

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

UNCTAD



An initiative to foster research and training program for the LDCs WTO Group in the Post Bali scenario

March, 2015

**Concept note of overall training and research initiative and work
program of the first executive training on rules of origin**

Government of
the Netherlands



Training and research initiative to support the WTO LDC Group

1. Context

The Bali Ministerial lays out a built-in agenda for the LDCs that calls for extensive follow-up and engagement by the LDC group in Geneva and in LDC Capitals. However, lack of human and financial resources hamper the full participation of LDCs in this process. UNCTAD has provided long-standing support to the LDC group in the WTO to assist countries defend their interests and to participate actively in the relevant WTO meetings.

On April 9, 2014, UNCTAD with support of the Dutch Government organized a workshop in Geneva on a Common Declaration on Preferential Rules of Origin. The objective of the workshop was to discuss a possible way forward given the Bali Decision on Preferential Rules of Origin and in light of the WTO meeting of the Committee on Rules of Origin (CRO) on April 10th. The workshop was successful in raising awareness of the challenges on preferential rules of origin and in helping LDCs develop a position ahead of the CRO meeting.

At the CRO meeting the WTO LDC group Coordinator stated that the LDCs would submit a paper (hereinafter the Paper) on their experiences with preferential rules of origin for discussion at the October 2014 CRO meeting. Subsequently the LDC group contacted UNCTAD to seek assistance in preparing the paper and requested in depth training on the content of the paper to be able to adequately present it and defend its findings.

Such sequencing of events and training needs associated with the Decision on Preferential Rules of Origin is mirrored in other negotiating issues involving the LDCs, most importantly the implementation of the Agreement on Trade Facilitation, DFQF access, and the operationalization of the Services Waiver. The lack of technical expertise on these matters in delegations in Geneva and in Capitals remains a formidable obstacle to more effective participation of the LDCs in the WTO and the implementation of the WTO commitments at national level.

This training and research initiative builds upon the initial assistance provided by UNCTAD and focuses on implementation of the Decision on Preferential Rules of Origin. Based on the results and experience obtained with this initial effort, consideration will be given to extending the initiative to other specific trade policy issues that are of particular importance for LDCs, such as trade facilitation, DFQF, the services waiver or other subjects that are identified by the LDC group.

2. Justification

Improved participation of LDCs in the global economy and the success of international trade initiatives to support the LDCs depend not only on the political will of these countries, but also on their capacity to evaluate, draft and implement sound legal instruments that take into account the country's development level, economic interests and priorities.

Participation in WTO processes and the development of regional trade initiatives that are effective in leveraging trade liberalization into economic growth requires a capacity to evaluate proposals, constructive negotiating positions and drafting of domestic implementing legislation, regulation and administrative processes that most LDCs do not possess. Limited human resource capacity in the area of trade law and international economics reduces the effectiveness of the laudable efforts by LDC representatives to pursue actions to foster deeper integration and participation. Agreed decisions in the WTO might not be implemented because the implications are not fully understood by stakeholders, and differences in technical capacity and preparation across the Delegations can easily lead to unbalanced outcomes for a region or country.

3. Providers of analytical and training services

The initiative will be delivered through a partnership between UNCTAD and the Global Governance Programme (GGP) of the European University Institute. UNCTAD has been supporting the LDCs through research and training in both the context of the WTO and regional trade initiatives. It has extensive experience and know-how in providing tailored assistance to LDCs. The EUI's Global Governance Programme has developed an active program of research and executive training in the area of trade, investment and development (Global Economics). It has expertise in a broad range of trade and development subjects, drawing on a core group of highly experienced faculty and associates that have an outstanding track record in terms of development policy research and advisory activities (Professors: Bernard Hoekman, Petros Mavroidis; Patrick Messerlin).

4. Objectives

The objective of the proposed project is to enhance the skills and knowledge of officials from LDCs – both Geneva and Capital-based – on specific operationally-important areas of international economic law and policy. The analytical and training activities that will be undertaken will be designed to provide the participants with a deeper understanding of alternative approaches and the implications of different trade policy rules and regulations, and to enhance their capacity to apply this knowledge in the course of international negotiations and the implementation of the WTO post-Bali LDC Package. The aim is to provide LDC officials and policy-makers with a set of legal and economic analytical tools that can be applied to a broad range of international trade and development-related topics. Specific topics that are identified as being of interest by the LDC group will be addressed in a tailored way to meet the interests of LDCs and the private sector of these countries.

It is expected that bringing together Geneva-based delegates and capital-based officials will establish a two-way flow of information and sharing of expertise that will contribute to the establishment of a more solid knowledge base and increase the pool of delegates conversant on trade policy and customs matters that could be effectively deployed and applied to related areas such as the implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement and geographical indications. The training activities will include a focus on the trade dynamics that could be generated by the combined application of lenient rules of origin tailored to global value chains and trade facilitation measures.

As noted above, the initial activity will focus on Preferential Rules of Origin. In addition to the concrete deliverables on this specific subject, the analysis and training activities will provide an opportunity to assess the effectiveness and usefulness for the LDCs of deepening the learning partnership between the EUI and UNCTAD. The specific goal of the training activity on preferential rules of origin is to help selected WTO LDC delegates and capital-based officials with relevant inputs from representatives of the private sector to prepare the papers and evidence base for the next Committee on Rules of Origin (CRO) in April 2015 as well as subsequent CRO meetings.

5 First Executive training on rules of origin 20-24 April 2015

The first executive Training program will be held at the European University Institute (EUI) for 7 LDC delegations composed of one Geneva-based delegate and one capital-based delegate. Interpretation English and French will be available

UNCTAD will provide travel expenses, accommodation, and living expenses at UN applicable rates.

5 (a) Admission

The Executive training program will be accessible on a first-come first-served basis to those 7 delegations who have successfully passed the WTO web-based test "*Made in ...: Understanding Rules of Origin*" accessible at ecampus.wto.org and have communicated their certificate and the stamped nomination form to the following addresses at Pamela.apaza@wto.org and regina.ogunyinka@unctad.org.

For overall information about the initiative and the course please contact M Stefano Inama at stefano.inama@unctad.org, tel +41 22 9175674

For further information related to accessibility of the online course please contact Ms. Pamela Apaza of the Institute for Training and Technical Cooperation (ITTC) of the WTO secretariat, by e-mail at Pamela.apaza@wto.org or by phone +41 22 739 63 48. An online chat will be organized on 18 March from 15.00 to 16.30 Geneva time. Please contact Ms. Apaza in case of enquiries on how to access the chat.

Successful candidates that have passed the test and obtained the certificate and nomination but are unable to attend the executive course because of shortage of funds will be placed on a reserve list. Such reserve list will be brought to the attention of donors to seek further funding for the initiative to organize another course for these participants.

The deadline for completing the course and send the certificate and nomination form is 30 March 2015.