antigua & Barbuda	2021–	European Commission
ARU/0T/KAY	ASYCUDA World Consolidation at the Aruba Customs and Excise Department	2021–	Aruba
BAR/0T/CAA	ASYCUDA World Implementation in Barbados	2013–	Barbados
BAR/0T/JBM	Electronic single window	2021–	Barbados
BDI/0T/KAV	Projet d’Appui au Renforcement de Capacités de l’Office Burundais des Recettes	2022–	African Development Bank
BGD/0T/FAC	ASYCUDA World – ASYCUDA Support Mechanism for Asia	2016–	Bangladesh
BKF/0T/KAO	SYDONIA World Burkina Faso	2022–	Burkina Faso
CAF/0T/JBF	SYDONIA World implementation Central African Republic	2021–	European Union
CHD/0T/JAQ	Assistance technique pour la migration à SYDONIA World et pour la mise en œuvre de la réforme douanière	2021–	World Bank
CMB/0T/KAS	Improving Small Package e-Trade for SMEs (SeT4SME)	2022–	Swisscontact
CMB/0T/MAF	For customization deployment & piloting of a solution for pre-arrival/departure processing for Express consignments	2023–	Germany GIZ
COI/0T/LAG	Power of Data Revolution Comoros	2022–	One United Nations fund
CVI/0T/MAS	Digital Cabo Verde Project SYDONIA	2023–	Cabo Verde

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
DJI/0T/LBF	Projet du corridor économique régional de Djibouti	2022–	Djibouti
DRC/0T/MAD	RDC: Renforcement de l'environnement électronique de la DGDA	2023–	Democratic Republic of the Congo
ELS/0T/JAN	ASYCUDAWorld - El Salvador	2021–	El Salvador
EQG/0T/EAM	Mise en place du SYDONI World à la Direction Générale des Douanes (DGD)	2016–	Equatorial Guinea
GAB/0T/DAH	Mise en œuvre de SYDONIA World	2018–	Gabon
GAM/0T/HAJ	Implementation of ASYCUDA World in the Gambia	2019–	Gambia
GEO/0T/JAR	Development and implementation of new computerized transit system of revenue service	2021–	European Union
GUI/0T/BCX	Implementation de SYDONIA World	2013–	African Development Bank
HAI/0T/DAO	Consolidation of ASYCUDA World and Simplification of Customs Procedures and Operations in Haiti	2014–	Haiti
IRQ/0T/KAA	Iraq: Modernization of Customs	2021–	Iraq
IVC/0T/4BV	Mise en place de SYDONIAWORLD a la Direction Générale des Douanes	2005–	Côte d'Ivoire
JAM/0T/KAN	ASYCUDA World Upgrade Project at the Jamaica Customs Agency	2023–	Jamaica
JOR/0T/JBN	Trade for employment: Accelerating the clearance process through the use of ASYCUDA World	2021–	Germany GIZ
KAZ/0T/KAE	Technical Support & Upgrade of IS ASTANA-1	2021–	Kazakhstan
LEB/0T/5BK	Implementation of ASYCUDAWorld in Lebanon	2005–	Lebanon - UNDP
LIR/0T/8CD	ASYCUDA project - Liberia	2008–	Liberia
MAU/0T/CAD	Projet de Modernisation des Douanes de la République Islamique de Mauritanie	2013–	Mauritania
MDV/0T/GBK	ASYCUDA Support Mechanism for the Asia Region (ASMA)	2018–	TradeMark Africa
MDV/0T/KBI	Development of an API for the exchange of customs import declarations and other payments	2021–	Asian Development Bank
MLI/0T/KAG	Renforcement de SYDONIAWorld Mali	2021–	Mali
MLI/0T/LBE	Southern Africa Trade and Connectivity Malawi	2022–	Malawi

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
MOL/0T/KAP	Contribution Agreement between UNCTAD and EBRD on Digitalization of Customs Service of Moldova	2021–	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
MOL/0T/LBB	Development & Implementation of the National Transit System (NTS) of the Customs	2023–	European Union
MON/0T/LBA	Mongolia Digitalisation of Customs Services	2022–	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
MOZ/0T/KAC	eCITES in Mozambique	2021–	Mozambique
NCA/0T/HBZ	Implémentation de SYDONIA World en Nouvelle Calédonie	2020–	New Caledonia
NEP/0T/GAU	ASYCUDA Support Mechanism for Asia	2017–	UNOPS
NER/0T/JAL	ASYCUDA World, phase III	2021–	Niger
PSE/0T/KBM	Strengthen the use of ASYCUDAWorld in Palestine	2022–	Palestine
SIL/0T/GAH	Public Financial Management Improvement and Consolidation Project	2017–	Sierra Leone
SPM/0T/DAF	ASYCUDA World Implementation in Saint Pierre et Miquelon	2014–	Saint Pierre et Miquelon
STV/0T/MBE	ASYCUDA Electronic Single Window for Trade in St Vincent and the Grenadines	2023–	St Vincent and the Grenadines
SUD/0T/JBT	MOA on ASYCUDAWorld Support Mechanism Sudan	2021–	Sudan
SUR/0T/LBD	Strengthening Customs Management Capacity in the Suriname Customs & Excise Department- ASYCUDA World Consolidation	2022–	Suriname
SYP/0T/4BP	Implementation of ASYCUDA World in the Syrian Customs Directorate	2004–	Syrian Arab Republic
TAJ/0T/KBB	Phase four of the Central Asia Regional Links Programme (CARS-4) Tajikistan	2022–	Tajikistan
TIM/0T/HCR	Implementation of the Trade Single Window System for Timor-Leste (TL-TSWS)	2020–	Timor-Leste
TOG/0T/KAT	Mission d'assistance technique pour la modernisation de Sydonia World	2021–	Togo
TOG/0T/LBR	ASYCUDA UPU project in Togo	2023–	Togo
TUK/0T/JAF	Implementation of single window for import and export operations	2021–	UNDP - Turkmenistan

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
UGA/0T/HCH	Uganda Electronic Single Window – Phase II	2019–	Uganda
VAN/0T/HBJ	Technical Consulting Services Agreement (Vanuatu ESWS)	2019–	Vanuatu
VEN/0T/ICE	ASYCUDAWorld Support to the SENIAT – Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	2021–	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)
VEN/0T/LBN	ASYCUDAWorld Support to the SENIAT - Venezuela new version 4.3.3	2023–	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)
VEN/0T/MAC	ASYCUDAWorld Support to the SENIAT - Venezuela	2023–	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)
YEM/0T/8BT	ASYCUDAWorld Project in Yemen	2021–	Yemen
ZAM/0T/MAK	Enhancement of ASYCUDAWorld Zambia	2023–	COMESA
ZIM/0T/JBB	Zimbabwe Electronic Single Window	2021–	Zimbabwe
INT/0T/FAK	Support to the Centre of Excellence, Gibraltar	2017–	National Governments
INT/0T/HCP	Enhancement of the aCITES system	2019–	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
INT/0T/IBB	Enabling PaP and PdP of ocean cargo through digital B2B exchange between ASYCUDA-GIZ	2020–	Germany GIZ
INT/0T/ICD	Evaluation and Improvement of the Regional transit (SIGMAT) interconnectivity in ECOWAS Region	2021–	World Bank
INT/0T/LBO	Enabling Pre-Arrival and Pre-Departure processing of Express consignments through digital B2G exchange between ASYCUDAWorld and express operator’s platforms	2022–	Germany GIZ
INT/9X/89S	Support for ASYCUDA implantation activities	1988–	Multi-donors
RAF/0T/IAA	COMESA Trade Facilitation Programme	2019–	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
RAF/0T/KAQ	Implementation of ASYATO in selected African countries	2021–	International Trade Centre
RAS/0T/1DA	ASYCUDA Support Mechanism for the	2002–	Multi-donors

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
	Pacific (ASMP)		
RAS/OT/DBT	ASYCUDA Support Mechanism for Asia	2015–	Sri Lanka
RAS/OT/IAK	The Implementation of the Pacific Trade and Customs Harmonization Project	2019–	Australia
RAS/OT/JBO	Improving Pacific Islands Customs and Trade (IMPACT)	2021–	European Union
RLA/OT/3AD	ASYCUDA Regional Support Centre for the Americas and Africa	2003–	National Governments
ROA-2326 (F15)	Automated System for Relief Emergency Consignments for innovative coordination and facilitation of relief consignments in times of disaster in the Pacific region	2023–	Development Account

467. **Development Context.** The ASYCUDA Programme is directed at reforming, streamlining and automating the customs clearance process, increasing trade facilitation and strengthening the institutions in member States and the capacities of its personnel. An efficient and effective customs administration is essential to the welfare of any country as it benefits the national economy by collecting revenue, assists the Government in implementing national and international trade policy, protects the country by combating fraud and the illegal trafficking of prohibited and restricted goods, provides statistical information on foreign trade transactions essential for economic planning and supports international trade needs.

468. The ASYCUDA programme is committed to providing sustained support for development, both in-country and remotely. Over a period of 42 years, it has supported the changing and evolving needs, addressed challenges of the customs administrations of 128 countries and territories, and facilitated their international trade. Having originated as a means of helping countries build and utilize the data collected at customs ports of entry through databases, the Programme's scope has gradually widened to helping countries manage their economic and financial analysis and planning, as well as to assisting the private sector in doing business and including Partner Governmental Agencies (PGAs) in the automation and streamlining of their procedures. It has also expanded in terms of the customs management functions that it supports, from the initial data capture (now uploaded via the Internet) to assisting countries and territories in monitoring trade crossing inwards and outwards of their borders, interfacing customs with PGAs for exchange of information, making available trade statistics, measuring institutional and trade facilitation benchmarks, and producing data critical to risk management analysis and enhancing the operational performance of customs and its integrity as an institution.

469. As an outcome of the fifteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the mandate of the ASYCUDA programme is reflected in paragraph 127 (c) of the Bridgetown Covenant, as it was in the Nairobi Maafikiano (paragraph 38 (p)). The document states that UNCTAD should "continue to provide assistance to developing countries to design and implement policies and actions aimed at improving the efficiency of trade transactions as well as the management of transport operations; it should also continue to cooperate with member States in implementing the Automated System for Customs Data" (ASYCUDA). The Fifth Committee of the General Assembly, in document A/C.5/64/L.23, also refers to the programme when it encourages the Secretary-General of UNCTAD "in supporting the strengthening of regional economic integration in Africa by providing, within the allocation to the Conference, technical assistance and capacity-building in the areas of trade, customs and infrastructure" (paragraph 82). In the Doha Mandate, specific reference is made to the programme's work, reaffirming, inter alia, the importance and role of the ASYCUDA programme in supporting developing countries, particularly landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, and in

continuing its trade facilitation work. The mandate states that UNCTAD should “assist developing countries, particularly landlocked developing countries and transit developing countries, and some countries with economies in transition, to address challenges affecting their participation in trade from geographical constraints, with a view to improving transport systems and connections, designing and implementing resilient and sustainable transport systems, and enhancing transit infrastructure and trade facilitation solutions”, “continue its work in the field of trade facilitation, including the Automated System for Customs Data programme” and “advise small island developing States on the design and implementation of policies addressing their specific trade and trade logistics challenges linked to their remoteness and geographical isolation” (paragraphs 56 (h), (i) and (j)). General Assembly resolution 70/1 recognizes “that baseline data for several targets remains unavailable,” and calls “for increased support for strengthening data collection and capacity-building in Member States, to develop national and global baselines where they do not yet exist” (paragraph 57). The resolution also makes reference to the need to “support developing countries, particularly African countries, least developed countries, small island developing States and landlocked developing countries, in strengthening the capacity of national statistical offices and data systems to ensure access to high-quality, timely, reliable and disaggregated data” (paragraph 76). In relation to General Assembly resolution 70/1, it is worthy to note the UNCTAD Automated System for Customs Data Software Suite is being implemented in 38 African countries and territories, 39 Least Developed Countries, 34 Small Island Developing States and 21 Landlocked Developing Countries, which makes it a unique possibility as a base repository for the extraction of trade and customs related data to strengthen statistical capacity and to support trade policymakers.

470. Links to SDGs. The use of the ASYCUDA system by customs administrations contributes to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, as explained below:

(a) Goal 1. No poverty: customs’ contribution to national revenue through revenue collections, and the subsequent investment of revenues into national development programmes;

(b) Goal 2. Improving the food security and food safety through strengthening customs and inter-agency controls at the borders, automation of issuance and monitoring of use of phytosanitary and veterinary certificates, integrated quota monitoring for agricultural exports and imports;

(c) Goal 3. Ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being, in particular targets 3a and 3d, by automating customs control of movement of excisable goods and by strengthening of customs and inter-agency controls at the borders of pharmaceutical products, drugs precursors, introduction of electronic certificates for pharmaceutical goods and their efficient control in the single window environment;

(d) Goal 5. Gender Equality, in particular target 5.5, by respecting gender parity and empowering women in the appointment of ASYCUDA staff in the field, and by promoting and recommending gender parity and women’s empowerment in customs local teams.

(e) Goal 6. Clean water and sanitation, in particular target 6.3, by improving water quality through reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimizing release of hazardous chemicals and materials, as customs apply in their controls the international conventions of Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm;

(f) Goal 8. Decent work and economic growth: customs make a key contribution to facilitating trade, enabling access to global value chains, innovation and employment opportunities;

(g) Goal 9. Industry, innovation and infrastructure, in particular targets 9.1, 9.3 and 9.c: the use of ASYCUDA by customs, which has always combined state-of-the-art advanced technologies with proven in-the-field expertise, ensures an efficient and tailored support to countries thus contributing to their ICT infrastructure development and upgrade, including the simplification of customs processes, sustainable modernization and automation initiatives promoting early taking of ownership by governments. This contributes towards lowering the international market’s barriers to entry for Small and

Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs)/Small and Medium-Sized Industries (SMIs) and to improving regional and cross-border infrastructure, especially in the least developed countries and Africa;

(h) Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, in particular targets 11.2, 11.5, 11.b: technical assistance in the area of customs promotes the development of customs and trade infrastructure (ports, logistics terminals, warehouses, supply chains in cities), while the use of ASYREC in disaster-prone countries reduces the loss of lives through implementation of integrated policies and plans increasing resilience to disasters;

(i) Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns: customs makes a key contribution through more efficient customs and inter-agency controls over chemicals export and import;

(j) Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts: customs administrations using ASYCUDA can improve control for ozone depleting substances. One of the main objectives of implementing ASYCUDA is to reduce the use of paper in Government agencies until disappearance;

(k) Goal 15. Life on land, in particular targets 15.5, 15.7 and 15.c: customs contributes to protecting society from unwanted pests and preventing the flow of illicit wildlife products by applying health and agricultural policies, and the International Plant Protection Convention; customs also helps to take urgent actions to end poaching and trafficking of protected species of flora and fauna and address both demand and supply of illegal wildlife products by applying the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Indeed, in 2019, ASYCUDA developed in cooperation with CITES an automated solution for endangered species import/export permit application, processing, issuance and reporting;

(l) Goal 16. Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, in particular target 16.5, through the use of ASYCUDA systems, automation of processes and reduced face-to-face interaction, customs contributes to reducing corruption and bribery.

(m) Goal 17. Partnerships for the Goals, in particular targets 17.1, 17.6, 17.8, 17.9, and 17.18, through the use of ASYCUDA system: customs contributes, by applying international standards and trade-related agreements, and by collaborating with other national authorities, countries and international agencies such as the World Customs Organization, to increased efficiency and coordination, strengthened resource mobilization and trade facilitation and statistics, which in turn contributes to ensuring sustainable development. In addition, the ASYCUDA programme organizes a multitude of study tours and technical and functional training sessions for customs delegations to visit and learn from experiences of implementing a new technology and/or a new infrastructure in other parts of the world, directly contributing to North–South and South–South international and regional cooperation, ensuring capacity-building and transfer of know-how.

471. **Objectives and features.** The main objective of the ASYCUDA programme is the modernization of customs and of Partner Governmental Agencies for trade facilitation, using information technology to speed up and simplify the goods clearance process, encourage international trade, reduce/eliminate the use of paper, monitor and track goods along the supply chain while preserving the environment and promoting green customs procedures. The ASYCUDA system manages the entire customs clearance process, from (and prior to) the arrival of goods up to their warehousing and ultimate release, after payment of duties and taxes. It includes an advanced risk-management and selectivity function and strong anti-corruption features. The implementation of an ASYCUDA project in a beneficiary country is based on the delivery of a comprehensive capacity-building programme, designed to transfer the full ASYCUDA functional and technical know-how to national staff and to ensure that the national team will be able to administer and maintain the national ASYCUDA system without external technical assistance and support.

472. **Outputs.** In 2023, ASYCUDAWorld was launched or upgraded to its latest version in Antigua and Barbuda, Cambodia, the Central African Republic, Georgia, Iraq, Malawi, Niue, Suriname, Tajikistan and Vanuatu. Countries such as Cabo Verde, Jamaica,

Kazakhstan, Marshall Islands, Palau, Venezuela, Zambia and Zimbabwe started preparing for the launch or upgrade of ASYCUDAWorld in 2023 by procuring new equipment and servers, installing and configuring a prototype, and delivering training to the users.

473. In 2023, in Antigua and Barbuda and Chad, ASYCUDA and Customs implemented an e-payment functionality in their respective ASYCUDAWorld systems. Cambodia and Vanuatu Customs with the assistance of ASYCUDA implemented an interface to exchange electronic data between their respective ASYCUDAWorld system and the Universal Postal Union's Customs Declaration System (CDS) for the processing of postal consignments before arrival. In Moldova, ASYCUDA and Customs implemented the pre-arrival processing for postal and express consignments. In Niger and Zambia, ASYCUDA in cooperation with the International Air Transport Association (IATA) integrated the cargo-XML solution within their respective ASYCUDAWorld system for airlines, freight forwarders and shippers to exchange air cargo electronic information with customs authorities in advance. In Suriname, Customs implemented an Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) programme within ASYCUDAWorld. In Fiji, ASYCUDA presented a Single Window concept which was validated by the trading community. A blueprint was handed to the Deputy Prime Minister. Turkmenistan and Zimbabwe launched their ASYCUDA-based Single Window for Trade.

474. **Results and impacts.** In Afghanistan, more than 50,000 trucks delivered humanitarian supplies speedily to people across the country thanks to ASYCUDAWorld and its exemption module.

475. Gambia Customs revenue collection increased by 23 per cent from 2022 to 2023.

476. The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation⁹¹ which assesses trade facilitation and paperless trade, rewarded Jamaica a score of 80 per cent in 2023 compared to 51 per cent in 2021.

477. In Moldova, a new IT functionality of ASYCUDA system allows the export of domestic products to be validated in 15 minutes.

478. In Sri Lanka, eCITES (the system developed by ASYCUDA in cooperation with CITES for the monitoring of international trade of endangered species of fauna and flora) processed more than 1,000 permits in 2023 with a rejection rate of approximately 6 per cent. Processing time was reduced from 5 days in 2020 to 43 hours in 2023 (65 per cent reduction).

479. In Timor-Leste, within the context of the implementation of the ASYCUDA-based Single Window, the vehicle import approval has gone 100 per cent paperless, saving more than 5,000 sheets of paper in 2023.

480. In Togo, Customs revenue increased by 5 per cent from 2022 to 2023.

481. In Tonga, within the context of the implementation of ASYCUDAWorld, the Manifest module has allowed data to be available 12 hours before the arrival of shipments. Combined with the Just In Time methodology, it has led to 14 per cent reduction in fuel consumption and GHG (greenhouse gas) emissions.

C5 Statistics

Table C5
Statistics

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
INT/OT/KBF	Development of an Information System for Trade in Healthy Food	2021–	World Health Organization

⁹¹ See <https://www.untfsurvey.org/>

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
INT/0T/LAY	Compilation framework for an extended and enhanced Global Transport Costs Dataset on International Trade (GTCDIT)	2022–	World Bank
RAF/0T/BCR	Projet UEMOA-CNUCED pour la mise en place des statistiques du commerce international des services	2014–	Union Economique et Monétaire Ouest Africaine
ROA-2023 (D12)	Data and statistics for more gender-responsive trade policies in Africa, Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia	2020–	Development Account
ROA-2023 (K12)	Statistics and data for measuring illicit financial flows in the Asia-Pacific region	2020–	Development Account
ROA-2124 (A13)	Towards integrated national financing framework	2021–	Development Account
ROA-2326 (D15)	Quantifying South-South cooperation to mobilize funds for the Sustainable Development Goals	2023–	Development Account
ROA-2326 (M15)	Measuring and curbing illicit financial flows	2023–	Development Account

482. **Development context.** Harnessing the power of data and statistics is a necessary condition to fully implement and monitor progress on the Sustainable Development Goals. This is true for all areas of sustainable development, and particularly for development support where measurement of South-South cooperation flows, both financial and in-kind, helps governments manage and mobilize resources and in areas of persisting gaps such as in women's economic empowerment, where UNCTAD helps governments gain insights on gender equality in trade, or to analyze the role of trade in ensuring the availability of healthy food. Countries require accurate, timely and relevant statistics that allow the monitoring of progress, including inclusive development, productive capacities, and technological readiness, among many other areas, on which UNCTAD provides statistics and capacity support. UNCTAD Statistics assists developing countries to improve their statistical capacity to measure various aspects of trade and development.

483. The global landscape of international development cooperation is undergoing a transformative shift, and the role of development support is critical as the world surpasses the halfway mark to achieving the SDGs by 2030. South-South cooperation can play an essential role, alongside other development support, in enhancing development efforts and results through mutual sharing of good practices, pooling resources, and exchanging know-how between countries of the global South. Thanks to the joint efforts of the Global South, for the first time, there is now a global, voluntary Conceptual Framework to measure South-South Cooperation. It feeds a related Sustainable Development Goals indicator 17.3.1, which UNCTAD was invited to be a co-custodian for to coordinate global reporting of data on South-South cooperation.

484. Higher shipping and transport costs in general are particularly detrimental for LDCs and SIDS, and their engagement in global trade. This higher effort is partly due to the greater distances that goods must travel in many developing countries, particularly in landlocked economies and small island nations, which are farther from global markets. This also leads to higher consumer prices. New information available in the UN Comtrade enables closer analysis of transport costs be it by air, road, sea or rail, and therefore, enables the estimation of emissions from transport taking place as part of global trade of goods.

485. Among nine Sustainable Development Goals indicators UNCTAD is a custodian of, illicit financial flows (IFFs) pose serious threats to sustainable development by diverting resources from essential social and health spending and productive investment and by impeding structural transformation. They also weaken institutions and the rule of law. These risks have been recognized in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and its target 16.4 to reduce IFFs. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda also highlights IFFs as a threat to the sufficient resources for development and calls for a redoubling of efforts to substantially reduce IFFs.

