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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 2024*

* 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

ACS	Association of Caribbean States
AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
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
EAC	East African Community
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
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 communications technology
IFFs	illicit financial flows
IIA	international investment agreement
IISD	International Institute for Sustainable Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMO	International Maritime Organization
IPR	investment policy review
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
ITC	International Trade Centre
LDC	least developed country
LLDC	landlocked developing country
MSME	micro, small and medium-sized enterprise
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OECS	Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States
PCI	Productive Capacities Index
PPP	public–private partnership
SIDS	small island developing States
STI	science, technology and innovation
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
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
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
UPU	Universal Postal Union
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 2024. 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, nine products under the theme “Transforming economies, fostering sustainable development” are reported on.² The reports highlight main technical cooperation activities carried out in 2024 and key results to date. Technical cooperation projects that are pertinent to the aforementioned theme, but not linked to any of the existing nine 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–	Multi-donors
INT/0T/HCIJ2	Strategic Partnership the Netherlands –	2023–	Kingdom of the

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>
	(linked with THCE04)		Netherlands

5. **Development context.** Foreign direct investment (FDI) can significantly contribute to economic and social development, but the benefits are neither automatic nor evenly distributed across countries. To maximize FDI's positive impact while minimizing environmental harm, investments should target activities that drive sustainable development. To support countries in their efforts to diversify their economies, attracting higher levels of FDI, and promoting sustainable development, UNCTAD conducts investment policy reviews (IPRs). These country-specific or regional reviews analyse the strategic, legal and institutional frameworks for investment, providing action-oriented policy advice and concrete recommendations. Special attention is given to gender equality, women's empowerment, youth, persons with disabilities, and environmental protection. UNCTAD also provides follow-up technical assistance to support 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.* The IPR 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) *Evaluation and advisory report.* The diagnostic phase includes desk research and a fact-finding mission by UNCTAD technical staff. Policymakers at the highest level and a wide range of stakeholders – including ministries, agencies, universities, research institutions, private sector representatives, non-governmental institutions, and development partners – are consulted through interviews and discussions.

(c) *Dialogue on recommendations and dissemination of the results.* Once the draft report is ready, beneficiary countries participate in a review process which includes a national stakeholders' workshop to discuss findings and review recommendations. The final report is then disseminated through various channels, including a social media campaign, and knowledge-sharing presentations.

(d) *Implementation and follow-up technical assistance.* After publication, the programme shifts focus to technical assistance, helping countries attract and benefit from higher levels and more diversified types of FDI. This phase involves short-term action plans and multi-agency, medium-term technical assistance. Furthermore, beneficiary countries gain access to the Live implementation matrix³, an online tool designed to support investment policy reform. This tool enhances transparency, strengthens accountability, helps track progress in implementing recommendations, and highlights technical assistance and capacity-building needs.

(e) *Implementation report and additional follow-up actions.* About five years after an IPR's completion, UNCTAD, at the countries' request, conducts an assessment to evaluate the implementation progress and identify areas requiring further support.

7. **Outputs.** In 2024, the programme delivered the following key outputs:

(a) Preparation and publication of the IPR of Tunisia;

(b) Preparation and publication of the Implementation Reports for the IPRs of The Gambia and Sierra Leone;

(c) Dissemination and follow-up activities on the IPR of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) and the Implementation Reports for The Gambia and Sierra Leone;

(d) Launch of the IPR process for the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC);

(e) Introduction to the Live implementation matrix in Sierra Leone;

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

(f) Finalization and publication of A Practitioners' Guide on Investment Laws;

(g) Technical assistance activities and advisory services to support the implementation of IPR recommendations and deal with issues related to investment policies, promotion strategies, international investment agreements and business facilitation. These activities benefited 23 countries including Angola, Cabo Verde, Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC) member States (Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and the Congo), The Gambia, Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, Uzbekistan and WAEMU member States (Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, the Niger, Senegal and Togo).

8. In 2024, the following activities were implemented at the country-level and for group of countries.

9. *Angola.* Contribution to the evaluation of the impact of the European Union–UNCTAD Joint Programme for Angola: Train for Trade II and participation in the meeting, which took place in June 2024 with a wide range of stakeholders, to review the outcome and share lessons learned, including on the country's IPR.

10. *Cabo Verde.* UNCTAD continued its cooperation with the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) throughout the year by contributing to key country assessments and programmatic documents. It also participated in the UNCT retreat (February) and other regular meetings to keep abreast of latest developments and effectively follow-up on investment-related capacity-building efforts.

11. *CEMAC.* At the request of the CEMAC Commission, UNCTAD initiated the IPR involving its six member States (Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and the Congo). Developed through a participative and inclusive process, the preparation of the IPR facilitated dialogue among a wide range of stakeholders on strategies and policies to enhance investment promotion in the region, including in the context of the ongoing reform of the CEMAC investment charter. The IPR will be finalized in 2025.

12. *The Gambia.* At the Government's request, UNCTAD published the Report on the implementation of the IPR of The Gambia. Following a fact-finding mission (January), UNCTAD drafted the report and conducted follow-up online sessions (February, May) with government representatives to gather all the relevant information and to discuss issues in-depth related to investment policymaking and the revision of the country's investment act. To support this process, UNCTAD also prepared two policy notes (April) highlighting key issues to be taken into consideration for the redrafting of the Act. The report was disseminated through a social media campaign (July).

13. *Mauritania.* In recent years, the Government of Mauritania has adopted several reforms to improve the investment climate and facilitate business operations. The Report on the implementation of the IPR of Mauritania was published in December 2023. As part of capacity-building efforts, representatives from the Investment Promotion Agency (APIM) participated in UNCTAD-organized workshop (November) in Casablanca, Morocco, in cooperation with the Moroccan Investment and Exports Development Agency (AMDIE). The workshop focused on issues related to the formulation of investment promotion and facilitation policies, and strategies for investor targeting.

14. *Morocco.* Representatives from the Moroccan Investment and Exports Development Agency (AMDIE) contributed to the investment promotion and facilitation workshop held in May in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire and coorganized the one in Casablanca in November (see below under WAEMU). Both events benefited from AMDIE's experience in investment promotion and facilitation, including expertise on the tools that can be used and strategies for targeting investors, and contributed to exchanging on best practices.

15. *Saudi Arabia.* UNCTAD provided comments and suggestions on the draft investment law (July), highlighting key foundational elements of such laws and best practices. The Government of Saudi Arabia approved the new law in August, applying to both local and foreign investors. The law entered into force in February 2025.

16. *Sierra Leone.* At the Government's request, UNCTAD undertook research to support the Report on the implementation of the IPR of Sierra Leone. In addition to thorough desk research, UNCTAD held online discussions (June, July, December) with government officials and representatives of the recently created National Investment Board (NIB) to gather insights on investment policymaking. The report was published in December 2024. Additionally, UNCTAD provided extensive comments on the draft National Investment Strategy of the country prepared by the NIB (September 2024).

17. *Togo.* As part of follow-up efforts on the IPR of Togo and the IPR WAEMU (where Togo is a beneficiary), the country participated in two capacity-building workshops focussed on issues related to investment promotion and facilitation (see WAEMU section). Insights from these discussions will inform ongoing development of Togo's Investment Policy Strategy and Investment Promotion Strategy.

18. *Tunisia.* At the Government's request, UNCTAD undertook an IPR of the country. The process involved extensive consultations with public and private stakeholders (January 2024), followed by a fact-finding mission (April 2024). The report analyses the strategic, legal and institutional framework for investment, including FDI. The main conclusions highlight the need to further enhance and simplify the regulatory framework, facilitate access to information and increase the process of digitalization, including of government procedures. The report was presented at a national workshop in December 2024, where its recommendations were endorsed by the Government and will be integrated into its reform agenda. The preparation of the report led to the establishment of a collaboration with the United Nations Resident Coordinator Office (UNRCO) and UNDP in Tunisia, which will play a key role in supporting the implementation of the recommendations. Published at the end of 2024, the report will be disseminated through various activities in 2025. Additionally, UNCTAD participated in the Tunisia Investment Forum and the launching of the OECD FDI Qualities Report of Tunisia (June 2024).

19. *Uzbekistan.* The report on the implementation of the IPR of Uzbekistan (published in 2021) highlighted the Government's policy paradigm shift towards private investment and FDI and its positive impact on the business environment. In July 2024, representatives from the country exchanged with UNCTAD on a range of investment policy options and explored opportunities for cooperation. The dialogue focused on enhancing the investment climate in line with the country's development objectives.

20. *WAEMU member States.* Following the publication of the IPR in February 2024, conducted at the request of the WAEMU Commission and involving its eight member States —Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo—UNCTAD delivered two capacity-building workshops to support investment promotion efforts. The first organized in cooperation with CEPICI, the investment promotion agency of Côte d'Ivoire, took place in May in Abidjan and dealt with concepts and tools for investment promotion and facilitation. The second, organized in cooperation with AMDIE, was held in Casablanca in November and covered issues related to the formulation of investment promotion and facilitation policies, and to investor targeting.

21. **Results and impact.** 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 the UNCTAD Investment Policy Framework for Sustainable Development (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

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.

willingness of member States to participate in UNCTAD activities aimed at showcasing their investment reform efforts and opportunities. In this regard, 63 countries participated in the last edition of the Investment Village at the WIF 2023. 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

22. 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 implement its outcome. In most cases, the IPRs have been presented to and discussed with Heads of State or Government 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:

(a) "The IPR has made it possible to diagnose and identify, in particular, the provisions and inadequacies in the institutional framework. The work on the recommendations involves simplification, digitalization and unique identifier, as well as extensive activities within the country." Director General, Investment promotion agency Côte d'Ivoire (CEPICI), 21 May 2024.

(b) "A budget has been voted to set up an action plan for the implementation of the recommendations of the IPR of WAEMU". Resident Representative in Côte d'Ivoire, WAEMU Commission, 22 May 2024.

(c) "UNCTAD had previously conducted an IPR of Sierra Leone in 2009, nearly 15 years ago. This diagnostic examination was widely acclaimed as a success and resulted in some significant legal, regulatory and institutional reforms." Executive Director, National Investment Board of Sierra Leone, 25 July 2024.

(d) "We would like to extend our deepest appreciation for the comprehensive work that has been conducted. The insights and recommendations provided in the review have been instrumental in shaping our investment policies and strategies. They have helped us increase our investment attraction." Head of department, Investment Promotion Agency under the Ministry of Investments and Foreign Trade of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 11 July 2024.

(e) "It (the IPR) addresses the various constraints to investment with an in-depth analysis...we want to finalize the IPR and launch the second phase for the implementation of the IPR with an action plan." Chief of Staff, Ministry of Economy and Planning of Tunisia, Tunis, 6 December 2024.

(f) "We are very interested in working together to continue the reforms (following the IPR)." United Nations Resident Coordinator, Tunis, 6 December 2024.

Implementation of IPR recommendations

23. Another indicator of the impact of IPRs is the extent to which governments have implemented the IPR recommendations.

24. Since 1999 and the inception of the IPR programme, UNCTAD has published 54 IPRs, involving 60 economies worldwide, and 23 reports on the implementation of the IPR. Assessments conducted in some of these countries showed that to date more than 650 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.

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.

Direct impact on investment flows and improvement of the investment environment

25. 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, UNCTAD data show that between 2002–2012 and 2013–2023, FDI inflows rose by 28.5 per cent worldwide while they grew by 47 per cent in 23 countries for which an assessment of the implementation of IPR recommendations has been conducted.

26. Another indicator of the IPRs impact is their integration into national policy reform efforts, often serving 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 instance, 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. During an online meeting in June 2024, which brought together a wide range of stakeholders to conclude the project's impact review, the IPR was highlighted as one of the key documents that contribute to policy and legislative reforms.

27. Finally, another way to attest for the 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>
ROA-2427 (K16)	Strengthening capacity for evidence-based policymaking and the economic resilience of CARICOM	2024–	Development Account

28. **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 goods 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.

29. **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.

30. 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.

31. **Outputs.** In 2024, UNCTAD started the implementation of a project aiming to strengthen the capacity of member countries of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) for evidence-based policymaking in trade in services, under the 16th tranche of the Development Account. A workshop held in May 2024 in the region identified the importance of traditional services, such as tourism, for the economy and trade of the beneficiary countries. It also emphasized the need to promote capacity-enhancing services, services that enhance competitiveness and knowledge-based services to increase the value and range of services trade, including traditional services. This work needed to be based on data ecosystems and capacity building to use and analyse trade in services data for evidence-based policies. In February 2025, the project organized a training on UNCTAD Trade-in-Services Information System (TiSSTAT) to support beneficiary countries in strengthening their data ecosystems.

32. UNCTAD engaged in technical discussions with the secretariat of the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP) in 2024 to share information related to technical assistance options on trade in services and development. While a source of funds was not yet identified to implement the technical assistance proposal to CPLP countries, in December 2024, Portugal provided funds to implement some pilot capacity building activities of UNCTAD technical assistance to CPLP countries on trade in services.

33. UNCTAD also addressed several requests for information on technical assistance on trade in services and development by potentially interested regions and countries. On 18 July 2024, Cambodia requested a meeting with UNCTAD regarding technical assistance on trade in services. There was particular interest on how Services Policy Reviews and better measurement of trade in services could support the country in moving forward with the services component of Cambodia Trade Integration Strategy. This request followed up the discussions held at the eleventh session of UNCTAD Multi-year Expert Meeting on Trade,

Services and Development. Some of the sectors discussed were ICT and financial services. These sectors are part of the Cambodia Trade Integration Strategy and are relevant as opportunities to vertically upgrade the country's economy and as tools to build export capacity in all sectors. On 4 November 2024, Jamaica requested UNCTAD support to build the country's capacity in trade in services, including on issues related to data collection and compilation. This may provide an opportunity to explore synergies with the above-mentioned technical assistance project to CARICOM. On 15 November 2024, South Africa has also reached out to UNCTAD for support on financial payment systems and their linkages to tourism development.

34. **Results and impact.** 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 cooperation. SPR assessments, customized advisory services and capacity building initiatives enhanced the technical capacity of policymakers, trade officials and other stakeholders. This contributed to strengthening 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

35. **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, productive capacity and structural transformation is crucial for achieving SDGs.

36. **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-centered 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.

37. **Outputs.** In 2024, UNCTAD provided technical assistance to Iraq through advisory services and specialized training workshops including a specialized workshop on trade policy (TP) formulation and implications for Iraq's WTO accession preparedness. It was held from 19 to 21 December 2024 in Antalya, Türkiye. It was attended by 11 Iraqi officials, including three women, representing the ministries of Trade, Finance (Central Bank & Customs Authority), Tourism, Transportation, Health, and the Investment Commission. Participants discussed the main components of TP priorities, including the

institutional and sectoral reform needed to align the country's trade regime with Iraq's overall development strategy, including WTO membership. Furthermore, during the period of January to May 2024 legal and technical counselling, and review were provided by UNCTAD experts to the government of Iraq to support trade officials in the preparation of regulatory mapping and audit of selected services sectors and the drafting, on that basis, of a revised GATS-related market access offer on trade in services.

38. Moreover, UNCTAD delivered from 20 to 21 July 2024, in Istanbul, Türkiye, a regional workshop on "UNCTAD contribution and support to Arab countries towards meeting the new challenges emerging from the Multilateral Trading System". Fourteen trade officials, policy makers and experts, including three female participants, from Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, the State of Palestine and the League of Arab States Secretariat participated in the workshop. They exchanged views on the possible effects that the 13th session of the WTO ministerial conference (MC13) outcomes, held from 26 February to 2 March 2024 in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, could have on Arab countries' TP development objectives. Also, the workshop provided the participants with the opportunity to share experiences and best practices on TP formulation and implementation as well as the lessons learned from and challenges of recent Arab countries' WTO accession negotiations.

39. UNCTAD also organised an online course on trade policy frameworks for developing countries and LDCs from 14 October 2024 to 27 January 2025 as part of the UNCTAD trade policy e-learning series. The course aimed to enhance the technical capacity of trade officials and other stakeholders in formulating trade policies best fit to achieve their sustainable development goals. The course was based on the UNCTAD Manual of Best Practices for Trade Policy Frameworks for Developing Countries. It consisted of nine modules. The course included three live sessions:

- (a) Webinar 1: Principal objective of the trading system (22 October 2024);
- (b) Webinar 2: Trade and development (31 October 2024);
- (c) Webinar 3: Emerging issues in trade policy formulation and implementation (4 December 2024).

40. There were 522 participants registered for the online course on trade policy frameworks, out of which 155 completed all the requirements and received their Certificates of Completion. Out of 155 participants completing the course, 46.5 per cent are female, 52.9 per cent are male and 0.6 per cent non-binary.

41. **Results and impact.** UNCTAD support helped improve the capacity of trade officials, negotiators, and TP makers to review and correct inefficiencies in existing trade policy frameworks and to initiate reforms aiming at inclusive economic transition and facilitate the target countries' positive regional and global integration, including through their engagement in trade agreements concluded under the auspices of the League of Arab States, such as the Greater Arab Free Trade Area (GAFTA) and the Agreement on liberalization of trade in services among Arab countries, and WTO membership.

42. UNCTAD 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.

43. UNCTAD capacity building and technical assistance are contributing to the efforts deployed by the beneficiary countries, namely Iraq and the State of Palestine, to review and reform their trade policy 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 business practices. In fact, UNCTAD interventions in this context addressed the main

restrictions on trade and analysed the prospects for reform to further facilitate trade in several key services sectors in both countries.

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>
ROA-2124 (D13)	Technology assessment in the energy and agricultural sectors in Africa to accelerate progress on Science, Technology and Innovation	2021–	Development Account

44. **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.

45. **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.

46. **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). 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. 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. Both the STI policy review report and the Foresight for STI report were finalized and printed during 2023. Following the

publishing of these two reports, UNCTAD has been planning to deliver capacity building workshop in the country.

47. In 2024, the STI policy review for Seychelles was completed under the project of “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 participating in the project 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. Capacity building training was also provided through two national workshops. The STI policy review for Seychelles was launched in the Seychelles in March 2024 and the report was published in April 2024. 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. UNCTAD has been in contact with the country to deliver advisory services in succeeding policy design and implementation phases.

48. **Results and impact.** At the end of 2024, 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.

49. 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
TRI/0T/LAQ	Trinidad and Tobago E-commerce Strategy Development Project	2023–	Trinidad and Tobago
ZIM/0T/MAM	eTrade Readiness Assessment of Zimbabwe	2023–	Republic of Korea
INT/0T/FAQ	eTrade for all Coordination	2016–	Multi-donors
INT/0T/HCE	Strategic Partnership the Netherlands (linked with THCJ)	2021–	Kingdom of the Netherlands

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
INT/0T/HCE04	Strategic Partnership the Netherlands (linked with THCJ2)	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	Support for the implementation of the project eTrade Readiness Assessments of Algeria and Mauritania	2022–	Germany
RAS/0T/KAJ	Pacific Digital Economy Programme	2021–	United Nations Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office
RAS/0T/KAJ2	Pacific Digital Economy Programme Support	2023–	United Nations Capital Development Fund
RAS/0T/MBD	E-commerce and Digital Economy (ECDE) Programme	2023–	Australia

50. **Development context.** In 2024, despite more people and companies moving online, there were also indications of widening divides related to e-commerce and digital trade. Persisting disparities in countries' readiness to engage in and benefit from the fast-evolving data-driven digital economy underlined the continued need for support to developing and least developed countries (LDCs) in this area. Rising concerns related to data and artificial intelligence as well as to the environmental footprint of the ICT sector and digitalization were given central attention in the discussions leading up to the outcome of the Summit of the Future. The Pact for the Future (General Assembly Resolution A/RES/79/1) and the Global Digital Compact (GDC) contained therein were adopted with the aim of fostering an inclusive, open, sustainable, fair, safe and secure digital future for all.

51. One of the main objectives (Objective 2) of the GDC is to expand inclusion in and benefits from the digital economy for all. In that context, the GDC reaffirms that “advancing digital inclusion requires a predictable and transparent enabling environment that encompasses policy, legal and regulatory frameworks that support innovation, protect consumer rights, nurture digital talent and skills, promote fair competition and digital entrepreneurship, and enhance consumer confidence and trust in the digital economy”. The GDC furthermore commits member States, among other things, to: (a) foster an open, fair, inclusive and non-discriminatory digital environment for all that enables micro-, small and medium sized enterprises to access and compete in the digital economy (SDG9); (b) support international, regional and national efforts to develop enabling environments for digital transformation, including predictable and transparent policy, legal and regulatory frameworks, and sharing of best practices (SDGs 10 and 16); (c) conduct national and regional assessments to inform actions to address gaps and needs in digital transformation and strengthen the collection and use of data to inform decision-making (all SDGs); [...] (h) exchange knowledge and best practices on digital enterprise to support innovation programmes and local technological solutions in developing countries (SDG9); (i) foster innovation and entrepreneurship, including among women, youth, and other underrepresented entrepreneurs with the goal of increasing the number of digital start-ups and micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises in developing countries and facilitate their access to markets through the use of digital technologies (SDGs 8 and 9).

52. Against this background, the E-Commerce and Digital Economy (ECDE) Programme continued to provide policymakers and other key stakeholders, including women digital entrepreneurs, with the knowledge, capacities, and dialogue avenues to take development-led actions towards an inclusive and sustainable digital future for all. Through

the Programme, UNCTAD works with government officials and development partners, representatives of civil society and the private sector, to strengthen the readiness of developing countries to harness the opportunities and address the risks presented by digitalization and the rise of e-commerce and digital trade in particular.

53. **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-responsive 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-responsive manner.

54. **Outputs.** The *Digital Economy Report 2024*, titled “Shaping an environmentally sustainable and inclusive digital future“, was launched in July, underscoring the pressing need for sustainable strategies throughout the lifecycle of digitalization. The report calls for a global shift towards a circular digital economy and for bold actions from policymakers, industry leaders, and consumers to mitigate the environmental repercussions of rapid digital transformation, which disproportionately affect developing countries. By the end of 2024, the report had been downloaded over 37,000 times and mentioned in some 260 posts on social media, sparking a wide-reaching discussion that resonated in high-level fora such as the Second Committee of the United Nations General Assembly in New York and regional events in Geneva, Addis Ababa, Nairobi, Bangkok, New Delhi, and Beijing.

55. New research and analysis publications included the second edition of the Pacific Digital Economy Report, dedicated to “Promoting Digital Entrepreneurship and Trade”, a “Gap analysis of Cyberlaws in Pacific Small Island Developing States (SIDS)”, and a policy review of “Indirect taxation of e-commerce and digital trade: implications for developing countries”. Updated digital economy statistics informed a technical note on “Business e-commerce sales and the role of online platforms”.

56. UNCTAD undertook the 40th e-trade readiness assessment and continued to support developing countries in building their preparedness to benefit from the digital economy through new e-commerce strategies and assistance for their implementation. Two e-trade readiness assessments were completed in 2024 - for Timor-Leste and Trinidad and Tobago, while work continued in Algeria and Zimbabwe and a new assessment commenced in Indonesia – the first G20 country to benefit from UNCTAD assistance in this area. Fiji, Samoa, Timor-Leste, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Mauritania, and Trinidad and Tobago were supported to develop national e-commerce strategies/policies, in most cases as a follow-up to an e-trade readiness assessment.

57. UNCTAD completed the development of the eTrade Reform Tracker and prepared a roadmap to support the deployment of the tool in a well-sequenced manner and based on a shared understanding of the conditions to put in place for effective delivery. A model Licence Agreement, available in English and French, was drafted to guide the adoption of the tool by the requesting partner countries and ensure the necessary commitment and accountability of all parties involved. Training materials were also developed, in particular a user guide for partner countries and an operational guide for platform administrators.

58. To further support implementation, an e-trade capacity-building workshop was organized in May in conjunction with the seventh session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts (IGE) on E-commerce and the Digital Economy, thus enabling 28 focal points (including 8 women) from partner countries and Regional Economic Communities across Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean, to participate in both events.

59. In the area of e-commerce and digital economy measurement, working closely with the IMF, OECD, World Bank, WTO and other parts of the UN, UNCTAD delivered in-person training to close to 300 participants from National Statistical Offices, Central Banks and other relevant agencies of countries across Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. This represents a three-fold increase in reach compared to 2023, with almost half of participants

being women. Online delivery was also used to raise awareness of digital trade concepts and measurement among a wider audience, especially policymakers.

60. UNCTAD announced five new eTrade for Women advocates and delivered, in partnership with the Advocates for French-speaking Africa and South Asia, two in-person Masterclasses that brought together a total of 43 women entrepreneurs from 15 countries. Thirty-one women from 12 countries also benefited from a 10-day study tour on *Empowering Women Entrepreneurs from the Global South in E-commerce and Digital Businesses*, delivered in close collaboration with the Ministry of Commerce or the People's Republic of China, and its Academy for International Business Officials (AIBO).

61. With the support of eTrade for Women Community Leaders, more than 30 business, leadership and networking-oriented events were organized, including two in-person regional gatherings in Nairobi and Jakarta. At the global and regional level, eTrade for Women engaged in 20 policy dialogue events, ensuring that women's perspectives are considered in the formulation of digital economy policies. These included, among others, the 9th Aid-for-Trade Global Review in Geneva, a roundtable discussion during the high-level week of the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, the validation workshop for the draft National E-commerce Strategy of Côte d'Ivoire in Abidjan, and consultations on AfCFTA Implementation Strategies in Nairobi.

62. A new online platform dedicated to Community members was launched, serving as a hub to connect, network, share good practices, access valuable resources, and enrol in the eTrade for Women Academy, which provides self-paced training and learning resources tailored to members' specific challenges and needs. Five courses tackling key topics, such as access to finance and design thinking, were attended by 70 women digital entrepreneurs from the 5 regions where the initiative is active.

63. UNCTAD contributed to the development of the GDC and will also play an active role in its implementation - as a member of the Working Group on Digital Technologies (WGDT), as well as co-lead of the sub-group responsible for Objective 2 of the GDC, which focuses on expanding inclusion in and benefits from the digital economy, and Objective 4, which focuses on advancing responsible, equitable and interoperable data governance approaches. UNCTAD will also continue to leverage synergies with existing global multi-stakeholder platforms such as the eWeek.

64. Following on from the work on e-trade readiness assessments and their implementation, the 7th session of the IGE on E-commerce and the Digital Economy was held in conjunction with the eTrade capacity-building workshop, emphasizing the urgent need for developing countries to build digital readiness amid unabated global crises and rising inequalities. The 5th meeting of the Working Group on Measuring E-commerce and the Digital Economy gathered experts to discuss progress in e-commerce and digital economy measurement by international organizations, the measurement of e-commerce value, non-survey-based measurement of e-commerce and the digital economy, and related capacity building.

65. The work of the Task Group on Measuring E-commerce Value (TG-eCOM) gathered speed, with the August launch of a members-only online platform that hosts meeting materials and records, as well as an online forum for discussions and tools to enable collaborative work. A joint workshop with the OECD Working Party on Digital Economics, Measurement, and Analysis (WPDEMA) in November provided an opportunity to discuss experiences and challenges related to interpreting and operationalizing the OECD 2009 definition of e-commerce and its supporting guidelines.