486. Global trade can help ensure a sufficient supply of nutrients and enable countries to have a healthier diet. This is because trade allows the countries to access a larger variety of food, thus enabling them to have a more nutritionally balanced diet. Studies show that global trade can balance food supply and demand across regions and smooth out nutrient intake across countries, but also that low-income countries are the first to fall into food and nutrition insecurity as supply chains get interrupted. It is important to have better evidence to analyze trade in healthy food or processed food items to understand the overall health effects.

487. International trade influences the employment and business opportunities, income, social status, welfare and equality of women and men in various ways. Data and statistics have not been collected and produced systematically about how women and men participate in international trade and how it affects them, and how the benefits of trade are shared. Therefore, it is difficult to design gender-responsive policies that address gaps in women's empowerment in international trade.

488. **Objectives and features.** UNCTAD Statistics supports the countries' capacity to monitor and report progress along the Sustainable Development Goals, with a particular focus on trade and the interrelated issues of finance, technology, investment, and sustainable development.

489. E-learning courses, carried out by UNCTAD TrainForTrade and Statistics jointly with UN Statistics Division and the World Trade Organization, aims to build national capacities to collect, harmonize, analyze, and disseminate statistics related to international trade of goods and services. Furthermore, the capacity development project carried out by UNCTAD Statistics jointly with the Western African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) previously, developed a trade-in-services statistics information system which can be adjusted for use by national statistical authorities of any interested country.

490. As a co-custodian of Sustainable Development Goals indicator 17.3.1 entrusted with hosting countries' Framework to measure South-South cooperation, UNCTAD aims to strengthen the capacity of developing countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America to measure and report the contribution of South-South Cooperation to progress in the 2030 Agenda and towards more inclusive and sustainable economic growth. The project is carried out in close cooperation with the UN Regional Commissions which take the regional leadership and building on country-owned mechanisms and their national data.

491. UNCTAD hosts the global trade matrix compiled from UN Comtrade data and has developed methods for the compilation of bilateral trade flow datasets. As new information on the mode of transport became available in official national data reported to the UN Comtrade, UNCTAD launched a project supported by the World Bank to provide the first comprehensive global picture of the transport that enables trade, including the costs associated with moving different products between economies.

492. UNCTAD, as a co-custodian of Sustainable Development Goals indicator 16.4.1 with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), is supporting a global capacity development project with all UN Regional Commissions, led by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) to measure and curb IFFs with internationally comparable methods, and enhance investigative and analytical capacities to develop evidence-based policy responses to monitor and curb illicit financial flows. This follows up on the project of UNCTAD and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) which ended up engaging in country pilots with eleven interested African countries who were able to measure selected types of IFFs with existing data, and the project with the Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) with five country pilots.

493. UNCTAD, with the support of the World Health Organization, aims to develop a database on trade in foods classified by their processing level to enable more granular analysis of the health effects of international food trade across countries and over time. The data will be based on the trade flows on identified goods as reported in the United Nations Comtrade.

494. UNCTAD Statistics also helps countries link national statistical data for new insights on gender equality in trade. These indicators inform gender-sensitive trade policy towards enabling better outcomes for women and men. These statistics can also be used to analyze the gendered impacts of COVID-19 and future crises transferred through trade. Having reliable and comparable statistics on gender and trade is a prerequisite for action and reviewing progress towards inclusive trade policy and equitable economic development as part of the 2030 Agenda.

495. **Outputs.** Two global e-learning courses on merchandise and services trade statistics were offered in 2023 as in previous years with great success. The participants in all courses involve statisticians from national statistical institutes, customs offices and different ministries that participate in the collection, analysis and dissemination of international trade statistics.

496. In July 2023, UNCTAD held the first inter-regional expert meeting on the Framework to measure South-South cooperation in Brasilia with the participation of 16 member States and several international and regional organizations. The event launched the development of a Manual to fill the Framework with country-owned data on South-South cooperation.

497. In 2023, UNCTAD finalized the first transport cost dataset which covers the value and volume of merchandise trade, along with the costs of transport per shipment between over 170 economies from 2016 to 2021. The data, broken down by commodity group, country and mode of transport, provides a suite of derived indicators such as freight rates and transport cost intensities by value and volume. This dataset was launched to the public at the first Global Supply Chain Forum, hosted by Barbados, in May 2024.

498. In 2023, UNCTAD released a publication titled 'Towards a statistical framework for the measurement of tax and commercial illicit financial flows' to share the results of the work carried out under the auspices of UNCTAD and UNODC as co-custodians for the indicator of inward and outward illicit financial flows with a particular focus on tax and commercial flows. It is grounded on the Conceptual Framework for the Statistical Measurement of Illicit Financial Flows developed by UNCTAD and UNODC, in consultation with an International Task Force on the Statistical Measurement of Illicit Financial Flows and other partners. In 2023, the first-ever data on crime-related IFFs were reported to SDG indicator 16.4.1, and in September, UNCTAD hosted an interregional workshop to launch the global follow-up project.

499. In 2023, six countries, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Cameroon, Kenya, Senegal, and Zimbabwe, pilot tested UNCTAD's Conceptual Framework to measure gender equality in trade after a four-year capacity development effort carried out jointly with ECA and the economic Europe (ECE). All six countries were able to compile new indicators of gender equality in trade by linking and reusing existing data. The resulting methodology is now delineated in UNCTAD's 'Compilation guidelines for measurement of gender-in-trade statistics', published in August 2023.

500. UNCTAD finalized the development of a trade in processed food database in a joint project with the World Health Organization. Through a series of working meetings, the agencies validated a classification of food items by the level of processing, which was used to derive a dedicated database. The results of the work are enshrined in an UNCTAD publication on 'Trade in processed food' to enable comprehensive understanding of food markets and nutritional access and inform nutrition-related trade policies.

501. **Results and impacts.** In 2023, e-learning courses, offered by Statistics and TrainForTrade on international merchandise trade statistics trained 1 061 statisticians (42 per cent women) from 144 economies and 1 433 participants (42 per cent women) from 160 economies benefitted from e-learning courses on international trade in services

statistics. Since 2016, over 11 000 participants have been trained on these two courses. These courses have been in high demand by developing countries but are also increasingly attended by developed countries. The satisfaction rate of participants has been increasing, from 76 per cent in 2017 to 90 per cent in 2023.

502. In 2023, eight Western African countries were applying UNCTAD's trade-in-services statistics information system (TiSSTAT) and it serves now as a modern tool for online data collection from businesses which reduces their burden to respond to this complex statistical survey. The usefulness of TiSSTAT was enhanced by adding a separate module on trade in services in the travel. To scale up impact to other regions, UNCTAD Statistics and DITC engaged with Caribbean countries to plan a project to extend this system and to strengthen capacity for evidence-based policymaking and the economic resilience of the countries.

503. The UN General Assembly resolution A/RES/78/167 requested UNCTAD "to strengthen capacity-building on the initial voluntary conceptual framework for the measurement of South-South cooperation based on country-led mechanisms" and saw the Framework to measure South-South cooperation as a breakthrough, as also noted by the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation earlier in 2023. A global survey carried out by UNCTAD showed that up to 60 developing countries would be interested in starting to report data on South-South cooperation but request capacity development support. UNCTAD made an initial effort to develop a Manual to support countries while seeking resources to provide training and mechanisms for data reporting to meet country demand.

504. UNCTAD's transport cost dataset informs research, analysis and policy actions to enable more targeted action to alleviate the impacts of high transport costs on population and trade, and to design targeted measures to address emissions related to transport of traded goods. The early research shows that the COVID-19 pandemic caused a sustained rise in container shipping costs, leading to an increase in global consumer price by 1.6 per cent. The dataset also shows that transport costs are highest for many landlocked developing countries, LDCs and small island states, which could adversely affect their integration in global trade and affordability of goods for their citizens without adequate policy efforts and support. The data will help countries identify high transport costs, address bottlenecks and facilitate transport, port activity, trade flows. The dataset also directly supports multilateral negotiations on decarbonization of maritime transport at the International Maritime Organization and lends itself to global analysis of emissions from the transport of traded goods by mode.

505. United Nations General Assembly resolution 78/140 recalled the UNCTAD conceptual framework on illicit financial flows and noted "the availability of the first official estimates of illicit financial flows". The resolution invited UNCTAD and UNODC, as SDG indicator 16.4.1 custodians, "to continue developing concepts and refine methods developed to date and to provide stronger support to national authorities and invited all Member States to engage with the custodian agencies towards reporting data". Altogether, pilots carried out in 22 countries on three continents show the feasibility of measuring IFFs based on existing data. The September inter-regional workshop brought together 38 country experts along with 26 staff from partner organizations to share experience and launch a global project to track and curb IFFs with an additional 2–3 pilot countries per region.

506. In a previous joint SDG fund with Egypt, UNCTAD developed a methodology to estimate the cost of achieving Sustainable Development Goals which takes into account synergies and trade-offs of spending across sectors. This method was applied globally to 90 countries with data on selected Sustainable Development Goals indicators and government expenditure by sector in a UN-wide effort led by UNCTAD, UNDESA and UNDP. The effort to accelerate progress across six transition pathways and gender equality was closely coordinated with partner organizations, such as UN Women, IFAD, IMF, IEA, ILO, ITU, ESCWA, UNEP, UNESCO, UN-Habitat and UNICEF. The resulting cost estimates were released for 48 developing economies, including nine landlocked developing countries, eight small island developing states, and six least developed countries. The outcomes underscore the urgent need to align programming and budgeting more closely with the 2030 Agenda.

507. The pilots undertaken in Cameroon, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Senegal, and Zimbabwe shed light on gender gaps in trade and the role of women employees and entrepreneurs. The countries' experience shows the feasibility of gaining new insights on gender equality in trade simply by reusing data that already exists in the national statistical systems. The outcomes from all six pilot countries reaffirmed the existence of gender gaps, while also highlighting differences across countries. Countries shared their findings and lessons learned at the 9th UN Global Forum on Gender Statistics in August 2023, and the related wrap up workshop of the UNCTAD capacity development project. The resulting compilation guidelines can be used by any country to provide crucial insights to inform the development of more gender-responsive trade policies.

508. The UNCTAD Conceptual Framework for measuring gender equality in trade was also taken up by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics, as an example of mainstreaming gender across statistical domains. UNCTAD also co-led a special group on trade, gender, well-being, and inclusiveness as part of the update of the United Nations Trade Statistics Manuals and shared the resulting guidance for global consultation among all United Nations member States.

509. Finally, the UNCTAD collaboration with the World Health Organization resulted in enhanced capacity to analyze trade in processed food with an open source resource: a Trade Matrix of bilateral trade flows, exports and imports, and trade balances across processed food categories accompanied by an analytical report with technical analysis to offer insights into food trade. The dedicated website, publicly launched in January 2024, offers access to the trade matrix, related documentation, technical papers, and data visualizations.

C7 Enabling accounting and reporting on the private sector's contribution to implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals

Table C7

Enabling accounting and reporting on the private sector's contribution to implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
INT/0T/BAQ	Capacity Building in Investment for Development	2015–	Multi-donors
INT/0T/BCP	Accounting and Corporate Governance Trust Fund	2012–	Multi-donors
INT/0T/H CJ2	Strategic Partnership the Netherlands - (linked with THCE04) Business Facilitation	2018–	Kingdom of the Netherlands
INT/0T/MAR	Supporting the implementation of sustainability reporting standards in developing countries	2023–	Germany GIZ
ROA-2124 (A13)	Towards integrated national financing framework	2021–	Development Account

510. **Development context.** A high-quality corporate reporting environment is a critical facilitator for attracting investment, effectively allocating scarce resources, and promoting financial inclusion and stability. Over the past decades, there has been a clear trend towards the implementation of harmonized global standards and codes by member States of UNCTAD. Furthermore, because sustainability reporting is the basis for sustainable investments, the topic has gained more relevance with the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. At COP 26, the Chair of the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) Foundation Trustees announced the creation of the

International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB). In June 2023, the ISSB published two international standards on sustainability disclosure – S1 and S2 – which countries can adopt as voluntary standards for annual reporting periods beginning on or after 1st January 2024. However, they will soon become mandatory for listed companies in many jurisdictions worldwide. Consequently, member States will need to accelerate national efforts to establish or strengthen their regulations, institutions, and technical capacity to meet these new requirements.

511. Effective implementation of such standards and codes remains a challenge for many developing countries. Elements that have an impact on the corporate reporting environment include weaknesses in legal and regulatory frameworks, lack of human capacity and relevant support institutions, and obstacles to adequate monitoring and enforcement of international standards and codes. As such, there is a need for coherent efforts to support capacity-building in the area of corporate reporting, aiming to converge national corporate reporting environments with global standards and codes, including sustainability reporting. Member states require tools that facilitate identification of gaps through international benchmarking, the elaboration of action plans for accounting and sustainability reporting reform, and the measurement of progress in priority areas. Additionally, eight years after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and Addis Ababa Action Agenda, mobilization of sufficient finance remains a critical challenge in most countries.

512. **Objectives and features.** UNCTAD provides substantive support to the Intergovernmental Working Group of Experts on International Standards of Accounting and Reporting (ISAR). The Group of Experts was established with the mandate to assist member States of the United Nations in harmonizing their accounting and reporting practices with international standards and codes to improve governance of enterprises, enhance transparency, and facilitate international investment flows and strengthen financial stability. The Bridgetown Covenant, reaffirmed the relevance of UNCTAD’s work in the area of accounting and reporting in paragraph 127s, which calls on UNCTAD to “continue to advance UNCTAD work on international standards of accounting and reporting.”

513. Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, ISAR has been focusing its work on harmonization of companies reporting on their contribution to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Intergovernmental Working Group of Experts achieves this by facilitating intergovernmental consensus building towards convergence of corporate financial and sustainability reporting and in particular on sustainability reporting frameworks; facilitating international coordination and cooperation with the key players in this area; identifying and sharing good practices; developing practical guidance and capacity-building tools and providing technical assistance on issues related to both financial and sustainability reporting. Technical assistance is provided using UNCTAD tools, such as the Accounting Development Tool (ADT), the Guidance, Training Manual, and e-learning course on Core Indicators for Sustainability and SDG impact reporting.

514. The ADT enables beneficiary countries to voluntarily assess their corporate financial and sustainability reporting infrastructure, including their national institutions, regulations, human resources, and processes, against international requirements for high-quality corporate reporting. The Tool promotes an open and constructive dialogue among all stakeholders involved, which is essential for conducting successful accounting reforms. It provides a quantitative benchmark of a country’s position at a particular point in time and, when implemented more than once, allows countries to assess their progress towards achieving international best practices. The results of the Accounting Development Tool support the elaboration of national action plans and the identification of priority areas where further action is required in order to improve their corporate reporting environment.

Outputs

Intergovernmental Working Group of Experts on International Standards of Accounting and Reporting

515. The fortieth session of ISAR took place in conjunction with the 8th World Investment Forum (WIF), in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates from 17 to 19 October

2023. In accordance with the agreement reached among member States at the thirty-ninth session, the fortieth session of ISAR dealt with the following main agenda items:

(a) Review of practical implementation of and recent developments in sustainability reporting requirements; and

(b) Accounting and reporting needs of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises and the role of accounting and reporting in facilitating the formalization of businesses in the informal sector.

516. Two background papers were prepared by the UNCTAD secretariat on the main agenda items, and a series of panel discussions facilitated delegates' consideration of the key issues. With respect to the first main agenda item, the Group of Experts welcomed the publication of *Tackling the Sustainability Reporting Challenge: A Policy Guide* prepared by the UNCTAD secretariat. ISAR requested UNCTAD to continue its support to member States, particularly developing countries, in building capacity for the implementation of sustainability requirements, including through technical cooperation projects, and invited donors in a position to do so to support the secretariat in this endeavour. With respect to the second main agenda item, the Group of Experts requested the UNCTAD secretariat to continue conducting periodic reviews on the topic with a view to facilitating the sharing of good practices among member States on issues such as the simplification of accounting and reporting requirements for microenterprises; the promotion of financial literacy for microentrepreneurs; and capacity-building in accounting and reporting, within a broader framework of government initiatives on private sector development. On topics discussed under other business, the session called upon the UNCTAD secretariat to continue conducting further research on promoting gender equality in the accountancy profession.

517. To further promote sustainability reporting, the ISAR Honours 2023 Edition was also held during the fortieth session of ISAR. It highlighted key national and international initiatives on promotion and harmonization of sustainability/SDGs reporting by companies, with a view to raising awareness and disseminating best practices in this area. From a total of 70 nominee institutions, demonstrating over 15 per cent growth from the previous year, ISAR Honours recognized six honourees, three in the international category and three in the national category, as well as a special nomination presented in both categories. Efforts in dissemination and outreach of the program helped to facilitate application and recognition of honourees representing developing countries.

518. During the World Investment Forum 2023, UNCTAD co-organized parallel events to address pertinent issues. On 18 October 2023, the Value Balancing Alliance (VBA) conducted an interactive session on determining the positive and negative contribution of business activities to society. Additionally, on 16 October 2023, in parallel to the Forum, a Symposium was held to discuss considerations for developing sustainability reporting standards for the public sector. The event was jointly organized by UNCTAD and the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA). The symposium highlighted the importance of developing sustainability reporting standards specifically designed for entities in the public sector.

Technical assistance projects on sustainability reporting

519. In 2023, UNCTAD provided technical assistance aimed at supporting countries in their efforts to establish or strengthen their national sustainability reporting infrastructure and at promoting high quality sustainability reports by companies.

Regional partnerships

520. To assist countries in reinforcing sustainability reporting infrastructures, the Secretariat developed and promoted regional partnerships aimed at promoting sustainability reporting. The partnerships were established to foster mutual support among countries in their efforts to achieve the development of national strategies and policies to: a) establish and/or strengthen the national infrastructure to prepare high-quality sustainability reports by companies, b) increase the number of high-quality sustainability reports by companies, c) measure the contribution of the private sector to the implementation of the SDGs, and d) promote sustainable enterprise development.

521. The Latin American Partnership for the promotion of sustainability reporting (ARL) held its first meeting of 2023 virtually from 1 to 2 March. The meeting featured the participation of a representative from the ISSB in charge of the region who provided an update on ISSB activities and plans. A representative from UNCTAD also presented a series of policy options that countries can choose from to tackle the sustainability reporting challenge. Representatives from Colombia, Mexico, Uruguay, and the International Federation of Accountants provided valuable inputs to the discussions.

522. The second meeting of the ARL took place in a hybrid format on 17 July, in the context of the Ibero-American Sustainability Forum for Competitiveness. During the meeting, a representative from ISSB provided an overview of the new standards issues by ISSB. Moreover, the Partnership conducted an internal consultation to prepare a regional response to the ISSB's Request for Information on its work programme for the coming two years. Representatives from the Brazilian Committee for Sustainability Pronouncements and the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) provided updates on developments in their respective institutions.

523. The ARL organized a training session on implementation of sustainability reporting standards published by the ISSB. The meeting, held on 28 and 29 September 2023, also reviewed developments on assurance standards and sustainability reporting standards for the public sector. The session facilitated exchange of experiences among countries in the region, and participants discussed new sustainability disclosure standards for non-listed entities in Mexico. The event was attended by 58 participants, including 31 women, from 13 countries. Furthermore, the Regional Partnership elected its Chair for 2024.

524. In 2023, the African Regional Partnership (ARP) held two virtual and one hybrid meetings. The partnership experienced notable growth, expanding from a mere handful of members at its inception in early 2022 to 58 members representing 29 countries across the region. Membership was evenly distributed among the sub-regions.

525. The first meeting was held in hybrid format on 23 and 24 March 2023 in Lusaka, Zambia. It was conducted as a regional component of the Development Account 13th Tranche project entitled '*Toward Integrated National Financing Frameworks*'. Its major topic highlighted Impact investing in Zambia and corporate sustainability reporting for the implementation of SDGs in Africa. The workshop's main objective was to raise awareness on the significance of impact investing and build capacity on corporate sustainability reporting to mobilize the engagement of the private sector across the region on delivering on SDGs. The two-day workshop was attended by participants from the Government of Zambia, representatives of the ARP including UNCTAD and ECA. Fifty participants attended the workshop in-person, while 64 joined online. Women comprised 31 per cent of the workshop's attendees.

526. The second meeting was organized virtually on 7 July 2023. The meeting focused on three main agenda items including: (1) experiences by member countries on the application of UNCTAD's Accounting Development Tool (ADT), (2) the discussion on the ISSB's consultation on agenda priorities, including a live poll to collect feedback, and (3) discussion on administrative issues, mostly regarding the possibility of organizing an event of the ARP at the World Investment Forum 2023. The meeting was attended by 41 members of the Partnership, including 14 women.

527. The third meeting was organized in the format of a workshop on "Enhancing sustainability reporting to boost investment flows and developing green finance in Africa" held within the framework of the World Investment Forum on 20 October 2023. During the session, a wide range of topics were discussed, including how sustainability reporting can enable the boost of financial flows into the African region, highlighting the potential benefits of harmonized sustainability reporting standards and regulations. Best practices in facilitating impact investment in Africa and opportunities for collaboration among stakeholders to promote sustainable investment practices in the region were also presented. The meeting brought together over 25 national and regional stakeholders from the African continent. Members of the Latin American Regional Partnership – ARL also joined the meeting and proposed to develop a cooperation mechanism and maintain coordination of efforts at the interregional level.

Other activities in support of sustainability reporting infrastructure

528. *Mexico:* UNCTAD supported the strengthening of the sustainability reporting infrastructure for companies in Mexico, by providing policy advice to Mexican counterparts on the drafting of a sustainability reporting framework for SMEs, taking into consideration the GCI. A report containing an analysis of the sustainability information for MSMEs in Mexico and a list of recommendations were prepared.

529. *Cameroon:* UNCTAD continued providing technical assistance to Cameroon with the financial support of the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action of Germany. The primary objective of this pilot project is to support Cameroon in strengthening its sustainability reporting infrastructures to prepare for and adopt the new IFRS standards S1 and S2; to maximize impact in the regions through the Regional Partnerships for the promotion of sustainability reporting in Africa and Latin America; and to promote the exchange of lessons learned and good practices in the context of the World Investment Forum 2023 and the 40th session of ISAR. A kick-off meeting for Cameroon was organized on 20 December 2023, attended by 45 participants, marking the start of collaborative initiative between UNCTAD and the Ministry of Finance of Cameroon. The project will also play a crucial role in supporting the implementation of sustainability reporting standards in member countries of the Organization for the Harmonisation of Corporate Law (OHADA).

530. *Uganda:* UNCTAD continued the implementation of the Informality Management for Compliance and Revenue Mobilization (IMCORE) Programme on MSME formalization supported by the funds of Netherlands. In May 2023, a kick-off meeting was organized among all stakeholders. It was attended by 25 participants representing different sectors and organizations in Uganda. The objective of the meeting was to present the approach and collect feedback from key stakeholders to inform the second phase of UNCTAD's technical assistance to ensure the implementation of the IMCORE programme. In addition, UNCTAD conducted a field visit and organized bilateral meetings with the local SMEs representing tourism and academic sectors. This work resulted in a new concept note for developing a customized version of an e-accounting digital platform that supports formalization of the SMEs in Uganda.