66. Partners in the UNCTAD-led eTrade for all initiative continued to actively contribute to advancing e-commerce and the digital economy in and for developing countries. A total of 22 partners engaged in various UNCTAD-led activities, including 13 partners supporting e-trade readiness assessments, e-commerce strategies and their implementation, 9 contributing to eTrade for Women activities, and 12 involved in research, analysis and measurement.

67. An independent evaluation of the ECDE Programme began in November, to be completed in early 2025. The evaluation covers the three-year period from 2022 to 2024

and will include an assessment of progress since the previous evaluation as well as strategic recommendations for programme development.⁶ To enhance transparency of activities and results, in December the Programme initiated reporting in the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) data standard. This first set of data published on the IATI registry by the Programme marked the beginning of UNCTAD journey with IATI.

68. **Results and impact.** The GDC calls for promoting interoperability of data governance frameworks (para 48). In this context and building on the analysis and recommendations of the *Digital Economy Report 2021*, member States requested the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) to establish a dedicated working group to engage in a comprehensive and inclusive multi-stakeholder dialogue on data governance at all levels as relevant for development. The CSTD is a subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Council and UNCTAD provides secretariat services and substantive support to its work.

69. The 7th session of the IGE on E-commerce and the Digital Economy delivered as a main outcome a set of agreed policy recommendations that underscored the importance of aligning digital development with the Sustainable Development Goals through the GDC.

70. The National E-commerce Strategy of Fiji, which builds on the findings of the National E-commerce Assessment (2020) led by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, and which aligns with the Pacific Regional E-commerce Strategy and Roadmap, received Cabinet endorsement in May. The National E-commerce Strategy of Côte d'Ivoire, which follows on from the e-trade readiness assessments completed in 2021 and is aligned with the regional E-commerce Strategy of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), was endorsed in September.

71. An interactive demonstration of the functionalities of the eTrade Reform Tracker during the capacity-building workshop in May triggered official requests for its deployment from Kenya, Mauritania, Fiji and Solomon Islands. Deployment will start in 2025.

72. UNCTAD enhanced cooperation with the UN resident coordinator system. Work commenced to develop a National E-commerce Strategy of Ghana in the framework of a joint programme implemented by UNCDF, UNCTAD and UNDP under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator's Office. The strategy is being developed with the financial support of the European Union and member States through the Joint SDG Fund's Window on Digital Transformation.

73. The eTrade for Women initiative reached new heights with its expansion into South Asia. By the end of the year, the initiative had supported over 350 women entrepreneurs from 65 countries across Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Balkans, and the Arab region, to enable them to scale their businesses, drive digitalization in their ecosystems, and foster more inclusive growth.

74. The *etradeforall.org* online platform attracted more than 50,000 visitors, with approximately half originating from developing countries. Ten editions of the *eTrade for all* newsletter were released to an audience of some 5,400 subscribers. The newsletter's 'open' and 'click' rates increased by 17 per cent and 31 per cent respectively on an annual basis.

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>
EUR/0T/KBJ	Support to CEFTA for monitoring and reporting of NTMs and implementation of Dispute Settlement Mechanism	2021–	European Union

⁶ See https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/osginf2022d5_en.pdf.

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
MOZ/0T/JAH	Building Competitiveness for Exports in Mozambique	2020–	UNIDO (with funding from the EU)
INT/0T/CBG	Non-tariff measures trust fund (under Transparency in Trade programme)	2013–	World Bank
INT/0T/MAI	Collection of NTMs Data with World Bank	2023–	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
RAF/0T/GBK	Support project for the African Continental Free Trade Area to eliminate non-tariff barriers and increase regulatory transparency – Phase 2	2021–	Germany
RAF/0T/MAZ	Support project for the African Continental Free Trade Area to eliminate non-tariff barriers and increase regulatory transparency - Phase 3	2024–	Germany
ROA-2023 (G12)	Green trade for sustainable development in Pacific small island developing States of the Melanesian Spearhead Group	2020–	Development Account

75. **Development context.** Regulations, including those aimed at safeguarding safety, health, and the environment, impact 90 per cent of global merchandise trade. These non-tariff measures (NTMs), which are policy actions beyond customs tariffs, often influence international trade by affecting quantities traded or prices. While most of these measures are designed with non-protectionist and non-discriminatory intentions, they can significantly affect trade by increasing trade costs and causing trade diversion. NTMs tend to raise costs related to trade, compliance, and procedures, which often place a heavier burden on small enterprises and poorer countries. Least developed countries (LDCs) and small producers in developing countries are particularly affected, limiting their trade potential and hindering economic growth. Nevertheless, many NTMs serve important public policy goals, such as safeguarding health, safety, and the environment. Over 40 per cent of NTMs are directly aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals. Achieving a balance between trade costs and the benefits of regulation requires transparency, policy coherence, and global regulatory alignment. Effective action in this area is often linked to regional economic integration and domestic regulatory reforms. While these measures serve legitimate policy purposes, such as ensuring access to or the safety of essential goods, they also have implications for sustainable development. For developing countries, understanding the use and effects of such measures is critical to crafting and implementing effective development strategies.

76. **Objectives and features.** The UNCTAD program on non-tariff measures seeks to enhance transparency and understanding of trade control measures and regulations to help policies better promote sustainable development. The program addresses the full spectrum of non-tariff measures, including classification, data collection and dissemination, as well as research, policy advice, and capacity-building for countries and regional integration groups. UNCTAD leads global cooperation on the development and updating of the International Classification of Non-Tariff Measures and works with regional and international partners on data collection, ensuring a coordinated and resource-efficient approach. UNCTAD supports developing countries in improving transparency and strengthening analytical capacity regarding non-tariff measures by: making data on these measures available online to improve transparency; conducting regional reviews of non-tariff measure integration; offering online and in-country training on data collection, sources, tools, methods, and policy-relevant research related to non-tariff measures; and

providing advisory services to countries and regional groupings to build capacity to address these measures and remove non-tariff barriers upon request.

77. **Outputs.** In 2024, UNCTAD reached a coverage of non-tariff measure (NTM) data of 143 countries. The UNCTAD database on non-tariff measures, known as the Trade Analysis and Information System (TRAINS), is the largest and most comprehensive in the world, covering over 90 per cent of global trade. Data on non-tariff measures is publicly available through various dissemination tools, including UNCTAD TRAINS Portal (for policymakers), the World Integrated Trade Solution (WITS) platform (for researchers), and the Global Trade Helpdesk (for private sector users). The TRAINS Portal is an interactive web platform that allows users to perform efficient search queries, compile data, retrieve information, and download customized search results. Its goal is to enhance the transparency of non-tariff measures across countries and lower the information access costs for traders. Data on non-tariff measures and trade regulations in the TRAINS Portal is sourced from the TRAINS Data Entry Tool, where information is collected using a standardized methodology endorsed by the United Nations Statistical Commission, ensuring comparability across countries. The number of users of these tools continued to grow, surpassing 40,000 in 2024.

78. The Latin American Integration Association (ALADI) continued to work in 2024 jointly with UNCTAD to provide yearly updated NTM data for all its member countries, plus 5 more in Central America. ALADI also worked towards integrating its database with TRAINS Portal, through a tailor-made application programming interface (API) for automatic transfer of data that integrates with TRAINS Online. This ensures a coherent and standardized approach for all countries in the region, so that data is comparable across them.

79. UNCTAD in 2024 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 around a hundred participants from various backgrounds (academic, government officials, traders, and researchers), 60 per cent of them are women. The online training course on NTMs and data collection enrolled 70 participants. A tailor-made course on NTM and data collection offered to policymakers and researchers in Southeast and East Asia graduated 62 participants. In addition, in-person workshops took place in Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji, Timor-Leste and Tonga. Overall, over 400 government officials, traders and researchers have completed the courses on non-tariff measures provided by UNCTAD, of whom more than 40 per cent are women.

80. UNCTAD held introductory and advanced online courses on NTMs from 16 January to 16 March 2024 for 82 West African stakeholders from eight ECOWAS countries, nominated by their governments and the ECOWAS Commission. The courses targeted officials from Trade and Agriculture Ministries, customs, export agencies, academics, experts, and business representatives to enhance their understanding of NTMs and their impact on regional agri-food value chains. The advanced course included a module on NTMs and Regional Agri-Food Value Chain Development, incorporating findings from UNCTAD trade-related mapping in nationally determined contributions. The training was part of the “Strengthening of Value Chains and Market Access in Four ECOWAS Countries” project. NTMs and compliance challenges were identified as key barriers to intra-African trade in prior consultations with businesses and policymakers. UNCTAD also provided technical guidance for the project’s final report, which was shared with the ECOWAS Commission and donors.

81. A recent report by UNCTAD highlights that addressing non-tariff barriers (NTBs) and non-tariff measures (NTMs) within the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) could bring annual economic benefits of \$7.1 billion. Currently, NTMs are estimated to increase trade costs by 13 per cent in the agri-food sectors and 5 per cent in manufacturing. Micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), as well as women and youth entrepreneurs and people with disabilities, are particularly affected. While many NTMs serve legitimate public policy purposes, there is a critical need for greater transparency. The AfCFTA Agreement calls for regulatory transparency in areas such as customs cooperation, mutual administrative assistance, trade facilitation, and sanitary and phytosanitary

measures. As the leading organization for collecting data on NTMs, UNCTAD is collaborating with the AfCFTA Secretariat to implement the necessary transparency measures and work toward removing unnecessary barriers. In 2024, data collection was completed in four countries, with three more set to be completed in 2025, bringing the total number of countries with recently collected data to 30.

82. In partnership with AfCFTA member states, UNCTAD developed an online tool to report, monitor, and eliminate non-tariff barriers, which was launched by African Heads of State in 2019. This tool allows the private sector - particularly microenterprises, SMEs, informal traders, and women and youth entrepreneurs - to report trade obstacles they face within intra-African trade. These issues are then addressed by national focal points trained by UNCTAD. With UNCTAD support, the mechanism has successfully helped eliminate several NTBs. To enhance the private sector's experience and improve reporting, UNCTAD assisted the AfCFTA Secretariat in developing the AfCFTA NTB Reporting Mobile Application⁷. Officially launched at Biashara Afrika trade fair in Kigali, Rwanda, the app is available for both Android and Apple devices. It enables users to report NTBs instantly via their mobile phones, providing quicker support from the AfCFTA Secretariat. UNCTAD continues to support the AfCFTA Secretariat through a seconded expert. The expert aids the NTB Coordination Unit, helps build the capacity of National Focal Points, and supports the implementation of awareness campaigns.

83. In the context of Mozambique-EU Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), UNCTAD provided, at the request of the government of Mozambique, technical and advisory support under an EU-funded project and in collaboration with UNIDO. In 2024, UNCTAD assisted the national stakeholders with thorough trade analysis and related capacity building including comprehensive studies on non-tariff measures to better assess the relevant economic implications and opportunities when adopting and formulating trade policies.

84. While UNCTAD successfully ended on 31 December 2023 the project called "Green trade for sustainable development in Pacific small island developing States of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG)" under the 12th Tranche of Development Account, some follow-up activities were conducted in 2024. This included the publication of six additional reports, namely: A Voluntary Sustainability Standards Guidebook for Vanilla in Papua New Guinea; National synergistic linkages between green trade and sustainable development: Vanuatu; Subregional action plan for green trade promotion; Synergistic linkages between green trade and sustainable development in Fiji; Synergistic linkages between green trade and sustainable development in Papua New Guinea; and Synergistic linkages between green trade and sustainable development in Solomon Islands.

85. 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, a training on the WTO TBT notification was undertaken in Papua New Guinea (3 October 2024). Furthermore, work started on the long-awaited Papua New Guinea tariff reduction program review. Moreover, NTM data of Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste and Vanuatu were updated with the update for Solomon Islands ongoing. Considering the importance of the work in the Pacific region, the donor has agreed to a one year no-cost extension.

86. In 2024, UNCTAD and the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA) selected and trained national consultants to collect and update the NTM data in the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) countries and India. The in-person training took place in Thailand, with the participation of representatives from the ASEAN secretariat and ASEAN ministries in May 2024. The data collection for the 16 countries is on-going and expected to finalize in mid-2025.

87. In close cooperation with UNECE, NTM data collection had been done for Kyrgyzstan in 2021 and 2022, as well as the development of a national e-NTM platform to collect information on NTM and serve as a national repository for regulations, to share data

⁷ <https://www.tradebarriers.africa/app>.

automatically with UNCTAD TRAINS Portal containing data for all other countries. The development of the e-NTM platform stretched into 2024 and is functional for Kyrgyzstan data, though due to a lack of funding the data collection update is expected to be completed only in 2025.

88. UNCTAD continues its support for the reforms and implementation of the Dispute Settlement Mechanism (DSM) to resolve non-tariff barriers between Parties to the 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 2024, UNCTAD organized eight rounds of negotiations on Additional Protocol 7 to CEFTA on DSM, providing legal advice and logistical support. The negotiating process was finalized and the Additional Protocol 7 on DSM was adopted in October 2024. UNCTAD has organized and delivered seven in-person trainings on Dispute Settlement Mechanism in all CEFTA Parties in 2023–2024, with participation from both public and private sector representatives. 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 supported CEFTA parties to enhance transparency by data collection on NTMs of CEFTA economies. By end of 2024 data collection for five CEFTA economies were finalized. These data will be disseminated through UNCTAD TRAINS online database. UNCTAD also collaborated 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. In 2024, UNCTAD organized seven workshops on strategy for private sector trade obstacles reporting mechanism in all CEFTA economies to enhance private public partnership, to raise awareness of the private sector on the existing reporting mechanisms and to hear the feedback from private and public sector stakeholders on challenges experienced in reporting and resolving the trade concerns. The initial recommendations on enhancing NTB reporting and resolution have been presented by UNCTAD which will be followed by further workshops and final report on strategy for trade obstacles reporting mechanism.

89. UNCTAD continues its calculation of indexes that describe the use and impact of NTMs. The data is made publicly available. Jointly with the Global Trade Analysis project, of which UNCTAD is a board member, ad valorem equivalent tariffs (AVEs) are calculated and made available as satellite data for GTAP. A mapping of NTMs to all SDGs shows which NTMs are positively linked to SDGs including those related to social objectives and environmental challenges such as climate change.

90. **Results and impact.** In 2024, awareness raising efforts under the support project to the AfCFTA led to an increase in the number of registered users in the AfCFTA NTB Online Mechanism by 51 per cent, from 931 to 1,408. This represents the largest increase in user registrations since the tool’s launch, with 477 new users joining in this year alone. The UNCTAD - Latin American Integration Association (ALADI) cooperation is continuing to promote trade through the continuous provision of updated information on NTM to policymakers, exporters and importers, based on UNCTAD methodology and technical support. Similarly, in the CEFTA and the Pacific regions, awareness of governments and private sectors was raised. Countries in Latin America and other regions 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. Transparency in NTMs, to which these technical cooperation projects contribute, can reduce trade costs by up to 20 per cent.

91. 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.

92. The legal advice provided within the support project to the CEFTA contributed to the finalization of negotiations on Additional Protocol 7 to CEFTA on Dispute Settlement Mechanism and the adoption of the Agreement in 2024, which will provide effective resolution mechanism for barriers to trade among CEFTA parties once it enters into force and is operational. So far, more than 150 participants from public and private sectors in the CEFTA economies benefitted from the training on Dispute Settlement Mechanism, which will help to support this change process in the CEFTA area.

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>
INT/0T/9AU	Trust Fund on WTO Accession	2009–	Multi-donors
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

93. **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.

94. 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.

95. 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.

96. **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 the development impact of regional dimension of trade (South–South and South–North).

97. UNCTAD 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.

98. The objective of UNCTAD support for the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) and other preferential arrangements is to increase the effectiveness of preferences through, inter alia, new modalities of market access cooperation, and 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.

99. The objective of UNCTAD support for GSTP is to increase knowledge of the agreement among its members, foster 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.

100. **Outputs.** The main outputs in 2024 in the area of trade negotiations and the international trading system are reported as follows:

Trading systems

101. UNCTAD continued to monitor and assess the evolution in international trade and the trading system from a development perspective. In 2024, 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. 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.

102. UNCTAD provided focused and targeted technical assistance to Iraq during the preparatory process for Iraq's WTO accession negotiations in 2024. These include (1) an advisory meeting that took place in Geneva on 15 July 2024 - prior to the third session of the Working Party (WP) on the accession of Iraq to the WTO – to coach the Iraqi negotiating team, composed of 15 members, including 5 female participants, on negotiations techniques and to prepare the team for the WTO WP actual negotiations, held on 18 July 2024; (2) drafting and review of replies to 160 questions addressed to Iraq by WTO members following the 3rd session of the said WP; and (3) the preparation of key required documents related to the WTO accession negotiations, in particular the Memorandum on Foreign Trade Regime (MFTR) and the offers on market access for trade in services.

103. In addition, part of the proceedings of the national and regional workshops organized, respectively, in Antalya and Istanbul, Türkiye, on 19–21 December and 20–21 July 2024, was dedicated to upgrading the skills of Iraqi trade negotiators and enhancing their capability to meet WTO accession legal and technical requirements through coaching and simulation exercises.

Services, development and trade

104. 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.

105. In 2024, UNCTAD supported its membership in using trade in services for diversification with several initiatives:

(a) UNCTAD organized the eleventh session of the Multi-year Expert Meeting (MYEM) on Trade, Services and Development on how creative services can be strengthened, for example by incorporating inputs from information and communications technology (ICT) services to become digitalized.

(b) UNCTAD participated in a meeting with member States of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in October 2024 to support on how services inputs can help the energy transition by delivering a presentation on “Trade in services for transfers of skills and knowledge in energy transition”.

106. UNCTAD supported member States in harvesting the potential development benefits from trade in services by better collection and use of related data. Trade in services has important data gaps due to the intangible nature of this trade and because of limitations on the infrastructure and skills of data ecosystems in several countries. The benefits for countries depend on effective policymaking in trade in services which, in turn, requires improving access and use of data.

107. In 2024, UNCTAD helped its member States improve its data ecosystems to better inform trade in services policymaking, through several initiatives:

(a) UNCTAD organized the final meetings of the informal working group on data for trade in services and development policies and prepared a report to disseminate the lessons learned and experiences shared in this working group on how to better collect, compile and use trade in services data.

(b) UNCTAD started to prepare a primer on trade in services data for development policies to provide a tool to developing countries on how to better access and use data to improve trade in services policymaking.

(c) UNCTAD prepared a policy brief on “Better data on trade in services for effective FFD strategies” to support member States participating in the 2024 conference on Financing for Development.

(d) UNCTAD collaborated with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) to deliver a presentation to ECA’s membership in November 2024 on the importance of data for trade in services policymaking.

108. 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.

109. In 2024, 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) UNCTAD participated in the United Nations Network on Migration, including in its annual meeting on 30 and 31 January 2024;

(b) UNCTAD 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”.

(c) UNCTAD collaborated with the International Trade Centre to deliver a policy dialogue in June 2024 on “Unpacking Mutual Recognition Agreements under the AfCFTA” to support development benefits from mobility of people to provide services.

Market access and trade preferences

110. 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, collection of data and publication of analytical studies on GSP schemes and technical cooperation and capacity-building services. UNCTAD ensured the dissemination of relevant information by preparing related studies, such as the Trade Preferences Outlook 2024 which was released on 13 November 2024. This first issue of the UNCTAD Trade Preferences Outlook takes stock of the current state of preferential trade conducted under non-reciprocal trade preferences (NRTP) programmes, assessing their effects, and examining their continued relevance in the light of the changing pattern and structure of international trade. 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.

111. 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 2024, UNCTAD focused on the implementation of the workplan of 2023–2025, approved during the last Committee of Participants in September 2023. As part of the workplan, the technical note “South-South trade in the marine fisheries and aquaculture sectors” was released in August 2024. The other two technical notes, focusing on agriculture and medical goods, will be presented in 2025. In addition, UNCTAD has organised an information session for GSTP participants on 4 November 2024, where the UNCTAD Trade Preferences Outlook 2024 and the technical note on marine fisheries and aquaculture were presented. UNCTAD has also moved forward with the update of the São Paulo Round tariff concessions and expects to conclude the exercise in 2025. The GSTP was also presented in two international conferences, the SALMA Dialogue for Economic Cooperation 2024 and the 4th Consultative Forum of the Regional Cooperation Organizations (RCOs) in the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Region.

112. **Results and impact.** 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 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 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.

113. In the case of Iraq, UNCTAD support enabled Iraq to complete a series of WTO accession related documentations, including the initial offers on goods and Services. The latter was tabled to the WTO as an official negotiating document in May 2024. Consequently, Iraq was able to resume, in July 2024, its WTO accession negotiations after 16 years of hiatus. The reactivation of the membership process required the government of Iraq to undertake a sheer volume of accession-related preparatory work at home. This covers a wide ranging and complex technical and legal formulation and reviews of core trade policy areas, involving not only measures related to market access in goods and services trade, but more importantly the systematic alignment of Iraq's trade-related legislative and regulatory frameworks to ensure consistency of its foreign trade regime with WTO agreements and disciplines. UNCTAD assistance in this context has been essential for Iraq to successfully meet some of WTO accession challenges related to the technical preparation. Ultimately, the negotiating teams in Iraq has been trained to adequately prepare for and negotiate trade agreements, including regional trade agreements (RTAs) and accession to WTO. UNCTAD received testimonial letters from Iraq attesting to the key role of UNCTAD and appreciating the support received from it in the WTO accession process.

114. UNCTAD work on services, trade and development has helped developing countries better understand the role of trade in services in economic transformation and diversification. Greater synergy was created between the three pillars of UNCTAD work on services. This synergy involved the lessons and exchanges from the 11th session of the MYEM on Trade, Services and Development, the technical assistance on "Strengthening capacity for evidence-based policymaking and the economic resilience of CARICOM" and analyses on how services inputs can transform all economic sectors relying on those inputs. UNCTAD 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 support, which was repeatedly appreciated by member States.

115. UNCTAD work on trade in services data for enhanced policymaking helped developing countries better understand how the development benefits from trade in services need to be based on evidence. This work has led UNCTAD member States to request more support in this area, including through a standing item in MYEM on Trade, Services and Development and through a primer on evidence-based trade in services policies for development. The developmental benefits of international migration and related remittances have also prompted consultations to UNCTAD in the light of its growing impact on development prospects.

116. UNCTAD 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, the Trade Preferences Outlook 2024, the 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 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>
INT/0T/7BS	Climate change programme	2007–	Portugal

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
INT/OT/7BS2	Avanzar en la economía social y solidaria para el desarrollo sostenible	2024–	Portugal
INT/OT/HAI	BioTrade Facilitation Programme: Linking trade, biodiversity and sustainable development	2019–	Switzerland
INT/OT/HBD	Sustainable manufacturing and environmental pollution programme	2018–	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
RAF/OT/KBE	Inclusion of green initiatives in AfCFTA National Implementation Strategies in 10 African Countries	2022–	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

117. **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.

118. Over the past few years, two important multilateral landmark agreements have been adopted: the WTO Fisheries Subsidies Agreement (FSA, 2022) and the United Nations treaty on Biodiversity in Areas Beyond Jurisdiction (BBNJ, 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. As of 6 February 2025, 89 countries have ratified the WTO FSA (22 more ratifications needed) and 18 countries have ratified the BBNJ (42 more ratifications needed). Negotiations on outstanding issues under the WTO Fisheries Agreement on subsidies that contribute to overcapacity and overfishing continued after the WTO 13th Ministerial Conference in February 2024 as consensus was not found. Preparations began for 2025, a major year for the ocean with the UNCTAD Ocean Forum in March and the UN Ocean Conference in June.

119. Negotiations for an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution under the United Nations framework have been pursued in 2024, with the objective of reaching an agreement by 2025.

120. Additionally at the 79th UN General Assembly in September 2024, world leaders adopted the Pact of the Future to tackle global challenges through multilateralism. Its Action 5 focuses on making the global trading system a driver of sustainable development, emphasizing export-led growth and preferential trade access for developing countries. Its Action 10 calls for accelerating efforts to restore, protect, conserve and sustainably use the environment, and notes the importance of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF), a landmark outcome adopted in 2022 under the Convention on Biological Diversity. This framework aims to reverse biodiversity loss by 2030 and sets out a global vision for living in harmony with nature by 2050. It opens new opportunities for exploring how trade and trade-related policies and measures can support biodiversity objectives in synergy with other SDGs.

121. The first global stocktake under the Paris Agreement, concluded in December 2023 at the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28), noted significant progress towards the Paris Agreement goals, albeit insufficient. It called for a comprehensive transformation across all sectors, essential to lower emissions, strengthen resilience, and mobilize resources in a just and sustainable way to accelerate and amplify efforts to meet

the agreed goals (UNFCCC, 2024). As countries prepare their third round of nationally determined contributions (NDCs) (NDCs 3.0) before COP30 in 2025, countries are encouraged to realign global emissions with climate goals with ambitious, economy-wide emissions reduction targets across all sectors and greenhouse gases, considering each country's unique circumstances and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (UNFCCC, 2024).

122. Trade can accelerate the implementation of climate-related goals, contributing to a just transition and offering sustainable development and trade opportunities. It can enhance affordable access to energy-efficient goods and technologies needed for climate change mitigation and adaptation. Sustainable trade practices can open new markets, create decent jobs and drive innovation. Investment supports the deployment of renewable energy. However, UNCTAD research shows that only over a quarter of the nationally determined contributions of developing countries include detailed investment planning and less fully utilize trade-related measures. The stakes are particularly high for developing countries where environmental degradation and climate change exacerbate poverty and undermine development gains.

123. Essential to biodiversity 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 protection, natural plastic substitutes, 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 these opportunities and enhance their productive capacity and export strengths.

124. UNCTAD – through its mandates on ocean and circular economies, biodiversity conservation, climate change, renewable energy, and plastic pollution under the Bridgetown Covenant⁸ – 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 facilitating plastic substitutes, 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 and trade diversification.

125. **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 and increasing national green and decarbonized exports.

126. 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 negative 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.

127. **Outputs.** The Oceans Economy Programme supports developing countries in responding to the triple planetary crisis by seizing opportunities from sustainable ocean

⁸ Building upon the Nairobi Maafikiano and the principles of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development.

trade. In 2024, it focused on the decarbonization of ocean economy sectors, notably fishing fleets, the development of emerging sectors, such as seaweed and non-plastic substitutes, and the promotion of South-South trade. To inform policymakers, it maintained and continued developing the Ocean Trade database in UNCTADstat. The main outputs of the Oceans Economy Programme in 2024 are reported as follows:

(a) UNCTAD released a study titled “An ocean of opportunities: The potential of seaweed to advance food, environmental and gender dimensions of the SDGs”, which points out the emerging opportunities for food security, environmental and gender aspects in the seaweed cultivation and processing sectors for developing countries.

(b) UNCTAD released “Beyond plastics: A review of trade-related policy measures on non-plastic substitutes” in July 2024, which points at opportunities for the development of non-plastic substitutes as a response to the plastic pollution crisis. This was a joint Ocean and SMEP programme output.

(c) UNCTAD released “South-South trade in the marine fisheries and aquaculture sectors” in August 2024. The report provides an analysis of South-South trade based on the UNCTAD Ocean trade and TRAINS databases, and recommendations on reviving GSTP negotiations at the sectoral level.

(d) UNCTAD released “A deep dive into ocean-related measures in the nationally determined contributions of small island developing States”⁹ on 2 December 2024, providing a detailed analysis of both direct and indirect trade-related measures in SIDS’ NDCs and recommendations for future commitments.

(e) UNCTAD organized four consultations and dialogues: Ocean Economy Measures in the NDCs of SIDS on 23 May (Barbados, University of the West Indies); Speakers’ Corner: The Potential of Seaweed for Food Security and Gender Empowerment on 12 July (Rome, Italy); Seaweed Dialogue: Industry Status, Markets, Trends on 19 September (Rome, Italy); and Market Access for Small-Scale Fisheries & Belt and Road Initiative on 28 November (Shanghai, China).

(f) UNCTAD organized four side events respectively on: 28 February – Trade-related Cooperation on Plastic Pollution (Abu Dhabi, UAE); 10 July – UN High Level Political Forum (HLPF) 2024: How seaweed contributes to achieving each of the goals under review (Online & In-person, New York); 16-18 October – UNCTAD-UNDP Fiji National Symposium on Plastic Pollution Prevention (Suva, Fiji); 23 November – Fifth International Negotiating Committee for a Plastic Pollution treaty (INC-5) Pre-event: Trade Implications of a Global Plastics Treaty (Busan, South Korea).

(g) UNCTAD organized three webinars respectively on: 26 February – Sixth United Nations Environmental Assembly (UNEA-6) Side Event on Seaweed as a Nature-based Solution; 20 June – Towards a Sustainable Ocean Economy: What Role for Cities?; 11 December – Enhancing Local-global Dialogue for Sustainable Water & Waste Management.

(h) Under its oceans economy programme, UNCTAD delivered six presentations respectively on: 9 April – Ocean Economy and Fisheries (Coalition for Fair Fisheries Arrangements); 25 April – Illicit Trade and Waste: Environmental Challenges and Trade Solutions (Geneva, Switzerland); 16 May – virtual presentation on “Climate Change and the Fishing Industry” made at the seventeenth round of informal consultations of States Parties to the United Nations Fish Stock Agreement (ICSP-17), UN DOALOS; 30 May – Gender in Fisheries and Aquaculture made at the OECD Fisheries Committee; 7 June – Ocean Innovation at France “Blue Talk” made at the Mission of France to the United Nations in Geneva; 30 June – The Oceans as a Source of Food: Seaweed for Trade & Food Security made at the Twenty-fourth meeting of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea (ICP-24).

⁹ <https://unctad.org/publication/deep-dive-ocean-related-measures-nationally-determined-contributions-small-island>

128. UNCTAD organized a training webinar on the relationship between trade and environment in international trade¹⁰ to bring together government officials and other selected public and private actors from various sectors to exchange knowledge and experience. The webinar was designed for Peru, with plans to scale up this initiative to the regional level in future years. The webinar was jointly organized by DITC's Trade and Environment, Commodities, and Trade analysis Branches, with experts from the three branches participating in the training delivery. All the above-mentioned events and trainings may have involved about 1,000 stakeholders in 2024.

129. Under the Trade and Climate Change Programme, in 2024, UNCTAD continued its collaboration with UNECA to implement activities under the project titled "Inclusion of Green Initiatives in AfCFTA National Implementation Strategies in Ten African Countries" funded by Denmark. Through the project, UNCTAD supported seven African countries (Algeria, Burkina Faso, Chad, Gabon, Madagascar, Mauritania, and Tunisia) in the development and adoption of national green value chain strategies emphasizing intra-African trade, regional cooperation, low-carbon production, and climate resilience.

130. Concretely, in 2024, a regional study analysing two sets of green value chains was completed by regional experts in Central Africa under the guidance of UNCTAD staff. The study informed national consultations in Chad and Gabon.

131. In all seven countries supported by UNCTAD, value chain assessments and national-level consultations were completed and followed by validation workshops (seven national workshops held in 2024 respectively in Algeria, Burkina Faso, Chad, Gabon, Madagascar, Mauritania, and Tunisia) where stakeholders reviewed and validated national green value chain strategies. Following the validation workshops, the seven national green value chain strategy documents were finalized.

132. Findings from national consultations and studies conducted under the project "Inclusion of Green Initiatives in AfCFTA National Implementation Strategies in Ten African Countries" provided key inputs for the preparation of a draft UNCTAD guide for policymakers on the inclusion of trade-related measures in national climate plans, including NDCs, taking advantage of new business and trade opportunities. The draft guide was presented by UNCTAD at COP 29 and subsequently piloted in the Gambia and Madagascar in December 2024. The guide is part of the UNCTAD contribution to the Baku Initiative for Climate Finance, Investment and Trade Dialogue, under the Presidency of COP 29.

133. As a result of these pilot initiatives, the Trade and Environment Ministries of both countries produced joint reports identifying climate-strategic trade sectors and formulating a set of trade-related measures aligned with these sectors to advance national climate objectives. These reports will inform the preparation of the third Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) of both countries under the Paris Agreement.

134. In 2024, the Trade and Climate Change Programme secured funding from the United Nations Development Account to implement a technical cooperation project entitled "Sustainable coffee export strategies and traceability for a green, sustainable, and inclusive economy in Asia." The project aims to strengthen the capacity of three Asian countries, namely Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam, to seize inclusive and sustainable export opportunities in sustainable arabica coffee value chains. The project will be implemented between 2025–2028 in cooperation with the Commodities Branch and the Gender, Trade and Development Programme.

135. The Global BioTrade Facilitation Programme: Linking trade, biodiversity and sustainable development¹¹ promotes sustainable BioTrade and provides key stakeholders with the ability to seize and capitalize on trade opportunities from linking biodiversity and sustainable development, thereby advancing the implementation of the SDGs, as well as the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. In 2024, eighty countries were

¹⁰ <https://unctad.org/meeting/training-webinar-relationship-between-trade-and-environment-international-trade>.

¹¹ <https://unctad.org/project/global-biotrade-facilitation-programme-linking-trade-biodiversity-and-sustainable>.

implementing the BioTrade principles and criteria – a guideline that supports the implementation of social, economic and environmental sustainability criteria across the entire value chain. Turnover of companies, associations and cooperatives implementing these principles and criteria reached nearly US\$50.5 billion in 2024, a significant increase from US\$40 million in 2003. The BioTrade Initiative and the UNCTAD Statistics Service continue promoting the Trade and Biodiversity (TraBio) statistical tool¹² that provides the trade flows of biodiversity-based products for over 185 economies dating from 2010 onwards and updated annually. The main outputs of the programme for 2024 are highlighted as follows:

136. The first ever Trade Day¹³ was jointly organized by UNCTAD, the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Secretariats, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and global partners at the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP 16) on 26 October 2024. Additionally, informal exchange sessions were organized at the UN Hub on topics related to trade and biodiversity on 24 October 2024. The events highlighted the role of international trade in supporting the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, generating sustainable livelihoods and fostering social inclusion and sustainable development.

137. The 7th BioTrade Congress: Global governance for trade and biodiversity¹⁴ was co-organized with other organizations on 25 and 26 March 2024. It brought together over 50 speakers and was attended by over 250 participants (51 per cent female) in person and virtually that exchanged on the positive role of trade and trade policies to address the biodiversity crisis.

138. Four meetings of the informal working group on trade and biodiversity statistics were held in February¹⁵, April¹⁶, July¹⁷ and September¹⁸ 2024. These were organized in cooperation with Statistics Service and convened with over 80 experts from 50 national, regional and international institutions. This informal working group aims to improve the collection of data on the commercialization & trade of biodiversity-based products and its socio-economic and environmental impact.

139. The Seventh Stakeholders Steering Committee (SSC) meeting for BioTrade¹⁹ was held virtually on 4 and 8 July 2024. The meeting provided a platform for promoting sector collaboration, coordinating joint initiatives in more than sixty countries, identifying and addressing emerging issues and sharing knowledge, lessons learned and best practices.

140. The Workshop on Advancing private-public partnerships to mainstream biodiversity conservation and sustainable use in Voluntary Sustainability Standards²⁰ was organized on 19 and 20 August in collaboration with the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment of South Africa.

141. The webinar “How can trade in support of the circular economy facilitate the delivery of biodiversity targets?”²¹ was jointly organized by UNCTAD, UNEP/UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Centre, CBD, WTO, and ITC on 21 February 2024 under the “Nature-Positive Trade” webinar series. The last session of the series was held as part of the 7th BioTrade Congress²² in March 2024.

¹² <https://unctadstat.unctad.org/EN/Biotrade.html> <https://unctadstat.unctad.org/datacentre/>.

¹³ <https://unctad.org/meeting/trade-day-convention-biological-diversity-cop16>.

¹⁴ <https://unctad.org/meeting/7th-biotrade-congress-global-governance-trade-and-biodiversity>.

¹⁵ <https://unctad.org/meeting/second-meeting-informal-working-group-trade-and-biodiversity-statistics>.

¹⁶ <https://unctad.org/meeting/third-meeting-informal-working-group-trade-and-biodiversity-statistics>.

¹⁷ <https://unctad.org/meeting/fourth-meeting-informal-working-group-trade-and-biodiversity-statistics>.

¹⁸ <https://unctad.org/meeting/fifth-meeting-informal-working-group-trade-and-biodiversity-statistics>.

¹⁹ <https://unctad.org/meeting/first-day-seventh-stakeholders-steering-committee-ssc-meeting-biotrade>.

²⁰ <https://unctad.org/meeting/workshop-advancing-private-public-partnerships-mainstream-biodiversity-conservation-and>.

²¹ <https://www.tradehub.earth/en/news/nature-positive-trade-how-can-trade-in-support-of-the-circular-economy-facilitate-the-delivery-of-biodiversity-targets>.

²² <https://unctad.org/meeting/7th-biotrade-congress-global-governance-trade-and-biodiversity>.

142. UNCTAD Co-organized the UNEA-6 Side-event – Sustainable consumption for biodiversity: Unleashing the power of GBF targets 15 and 16²³ on 26 February 2024 with the Consumers International and the Forest Stewardship Council within the Working Group on Biodiversity and Consumption of the One Planet Network.²⁴

143. The UNCTAD Sustainable Manufacturing and Environmental Pollution (SMEP) *programme*²⁵ 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.

144. In 2024, UNCTAD continued its engagement and deliverables under the SMEP programme, in close cooperation with the Programme Management Agent (Pegasys and SouthSouthNorth), in line with the scope of activities for UNCTAD defined in the MoU with Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) -UK (former DFID) signed on 20 August 2018 and amended on 19 September 2019 (1st amendment) and on 20 of October 2022 (2nd amendment, adding to the project activities work on plastic substitutes in the Indo-Pacific region). In 2024, the main accomplishments by UNCTAD under the SMEP programme were as follows:

145. UNCTAD hosted a Circular Economy Side Event at the 3rd Global South Nexus Conference²⁶, based on empirical learnings from the SMEP Programme. The session focused on innovative solutions for material circularity in a global south context, including materials that can substitute plastics and environmental goods and services, and their applicability in critical sectors of the economy. Discussions were held on plastic substitutes, resource efficiency, and circular economy practices across various manufacturing industries in the African, South Asian, and Indo-Pacific regions based on recent evidence from the SMEP Programme.

146. UNCTAD hosted an official side-event²⁷ during the 6th UN Environmental Assembly. This event aimed to increase knowledge and understanding of how seaweed ecosystems can support coastal fisheries, provide food and medicine, mitigate climate change and ocean acidification, and improve water quality.

147. UNCTAD co-hosted an IISD Trade Hub session²⁸ as part of COP28, which brought together trade delegates and stakeholders to highlight where trade-related cooperation can support global efforts to end plastic pollution across the full life cycle of plastics. It focused on progress in discussion of trade-related dimensions in the Dialogue on Plastic Pollution (DPP) and within the context of ongoing negotiations for a global plastics treaty to address plastic pollution.

148. UNCTAD co-hosted a workshop²⁹ to discuss business innovation and policy harmonization efforts to improve the circular economy aspects of e-mobility in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The event addressed Bangladesh's lead-acid battery industry challenges by exploring commercially attractive solutions for high-quality lead-acid batteries, alternative technologies with higher energy density, business model innovation, and policy harmonization. A background note prepared under the SMEP Programme informed discussions.

²³ <https://unctad.org/meeting/unea-6-side-event-sustainable-consumption-biodiversity-unleashing-power-gbf-targets-15-and>.

²⁴ <https://www.oneplanetnetwork.org/programmes/consumer-information-scp/biodiversity>.

²⁵ <https://unctad.org/project/sustainable-manufacturing-and-environmental-pollution-smep>.

²⁶ <https://unctad.org/meeting/3rd-global-south-nexus-conference>.

²⁷ <https://unctad.org/meeting/unea-6-side-event-seaweed-nature-based-solution-tackle-triple-planetary-crisis-climate>.

²⁸ <https://unctad.org/meeting/fostering-trade-related-cooperation-plastic-pollution-dialogue-plastic-pollution-beyond>.

²⁹ <https://unctad.org/meeting/workshop-business-innovation-and-policy-solutions-informal-recycling-used-lead-acid>.

149. UNCTAD co-organized a workshop on “The Global Problem of Plastic Waste”³⁰ with Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, British Columbia (Canada), as a pre-event to the 4th round of the International Negotiating Committee (INC) negotiations in Ottawa. The workshop shared information about a SMEP plastics upcycling project in Nepal and the latest research being done on plastics recycling, alternatives and non-plastics substitutes, by UNCTAD. Research, based on the SMEP project in Nepal, entitled “Dirty, Difficult and Dangerous: Establishing a Plastics Waste Upcycling System in Nepal” was also presented.

150. During the Trade and Development Commission in April, a *special session*³¹ was held to explore the issue of illicit trade and waste. This form of illicit trade has widespread repercussions for the sustainable development agenda, not least for environmental well-being, human health, and sustainable production and consumption practices. This session aimed not only to dissect the challenges posed by illegal trade in waste but, within an overall development framework, to explore how trade, coupled with better border and domestic governance, can provide positive solutions that contribute to the lasting mitigation of this global problem. Two SMEP projects, representing lead-acid battery recycling and second-hand clothes upcycling, were presented to discuss illicit trade issues with Member States present.

151. UNCTAD and Global Cities Hub co-organized a virtual event on cities’ role in the ocean economy³² with two aims. First, it sought to strengthen two-way information exchange between speakers, UNCTAD and other organizations, and local and regional governments. Second, it aimed to explore how UNCTAD can help coastal cities and the global community achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). UNCTAD important role in helping national, regional, and local governments and efforts to create dialogue, expand data collection, and identify lessons and best practices were emphasized.

152. UNCTAD, Global Seaweed Coalition, World Bank, Aquatic Blue Food Coalition, and the UN Global Compact organised a side event at the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development. The event entitled “How seaweed contributes to achieving each of the goals under review”³³ aimed to explore the uses, potential, and mainstreaming of seaweed. Participants issued a collective call to create an international and properly funded centre of excellence dedicated to the development of the seaweed sector’ that will require further support. UNCTAD, UN Compact and the World Bank could jointly house such a centre.

153. To support the implementation of appropriate policies and legislation to reduce plastics pollution and promote circular systems in East and West Africa, UNCTAD partnered with the Environmental Coalition on Standards (ECOS) to evaluate the status of the policy and legislative framework of plastic products, including circularity, biodegradability and compostability, as well as accompanying standards. This included an examination of regulations adopted to guide market agents in the sustainable use of biodegradables and compostable plastics and alternative materials in the global South. The findings were captured in a report designed to guide higher environmental ambition in plastics,³⁴ including biodegradation and compostability. This report was subsequently used as the basis for a 2-day regional workshop³⁵ in Nairobi. The workshop presented the report’s findings to national stakeholders and fostered enhanced collaboration on plastic-related standards and policies. It convened National Standards Bodies (NSBs), Environmental Regulators from Kenya, Nigeria and Ghana, and other key stakeholders, providing a platform for in-depth discussions and coordination. This workshop provided

³⁰ <https://unctad.org/meeting/workshop-global-problem-plastic-waste>.

³¹ <https://unctad.org/meeting/special-session-illicit-trade-and-waste-environmental-challenges-and-trade-solutions>.

³² <https://unctad.org/meeting/webinar-towards-sustainable-ocean-economy-what-role-cities>.

³³ <https://unctad.org/meeting/side-event-un-high-level-political-forum-2024-how-seaweed-contributes-achieving-each-goals>.

³⁴ <https://unctad.org/system/files/non-official-document/plastic-reduction-and-management-summary-of-recommendations.pdf>.

³⁵ <https://unctad.org/meeting/workshop-policies-and-standards-plastic-reduction-and-management-east-and-west-africa>.

guidance to the eventual East Africa Single Use Plastics (SUP) Bill, being appraised by the regional parliament in early 2025.

154. At the Waste is Wealth Conference 2024 on “Accelerating Sustainable Initiatives for a Greener Future”, UNCTAD led a session entitled “Thinking outside the sink: Driving sustainable pollution-control strategies through trade”,³⁶ exploring how trade and regional incentives can drive the adoption of technologies and services for sustainable organic waste management and value addition. This session showcased best practices, with concrete examples from the SMEP programme highlighting international cooperation and providing practical solutions to common challenges. This session explored the role of trade and regional incentives in promoting circularity in various organic cycles in East Africa, addressing gaps in inputs and markets, enhancing South-South collaboration, and encouraging policy development and environmental compliance.

155. The Government of Fiji, together with UNCTAD and UNDP, organized a *national symposium*³⁷ to take stock of the current initiatives, and to help better align national plastic pollution prevention priorities to global and regional commitments as a follow-up to a series of discussions and events which resulted in a policy action plan. This includes the development of a strategic blueprint for a national plastics prevention plan as part of Fiji’s larger green structural transformation ambitions. This conference aims to understand what the voice of the Pacific is, especially Fiji, in the plastic puzzle at the national, regional and international levels as well as in the ongoing debates and discussions surrounding the then upcoming INC5.

156. As part of its annual International Consumer Protection Forum for Latin America, UNCTAD presented the main findings of a review of parameters and requirements³⁸ for an effective consumer label on plastics and plastics alternatives (to be published in 2025), addressing the need for transparent and informative labelling. The review highlights the importance of labelling in promoting transparency, regulatory compliance, and consumer protection. It showcases harmonized labelling practices that reduce business complexities and prevent disruptions caused by labelling discrepancies, empowering consumers to make informed and sustainable choices.

157. During COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan, UNCTAD co-hosted, with UNEP, a session *exploring trade policy solutions*³⁹ to decarbonise textile value chains, addressing both new and second-hand garments, and how governments are responding to the fast fashion trend with policies aimed at reducing environmental harm while promoting sustainable development in this industry. In preparation for this session, UNCTAD, through the SMEP programme, released a policy brief on “Second Hand Clothes Markets in the United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda”.⁴⁰

158. UNCTAD organized a pre-event to INC5 in Busan entitled “Trade implications of a new global plastics treaty”.⁴¹ Because trade, while a significant contributor to plastic pollution, can also be wielded to bolster plastic action efforts across borders. This event explored the role of trade policy in a future global plastic treaty. This informal side event gathered negotiators, the private sector and civil society leaders to discuss specific trade policy opportunities in support of the Instrument being negotiated. In addition, this event marked the launch of UNCTADstats new database⁴² tracking international trade in non-plastic substitutes, to which contributions were supported by SMEP. Several studies and policy briefs and tools were also prepared for this event, through the SMEP programme including: (a) Plastic reduction and management summary of recommendations: A deep dive into policies and standards, including on biodegradation and compostability, to support

³⁶ <https://unctad.org/meeting/thinking-outside-sink-driving-sustainable-organic-pollution-control-strategies-through>.

³⁷ <https://unctad.org/meeting/unctad-undp-fiji-national-symposium-plastic-pollution-prevention>

³⁸ <https://unctad.org/meeting/fourteenth-international-consumer-protection-forum-latin-america>

³⁹ <https://unctad.org/meeting/cop29-trade-and-investment-house-event-decarbonizing-global-textile-value-chains-trade>

⁴⁰ https://unctad.org/system/files/non-official-document/-smep-shc_19-11-2024-2-2.pdf

⁴¹ <https://unctad.org/meeting/inc-5-pre-event-trade-implications-new-global-plastics-treaty>

⁴² <https://unctadstat.unctad.org/datacentre/dataviewer/US.NonPlasticSubstsTradeByPartner>

National Management Authorities in East and West Africa⁴³; (b) Plastics management and recycling amid global governance change⁴⁴; (c) Opportunities for plastic substitution in critical sectors of developing economies⁴⁵; and (d) Gravity filters reducing plastics and CO₂ footprint of potable water delivery.⁴⁶

159. UNCTAD co-hosted a webinar with UN Habitat, and Global Cities Hub on “Enhancing local-global dialogue for sustainable water and solid waste management in urban areas – implications for trade and cities development”⁴⁷ looking at a transformative approach, involving a shift from unsustainable consumption and production patterns towards a circular economy across the various fractions of solid waste and water management. The event looked at how fostering cooperation with local and regional governments (LRGs) can play a critical role in supporting cities to achieve water and solid waste management and material recovery goals that contribute to local socioeconomic development and align with global sustainability objectives (SDG 6, 11, 12 and 14).

160. Through its Sustainable Manufacturing and Environmental Pollution Programme, UNCTAD published a SMEP technical brief⁴⁸ that highlights the connection between energy poverty and e-mobility, the challenges associated with the use of LAB vehicles and how these compare to lithium-ion batteries, as well as critical minerals in the battery value chain. This technical brief used data from the SMEP technical assistance project on used lead-acid batteries in Bangladesh.

161. UNCTAD, through its Sustainable Manufacturing and Environmental Pollution Programme, developed a toolkit based on the successful and widely cited the Ellen MacArthur Foundation butterfly diagram,⁴⁹ providing a visual representation of the circular economy. The new SMEP butterfly diagram tool helps users to map the various SMEP projects onto the diagram, giving a better understanding of how the various SMEP projects fit into and contribute to the circular economy. This tool maps the SMEP programme onto a visual representation of the circular economy, allowing users to pinpoint which project contributes to the area of work they are interested in and therefore identifying who they can interact with in the SMEP portfolio, encouraging understanding and linkages to promote uptake of the innovative solutions supported by the programme.

162. **Results and impact.** In 2024, 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 (52 events).

163. Such technical assistance and cooperation has: (a) increased awareness and understanding of environmental, socioeconomic impacts and opportunities 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, biodiversity and other nature-based economic sectors, supporting the development of sustainable and climate resilient regional value chains, and addressing plastic pollution through the development of material substitution and biodegradation options; (c) supported policy harmonization in East Africa through a single-use plastic bill being considered at the East Africa Legislative Assembly; (d) equipped INC plastics negotiations with plastic trade data, and information on non-plastic substitutes which became part of negotiating text; and (e) served as a dissemination tool of key

⁴³ <https://unctad.org/system/files/non-official-document/plastic-reduction-and-management-summary-of-recommendations.pdf>

⁴⁴ <https://smepprogramme.org/resources-1/plastics-management-and-recycling-amid-global-governance-change/>

⁴⁵ <https://unctad.org/system/files/information-document/plastic-substitution-in-critical-sectors.pdf>

⁴⁶ <https://unctad.org/system/files/information-document/gravity-filters-reducing-plastics-usage-in-water-delivery-smep-2024.pdf>

⁴⁷ <https://unctad.org/meeting/webinar-enhancing-local-global-dialogue-sustainable-water-and-solid-waste-management-urban>

⁴⁸ https://unctad.org/system/files/non-official-document/%5B_SMEP_%5D_ULABs_26-03-2024.pdf

⁴⁹ <https://unctad.org/news/organic-residues-sustainable-solution-plastic-pollution-and-development>

UNCTAD findings and policy recommendations with positive feedback from all stakeholders.

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>
INT/OT/1BN	Capacity Building in Investment Promotion	2001–	Multi-donors
INT/OT/H CJ2	Strategic Partnership the Netherlands – (linked with THCE04)	2023–	Kingdom of the Netherlands
ROA-2427 (16B)	Attracting Finance and Investment for the Energy Transition in Africa	2024–	Development Account

164. **Development context.** Foreign direct investment (FDI) is a critical source of finance and technology 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.

165. **Objectives and features.** UNCTAD work on investment promotion and facilitation 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). The work on investment promotion and facilitation directly contributes to SDGs 9 (Industry, innovation and infrastructure) and 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

166. **Outputs.** The main outputs of the programme in 2024 are detailed below.

Publications

167. *The Sustainability Practices of Special Economic Zones.* Issue 15 of the IPA Observer series offers an overview of sustainability practices of special economic zones (SEZs). This issue is based on a 2024 survey of the 50 SEZs identified by the SDG Model Zone Partners initiative launched by the Global Alliance of Special Economic Zones (GASEZ).

Workshops, seminars and conferences

168. UNCTAD and the Seychelles Investment Board (SIB) organized a stakeholder meeting on attracting finance and investment for the energy transition on 1 August 2024, in Victoria, Seychelles. The meeting was attended by 55 participants, including 23 women, representing policy makers, regulatory agencies, private sector, development finance and technical assistance providers. It served as a platform for key players in Seychelles' energy transition to align national initiatives, international support, and private sector participation. The meeting received highly positive feedback, with most participants rating it favourably across evaluation criteria. Eight-seven per cent of participants considered the meeting 'highly useful' for their work, and the organization of the meeting was rated as 'excellent.'

169. UNCTAD and the Ethiopia Investment Commission (EIC) organized a stakeholder meeting on attracting finance and investment for the energy transition on 15 August 2024, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The meeting helped stakeholders to identify the opportunities and challenges for investment and institutional cooperation to accelerate the energy transition in Ethiopia. It was attended by 61 participants, including 14 women, representing policymakers, regulatory agencies, the private sector, and development finance and technical assistance providers. All participants (100 per cent) rated the stakeholder meeting highly for its relevance and usefulness to their respective contribution and activities on energy transition.

170. UNCTAD and the Tanzania Investment Centre (TIC) organized a stakeholder meeting on attracting finance and investment for the energy transition on 19 September 2024. The meeting aimed to assess the current landscape and gather stakeholders' perspectives on key issues affecting the financing and investments of Tanzania's energy transition. A total of 39 participants, including 13 women, attended the meeting, representing the private and public sectors, finance providers and development partners engaged in Tanzania's energy transition. Through panel discussions and focused group sessions, participants identified opportunities and challenges in building an enabling environment for investment in renewable energy, as well as the role of development finance and institutional investors in supporting the energy transition. Over 80 per cent of participants endorsed the relevance and effectiveness of the meeting.

171. UNCTAD and the Malawi Investment and Trade Centre (MITC) organized a stakeholder meeting on attracting finance and investment for the energy transition on 24 September 2024 in Lilongwe, Malawi. The meeting facilitated consultations on key policies, challenges and opportunities for finance and investment to support the energy transition in Malawi. The meeting was attended by 56 participants, including 17 women, representing policymakers, regulatory agencies, the private sector, the development finance and technical assistance providers. A post-workshop survey showed that 94 per cent of participants rated the meeting as highly relevant to their work.