531. *Kyrgyzstan:* A national consultative workshop took place in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan on 17 February 2023. During the meeting the consolidated results and a report of the assessment of the national reporting infrastructure in Kyrgyzstan were presented. The assessment was conducted with the support of the ADT Tool. The discussion held during the workshop helped to validate the findings and finalize the action plan aimed at advancing sustainability reporting practices in the country.

532. *Belarus:* In Belarus, UNCTAD organized a workshop on Enterprise Sustainability Reporting in Minsk on 16 June 2023, based on its Guidance on Core SDG Indicators. The objective of the training was to raise awareness among relevant national stakeholders about the requirements and global practice and procedures of sustainability reporting. The event was attended by 50 participants, with men comprising 24 per cent and women 76 per cent of the attendees.

533. A kick-off meeting was also organized virtually on 26 May 2023 to launch the evaluation of the reporting infrastructure based on the ADT Tool. It was attended by 49 stakeholders, with men comprising 23 per cent and women 77 per cent of the attendees. Following the completion of the evaluation phase, the ADT national workshop was held in Minsk on 5 October 2023. The workshop was dedicated to presenting the results of the assessment of the reporting infrastructure in the Republic of Belarus conducted in 2023, and to introducing recommendations for the next steps for the development of financial and sustainability reporting. The meeting was attended by more than 30 stakeholders, with men comprising 33 per cent and women 67 per cent of the attendees.

534. In addition, a Training of Trainers (TOT) on Accounting for Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) was organized on 14 December 2023 in Minsk, Belarus. The objective of the training was to provide technical assistance to the trainers in the implementation of the Accounting for MSMEs training course for business owners. The meeting was attended by 33 qualified accountants, with men comprising 28 per cent and

women 72 per cent of the attendees, representing local Professional Accountancy Organizations and businesses.

535. **Results and impact.** For over 40 years, the Intergovernmental Working Group of Experts has been providing member States with guidance and tools on a number of corporate reporting topics. These products have had a positive impact, assisting member States in implementing standards on financial and sustainability reporting and other internationally recognized practices, such as guidelines on corporate governance disclosure, and environmental and corporate social responsibility reporting.

536. The 40th session of ISAR attracted 410 registered participants from 101 countries. Feedback received from participants indicated that 95 per cent were very satisfied or satisfied with the substance of the session. ISAR is the largest expert meeting of UNCTAD and one of the longest standing groups of experts in the United Nations system. High attendance underscores its sustained relevance in shaping the international agenda in accounting and sustainability reporting, and its role in bringing the views of developing countries to the international standard-setting process.

537. The Group of Experts requested the UNCTAD secretariat to continue identifying lessons learned and best practices for strengthening national sustainability reporting infrastructures. This work is aimed at producing practical guidance for member States. Delegates highlighted the important role that regional partnerships can play in this process. The session commended the extensive work conducted during the intersessional period to support regional efforts on building and strengthening partnerships in Africa and Latin America. The objective of the effort has been aimed at promoting a common approach to sustainability reporting. In this context, delegates welcomed the initiative by the secretariat to develop a brief guide to establishing regional partnerships and maximizing their benefits.

538. The Group of Experts encouraged other regions to form such partnerships and called upon the secretariat to provide support. Following the successful examples of exiting partnerships, a number of members states expressed their interests in forming a Eurasian Regional Partnership on sustainability and SDG reporting. With respect to the implementation of the ADT, the session requested the UNCTAD secretariat to continue pursuing updates. This will include incorporating lessons learnt and widening the scope of the public sector component. Delegates encouraged the secretariat to facilitate further applications of the ADT, responding as much as possible to numerous requests made by member States. The session invited donors in a position to do so to support the secretariat in this endeavour.

539. UNCTAD plays a key role in helping the established regional partnerships support their members, including by sharing experiences, organizing capacity-building workshops on sustainability reporting, and making its materials, guidance, and tools available. The two inaugural partnerships launched in Africa and Latin America achieved considerable success, growing from 7 members in 2021 to 87 members, representing 43 countries in 2023, illustrating the relevance and effectiveness of the approach adopted. This success is further confirmed by an external independent evaluation which indicates “The creation of regional partnerships is identified as a good practice that should be replicated.” Additionally, member States at ISAR40 “Commend[ed] the UNCTAD secretariat for the support provided... to the regional partnerships for the promotion of sustainability reporting.” In response to a call by member States, UNCTAD worked throughout 2023 towards the establishment of regional partnerships in three additional regions: Asia, Eurasia and in countries of the Gulf region.

C8 Investment and public health

Table C8
Investment and Public Health

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
INT/OT/BAQ	Capacity Building in Investment for Development	2015–	Multi-donors
RAF/OT/LBH	Facilitating Investment & Partnerships for Vaccines Production in line with PAVM Framework for Action	2022–	Germany GIZ
ROA-2023 (F12)	Investment incentives for local production of essential antibiotics in East Africa	2020–	Development Account

540. **Development context.** Investing in health sectors of developing countries is crucial to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) for ensuring good health and well-being (SDG 3). The health sector covers the development and manufacturing of health commodities, such as medical supplies and equipment, pharmaceutical products and vaccines; and health services, such as laboratory services, hospitals and clinics. As such, achieving the SDGs requires considerable investment by the private sector, governments and development partners. It also requires coherence in various policy domains and institutions covering health, investment, intellectual property (IP) and trade. However, there are additional factors shaping the development context of investing in health.

541. Health crises, such as the epidemic of HIV/AIDS and the pandemics of H1N1 and COVID19, had invigorated global initiatives for investment in health sectors of developing countries. However, the initiatives appear to slow down once the health crises are under control. Hence, it is vital to foster global partnership to ensure sustainable investment into the health sectors of developing countries in normal times to enhance preparedness for global, regional and national public health crises.

542. COVID-19 has resulted in disruption of supplies and increased cost of health commodities that disproportionately affected developing countries with limited or no manufacturing capacity for medical supplies, medicines, and vaccines.

543. UNCTAD seeks to enhance the capacity of developing countries to develop a better framework for investment in health, taking into account their respective development needs.

544. **Objectives and features.** The objectives of the programme are the following:

- (a) Promotion of investment in health sectors of developing countries;
- (b) Promotion of coherence in industrial and health policies, including in the regulation of investment and intellectual property (IP);
- (c) Promotion of stakeholder ownership to ensure the sustainability of programme activities.

545. **Outputs.** In 2023, the work programme involved the implementation of two projects on (i) investment in the production and supply of antibiotics in the context of measures to combat antimicrobial resistance (AMR); and (ii) supporting the building of vaccines manufacturing capacity in Africa in the context of the Partnership for Africa Vaccines Manufacturing (PAVM).

546. Since 2020, UNCTAD has been implementing a Development Account project on “Investment incentives for local production of essential antibiotics in East Africa.” The project aims at addressing the misalignment between incentives for the local production of antibiotics and the objective to tackle antimicrobial resistance. In collaboration with the East African Community (EAC), UNCTAD has led initiatives to bolster investment in the

region's antibiotics production capacity. This endeavor is crucially aligned with the goal of ensuring universal healthcare access under SDG3, especially concerning antibiotics, where inappropriate access exacerbates antimicrobial resistance. UNCTAD's efforts comprised two distinct workstreams: a regional focus on the EAC and a bilateral approach involving Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda.

(a) The regional workstream's key achievements include the adoption of two regional instruments by EAC Member States – a regional policy framework and a regional cooperation mechanism – extensive national consultations on these instruments, and their subsequent endorsement by the EAC Council of Ministers. An action plan for implementing the recommendations of these instruments has also been developed.

(b) Under the bilateral workstream, three advisory reports were prepared, adopted, and published for Kenya, Uganda, and Ethiopia, with specific consultations on implementation conducted with the Kenyan government. This resulted in the formulation of a UNCTAD policy report aimed at leveraging Special Economic Zones to bolster local antibiotic production in Kenya.

547. In the context of the project on “Facilitating investment and partnerships for vaccines production in line with PAVM Framework for Action”, UNCTAD undertook assessment of the pain points of investment initiatives for vaccine manufacturing in Africa that were announced since the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic. It also extensively consulted with regional and international stakeholders and built partnerships with key and strategic players contributing to the realization of the Partnership for Africa Vaccine Manufacturing. Its work culminated in the Global event on strengthening the sustainability of vaccine manufacturing in Africa held from 27 to 29 June 2023.

548. The event brought together a significant number of African firms engaged or planning to engage in vaccine manufacturing, international firms interested in contributing to building vaccine manufacturing capacity in Africa, technology providers, facilitators, investment finance providers, and development partners. The event facilitated linkages among the industry and relevant players, providing each participant with the opportunity to present their offers and requests and receive feedback from peers and potential partners. In total, 140 people attended, including 47 women.

549. **Results and impacts.** With the project concluded in 2023, all ten outlined outputs of the Development Account Project were successfully delivered, marking a significant milestone in addressing the challenges hindering local antibiotic production within the region. In the press release⁹² issued for the conclusion of the regional workstream, EAC leadership and high-level government representatives of member states thanked UNCTAD for its support and highlighted how the successful adoption of the two regional instruments represents a milestone achievement in addressing the challenges hindering local antibiotics production within the region. Beyond achieving technical assistance objectives, the project engaged in extensive consultations with stakeholders and produced a significant body of published policy reports, informing UNCTAD's strategic initiatives and contributing to high-level discussions and engagements with organizations like the WHO. The insights gained from this project will be central to a forthcoming high-level publication by UNCTAD, offering a comprehensive framework for evaluating the viability of local pharmaceutical production in Africa, thus serving as a valuable resource for stakeholders across the region.

550. The global event organized by UNCTAD for facilitating vaccine manufacturing in Africa led to the adoption of an ‘industry statement,’ indicating the industry's motivation and inspiration derived from the discussions and the depth of information shared. Subsequent follow-up actions were outlined to develop a strategy for advancing the industry statement and moving forward on one of the action areas identified, particularly regarding the contribution of the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization.

⁹² [EAC Council of Ministers adopts Regional Framework for the supply and production of antibiotics](#)

C9 International investment agreements

Table C9
International investment agreements

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
INT/0T/BAQ	Capacity-Building in Investment for Development	2011–	Multi-donors
INT/0T/HCJ2	Strategic Partnership the Netherlands	2018–	Kingdom of the Netherlands

551. **Development context.** The current network of international investment rules comprises over 3,000 bilateral, regional and plurilateral treaties, many of which were concluded decades ago and need reform. Recent years have witnessed dynamic changes aimed at reforming the regime of international investment agreements (IIAs), with intensified efforts at the regional level. In 2022 and 2023 the number of treaty terminations exceeded that of new IIAs.

552. There is a growing unease with the current functioning of the global IIA regime and the investor–State dispute settlement (ISDS) system. This unease, coupled with the evolution of the international investment landscape, the greater role of Governments in the economy, and the current sustainable development imperative, has led countries to embark on reforming their IIA regimes and engage in multilateral discussions for the reform of ISDS system. Today, there is broad consensus that reform is not an option but a necessity.

553. Immediate IIA reform steps are needed to alleviate ISDS risks and create the necessary policy space for States to take urgent climate action. While new-generation IIAs may offer some improvements in safeguarding the States’ right to regulate, both old and recent IIAs lack proactive provisions aimed at effectively supporting climate action. States may need to fast-track IIA reform to make it more aligned with climate action as well as other public policy imperatives.

554. Integrating sustainable development objectives into IIAs (e.g. the protection of public health and environment) requires addressing a number of questions, including how to safeguard the right to regulate while preserving investment protection; how to enhance legal clarity of certain provisions; how to reform dispute settlement; how to promote and facilitate investment that contribute to sustainable development; how to ensure responsible investment; and how to manage the systemic complexity of the IIA regime.

555. **Objectives and features.** The UNCTAD work programme on IIAs responds to this trend of reform, aiming to make the IIA regime work better for both States and investors, and more conducive to sustainable development. The programme covers activities in the three pillars of UNCTAD work (research and policy analysis, technical assistance and advisory services, and intergovernmental consensus-building).

Outputs

556. For 2023, the main outputs are outlined below.

Research work related to technical assistance

557. In addition to regular reporting and monitoring on international investment policy developments, the IIA work programme carried out research and policy analysis, among others, for the following publications:

(a) *World Investment Report 2023*. The chapter on recent policy developments and key issues highlights significant progress made in 2022 and 2023 towards reforming the IIA regime. These include, new types of investment-related agreements, the termination of bilateral investment treaties (BITs) and continued multilateral discussions on the reform

of investor–State dispute settlement (ISDS) mechanisms. At the same time, greater policy attention to investment facilitation and climate change are set to recalibrate international investment governance. This is especially important as the network of IIAs currently in force is complex and largely dominated by old-generation treaties. The report provides an update on the total number of ISDS cases, with a considerable portion of these cases pertaining directly to measures or sectors relevant to climate action. In this regard, UNCTAD has developed a toolbox aimed at ensuring that IIAs actively support rather than hinder the energy transition. Various options exist to transform IIAs into tools that promote and facilitate sustainable energy investment and climate objectives more generally. Consequently, actions aimed at reforming IIAs should pursue a dual objective: first, to ensure that all provisions in IIAs appropriately safeguard the right and duty of States to regulate in the public interest, particularly in sectors where frequent regulatory change is necessary such as energy investment; and second, to enhance the capacity of IIAs to contribute positively to the sustainable energy transition.

(b) *IIA issues notes and policy briefs.* The following issues notes were produced in 2023:

(i) IIA Issues Note: “Trends in the Investment Treaty Regime and a Reform Toolbox for the Energy Transition”. This IIA Issues Note gives an update on global trends in the investment treaty regime and presents a new reform toolbox for the energy transition.

(ii) IIA Issues Note: “Investment Facilitation in International Investment Agreements: Trends and Policy Options”. This IIA Issues Note takes stock of the increasing share of IIAs with investment facilitation features and provides policy options and best practices to focus these provisions on channelling investment toward sustainable development.

(iii) IIA Issues Note: “The Global Minimum Tax and Investment Treaties: Exploring Policy Options”. This IIA Issues Note elaborates on the relationship between the global minimum tax and IIAs. It presents those elements of the global minimum tax that are most likely to cause tensions from the perspective of investment protection disciplines and assesses the actual and perceived legal risks that IIAs pose to the implementation of the minimum tax.

(iv) IIA Issues Note: Review of 2021 Investor–State Arbitration Decisions: IIA Reform Issues at a Glance. This Note reviews ISDS decisions rendered by arbitral tribunals in 2021. It covers high-profile decisions such as *Eco Oro v. Colombia*, and several renewable energy-related cases under the Energy Charter Treaty such as *Infracapital v. Spain*. Thirty-one ISDS decisions on jurisdiction and merits were publicly available at the time of writing.

(c) *Comprehensive updates to the IIA and ISDS databases:* In March 2023, UNCTAD updated its IIA Navigator with BITs and treaties with provisions (TIPs). To date the database encompasses more than 3,100 texts of IIAs. Subsequently, in April 2023, UNCTAD updated its ISDS Navigator. The update includes new cases, awards and arbitrator appointments compiled from public sources and specialized reporting services.

Consensus-building

558. The World Investment Forum 2023 included a dedicated track on IIAs. Five events were organized by UNCTAD in this context:

(a) *The 2023 High-Level IIA Conference.* The conference discussed the need to make investment policy and IIAs consistent with national, regional, and global climate commitments. It shed light on the key issues to be addressed to ensure that IIA commitments safeguard the right of states to regulate in the public interest while strengthening regional and global forums for continued dialogue and coordination on comprehensive IIA reform. The IIA conference concluded with the establishment of UNCTAD’s Multi-Stakeholder Platform on IIA Reform that brings experts together in a collaborative way to harness their collective wisdom, creativity, and diversity to support real change in the IIA regime.

(b) *Investment Facilitation: International Policy Developments.* The session shed light on the WTO Agreement on investment facilitation and investment facilitation provisions in IIAs and how they can enhance investment flows where they result in ground-level action. The meeting also discussed how investment facilitation can help reconceptualize the international investment regime to make it more conducive to sustainable development.

(c) The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Protocol on Investment: towards a new generation of investment policies in Africa. The meeting discussed the role of the AfCFTA Protocol on Investment in bolstering both public and private action for investment in sustainable development in Africa. It explored the innovative aspects of the Protocol and their contribution to the ongoing efforts of African countries to reform their IIA networks. Additionally, there was a discussion regarding cooperation between UNCTAD, the AfCFTA Secretariat, and African countries to accelerate the implementation of the Protocol on Investment.

(d) *The Islamic Development Bank – UNCTAD Guiding Principles on Investment Policy.* The meeting discussed the role of soft policies, notably the Guiding Principles, in fostering regional cooperation to harness investment policymaking for sustainable development. It called for greater cooperation on IIA reform with UNCTAD's coordination.

(e) *D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation – UNCTAD Guiding Principles for Investment.* The meeting discussed the current state of IIA reform in D-8 Members (Bangladesh, Egypt, Nigeria, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Pakistan, and Türkiye) as well as the role of soft policies, notably the Guiding Principles, in fostering regional to harness investment policymaking for sustainable development. The session underlined the role of the Guiding Principles in supporting D8 members' efforts to reform their IIA networks, notably through consensus-building.

Capacity-building

559. Drawing from the UNCTAD Investment Policy Framework for Sustainable Development (IPFSD) and its Reform Package for the International Investment Regime, alongside the UNCTAD IIA Reform Accelerator options aimed at modernizing the existing stock of treaties, UNCTAD conducts a range of training activities and advisory services. These include reviews of a country or region's IIA network; comments on a country or region's model treaties; and other analysis of various aspects of countries' IIA universes, including with respect to the interplay between IIA obligations and measures taken to mitigate the effects of climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic. Comments are provided with a view to identifying options for maximizing IIAs' sustainable development dimension. The analysis is tailor-made, considering the specificities of each country and/or region and, typically, the submission of written advisory services is complemented by one or several videoconferences, discussing the analysis undertaken on behalf of the country.

560. UNCTAD continued to provide support to the AfCFTA Secretariat on the Investment Protocol of AfCFTA. The AfCFTA Investment Protocol was adopted by the Heads of State and Government during the Assembly of the African Union in February 2023. The Protocol contains reformed provisions aimed at promoting, facilitating and protecting intra-African investment that fosters sustainable development while safeguarding the State Parties' right to regulate. It recognizes UNCTAD's work on IIA reform in its preamble. UNCTAD is a member of the task force assisting the AfCFTA Secretariat in the negotiations of the Investment Protocol and the Investment Dispute Settlement Annex to the Protocol.

561. In March 2023, at the request of Egypt's General Authority for Investment and Free Zones (GAFI), UNCTAD organized a virtual workshop on developing an effective strategy for IIA reform. The event discussed the reform of the IIA regime through a modernization of the existing stock of BITs. It also provided recommendations on how to better align IIAs with sustainable development and climate goals and discussed options to minimize the risk of ISDS claims.

562. In March 2023, UNCTAD in cooperation with the Namibia Investment Promotion and Development Board (NIPDB) shed light on Namibia's IIA regime, and discussed how can the country move forward effectively with IIA reform. Discussions also focused on the interplay between Namibia's BITs, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) protocol and the AfCFTA investment protocol – and how to ensure policy coherence and synergies among the various international investment commitments with a view to making the IIA regime contribute to sustainable development.

563. In November 2023, UNCTAD organized a training workshop on IIA and climate change for Thailand. The panel discussed key areas of interaction between IIAs and climate action, with a focus on recent developments and policy options for the reform of IIAs to align them with climate action, including UNCTAD's Toolbox for Sustainable Energy Investment.

564. In November 2023, UNCTAD organized a training workshop on key trends and issues in IIAs and ISDS for the Government officials from the Republic of Korea. The session introduced key concepts in IIAs and FTAs with investment provisions and presented UNCTAD's policy tools for IIA reform.

565. In December 2023, UNCTAD, in cooperation with Egypt's GAFI, organized a capacity-building workshop on the reform of Egypt's IIAs. Representatives from UNCTAD and officials responsible for investment policies in Egypt discussed several key topics including: the latest trends in IIA reform and Egypt's recent reform actions; UNCTAD's toolbox for IIAs and the energy transition; the role of investment facilitation in attracting and retaining sustainable investment; the global minimum tax and its interplay with IIAs, including the growing importance of investment facilitation measures in this new era of investment policymaking; and, ensuring coherence at different levels between the promotion, protection and facilitation of international investment flows into Egypt.

566. Regional or other training courses hosted or co-hosted by UNCTAD in 2023 include the following:

(a) Between January and April 2023, UNCTAD organized two workshops in cooperation with the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ) on International Investment Policies and Investor-State Dispute resolution for the Balkan economies. In January, UNCTAD participated in an in-person workshop providing recommendations for international policy reform in the Western Balkans. The objective was to share views and experiences on moving to a new generation of IIAs and modernizing the existing stock of IIAs. Subsequently, UNCTAD organized a virtual workshop on Accelerating IIA Reform for Sustainable Development for the Western Balkan economies in April 2023.

(b) In February 2023, UNCTAD organized a training titled "How are IIA changing to address ESG issues?" at the Swiss Arbitration Association Winter Conference. The training focused on refining IIA provisions towards sustainable-development-oriented provisions, responsible investment behaviour, and investment facilitation to avoid unpredictable and overly broad interpretations by ISDS tribunals.

(c) In February 2023, UNCTAD, in collaboration with UNCITRAL, organised a capacity-building workshop on IIAs and ISDS for treaty negotiators from Ecuador. The event included discussions on UNCTAD's work on IIAs, its core publications on IIAs and IIA reform, as well as a detailed description of reform approaches for selected treaty provisions. The training provided Ecuadorian government staff from various working groups with detailed insights on key IIA clauses and investor-State dispute prevention and settlement.

(d) In March 2023, UNCTAD organized a substantive session during the tour organized by GIZ for senior trade policy officials from Africa in Geneva. Discussions highlighted the key trends in the legal and policy regimes for investment in Africa and shed light on the impact of the AfCFTA Investment Protocol on the continent's FDI environment. The meeting highlighted the challenges facing African countries due to the large network of outdated BITs, and the opportunities presented by the Investment protocol to consolidate and modernize the African FDI legal framework.

(e) In May 2023, UNCTAD organized a training on the “Protocol on Investment of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), USMCA and New Generation of Investment Treaties by Region” at the Launch of the 2023 World Arbitration Update.

(f) In July 2023, UNCTAD and the D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation organized a workshop on the international investment regime and climate change. This webinar discussed how the IIA regime can be adapted through treaty renegotiation and amendments to design climate responsive IIAs while minimizing the risk of facing ISDS claims related to climate change policies.

(g) In August 2023, UNCTAD in cooperation with Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) organized a training session during the APEC Investment Experts’ Group workshop on “IIAs and Climate Change: What is the role that IIAs play in the transition to a green economy?” The capacity-building workshop explored the role of IIAs in the transition to a green economy, with UNCTAD contributing to two panels on investment protection disciplines and market access.

(h) In September 2023, UNCTAD contributed to the training on “Assessing and Mitigating ISDS Risk” at the Columbia Center on Sustainable Investment (CCSI) Executive Training on Investment Treaties and Arbitration for Government Officials. The online training programme is specifically designed to address states’ objectives, opportunities and challenges facing governments in treaty reform, as well as other approaches to investment governance, including dispute prevention and alternatives to ISDS. The panel addressed the question of assessing and mitigating the risk of ISDS, including reform options for dispute settlement that have the potential of balancing the system.

(i) In October 2023, UNCTAD, in cooperation with the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) organized a training workshop on Investment Facilitation in IIAs during the 15th Investment Policy Forum (organized by the IISD and the Government of Panama).

(j) In November 2023, UNCTAD organized a training workshop on ISDS challenges at the 39th Investment Treaty Forum Public Conference: Energy Disputes in ISDS. UNCTAD shed light on how old-generation IIAs may hinder or impede climate action and discussed ways to conceive IIAs that could effectively support climate action. Additionally, the workshop analysed ISDS cases relevant to the energy transition, and UNCTAD presented its IIA Reform Accelerator.

(k) In November 2023, UNCTAD organized technical assistance session on IIAs at the launch of the Investment Facilitation Digital Monitor for the SACU members. The panel discussed UNCTAD’s technical assistance and capacity building tools on the reform of IIAs, such as IIA Reviews, Model IIA Reviews and training workshops, as well as their content relevant to investment facilitation.

(l) In November 2023, UNCTAD contributed to the 6th OECD Roundtable on Investment and Sustainable Development. UNCTAD contributed substantively to the concluding roundtable on Investment and sustainable development. The last session shed light on the major challenges for the future of investment policy and the need for more coordination and synchronization of investment policy reforms at all levels.

(m) In November 2023, UNCTAD presented its IIA and ISDS work at the European Parliament on “Global Investment in the Energy Transition and the EU Investment Policy Framework”. The goal of the hearing was to assess the recent transformation of the area of EU Foreign Direct Investment policy, brought about also by the adoption at global or bilateral level of Investment Facilitation Agreements.

(n) In November 2023, UNCTAD, in cooperation with the University of Padova organized a training workshop on the role of International Organizations in the development on foreign investment law. The workshop panel discussed UNCTAD’s core policy analysis tools, soft policy guidance instruments and technical assistance in the field of international investment policies.

567. **Results and impacts.** There is strong evidence that the IIA work programme has a concrete and positive impact. UNCTAD policy tools have shaped investment policymaking at all levels.

(a) Forward-looking IIA reform is well under way and involves countries at all levels of development and from all geographical regions. All of today's new IIAs include several sustainable development-oriented reform elements in line with UNCTAD policy tools (see WIR 2023). Provisions that were considered innovative in pre-2012 IIAs now appear regularly. Highlights of modern treaty making include a sustainable development orientation, preservation of regulatory space and improvements to or omissions of investment dispute settlement. The most broadly pursued area of reform is preservation of regulatory space. As part of broader IIA reform, countries have implemented many ISDS reform elements in recent IIAs.

(b) Feedback from participants in capacity-building workshops and conferences on IIAs is generally very positive, with an average of 89 per cent stating that the courses contributed substantially to improving their understanding of the key issues at stake. An average of over 81 per cent of respondents also indicated that they had used recommendations found in UNCTAD's Investment Policy Framework for Sustainable Development in their work and 44 per cent noted that the Investment Policy Framework had prompted their country to reconsider its investment policy strategy. To date some 144 countries and regional economic integration organizations have used UNCTAD recommendations on IIA reform to (re)design investment policies and IIA treaty clauses.

568. Further evidence and positive feedback received in 2023 include:

(a) "The session ['Guiding Principles for Investment' as a part of the '8th World Investment Forum' in Abu Dhabi on 16 October 2023] allowed experts from the D-8 Member States to underscore the importance of modernizing investment agreements and aligning them with the UN SDGs. They further agreed to establish a D-8 Investment Working Group and continue their dialogue in coordination with UNCTAD, in line with the 'D8-UNCTAD Guiding Principles for Investment'. It will help forge collaboration among the D-8 Member States to ensure better policy coherence." Secretary-General, D-8 Organization of Economic Cooperation

(b) "I would like to express our appreciation for UNCTAD's pivotal contributions to reshaping the international governance landscape. UNCTAD commitment to addressing the systemic reforms necessary to meet the transnational challenges of governing investment for sustainable development is crucial. UNCTAD's insightful reports provide an expansive view of investment regime challenges which go far beyond anything addressing the current IIA reform. In putting the Sustainable Development Goals at the core of their investment policies, UNCTAD championed IIA reforms by presenting concrete solutions. UNCTAD's leadership in this respect has been incredibly helpful. As Director of Sustainable Investment at IISD, I can affirm that the opportunity to leverage UNCTAD's work, and publications has been strategic for our work as an independent think tank. It's a testament to the credibility and impact of UNCTAD's work in this space." Director of Sustainable Investment, International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD).

(c) "We found the workshop enriching and very fruitful. It was very informative and timely. I believe it will inspire and guide our work in the reform journey." Under Secretary of State, Head of International Relations Department, Promotion Sector, General Authority for Investment and Free Zone (GAFI).

(d) "The unique data-based insights provided by UNCTAD's experts, and their elaboration of the UNCTAD IIA Reform Accelerator was extremely valuable to the Western Balkans stakeholders. This information will serve as a baseline for the strategic reform of IIAs in the region, as well as the design of follow-up project activities in the field. In the long-term, the guidance and tools provided in the Accelerator will be a valuable resource for the Western Balkans policy makers who are engaging in the drafting and negotiations of new IIAs. There is no doubt that the input and UNCTAD tools will continue to benefit the reform activities in the region." Rule of Law Advisor, Legal Reform for Economic Development in the Western Balkans, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ).

(e) “I wish...to congratulate UNCTAD on a fruitful and successful event and on the launch of the *Multistakeholder Platform on IIA Reform*. The IIA Conference was indeed an engaging event full of promising prospects of collaboration and remarkable opportunities. I look forward to working with you on the Platform and remain at your disposal for any assistance I can extend.” Assistant Undersecretary for International Trade, Ministry of Economy, United Arab Emirates.

(f) “The discussions throughout the day were thought-provoking, insightful, and solutions-oriented. Your reflections on how we as international organisations should work together to jointly shape the international investment policy agenda in the coming years and to ensure the contribution of investment in addressing global challenges were very useful. We have learned a lot and our networks provided unanimously positive feedback on the quality of the discussions.” Head of the Investment Division, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

(g) “The Multistakeholder Platform [on IIA Reform] seems a very helpful, concrete step forward – offering a much-needed space to discuss and accelerate reform beyond the confines of existing processes. It is always a pleasure to collaborate, and I would be delighted if IIED could contribute in any way.” Head of Law, Economics and Justice Programme, International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED).

(h) “I am thrilled to learn of UNCTAD’s decision to launch a Multistakeholder Platform on IIA Reform to identify ways to fast-track IIA reforms. There is a great need for an informal group of experts for knowledge sharing and exchange of best practices on IIA reform.” Chairperson, ISDS Reform Negotiations, Organisation of Islamic Cooperation.

C10 Competition and consumer protection policies and frameworks

Table C10

Competition and consumer protection policies and frameworks

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
INT/8X/603	Training programmes on restrictive business practices (competition policies)	1986–	Multi-donors
RAF/0T/LBG	Cadre de référence de l’assistance technique sur la concurrence et consommation	2023–	Democratic Republic of the Congo
RAS/0T/IAV	Delivering Block Chain Based Online Dispute Resolution System (BODR)	2020–	China Silk Road Group Ltd

569. **Development context.** Competition law and policy contribute to economic growth and sustainable development through market openness, innovation, and economic efficiency towards achieving consumer welfare. Competition policy complements trade policy as, anticompetitive business practices should not hamper the benefits brought by trade and investment liberalization. Consumer protection empowers consumers to play an active role in the market through informed, responsible, and sustainable choices while ensuring that unfair commercial practices are sanctioned, and consumers rights are protected. In a globalized world, competition and consumer protection laws and policies are increasingly faced with cross-border challenges, which demand further regional and international cooperation to guarantee a level playing field for business and a high-level of consumer protection across the world.

570. Developing countries are particularly vulnerable to anticompetitive and unfair business practices. Weak business infrastructure and complex regulatory and licensing regimes make it harder for companies to enter these markets; their policies, laws and regulations are often not sufficiently robust, while their enforcement authorities may lack

the capacity to detect and address anticompetitive behaviour effectively. Moreover, consumers and businesses are less aware of the importance of competition and therefore, consumers do not always exercise their rights while businesses may infringe their obligations. In addition, companies and supply chains are global, while competition and consumer protection laws and enforcement authorities are primarily national. Individual countries have struggled to address anticompetitive practices at the international level, which requires regional and international collaboration to effectively enforce competition rules. The successful implementation of competition and consumer protection policies worldwide results in eliminating anticompetitive regulation and unnecessary barriers to market access and provides for fairer market functioning.

571. **Objectives and features.** UNCTAD aims to assist developing countries in adopting or revising competition and consumer protection legislation and policies to align with international best practices and regional frameworks in these areas. UNCTAD also contributes to fostering government officials' and experts' capacities and raising awareness among stakeholders involved in both fields. These policies play an essential role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially Goal 8 – decent work and economic growth; Goal 9 – industry, innovation and infrastructure; Goal 10 – reduced inequalities; Goal 12 – responsible consumption and production; and Goal 17 – partnership for the goals.

572. **Outputs.** The project “Delivering digital trading infrastructure and online dispute resolution for consumers as means to improve international trade and electronic commerce” (DODR project), funded by the China Silk Road Group, focused on the design of online consumer dispute resolution mechanisms for Indonesia and Thailand. UNCTAD launched a publication providing insights into how emerging technologies can enhance online dispute resolution (ODR) processes, better safeguard consumer rights, and ensure that consumer protection agencies can adapt and thrive in the ever-evolving digital landscape.⁹³ The DODR project implemented activities from 2021 to 2023 in two beneficiary countries, namely Indonesia and Thailand. Based on the experience of the DODR Project, UNCTAD intervened in the international event on “Consumer online dispute resolution” organized by the CUTS Institute for Regulation and Competition in September 2023 and in the conference organized by the Department of Consumer Affairs, Government of India, on “Pioneering an ODR platform for seamless cross-border e-commerce dispute resolution”.

573. Under the project on “Technical assistance and capacity building in competition and consumer protection for African Portuguese-speaking developing countries and Timor-Leste”,⁹⁴ UNCTAD held four webinars on competition and consumer protection laws and policies in April⁹⁵ and October 2023⁹⁶. The webinars had an average audience of sixty participants, of which 20 per cent were women, reaching experts beyond the beneficiaries. Representatives from the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), and the competition authorities of Brazil and Portugal participated, emphasizing the South-South cooperation element which was integral to the project. Besides the webinars, UNCTAD organized two in-person meetings respectively in July and November 2023, dedicated to discussing beneficiaries' needs and exchanging information on the current status of competition law and policy and the goals of consumer protection law and policy. The project is funded by Portugal and intends to foster regional cooperation between the Portuguese-speaking developing countries, neighbouring countries and other partners.

⁹³ https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/tcsditconf2023d5_en.pdf

⁹⁴ <https://unctad.org/project/technical-assistance-and-capacity-building-competition-and-consumer-protection-african>

⁹⁵ <https://unctad.org/meeting/webinar-consumer-protection-policy-portuguese-speaking-countriesseminario-sobre-politica-0>; <https://unctad.org/meeting/webinar-competition-law-and-policy-portuguese-speaking-countriesseminario-sobre-direito-e>

⁹⁶ <https://unctad.org/meeting/webinar-competition-law-and-policy-portuguese-speaking-countriesseminario-sobre-direito-da>; <https://unctad.org/meeting/webinar-consumer-protection-policy-portuguese-speaking-countriesseminario-sobre-politica-1>

574. Also, under this project, UNCTAD has been supporting the recently established competition authority of Cabo Verde since 2022. This assistance comprised advisory services on mergers in telecommunications sector, guidance on the imposition of sanctions for competition law infringements and on internal regulations regarding the financing of the competition authority. Moreover, UNCTAD drafted Timor-Leste competition law, closely related to the country's accession to the World Trade Organization, and is supporting its implementation.

575. Under the trilateral cooperation agreement between UNCTAD, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UN-ESCWA) and Organisation on Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which seeks to support the formulation or improvement of national competition laws, procedures, and enforcement in the Arab countries, the fourth Joint annual Competition Forum for the Arab Region was held in May 2023. The Forum aims to develop a regional multi-stakeholder platform that facilitates the coordination and implementation of competition-related initiatives both at the national and regional level. In this fourth edition, Arab countries discussed the effectiveness of competition authorities in developing and least developed countries, abuse of dominance in digital markets and cross-border merger control, as well as best practices in planning and conducting market studies.

576. Following the successful completion in early 2023 of a self-paced online training course on competition policy and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)⁹⁷ funded by the United Nations Development Account under the project on "Global Initiative towards post-Covid-19 Resurgence of micro and small and medium sized enterprises (MSMEs)", in December 2023, UNCTAD relaunched the same five-module course, attracting 228 participants, of which 46 per cent were female, who took the online course between February and March 2024. UNCTAD will organise a graduation ceremony in the second quarter of 2024. This wide interest demonstrates member States' appreciation of this type of product and underscores the impact of UNCTAD's initiatives in this field.

577. On the interplay between consumer protection and sustainability, UNCTAD and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) are working on a project to advance consumer information and consumer protection in alignment with multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs). The project will develop a guidance note on the role of consumer information in addressing MEAs, disseminate the main findings and provide actionable recommendations to support the 10 Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns, as per SDG 12 on sustainable consumption and production.

578. Following the conclusion of the Competition and Consumer Protection Policies for Latin America (COMPAL) programme, UNCTAD new activities in this region have been self-financed by beneficiary countries showing their interest in UNCTAD technical cooperation activities. In October 2023, the competition authority of Dominican Republic (Procompetencia) and UNCTAD co-hosted the competition week⁹⁸ including round tables and a judiciary training course. The training course addressed multiple issues on the application of competition law by the judiciary, such as economic analysis; the scope of judicial review; the definition of the relevant market; and sanctions.

579. The thirteenth UNCTAD-COMPAL International Consumer Protection Forum was co-organized with the consumer protection agency from the Dominican Republic (ProConsumidor) in November 2023.⁹⁹ The discussions centred around cross-border dispute resolution for consumers, the agencies' role in enhancing consumer associations, and the future of regional cooperation in Latin America.

⁹⁷ <https://elearning.unctad.org/course/index.php?categoryid=6>

⁹⁸ <https://unctad.org/meeting/competition-week-dominican-republic-and-annual-meeting-competition-and-trade-working-group>

⁹⁹ <https://unctad.org/meeting/thirteenth-compal-international-consumer-protection-forum-latin-america>

580. As part of the longstanding cooperation between UNCTAD and Latin American and Caribbean Economic System (SELA)¹⁰⁰, the eleventh Annual meeting of the Working Group on Trade and Competition (WGTC) of Latin America and the Caribbean took place in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic in November 2023, during the competition week mentioned above¹⁰¹. The WGTC remains the only forum that brings together government officials in charge of trade and competition from Latin America and the Caribbean to address global challenges in both areas. This eleventh edition discussed the financial technology sector - fintech. Also, UNCTAD and the Zurich University of Management and Law (ZHAW) presented the main findings of the UNCTAD report on “Competition compliance programs: the experience of Latin America”.¹⁰² The WGTC was attended by over 60 participants from 15 countries, five international organizations and four academic institutions, and concluded with the decision to extend the meetings to three days, incorporating a forum for private companies.

581. Also in Latin America, in May 2023, UNCTAD and the Secretariat for Consumer and User Defence (SEDECO) of Paraguay organized a webinar on the United Nations Guidelines for Consumer Protection and emerging challenges for the modern consumer.¹⁰³ The webinar proved successful with 130 registered participants, nearly 70 per cent of whom were women. Among the attendees, 82 per cent identified themselves as consumers, while the rest identified as suppliers.

582. In August and September 2023¹⁰⁴, UNCTAD conducted three webinars to assist the Royal Government of Bhutan with the approval of draft Competition Bill, which will be the first national competition law of the country. The recently renamed Competition and Consumer Affairs Authority (CCAA) is now responsible for the implementation of competition and consumer protection frameworks, while it only dealt with consumer protection before. The CCAA requested UNCTAD assistance with training courses for its around twelve government officers. The webinars focused on the role of competition authority, enforcement techniques and the interaction between competition and consumer protection laws and policies, as well as international cooperation.

583. Following the three successful workshops since 2020, UNCTAD co-organised the fourth joint workshop with the European Commission titled “Unlocking the full potential of research in product safety” in December 2023¹⁰⁵. It addressed existing product safety research and training programs, identified priority issues that researchers should focus on, and explored synergies between academia and the product safety community.

584. In the effort to boost consumer associations, UNCTAD organized several events in collaboration with key partners such as Consumers International and CUTS International during this reporting period. Consumer associations play an essential role in making the voice of consumers heard in public policy decision-making, improving consumer information and education, defending consumer rights, and monitoring markets. Under the Group 20 (G20) Presidency of India, UNCTAD and CUTS International conducted a global webinar in August 2023¹⁰⁶ reiterating the G20 commitment for promoting fair trade practices and help create a more equitable and sustainable global economy for the achievement of the SDGs. Additionally, according to the UNCTAD publication on consumer associations¹⁰⁷, issues related to governance, human resources, professionalization, and funding are pivotal for strengthening consumer associations. To

¹⁰⁰ In Spanish: Sistema Económico Latinoamericano y del Caribe.

¹⁰¹ <https://unctad.org/meeting/competition-week-dominican-republic-and-annual-meeting-competition-and-trade-working-group>

¹⁰² https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ditclp2023d5_en.pdf

¹⁰³ <https://unctad.org/meeting/online-training-united-nations-guidelines-consumer-protection>

¹⁰⁴ <https://unctad.org/meeting/first-workshop-competition-and-consumer-affairs-authority-bhutan;>
<https://unctad.org/meeting/second-workshop-competition-and-consumer-affairs-authority-bhutan;> and
<https://unctad.org/meeting/third-workshop-competition-and-consumer-affairs-authority-bhutan>

¹⁰⁵ <https://unctad.org/meeting/european-commission-unctad-workshop-unlocking-full-potential-research-product-safety>

¹⁰⁶ <https://unctad.org/meeting/cuts-global-webinar-g20-championing-consumer-movement>

¹⁰⁷ https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ditclp2019d2_en.pdf

address these concerns, UNCTAD held a side event on “Enhancing the consumer movement”¹⁰⁸ at the Consumers International Global Congress in December 2023. During this event, representatives from consumer associations in Chile, Nigeria and Rwanda, and a global association for African women in agribusiness explored ways in which governments can facilitate the establishment and growth of consumer associations in a global context that continually tests the resilience of these groups.

585. Since 2019, UNCTAD has been offering advisory services on competition policy to the secretariat of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and its member States. This assistance initially involved drafting and negotiating the Protocol on Competition Policy, along with providing technical support to enhance the capacities of the secretariat for the implementation of the protocol. The Protocol on Competition Policy was adopted by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union in February 2023, laying the foundation for its ratification and adoption by State Parties. Under the memorandum of understanding between UNCTAD and the AfCFTA Secretariat, two capacity building workshops were conducted by UNCTAD in August¹⁰⁹ and November 2023 respectively.¹¹⁰ A significant 85 per cent of participants found the workshops valuable in preparing for the negotiations on the regulations of the Protocol on Competition Policy, and 95 per cent stated that the workshop was relevant to their jobs. Additionally, 90 per cent reported gaining a better understanding of mergers and the abuse of dominance through case study discussions.

586. In August 2023, UNCTAD launched a technical assistance project to strengthen competition and consumer protection policies in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The project aims to develop and consolidate institutional and regulatory frameworks to promote competition and consumer protection in the country. UNCTAD conducted a fact-finding mission to examine the current state of competition legislation and sectoral regulations influencing market dynamics.¹¹¹ Recommendations were formulated to guide specific actions aimed at instituting an effective institutional and regulatory framework for competition. Additionally, the mission assessed the existing consumer protection legislation, recommending the establishment of an appropriate institutional and regulatory framework in accordance with the United Nations Guidelines for Consumer Protection.¹¹² Furthermore, UNCTAD elaborated a report mapping strategic sectors for a competitive economy in the DRC and developed a three-year programme tailored to enhance its technical and institutional capacities for the implementation of robust competition and consumer protection policies. The three-year programme was presented to the DRC government in February 2024.

587. Under the 2019 memorandum of understanding between UNCTAD and the European University Institute (specifically the current Florence Competition Programme¹¹³ under the Robert Schuman Centre) and thanks to the Florence Competition Programme counterparts, since 2021, UNCTAD has contributed to enhancing capacities of competition authorities experts from developing countries by facilitating free access to different annual training courses organized by the EUI, including the Florence Competition Autumn School and Merger Control in Digital Markets in 2023.

588. **Results and impacts.** Technical assistance is an important pillar of UNCTAD’s work in competition and consumer policies and contributes to significant results achieved

¹⁰⁸ <https://unctad.org/meeting/consumers-international-global-congress-unctad-side-event-enhancing-consumer-movement>

¹⁰⁹ <https://unctad.org/meeting/regional-workshop-competition-policy-and-law-african-continental-free-trade-area-afcfta>

¹¹⁰ <https://unctad.org/meeting/african-continental-free-trade-area-afcfta-regional-workshop-competition-policy-and-law>

¹¹¹ <https://unctad.org/meeting/launch-unctads-technical-assistance-project-democratic-republic-congo-institutional-and>

¹¹² <https://unctad.org/topic/competition-and-consumer-protection/un-guidelines-for-consumer-protection#:~:text=The%20United%20Nations%20Guidelines%20for,formulating%20and%20enforcing%20domestic%20and>

¹¹³ <http://fcp.eui.eu/>

to date. The number of formal requests for technical assistance and capacity building from developing countries underlined the expertise and the relevance of the technical cooperation services delivered by UNCTAD. The quick adjustment and flexibility undertaken under this pillar of work allowed UNCTAD to fully respond to member States' requests, and to address their needs and challenges in the best possible manner. Furthermore, online and hybrid events allow for broader attendance and for experts worldwide to participate in panel discussions. In 2023, UNCTAD organized 27 public events on competition and consumer protection, both online and in-person in 9 countries. Responding to member States' invitations, UNCTAD intervened in more than 50 events related to competition and/or consumer protection.