172. UNCTAD and the Namibia Investment Promotion and Development Board (NIPDB) organized a stakeholder meeting on attracting finance and investment for the energy transition on 30 October 2024, in Namibia. The meeting aimed to identify key challenges and opportunities for international investment to support Namibia's energy transition plans. The meeting was attended by 57 participants, including 25 women, representing policymakers, regulatory agencies, the private sector, and development finance and technical assistance providers. Participants surveyed rated the stakeholder meeting highly across all evaluation criteria. Ninety-five per cent of respondents found the meeting to be "highly useful" or "somewhat useful" for their work.

173. As part of the Enhanced Integrated Framework — Capacity-development programme for IPAs of LDCs, the annual one-week training workshop for investment promotion officials from developing countries took place in May 2024. Hosted by the ITC-ILO Training Centre, the workshop was organized by a consortium of UN agencies (ILO, UNCTAD, UNIDO) and international organizations (IFC, OECD, and WAIPA). It brought together 21 participants (12 women) from 15 developing countries, including four LDCs and four SIDS. UNCTAD staff delivered in-person training from 27 to 28 May 2024, focusing on mainstreaming SDGs in investment promotion and facilitation, with a dedicated session on promoting and facilitating investment in the energy transition. This session addressed SDGs 7, 13, and 17 and was based on the findings and recommendations of the World Investment Report 2023: Investing in Sustainable Energy for All (WIR 2023).

174. In May 2024, UNCTAD delivered a training workshop for investment promotion stakeholders as part of a two-day event combining a Master Class and a Forum for investment promotion officials responsible for investor aftercare. Organized by Cities & Collaboration and hosted by Invest in Tuscany, the event took place in Florence, Italy, and brought together 57 participants (24 women) from 22 countries across Europe, Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean. On 29 May 2024, UNCTAD conducted a one-day Aftercare Masterclass, focusing on investor aftercare through the lens of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs. The following day, during the Aftercare Forum, UNCTAD moderated morning sessions on key topics, including the impact of the current geopolitical situation on the

international business landscape and its implications for aftercare; the impact of environmental, social and governance (ESG) regulations, such as the European carbon border adjustment mechanism (CBAM), on investment and supply chains; and the role of aftercare professionals in the implementation of the WTO Investment Facilitation Agreement.

175. The third GASEZ Annual Conference took place on 8 September 2024 in Xiamen, China. Representatives from the seven founding members of the SEZ associations and UNCTAD were present. Four hundred stakeholders from the international SEZ community representing countries across Asia, Africa, Europe and Latin America attended the event. Their participation reaffirmed their support for the alliance and contributed to its future work agenda. A matchmaking session between Chinese exporting companies and international SEZs was organized, together with a study tour of SEZs in China.

176. Following the publication of the Investment Policy Review (IPR) for the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), UNCTAD, in cooperation with the WAEMU Commission, organized capacity building for investment facilitation and promotion, aimed at supporting the implementation of the IPR recommendations. As part of this effort, a training workshop took place in Casablanca and Tangier from 11 to 13 November 2024. The workshop brought together 30 participants (15 women, 15 men) from 10 countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Togo – WAEMU Member States – Mauritania and Morocco). The three-day workshop provided an opportunity to exchange knowledge and good practices, while promoting a collaborative and innovative approach to strengthening an investment-conducive environment within the WAEMU region.

Advisory services

177. A new UNCTAD investment promotion and facilitation subsite⁵⁰ was launched, designed for IPA professionals, policymakers, and other investment stakeholders. The platform features comprehensive information on UNCTAD activities and projects aimed at supporting countries in promoting and facilitating international investment for sustainable development. It also includes training materials, such as videos, and showcases best practices through the United Nations Investment Promotion Awards.

178. Market briefs on investment potential in the energy transition for Ethiopia, Malawi, Namibia, Seychelles, and the United Republic of Tanzania were developed, alongside training materials based on the WIR 2023. These resources informed stakeholder consultation meetings held in each country during the reporting period. The research and consultation process will culminate in strategy papers and action plans to assist IPAs in each country in promoting and facilitating investment and finance for the energy transition.

179. **Results and impact.** In 2024, investment promotion and facilitation training, seminars, and conferences – both in person and online – attracted 376 participants from 50 countries, including IPA officials, policymakers, and other stakeholders. Of those, 38 per cent (143) were women.

180. As part of the Development Account project on “Attracting Finance and Investment for the Energy Transition in Africa”, a total of 59 bilateral online meetings were organized with key stakeholders in each of the five beneficiary countries (Ethiopia, Malawi, Namibia, Seychelles and Tanzania). The project will support these countries to devise strategies to attract finance and investment for energy transition. Stakeholders’ reactions to the project activities and UNCTAD work on investment promotion and facilitation in 2024:

(a) “...this event [stakeholder meeting on attracting finance and investment for the energy transition] ha[s] provide[d] us with valuable insights, crucial for the execution of the program...making the workshop a meaningful and productive experience.” Chief Executive Officer, Seychelles Investment Board, 9 August 2024.

⁵⁰ See <https://unctad.org/topic/investment/investment-promotion-and-facilitation> (formerly at sustainableFDI.org).

(b) “Insightful workshop today on Ethiopia’s Green Energy Transition...We learned about: Ethiopia’s ambitious renewable energy targets; Government incentives for green investment and EIC’s role in sustainable project facilitation.” Head of the Ethiopia Investment Board Representation to Ethiopia and the African Union, 19 August 2024, Linked In.

(c) “We would like to express our sincere gratitude for organizing this insightful workshop on investment facilitation policies. This platform for exchange and dialogue between Mauritania, Morocco and WAEMU member countries proved to be a valuable opportunity for mutual learning and the exploration of highly relevant best practices. Beyond the knowledge gained, the workshop fostered collective reflection on mechanisms to create a truly investment-friendly environment. It also deepened our understanding of shared challenges and opportunities.” Head of Project Sponsor Support Service, Moroccan Agency for Investment and Export Development, 2024.

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 – (linked with THCE04)	2023–	Kingdom of the Netherlands
RAS/0T/EAY2	ASEAN Investment Report 2024–2026	2024–	ASEAN Secretariat
<i>Division on International Trade and Commodities</i>			
INT/0T/IBM	United Nations Forum on Sustainability Standards fourth flagship report on voluntary sustainable standards	2020–	Switzerland
ROA-2427 (C16)	Harnessing trade policy and transport and logistics to build sustainable and resilient food supply chains in the Caribbean and the Arab region.	2024–	Development Account
<i>Division on Technology and Logistics</i>			
INT/0T/7CB	Special Trust Fund for Activities Related to the Commission on Science and Technology for Development’s Twenty-year WSIS Review	2007–	Multi-donors
INT/0T/KAL	CropWatch Innovative Cooperation Programme	2021–	Aerospace Information Research Institute Chinese Academy of Sciences
INT/0T/MAA	STI Capacity Building Programs on Female Researchers and Entrepreneurs to Promote Bio-Circular-Green Economic (BCG) Model	2023–2024	Thailand Science Research and

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
			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
VEN/OT/MAW	Venezuela Project 2023 CAF-UNCTAD	2023–	Corporacion Andina de Fomento - CAF
ROA-2124 (E13)	Mobilizing resources for a Green New Deal: partnerships in Asia for a decade of action in the era of Coronavirus	2021–	Development Account
ROA-2427(M16)	Regional Integration and Industrial Policy for Transformational Change and Resilience in Latin America	2024–	Development Account
<i>Programme Support and Management Service</i>			
INT/OT/0BU	Support to UNCTAD Technical Cooperation	2000–	Belgium

1. Trade and creative economy

181. **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 2024 shows that in 2022, creative goods and services represented approximately 2.9 and 19.3 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. In 2022, global exports of creative services reached a record US\$1.4 trillion, nearly double the value of creative goods exports at US\$713 billion, underlining the growing dominance of creative services in global trade. Developed countries accounted for about 80 per cent of creative services exports, although the share from developing economies has doubled since 2010. The creative economy generates jobs, innovation and trade, while contributing to social inclusion and cultural diversity.

182. 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.

183. 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.

184. 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”.

185. **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.

186. 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.

187. 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 key unique selling points. The data was last updated in 2024. However, data needs to be interpreted, analysed and used to inform decision-making at both the policy and practical levels.

188. 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.

189. **Outputs.** As a leading agency in the implementation of the United Nations resolution on the creative economy, UNCTAD assisted member States in 2024 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.

190. UNCTAD Division on International Trade and Commodities co-organized an online workshop with UNCTAD Regional Office for Africa and the Ministry of Culture and Sport of Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia⁵¹ on 20–21 June 2024, which provided participants with a comprehensive understanding of the creative economy. The main objectives of the workshop were to increase awareness and knowledge among public sector stakeholders about global trends and impacts of creative industries, enhance their ability to identify and assess key creative industries, and build capacities to formulate and implement strategies and policies to promote creative industries. Specifically, the workshop aimed at enhancing the capacity of Ethiopia’s government institutions to facilitate the growth of creative industries and leverage the country’s rich creativity and culture-based traditions. Participants included officials from Ethiopia’s government institutions, representatives from its creative industries, and other private sector participants.

⁵¹ <https://unctad.org/meeting/workshop-harnessing-creative-economy-ethiopias-sustainable-development>

191. UNCTAD participated in the APEC Tourism Working Group on the role of Creative Economies in the future of tourism within the region. Through UNCTAD experience gained globally, it was possible to draw upon experience that may have an impact upon the region. Focus was given to the role of gender equality and that of inclusiveness to help disadvantaged groups as well as support adaption to climate resilience. The output of this technical assistance was a document detailing best practices from around the world from different perspectives.

192. UNCTAD 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. UNESCO and UNCTAD are co-leading a sub-group for the classification of 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.

193. UNCTAD also delivered a keynote address at the 3rd Egypt Business Solutions Summit held on 25 November 2024 in Cairo. UNCTAD provided a global overview of its work on the creative economy, including the mapping exercise it recently completed for Angola. UNCTAD advised that, subject to funding, it was ready and able to provide similar technical assistance in helping Egypt map its creative economy.

194. UNCTAD published and disseminated a number of key publications, most notably the Creative Economy Outlook 2024⁵², which was presented over 10 global and regional events. One such event was the high-level World Conference on Creative Economy⁵³ (WCCE) held in Uzbekistan in October, where the UNCTAD Secretary-General was present. This report drew on contributions across the team and external experts and reflected the most up-to-date policy discussions, sustainability concerns, and global trade data. Two additional publications—K-Content Goes Global⁵⁴ and Advancing the measurement of the creative economy⁵⁵—further expanded the knowledge base and visibility.

195. The findings of these reports were discussed at UNCTAD's Multi-year Expert Meeting (MYEM) on Trade in Services which focused on creative services and brought together experts from national governments on the culture and creative economy worldwide.

196. 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.

197. **Results and impact.** UNCTAD technical cooperation on trade and the creative economy in 2024 strengthened the capacity of developing countries to leverage creative sectors for inclusive growth, economic diversification, and sustainable development. Through tailored advisory services, high-level policy engagement, and demand-driven events, UNCTAD helped integrate creative economy strategies into broader national development and trade agendas.

198. In 2024, the work undertaken under the Creative Economy Programme enhanced evidence-based policymaking by expanding the statistical framework for measuring creative industries, supporting dialogue on creative services trade, and building capacities through regional and global platforms. Policymakers from over 40 developing countries benefited directly from UNCTAD interventions via technical cooperation projects, including capacity-building workshops and participation in expert meetings such as the Multi-year Expert Meeting on Trade, Services and Development.

⁵² <https://unctad.org/publication/creative-economy-outlook-2024>

⁵³ <https://www.wcce.uz/en/programs>

⁵⁴ https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ditctsce2023d3_en.pdf

⁵⁵ <https://unctad.org/publication/advancing-measurement-creative-economy-revised-framework-creative-industries-and-trade>

199. Numerous stakeholders acknowledged the value and relevance of UNCTAD work. As noted by the Department of Trade and Industry of the Philippines: “Your insights would be invaluable in achieving our goal to establish the Philippines as the premier Creative Hub in Southeast Asia by 2030.”

200. UNCTAD support also elevated the discourse on creative trade at major international fora. At the World Conference on Creative Economy 2024, attended by participants from 85 countries, the Secretariat’s contributions were acknowledged as having “left a lasting impact... inspiring fellow attendees and broadening our collective vision”.

201. Furthermore, participation in regional initiatives such as the Egypt Business Solutions Summit underscored the ability of UNCTAD to link creativity, sustainability, and innovation. As the organisers affirmed: “(UNCTAD experts) level of expertise, knowledge, and charismatic stage presence were truly admired by many.”

202. Continued UNCTAD leadership in this field has positioned the organization as a global reference for data, policy guidance, and intergovernmental dialogue on the creative economy. Its interventions have catalysed inter-agency collaboration and South–South cooperation, while reinforcing the role of creative sectors in advancing the 2030 Agenda.

2. Voluntary sustainability standards

203. **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) which 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.

204. **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.

205. **Outputs.** Within the framework of the United Nations Forum on Sustainability Standards, supported by UNCTAD, the following activities were implemented in 2024:

206. Under the leadership of UNCTAD and with the support of the UN agencies composing UNFSS, as well as several members of the Academic Advisory Council (AAC), the sixth UN VSS report titled “*The future of sustainable trade: Due diligence initiatives, voluntary sustainability standards and developing countries*”⁵⁶ was published in December

⁵⁶ <https://unctad.org/publication/future-sustainable-trade>

2024. The report builds on some of the ideas discussed at the AAC meeting held at the European University Institute (EUI) in Florence in October 2023, where discussions gravitated around the implementation of due diligence requirements, and concerns about the potential role of VSS in these developments, as well as the impact on developing countries. Besides addressing these points, the report maps the regulatory landscape, draws lessons from VSS, assesses impacts on producers, and offers recommendations for inclusive trade governance. It highlights the need for harmonization, support for vulnerable actors, fair value distribution, and stakeholder participation under the realm of global sustainability governance, exploring consequences for developing countries and sustainable trade at large:

(a) UNCTAD organized a two-day hybrid workshop on “Advancing private-public partnerships to mainstream biodiversity conservation and sustainable use in Voluntary Sustainability Standards”⁵⁷ in partnership with the South Africa’s Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) in Pretoria. Held on the 19th and 20th of August, this workshop delved deeper into the connections between VSS and the UNCTAD BioTrade principles and criteria (P&C), especially in the South African context and in the light of a Charter envisioned by the DFFE to establish a public-private partnership model for effectively implementing sustainability standards across biodiversity value chains. It aimed at bringing together various stakeholders to share knowledge, explore partnerships, and develop concrete strategies for mainstreaming VSS while supporting the implementation of the Charter and other relevant national initiatives. The workshop was organized with the support of the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) of Switzerland. The outputs and recommendations from the workshop will be considered and further explored for the new trade and biodiversity programme under UNCTAD.

(b) On 15 and 16 August 2024, UNCTAD, jointly with the APEC secretariat, held “The 15th APEC Sub-Committee on Standards and Conformance’s Conference on Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS)”⁵⁸ in Lima, Peru. The meeting aimed at advancing the APEC member economies’ understanding of VSS, including related opportunities and challenges of their implementation as well as how VSS could promote cooperation mechanisms among APEC member economies when VSS are based on science and follow internationally agreed methodologies. Additionally, the program included interventions from invited VSS representatives who contributed with first-hand experience to the objectives of the meeting. The conference also explored how VSS can be integrated into the sustainability strategies of APEC economies and how members can enhance compliance in supply chains and traceability within a broader macroeconomic and social context.

(c) 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 Colombia, the Caribbean, Indonesia, Malaysia, South Africa, and Viet Nam. The National Platform and Initiative Cooperation Network (NPICN) met virtually on the 6th of November 2024. The meeting 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 of Brazil, China and India also shared ongoing initiatives and activities, including the re-convening of network’s meetings, collaboration opportunities and next steps.

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

(i) Graduate Institute – Guest Seminar on “VSS in International Trade”, 3 May 2024;

⁵⁷ <https://unctad.org/meeting/workshop-advancing-private-public-partnerships-mainstream-biodiversity-conservation-and>

⁵⁸ <https://unctad.org/meeting/15th-apec-sub-committee-standards-and-conformances-conference-voluntary-sustainability>

- (ii) Steering Committee meetings for UNFSS, 23 April and 6 December 2024;
- (iii) Global Supply Chain Forum 2024 summit in Barbados, session on 22 May, “One Caribbean: A strategy to tackle food insecurity. Focus on sustainable freight logistics and trade” as part of the DA project “Harnessing trade policy and transport and logistics to build sustainable and resilient food supply chains in the Caribbean and the Arab region”;
- (iv) Panel participation at the International Seed Federation – 5 November 2024.

207. **Results and impact.** 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 two workshops held in Pretoria and Lima, as well as the NPICN meeting 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.
- (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 6th VSS biannual report, published in 2024, and the organization of the next 5th AAC meeting in March 2025 pave the way for a stronger stakeholder network. 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. The 5th AAC meeting is, for the first time, including VSS representatives together with NPICN members, fostering an even more inclusive and enriching environment and discussions. 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*

208. **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 work in this area is reaffirmed in its mandate, the 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.” (TD/519/Add.2). More recently, the Bridgetown Covenant calls on UNCTAD to “continue to provide statistics, analytical work and technical assistance to developing countries, to promote structural transformation” (TD/541/Add.2).

209. **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.

210. **Outputs.** In 2024, 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.

211. In 2024, 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 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the IMF Balance of Payments Committee. UNCTAD involvement included contributing to the finalization of the update of Sixth Edition of the IMF Balance of Payments and International Investment Position Manual (BPM6) and the fourth edition of the OECD's Benchmark Definition of Foreign Direct Investment.

212. UNCTAD provided technical assistance to Angola to improve collection of FDI statistics and activities on multinational enterprises. This initiative also aimed to raise awareness of internationally accepted standards and guidelines for FDI data compilation, as outlined in the IMF Balance of Payments and International Investment Positions Manual, seventh edition (BPM7) and the OECD's Benchmark Definition of FDI, fifth edition (BD5).

213. **Results.** According to the UNCTADstat data centre, in 2024, the FDI tables were the most visited section on the UNCTAD website, accounting for more than one-tenth (12.2 per cent) of all page views.

214. UNCTAD also received positive feedback from countries and regional groupings that benefitted from its assistance. For example, the Director of the Statistics Department at the Central Bank of Angola (BNA) highlighted, "On behalf of the BNA, particularly the Department of Statistics, we would like to express our thanks for such important webinar, full of essential information for understanding trends, collection and processing, as well as the developments and updates of the FDI methodological manuals. It was, in fact, a good, formative and informative session for those present, as it strengthened the foundations and consolidated the methodological bases of our technical staff involved not only in the compilation of FDI statistics, but also the analysis of related matters."

3.2. *Technical assistance on ASEAN Investment Report series*

215. **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. Additionally, UNCTAD has supported ASEAN in implementing an investment work programme in relation to the ASEAN Economic Community 2025 Blueprint and the ASEAN Comprehensive Investment Agreement.

216. **Objectives and features.** The AIR series presents an analysis 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.

217. **Outputs.** The "ASEAN Investment Report 2024: ASEAN Economic Community 2025 and Foreign Direct Investment" was released as the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) 2025 Blueprint nears its final year. The report provides an in-depth analysis of the

ASEAN investment landscape over the past decade, examines the relationship between the ASEAN Economic Community 2025 programme and FDI development, and highlights key areas to improve intra-ASEAN investment. Additionally, gender issues were reflected in different parts of the report, which was in line with the original outline agreed with the ASEAN Secretariat and the donor. The report was launched at the ASEAN Business and Investment Summit on 9 October 2024, Vientiane, the Lao People's Democratic Republic. The summit was attended by more than 800 people, primarily from businesses, industry and policymakers.

218. In preparation of the report, UNCTAD collaborated with the ASEAN Coordinating Committee on Investment, the ASEAN Secretariat and the ASEAN Business Councils. Two capacity-building events were organized in partnership with the ASEAN Secretariat and the Australia for ASEAN Futures, namely the UNCTAD-ASEAN Consultative Forum (involving Business Councils of ASEAN Dialogue Partners and ASEAN policymakers) and the AIR 2024 Policy Implementation Workshop.

219. The ASEAN Consultative Forum, held from 3 to 4 July 2024 in Bangkok, brought together more than 70 experts and representatives, approximately 65 per cent of whom were women. The AIR 2024 Policy Implementation Workshop: Strengthening Regional Connectivity and FDI Ecosystem, held on 10 October 2024 in Vientiane, was attended by ASEAN policymakers, with over 60 per cent of participants being women.

220. **Results.** The report provided inputs to the ASEAN post-2025 Agenda through its review of progress made in the ASEAN region on investment policies and investment attraction during 2015–2024 (the economic planning cycle of ASEAN). The report served as a background document for discussion among ASEAN Ministers at the ASEAN Investment Area-ASEAN Economic Minister Meeting on 16 September 2024 in Vientiane, Lao PDR. The Ministerial Meeting was attended by all 10 ASEAN member States and Timor Leste.

221. The AIR 2024 was well received by the ASEAN Ministers and other stakeholders. The Secretary General of ASEAN thanked “UNCTAD for the relentless assistance extended to ASEAN in producing the annual ASEAN Investment Report series.... [the] AIR 2024 is a valuable report and the recommendations are immensely useful. I urge ASEAN officials to utilise the report as a key reference document in their work”.

3.3 *World Investment Report series*

222. **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 (WIR) 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.

223. **Objectives and features.** The 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.

224. **Outputs.** *The World Investment Report 2024: Investment Facilitation and Digital Government* underscores the importance of investment facilitation and digital government as tools to attract and retain investment. The report takes stock of progress in the implementation of digital business and investment facilitation worldwide; and looks at the challenges, opportunities and policy priorities for its effective implementation. It also examines how it connects with wider digital government strategies to promote good governance and institutional robustness, to create a more transparent, efficient and investor-friendly environment, and to accelerate economic development. The increasing wave of digital government initiatives now makes up a significant share of national investment policy measures monitored by UNCTAD; modern international investment agreements also increasingly encourage digitalization to implement commitments.

225. The Report shows that the number of digital facilitation tools has significantly increased in recent years, and their quality has improved. The report reveals that digital investment facilitation has positive effects on governance and institutions, business creation and investment attraction. Much of the sustainable development impact occurs through business facilitation, which contributes to the formalization of local firms, domestic resource mobilization and higher rates of inclusivity and participation in the MSME sector, including women. For example, the report examines the experiences of several African countries, including Burundi, Kenya, Benin, Mali, and Togo, in particular, their efforts in connecting digital tools for investment promotion and facilitation, including non-traditional areas such as pharmaceuticals and special economic zones (SEZs).

226. By streamlining procedures, enhancing transparency and leveraging digital tools such as online single windows we can foster a more conducive investment climate, particularly in developing countries. Furthermore, the report emphasizes that digital business and investment facilitation is not merely a technical solution, it is a stepping stone towards wider digital government implementation, which can address underlying weaknesses in governance and institutions that often hinder investment and impede progress towards sustainable development. Investment facilitation, while essential, is not a panacea for the challenges facing global investment flows. However, it is an undeniable prerequisite for fostering an environment conducive to sustainable investment. The proliferation of digital solutions for investment facilitation, as highlighted in this report, exemplifies the WIR's commitment to providing tangible and actionable policy recommendations even in the most challenging of times.

227. The Report was released on 20 June 2024. To facilitate global media coverage, four press releases were prepared and translated into official United Nations languages. A video was also produced and translated into eight languages, alongside blogs and opinion pieces. Additionally, numerous events were organized to disseminate the findings of the WIR. These included a presentation in Bahrain, during the WAIPA Regional meeting, and the Luohan Academy Annual Digital Economy Conference. Furthermore, a special session was organized at the Academy of International Business (AIB) annual conference, focusing on forward-looking research ideas and solutions for UNCTAD policy-oriented research to inform member States.

228. **Results.** By the end of 2024, the *World Investment Report 2024* (WIR24), including overview, factsheets, data, and statistics and chapters were downloaded almost 124,000 times. During the first month of the release of the report, 1,229 outlets covered 1,895 stories

in 34 languages. Social media through UNCTAD and UN account reached 410,000 people, and the website attracted some 46,000 views.

229. In 2024, the General Assembly adopted a resolution on promoting investment for sustainable development (A/RES/79/198). The resolution highlights the “policy proposals put forward in the WIR 2024, in particular that the international community should support developing countries, especially in Africa and LDCs, including through the deployment of business facilitation and digital government tools and the promotion of institutional investment to support long-term economic growth, and calls upon the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development to work in collaboration with multiple stakeholders to help developing countries to avail themselves of these recommendations.” Furthermore, it requests UNCTAD to “to inform the General Assembly at its eightieth 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.”

230. During the fourteenth session of the Investment, Enterprise and Development Commission, regional groups and delegates discussed the theme of WIR24 and had the opportunity to actively contribute to the debate and build consensus on key outcomes and recommendations. As such, UNCTAD proactively integrated the intergovernmental process with its research and technical assistance mandate.

231. At the seventy-first session of the Trade and Development Board, regional groups and delegates expressed appreciation for the topicality of the WIR24, 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 importance of digital investment facilitation tools in streamlining procedures, enhancing transparency and leveraging digital tools such as online single windows to create a more conducive investment climate, particularly in developing countries.

232. Positive feedback on WIR24 received during the seventy-first session of the Trade and Development Board in September 2024:

(a) “We commend the focus on digital investment facilitation in WIR24, particularly the role of digital government tools in improving transparency and attracting FDI. We encourage continuous efforts to enhance these tools, as they are vital for inclusive development and for supporting small and medium-sized enterprises in developing countries.” Statement by Cambodia (on behalf of the Group 77 and China).

(b) “We appreciate the analysis conducted before the UN’s global investment report and the insightful analysis on the transformative role of business facilitation and digital Government solutions to attract investment to developing regions. We recognize the growing importance of these digital tools as essential components for development, especially for Africa, as shown by experience highlighted in the report on several African countries.” Statement by the Niger (on behalf of the African Group).

(c) “The group welcomes the thematic focus of the report on investment facilitation and digital government, recognizing the critical importance for enhancing economic growth and sustainable development across the region. The report underscores how digital tools and streamlined administrative procedures can improve the investment climate, making it easier for businesses to operate and thrive. By promoting transparency and efficiency, these measures not only attract foreign direct investment but also support the growth and formalization of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises which are vital to the economic fabric of our region.” Statement by Bangladesh (on behalf of the Asia-Pacific Group).

4. Macroeconomic and development policies

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

233. **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.

234. **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.

235. 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.

236. **Outputs.** Implementation of the project started in 2021, and all the initially planned activities had been completed by 2024. The main outputs delivered before 2024 include (a) several policy papers, which provide overall analysis of the project country's economy and propose policy recommendations on economic diversification and enhancing South-South economic cooperation; (b) 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; (c) two promotional films themed on South-South Cooperation, which was launched in Bangkok during the UN Global South-South Development Expo and in Geneva jointly with G77 and China; and (d) an in-person workshop in Barbados on "Promoting Sustained Recovery through Economic Diversification".

237. In 2024, UNCTAD organized the planned seminar on South-South economic cooperation on 21 January in Kampala, Uganda. The seminar was also held as an official side event of the Third South Summit. There were around 100 participants and high-level speakers of the Seminar including the President of Uganda, Secretary-General of UNCTAD, and over 20 ministers and heads of international organizations. The seminar focused on enhancing economic resilience through broader South-South economic cooperation, including the policy areas of trade, investment, industrial and finance.