589. UNCTAD strongly supported member States in tackling market disruptions in the form of unfair commercial and anticompetitive practices through advisory services, technical assistance and capacity building activities implemented during 2023. These services disseminated international experiences and best practices, providing a sound background for policy measures and legislative and regulatory frameworks. The UNCTAD multi-stakeholder approach in these policy areas and the combination of national-level and regional-level activities have been extremely successful in the fields of competition and consumer protection. Furthermore, established UNCTAD partnerships with national, regional, and international organizations and institutions, combining knowledge, technical and financial support, allow the activities to be carried out effectively and to produce tangible outcomes.

590. The rapid growth of e-commerce and the development of new business models driven by large digital platforms are dramatically changing the market structure and impacting consumer patterns at high speed. UNCTAD's work on consumer online dispute resolution is of utmost importance, not only for consumers to strengthen their confidence in e-commerce but also for the development of fairer and more reliable digital markets. The DODR project has attracted the attention of several member states, regional organizations, civil society, and academia who place their trust in UNCTAD to lead initiatives to discuss the resolution of disputes in cross-border consumer cases. Two beneficiary countries - Indonesia and Thailand - have improved their existing consumer dispute resolution workflows, tailored to their mandates and capabilities for handling and solving complaints. In the age of rapid technological advancements, online dispute resolution platforms have become increasingly vital for addressing consumer disputes effectively and efficiently.

591. The project on "Technical assistance and capacity building in competition and consumer protection for African Portuguese-speaking developing countries and Timor-Leste" actively implemented by UNCTAD, plays a pivotal role in nurturing a culture of competition law and policy in the beneficiaries, while promoting regional cooperation. It has been instrumental in facilitating the exchange of knowledge and experiences, thereby enhancing the capabilities of participating countries in these critical areas. Additionally, it has played a crucial role in the formulation of competition law in Timor-Leste, a key step in the country's journey towards accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO). By actively participating in a variety of activities, including seminars, and working group meetings, the beneficiary authorities and experts on competition and consumer laws and policies have shared insights and learned from each other's experiences. Further evidence of the project's success is illustrated by bilateral cooperation arrangements in the field of competition between Angola and Cabo Verde, Angola and Portugal, Cabo Verde and Mozambique, Mozambique and Angola, Mozambique and Portugal, and Mozambique and Brazil.

592. UNCTAD's participation in the COVID-19 joint projects funded by the United Nations Development Account, together with the United Nations Regional Economic Commissions and other international organizations, enhanced the role of competition policy to build stronger MSMEs and underlined the importance of coordinating cross-thematic efforts to address the post-COVID-19 recovery of MSMEs. The projects had several positive externalities such as UNCTAD's increased visibility as a focal point for both competition and consumer protection policies within the United Nations system and widened cooperation opportunities at different regional levels.

593. The proactive collaborations with other international and regional organisations in delivering technical assistance activities contribute to maximizing the impact of operations and increasing the complementarities between institutions, and are also aligned with UNCTAD’s technical cooperation strategy which states that “UNCTAD will seek to strengthen cooperation and increase joint activities with other agencies providers of trade and investment technical assistance”.¹¹⁴

594. UNCTAD has been increasingly engaging in joint work with the United Nations regional commissions and other international organizations and been in contact with the United Nations resident coordinators, to further explore inter-agency collaboration given their experience in the field in order to better assist developing countries.

595. Finally, UNCTAD will continue its ongoing work assisting the regional economic organizations of developing countries in implementing competition and consumer protection laws and policies and enforcing them, in collaboration with national authorities. Regional cooperation is supportive of young and small competition authorities and consumer protection agencies and, in particular, South-South cooperation. This work is expected to increase, particularly in Africa and Central America.

C99 Other

Table C99

Others

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
<i>Division on Investment and Enterprise</i>			
INT/0T/HCJ	Strategic Partnership the Netherlands	2018–	Kingdom of the Netherlands
INT/0T/ICC	Sustainable stock Exchanges (SSE) Multi-donor	2020–	Foundation for the Global Compact
<i>Division on Globalization and Development Strategies</i>			
INT/0T/FAP	Wuhan Globalization Seminars	2016–	China

1. Capital markets and sustainable investment

1.1. Sustainable Stock Exchanges initiative

596. **Development context.** UNCTAD has deepened its work on responsible investment through several channels, particularly the activities of the United Nations Sustainable Stock Exchanges (SSE) initiative. Launched in 2009 by the UN Secretary General, the SSE was built on the demand from exchanges for a place to come together with investors, companies, regulators, standard setters and policymakers to share good practices and challenges in a multi-stakeholder environment. The initiative has grown into a global partnership platform including most of the world’s stock exchanges. In 2023, the membership grew to 119 stock exchanges and 14 derivatives exchanges.

597. **Objectives and features.** UNCTAD’s work on responsible investment, including the SSE initiative, aims to achieve the following objectives through research, consensus-building and technical assistance:

¹¹⁴ TD/B/69/4/Add.1, paragraph 20 (b).

- (a) Providing capital market stakeholders worldwide with proof of concept of supporting the Sustainable Development Goals through capital market regulation, training and education, and market norms.
- (b) Supplying data to help markets better react to sustainability challenges.
- (c) Sharing of experiences and learning from other markets.
- (d) Developing a network support system.

598. **Outputs.** In 2023, the SSE published two major guidance documents. In collaboration with the Net Zero Financial Service Providers Alliance and over 56 industry experts from 28 different organisations, the SSE produced the publication “Net Zero Target-Setting Guidance for Exchanges” which guides exchanges to set ambitious and credible net zero targets, enabling them to contribute meaningfully to a sustainable future. The Guidance was officially approved by the UN Climate Change High-level Champions overseeing the Race to Zero campaign. The SSE also published a guidance on carbon markets: “How exchanges can maximize the opportunities of carbon markets: An action framework to guide exchanges”. The action framework was launched at a high-level roundtable on Carbon Markets organized in collaboration with the International Organisation of Securities Commissions (IOSCO), at the World Investment Forum 2023. The publication offers a practical action framework to guide exchanges that are looking to optimize the opportunities of involvement in carbon markets.

599. In addition to major guidance documents, the SSE published 3 Market Monitors on gender equality in collaboration with the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and UN Women: (a) a global analysis of boardroom gender equality in G20 markets and in the top 5 markets in 7 regional or country groupings; (b) an analysis of boardroom gender equality in the 13 largest African markets; and (c) an analysis of boardroom gender equality in the 17 largest Asian markets. The SSE also published one issue of the *Market Monitor* bulletin, on finance and human rights, entitled “Modern slavery: Analysis of coverage in exchange ESG disclosure guidance”, prepared in collaboration with the Finance Against Slavery and Trafficking (FAST) initiative (a project of the United Nations University Centre for Policy Research) and Walk Free, a civil society organization.

600. To strengthen its training and technical assistance, the SSE also published three technical training tools entitled: “Disclosing Climate Metrics”, “Transition Plans”, and “Gap Analysis Checklist for Sustainability-Related Financial Disclosures”.

601. The SSE initiative also further strengthened and expanded its existing online databases including: (a) its stock exchange database with data on the sustainability practices of over 121 stock exchanges worldwide — the most comprehensive dataset of its kind publicly available; (b) its database of stock exchange sustainability disclosure guidance documents — a complete inventory of all such guidance documents in the world; (c) security market regulator database of best practices in promoting sustainable over finance; (d) the gender equality database — providing data on boardroom gender balances in 40 markets around the world; (e) the derivatives exchanges database; and (f) a database tracking support for the recommendations of the Taskforce on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD).

602. The SSE regularly convenes relevant stakeholders for the purpose of disseminating knowledge and building consensus on capital market transparency and sustainability, including the following key events:

(a) SSE partnered with the International Finance Corporation (IFC) to hold over 47 online SSE Academy workshops in 42 markets in 2023, training over 8,000 participants.

(b) In March 2023, on the occasion of International Women’s Day, SSE partnered with UN Women, UN Global Compact, IFC and World Federation of Exchanges to convene 117 “Ring the Bell for Gender Equality” events at exchanges around the world. These events aim to raise awareness on the business case for women’s economic empowerment and the opportunities for the private sector to advance gender equality and sustainable development.

(c) SSE convened four quarterly webinars for SSE Partner Exchanges and other capital market stakeholder, covering the following topics: new training programmes on climate disclosure and gender equality in the first quarter; biodiversity and nature dependency in the second quarter; climate disclosure and the race to zero in the third quarter; and gender equality in the fourth quarter.

(d) SSE organized two in-person sessions at COP28 in the blue zone in collaboration with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). These included a technical round table on the role of stock exchanges in promoting innovative climate solutions, and a CEO and Regulator round table on the role of exchanges in creating a net zero world. Additionally, the SSE organized a COP28 side event hosted by the Dubai Stock Exchange in collaboration with the UN Global Compact. The event featured interactive dialogue with market participants on new climate disclosure standards.

(e) SSE produced 24 episodes of “SSE TV” interviews with stock exchange CEOs and other high-level stakeholders on sustainable finance and the SDGs.

603. The SSE also provided technical assistance to stock exchanges working to develop guidance on sustainability reporting for their markets as part of its objective to ensure all stock exchanges provide such guidance.

604. **Results and impacts.** In 2023, in addition to the 47 online training sessions organised, the SSE conducted 14 consensus building events, with 149 speakers (53 per cent female) convening leaders from stock exchanges, security market regulators, global standard setters and other key market stakeholders. The SSE’s membership increased to 119 stock exchanges and 14 derivatives exchanges for 133 SSE partner exchanges in total, with 72 stock exchanges providing written guidance on sustainability reporting, up from just 14 when the SSE started encouraging exchanges to do this in 2015 (with 80 per cent of these guidance documents making explicit reference to the work of the SSE).

605. SSE work was endorsed by a number of key institutions and private sector partners, as reflected in the following statements:

(a) In 2023, the UN SSE won a “Climate Leader Award” as part of the Finance for the Future Awards which celebrate organisations supporting the integration of sustainability into financial decision-making. “The UN SSE initiative continues to deliver one of the largest global education programmes on climate risk disclosures, convening organisations and stock exchanges to build knowledge in both established and emerging markets. [...] The UN SSE initiative has impressed the judges with the global reach of its TCFD training, building capacity with over 50 stock exchanges. Its focus on bespoke market needs, feedback and continuous improvement has efficiently delivered training to 20,000+ market participants, helping scale the growth in transparency and reporting on climate risk and opportunity.” Judges of the Finance for the Future Awards, 2023.

(b) “Stock exchanges play a crucial role in efforts to raise the bar in the quality of sustainability-related disclosures. We are grateful to the UN SSE for their partnership in developing this training that will directly support the ability of companies to provide investors with consistent, comparable decision-useful disclosures in accordance with the ISSB Standards.” Chair, International Sustainability Standards Board, IFRS Foundation, 2023.

(c) “I very much laud the UN SSE’s proactive effort to develop this guidance on carbon markets for exchanges...I believe that the information and proposed actions provided in this publication will significantly contribute to raising awareness on voluntary carbon markets, and opportunities for exchanges around the world.” CEO, Bursa Malaysia Berhad, 2023.

(d) “Promoting gender parity and achieving gender equality cannot be done without unlocking key financing and setting a strong foundation through education. We are pleased to work with the UN SSE to also support their education programme and to work together on building skills and knowledge in markets on gender equality.” Head of Sustainable Finance, Luxembourg Stock Exchange, 2023.

(e) “We have no doubt that this timely UN SSE publication on carbon markets marks a significant step towards strengthening the knowledge of exchanges on carbon markets.” Executive Chairman, The Egyptian Exchange, 2023.

(f) “The training [on the Task Force on Climate-Related Financial Disclosure] provided clear, comprehensive, high-quality information on the financial risks & opportunities associated with climate change, a deep dive on the TCFD recommended disclosures and steps organizations need to take to implement the recommendations, including good practice and case studies.” Chief Executive Nairobi Securities Exchange, 2023.

(g) “As the Indonesia stock exchange, we welcome the continued support from SSE on diverse reporting training to help our markets understand the different frameworks and standards.” CEO, Indonesia Stock Exchange, 2023.

(h) “Congratulations to UN SSE, IFC and UN Women for this very important benchmark report [on women in corporate leadership] because I think this is what we need to look at how we’re doing compared to other regional exchanges and global standards to drive us all towards the goal we are going forward to.” Managing Director, Ghana Stock Exchange, 2023.

(i) “The publication of the target-setting framework today is an important initial milestone and I’d like to thank the United Nations Sustainable Stock Exchanges initiative for their support in facilitating this. This work is an example of what can be achieved through collaboration amongst global exchanges. Our focus now must be on driving action and implementing the framework globally in support of achieving net zero.” CEO, London Stock Exchange, 2023.

1.2. *Sustainable Institutional Investment Facilitation programme*

606. **Development context.** Capital markets can have a decisive impact on the level and direction of investment. To leverage the potential of capital markets to fill the financing gap for the SDGs, UNCTAD has been expanding its focus to the upstream segment of the investment chain, centred around the global financial market ecosystem. The Sustainable Institutional Investment Facilitation (SIIF) programme is dedicated to promoting the integration of sustainable development, as defined by the SDGs, into the capital market.

607. **Objectives and features.** The programme aims to facilitate long-term sustainable investment by institutional investors in key SDG sectors, particularly in developing economies. This is achieved through policy advocacy, capacity building, dissemination of best practices and partnership with SDG investors.

608. **Outputs.** In 2023, the programme updated the UN Global Sustainable Finance Observatory (GSFO) and its databases to maintain a relevant enabling ecosystem that supports sustainable finance and related policymaking. The Observatory features a sustainable finance regulations platform, covering sustainable finance policies and regulations and related best practices in 35 countries and country groupings, representing 93 per cent of global GDP. It presents the latest developments and best practices in sustainable finance policymaking. The Observatory also published the sustainability performance of almost 3000 sustainable funds, including their alignment with the SDGs and their climate impact, which helped enhance the transparency and credibility of the sustainable investment market.

609. The programme continues monitoring and assessing sustainable investment and related practices of the world’s 100 largest sovereign wealth funds (SWFs) and public pension funds. Best-practice examples of sustainable investment by sovereign and public investors were presented and published as a dedicated section on institutional investors in the *World Investment Report 2023*, and in the GSFO with an aim to encourage sustainable investment by institutional investors, in particular in developing economies.

610. The programme launched *A Sustainability Integration Framework for Institutional Investors* at the UNCTAD World Investment Forum in October 2023. The Framework, which is produced jointly by UNCTAD and the UNEP Finance Initiative, provides step-by-step guidance for institutional investors and financial industry associations, particularly in

developing economies, on integrating sustainable development considerations into investment strategy and decision making.

611. Stemming directly from its capacity-building workshop on sustainability integration strategies and practices provided to the Angolan sovereign wealth fund in December 2022, the programme developed an advisory report on facilitating institutional investment in infrastructure in Africa. The success of the Angola project was well-received by the Angolan and wider African investment community and helped foster a partnership between UNCTAD and the African Sovereign Investors Forum (ASIF), which was announced during the World Investment Forum 2023. The partnership aims to support sovereign investors in Africa to attract and co-invest with other institutional investors – for example, large Middle East-based SWFs – by overcoming problems related to the cost of capital and scale, the unattractive risk profiles of investments, and policy challenges. As a joint activity of the partnership, a high-level event on mobilizing institutional investment for sustainable development in Africa was organized during the World Investment Forum, during which ASIF and several African SWFs, including the Angola Sovereign Fund (FSDEA), presented SDG investment opportunities for international investors.

612. In addition, a high-level conference on sustainable funds was organized as part of the World Investment Forum, to discuss strategies and best practices to leverage the potential of sustainable funds to finance the SDGs in developing economies. The conference saw the participation of policymakers and financial industry associations executives. A roundtable, featuring executives of sovereign wealth funds from both developed and developing economies, was also organized to deliberate on policy options and tools to promote long-term investment by sovereign and public investors in the SDGs and climate transition.

613. **Results.** The efforts made by the SIIF programme in promoting and facilitating long-term investment by financial institutions and the capital market in SDG sectors, particularly in developing countries, were well recognized by the financial industry and member States.

(a) “The education of the investment fund management industry is key to increasing sustainability awareness and integrating sustainability performance in investment strategies and decision making. UNCTAD’s support to our work and to the global community in this field is invaluable.” CEO, Investment Management Association of Singapore (IMAS).

(b) “We value our cooperation with UNCTAD and look forward to continuing to share market data and analysis to support UNCTAD monitoring and analysis. We also recognize the need for capacity building of institutional investors in Latin America, and beyond, and look forward to collaborating with UNCTAD to achieve this.” CEO, Brazilian Financial and Capital Markets Association.

(c) “The potential further collaboration envisaged by UNCTAD and the Africa Sovereign Investors Forum will help us establish an infrastructure finance platform to attract large scale investments from sovereign and public investors in Africa.” CEO, Ithmar Capital, Morocco and Acting Chair, International Forum of Sovereign Wealth Funds (IFSFW).

2. Addressing challenges and opportunities in economic globalization

Wuhan Globalization Seminars

614. Development **context.** The rapid and successful integration of China into the world economy since the 1990s provides valuable lessons and insights of the opportunities and challenges posed by economic globalization for the process of structural transformation and development. Studying the recent development experiences of China and potential implications for own national development strategies is therefore of great significance for policymakers from other developing nations.

615. The Wuhan Seminars are a training programme, jointly sponsored by the Ministry of Commerce of China and UNCTAD since 2004. The programme is focused on the area of economic globalization and the development experience of China.

616. **Objectives and features.** The main objective of the project is to enable policymakers from developing nations to study China's development experience in the context of the dynamics of economic globalization processes, and to gain a deeper understanding of strategic requirements for their national development processes in this context. Furthermore, the project also aims at supporting Chinese policymakers in their efforts to keep abreast of ongoing developments in the global economy and to enhance sensitivity to policy options at national levels to meet new challenges. Since 2022, after consulting with the donor agency, the scope of the project has also been expanded to broader international economic and development issues particularly from South-South Cooperation perspective.

617. **Outputs.** Entrusted by the Ministry of Commerce of China, the China–Europe Vocational Training Centre and UNCTAD have successfully held and organized well over 20 international seminars on a range of issues relating to economic globalization processes, their impact on trade, industrialization and macro-financial policy spaces in developing countries, as well as lessons to be learned from the development experience of China. During the Covid-19 pandemic, virtual seminars was organized as well.

618. In 2023, UNCTAD was informed that, due to the Covid-19 pandemic shock, the local partner, namely China-Europe Vocational Training Centre, was no longer able to organize training seminar in 2023 and beyond. Therefore, no seminar was organized in China under this project.

619. Regarding other activities, UNCTAD, upon requests from Chinese Government and other partners, 1) continued to provide technical support to BRICS' discussion in the workstream of Contact Group on Economic and Trade Issues (CGETI) during the South Africa Presidency; 2) provided support to Hongqiao International Economic Forum on agenda and topic designing and co-hosted a sub-forum entitled "Driving Green Investment and Trade to Jointly Build Global Eco-Civilization" on 5th November 2023 which was attended by UNCTAD Secretary-General, several heads of state and many ministerial officials from various developing countries; 3) funded the travel of two young participants of UNCTAD Summer School 2023.

620. **Results.** Since the beginning of the project, nearly 1,000 governmental officials from 89 developing countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America, Europe and Oceania participated in the programme. The seminar series, including in particular the Economic Globalization series, has persistently received highly positive feedback and remains very popular with participants. The programme overall is very much welcomed by policymakers in developing nations and has, over the years, impacted substantially on training for developmental policy analysis and design.

621. Beyond the seminars, the project has also extended UNCTAD support, upon request, to various policy consensus building and capacity building activities, which has also been welcomed and recognized by many developing countries.

IV. Theme D: Empowering people, investing in their future

622. The transformative 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity. It aims at ending poverty in all its forms and improving human well-being. The successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals would require, on the one hand, sound strategies and policies made by Governments and, on the other hand, the engagement of all people from different sectors of society, including local authorities, business and industry, non-governmental organizations, women and farmers. To support policymaking and the effective participation of people in this new development process, it is essential to strengthen their skills and update their knowledge base through capacity-building activities.

623. UNCTAD has developed well-targeted technical assistance programmes (including training) to build capacity for various stakeholders including policymakers, academic institutions, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and port operators in developing countries. Furthermore, UNCTAD supports developing country policymakers in mainstreaming gender in trade policy and empowering women in trade.

624. In this section, reports are presented on three products under the theme “Empowering people, investing in their future”. The reports highlight main technical cooperation activities carried out in 2023 and key results to date. Technical cooperation projects that are pertinent to the aforementioned theme but not linked with any of the existing three products in this thematic area are reported on under “D99 Other”.

D1 Trade, gender and development

Table D1
Trade, gender and development

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
INS/OT/LBP	Promoting Transformative Gender Equality Agenda in Asia and the Pacific	2023–	Asian Development Bank
MOZ/OT/LAM	Strengthening Capacity of Women Cross Border Traders in Mozambique	2022–	TradeMark Africa
MYA/OT/HBI	United Nations Inter-Agency Cluster on Trade and Productive Capacity, Myanmar	2019–	UNOPS - Switzerland
INT/OT/CAI	Capacity-Building in Trade and Gender	2013–	Multi-donors
INT/OT/JAC	EIF-Regional Project Promoting Gender Responsive Trade Policy in the LDCs	2020–	UNOPS - EIF
INT/OT/LAF	EIF-Trade and Gender Linkages: Exploring the Benefit of e-commerce for Women	2022–	UNOPS - EIF
ROA-2023 (D12)	Data and statistics for more gender-responsive trade policies in Africa, the Caucasus and Central Asia	2020–	Development Account

625. **Development context.** Women are important players in trade in their roles as producers, workers, entrepreneurs and traders and their participation in the economy has been a major engine of growth and competitiveness for all countries. Yet, women’s potential in trade is too often held back by the many constraints they face.

626. Trade and trade policy are a powerful driving force in supporting the global efforts towards the realization of broader women’s economic empowerment and gender equality goals. For this to happen, an in-depth understanding of the gender ramifications of trade policy is necessary to make trade a tool for achieving more inclusive and gender-equal economies after the pandemic.

627. **Objectives and features.** The Trade, Gender and Development Programme assists member countries in enhancing their understanding of the links between trade and gender, in conducting gender impact analyses of trade policies and agreements, as well as in the formulation and implementation of gender-sensitive trade policies. It does so by (a) carrying out analytical activities, (b) implementing capacity development and technical cooperation activities, and (c) promoting policy advocacy and intergovernmental dialogues. Through its work programme on trade, gender and development, UNCTAD contributes to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 8, on inclusive and sustainable economic growth, by promoting the design and implementation of macroeconomic policies,

in particular trade policies, that are gender inclusive. UNCTAD work in this area is also strongly aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 5 and recognizes gender equality and women's economic empowerment as key elements to achieve the ambitions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

628. **Outputs.** In 2023, the Trade, Gender and Development Programme assisted beneficiary countries in assessing the gender effects of trade policies, and in devising strategies and policy measures to overcome gender-based constraints that hinder inclusive development. It also carried out capacity-building activities to train policymakers on the trade and gender nexus through its e-learning programme on trade and gender; and provided technical assistance to enhance women's role in small-scale cross-border trade. Activities carried out include:

Training

629. Delivery of four iterations of the online course on trade and gender. Two iterations focused on the Least Developed Countries, and were delivered in cooperation with the EIF. The courses were held in English and in French (13 March to 16 April 2023). A total of 153 stakeholders participated in the courses. Beyond the pedagogical manuals, trainees benefited from various audio-visual aids developed by UNCTAD, combined with peer-to-peer exchanges with experts, for a concrete application of the themes addressed. An additional iteration of the course devoted to trade and gender and e-commerce was delivered in Spanish from 9 October to 12 November 2023, and benefited 54 stakeholders from Latin America. Lastly, the online course on trade and entrepreneurship in Indonesia from a gender and development perspective, organized in collaboration with the Asian Development Bank, was delivered during 13 November to 17 December 2023 in Bahasa, and benefited 97 participants.

630. Training programme on "Trade rules and procedures, and entrepreneurship" for women small-scale and informal cross-border traders in Mozambique. From 26 June to 29 July 2023, UNCTAD trained 113 women small-scale cross-border traders in Mozambique to promote awareness on trade rules and customs procedures, and strengthen traders' entrepreneurial skills. The training was carried out as part of the project on "Strengthening capacity of women cross border traders in Mozambique" financed by TradeMark Africa. The project builds upon the success of previous projects on the same issues carried out by UNCTAD in 2016–2022.

Analytical activities

631. The analytical work conducted by the Trade, Gender and Development Programme in 2023 focused on the drafting of the following studies:

(a) Publication of the policy review: "*E-commerce from a gender and development perspective*". The publication examines the opportunities e-commerce offers to women-led and women-owned small enterprises in developing and least developed countries, and the obstacles such enterprises must overcome to engage in e-commerce. It aims to provide guidance on how to design policies and measures that enhance women's beneficial participation in the economy by leveraging e-commerce.

(b) Publication of the policy review: "*Trade and entrepreneurship in Indonesia from a gender and development perspective*". The publication examines the gender linkages and their impact on women's entrepreneurship in Indonesia. It aims to provide guidance on how to design policies and measures that enhance women's beneficial participation in the economy in their roles as entrepreneurs.

(c) Publication of the study "*Trade and Development in the State of Palestine Through a Gender Lens*", which looks at the socioeconomic structure of the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) through a gender lens and investigates the interaction between trade and gender. It distinguishes between women's different economic roles as workers and entrepreneurs/business owners, and between different economic sectors such as agriculture, industry, and services.

(d) Publication of the policy review “*Mozambique’s Integration into Regional Value Chains and the Role of Women Small-Scale Cross-Border Traders*”. The study looks at Mozambique’s integration into international and regional value chains and analyses the role of women small-scale cross-border traders in them, as well as the barriers they face. It offers policy recommendations towards a better integration of women cross-border traders into regional value chains.

(e) Continued implementation of the SECO - UN Trade Cluster project in Myanmar, with particular focus on female farmers. Interventions aimed to promote ethnic identities, rural economic development and traditional knowledge through the valorization of culinary heritage, and to leverage the productive potential of women farmers through digital solutions. Activities carried out in 2023 included: i) the publication of a book about the culinary traditions of Myanmar presenting recipes of the most popular traditional dishes collected through interviews and field visits; ii) the publication of a guidebook titled “Towards better trade opportunities for female farmers in Myanmar” to improve agricultural practices, food safety, and access to credit; and iii) the development of mobile solutions for female farmers, including educational digital content prepared by UNCTAD on good agricultural practices for ginger, avocado and tea, access to finance and food safety.

Events and workshops – Awareness-raising and policy dialogue on the trade and gender nexus

632. During the period under review, the Trade, Gender and Development Programme organized the following meetings and events on the topic of trade and gender:

(a) CSW67 side event “Gender gaps in trade and development: Does digitalization hold solutions?”. The event was held on 7 March 2023 during the sixty-seventh session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). The focus of the discussion was on the opportunities, bottlenecks and key strategic interventions at the international and domestic levels to enable women to benefit further from the digital revolution and to enhance their participation in trade.

(b) WTO Public Forum event “Empowering waves: An ocean of opportunities for women in the blue economy” held on 15 September 2023. The event discussed the role of women in the ocean economy, recognizing their valuable contributions, and examined existing gender gaps. It focused on women’s involvement in fisheries and seaweed cultivation, highlighting the untapped potential for women’s greater participation and empowerment in these industries, especially in value-added activities, and R&D.

(c) UN Trade Forum event “Gender gaps and digital solutions - Launch of UNCTAD Policy Review: E-commerce from a gender and development perspective” on 9 May 2023. The event discussed the potential of digital technologies to enhance women’s economic participation, and provided an opportunity to launch a publication analyzing the benefits and the challenges of e-commerce for women-led small enterprises in developing and least developed countries.

(d) UNCTAD eWeek event “Trade regulations in the digital environment- Is there a gender component?” held on 6 December 2023. The event focused on exploring trade-related regulations in e-commerce and digitalization, and provided insights into how these regulations may impact women’s participation in online trade and highlight potential opportunities and challenges they may encounter.

633. **Results.** The above activities yielded positive and multiplier effects in terms of enhanced capacities to mainstream gender into trade policy.

Delivery of online courses on trade and gender

634. In 2023, the online courses had an average success rate of 75 per cent, with 514 participants, 60 per cent of which were women, successfully completing all course activities and scoring passing grades in the quizzes. Over 76 per cent of course participants rated the course as excellent or very good and indicated that the objectives of the course were fully met, exceeded, or considerably exceeded. Ninety-one per cent of participants

indicated that the course was extremely or very successful in enhancing their understanding of the two-way relationship between trade and gender, and an average of 72 per cent of participants indicated that they feel confident or better prepared to undertake policy-relevant research on trade and gender, or that they feel ready or more able to be involved in gender-sensitive trade policymaking in their own country.

Training programme for women cross border traders

635. UNCTAD capacity building activities targeting women small-scale cross-border traders in Mozambique comprised of 4 six-day training workshops, including 3 in Maputo (linked to Ressano Garcia border with South Africa) and 1 at the Mandimba border with Malawi. Out of the 113 participants who benefited from the workshops, 90 per cent were women. Participants' understanding was extremely improved after the training as a result of the discussions on their rights (81.5 per cent), their obligations (69 per cent), and of regional trade rules (71 per cent). They also confirmed enhanced confidence to cross the border through official border posts (97 per cent) and intention to formalize their business within the next 12 months (97 per cent).

D3 Entrepreneurship for sustainable development

Table D3

Entrepreneurship for sustainable development

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
ANG/0T/FBK	European Union–UNCTAD Joint Programme for Angola: Train for Trade II	2017–	European Union
MYA/0T/HBI	UN Trade Cluster Myanmar	2018–	UNOPS - Switzerland
SAU/0T/CBI	Entrepreneurship Development Programme (Saudi Arabia)	2014–	Saudi Arabia
INT/0T/BAQ	Capacity Building in Investment for Development	2011–	Multi-donors
ROA-2124 (A13)	Towards integrated national financing framework	2021–	Development Account

636. **Development context.** The General Assembly of the United Nations, in its resolutions 67/202 of 21 December 2012, 69/210 of 19 December 2014, 71/221 of 21 December 2016, 73/225 of 20 December 2018, 75/211 of 21 December 2020, and 77/160 of 27 December 2022, recognizes the important contribution that entrepreneurship makes to sustainable development by creating jobs, promoting decent work, driving inclusive economic growth and innovation, improving social conditions and addressing economic, social and environmental challenges. Acknowledging the value of entrepreneurship education and the dissemination of entrepreneurial thinking across all sectors, the General Assembly encourages UNCTAD to continue its work in support of entrepreneurship through its Empretec programme and to assist Member States in identifying, formulating, implementing and assessing coherent policy measures on entrepreneurship and the promotion of microenterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs).

637. The UNCTAD XV outcome document “The Bridgetown Covenant”, para. 127 (r), mandates UNCTAD, in collaboration with agencies within and outside the United Nations system, to “continue to provide support in the area of development of microenterprises, small and medium-sized enterprises and start-ups, including women- and youth-owned small and medium-sized enterprises, through”, inter alia:

(i) Enterprise development initiatives, including capacity-building and assistance to attract investment capital, grow business linkages with transnational corporations and participate in global and regional value chains;

(iii) Entrepreneurship policy support for the implementation of robust national and regional policy frameworks.

638. In addition, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by United Nations Member States in September 2015, also emphasizes the role of entrepreneurship in sustainable development, particularly in Goals 4 and 8.

639. These mandates underpin UNCTAD technical assistance work on entrepreneurship for sustainable development.

640. **Objectives and features.** UNCTAD's assistance to member States in the area includes the identification, formulation, implementation and assessment of coherent policy measures that support entrepreneurship and the promotion of microenterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises. The objective is to support member States, at their request, to design initiatives, and identify measures and institutions that will promote entrepreneurship across five interrelated priority areas for the formulation of a national entrepreneurship strategy¹¹⁵: optimizing the regulatory environment; enhancing entrepreneurship education and skills development; facilitating technology exchange and innovation; improving access to finance; and promoting awareness and networking.

641. The other pillar of UNCTAD assistance to member States focuses on developing entrepreneurial skills and building local productive capacities of MSMEs and start-ups, through its Empretec programme and related initiatives aimed at promoting entrepreneurship, including vulnerable groups, as well as innovative start-ups.

642. Since its inception, the Empretec programme has been installed in forty-two countries and has been assisting entrepreneurs by establishing self-sustained, local market-driven entrepreneurship development centres (Empretec national centres). To date, more than 550,000 entrepreneurs have benefited from Empretec workshops and business development services available in the existing network of Empretec centres worldwide. Business support centres helped small businesses improve their efficiency and contribute to job creation in the hosting countries.

643. Through its network of Empretec centres, UNCTAD has also been assisting local suppliers with training and services that facilitate their integration into national and/or regional value chains through mutually beneficial business linkages with large buyers and processors. This action contributes to 2030 Agenda, leveraging the incentives and resources of the private sector to adopt environmental and labour standards and ensure the beneficial inclusion of the poorest segment of the population, especially in rural settings.

Outputs

644. The main outputs in 2023 in the areas of entrepreneurship policies, Empretec and business linkages are reported below.

Entrepreneurship policies

Research work related to technical assistance.

645. UNCTAD and the Africa Economic Zones Organization (AEZO) published a guide for practitioners titled "Promoting MSME development and entrepreneurship in and around Special Economic Zones in Africa" to offer practical guidance on policies, initiatives, and facilities for the effective promotion of entrepreneurship in and around Special Economic Zones (SEZs). The guide provides policymakers, SEZ authorities and management companies, and other institutions and stakeholders with practical examples aiming at leveraging SEZ policies to support MSMES and foster local entrepreneurship.

¹¹⁵ As identified in the UNCTAD Entrepreneurship Policy Framework – EPF, launched in 2012.

646. Continuing its series of papers under the tag “The New Frontier in Entrepreneurship”, UNCTAD published a brief with the title: “Entrepreneurs riding the wave of circularity”. The paper highlights opportunities and challenges in the transition to a circular economy and showcases inspiring examples of entrepreneurs managing small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and tech start-ups that are advancing this new economic model in local communities. It also illustrates policy initiatives to support entrepreneurial innovations and aims to encourage more business-led initiatives for a circular economy with a special focus on developing countries.

Advisory Reports

647. The programme also prepared the following advisory reports:

Angola – Elaboration of a national entrepreneurship policy

648. As part of the activities of the European Union-UNCTAD joint Programme for Angola: Train for Trade II, the design of initiatives and measures to promote entrepreneurship is a key element of the UNCTAD Empretec component aimed at supporting the government of Angola to elaborate a national entrepreneurship policy. UNCTAD and the Angolan National Institute for Support to Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (INAPEM) organized the “First Methodological meeting on the elaboration of the National Entrepreneurship Policy” to facilitate a multistakeholder dialogue that would serve as a contribution to the elaboration of a national entrepreneurship policy. The workshop brought together officials from various ministries, public institutions, representatives of the private sector and civil society, as well as international organizations, and its outcomes were published in the “Report on the multistakeholder dialogue of the elaboration of the national entrepreneurship policy”, issued by UNCTAD in November 2023. The report was presented at a multistakeholder webinar led by INAPEM in December 2023 during which final comments were made.

Seychelles - National Entrepreneurship Strategy

649. On 14 November 2022, Seychelles adopted a national entrepreneurship strategy as part of broader efforts towards achieving the government’s Vision 2033 for a resilient, responsible and prosperous nation. The strategy incorporates all key components of UNCTAD’s entrepreneurship policy framework, such as optimizing business regulations, enhancing entrepreneurship education, investing in technology and innovation, improving entrepreneurs’ access to finance, and promoting a culture of entrepreneurship and networking. As a result of UNCTAD’s collaboration with the Ministry of Investment, Entrepreneurship and Industry, Seychelles’ national entrepreneurship strategy was published on UNCTAD’s website in March 2023.

South Africa - Entrepreneurship Strategy Review

650. Since 2021, UNCTAD has been assisting the Department of Small Business Development (DSBD) of the Government of South Africa to complement the National Integrated Small Enterprise Development (NISED) Masterplan and draft an entrepreneurship strategy. In 2022, UNCTAD, DSDB and other local partners, organized a workshop to review strengths and weaknesses of the entrepreneurial ecosystem in South Africa. As a result of the consultation process, UNCTAD, in cooperation with DSDB, issued the “Entrepreneurship Strategy Review” for South Africa in August 2023. The Review provides an assessment of the country’s entrepreneurial ecosystem and identifies priority actions and activities that policymakers could consider. Policy options are aligned with South Africa’s NISED Masterplan and focus on three of the five pillars of UNCTAD’s Entrepreneurship Policy Framework (EPF).

Uganda – Entrepreneurship Policy Review

651. The Ministry of Trade, Industry and Cooperatives (MTIC) of Uganda received UNCTAD’s support in 2021 and 2022 to conduct a diagnostic assessment and carry out two multistakeholder workshops on Uganda’s National Entrepreneurship and MSME Strategy, in alignment with the National Development Plan 2020/21–2024/25 (NDP III) and the

Government's Vision 2040. In March 2023, in coordination with MTIC, UNCTAD issued Uganda's "Entrepreneurship Policy Review" containing the main findings of the work carried out in the previous biennium, and an action plan with priority actions for the implementation of the National Entrepreneurship and MSME Strategy.

Training and technical material

652. *E-learning course on policymaking: Entrepreneurship for Sustainable Development.* The online course was designed by UNCTAD to help policymakers and practitioners understand the benefits of promoting entrepreneurship and its impact on sustainable development. Hosted on the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)'s platform, the course is available in three languages: English, French and Spanish. In 2023, the course was attended by 475 people from 126 countries.

653. *E-learning course on Entrepreneurship for Migrants and Refugees* The e-learning course for policymakers and practitioners on Entrepreneurship for Migrants and Refugees follows closely the Policy Guide on Entrepreneurship for Migrants and Refugees and aims to improve the capacity, awareness and experience sharing among policy makers and relevant stakeholders, as well as to develop and implement special provisions in entrepreneurship policies for vulnerable groups, including migrants, refugees, and internally displaced people. In 2023, the e-learning course – made available in English, French and Spanish – was completed by 445 people from 93 countries.

Global events

654. The United Nations MSME Day, observed on 27 June every year, provides an opportunity to highlight the crucial role of MSMEs in sustainable development and advocate for policies that support their growth. In 2023, UNCTAD co-organized the event in collaboration with the Permanent Mission of Argentina to the UN, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Trade Centre (ITC), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), and the International Council for Small Business. Panellists discussed the role of policies that strengthen capacities and support MSMEs development and entrepreneurship for women and youth, as well as measures aimed at making supply chains more resilient for MSMEs in a scenario where rising inflation and disruptions of different nature can frequently stifle the growth of small businesses.

655. UNCTAD's 8th World Investment Forum, which took place in Abu Dhabi, UAE, in October 2023 featured ten sessions and global events dedicated to enterprise development (*entrepreneurship track*), including an Enterprise Ministerial Round Table, the 8th Empretec Women in Business Awards ceremony and an Enterprise Corner. Fourteen Ministers, Heads of International Organizations and high-level representatives of International Organizations, including UN Women, UNIDO, ILO and the Commonwealth Secretariat, participated in the Enterprise Ministerial Round Table. Ministers debated the importance of entrepreneurship for sustainable development and how MSMEs and the private sector can play a role in achieving the SDGs.

Empretec

656. Among the achievements of the Empretec programme in 2023, the following had a particular relevance at the global or country level:

- (a) The annual Empretec Directors meeting in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on 21–23 October.
- (b) Final training activities in Angola (Empretec and Farming-as-a-Business workshops).
- (c) Advancement of the Empretec Saudi Arabia project, with the organization of 13 Empretec workshops, two training-of-trainers workshops, and five follow-up meetings with former workshop participants.
- (d) Seven Empretec workshops in Costa Rica, as part of the training activities planned under the installation phase of the programme in the country.

(e) A first Empretec workshop in Indonesia.

657. More specifically the following activities were conducted:

Empretec global network activities

658. Representatives from 24 Empretec national centres participated in the twenty-ninth annual meeting of Empretec Directors, held on 21–22 October 2023 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The event was hosted by the Empretec national counterpart – the Social Development Bank (SDB). The annual gathering featured a rich programme of events, including high-level panel discussions with the participation of UNCTAD’s Secretary-General, the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development of Saudi Arabia, and the CEO of SDB. Notable among the events, UNCTAD and SDB launched new initiatives, such as the Empretec LogiHub – a smart logistics project that UNCTAD and SDB will start implementing in 2024 with local start-ups in the smart logistics sector.

659. During the Empretec annual gathering, and as an integral part of its Empretec 2.0 strategy, UNCTAD launched its Square for Global Goals initiative which aims at scaling start-ups from developing countries by connecting them with fellow startup founders, mentors, investors and industry experts.

660. The eighth edition of UNCTAD’s Empretec Women in Business Awards was held on 18 October during the World Investment Forum. The awards honoured three women entrepreneurs from Uganda, Nigeria and Saudi Arabia who have not only achieved success but also promoted business models that deliver a positive impact for people and the planet. The winners were selected from an initial pool of 88 candidates from 26 countries.

Empretec activities at national and regional levels

661. The following section provides highlights on Empretec centres and new initiatives undertaken by some centres per region or geographic area.

Empretec country activities in Asia

662. Under the framework of the Development Account project “Towards Integrated National Financing Framework (INFFs)”, UNCTAD, in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Finance of Indonesia, organized the first Empretec Entrepreneurship Training Workshop (ETW) in the country. The workshop, which took place in Surabaya in December 2023, saw the participation of 31 entrepreneurs, including 13 women, and was led by a team of international trainers from Brazil, Malaysia, and Viet Nam.

663. The consolidation of the Empretec programme in Saudi Arabia continued in 2023. In cooperation with the donor and local implementing partner, the Social Development Bank (SDB), 13 Empretec training workshops were held in Riyadh, Al Khobar and Al Ula, benefiting 307 Saudi entrepreneurs, including 133 women. During the year, UNCTAD and SDB organized two training-of-trainers workshops. As a result, three local trainers received their certification as UNCTAD-Empretec National Master Trainers, while three more were certified as Empretec National Trainers. SDB also organized five follow-up sessions with previous Empretec participants to strengthen the alumni network and to assist them further with targeted training and non-training solutions.

Empretec country activities in Africa

664. Under the framework of the European Union-UNCTAD joint Programme for Angola: Train for Trade II, UNCTAD and the national Empretec centre conducted three Empretec Entrepreneurship Training Workshops, two in Luanda and one in Benguela, benefiting 74 local entrepreneurs, including 33 women. In collaboration with a local NGO that supports grassroot farming communities in various provinces aimed at improving their livelihoods, UNCTAD organized three Farming-as-a-Business workshops on horticulture value chains and fish farming. These workshops were attended by 90 small holder farmers, including 60 women, from Cubal, Porto Amboim and Uige.

665. In partnership with the local Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Empretec centre in Benin continued to provide support to small and medium-sized businesses. Two Entrepreneurship Training Workshops, based on the Empretec's most recent training methodology, were organized in the last quarter of 2023.

666. Ethiopia's Entrepreneurship Development Institute (EDI) hosts UNCTAD's Empretec programme in the country and has been the government's implementing arm for the provision of business development services to the SME sector. In coordination with the Ministry of Labour and Skills and the Ministry of Innovation and Technology, EDI has also been piloting a Public Entrepreneurship and Innovation initiative to turn public institutions into true agents of change and transformation. In September 2023, EDI organized an assessment workshop for national trainers with a view to certifying them at the Master's level. Thirty-one new UNCTAD-Empretec National Master Trainers received their certification, thus strengthening a team of some 400 trainers and 1,100 Business Development Services advisors at the national level.

667. In partnership with different international institutions and cooperation agencies, Empretec Ghana provided training workshops to women- and youth-led MSMEs. The Empretec centre has been partnering with banks and credit institutions on entrepreneurship training for women- and youth-led SMEs, and with the Government of Ghana on training for young people under the government initiative "YOUSTART" to create employment.

668. Empretec Nigeria Foundation organized seven Entrepreneurship Training Workshops, based on UNCTAD's Empretec methodology, for 225 entrepreneurs in the Cross River State, in collaboration with the State government. Moreover, under the "Employability and Entrepreneurship Development Programme" the Empretec centre trained 4,000 young people and unemployed graduates from 23 local government councils in Rivers State through a series of virtual workshops. It also assisted women in export through supply chain management workshops and strengthened entrepreneurial competencies of women in oil and gas, in collaboration with the Nigeria Content Development and Monitoring Board.

669. Through Empretec Zimbabwe, UNCTAD assisted the Ministry of Women Affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprises Development of Zimbabwe in the organization of a stakeholders' dialogue to discuss opportunities and constraints to sustainable entrepreneurship in the country. Empretec Zimbabwe also implemented the "Opportunities for Youth Employment (OYE)" project supporting 2,000 young people (48 per cent women) in the agriculture, energy and waste management sectors through training, cooperation with vocational training centres and private companies, and mentoring. It has also initiated an entrepreneurship project for retirees in collaboration with a development bank operating in the country.