238. In 2024, UNCTAD project team completed the project-related report titled “Policy Strategies Report on Promoting Economic Diversification and Resilience of Barbados”. The report was submitted to the Government of Barbados.

239. **Results and impact.** The project had completed all planned activities by 2024 with two key results. First, through policy research and capacity-building events, the project assisted policy makers and researchers in Barbados to enhance the understanding of the binding constraints of the country’s economic growth and the policy strategies of improving diversification and resilience. Second, through various outputs (promotion and communication materials, high-level seminars), the project significantly contributed to the policy dialogue among top policy makers on the role of South-South cooperation in building economic diversification and resilience.

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

240. **Development context.** The dual challenge for developing countries of advancing their development strategies while also responding to climate change adaptation and mitigation requirements and wider environmental crises has been recognised by successive UN Climate Change Conferences. Limitations to developing countries’ ability to strengthen their economic resilience and implement structural economic change were highlighted by the Covid-19 pandemic that brought into sharp focus their limited fiscal spaces, exposure to liquidity shortages, capital flight vulnerabilities, supply chain disruptions and recurrent debt distress. Since then, a largely volatile international trade and financial environment has done little to allow developing countries to navigate this dual challenge effectively, including to further “integrate adaptation into local, national and regional planning” based on support in identifying and addressing both current and emerging capacity-building gaps (e.g. COP 26 outcome). While many Asian economies have been at the forefront of economic development over recent decades, achieving substantive progress in terms of economic growth, industrialisation and structural change, integrating this progress with meeting new greening and environmental requirements remains a challenge, in terms of both resource mobilisation and adjustments to institutional capabilities at the requisite scale, including at the regional level.

241. 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. A pioneering effort in this regard has been made by China. Following the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement, China launched its transformative growth agenda to achieve High-Quality Development (HQD). Under the HQD framework for innovative, coordinated, green, open and shared development, China has effectively formulated integrated development strategies across several policy areas, including public spending, financial regulation, trade, investment and industrial and STI policies. China’s experience therefore provides a useful starting point for South-South peer learning in the region to help promote integrated national strategies for green transformation as well as to further regional cooperation in this regard.

242. **Objectives and features.** The project, funded by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Sub-Fund of the UN Peace and Development Trust Fund, aims to assist selected beneficiary countries in Asia (Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Pakistan and Türkiye) in their efforts to reach the SDGs and green transformation through two channels: 1) enhance national capacities to formulate integrated policy strategies including through South-South peer learning; 2) facilitate regional cooperation in project-related areas including through establishing an Asian Green Development Partnership Network (AGDPN).

243. The project is organised in three consecutive phases: The first phase focuses on south-south policy experience sharing through conducting project related research on China’s policy framework in strengthening economic resilience and promoting High Quality Development since 2015 and through facilitating policy dialogue on this experience with participating beneficiary countries (regional conference). The second phase of the project centres on research and capacity-building to improve the understanding of binding constraints on green transformation processes in the beneficiary countries and facilitate the

development and design of integrated national policy strategies to respond to these challenges as well as identified opportunities. To this purpose, UNCTAD identified core sectoral and policy issues of particular relevance to each project country and oversaw tailored inputs to support these discussions and promote south-south peer-learning and experience sharing at the regional level. The final phase builds on project outputs at national levels to facilitate leveraging regional policy synergies and furthering regional cooperation for green transformation agendas, including through the planned launch of an Asian Green Development Partnership Network (AGDPN). In addition, insights and learning outcomes from national as well as regional-level discussions will be shared with policymakers from participating countries through an online course hosted by UNCTAD.

244. **Outputs and results.** During 2024, work with local partner organisation on the identification and discussion of challenges (binding constraints) and opportunities in their countries were finalised. Further, 2-day national consultation meetings (in Malaysia and Kazakhstan) were successfully implemented with high-level participation from Vice-ministers, heads of relevant government departments and offices, private sector and State-Owned Enterprise (SOE) representatives as well as representatives from civil society and academia. The consultations benefited from the presentation of sectoral and thematically specific research papers prepared for this purpose in close cooperation with local researchers and experts. Both meetings generated considerable interest, including in the national press, and participants provided strongly positive feedback on the usefulness and organisation of the meetings. Overall, 23 research papers (including for two national consultations that had taken place in 2022 and 2023) were finalised for publication as technical project documents. Building on this work, further research on 4 country-specific integrated policy strategy proposals was initiated and developed to inform the final round of national consultations on this topic in the first half of 2025. The national consultations in Malaysia and Kazakhstan also prepared the ground for the launch of the AGDPN in 2025 through sessions aimed at presenting ideas and scenarios for the network and gathering participant feedback on the network ideas. Finally, substantive progress was made in the planning and design of the online course, scheduled to run in August/September 2025.

4.3. *Sustainable export diversification strategies in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela: A product space analysis*

245. **Development context.** The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has a long history of dependence on commodity exports, centred mainly on oil. The volatility of commodity prices influences fundamental aspects of the country's economic management, generating short-term macroeconomic stabilization, affecting poverty and inequality, and making more difficult reaching economic diversification and structural transformation to attenuate commodity dependence. Since 1999, Venezuela has successfully addressed social challenges and also embarked on attempts to address diversification and structural transformation through its policies to promote the 18 drivers of productive development.

246. However, commodity dependence and the volatility and fluctuations in commodity prices keep impacting the growth trajectory of the country, not only through variations of terms of trade and changes in the distribution of national income, but also through impacts on the economic structure. Rising commodity prices create incentives for investment in commodities and non-tradable sectors. These are characterized by a lack of linkages with the rest of the economy and low productivity growth. Structural transformation risks therefore to be neglected in favour of achieving more tangible and immediate objectives.

247. This situation opens space to undertake rethinking of Venezuela's long-term strategy for economic development and to focus in particular on export diversification. Paradoxically, the diminishing role of the oil sector under the current economic embargo also provides an opportunity to accelerate efforts in this regard. Furthermore, given the economic embargo on the public sector, export diversification in close collaboration with the private sector must clearly be the central axis of any such strategy.

248. **Objectives and features.** The key purpose of the project is to define a sustainable export diversification strategy for Venezuela and to propose an industrial policy package to support the identified products and processes. In more detail, the goals of the project are: (i) to increase exports of those goods currently exported only with limited shares, or add

new products; (ii) to move into processing (and away from natural resources) and generate employment; (iii) to upgrade production and generate foreign exchange; and (iv) to develop industries with strong linkages to the rest of the economy and strengthen national value chains.

249. In order to reach its objectives, the project will employ both product space analysis using trade data and micro-econometric technics based on micro data and firm surveys aiming at identifying clusters of products particularly promising for diversifying the export and production structure and progressively increasing value addition while generating employment. The results of the empirical analysis will be validated through policy workshops and discussions with public and private counterparts.

250. **Outputs.** The first phase of the project – the preparation of a macroeconomic report on product spaces for the selection and prioritization of new export product groups – was completed in July 2024 as per schedule. The workshop to present the results and findings to the Development Bank of Latin America - CAF and the Venezuelan government was held on 9 December 2024 in Caracas. The workshop was very successful, and project results were also presented at the 25th Global Forum on Special Economic Zones, held in Caracas on 12 December 2024. A final validation meeting with government representatives and the CAF was held online, as part of the project requirements, on 20 December 2024.

251. Work on the second phase of the project – the preparation of a report on structural change in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela based on geospatial and industrial micro (company-level) data – has also been initiated and preliminary results were also presented at the Caracas workshop.

252. **Results and impact.** The activities of the project deployed to date allowed the identification of a number of clusters of products that could facilitate export diversification in Venezuela. The workshop held in December 2024 raised awareness of the importance of diversifying the export and production structure. The reactions of government representatives after the event revealed an increasing interest in the project and in its policy recommendations.

4.4. *Mobilizing resources for a Green New Deal: partnerships in Asia for a decade of action in the era of Coronavirus*

253. **Development context.** The SDGs set out an ambitious agenda for a more sustainable and equitable future, but no road map. Governments, financial institutions and private enterprise continue to need informative and evidence-based analysis on strategies and policies to address climate change and support transformative change that will bring more sustainable and inclusive economic production, consumption and trade. This is particularly important in the Asia-Pacific region, which is central to any successful efforts to address climate change and to achieve development goals. Some countries are already experiencing negative impacts of climate change; some are experimenting with innovative new policies.

254. **Objectives and features.** The project “Mobilizing resources for a Green New Deal: partnerships in Asia for a Decade of Action in the era of coronavirus” focuses on how to scale up and direct finance and technical resources for climate-aligned development and structural transformation in Asia and the Pacific, through the interlinking use of financial, trade and industrial policies. It 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, the project expects 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, through the kind of approach sometimes described as a Green New Deal, over the next 10 years. Whether or not this precise term is used, the approach aims to bring together the full range of macroeconomic, trade and industrial policies as well as regulation and redistribution to support a just transition and transformation. Secondly, at the regional level, the project expects to enhance cooperation between countries and regional financial institutions (especially public and development banks), to support regional policies to help finance and

implement the Sustainable Development Goals by means of a green new deal, over the next 10 years.

255. **Outputs.** During 2024, UNCTAD finalised project research on strategies that countries are using to scale up finance and direct it to transformative investments. These included a study of the potential for EV battery assembly or production and a shift to sustainable textiles production in Sri Lanka; and finalisation of a study of the impacts on trade and employment through a gendered lens, of structural transformation in the diverse economies of Viet Nam, Korea and Fiji; as well as continued analysis and identification of examples of how public and development banks can scale up and direct finance at affordable cost to greening and sustainability investments.

256. Project related Research and policy findings were shared at national and international events including a workshop in the Pacific, where the project supported demonstration efforts on how SIDS can shift to sustainable substitutes for plastics for national and export uses; and a regional meeting with policymakers, delegates and academics in Bangkok in collaboration with UNESCAP.

257. Moreover, the project continued its support to the rapidly growing network of senior financial officials and institutions hosted by the Finance in Common Summit; continued contributions and support to inter-governmental negotiations regarding a global treaty to address plastic pollution, including at the WTO and UNEP; and participated in OECD guidance on the sustainable oceans economy. Research findings also contributed to UNCTAD expert meetings and to the *Trade and Development Report*.

258. **Results and impact.** The work continues to help fill important gaps in knowledge. At the request of the Government of Fiji, UNCTAD supported sharing of knowledge on financing and industrial policy approaches to produce and export sustainable substitutes for plastic, as well as providing information and support on trends and policies to delegates from Pacific islands and low-income countries participating in the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution. In Sri Lanka, the research and consensus building activities under the project helped identify major obstacles and opportunities in financing and implementing shifts to greener productive processes in the textiles and electric batteries sectors. With the support of the Government of Indonesia, the project facilitated south-south sharing of experiences and policy learnings on green industrial transformation among various stakeholders, including leading financial institutions, policymakers and the private sector. An UNESCAP/UNCTAD workshop shared national and regional policy essentials on financing and implementing the Green Transition and contributed to the UNESCAP High-Level Regional Consultation on Financing for Development in Asia and the Pacific in preparation for the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development.

4.5. *Regional Integration and Industrial Policy for Transformational Change and Resilience in Latin America*

259. **Development context.** The impact of climate change will be more devastating in Latin America than in most parts of the world and will influence the region's ability to trade. Precipitation patterns are shifting, temperatures are rising, and some areas are experiencing changes in the frequency and severity of weather extremes such as floods and droughts. The global push toward decarbonization also has important implications for the region's trade prospects, bringing about both challenges and opportunities. On the one hand, several oil producers, such as Colombia, face uncertainty as the demand for fossil fuels is expected to drop in the medium to long term. On the other hand, several Latin American countries are poised to benefit from their large endowment of minerals that are essential to the production of low carbon technologies and from the enormous potential in renewable energy generation. However, even for countries abundant in so-called "minerals of the future", and/or renewable energy potential, the long-term outlook is still dominated by high levels of uncertainty and risks of technological disruption.

260. Each Latin American country has different comparative strengths, from a variety of (complementary) critical minerals that are spread across the region (e.g., Colombia) to manufacturing capacity (e.g., Brazil) and renewable energy potential (e.g., Mexico) as well

as proximity to important trade routes (e.g., Honduras and Dominican Republic). If appropriate resources and policy tools are used and coordinated, all these assets can be part of a plan to develop an efficient regional industrial ecosystem around low carbon technologies.

261. The design and implementation of such a plan, however, hinges on overcoming several challenges, especially on the political and technical design front. Although several countries are showing increasingly high ambitions, launching several green economy plans, and recently signed agreements promise major implications for the shift to more sustainable trade, regional governments and their international trade and investment partners need to take bolder steps that are appropriate to the significant opportunities and challenges for the future of Latin American trade.

262. **Objectives and features.** The project “Regional Integration and Industrial Policy for Transformational Change and Resilience in Latin America” funded by the United Nations Development Account will fill these gaps by providing background analysis and policy capacity building to accompany national and subnational governments of beneficiary countries in a deeper and more effective, and coordinated, implementation of their policies and agendas in this area. The main objective of the project is to strengthen the design of industrial policy and economic and productive integration between selected economies in Latin America, improve coordination on industrial and trade policy, and ultimately contribute to structural transformation, economic recovery and inequality reduction in the continent. The project will have positive impacts across many economic sectors, including energy and agriculture, carbon emissions trading, manufacturing as related to electromobility and bioeconomy.

263. In order to reach its objective, the project will employ a sequential approach aiming first at establishing a common vision on the productive green transformation of the region and a consensus on the primacy of RVCs to achieve green transformation, and later at building capacity to design and implement the needed industrial policy at the domestic and regional level. Its progressive implementation has been thought to guarantee consistency across target countries between vision and policy strategies to harness FDI and trade for structural transformation and development. The ambition is going beyond a simple increase of intra-regional trade and FDI flows and granting that these flows would feed in a common development strategy at the regional level. This is a significant novelty of the project with respect to past endeavours.

264. **Outputs and results.** Implementation of the project started in July 2024. After informal consultations with the Governments of the target countries (i.e. Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Honduras and Mexico) and their respective missions in Geneva, a series of background studies has been commissioned to international and regional consultants to examine the most promising opportunities to build and strengthen green RVCs between the target economies and propose a package of supporting policy measures. These studies focus on critical minerals value chains, regional coordination for energy matrix transition (renewable energies value chains), electric buses value chain, and green industrial policy coordination. They will help establish a common vision on the productive green transformation of the region and a consensus on the primacy of RVCs to achieve green transformation. An additional study on the use of input/output tables to improve industrial policy making has also been commissioned. The study aims in particular at supporting actions and instruments to improve or foster green transformation, environmentally friendly technologies, electromobility related sector and digital transformation.

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*

265. **Development context.** Technology assessment is a well-established interdisciplinary field for assessing the opportunities and risks created by developing and adopting new technologies. A technology assessment (TA) can catalyse 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. It is a forward-looking tool of STI policy that helps to prepare a country for the implications of technological advances so that they can take appropriate action to harness benefits and manage risks. 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. Few developing countries have consolidated capacities in place for undertaking TA. Outside of health, technology assessments are seldom conducted in most developing countries owing to a lack of capabilities and institutions for TA. Many developing countries have never undertaken a technology assessment, and certainly not a participatory TA. 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, which involves accessing and assimilating a new technology.

266. **Objectives.** The objective of the Development Account project on “Technology Assessment in the energy and agricultural sectors in Africa to accelerate progress on Science, Technology and Innovation” is to strengthen capacities of national Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) policymakers and other relevant stakeholders in three African countries (Seychelles, South Africa and Zambia) to assess the potential impacts of adopting new and emerging technologies in the energy and agricultural sectors. Capacity building included undertaking an assessment of the implications of a technology of high priority in terms of national interest that was relatively new to them. This would 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 aim to develop institutional capacities to continuously scan, monitor, and assess the impacts of technologies as part of forward-looking development strategies.

267. **Outputs.** The project began its implementation in three pilot countries (Seychelles, South Africa and Zambia) in 2021.

268. In 2024 the three TA reports were completed and validated, and draft plans of action were prepared. The Zambia TA report was validated and a draft plan of action prepared and discussed at workshops in Lusaka held during 13-16 February 2024. The Seychelles TA report and draft action plan, along with the Seychelles STI Policy Review, were discussed at workshops in Mahé held during 5-8 March 2024. The South Africa pilot TA report and draft plan of action were discussed at workshops in Pretoria held during 25–27 June 2024. The TA reports for Zambia and Seychelles were discussed on April 2024 during the Annual Session of the UN Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD). The STI Policy Review of Seychelles was also presented and discussed during the CSTD Annual Session. There was a press launch event for the South Africa pilot TA report at a workshop organized on 3 December 2024 as a side event during the Science Forum South Africa, a major forum discussing STI policy issues hosted annually by South Africa.

269. Based on the lessons learned from the three countries’ experiences, UNCTAD revised and printed its methodology for technology assessment in developing countries in late 2024. The lessons learned from the project were discussed at an international workshop UNCTAD held in Geneva on 23 October 2024, and the outcomes and results of the project were disseminated as well.

270. **Results and impact.** The project successfully completed pilot technology assessment processes of a specific technology selected by national stakeholders in each of the three participating countries. Each TA exercise was largely country-driven and executed by stakeholders in the country, with support from UNCTAD. The three assessments made a significant contribution to forward-looking and evidence-based policymaking, utilizing an inclusive process that engaged multiple stakeholders. It created an initial experience and some degree of capacity in the three countries that laid the groundwork for adopting an

anticipatory approach to technology governance in the three countries. The practical implementation of an assessment of a technology of interest to local stakeholders created a shared understanding among stakeholders on the potential implications of rapid technological change for STI policy and broader national development policies. There was a good level of success in establishing linkages among the three pilot countries to exchange experiences, which is useful for mutual learning in the future.

271. The assessment in Zambia generated strong interest from national stakeholders in scaling up the adoption of biogas. Based on the findings and recommendations of the assessment report, the Ministry of Energy, which participated in the process alongside the focal point, the Ministry of Technology and Science, has indicated its intention to pursue policy measures to support biogas uptake. In particular, the Ministry of Energy plans to submit a proposal to the Ministry of Finance to introduce tax incentives for imported biodigester system components, in line with one of the key recommendations of the report. The project also facilitated inter-ministerial collaboration, particularly between the Ministry of Technology and Science and the Ministry of Energy. In Seychelles, the Ministry of Investment, Entrepreneurship and Industry expressed interest in following up to the TA exercise with actual implementation of pilot Agrivoltaics projects in Seychelles. The UNCTAD project also created interest from local researchers on the assessed technology new to the country. Following the completion of the assessment, two studies were conducted in August 2024 and February 2025 respectively by two authors from Seychelles on acceptance of Agrivoltaics on Mahé island.

272. The project has sparked interest among several other developing countries in understanding better TA and considering undertaking TA exercises. There was likewise interest expressed by the African Union Commission in diffusing TA as a policy tool more broadly within Africa as it is a goal of the recently adopted AU Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA) 2034. Several African countries are discussing to establish a network on TA in Africa. The project developed a bespoke methodology for undertaking TA in a developing country, and it was tested as a guidance during the assessments undertaken in the three countries. This methodology that UNCTAD updated based on the lessons learned from the project implementation could serve as a source of guidance for other developing countries that are new to TA and would like to undertake a TA within their domestic context.

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

273. **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 located 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. The project is funded by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Sub-Fund under the United Nations Peace and Development Trust Fund (UNPDF). 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.

274. **Objective.** The core objective of the project is to bolster the ecosystem surrounding STI parks in four beneficiary countries in Asia and Africa, including Ghana, Mongolia, Mozambique, and Uzbekistan. The project seeks to share 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.

275. **Outputs.** The project started implementation in 2023 with visits to the four beneficiary countries (Ghana, Mozambique, Uzbekistan and Mongolia) to identify key issues through engagement with a variety of national STI stakeholders. These stakeholders include government officials, university researchers, industry experts, representatives of STI parks and others integral to the STI ecosystem.

276. By the end of 2024, the project had made significant progress. Analysis reports based on literature review and country visits were prepared. The reports for Ghana, Mozambique and Uzbekistan had been published in English as of December 2024, with the Mongolia report published in April 2025. The Uzbekistan Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation has translated the English report into Uzbek language. These reports provide country-specific recommendations for addressing challenges facing these countries in STI Park development and identify their capacity building needs. The reports are crucial for tailoring the project's capacity-building programme to the specific contexts of the beneficiary countries. The project has also conducted two intensive training workshops in Wuhan and Shenzhen, China, in July and September 2024 respectively, with a total of 49 participants of whom 11 were female. An important outcome of each of these workshops was a concrete proposal collectively prepared by a country's participants for their own country's STI park development. Following the workshops in China, UNCTAD organized national training workshops in Uzbekistan and Mozambique, in November and December 2024 respectively. Besides two Chinese experts, experts from India and Thailand also shared their expertise at the workshops. These workshops provided opportunities for more participants from each of the stakeholder categories to gain practical knowledge and skills in designing and implementing STI park policies as well as in STI park operational management. Draft action plans tailored to their national contexts were developed at the workshops.

277. **Results and impact.** The understanding of stakeholders in the four countries regarding how to leverage STI parks as an instrument for national development has been enhanced. Participants in each workshop held in China found the training to be eye-opening, practical and insightful. They reported a noticeable increase in knowledge after the workshops, with 100 per cent of the participants indicating they had gained new insights. The reports prepared by UNCTAD were appreciated by the beneficiary countries. In Uzbekistan, the National Office for Innovation Implementation and Technology Transfer under the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Innovations has translated the English report into Uzbek language and presented it to the deputy minister in charge of Innovation. Uzbekistan has started implementing some recommendations from the report as well as the practices learned from the trainings. For example, it has undertaken a feasibility study on establishing a Matchmaking Online Platform to connect demand and supply for STI solutions, like the Hubei Sci-tech Innovation Supply Chain Platform in China. Uzbekistan has also discussed with other central Asian countries to establish and share such platform. The National Office's staff members were sent to do fact-checking of the regional STI parks with a view to developing ways to improve their performance. The Council for Science and Industrial Research in Ghana has designated an engineer to work on the creation of a similar Matchmaking online Platform. In Mongolia, the University of Mongolia has applied knowledge gained from the training workshop in China in improving the performance of its science park.

278. South-South cooperation has been strengthened. A Memorandum of Understanding has been signed between Uzbekistan's National Officer for Innovation Implementation and Technology Transfer and a professional Chinese STI park operator, with the aim of helping Uzbekistan promote its economic diversification and technological upgrading through STI parks. Following the national training workshop UNCTAD organized in Tashkent, the Singapore Management Development Institute in Tashkent, which operates an incubator, has been discussing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Thai Business Incubators and Science Parks Association (Thai-BISPA) led by the expert who shared the experience of Thailand at the workshop, to launch a co-acceleration programme. The MOU will be signed soon. Such cooperation contributes to the project's broader aim of fostering sustainable economic growth, high-tech industry development, and innovation-driven economies in the beneficiary 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*

279. **Development context.** The World Summit on the Information Society (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.

280. **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.

281. **Outputs.** In 2024, the secretariat supported the 27th Commission to review the follow-up of the implementation of Summit outcomes in April. 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 20-year implementation of the outcomes of the Summit (General Assembly resolution 70/125). As requested in the ECOSOC resolution (E/RES/2023/3), and building upon the first global multistakeholder open consultation on WSIS+20 held in October 2023 in Japan, the secretariat continued supporting the Commission's review of the WSIS+20 by presenting a preliminary note for discussion at the 27th CSTD in April 2024, and gathering inputs through regional multi-stakeholder open consultations, including the one held for the European region in June 2024 in Lithuania. These consultations were well attended, and participants actively shared their views and suggestions that constituted rich inputs. Close partnerships with the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), UNESCO and UNDP were established through joint consultations. The secretariat also participated in the High-Level WSIS+20 Forum organized by ITU and Switzerland in May 2024. Preparations of thematic discussions on WSIS and environment, e-government, digital economy, rights of women and rights of children were underway. Meanwhile the secretariat has started preparing its comprehensive report on the 20 years' implementation of the WSIS outcomes for discussion at the 28th CSTD in April 2025.

282. **Results.** The General Assembly in its resolution A/RES/79/194, and the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 2024/13, reaffirmed the role of the Commission in assisting the Council as the focal point in the system-wide follow-up, in particular the review and assessment of progress made in implementing Summit outcomes. 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. Further, the Council resolution (E/RES/2023/3) requested the Commission to collect inputs from various stakeholders and conduct substantive discussions on WSIS+20 at its annual sessions in 2024 and 2025, and to report thereon, through the Economic and Social Council, to the General Assembly. Such work has been strengthened due to the support of the Trust Fund.

5.4. *CropWatch Innovative Cooperation Programme*

283. **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.

284. **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 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 the increase in export of crops resulting from enhanced agricultural production thanks to crop monitoring.

285. **Outputs.** As of December 2024, 14 African countries and two Middle East countries had benefited from the training activities under this programme: Algeria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Mauritius, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Syria and Lebanon. In July 2024, a physical regional workshop for West African countries was held in Abuja, Nigeria. Twenty-eight participants from 8 countries (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal) of whom 12 were female attended the workshop and conducted field work on Nigerian farms. The regional workshop obtained a 100 per cent satisfaction rate from the participants. A regional centre of excellence was launched at the regional workshop. It will be hosted by the National Space Research and Development Agency of Nigeria, with support from the Aerospace Innovative Research Institute of China Academy of Science.

286. A 10-day on-the-job training on the use of CropWatch Cloud and the model calibration was provided to two Nigerian officers in Beijing, China in February 2024. They acquired advanced skills in using crop monitoring in Nigeria. Additionally, the officers were taught how to customize it to specific local requirements using high-resolution Nigeria and Chinese satellite data. Hence, Nigeria has its CropWatch Platform in the country and the trained officers are able to train local experts to use it. Nigeria now generates quarterly CropWatch bulletins which inform policymaking at national, provincial and local level agriculture departments, as well as farmers (including subsistence farmers). The bulletin preparation led by the National Space Research and Development Agency of Nigeria is undertaken with support from the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, Federal Ministry of Water Resources, Nigerian Meteorological Agency and others.

287. **Results and impact.** To its user countries, CropWatch has helped with access to real-time and reliable information on crop conditions across the country, guiding interventions such as targeted agricultural support, early warning systems, and emergency response plans, monitoring and assessing the impacts of drought on crops, and assessing crop production (based on the Normalized Difference Vegetation Index) compared to past seasons. In Nigeria, for example, the quality and transparency of the agricultural information the country releases have been improved. The quarterly-released bulletins inform policymakers at national, provincial and local levels as well as farmers, including subsistence farmers, and allow for precise monitoring, thus enabling timely interventions and better agricultural planning. Through bulletin preparations, inter-agency cooperation in ensuring food security of Nigeria has been strengthened. An expected result will be achieved through the West African Centre of Excellence, as collaboration among Western

African countries in ensuring food security nationally and regionally through Cropwatch will be increased.

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

288. **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) are central to achieving the sustainable development goals (SDGs) under the 2030 Agenda. Research capacity on STI is essential to a country's STI capacity and the 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 developing productive capacities in developing countries, significantly impacting economic growth. Moreover, female engagement in STI research is still limited, while closing this gender gap is necessary to harness STI for genuinely inclusive and sustainable development for all communities and all countries, which will also contribute to the achievement of gender equality and gender empowerment outlined 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. Given the success and high demand, these programmes have been extended, and the scope has expanded beyond Africa and Asia to Latin America and the Caribbean for five more years.