Empretec country activities in Latin America

670. In 2023, Empretec Argentina conducted six Empretec workshops in six different provinces across the country, training 120 entrepreneurs, with 68 per cent being women. In collaboration with the National Bank of Argentina, the Empretec centre conducted various types of training, especially targeting exports-oriented companies and innovative businesses, reaching more than 1,600 participants (52 per cent women).

671. The Empretec centre in Brazil, hosted at SEBRAE¹¹⁶ celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2023. With over 50 staff dedicated to the Empretec programme and 360 consultants (comprising 280 certified trainers and 80 interviewers), the centre reached a milestone of training 300,000 entrepreneurs (empretecocos), through more than 13,000 Empretec training workshops offered across all 26 states and the federal district. Additionally, the centre has been piloting three new training solutions for entrepreneurs: one for rural enterprises, one for start-ups, and one as a follow-up or complement to the standard 6-day Empretec workshop.

¹¹⁶ Support Service of Brazil for Micro and Small Enterprises

672. The Empretec programme in Costa Rica, hosted by CELIEM¹¹⁷, started in 2023 with the organization of 7 Empretec workshops for 173 entrepreneurs (77 per cent women and 20 per cent migrants) in three regions of the country, including the capital city. Seventy per cent of the businesses were formal and six months or older at the time of the workshop. Empretec fits CELIEM's portfolio of services and is in line with its mandate to strengthen Costa Rica's entrepreneurial ecosystem, with a particular focus on entrepreneurship for women and migrants, green entrepreneurship, and creative/cultural entrepreneurship, among others.

673. Empretec Panama has been assisting CELIEM with the installation of Empretec in Costa Rica. In partnership with certified trainers from Dominican Republic, the centre provided technical support to Costa Rica in the organization and delivery of the first ETWs. Empretec Panama has also been supporting the Empretec programme in Dominican Republic, which is partnering with a local school of management, where Empretec is being taught as a subject in its curriculum.

Business Linkages

674. Under the SECO-United Nations Cluster on Trade and Productive Capacity project in Myanmar, UNCTAD delivered Farming-as-a-Business courses on the three agricultural value chains – avocado, ginger and tea – through a virtual platform. The content, developed in local language, was delivered by a Myanmar-based consultant to small groups of a total of 106 farmers gathered in three different townships (and 19 villages). Participants learned about good agricultural practices and how to add more value to their products in view of entering regional markets. They appreciated the opportunity to practice with basic planning tools that would allow them to estimate their income under different scenarios.

675. **Results and impact.** UNCTAD's Entrepreneurship Policy Framework and its participatory, multi-stakeholder approach has been adopted in the finalization of policy documents on entrepreneurship prepared by the Governments of Angola, Seychelles, South Africa and Uganda. UNCTAD's papers on urbanization, new health economy and circularity, issued under the tag "The New Frontier in Entrepreneurship", provided context and background to experts panels organized under the entrepreneurship track at the World Investment Forum 2023.

676. During the Enterprise Ministerial Round Table at the World Investment Forum 2023, Ministers identified challenges, priorities and solutions being adopted at the country level. The Minister of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration and Employment, The Gambia stated "In all our reform processes, UNCTAD has played and continues to play an important role in helping us realize our reform objectives...In our efforts to restore the economy...the government sought and obtained assistance from UNCTAD to reform its policy and regulatory environment to enhance private sector participation in the economy. Some of the reforms include but not limited to the formulation of a national micro-small and medium enterprise policy strategy [and] national entrepreneurship policy review."

677. Under Empretec Saudi Arabia's three-year consolidation phase, in partnership with SDB, a total of 28 Empretec workshops (ETWs) were organized between June 2021 and 2023, benefiting 672 entrepreneurs, including 311 women. During this period, six national trainers were certified, three at the National Master Trainer level. Additionally, five more are expected to receive their certification in early 2024. Of the certified trainers, three are women, and three of the five currently in the process of being certified are also women. Activities are progressing according to the work plan set out for the consolidation phase, which aims at organizing a total of 40 ETWs across different parts of the country, and certifying up to 20 national Empretec trainers. A preliminary assessment of the impact on participants who attended ETWs between June 2021 and December 2023 shows high overall appreciation of this capacity-building tool, with an average score of 9.08/10. More than 81 per cent of participants believe that ETWs are better than other entrepreneurship training programmes, and 96 per cent acknowledge that what they learned is important for

¹¹⁷ Latin American Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship

dealing with business challenges. Moreover, participants reported improved business performance a few months after attending the workshop. Applying and practicing what they learned during the training led to significant benefits: 60 per cent reported increased sales; there was 60 per cent increase in total employment; and one-fourth started new businesses or lines of business.

678. The first Empretec workshop, that took place in December 2023 in Indonesia, was highly appreciated by participants (with a score of 4.87/5.00). Participants recognized that its content and methodology was “highly relevant” to their business, exceeding their expectations, and indicated that the workshop was particularly helpful in improving their professional behaviour and management skills, and in strengthening their network. They also indicated that what they learned would have a positive impact on profitability of their business, expansion of customers base, finding new markets and improving the quality of their products and services.

D6 Train for Trade

Table D6
Train for Trade

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
INT/OT/4AB	Mise en place d'un projet de renforcement des capacités de formation portuaire pour les pays en développement (Programme Train for Trade)	2004–	Developing country ports
INT/OT/5BS	Coopération entre l'Autorité Portuaire de Valence (Espagne) et le programme Train for Trade de la CNUCED	2005–	Valencia port authority of Spain
INT/OT/6AR	Train for Trade Trust Fund	2006–	Multi-donors
INT/OT/7BR	UNCTAD/ Train for Trade Port Training Programme for English-Speaking Developing Countries	2007–	Multi-donors
ROA-2225 (F14)	Train for Trade blended learning strategy to boost the digital economy in small island developing States of Africa, the Caribbean and Asia and the Pacific	2022–	Development Account

679. **Development context.** With a view to supporting the development of inclusive and sustainable economic growth, the UNCTAD TrainForTrade Programme proposes tailored technical assistance to best meet countries' needs in key trade-related areas. The programme aims to develop local capacities, knowledge and skills to empower countries to reap the benefits of international trade. The programme promotes national ownership, supports South–South and triangular cooperation and leads to poverty reduction. Specifically, the programme helps developing countries build sustainable networks of knowledge, develop trade-oriented policies and promote ICT solutions and innovative thinking to enhance the capacities of international trade players and reduce poverty. In recent years, the TrainForTrade programme has enlarged its scope in terms of geographic coverage and themes. The programme comprises 3 main components:

(a) E-commerce, including issues such as the Legal Aspects of E-commerce, Digital Identity for Trade and Development, E-commerce Best Practices, online Training on the Manual for the Production of Statistics on the Digital Economy, and E-commerce general course;

(b) Trade statistics, including Statistics on International Trade in Services (SITS) and on International Merchandise Trade Statistics (IMTS);

(c) Port Management Programme (PMP), including the course on Modern Port Management, the special course on Building Port Resilience Against Pandemics, and the performance indicators.

680. The TrainForTrade Port Management Programme plays a vital role in supporting port communities in developing countries in quest for efficient and competitive port management. In many developing countries, ports play a key role in connecting them to international trade. Furthermore, 80 per cent of international trade is channelled through ports (this percentage is even higher in most developing countries). Hence, the way the maritime sector is organized has a profound impact on trade volumes and transport costs and is therefore crucial for the competitiveness of countries. Since the trade and maritime transport sectors are subject to constant regulatory changes, it is paramount that port officials are able to grasp the growing complexities of port management.

681. The activities of the TrainForTrade programme in 2023 have contributed to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, as follows:

(a) Goal 5 (achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls) by actively promoting women's participation in all programme activities. In 2023 the women's participation in the programme reached 42 per cent with a total of 2,633 women following the programme activities. TrainForTrade port management programme not only aims to increase women's participation in management roles in ports through training and empowerment, but also aims to promote the concept of gender equality and raise awareness throughout all programme activities.

(b) Goal 7 (ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all) by improving the port infrastructure improvements in line with the energy transition happening in the port sector. Some examples include readiness assessment of the Tanjung Perak Port of PELINDO in Indonesia for implementing towage services using tugboat fuel with clean or green energy and addressing the green energy requirements of Tanjung Priok Port of PELINDO in Indonesia by examining of LNG bunkering infrastructure provision.

(c) Goal 8 (promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all) by providing sustainable and comprehensive training, capacity-building and knowledge exchange programme. Some examples include proposing implementation of a new salary scheme with the goal of establishing a fair and transparent mechanism in determining the salary structure for non-crew outsourced office workers following the merger into one group called PELINDO, managing growing coal throughput by enhancing performance through buffer zone, improving loading rate in the Port of Bengkulu of PELINDO in Indonesia, and optimizing the operational performance of the bulk terminal at Belawan Port of PELINDO in Indonesia. In Cameroon, the Port Authority of Kribi reformed its staff training system, to give better access to quality education, and to ensure gender equality, decent work for all and economic growth. The goal is to inject skills and knowledge into the port's human resources, that will have a knock-on effect in the port itself and in the region. In this context, the port even asked for developing a closer partnership with the TrainForTrade programme. In Togo, the Port Authority of Lomé has investigated the issue of stress, well-being and safety, with the aim of improving the working conditions of its employees from the dockers to the secretaries.

(d) Goal 9 (build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation) by encouraging port communities to implement proposals for corrective actions and innovations contained in dissertations of the participants of the Port Management Programme. Some examples include the utilization of geographical information system to improve property management and monitoring in PELINDO, Indonesia and the implementation of a dedicated operation planning and control system as part of the digitalization process in Tanjung Pinang Branch of PELINDO, Indonesia.

(e) Goal 10 (reduced inequalities within and among countries). In Indonesia, the TrainForTrade Port Management Programme has led to the formulation of reforms aimed at developing Roll-on/Roll-off as well as passenger shipping. Being cost-effective and efficient for short distances, this should lead to the development of islands that are not well connected with existing infrastructure. The Indonesian archipelago faces specific development challenges. The development of Roll-on/Roll-off will make development more inclusive and foster innovation, leading to a reduction of inequalities within the country itself. Equal movement of people and goods across a territory is an essential step towards greater economic integration.

(f) Goal 11 (make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable). Ports are seen as a space that should be open to everyone. It is a question of increasing the internal and external visibility of the port, and of promoting the dialogue around its structure with the city, the ministries, the industries and the citizens. For example, Port of Buenos Aires in Argentina is working together with the city promoting a good port-city relationship improving public spaces and people's vision about the port. In Cameroon, the Port Authority of Douala is taking seriously the issue of plastic waste, at the interface between the city and the port. The port intends to play a leading role in reducing the use of plastic bottles in the region, as well as in water purification. They conceive ports as the initiators of transitions benefiting cities. The cement industry located in the port is responsible for air pollution. The port of Douala is taking measures to reduce the spread of clinker powder, affecting the river and the surrounding urban area. In Togo, the Port Authority of Lomé has devoted its attention to the fish smokehouses located in the districts around the port itself. In 2023, this activity had negative impact on workers' health and on the population living next to the factories, mostly due to the use of plastic to smoke fish. The port intends to make workers aware of health hazards, and to improve the smoked fish quality which would benefit the consumers.

(g) Goal 12 (ensure responsible consumption and production patterns). Members of the ports network are managing natural resources, chemical waste in a sustainable manner; implementing responsible procurement policies; making sustainable investment in port area; encouraging the circular economy; optimizing port operations; and reducing food wastage and food loss in the production and supply chain. For example, PT JPPI, PELINOD in Indonesia proposed an improvement strategy for spare part supply to strengthen port equipment maintenance services. In Cameroon, the Port Authority of Kribi is developing an investment optimisation programme, making sure that resources are not wasted and are used as efficiently as possible.

(h) Goal 13 (take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts). Some examples include a proposal to reduce emission by developing net-zero emission roadmap in IPCC Car Terminal in Indonesia and implementation of Green Port initiatives and proposing a plan to achieve Blue rating of Proper Assessment being part of the Proper Program (being one of the Indonesian environmental regulation with the aims of improving company's environmental management performance) in the Tanjung Perak Port of PELINDO in Indonesia. In 2023, the Port Authority of Lomé (Togo) devoted 60 million FCFA to reduce the impact of the port activities on the environment, to decarbonise infrastructure, as well as to improve workers' safety and health. In Cameroon, the Port Authority of Douala is working to integrate the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, better waste management and environmental protection into the legal framework defining the port's objectives and functions. New standards and rules favouring renewable energies, pollution reduction and clean technologies should be adopted, as well as a system of sanctions and incentives.

(i) Goal 14 (conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development) by raising awareness of challenges for sustainable ports, including circular economy, air quality, environmental impact, green bank investment, decarbonization, climate change, and so on. In Dominican Republic, Port of Rio Haina is improving the sanitary drainage of the port to improve the quality of the water. In Indonesia, in the Tanjung Priok Port, the TrainForTrade Port Management Programme has helped to formulate reforms aimed at better management of waste from ships, from the collection of data on waste transported by ships to toxic and hazardous waste management

services. In Togo, the Port Authority of Lomé considers taxing port users who damage the environment to repair the damage caused and put an end to harmful practices.

(j) Goal 17 (strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development) by building global partnership and consensus. One of the core features of the port management programme is its south-south, north-south and triangular exchanges of experience and knowledge. Indeed, in the 3 linguistic networks port experts that are certified by TrainForTrade contribute to the activities in various countries providing advisory services, training and capacity building and finally assessing case studies from peers of port communities. This dimension of the programme is very much appreciated by beneficiaries, partners and donors. Participants of the programme have made use of their acquired knowledge to analyse current problems that their ports are facing and formulate concrete recommendations. For example, participants from the Center of Navigation of Argentina proposed reforms on their customs processes and port-related regulations, in order to promote greater competitiveness of foreign trade while safeguarding the connectivity with the rest of the logistics chain that operates globally. Moreover, after benefitting from the programme, participants create a national network in their port environment. These networks are efficient to improve port management and workflow many years after they graduate. The connection between mentors and participants as well as with local trainers create strong ties that all the port community benefits from. In Argentina, Port Dock Sud is restructuring the traffic of trucks in city of Dock Sud to improve security and quality of life of population. This is achieved thanks to the partnership between the Port, the municipality and the Regional government.

682. **Objectives and features.** The TrainForTrade programme contributes to the work of development-led globalization, where the development paths are sustainable and inclusive, by disseminating international trade-related knowledge and developing skills and capacities. TrainForTrade has proven to be very useful and instrumental in connecting UNCTAD research and analysis with sustainable capacity-building activities in developing countries. TrainForTrade activities help to facilitate South–South and North–South collaboration and foster communication between trade and training experts. The UNCTAD TrainForTrade methodology includes training of trainers, coaching, and blended learning. It provides countries with a public–private partnership model, sustainable training and capacity-building, talent management scheme and systematic methodology combining blended learning and digital technology.

683. The PMP brings together public, private and international entities to share expertise and best practices. Talent management and leadership development is a crucial part of the programme. The PMP operates through three language-based networks (English, French and Spanish) in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean. The programme hosts the high-end course on modern port management, which entails a powerful scheme to induce value added solutions in port communities and performance measurement indicators. It also encompasses the course on “Building Port Resilience Against Pandemics (BPR)” fully digital and accessible in three languages (French, English and Spanish) with dedicated platforms and support.

684. Partnerships have been established with European ports to share their knowledge and expertise with ports in the South. Annual regional meetings bring together port officials from different countries, promoting sharing of experiences and expertise. South–South collaboration between port communities is promoted as it is crucial for knowledge sharing. For example, exchange of participants is encouraged in order to increase participants’ exposure to different port set-ups, as well as to facilitate the transfer of knowledge. Furthermore, the beneficiary ports of the Port Management Programme (Argentina, Plurinational State of Bolivia, Cameroon, Cambodia, Costa Rica, Côte d’Ivoire, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Gabon, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea, Haiti, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nigeria, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Senegal, Togo, Tunisia, United Republic of Tanzania and Uruguay) continued to contribute financially to the programme, including contributions to the Trust Fund. This *self-sustaining aspect* indicates *the level of commitment and interest from the national port communities* (public–private partnerships). Partnerships and synergies have also been established with regional organizations, namely the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU or UEMOA in French); and with international organizations, including UNSD, UNCITRAL, UNESCAP, UNECLAC and WTO. Moreover, the TrainForTrade programme collaborates with UNCTAD divisions/programmes according to the mandate/themes and requests from beneficiaries.

685. The PMP also offers *training-of-trainer* courses and *coaching* sessions to support capacity development of port managers as instructors. The Modern Port Management course targets middle and senior managers and consists of 240 hours of training activities, which are divided into eight modules and delivered over a two-year span. The eight modules of the Modern Port Management course are:

- (a) International trade and transport;
- (b) Organization of a port system;
- (c) Functioning of a port system;
- (d) Challenges of sustainable ports;
- (e) Methods and tools of port management;
- (f) Economic, commercial and financial management;
- (g) Administrative and legal management;
- (h) Technical management and human resources development.

686. To obtain the UNCTAD Certificate in Modern Port Management, participants must complete each module and defend a dissertation. Many former participants in the Modern Port Management programme become instructors and take more responsibility at the senior management level, thereby multiplying the effects of the programme. Other indicators of the effectiveness of the programme in the field are the validation of the quality of a participant's dissertation by international and regional port experts, and the relevance of the dissertations (about 150 each year) to improve services in the port community.

687. **Outputs.** Under the Port Management Programme, the key outputs of the French-, English- and Spanish-speaking networks during the reporting period are highlighted below. Thanks to the TrainForTrade strategy and experience with blended learning and with the support of certified local trainers, the programme was able to fully deliver all training and capacity building activities and advisory services as planned.

688. With the continued support of the United Nations Development Account and Irish Aid, based on the requests from port members of the Port Management Programme, the special training and capacity-building package called "Building Port Resilience Against Pandemics" (BPR) was organised again in 2023 to build essential skills for port community managers to help protect people and to secure vital trade in ports. The BPR package was delivered in March and April 2023 to port communities worldwide in the three languages for a total of 1,774 port operators and other stakeholders (41 per cent women) from 134 economies. The sessions also included follow-up webinars featuring selected case studies of participants that implemented concrete measures to mitigate pandemics effects. The satisfaction rate was 92 per cent and the average score was 78 per cent.

689. The project also includes the exchange of best practices and new safety standards with a dedicated webpage on the TrainForTrade platform to provide information on port responsiveness against the pandemic including best practices, recommendations, crisis protocols and reference documents in English, French and Spanish.

690. The TrainForTrade Port Management Conference 2023 took place from 25 to 26 October in Valencia, Spain. The first day was devoted to the Port Performance Scorecard Conference, while the second to the Port Entrepreneurship International Congress. Thirty-nine (39) participants from sixteen (16) countries of the TrainForTrade PMP attended the two-day event in addition to more than eighty (80) participants on Day 2 including representatives of the European Commission, the World Economic Forum, the International Association of Ports and Harbors, as well as major investment funds and experts from

Brazil, Canada, Germany, Israel and Spain. The event was conducted in English, French and Spanish. Delegates took part in a series of port events to exchange on best practices and lessons learned. The delegates praised UNCTAD for the relevance and impact of its TrainForTrade capacity building programme in the beneficiary port communities. The delegates reaffirmed their annual financial support towards the activities of TrainForTrade through its dedicated Trust Funds with contributions from the beneficiary members on the cost sharing principle and support from donors and port partners.

691. *French-speaking network.* In 2023, the French-speaking network of the Port Management Programme was composed of the port communities of Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Gabon, Guinea, Haiti, Senegal, Togo and Tunisia. Djibouti relaunched the program with the 3rd cycle that started in July 2023 for 16 port operators (1 women). The programme will be delivered over 2 years. In Haiti, the trainings are currently on hold due to a surge of violence and insecurity in the country. Despite this situation, the National Port Authority continued participating in the network's activities abroad. Regarding the network's partnerships, the MoU with the Port of Nantes Saint-Nazaire was renewed for four more years. In January, a meeting focusing on methodology was hosted by the Lomé Port Authority in Togo. It led to the adoption of new norms defined in two handbooks: the writing methodology guide and the jurors' guide. In June, the 23rd Coordination Meeting was held in Marseille with representatives of 7 member countries. These delegates voted the Plan of action of the French-speaking network for 2023/2024.

692. The Training of Trainers workshop took place in Marseille, according to the MoU defined between UNCTAD/TrainForTrade and the Port of Marseille-Fos. Twenty-six senior managers (11 women) from 7 countries attended the workshop. Prior to this face-to-face training, the modules 5 to 8 were delivered online.

693. The Port Management Programme continued being delivered nationally in Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Gabon, Guinea, Senegal and Togo. Cameroun and Togo completed their 14th and 11th cycles, respectively, with the presentation of participants' dissertations to international experts. These events gathered a total of 27 experts from other countries of the network to assess the final work (called dissertations) of participants and to award the Port Certificate upon successful results. The participation of port experts from beneficiary countries further contributed to the South-South exchange of knowledge and expertise.

694. *South-South cooperation continued within the French-speaking network.* Nine experts from Guinea, Haiti and Togo evaluated the quality of the dissertations of the 14th cycle in Cameroon, while 14 experts from Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon and Guinea did the same in Togo for the 11th cycle. Similarly, a total of eight port managers from Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Haiti and Togo were trained as instructors during coaching workshops held in Djibouti and Tunisia. Member countries also exchanged port instructors during the delivery of the Modern Port Management course to improve the exchange of knowledge and cooperation. Participants from Cameroon, Ghana, Guinea and Togo visited port infrastructures of partner countries to benchmark and to get ideas for reforms in their own port communities.

695. Coaching workshops were held in Djibouti in March (for 13 port managers (5 women) including 1 from Cameroun, 1 from Cote d'Ivoire, 1 from Togo) and in Tunisia in October (for 26 port managers (11 women) including 1 from Cameroun, 2 from Haiti, 1 from Togo).

696. *English-speaking network.* The English-speaking network continued to benefit from financial contributions of Irish Aid (100,000 Euro in 2023) and the collaboration of Irish ports, namely Port of Cork Company (PoCC), Dublin Port Company (DPC) and Belfast Harbour Commissioners (BHC), as well as the Port Authority of Valencia (PAV) in Spain.

697. Training of Trainers workshop continued with modules 3 and 4 being delivered online to 70 senior managers (18 women) from 9 countries. The workshop held in Las Palmas, Spain welcomed participants from Cambodia, Cameroon (French-speaking network), Ghana, Indonesia, Maldives, Nigeria, Philippines, Serbia and the United Republic of Tanzania.

698. *Ghana*. In cooperation with Ghana Ports and Harbours Authority (GPHA), 18 middle managers (including 4 women) from the port communities of Ghana covering the ports of Tema and Takoradi from cycle 5 of the UNCTAD Port Management Programme took part in the international juries defending their business case studies related to improving on selected issues in their own port operations. Fifteen (15) of them (4 women) successfully completed the programme and received certificates of completion. Moreover, 40 more participants (25 per cent women) took part in the BPR component.