289. **Objective and features.** Both programmes aim to enhance scientific research capabilities in developing countries by contributing to building human capital in science, technology, and innovation-related fields in these countries and closing the gender gap in scientific research. The programmes feature joint cutting-edge research and advanced educational programmes. The research and education courses are designed and implemented such that the outcomes would contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through selected research areas and advanced study courses. The CSTD established, through this programme, a new mode of global collaborative and valuable research for the post-COVID-19 era.

290. **Outputs.** Twenty-seven young female scientists have participated in the programme since its inception. In 2024, the Young Female Scientist programme received two candidates from Botswana, one candidate from the Philippines and two candidates from South Africa. All had successfully completed their programme as of December 2024. They conducted cutting-edge research in seven scientific fields guided by researchers at Okayama University for 15-30 days. Under the Young Scientist Programme, researchers from Madagascar, Nigeria and the Philippines have pursued a 3-year doctoral degree, and the programme saw its first graduate from Nigeria receive his diploma in 2024. Participants from both programmes have diverse research areas, including medical and health, agricultural sciences, and engineering.

291. **Results and impact.** The participating young female scientists use the knowledge and skills they have acquired through their respective research under the guidance of researchers from Okayama University. Two scientists have already published joint work with their Okayama University professors, and several plans to continue research collaboration with Okayama University. The programme has also improved their access to research networks in their area of expertise.

5.6. *Harnessing Space Technological Applications in Sustainable Urban Development*

292. **Development context.** Many developing countries face serious impediments to harnessing science, technology, and innovation (STI) for sustainable development. Countries need STI tools to address sustainable development challenges, such as adequate early disaster warning and water quality monitoring and control, which depend on quality data. Such data will also help them improve their STI capacity and implement coherent and sustainable STI policies to make progress on SDGs, including SDG 6 on clean water and SDG 11 on sustainable cities. Geospatial technologies have recently gained much attention

as a potential solution to fill data gaps, improve data quality, and increase developing countries' SDG reporting rates. The project on "Harnessing Space Technological Applications in Sustainable Urban Development" responds to the need to further support STI experts in developing countries, particularly female scientists, in using geospatial technology (GST) as a catalyst for sustainable urban development and the SDGs. It focuses on the open-source and relatively new programming language, Julia, which is particularly suitable for geospatial analysis.

293. **Objectives and features.** The project assists STI experts, with particular attention to female scientists, in using geospatial technology to increase resilience to sustainable development challenges, such as natural disasters and access to safe water. It also builds the capacities of beneficiary STI experts to absorb, manipulate, interpret, and digitalize information to support policymaking and reporting on progress for the SDGs, particularly SDG 6 and SDG 11. It also aims to contribute to SDG 5 on gender equality in STI. It targets two developing countries, namely Brazil and South Africa.

294. **Outputs.** In 2024, the project delivered five key workshops aimed at strengthening geospatial analysis capabilities and promoting inclusive participation in science, technology, and innovation (STI). Three international workshops—two in-person and one virtual—gathered over 250 scientists and researchers, with at least half of the participants in each being women. These events featured experts from leading institutions such as MIT and Harvard University, as well as from national space agencies and organizations across Belgium, Brazil, Denmark, Poland, Portugal, South Africa, and the United States. In addition, two national hybrid workshops were held in Brazil and South Africa, each attracting over 100 participants from national institutions, policy-making bodies, the private sector, and other relevant stakeholders. More than half of the participants in Brazil were female, while South Africa achieved gender parity. Although nationally focused, these workshops addressed diverse and region-specific challenges within each country, given their geographic size and socio-economic complexity. In addition, an advanced online training workshop was conducted remotely with around 30 participants, offering targeted technical capacity-building.

295. **Results and impact.** The project succeeded in enhancing participants' abilities to absorb, manipulate, interpret, and digitalize geospatial data to support monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)—particularly SDG 6 (clean water and sanitation), SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities), and SDG 5 (gender equality in STI). Notably, the project specifically selected and sponsored female participants from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (LAMCE/COPPE) in Brazil, and from South Africa's Space Agency (SANSA) and utility company Eskom Holdings SOC Ltd. These women are now emerging leaders and active contributors in the global open-source Julia community, historically composed of experts from developed countries.

II. Theme B: Tackling vulnerabilities, building resilience

296. Poor people or countries 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.

297. 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.

298. In this section, five products under the theme “Tackling vulnerabilities, building resilience” are reported on⁵⁹. The reports highlight the main technical cooperation activities carried out in 2024 and key results to date. Technical cooperation projects that are pertinent to the aforementioned theme but not linked with any of the existing five 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

299. **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 Sao Tome and Principe in December 2024, only eight countries have graduated from the LDC category in the more than five decades of its existence (since 1971). In the pipeline to graduation are Bangladesh (2026); Lao People’s Democratic Republic (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 were 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.

300. **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 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 to support sustainable graduation, industrial policies and other supportive strategies to support structural economic transformation and specific national thematic studies), policy dialogue with national policymakers and advisory missions.

⁵⁹ There was no activity in 2024 under product “UNCTAD Contribution to the Enhanced Integrated Framework”.

Outputs

Supporting structural economic progress towards and beyond graduation from least developed country status

301. With the funding support of Development Account, UNCTAD is delivering a project on *Supporting structural economic progress towards and beyond graduation from least developed country status* by the pre-qualified African and Asian countries. From 15 to 16 October 2024, UNCTAD organized and delivered a National Validation Workshop of the Vulnerability Profile of the Comoros and the Study of the Impact of the AfCFTA on the Prospects of Structural Transformation of the Comoros. The event discussed the findings of the Vulnerability Profile prepared by UNCTAD and of the impact study prepared by the Economic Commission for Africa. It was very interactive, with participants making questions and remarks on all sessions and engaging decisively in discussions. The workshop was attended by 65 participants from the government, private sector, civil society, and academia, including 18 women.

302. Seven ministers attended the opening ceremony, including the counterpart minister of the collaboration between UNCTAD and the Comoros, the Ministry for the Economy, Industry, Investment, in Charge of Economic Integration. Overall, participants' feedback praised UNCTAD for pertinent and well-organized discussions. The majority of participants considered the discussions directly relevant to their work. Workshop deliberations culminated in developing a series of recommendations, which will be consolidated into a brief workshop outcome document.

303. In addition, UNCTAD pursued the development of training material on industrial policy and advanced in the development of the industrial policy profiles of Cambodia, Comoros, Djibouti, Senegal and Zambia.

Other technical assistance in 2024 to LDCs facing the challenge of graduation from LDC status

304. *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, UNCTAD produced the flagship publication, *The Least Developed Countries Report 2024 – Leveraging carbon markets for sustainable development*,⁶⁰ which was launched ahead of COP29.

305. UNCTAD actively participated at the 2024 Plenary Session of the Committee for Development Policy (CDP) held in New York. UNCTAD has contributed through its preparation of the Vulnerability Profiles of the countries declared pre-eligible in 2021 (Cambodia, Comoros, Djibouti, Senegal and Zambia) and through its contribution to the writing of the corresponding Graduation Assessments.

306. UNCTAD participated in the “Online workshop: Ensuring a smooth transition for Senegal after graduation from the LDC category – experiences of other graduating and graduated countries” on 10 December 2024. UNCTAD made a presentation showing its support to Senegal concerning its graduation process ever since the inception mission to the country undertaken in 2022 in preparation of the Vulnerability Profile of Senegal. This has been followed by intense interaction between ALDC and the Senegalese authorities. The event was organized by the secretariat of the Committee for Development Policy (DESA) and had the participation of senior policymakers from previously graduated or graduating countries (Bangladesh, Cabo Verde, Maldives) and other international organizations.

307. UNCTAD also actively participated in discussions at the Committee for Development Policy (CDP) meeting of the Subgroup of LDCs on 6 December 2024. Discussions centred on changes to graduation procedures and graduation deferment. UNCTAD provided a summary of the comments on the document prepared by the CDP Secretariat and provided substantive feedback and suggestions to the CDP Secretariat.

⁶⁰ <https://unctad.org/publication/least-developed-countries-report-2024>.

308. **Results and impact.** The demand for UNCTAD technical support continues to rise compared to extrabudgetary resources allocated for the activities. The rising demand from Member States, UN system-wide 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
DJI/0T/KAK	Projet de Gestion Économique et de Développement Statistique pour la prise de Décision	2022–	World Bank
EQG/0T/IBI	SYGADE project Equatorial Guinea	2022–	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–	Agence Française de Développement
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/MBC	Renforcement des capacités de gestion de la dette en Mauritanie	2024–	Mauritania
MOL/0T/EAF	DMFAS 6 implementation in Moldova	2016–	Republic of Moldova
NER/0T/JAG	Mise en œuvre du SYGADE 6 renforcement des capacités de gestion dette Niger	2023–	African Development Bank
PAK/0T/MBK	Supporting Debt Management/ Transparency-Support Public Debt Management Pakistan	2024–	Asian Development Bank
PSE/0T/KBD	DMFAS Project in Palestine	2022–	State of Palestine
UGA/0T/GBC	Strengthening Integrated Debt Management Uganda	2019–	Uganda
UZB/0T/NBI	Strengthening Uzbekistan debt management office in the use of DMFAS 6 and	2024–	Asian Development

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
	interfacing DMFAS with DMBAT		Bank
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/2AO2	EU Contribution to DMFAS 2022–24	2022–	European Union
INT/0T/HCB	Strengthening Debt Management in selected Low- and Middle- Income Countries	2018–	Switzerland

309. **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.

310. 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 to attain long-term debt sustainability and reducing the risk of debt distress. Furthermore, the United Nations General Assembly⁶¹ 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”.

311. In 2024, 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 recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

312. 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.

313. Despite the growing importance of effective debt management, many developing countries still struggled with the capacity to manage their debt efficiently. Faced with increasingly complex debt portfolios, significant weaknesses in legal and institutional frameworks, staffing, skills and systems undermined the ability of countries to manage public debt.

314. In 2024, the priority continued to be maintaining capacity to ensure that comprehensive, accurate timely information on public debt is available in support of policy decisions and risk management.

315. In response to countries’ needs, in 2024, the Programme provided continuous support and guidance on ensuring the accuracy and completeness of public debt records and comprehensive and timely reporting, closing the strategic period 2020–2024.

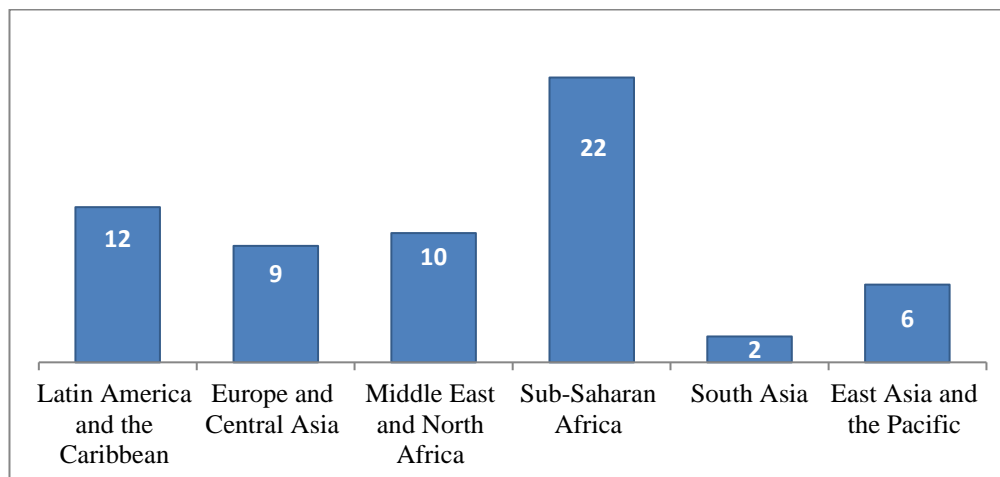
316. **Objectives and features.** The DMFAS Programme is a leading provider of technical cooperation and advisory services in the area of debt management. It offers a set

⁶¹ United Nations General Assembly Resolution 79/197 on external debt sustainability and development, adopted on 19 December 2024.

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 (figure 1).

Figure 1

Geographical distribution of active DMFAS users, 2024



317. **Outputs.** In 2024, the DMFAS Programme continued to provide effective support to the 61 countries actively using its software.

318. The Programme delivered country-specific technical assistance and trained 492 debt officers, of which 47 per cent were women, from 15 countries through 62 capacity-building activities in the field or remotely. Remote support included support through its help desk, which responded to 493 requests during the reporting period. During the year, the Programme managed 14 active technical assistance projects and signed five new projects.

319. 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 2024, 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 also is 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.

320. **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:

(a) 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.

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

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

(d) 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 2024, 73 per cent of DMFAS clients participating in the World Bank Quarterly External Debt Statistics database reported on a timely basis.

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

(f) 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 strategic plan for an additional year, which ended in December 2024.

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
INT/0T/4AY2	Research Project on Cumulation	2024–	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

321. **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.

322. 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.

323. 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.

324. **Objectives and features.** The main objectives of UNCTAD 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.

325. 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.

326. 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

327. UNCTAD collaborated closely with the European University Institute (EUI) in Florence, Italy to organize and deliver the executive training for the benefit of LDC Group members at the WTO. The EUI has previously signed an MoU with UNCTAD and is one of the UNCTAD Centers of Excellence.

328. The LDC Trust Fund has been utilized in 2024 to support the capacity building and training of the LDC Group members at the World Trade Organization (WTO), especially on rules of origin. To this end, UNCTAD delivered Executive training workshops on rules of origin for LDCs, held in November 2024 at the European University Institute in Florence. The *Executive round table on rules of origin: Rules of origin in a fractioned world trade*⁶² was held from 6 to 7 November 2024. Moreover, the *Executive meeting on negotiating and drafting rules of origin (RoO) for the LDC WTO group*⁶³ was held from 11 to 13 November 2024. 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.

329. Delegates from various organizations, including the World Trade Organization (WTO), World Customs Organization (WCO), and Asian Development Bank (ADB),

⁶² <https://unctad.org/meeting/executive-round-table-rules-origin-rules-origin-fractioned-world-trade>

⁶³ <https://unctad.org/meeting/executive-meeting-negotiating-and-drafting-rules-origin-roo-ldc-wto-group>.

participated in the workshop. Topics of discussion included the outcomes of reports from the general council and the 13th Ministerial Conference (MC13) on Rules of Origin, specific issues at both multilateral and regional levels, forthcoming LDC submissions, and unresolved issues from previous submissions.

Specialized databases on trade preference utilization

330. In 2024, 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 African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)⁶⁴. 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 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.

331. 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.^{65 66} “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. It contains data on utilization by product, top products imported from a beneficiary and utilization by country.

Project related research on cumulation

332. The overall objective of the study is to demonstrate the effective use of cumulation, best practices and lessons learned to facilitate compliance with rules of origin (RoO) by developing countries, particularly LDCs. It may also support a better understanding of how the present European Union and African Growth and Opportunities Act (AGOA) rules may be improved, as both administrations are reviewing their provisions on cumulation.

333. In 2024, in-depth project research on the use of cumulation by LDCs under preferential trade arrangements was carried out, addressing a critical evidence gap highlighted by the LDC WTO Group. The project research included a detailed mapping of the types and evolution of cumulation provisions granted by preference-giving countries, assessed through both qualitative and quantitative lenses. Applying an input-output methodology, it analysed tariffs, trade flows, and related data to identify concrete examples and emerging best practices. The findings are intended to inform future policy discussions and highlight potential value chains where cumulation could serve as a catalyst for expanded trading opportunities in LDCs.

334. **Results and impact.** As a result of UNCTAD 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

⁶⁴ <https://afcfta.unctad.org>.

⁶⁵ <https://gsp.unctad.org/home>.

⁶⁶ The database covers imports by QUAD countries, namely Canada, European Union, Japan and the USA, from their GSP beneficiaries and DFQF arrangements.

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>
INT/0T/9AX	Global Commodity Forum	2009–	Group of sponsors

335. **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.

336. **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:

- (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.

337. 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.

338. **Outputs.** In February 2024, UNCTAD signed an MOU with SENAI-PE⁶⁷ 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 jointly conducted in 2024 a *study on economic diversification of the industrial park in the port of SUAPE in Recife*⁶⁸. As part of the study, the first workshop was held to collect data on the feasibility of production. Participants provided insights based on criteria such as production processes, infrastructure, sustainability, innovation, and potential cross-industry uses. They also assessed the availability of capital and human resources, helping to prioritize products that could enhance the Port of Suape's productive capacity.

⁶⁷ SENAI Pernambuco (Serviço Nacional de Aprendizagem Industrial - Pernambuco) is a regional branch of Brazil's National Industrial Apprenticeship Service, a public-private entity that focuses on industrial development through technical education, professional training, and innovation.

⁶⁸ <https://unctad.org/project/study-economic-complexity-suape-industrial-complex-pernambuco-brazil>.

339. The economic complexity study⁶⁹ identifies 141 new products across six sectors that could diversify Suape's industrial base. These products present an export opportunity of US\$141 billion, with an investment requirement of US\$ 2.24 billion and the potential to create 19,000 jobs. The study highlights Suape's capacity to increase GDP by 3.14 per cent and promote sustainable growth through strategic investments in key sectors, such as machinery, chemicals, and electrical equipment. The study also emphasizes the importance of prioritizing products that align with global demand and local capabilities to improve Suape's competitive edge while considering sustainability and local employment. Additionally, it outlines potential barriers to sector expansion and offers a macro-level investment strategy to address these challenges, providing a comprehensive roadmap for Suape's future growth as a vital industrial hub in the Northeast region. The methodology developed for this rapid assessment of diversification opportunities, based on the economic complexity framework, has broad applicability, and can be effectively adapted to other countries and contexts.

340. The findings of the project-related study as well as the implementation of the study were presented during a high-level session organized in partnership with SENAI and the Port of Suape in Geneva. The event counted with the participation of the Ambassador of Brazil to the WTO, the President of the Port of Suape and its Director of Industrial Development and Management. In addition, the event served as a platform to showcase the UNCTAD work on economic complexity and explored how similar studies on economic complexity can support commodity-dependent countries in identifying sectors for diversification, value addition, and export growth. UNCTAD engaged in several follow-up discussions with Brazilian authorities who showed interest in expanding the project to other regions of the country.

341. UNCTAD, with the support of its partners, held the 2024 Global Commodities Forum on 9 and 10 December at the Palais des Nations in Geneva. The Forum is a multi-stakeholder dialogue to jointly identify pragmatic solutions to development challenges in the commodity economy. It helps frame international policy debates on commodities and features developing countries' perspectives and experts. Under the theme of "Commodities amid the climate emergency: Sustainable trade and value addition", international experts from various fields examined the implications of climate action policies, including the energy transition, on value addition and trade prospects for commodity-dependent developing countries. Over two days, the Forum discussed the following topics: Adaptation to the energy transition in fossil fuel-dependent developing countries; Promoting natural fibres in the climate action agenda; Mandatory environmentally motivated standards and traceability: challenges and opportunities; Harnessing benefits from critical energy transition minerals. The outcomes of the Forum are summarized in "Key Takeaways from the Global Commodities Forum 2024", and it is available online.⁷⁰

342. **Results and impact.** The successful implementation of the economic complexity assessment in the Suape Industrial Port Complex served as a key reference and demonstration of impact, helping to catalyse interest and support for the development of a project funded by the Government of Japan on rapid assessment for value addition and economic diversification. The Suape experience showcased the practical applicability of the methodology in identifying sectoral opportunities for structural transformation, thereby reinforcing its relevance in other developing country contexts.

⁶⁹ https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/tcsditcinf2024d10_en.pdf.

⁷⁰ https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ditccominf2025d1_en.pdf.

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>
INT/9X/31Y	Introduction of multimodal transport and microcomputer software programmes	1993–	Multi-donors
INT/0T/MAH	Global Supply Chain Forum: Transport, logistics and trade facilitation for trade-driven development	2023–	Multi-donors
ROA-2124 (A13)	DESA - Joint Project on Financing	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
ROA-2427 (C16)	Harnessing trade policy and transport and logistics to build sustainable and resilient food supply chains in the Caribbean and the Arab region.	2024–	Development Account

343. **Development context.** The transport sector, including maritime transport, continued to face growing complexity and persistent uncertainty in 2023 and 2024, as challenges that have been reshaping the industry in recent years have intensified. Key contributing factors include heightened global economic uncertainties, geopolitical tensions and climate change impacts and more frequent supply chain disruptions to supply chains and their underlying transport networks and logistics. Disruptions at critical maritime chokepoints, such as the Red Sea, the Suez Canal, and the Panama Canal, further strained global supply chains, while the ongoing war in Ukraine continued to impact shipping activities in the Black Sea. Together, these factors are upending the overall operating landscape of transport and logistics, in particular maritime transport. The maritime transport operating environment including for shipping and ports is increasingly unpredictable and rapidly evolving, requiring sustainability and resilience-enabling strategies, coordinated policy responses, and increased investment to ensure the proper functioning of supply chains - particularly for developing economies, which are more vulnerable to maritime transport disruptions.

344. In 2023, global maritime trade experienced a 2.4 per cent growth, rebounding from the previous year's contraction. Growth was driven by the recovery in the world economy, as well as increased demand caused by vessel rerouting. Together, the war in Ukraine, the disruption in the Red Sea and the reduced water levels in the Panama Canal have caused maritime shipping and trade to shift onto longer routes. Average distances travelled per ton of cargo continued to expand in 2023, part of a trend that began about two decades ago. Total estimated ton-miles reached 62,037 billion in 2023, an increase of 4.2 per cent over 2022.

345. However, this recovery remains fragile. Projections for 2024 indicate a modest 2 per cent growth, driven by demand for bulk commodities like iron ore, coal, and grain, alongside containerized goods. Containerized trade, which saw a marginal increase of 0.3 per cent in 2023, is expected to rebound by 3.5 per cent in 2024, contingent upon the stabilization of supply chains and economy.

346. The repercussions of the above-mentioned disruptions are particularly critical for vulnerable economies. Small island developing States (SIDS) and least developed countries (LDCs) are disproportionately affected by rising shipping and transport costs. These increased costs could contribute to higher price levels for food and other essential goods, exacerbating existing economic challenges and undermining development efforts.

347. Addressing these pressing issues in transport and logistics, including shipping, ports and their hinterland connections, requires urgent action prioritizing enhanced resilience in the face of shocks and disruptive factors, greater sustainability, accelerated decarbonization efforts, and support for vulnerable economies.

348. **Objectives and features.** UNCTAD technical cooperation efforts aim to promote transport networks and logistics systems that are resilient, sustainable, and inclusive. Through research and analysis, intergovernmental dialogue, capacity-building, knowledge sharing, data-driven and evidence-based policy development, and multi-stakeholder collaboration, UNCTAD supports countries in particular LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, in strengthening their transport and logistics frameworks. These efforts enhance the ability of these countries to withstand disruptions, drive sustainable and inclusive economic growth, and improve global and regional trade efficiency.

349. In 2024, UNCTAD continued its research, policy analysis, and technical cooperation efforts in transport and logistics, reinforcing its role as a leading knowledge and technical partner for developing countries. The work focused on maritime transport (shipping, ports and their hinterland connections), transport and transit corridors, and cross-cutting issues such as sustainability, resilience, smart and technology-driven solutions, innovative finance and public-private partnerships (PPPs).

350. UNCTAD analytical work is built on rigorous, data-driven methodologies, providing timely insights into global maritime trade and transport trends. The *Review of Maritime Transport 2024*⁷¹ (RMT) offered in-depth assessments of developments affecting global maritime trade, the shipping fleet and maritime business, ports, freight rates, transport costs, and the relevant maritime transport regulatory frameworks. Additionally, RMT 2024 assessed the implications of the latest disruptions to maritime shipping networks and global supply chains. Insights gained from the research and analytical work allowed UNCTAD to deliver bespoke and tailored advisory services and policy guidance in 2024, in response to requests for information and assistance received from various entities, including as regards the impacts on transport and trade of the continued disruption in the Black Sea and the new challenges faced by shipping in their transit patterns via the Panama Canal, the Red Sea and the Suez Canal. Advisory services also covered topical issues such as shipping decarbonization as well as sustainable and resilient freight transport.

351. 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), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA), the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNECLAC), the United Nations Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries, and Small Island Developing States (UNOHRLS), and the International Maritime Organization (IMO). In addition, UNCTAD collaborates with United Nations country teams and Resident Coordinator Offices, as well as regional organizations such as the African Union and the Indian Ocean Commission. Partnerships also extend to port associations, multilateral and development banks, including the African Development Bank, the Islamic Development Bank, and the Inter-American Development Bank, as well as multi-stakeholder organizations and programs such as SLOCAT⁷² and Sustainable Mobility for All (SuM4All).⁷³ By leveraging these partnerships, UNCTAD provides comprehensive and effective technical assistance in support of sustainable development in

⁷¹ <https://unctad.org/publication/review-maritime-transport-2024>.

⁷² SLOCAT is an international, multi-stakeholder partnership that powers systemic transformations and a just transition towards equitable, healthy, green and resilient transport and mobility systems for people and the planet. See: <https://slocat.net/>.

⁷³ Sustainable Mobility for All (SuM4ALL) is a platform for international cooperation on issues related to transport and sustainable mobility. It was established in 2017 and is hosted by the World Bank. See: <https://www.sum4all.org/>.

the transport and logistics sector. The gender dimension is also an integral part of UNCTAD transport and logistics analysis, technical assistance programme and activities, ensuring that gender-related issues are systematically incorporated into discussions, training sessions, and capacity-building initiatives, including through equitable participation.

352. **Outputs.** A key milestone in 2024 was the inaugural *UN Global Supply Chain Forum* (GSCF),⁷⁴ which was convened by UNCTAD, in collaboration with the Government of Barbados, in response to a call from the Prime Minister of Barbados at the closing of the UNCTAD XV Conference. With over 1,000 participants, the Forum brought together policymakers, industry leaders, representatives from international and regional organizations and associations, other key stakeholders, and experts from around the world to discuss and address challenges and opportunities in transport and logistics that are reshaping global supply chains. The Forum provided a unique global platform for knowledge exchange, collaboration and the development of innovative strategies for sustainable and resilient supply chains, with a particular emphasis on SIDS. High-level and technical sessions covered key thematic areas, including the impact of disruptions on trade and transport, the shifting geography of trade and trade patterns, connectivity constraints, regional integration, resilience building in maritime transport and logistics, supply chain robustness, food security, supply chain vulnerabilities, maritime decarbonization, low-carbon shipping solutions, alternative fuels, climate change adaptation resilience-building and disaster risk reduction (DRR) for ports, regulatory developments, sustainable and smart ports, and the sector's access to investment and finance. Discussions underscored the critical role of capacity building, knowledge exchange, cooperation and collaboration (including public and private), and targeted policy measures for enhancing the sustainability, resilience, and efficiency of global and regional supply chains, particularly in the context of SIDS and other vulnerable economies. Outcomes include a number of joint initiatives as well as Ministerial Statement for Enhancing Transport and Logistics in Small Island Developing States (SIDS).⁷⁵

353. One key intergovernmental output for 2024, was the eleventh session of the Multi-year Expert Meeting on Transport, Trade Logistics and Trade Facilitation⁷⁶ from 23 to 24 October 2024, focusing on "Maritime Transport in Times of Polycrisis". The meeting explored strategies to advancing resilience, sustainability and low-carbon maritime transport and trade in a time of poly-crisis, while taking into account the outcome of relevant global key policy processes, including the UN Global Supply Chain Forum (GSCF)⁷⁷ mentioned above, with a strong emphasis on the specific challenges faced by developing countries, SIDS, LLDCs and LDCs. This session informed and directly contributed to the UNCTAD technical cooperation programme and activities, research and policy analysis on transport and logistics.