699. *Indonesia*. Cycle 5 of the Modern Port Management continued in 2023 under the lead of the new President Director of Pelindo being himself a certified trainer from the programme during events in programme's port partners in Ireland in 2009 and 2010. A total of 25 participants followed modules 5 to 8 with woman's participation of 28 per cent and presented their dissertations in front of the international juries composed of port experts. All of the candidates successfully defended their topics and received certificates of completion of the programme. Additionally, 29 participants (41 per cent women) took part in the BPR component.

700. *Nigeria*. Nigeria Ports Authority continued the delivery of the modules 4 to 7 with a total of 19 representatives (3 women) from various ports in the country. The trainings were also organised in different locations (Lagos, Warri, Port Harcourt) to provide the port operators with different perspectives of the Nigerian port systems. A total of 39 port operators (31 per cent women) also took part in the BPR component in 2023.

701. *Philippines*. Cycle 5 of the Modern Port Management course with 20 participants (including 9 woman) was initiated in 2023 with the delivery of modules 1 to 4 of the programme. Moreover, participants from the Philippines represented the largest number of participants (238) with 45 per cent woman of the BPR component in 2023.

702. *United Republic of Tanzania*. Cycle 3 of the Modern Port Management course was launched and the first two modules of the course were delivered to 25 port operators and representatives of regulatory entities and customs (28 per cent women). A total of 33 port operators (27 per cent women) from United Republic of Tanzania took part in BPR component in 2023.

703. Ports from Maldives, Namibia and Solomon Islands expressed their strong interest in joining the English-speaking network of the Port Management Programme and confirmed their participation in the 2024 edition of the Training of Trainers event.

704. *Spanish-speaking network*. The Spanish-speaking network benefits from the collaboration with Spanish ports by means of a memorandum of understanding with Puertos del Estado (Spanish port regulator entity). The Port Authority of Valencia also gives financial and in-kind contributions to the programme through a memorandum of understanding. Finally, the Port Authority of Gijon and the Port Authority of Las Palmas provide in-kind contribution hosting events and taking part in field missions and activities.

705. The national deliveries of the Modern Port Management course were organized in Argentina, the Dominican Republic, Peru, in the Plurinational State of Bolivia and Uruguay. All the modules were delivered by international experts and local instructors (certified by TrainForTrade).

706. The International Coordination Meeting of the Spanish-speaking network was organized on 27 and 28 November 2023 in Buenos Aires, Argentina with the participation of representatives of the member countries, Puertos del Estado of Spain and the Spanish Port Authorities of Valencia, Gijon and Las Palmas and UNCTAD team. The purpose of the meeting was to assess the results of the cycles and to evaluate the scope of strengthening and expanding the programme. The meeting acknowledged the positive impact of the activities implemented for networking, exchange of information, experiences and good practices, among others. Representatives of the Spanish Speaking network agreed on a draft workplan for 2024 and to continue financing their membership. Representatives from Panama were also present in the meeting because they joined the programme as a new member.

707. A Training of Trainers workshop was organized in Gijon, Spain from 3 to 14 July 2023 with the participation of 27 representatives (8 women) from ports of Argentina, the

Plurinational State of Bolivia, the Dominican Republic, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela. Participants were certified as instructors to deliver Modern Port Management course in their countries.

708. A study tour was organized in Port of Valencia (from 17 to 21 July 2023), with the participation of 10 representatives (3 women) from Argentina, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, the Dominican Republic and Peru. Participants were able to visit the installations of Port of Valencia and meet and discuss with the responsible staff of each department.

709. In 2023, South–South cooperation was carried out with the participation of port experts from the Spanish-speaking network. It provided these countries with opportunities to share and develop knowledge, skills, best practices, awareness on different topics and to reinforce the network’s capability to respond to common challenges.

710. The volume 11 of the UNCTAD TrainForTrade Port Management Series (PMS) was published in Spanish, English and French featuring a new proposal of Port Performance Indicators. This publication compiles 7 major groups of indicators on (1) governance, (2) human resources, (3) finance, (4) resilience, (5) quay side operations, (6) cargo operations and (7) sustainable environment. The publication links each indicator directly to relevant Sustainable Development Goals.

711. The TrainForTrade Conference on Energy Transition and Digital Transformation took place from 20 to 21 March 2023 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. One hundred sixty-six (166) participants (41 women) from Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Peru and Uruguay attended the Conference. The event allowed the participants to identify the challenges for ports and logistic chains and the main technologies trends on Energy and Digitalization.

712. A Coaching Workshop was organized from 8 to 10 May 2023 in Lima – Peru, with the participation of 15 participants (5 women) from Argentina and Peru. This workshop enhanced the capacities of local instructors using TrainForTrade’s methodology for the delivery of Modern Port Management course in their countries.

713. The TrainForTrade Port Performance Scorecard (PPS) was updated with the latest figures from the ports, and the outcomes were reflected in chapter 4 “Port Performance and Maritime Trade and Transport Facilitation” of the UNCTAD’s *Review of Maritime Transport 2023*. The main objective of PPS is to provide members of the programme with a useful tool allowing performance benchmarking and port and regional comparison on a yearly basis.

714. In addition to the Port Management Programme, TrainForTrade, in collaboration with WTO, UNSD and UNCTAD Statistics, delivered two online courses on statistics in English and French in 2023. TrainForTrade has trained 2,494 statisticians (42 per cent women) from 174 countries or areas. At the end of the courses, over 90 per cent of participants confirmed that their knowledge increased thanks to the course and that they were likely to use that knowledge in their work.

715. The online course on Statistics on International Trade in Services (SITS) was delivered (in English and French) to 1,433 participants (42 per cent women) from 160 countries or areas. The courses were followed by three webinars (two in English and one in French to increase the outreach and to accommodate for different time-zones) to discuss challenges and exchange best practices.

716. The online course on International Merchandise Trade Statistics (IMTS) was delivered (in English and French) for 1,061 participants (42 per cent women) from 144 countries or areas. The courses were followed by three webinars (two in English and one in French to increase the outreach and to accommodate for different time-zones) to discuss challenges and exchange best practices.

717. In the framework of the UN Development Account project “TrainForTrade blended learning strategy to boost the digital economy in small island developing States of Africa, the Caribbean and Asia and the Pacific”, two blended learning courses were delivered to representatives of the small island developing States. Digital Identity for Trade and Development was attended by 378 participants (59 per cent women) from 47 countries or

areas while 282 trade practitioners (61 per cent women) from 37 countries or areas followed the Legal Aspects of e-Commerce.

718. In collaboration with the Digital Economy and E-Commerce Branch and UN ECLAC, a new TFT generic blended learning course on e-Commerce was delivered in Spanish to 372 trade practitioners (52 women) from 27 countries or areas. This hybrid course supported policymakers in developing effective measures for e-commerce and inclusive development covering aspects related to ICT connectivity and infrastructure, payment solutions and financing, e-commerce skills and adoption, legal and regulatory frameworks, and trade facilitation and logistics.

719. Together with International Ports and Harbours Association and Port of Antwerp-Bruges, the Port Endeavor game focusing on raising awareness of SDGs among the port executives and managers, was successfully digitalized. It became an integral part of the TFT Port Management Programme and was played by over 1000 port professionals from five continents.

720. **Results and impacts.** In 2023, the TrainForTrade Programme enhanced skills and abilities of 6,207 trade practitioners¹¹⁸ (42 per cent women) from 188 countries and areas through various courses and activities for a total of 52,327 days of training with the overall satisfaction rate of 90 per cent. It is summarized in the table below.

Number of trade practitioners who enhanced their skills and expertise through various courses and activities in 2023

<i>Area</i>	<i>Total number</i>	<i>% Women</i>
Port Management Programme	909	30%
French-speaking network	314	35%
English-speaking network	175	29%
Spanish-speaking network	420	27%
Building Port Resilience Against Pandemics	1,774	41%
Statistics on International Trade in Services blended learning course	1,433	42%
English	1024	45%
French	409	35%
International Merchandise Trade Statistics blended learning	1,061	42%
English	778	46%
French	283	31%
Digital Identity for Trade and Development	377	59%
Legal Aspects of e-Commerce	281	61%
E-Commerce General Course	372	52%

721. The year 2023 was the best year in terms of participation since the inception of the TrainForTrade programme in 1998. In 2023, the participants of the Port Management Programme prepared a total of 95 dissertations with proposals of improvements to the port communities, which were positively evaluated by local and international subject matter experts. These proposals will have big chance of being implemented by the port authorities.

¹¹⁸ If a person participated in more than one training programme in 2023, each participation is counted separately.

722. The exchange of port network instructors is an excellent example of South–South cooperation supported by the UNCTAD TrainForTrade Port Management Programme. These exchanges allow for sharing of knowledge and port practices between countries of the region, which often share common issues.

723. Based on the balanced scorecard concept, 26 indicators were identified, collected and classified into six main categories: finance, human resources, gender, vessel operations, cargo operations and environment. The Port Performance Scorecard has been collecting and monitoring port data since 2010 through a dedicated platform (pps.unctad.org). On this dedicated platform a demo part is accessible to all, while the rest is for reporting members only. The general results with the 26 indicators are published in the Review of Maritime Transport each year and the PPS Newsletter. The resulting statistics are being used by port communities to help with strategic planning and annual based performance benchmarking on a regional and global scales.

724. Thanks to the sudden boost of digital tools and the fact that the majority of trade actors started to use more and more new technologies to communicate (Teams, Zoom, WebEx, social applications, etc.), the scope of the programme has been extended to cover a total of 219 economies across the globe. The TrainForTrade platforms have been further developed to cater for a larger number of participants and to capture real-time statistics of the events and link them up with the results-based management (RBM) indicators of the programme (78 per cent average test score and 88 per cent satisfaction rate globally). New features have been incorporated into the Learning and Content Management System (LMS) under Moodle open source. The TrainForTrade public website has also been improved, with contributions to social media (Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn @TRAINFORTRADE) and multimedia materials illustrating the impact of the programme in member States and providing them with powerful tools and knowledge on trade policies to absorb the economic shock of the pandemic and build back better.

D99 Other

Table D99

Others

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
INT/OT/KBH	Trust Fund for the UNCTAD Virtual Institute on Trade and Development (formely T6AP)	2004–	Multi-donors

1. Virtual Institute

725. **Development context.** Developing countries lack capacity to undertake economic analysis, formulate national policies and implement them to achieve their development objectives. Universities and research centres play an essential role in building such capacity, as they educate future decision-makers and can provide research and analysis to inform their Governments' economic policy decisions.

726. **Objectives and features.** The Virtual Institute is the UNCTAD programme of support to academia. Its ultimate objective is to help developing countries design evidence-based policies that result in inclusive and sustainable development. To this end, the Virtual Institute offers capacity-building opportunities for academics, researchers, and qualified decision-makers, and provides analysis to underpin the formulation of economic policies in developing countries.

727. **Outputs.** In 2023, the Virtual Institute continued to provide its member institutions with services in the following areas: (a) professional development for academics specializing in topics in which UNCTAD has expertise; (b) facilitation of cooperation between relevant academics within the Virtual Institute network; and (c) dissemination of UNCTAD research to the academic community.

728. The Virtual Institute offered an online seminar to students at the Institute for Business Administration in Karachi, Pakistan on the findings of the 2023 Trade and Development Report. In-person study tours were organised for groups of graduate students studying international trade and economics at the following universities: University of the West Indies (25 students); HTW Berlin (35 students); and the National Research University Higher School of Economics, Moscow State Institute of International Relations, and St. Petersburg University (21 students). Topics covered included the macroeconomic environment, industrial transformation, and the oceans economy.

729. In August 2023 the Training and Outreach Unit helped to organize the sixth UNCTAD Young Scholars Initiative (YSI) Summer School, on the theme of “Finance, growth and distribution: Policy challenges in a world of cascading crises” in partnership with the Macroeconomics branch of the Division on Globalization and Development Strategies and the Institute for New Economic Thinking. This is the Division’s flagship programme to educate young economists worldwide on UNCTAD’s approach to development issues. The 2023 Summer School was delivered in hybrid format for the first time. It attracted 364 participants representing 97 countries. Of these, 104 received a Certificate of Attendance. Of the participants, over half were female and over half were from developing countries.

730. Additionally, the Virtual Institute provided support to the Division in disseminating its work to academic and policymaker audiences and organizing public events, notably for the Trade and Development Report Update in April 2023; the Trade and Development Report in October 2023; and UNCTAD high-level side events on climate finance at the COP 28 climate conference. Panel discussions were also organized with the High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism and on the global economy in partnership with Hong Kong University Business School.

731. The Virtual Institute delivered a bespoke online training programme on the Global Economic System to future diplomats at the Pakistan Foreign Service Training Academy. The programme content was agreed with the Pakistan Permanent Mission to the UN in Geneva and with the Academy, and the course instructors were experts from UNCTAD and leading academics within the Virtual Institute network.

732. The Virtual Institute supports outreach and engagement with Asian academics and researchers involved in UNCTAD’s project on “Integrated Policy Strategies and Regional Policy Coordination for Resilient, Green and Transformative Development: Supporting Selected Asian BRI Partner Countries to Achieve 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda”. In 2023 the Virtual Institute partnered with leading research institutes in the project countries to organise meetings in Pakistan and China and promote the findings of the project to academics and researchers in Asia.

733. **Results and impacts.** The Virtual Institute has contributed to enhanced understanding of trade and development issues among researchers and academics in developing countries and helped them identify suitable areas of new research and issues to consider within their existing research. Through teaching and outreach activities, the Virtual Institute has also helped to strengthen links between researchers and policymakers in developing countries. Dissemination activities including media outreach and web and social media content creation have helped UNCTAD reach academics and researchers through different channels and build wider awareness of UNCTAD’s expertise on specific issues.

2. Course on key issues on the international economic agenda – paragraph 166

734. **Development Context.** In recent times, especially over the last three decades, development practitioners have turned their attention to investing in human capital, as means to improving the quality of life, via health and education, and years of living, and promoting economic growth and stronger public institutions. In the spectrum of numbers and quantitative measures to assess economic growth, it became pertinent and important to invest in human capital to realize prospects of development and developmental goals, from the prism of qualitative measures as well.

735. Paragraph 166 of the Bangkok Plan of Action was adopted at the tenth session of the UNCTAD Ministerial Conference, in which it called on UNCTAD to strengthen its capacity building activities, particularly in providing training courses on key trade and development matters to policy makers across developing countries. The paragraph also underlines that these training courses would draw on the expertise and policy analysis work of the UNCTAD secretariat. This mandate was renewed by the São Paulo Consensus, the Accra Accord, the Doha Declaration, and reaffirmed in UNCTAD 14 of Nairobi in 2016, and finally highlighted in the Bridgetown Covenant of 2021 in which P166 was given a special attention in the context of the technical cooperation work: “the activities under paragraph 166 of the Bangkok Plan of Action have proven to be of great importance and utility and should be continued”¹¹⁹.

736. **Objectives and features.** The objective of the P166 programme is to invest in human capital, which is aligned with realizing development and economic growth. UNCTAD P166 programme enhances knowledge on trade and trade policy; science, technology and innovation; foreign direct investment and other forms of financial inflows and outflows, along with entrepreneurship, among others, that enhance the knowledge of policy makers from across the developing regions, in tackling policies related to these areas.

737. Located in the Technology, Innovation and Knowledge Development Branch (TIKDB) of the Division of Technology and Logistics (DTL) of UNCTAD, the Policy Capacity Building Section (PCBS), known as PCBS-P166, delivers the regional and short courses on economic development, and trade related matters. The former targets mid-level policy makers based in five development regions while the latter targets Geneva-based delegates who follow-up on UNCTAD related matters. Overall, the beneficiaries of the regional courses work at relevant Government institutions, including Ministries of Commerce, Economy, Trade, Planning, among others. Academics, with an economic background, are at times considered for participation.

738. The programme works closely with the Permanent Missions to the United Nations based in Geneva. This covers, but does not exclude other areas, the processes for the regional and short courses, from notifying, nominating, and communicating with all relevant permanent Missions in Geneva. Therefore, and since decades, the programme has established a centralized communication with permanent missions, ensuring that both diplomatic missions and capitals are in contact and communicate over the P166 programme.

739. Additionally, the current structure of regional courses is focused on UNCTAD’s mandate and cross-divisional in terms of content. The curricula are designed and developed by PCBS/P166, in collaboration with the experts from various Divisions. During the design phase, collaboration is also sought with the regional economic commissions of the United Nations and with national experts from the hosting countries to ensure relevance and coherence among the various economic themes. Ranging from economic theories to trade policy, FDI, technology, among other topics, the programme focuses on response to crises and sustainable development as a central theme.

740. **Outputs.** In 2023, the curricula for regional courses continued to illustrate the formulation of development policies and strategies, placing them within the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals. Additionally, it was updated to incorporate building resilience and responding to multiple economic shocks. The training includes lectures on economic, trade and, finance theories and their relevance to policy development, the role of investment and technology, along with detailed case studies and lessons learned from previous policy decisions. Critical thinking, with emphasis placed on policy design, coherence, coordination, implementation, and measurement, is considered essential. Central to the course are also simulation exercises, examinations, and critiques of best practices in policy development, group work and debates.

¹¹⁹ Paragraph 117

741. The overall curricula of the regional course include three modules: a fully integrated and interrelated approach for several substantive topics developed in the research work of UNCTAD. It is adapted to each developing region and enhances knowledge on contemporary economic issues among trade policy officials, finance and investment experts and academics who work in these areas. The curriculum generated for each region focuses on the development of appropriate trade, finance, investment, innovation, and technology policies that are critical to achieve economic gains, which in parallel meets the development objectives of participating countries.

742. Policymakers during the training are introduced to sound fiscal policies adapted to the changing global environment. The need to stimulate productive investment, develop local markets and promote diversification will require adopting relevant industrial policies. Developing countries must have sufficient policy space in which they can manoeuvre and advocate for their interests, from a national policy prism. This space should be safeguarded, ensuring that ‘no one is left behind’ while taking part in the global economy. In a nutshell, investing in human capital, infrastructure, and ensuring policy space, are all prerequisites for a successful developmental state.

743. In 2023, face to face and online/hybrid trainings were delivered as part of UNCTAD’s regional and short courses. Additionally, an e-learning module on the history of UNCTAD continued to be utilized to prepare selected participants ahead of the regional course.

744. Two regional courses were held: for Eastern Europe and for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). The forty-ninth regional course on key issues on the international economic agenda for Eastern Europe was held in North Macedonia on 3–14 July 2023 in collaboration with the Faculty of Economics, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University-Skopje, with the support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Twenty participants attended the course, representing Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia-Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Russia, Serbia, and Ukraine.

745. As for the forty-ninth regional course on key issues on the international economic agenda for MENA, it was held in Cairo, Egypt on 26 November–7 December 2023 in collaboration with the Institute for Diplomatic Studies, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Twenty-five participants attended, representing Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen.

746. In total, 45 participants/policymakers from 21 countries participated in these editions. Out of the total number, 24 participants were women, representing nearly 53 per cent of overall participants.

747. With the delivery of these courses in various capitals in developing regions, the multi-year venue continued to illustrate its innovative approach of raising support, gaining experiences from different economies, and enhancing bilateral cooperation at the country level. The contribution of national experts in shedding light on the national and regional experience is of significance to the programme’s curricula which aims at enhancing knowledge and boosting human capital among policymakers.

748. The five multi-year venues for the reporting period are:

(a) The Foreign Service Academy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pakistan, multi-year venue for the Asia-Pacific region, 2022–2026.

(b) University of Buenos Aires, Faculty of Economics, Argentina, multi-year venue for Latin America and Caribbean, 2022–2026.

(c) Ss. Cyril and Methodius University, Faculty of Economics, North Macedonia, with the support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, multi-venue for Eastern Europe 2021–2025.

(d) The Institute of Diplomatic Studies of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Egypt, multi-year venue for the Arab region, 2018–2023.

(e) University of Nairobi, Faculty of Economics, with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, multi-venue for Africa, 2019–2024.

749. Similarly, the short courses continued to update Geneva-based delegates on UNCTAD's recent research on development, economic, and trade matters. In cooperation with several UNCTAD divisions, six short editions were offered in the Spring and Fall of 2023 on the following subjects:

(a) Maritime transport for sustainable development: Key insights and projections from the UNCTAD Review of Maritime Transport 2022 (9 February 2023).

(b) Foreign direct investment trends and prospects and investment policies and their impact on sustainable development (14 March 2023).

(c) Voluntary sustainability standards and international trade (27 April 2023).

(d) Shaping the future of supply chains in Africa: Optimizing opportunities and strategic value, Economic Development in Africa Report (12 September 2023).

(e) Challenges and Opportunities around Green Innovation and Sustainability (26 September 2023).

(f) Unlocking the potential of the creative economy for resilience and sustainable development (24 November 2023).

750. A total of 139 delegates participated in these editions, including 51 women, representing nearly 37 per cent of overall participants.

751. The short courses provide a platform, for both Geneva-based delegates and UNCTAD experts. The latter are given an opportunity to present their recent research to the delegates, whose comments and questions provide relevant input and potential research topics to UNCTAD's work. This helps to inform dialogue between UNCTAD's researchers and Geneva-based representatives of member States, bridge the gap in knowledge and ensure information-sharing. These sessions are on average well attended and provide a forum for delegates and UNCTAD research experts to debate and exchange views.

752. **Results and impacts.** Following the completion of the short courses and regional courses, most delegates and participants indicated that the courses led to improved knowledge on development, and the issues addressed. For the regional courses, they have noted a deepened understanding of the importance of the role of international trade in improving economic development, including the links between international economic, social, and financial issues. The approach to link theory, policy and practice in economic policy development was highly rated. Its approach to trade, development and investment at the regional and international levels was also useful for the participants.

753. The evaluations of the regional courses continued to illustrate those participants and their sending departments appreciated the debates on development-related topics and the integrated approach of the programme to ensuring that economic gains benefit development. This is inherent in the design of the curriculum, which treats development from the multiple perspectives of trade, finance, investment, and technology. The curriculum highlights that the debates and design and implementation of appropriate economic policies can contribute to growth and the development process in general.

754. Several participants reported that they were already using the knowledge and tools acquired in their daily work, such as, improvement of economic policy, trade negotiations, policy formulation, strategic planning, attracting FDI, employment creation as well as providing advisory services. Additionally, several noted that the knowledge gained helped them achieve a better understanding of contemporary economic issues and how to cope with the challenges of the new multilateral trading system, including responding to various types of crises. Several participants indicated their ability to employ analytical tools in the decision-making process in pursuit of relevant development policies to address economic challenges. Many also mentioned the linkages among international trade, finance, investment, technology, and innovation as key pillars of the development strategy.