354. As part of its work on *sustainable and resilient freight transport and finance*, UNCTAD continued the implementation of the final activity as part of the framework of the *EU-UNCTAD Joint Programme for Angola: Train for Trade II*, under the transport and logistics component. The Angola Sustainable Freight Transport (SFT) assessment⁷⁸ was published in January 2025. It provided a rapid analysis of Angola's freight transport systems and logistics sector, covering maritime, road and rail transport, and corridors and examined the linkages with value chain development. This assessment offers insights into the current situation and performance of Angola's freight transport sector and evaluates its ability to meet relevant sustainability objectives. The assessment applies a sustainability framework developed by UNCTAD⁷⁹ based on three key pillars - economic, social and environmental. The UNCTAD SFT index⁸⁰ was launched for the first time in 2024. The

⁷⁴ <https://unctad.org/conference/global-supply-chain-forum-2024>.

⁷⁵ <https://unctad.org/conference/global-supply-chain-forum-2024/news/un-global-supply-chain-forum-calls-resilience-amid-world-trade-disruptions>.

⁷⁶ <https://unctad.org/meeting/multi-year-expert-meeting-transport-trade-logistics-and-trade-facilitation-eleventh-session>.

⁷⁷ <https://unctad.org/meeting/global-supply-chain-forum-2024>.

⁷⁸ <https://unctad.org/publication/angola-sustainable-freight-transport-assessment/>.

⁷⁹ <https://sft-framework.unctad.org/>.

⁸⁰ <https://sft-framework.unctad.org/about-sft-index>.

index measures and visualizes countries' sustainable freight transport performance in an internationally comparable manner and covers around 160 economies.

355. To promote well-functioning *public-private partnerships (PPPs)*, UNCTAD has implemented a United Nations Development Account (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 activities related to infrastructure finance, UNCTAD, in cooperation with the Ministry of Finance and Planning of Zambia (MFNP) and its PPP Unit, and UNECA, through its Subregional Office for Southern Africa (SRO-SA), organized a series of capacity-building and training workshops on PPPs in Zambia, focusing on specific sectors such as transport and energy. Two back-to-back capacity building and training workshops and a high-level meeting⁸¹ aimed at supporting Zambia's infrastructure development through effective PPPs were held in Lusaka, from 12 to 16 February 2024. The high-level meeting was convened with the PPP Council of Ministers of Zambia and provided the Council with an overview of the outcomes of the workshops and of key issues to be considered when reviewing PPPs project proposals in Zambia. It also underscored the Government's commitment to advancing PPPs initiatives.

356. In the area of *sustainable smart ports (SSP)*, UNCTAD continued the implementation of the UNDA project on “Sustainable Smart Ports for African countries, including Small Island Developing States, to ‘recover better’” from COVID-19⁸² (2022–2025), supporting African ports in integrating renewable energy solutions and green and smart technologies. Focusing on policy recommendations, action plan, capacity-building, and experience-sharing, the project targets port of Tema (Ghana), port of Tanger Med (Morocco), and Port Louis (Mauritius). The project is contributing to the transformation of African ports by promoting the transition to renewable energy sources, energy efficiency, and green and smart technologies. It aligns with the African Union's Agenda 2063, advancing sustainable growth, regional integration, and climate resilience. In 2024, key activities included a meeting on ports and energy transition held in Bridgetown, Barbados, as part of the Global Supply Chain Forum (GSCF) held in May. The meeting focused on SIDS and brought together representatives from Mauritius, Cabo Verde, and Seychelles, along with the regional and international partners to review the SSP assessments carried out under the project and explore opportunities for collaboration aimed at replicating SSP assessments in other ports. This includes exploring collaboration with other Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) members. In June 2024, a stakeholder meeting was held in Port Louis, Mauritius, and validated key findings on alternative energy sources and priority projects for SSP implementation. In December, a meeting in Tanger Med, Morocco, allowed UNCTAD to launch Tanger Med's SSP assessment and secure high-level commitment to providing data and expertise for developing an action plan. To further build capacity in the three beneficiary ports, an ISO 50001 Energy Management Systems Workshop⁸³ was specifically designed and delivered in October 2024, in close collaboration with ISO. This training focused on helping African ports develop and implement energy management systems, thereby addressing a key priority that had been identified by the three pilot ports.

357. As part of its work on *sustainable and resilient transport and logistics and food security*, a new UNDA project on “Harnessing Trade Policy and Transport and Logistics to Build Sustainable and Resilient Food Supply Chains in the Caribbean and the Arab region⁸⁴” was launched in mid-2024 for a duration of about four years (2024–2027). The project addresses the challenges posed by the triple crises of food, energy, and finance, focusing on highly impacted countries and regions. The project is implemented jointly by two UNCTAD Divisions (Division on Technology and Logistics and Division on

⁸¹ <https://unctad.org/meeting/capacity-building-workshops-public-private-partnerships-zambia>.

⁸² <https://unctad.org/project/sustainable-smart-ports-african-countries-including-small-island-developing-states-recover>.

⁸³ <https://unctad.org/meeting/workshop-iso-50001-energy-management-systems-promote-sustainable-practices-and-energy>.

⁸⁴ <https://unctad.org/project/sustainable-and-resilient-food-supply-chains>.

International Trade and Commodities) and UNECLAC and in collaboration with UNESCWA. The overall project objective is to strengthen capacities of selected countries to leverage trade policy measures and harness transport and logistics to be better prepared for and respond to supply chain disruptions, build sustainable and resilient food supply chains, enhance food security, and promote regional cooperation. Under the project, two regional assessments will be conducted respectively for the Caribbean and the Arab region, and four national assessments specifically targeting Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, Lebanon and Morocco. Tailored capacity building and training products and tools, training workshops and regional collaboration mechanism are part of the activities envisaged under the project.

358. As part of its ongoing work on *supporting a just and equitable maritime decarbonization and energy transition*, UNCTAD, at the request of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), prepared a comprehensive impact assessment (CIA) of the basket of candidate mid-term greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction measures discussed at IMO. In that scope, UNCTAD analyzed the expected effects of these proposed measures on States' imports, exports, GDP, and consumer prices in 2030, 2040 and 2050 and discussed their implications for food security, climate vulnerability, transport dependency, connectivity and other relevant terms pointed out in the IMO GHG Strategy and the Terms of Reference (TORs) established for the purposes of the CIA. The findings from that assessment are intended to inform discussions at the IMO regarding the candidate mid-term GHG reduction measures and enable evidence-based decisions by the IMO's Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC) in 2025.

359. Jointly with UNDESA, UNCTAD developed a UNDA project to enhance the statistical and analytical capacities of selected Caribbean countries for the timely monitoring of maritime trade, fisheries and ecosystem services and their CO₂ emissions, using data science and artificial intelligence in combination with novel and national sources and applying standard accounting frameworks, to formulate and promote evidence-based national and regional climate change and trade policies. This project will kick off in spring 2025.

360. As part of its work on *transport policy and legislation*, UNCTAD continued to focus on key issues and developments in international maritime and transport law, as well as on addressing the increasingly urgent challenges affecting maritime transport and sustainable development as a result of climate change impacts affecting critical maritime infrastructures. Drawing on the UNCTAD mandate and longstanding work on climate change adaptation, resilience-building and DRR for ports and key transport infrastructure, systems and networks, UNCTAD continued to provide related technical advice and assistance, highlighting the urgent need for accelerated action, including the development of supportive policy and legal frameworks, as well as scaling up of capacity-building and finance for infrastructure adaptation in developing countries. Three focused technical sessions on this set of issues, livestreamed to reach a wide global audience, were organized as part of the UNCTAD Global Supply Chain Forum (GSCF) held in May 2024 in Barbados.⁸⁵ The 2024 edition of the UNCTAD SDG Pulse highlights key challenges for sustainable and resilient transport amidst rising uncertainty, disruptions and climate risks and provides data on the growing exposure of top global containers ports to extreme sea levels, together with related analysis and advice.⁸⁶ The 2024 edition of the flagship *Review of Maritime Transport* provides original analysis of the important safety and commercial law implications of weather and climate-related risks for maritime infrastructure and operations. A peer-reviewed research paper in collaboration with partners analyses policies and legislation for adaptation in the light of climate change hazards and impacts affecting seaports.⁸⁷ Important areas for UNCTAD interdivisional cooperation included an analytical overview of the legal and regulatory framework for emissions from fishing vessels as part

⁸⁵ <https://unctad.org/meeting/climate-change-adaptation-resilience-building-and-disaster-risk-reduction-ports-part-1>.

⁸⁶ <https://sdgpulse.unctad.org/sustainable-transport/>.

⁸⁷ https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ditcted2023d5_en.pdf.

of a joint report (DITC/DTL) on “*Energy transition of fishing fleets: Opportunities and challenges for developing countries*”⁸⁸, published in 2024.

361. Advice and assistance as part of intergovernmental work and multistakeholder collaboration on policy and legal issues affecting transport and trade included active contribution to the ongoing work of the IMO Legal Committee to combat fraudulent ship registration and registries, including a comprehensive study on the subject prepared by UNCTAD, the World Maritime University (WMU) and the IMO International Maritime Law Institute (IMLI) at the request of the Committee. An analytical overview of related developments at IMO was included as part of a chapter on legal issues and regulatory developments in the *Review of Maritime Transport 2024*. UNCTAD also contributed to the legal technical advice as part of the deliberations under the auspices of UNCITRAL WG VI towards the development of an international legal instrument on Negotiable Cargo Documents and continued its active contribution to the work of the intergovernmental UNECE Group of Experts on climate change adaptation for inland transport, including through the preparation of an informal document on policy and legal approaches. 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.

362. Dissemination of UNCTAD work on policy and legal issues through contributions to international meetings and Conferences included the 2024 Workshop on “Improving the Digitalization of International Trade: The Relevance of the Use of an Electronic Bill of Lading”, organized by *Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)/Instituto de Facilitación del Comercio (IFCOM)*⁸⁹; the session on Legal Issues as part of the 2024 International Federation of Freight Forwarders Associations (FIATA) Headquarters meeting in Geneva; and the Global Shippers Alliance Workshop on “Balanced Business Practices in Maritime Supply Chains” in Brussels, drawing on the outcome of an UNCTAD moderated session at the UN GSCF 2024, which brought together the global representatives of Shippers’ Associations, Freight Forwarders and Liner Shipping Companies.⁹⁰ It also included delivery of presentations at the 2024 International Conference on Disaster Resilient Infrastructure in New Delhi; the 5th Athens Triennials, as part of a session on Climate Change and Shipping co-chaired by UNCTAD; and a UN-Oceans side event at the COP 29 co-organized by UNCTAD.⁹¹ In addition, UNCTAD organized a number of seminars, including on key insights from the *Review of Maritime Transport* at the University of Malta, Gujarat University and National and Technical University Singapore.

363. **Results and impacts.** The delivery of technical assistance, advisory services, and capacity-building support, combined with the dissemination of data, insights, guidance material, and analytical tools, has been both timely and essential in helping to strengthen the capacity of policymakers and stakeholders in developing countries. These efforts have contributed to enhancing their ability to address transport and logistics challenges and to formulate and implement effective policies and solutions, ensuring that developing countries have access to evidence-based policy guidance tailored to their specific needs. UNCTAD insights from research, intelligence derived from data and statistics, and policy guidance and recommendations are also reflected in substantive contributions to various publications, technical reports, and analytical studies. This work has informed intergovernmental deliberations at UNCTAD and other fora, including discussions under the auspices of the IMO, contributing to global policymaking in maritime transport and trade.

364. 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

⁸⁸ https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ditcted2023d5_en.pdf.

⁸⁹ <https://ipfcom.org/english/>.

⁹⁰ <https://unctad.org/meeting/strengthening-service-quality-and-connectivity-maritime-transport-foster-global-trade-and>.

⁹¹ <https://unctad.org/meeting/cop29-side-event-striving-ambitious-ocean-based-action-how-un-oceans-can-support-states>.

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. Follow-up online training activities are planned for March 2025.

365. One of the key outcomes of the GSCF was the Ministerial Statement for Enhancing Transport and Logistics in Small Island Developing States (SIDS),⁹² reaffirming commitments to improving maritime connectivity, strengthening food security, addressing financing challenges, and advancing sustainability in the transport and logistics sectors. The statement also emphasized regional cooperation, capacity-building, and public-private partnerships as essential tools for ensuring efficient, reliable, and environmentally sustainable and resilient transport solutions for SIDS.

366. The GSCF also marked the launch of a new Trade-and-Transport Dataset⁹³ developed by UNCTAD and the World Bank, providing the first comprehensive global picture of the transport costs associated with moving different products between economies.

367. UNCTAD will build on these initiatives, to continue to effectively support developing countries in addressing key transport and logistics challenges and advancing greater resilience, sustainability, and efficiency in global and regional trade and supply chains.

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>			
INT/OT/MAP	G77 - Development Priorities for a Climate-Resilient Financial System at COP28	2023–	Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors Inc.
INT/OT/MAY	UNCTAD Sustainable Development Initiatives grant - Debt initiatives	2024–	Foundation to Promote Open Society
INT/OT/MAY	UNCTAD Sustainable Development Initiatives grant - Climate Finance for Development	2024–	Foundation to Promote Open Society
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
<i>Division for Africa, Least Developed Countries and Special Programmes</i>			
ANG/OT/FBK	EU–UNCTAD Joint Programme for Angola: Train for Trade II	2017–	European Union
INT/OT/IAH	Finding Opportunities for Niche Commodities from DC in Health Food Markets	2021–	Common Fund for Commodities
INT/OT/NAC	Strategy for SIDS	2024–	Portugal

⁹² https://unctad.org/system/files/information-document/gscf2024-SIDS-ministerial-statement_en.pdf.

⁹³ <https://unctad.org/conference/global-supply-chain-forum-2024/news/new-global-dataset-reveals-hidden-costs-international-trade-and-transport>.

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
RAF/OT/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–	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
RAF/OT/NAL	Enhancing the capacity of African vulnerable countries in adopting policy incentives and innovative instruments for SME participation in regional value chains	2024–	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
ROA-2023 (E12)	Coherent strategies for productive capacity development in African least developed countries	2020–	Development Account

1. Assistance to the Palestinian people

368. **Development context.** In the context of 58 years of Israeli occupation, Israel has imposed closures and economic and movement restrictions on Gaza since June 2007 and conducted a number of military operations, which destroyed its infrastructure and hollowed out the productive base of its economy. October 2023, the thirtieth anniversary of the Oslo Accords, coincided with the dramatic escalation of hostilities in Gaza and a severe confrontation in the West Bank. Intense Israeli restrictions and military operations in Gaza and the West Bank inflicted the greatest damage to the Palestinian economy in recent history. The resulting decline in economic activity exceeded the impact of all previous confrontations in 2008, 2012, 2014 and 2021, and surpassed the damage recorded in the aftermath of the second intifada.

369. Prior to October 2023, the people of Gaza were nearly completely dependent on international aid. Following the events of 7 October 2023, the occupying Power launched a military operation. An intense and sustained military attack has decimated entire neighbourhoods in Gaza and resulted in a high death toll and the destruction of schools, hospitals, housing units, agricultural assets and energy, water and telecommunications networks. Across the Occupied Palestinian Territory, production processes have been disrupted or decimated, income sources have been lost, poverty has intensified and expanded, neighbourhoods have been eradicated, and communities and towns have been ruined. An unprecedented, complex humanitarian, environmental and social crisis ensued and transformed the region from underdevelopment to total collapse.

370. The direct damage to the economy of Gaza and the West Bank continued to accumulate throughout 2024 and 2025. The economic decline in the Occupied Palestinian Territory in 2024 is the worst since the Oslo accords and the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority. Repair will take decades, and the socioeconomic repercussions of the large-scale destruction will be felt for generations to come.

371. The Palestinian economy declined by 28 per cent in 2024 and the unemployment rate rose to 51 per cent. The Gaza economy contracted by 82 per cent, while unemployment surpassed 80 per cent. Meanwhile, the economy of the West Bank declined by more than 19 per cent, and the unemployment rate tripled to 35 per cent. Poverty has widened and deepened across the Territory but especially in Gaza, where multidimensional poverty has engulfed the entire population; with lost access to income, food, basic services, education, health and basic infrastructure.

372. The income loss in Gaza caused by 16 years of closures and economic and movement restrictions and repeated military operations is staggering. In the absence of those constraints, by the end of 2023 Gaza's gross domestic product (GDP) would have been 77.6 per cent higher than its actual level and GDP per capita would have been 172 per cent higher than the actual figures. The cumulative loss in terms of unrealized GDP

potential during the period 2007–2023 is conservatively estimated at \$35.8 billion (in constant 2015 dollars) – equivalent to 17 times the GDP of Gaza in 2023.

373. Prior to October 2023, 171,000 West Bank Palestinians worked in Israel and settlements and their incomes accounted for one-third of overall demand. Since the start of the confrontation, 90 per cent of them have lost their jobs, and additional restrictions and closures have prevented another 67,000 workers from accessing their workplaces outside their governorates of residence. In the fourth quarter of 2023, unemployment in the West Bank rose to 32 per cent, up from 12.9 per cent in the third quarter of 2023. Over 200,000 jobs have been lost, most of them in Israel and settlements. By end-January 2024, Gaza lost two-third of pre-October 2023 jobs. The International Labour Organization estimated the overall Occupied Palestinian Territory unemployment rate in the first quarter of 2024 at 57 per cent. In recent years, incomes earned by Palestinian workers in Israel and settlements played a key role in sustaining consumption-driven GDP growth. This stimulus evaporated in the aftermath of the outbreak of this latest, most devastating, round of confrontations.

374. On the fiscal front, according to the Palestinian Ministry of Finance and Planning, in 2019–April 2024, unilateral Israeli deductions from Palestinian fiscal revenue amounted to \$863 million, equivalent to 5 per cent of Palestinian GDP in 2023. Furthermore, since October 2023, the occupying Power has been withholding additional amounts equivalent to the payments made by the Palestinian Government to civil servants in Gaza - approximately \$75 million per month. Palestinian Government data suggest that during the period October 2023 – May 2024, the sum of \$483 million was withheld under this item. This raises monthly withholding and deductions to half of the revenues raised from tax and tariff on total Palestinian imports. Deductions and withheld amounts have increased since October 2023. In October 2024, cumulative deductions and withheld amounts reached \$1.8 billion. The loss of revenue undermines the capacity of the Government to function and provide essential services and pay employees, pensioners and creditors.

375. Beyond a permanent ceasefire and immediate relief, recovery and sustainable development in Gaza demand urgent action from the international community to inject massive aid for rebuilding the devastated Gaza Strip. Building Gaza back fully and better is not impossible. History shows that rebuilding war-torn societies is possible if the international community rallies together. Rapid restoration of infrastructure and essential services is crucial for containing the long-term consequences of the recent, unprecedented dramatic escalation of hostilities. There is a glaring, urgent need for an extensive recovery programme that prioritizes rebuilding the entire infrastructure, especially in such vital public goods as water, electricity, sanitation, hygiene, education, and health.

376. **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.

377. 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.

378. 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.

379. **Outputs and results.** In 2024, 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 economy and pursuing the Sustainable Development Goals. The programme continued its ongoing support for the Palestinian people despite adverse and increasingly difficult field conditions.

380. In response to the above-mentioned resolutions, in 2024, UNCTAD submitted a report to the General Assembly titled “Economic costs of the Israeli occupation for the Palestinian people: the economic impact of the Israeli military operation in Gaza from October 2023 to May 2024”. The report focused on the economic cost of the Israeli occupation restrictions and military operation in Gaza. The report provided a quantitative assessment of the economic impact of the Israeli military operation in Gaza for the period from October 2023 to May 2024.

381. In January 2024, UNCTAD issued a report entitled “Preliminary assessment of the economic impact of the destruction in Gaza and prospects for economic recovery”.

382. In December 2024, UNCTAD issued a study on the occupation, fragmentation and poverty in the West Bank. The study assesses and quantifies the welfare cost of the fragmentation of the West Bank.

383. In 2023 and 2024, UNCTAD provided advisory services to the Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS) on relevant methodologies for assessing the economic impact of the Israeli military operation in Gaza.

384. In October 2024, UNCTAD staff conducted a field mission to the occupied Palestinian territory. The mission included meetings with senior staff from several Palestinian ministries, compiled data on the fiscal position of the Palestinian Government and followed up on the recent technical cooperation activities, forthcoming needs and potential future provision of technical cooperation support.

2. Productive capacity-building in vulnerable economies

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

385. **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.

386. 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.

387. **Objectives and features.** UNCTAD implemented the cross-divisional European Union-UNCTAD Joint Programme for Angola: Train for Trade II 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.

388. 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.

389. 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.

390. 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.

391. **Outputs.** In 2024, UNCTAD prepared a comprehensive draft final report for the European Union-UNCTAD Joint Programme for Angola: Train for Trade II, covering the period from 2017 to 2023, in English and in Portuguese. The updated final report and its Portuguese translation were submitted to the European Union delegation in Angola and the Ministry of Industry and Commerce of Angola on 23 December 2024. UNCTAD reported all results data from the Programme through the 'electronic platform of the European Union (OPSYS), in addition to the final report in report format.

392. To support the Programme's final evaluation, UNCTAD undertook relevant data collection, carried out an inventory of programme outputs and results, engaged in the identification and handover of equipment to appropriate counterparts. This required ongoing engagement with Angolan counterpart institutions to transfer organizational project knowledge to beneficiaries.

393. UNCTAD provided follow-up institutional capacity building and engagement with stakeholders and national partner institutions to institutionalize the project's lessons, practices and training interventions. UNCTAD also undertook action to institutionalize the content and resources of training courses including on trade and investment negotiations, and on the implementation of the AfCFTA.

394. In 2024, UNCTAD carried out visibility actions to share the programme's successes and results. Focused efforts have been put into securing visibility, delivered through the project team as well as institutional UNCTAD communications and external relations team. The New York-based UN Magazine *Africa Renewal* travelled to Angola to collect human impact stories as a result of the joint European Union-UNCTAD Action. This resulted in the publication of a Special Edition of the *Africa Renewal* in February 2024, focused on the human impacts of the Train for Trade II Programme.⁹⁴

395. UNCTAD also continued to engage in strategic discussions with stakeholders on the sustainability of the action and potential follow-up action in Angola.

396. **Results and impact.** The Programme has capacitated over 3,300 Angolans in 940 institutions and trained national trainers. It has supported the review and development of policies and legal frameworks and their implementation. It has modernized university curricula and capacitated institutions to harness the potential of green and creative value chains by addressing concrete development challenges. Today, macroeconomic evidence shows a diversification trend within the Angolan economy. Non-oil sector exports have increased by 6 per cent in real terms from 2016 to 2022 and investments into the non-oil sector are also increasing.

⁹⁴ https://unctad.org/system/files/information-document/aldc-transforming4trade01-africa-renewal_en.pdf.

397. The success of the Programme's holistic, multisectoral and evidence-based approach has been recognized globally, as the United Nations-agency wide review team led by UNDESA selected the Programme as a global success story on SDG good practices implementation in 2022. Subsequently, the Programme provided the basis for the UN Secretary General's High Impact Initiative, *Transforming4Trade: Paradigm Shift to boost Economic Development*, that was presented in the margins of the United Nations General Assembly session in September 2023.

398. 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.

399. More importantly, UNCTAD 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 divisions and experts to deliver as one on several areas of trade and development that are of interest to Angola.

400. The Programme has helped to draft better policies⁹⁵ 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.

401. The implementation of the Programme has received positive feedback from stakeholders. Below are some testimonials at the presentation of Train for Trade II Programme's final report on 24 June 2024:

(a) "The workshops organized with UNCTAD served as one of the principal platforms to promote and attract investments, through the participation of investors in the events and eventually the tenders." Director, Regulatory Agency for the Certification of Cargo and Logistics of Angola (ARCCLA).

(b) "During the training on the National Quality Infrastructure (NQI) for fisheries, tropical fruits and coffee, the participants carried out an evaluation of the Angolan NQI and developed an action plan to address the gaps identified, with the support of UNCTAD and ISO experts. These documents are being used in the elaboration of the National Quality Policy, currently underway." Director, National Institute of Quality Infrastructures.

(c) "UNCTAD training in (Cultural and creative industries) CCIs opened my eyes to see beyond the entertainment aspect of culture. I understood that knowledge and professional training were required to take the creative sectors forward. There was also a need to integrate CCIs to other economic sectors to harness their potential. Stimulated by this, I established the first ever dedicated vocational training centre, Academia Produza, to train young CCIs entrepreneurs to harness the economic opportunities offered by the 18 CCIs sectors of Angola." Director, Academia Produza.

2.2. *Opportunities and challenges of the EU Deforestation Regulation in agri-commodity value chains*

402. **Development context.** For several decades structurally weak and vulnerable economies including landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and least developed

⁹⁵ See interactive charts in <https://unctad.org/project/eu-unctad-joint-programme-angola-train-trade-ii> - Progress on policy development.

countries (LDCs) have not been able to take full advantage of global trade opportunities. 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.

403. 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.

404. 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.

405. **Objectives and features.** The study, financed by Common Fund for Commodities (CFC), seeks to explore the opportunities and challenges related to the implementation of the EU Deforestation Regulation in agri-commodity value chains. The primary location of interest for this examination is the Global South, in particular LDCs and LLDCs. Sectoral target markets include the seven commodities that are covered under the European Union Deforestation Regulation: cattle, cocoa, coffee, oil palm, rubber, soya and wood, as well as many derived products listed in the annex to the regulation (e.g., meat products, leather, chocolate, coffee, palm nuts, palm oil derivatives, glycerol, natural rubber products, soybeans, soy-bean flour and oil, fuel wood, wood products, pulp and paper, printed books).

406. **Outputs.** UNCTAD has completed initial drafts of selected chapters of the report. The research examines a number of challenges for small producers and rural communities, including the risks of leakage and displacement, impact on market access, compliance costs and technological barriers, potential market distortions, information asymmetry, heavy financial and technical burden on governments, negative impacts on non-forest ecosystems, exacerbation of conflicts between large-scale and small-scale production, and legal uncertainties, among others.

407. **Results.** It is expected that the results of the study would help stakeholders better understand the financial, social and environmental implications of the European Union Deforestation Regulation and make informed decisions to align with the regulation's goals while managing associated risks and opportunities.

2.3. *UNCTAD Strategy for SIDS*

408. **Development context.** There are 39 small island developing States (SIDS) which are members of the United Nations, representing 20 per cent of the membership of the United Nations. Although they are characterised by small geographic and demographic sizes, they are home to substantial biodiversity, controlling the area of nearly 30 per cent of all oceans.

409. Overall, SIDS play a marginal role in the global economy. In terms of the share in global GDP, it stands at 0.4 per cent, with the Caribbean SIDS being responsible for the overwhelming majority of more than 80 per cent of this contribution (in 2021, according to UNCTADstat 2023). In terms of total international merchandise trade, they contribute 0.3 per cent (in 2022, UNCTADstat, 2023). In terms of the share of World FDI inflows, they constitute 0.2 per cent (WIR, 2022). The limited role of SIDS in the global economy is not surprising considering their share in the world's population of less than one percent.

410. SIDS face severe structural constraints and multiple development challenges that leave them vulnerable to economic shocks and limit progress towards sustainable development. Given their import dependence, especially on food products and fuel, SIDS are vulnerable to international price shocks and disruptions to global shipping and supply chains. The assessment of SIDS' performance on the Productive Capacities Index illustrates that a greater emphasis on structural economic transformation is key for their development progress. SIDS need to build critical minimum levels of productive capacity and technological capabilities.

411. SIDS may be small in land area, but they have large ocean resources. This critical resource is also highly vulnerable to climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss. Urgent action is needed to address these major threats to SIDS ocean economies. Understanding SIDS' unique strengths and vulnerabilities is key to unlocking their full potential for sustainable development.

412. The reconstruction efforts in the aftermaths of climate change and disasters require massive financial resources. Being a small economy and import-dependent leaves many SIDS in a vicious debt trap. SIDS are among the most indebted developing countries in the world. In 2022, SIDS external debt accounted for 78.5 per cent of their GDP and for 144.6 per cent of their export revenues of goods and services, including tourism.

413. Many SIDS rely on official development assistance (ODA) to keep their economies afloat. While this aid is crucial, if it's on loan as opposed to grants or concessional finance, it can lead to a dangerous build-up of debt. This debt burden puts a stranglehold on the public sector, limiting investments in sustainable development and vital social programs.

414. The 4th International Conference on SIDS took place at the end of May 2024 in Antigua and Barbuda and concluded with the adoption of the ABAS – the Antigua and Barbuda Action Strategy, a new 10-year action plan for SIDS. The strategy guides the next decade of international support and commitments to SIDS and places a key focus on the importance of building productive capacities. The UNCTAD strategy is aligned with the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS.

415. Moreover, Paragraph 21 of ABAS calls on SIDS to diversify their exports of goods and services, reduce dependence on imports, and address current account deficits and limited fiscal space. This should be pursued by undertaking National Productive Capacities Gap Assessments (NPCGAs), implementing Holistic Productive Capacities Development Programmes (HPCDPs) and investing in higher productivity sectors, including in advanced technologies and digital economy to provide better paying jobs and reduce brain drain and labour mobility.

416. **Objectives and features.** The UNCTAD SIDS strategy aims to maximize synergies and exploit a paradigm shift for socioeconomic resilience building in SIDS by fostering productive capacities and structural economic transformation, as well as international economic engagement, for achieving inclusive growth and sustainable development. The new development model for SIDS should blend robust actions to address climate change and environmental degradation, which disproportionately affect SIDS, while at the same time addressing their structural economic vulnerabilities and underdevelopment. SIDS also need a new generation of international support mechanisms (ISMs) that could effectively respond to their multiple vulnerabilities, relieve key binding constraints to development, and, more importantly, help them sustainably harness their comparative advantages. In addition to helping deliver on the commitments of the Bridgetown Covenant, the UNCTAD SIDS Strategy will also help to catalyse action in support of the ABAS.

417. The strategy features 10 broad pillars of support: building productive capacities; enhancing connectivity, reducing transport costs, and promoting sustainable and resilient transport; managing and expanding the Automated System for Customs Data; facilitating digital transformation; supporting digital transformation; supporting investment; facilitating the ocean economy's sustainable development and trade; supporting private sector development; supporting the mobilization of external financial resources; using

South–South cooperation to enhance development strategies; and implementing trade facilitation reforms.

418. It is designed to address the overlapping and systemic vulnerabilities facing SIDS by sustainably harnessing their comparative advantages and unlocking key binding constraints to their development.

419. A Trust Fund for SIDS has already been established to facilitate and kick-start the implementation of the UNCTAD SIDS Strategy.

420. **Outputs.** UNCTAD facilitated the preparations of the Interactive Dialogue on “Revitalizing SIDS economies for accelerated and sustainable growth,” which took place on 28 May 2024 during the 4th International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS4) in Antigua and Barbuda. UNCTAD prepared a background note and provided inputs to the statements by the Dialogue’s co-chairs from Finland and Maldives. In the opening and closing remarks, the co-chairs explicitly referred to the necessity of building productive capacities in SIDS in order to address their development challenges.

421. Twenty-one participants made interventions during the Interactive Dialogue, including those from member States, intergovernmental organizations and other stakeholders. Participants reflected on the development perspectives of SIDS, elaborating on how building SIDS’ productive capacities can minimize the impact of external shocks – be them financial, environmental or climate change-related – and ultimately contribute to their resilience in the long run. Many participants stressed how economic transformation in SIDS must build on their most abundant resource - the ocean. As SIDS control over 30 per cent of the world’s waters, they must lead and influence the international community, in order to ensure that the blue economy drives economic growth and has financial returns, preserving and regenerating the marine ecosystem at the same time. Many participants called for a paradigm shift in development assistance, moving towards a holistic approach that takes into consideration the very specific challenges and opportunities of SIDS. Participants stressed that to do so, the international community must rethink the way development assistance is disbursed to SIDS and in general how the environmental impact of economic activities must be factored in, including by diverting subsidies from fossil fuels to renewable sources of energy, thus making these more affordable for developing economies.

422. At SIDS4, ALDC organized a side event entitled “Building Resilience Through Fostering Green Productive Capacities, Economic Diversification and Decent Jobs Opportunities: Innovative Strategies and Global Partnerships for Small Island Developing States”. This side event was closely aligned with the Interactive Dialogue. The objective of the event was to showcase the necessity to build domestic, economy-wide productive capacities and institutions that enable SIDS’ economic diversification, advance structural transformation and enhanced resilience, as well as generate decent jobs and productive employment.

423. ALDC also co-organised a SIDS4 side event titled, “Financing Resilient Prosperity in Small Island Developing States”. The side-event drew on recent cutting-edge research to set out a series of novel concrete actions, reforms and mechanisms that can help to ensure SIDS can access the affordable finance needed to cope with shocks, manage debt sustainably, and advance towards resilient prosperity during the lifetime of the Antigua-Barbuda Accord for SIDS (ABAS).

424. On 22 September 2024, UNCTAD, in cooperation with the Permanent Missions of the Maldives and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines substantially supported the organization of a side event on the margins of the General Assembly on “Building productive capacity in small island developing States”. The side event focused on the key role of the Productive Capacities Index in shaping and implementing SIDS-specific economic policies, enabling them to integrate into global and regional value chains.

425. **Results and impact.** The UNCTAD SIDS Strategy was presented to member States at the 71st Session of the Trade and Development Board in September 2024. Member States recognized the importance of the Strategy as a framework to advance the

Antigua and Barbuda Action Strategy for Small Island Developing States and welcomed the financial support of Portugal for the trust fund.

426. Member States appreciated the UNCTAD emphasis on vulnerability and the design of instruments to improve resilience and strengthen the productive capacities of small island developing States, calling on the cooperation of donors and partners. To implement the Strategy, the organization has established a Trust Fund for SIDS to enable predictable, secure and regular financial resources to be made available for the delivery of robust substantive and technical support.

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

427. **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 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.

428. 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.

429. **Objectives and features.** The project titled “Developing Integrated Programmes to Alleviate Binding Constraints to Development by Fostering Structural Transformation, Building Productive Capacities and Enhancing Investment Opportunities and Linkages with China” 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.

430. 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.

431. **Outputs.** In 2024, UNCTAD finalized the project which was financed by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Sub-Fund of the United Nations Peace and Development Trust Fund.

432. Concretely, in 2024, UNCTAD finalized two publications titled “Productive Capacities: Challenges and Opportunities” - one each for Ethiopia and Kenya. The publications are comprised of, in part I, detailed assessments of the state of productive capacities development in the two countries and provide succinct analysis of national productive capacities gaps (in the form of *National Productive Capacities Gap Assessment*) and actionable policy recommendations. Part II of the publications contains intervention strategies in the form of *Holistic Productive Capacities Development Programmes* (HPCDPs), spanning 10 years of implementation. If funding for the implementation of HPCDPs is secured, the programmes are viewed as gamechangers by policymakers and technocrats of the two countries. The contents of the publications were discussed and validated by policymakers at high-level policy workshops organized in the two countries.

433. UNCTAD conducted a capacity building workshop for technical experts and statisticians in Mozambique on the utilisation of the Productive Capacities Index for policy formulation from 2 to 3 May 2024. The statistical training aimed to build the statistical capacities of Mozambique by training national experts in computing and interpreting the

PCI. It sought to enhance the capacity of these experts to validate results and integrate PCI into national statistics and policymaking. Additionally, the training fostered a network of national statisticians and collected feedback for the PCI's Statistical and Technical Advisory Group (STAG). The PCI training was attended by 20 participants, nine of which were women.

434. From 6 to 7 May 2024, UNCTAD conducted a capacity building workshop for technical experts and statisticians in Zimbabwe on the utilisation of the Productive Capacities Index for policy formulation. The statistical training aimed to strengthen Zimbabwe's statistical capabilities by educating national experts in calculating and interpreting the PCI. It sought to improve the ability of these experts to validate results and incorporate PCI into national statistics and policymaking. Additionally, the training cultivated a network of national statisticians and gathered feedback for the PCI's Statistical and Technical Advisory Group (STAG). The training was attended by 28 participants, of which 13 were women.

435. From 8 to 9 May 2024, UNCTAD also organized a National Policy-level Workshop on fostering productive capacities in Zimbabwe for industrialisation, economic diversification, and inclusive growth. The objective was to build capacity among policymakers to mainstream productive capacities into policy formulation and institution building to enable structural transformation and economic diversification. The workshop examined Zimbabwe's PCI performance and discussed the success stories of building productive capacities and accelerating structural economic transformation. It examined Zimbabwe's comparative advantages and potential, together with main challenges to structural transformation, economic diversification, and productive capacities' building, looking at the proposed pillars and drivers of growth: modern agriculture, industry with important role of manufacturing and mining of resources, as well as services such as tourism. The 2-day event was attended by 51 policymakers representing various ministries and state-level institutions, including the UN system, of the participants, 27 were women.

436. In Lilongwe, Malawi, UNCTAD organized a high-level validation workshop on 5 and 6 November 2024 of the *National Productive Capacities Gap Assessment and Holistic Productive Capacities Development Programme* for the country. The objectives of the workshop were: (a) to discuss and validate *Malawi's National Productive Capacities Gap Assessment* (NPCGA) and the *Holistic Productive Capacities Development Programme* (HPCDP) and (b) to exchange views on the way forward in implementing the country's Holistic Productive Capacities Development Programme.

437. The National Productive Capacities Gap Assessment of Mozambique (December 2024) and the Productive Capacities Development Roadmap for Ethiopia (January 2025) were delivered as part of the project's implementation.

438. Furthermore, UNCTAD organized donor-recipient consultations on the ways and means of financing the Kenyan Holistic Productive Capacities Development Programme on 3 October 2024. The consultation was well attended, with key sectoral ministers participating under the overall leadership of the Prime Cabinet Secretary. Eighty-three registered participants (above the maximum 60 expected), including several ministers, senior government officials, Nairobi-based ambassadors, heads of United Nations and other international organizations, and representatives of academia and the private sector, took part in the consultation. The Government of Kenya views the HPCDP as a game-changer that can serve as a framework to assist Kenya in realizing its objectives in the country's vision 2030 and the medium-term plan. Kenyan authorities noted with satisfaction and great interest the content, substance, and processes leading up to the articulation of the NPPCGA and HPCDP. They appreciated the consultative and inclusive nature of the process which is key in fortifying the capacities of national institutions in the formulation and implementation of integrated, long-term, and comprehensive policies and strategies as elaborated in the HPCDP. UNCTAD, in consultation with the Office of Prime Cabinet Secretary, will follow up to the understanding reached and subsequent activities agreed at the consultation.

439. **Results and impact.** Through the completion of eight national reviews of productive capacities gaps and the drafting of eight national strategies and holistic

programmes on how to address these productive capacities gaps and advance structural transformation, with seven specific roadmaps, the project clearly articulated the most binding constraints to trade, investment, and private sector development in beneficiary countries, and substantially increased the understanding of the role of productive capacities in the overall and comprehensive development process and structural transformation.

440. By building capacity among 806 policymakers and other stakeholders of the national development processes (including 241 women, who constitute 30 per cent of those trained, and 524 government officials), on how to reorient policy formulation and institution building towards a holistic and comprehensive approach by mainstreaming economy-wide productive capacities, the project improved the national capacity of the beneficiary countries to generate and implement evidence-based policies to support structural transformation in Africa and investment opportunities therein. This substantial cohort of individuals engaged in the national development processes in the weak and vulnerable countries has potential to bring a qualitative change in policy formulation to ensure its holistic, comprehensive and inclusive character and one which will guarantee more beneficial links with the global economy through trade, investment and production value chains, including with China.

441. The work of UNCTAD under the project was appreciated by project beneficiary countries, as witnessed by the letter of the Minister of Industry and Commerce of Mozambique on 20 September 2024: “The Government of Mozambique wishes to reiterate its appreciation for the productive capacity assessment and the support that UNCTAD is providing to the country through the project ‘Development of Integrated Programmes to Alleviate Binding Constraints to Development by Promoting Structural Transformation, Building Productive Capacities and Enhancing Investment Opportunities and Linkages with China’. ...Indeed, this support is essential for the country to accelerate its progress towards sustainable structural transformation in line with the Government’s development policy priorities.”

442. Overall, the project has had an immense impact not only on beneficiary countries, but also on the international approach to development, as evidenced by the increasingly prominent role that productive capacities and the Productive Capacities Index play in the re-conceptualization of development policy formulation and institution building. The Project’s long-term impact will continue to increase while the international community adopts the new approach, new countries engage in building economy-wide, national productive capacities, and the beneficiary countries implement the Holistic Productive Capacities Development Programmes’ provisions.

3. Mobilizing financial resources for development

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

443. **Development context.** The COP27 outcome 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” (Sharm El-Sheikh Implementation Plan), and makes specific references to managing debt distress, reforming multilateral development banks, and scaling grant and concessional financing.

444. 2024 was an important year for the discussions around climate finance and reform of the international financial architecture. The New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) was the most anticipated outcome of the United Nations climate change conference COP29, which took place in Baku in November 2024. The goal is the core of climate finance talks, as it aims to define the financial support target for developing countries’ climate actions in the coming years, replacing the previous USD 100 billion goal agreed in 2009. A testament to its importance, many negotiating workstreams were stalled waiting for advances on the NCQG, which was finally agreed in the early hours of November 24. Ambitious proposals for governance reform gathered momentum, and key discussions at the multilateral level now involve the interplay of development finance, debt, macroeconomics, and climate change. Whereas the climate and development discussions are becoming increasingly

intertwined, there are still not enough communications between professionals working in one or the other area. 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 the UNCTAD mandate and 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.

445. **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 future COPs. UNCTAD works with relevant agencies and organizations to deliver an inclusive programme to respond to these requests from developing countries.

446. **Outputs.** In 2024, outputs of the project included one COP28 Debrief event; one workshop for developing countries' negotiators; participation at COP29 and two events organized in the Trade and Investment House; and two input technical material written for the G20 Brazilian Presidency. In relation to the Conference of the Parties of the UNFCCC, UNCTAD organized an event titled "COP28 debrief on relevant outcomes and the road to COP29"⁹⁶ on 12 March 2024. The objective of the meeting was to discuss relevant outcomes of COP28 and the main topics for COP29, and thus provide both delegates of Member States and UNCTAD staff members information on the priority areas and topics for the potential future activity of UNCTAD.

447. UNCTAD collaborated closely with the Ugandan G77 and China Chairmanship in the co-organization, together with Third World Network, of a workshop for climate finance negotiators of developing countries focused on the NCQG. The workshop on Development priorities for a collective quantified goal on climate finance fit for developing countries' needs⁹⁷ took place on 8 September in Baku, Azerbaijan. Negotiators were consulted in the organization of the workshop, and there was particular attention in ensuring that all sub-groups within the G77 and China receive equal space in the discussion. The workshop aimed to explore key elements of an NCQG for climate finance that can address the real needs of developing countries. Discussions were grounded in the context of ongoing debates around reform of the global financial architecture to provide sufficient fiscal space for every country to achieve climate and development goals.

448. UNCTAD participated in the UNFCCC 29th Conference of Parties held in Baku, Azerbaijan. As part of this project, UNCTAD supported negotiators on different workstreams, including NCQG, Article 2.1C and Just Transition.

449. In the context of the COP29 hosted in Baku, Azerbaijan, UNCTAD organized a series of events in the Trade and Investment House, including:

(a) 18 November, "Development priorities for a New Collective Quantified Goal for climate finance"⁹⁸. The event delved into the key elements of the COP29 negotiations around the NCQG, discussing what the goal needed to include to address developing countries' needs and priorities, including both quantitative and qualitative elements.

(b) 19 November, "What do developing countries need from Global Financial Architecture Reform?"⁹⁹. The event discussed the main elements of a global financial architecture reform that can foster climate-resilient development for developing countries,

⁹⁶ <https://unctad.org/meeting/cop28-debrief-relevant-outcomes-and-road-cop29>.

⁹⁷ <https://unctad.org/meeting/workshop-development-priorities-collective-quantified-goal-climate-finance-fit-developing>.

⁹⁸ <https://unctad.org/meeting/cop29-trade-and-investment-house-event-development-priorities-new-collective-quantified>.

⁹⁹ <https://unctad.org/meeting/cop29-trade-and-investment-house-event-what-do-developing-countries-need-global-financial>.

in the context of the NCQG negotiations and the Sharm el-Sheikh Dialogue on Article 2.1c.

450. In 2024, Brazil hosted the Presidency of the G20. Considering synergies and the important roles that Brazil is covering as G20 Presidency in 2024, BRICS Chairship and COP30 Presidency in 2025, UNCTAD was seen as a strategic partner that could support in some areas of these responsibilities. Because of its expertise, UNCTAD was formally invited to be a knowledge partner on the Taskforce on Global Mobilization against Climate Change (TF-CLIMA) during Brazil's Presidency of the G20. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed in Geneva in June 2024, with the intention that "UNCTAD expertise in trade and development can be leveraged to support a just and effective response to climate change". UNCTAD committed to providing technical expertise to the 2024 Brazilian G20 Presidency.

451. Concretely, UNCTAD participated in the four meetings of TF-CLIMA on 11 and 12 March virtually, 4 and 5 April in Rio de Janeiro, 11 and 12 July in Belem, and 24 October in Washington DC. Furthermore, UNCTAD produced two written inputs. The first document "A path less travelled: making finance flow into climate resilient development" argues that, in a context of dominance of actors in the global financial landscape which is ill-suited to deliver the transformative change needed, it is essential to move beyond the narrative that the primary role of public finance is to subsidize private finance for the delivery of public goods and services. The second document "Banking on 1.5°C: what role for Central Banks?" argues that Central Banks and other financial regulators will have to take a more active role to respond to the challenges of climate change, expanding their current narrow interpretation of the mandate to provide price and financial stability.

452. **Results and impact.** A survey was conducted among participants of the workshop on Development priorities for a collective quantified goal on climate finance fit for developing countries' needs organized under this project. Ten out of 16 survey respondents were very satisfied and thought that it was helpful for their role. One comment highlighted that the workshop "provided a comprehensive overview of selected areas of negotiation under the NCQG, including a multidisciplinary approach including history of negotiations, economic analysis and political considerations", with insightful presentations. An interest in this kind of meetings continues to increase, which emphasizes the growing relevance of UNCTAD in the climate space and the need to strengthen this work.

453. At the closing of COP29, countries agreed to a New Collective Quantified Goal on climate finance that will shape talks for the next 10 years. The new goal calls on developed countries to take the lead in mobilizing at least \$300 billion per year for developing countries, within the context of a wider goal involving all actors to scale up financing to developing countries to at least \$1.3 trillion per year by 2035. While far short of developing countries' needs, countries must be applauded for their determination to find an outcome, and with sustained momentum, this foundation can help ensure that 2025 becomes a pivotal year for financing climate and development goals. UNCTAD contributed to that outcome by providing climate negotiators with knowledge of development impacts of possible outcomes of the negotiations.

454. The G20 Brazilian Presidency's Task Force for the Global Mobilization against Climate Change concluded in October 2024 with the adoption of its Ministerial and Outcome documents. TF-CLIMA promoted debates about the alignment of the financial sector to the long-term goals of the Paris Agreement. It did so with the participation of governments, financial regulators, commercial and development banks, international financial institutions, institutional investors, UN agencies and other financial actors. UNCTAD played a prominent role in that process and had an influence on this important discussion.

3.2. *UNCTAD Sustainable Development Initiatives – Debt and Development Initiative*

455. **Development context.** Recent external shocks—including the Covid-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, the deepening climate crisis, and escalating geopolitical tensions—have compounded the debt challenges facing many developing countries. It is a critical moment now to address these challenges as many of these countries are in, or at high risk of, debt

distress. Lengthy and uncertain debt restructuring processes and the lack of progress in multilateral initiatives to address debt challenges highlight the need for fundamental changes in the global debt architecture. Timely and orderly debt crisis resolution is required to ensure that countries can commit their resources on sustainable development. Debt transparency from all parties is essential for preventing and resolving debt crises as it allows governments, creditors, and other stakeholders to make informed decisions about borrowing and lending. Moreover, debt sustainability assessments that integrate development goals are critical for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

456. **Objectives and features.** Under the project on “UNCTAD Sustainable Development Initiatives” funded by the Foundation to Promote Open Society, UNCTAD supports developing countries on debt and development issues, one of the three components of the project. The overarching goal of this component is to assist developing countries in attaining long-term debt sustainability through an improved and more equitable debt resolution architecture, enhanced debt transparency from all parties, and debt sustainability assessment with integrated development goals. This requires a sustained effort to generate political and intellectual momentum for launching reforms.

457. In pursuit of this goal, this component aims to strengthen coordination among non-creditor countries by building a collaborative network, establishing an intergovernmental platform to preserve the shared knowledge and experiences, facilitating peer learning, and supporting efforts to amplify a common and research-informed voice of non-creditor countries in the global discourse. Revitalizing UNCTAD Principles on Promoting Responsible Sovereign Lending and Borrowing (PRSLB) in the current global context is also a critical milestone toward realizing the goal of this component. UNCTAD will lead research efforts to support debt initiatives for sustainable development and stay engaged in discussions on all proposals at the national and international levels that are conducive to meaningful reforms for a more equitable debt architecture, taking into account the needs of both lenders and borrowers.

458. **Outputs.** In 2024, UNCTAD held two meetings to advance coordination between non-creditor countries, as part of the ongoing series of non-creditor country meetings. The session on 1 February 2024 had a special focus on preparing countries for negotiations at the Global Sovereign Debt Roundtable (GSDR), particularly regarding the role of credit rating agencies (CRAs), leading to subsequent research by UNCTAD. The research findings were presented during the next meeting on 26 November 2024, setting the stage for a constructive discussion between non-creditor countries, experts, and CRA representatives. The two sessions in 2024 have seen active engagement from non-creditor countries, including Egypt, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Ghana, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Zambia and Malawi.

459. In 2024, two research works were prepared within the component:

- (a) Credit Rating Agencies, Developing Countries and Bias: A Policy Review;
- (b) Sovereign Debt Vulnerabilities in Developing Countries.

460. The policy review on CRA was requested following the non-creditor meeting organized by UNCTAD in February 2024. It investigates the extent to which global capital markets rely on sovereign credit ratings, assesses possible rating bias against developing countries, and puts forward UNCTAD recommendations. The other piece was part of UNCTAD inputs to the G20 International Financial Architecture Working Group (IFAWG) during the Brazilian presidency, outlining the sovereign debt vulnerabilities in developing countries over the sovereign debt life cycle, including debt acquisition, access to markets, debt servicing, repayment, and resilience, and the impact of financial integration levels on such vulnerabilities. Another active area of research within this component in 2024 was UNCTAD engagement with countries that have recently undergone a debt restructuring, as well as countries with valuable insights into other debt-related issues, to produce analysis of their experiences. This process seeks to serve as a valuable resource for policymakers, experts, and other stakeholders involved in debt restructuring efforts.

461. In addition, UNCTAD engaged in key international fora to disseminate research findings and participate in international discussions, including UN General Assembly,

Financing for Development (FfD) Forum, the Group of 20 Forum, and the IMF-World Bank Spring and Annual Meetings. These engagements aim to build political momentum and raise awareness of the pressing need to address the ongoing debt and development crisis. UNCTAD was actively involved throughout the G20 Brazilian presidency in 2024, particularly contributing through its two research works, “Sovereign debt vulnerabilities in developing countries” and “Sovereign Debt-for-Development Swaps”. The initiatives within this component were also presented in IMF-WB Spring and Annual Meetings and various UN fora, including the UN General Assembly, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, and Preparatory Process for the 4th International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4).

462. **Results and impact.** The series of non-creditor country meetings is to support knowledge sharing and coordination among these countries, while also serving as a platform for policymakers to obtain views and insights from stakeholders and experts. The two sessions held in 2024 saw open and constructive conversations among representatives of non-creditor countries, debt experts, and representatives of relevant institutions such as the Bretton Woods institutions and the CRAs. Specifically, the meeting of non-creditor countries on 1 February 2024 was effective to prepare countries for their negotiation at the GSDR meeting in February 2024. The following meeting on 26 November progressed this momentum and encouraged the exchanges between the non-creditor countries and CRA representatives.

463. UNCTAD research within this component raised awareness of the current debt and development crisis through various aspects. The report “Credit Rating Agencies, Developing Countries and Bias: A Policy Review” was presented at the third non-creditor meeting in November 2024, with inputs from debt experts, CRA representatives (Moody’s and S&P), and delegates from Zambia, Ethiopia, Egypt, Sri Lanka, and Suriname. With comprehensive inputs from diverse perspectives, UNCTAD communicated this report to a broad audience of key stakeholders to drive informed discussions of CRAs, which is currently at the forefront of global debt conversations and makes this report both timely and relevant. UNCTAD presented its analysis of sovereign debt vulnerabilities in developing countries in various international fora, highlighting the current debt and development crisis and exploring viable policy responses.

464. UNCTAD engagement across different international platforms has driven significant and varied impacts. UNCTAD strengthened its presence at the G20 through its active involvement during the Brazilian presidency. In addition to the study on the sovereign debt vulnerabilities in developing countries in response to the Brazilian G20 presidency’s focus on debt swaps, UNCTAD provided analysis of the use of sovereign debt swaps in development finance, based on a database developed regarding sovereign debt swaps. UNCTAD contributions to the G20 discussions remain steady and sustained. The establishment of the Cost of Capital Commission by South Africa’s G20 presidency in 2025 reflects the increased awareness resulting from UNCTAD work on the cost of development finance.

3.3. *UNCTAD Sustainable Development Initiatives – Climate finance for development*

465. **Development context.** Delivering sustainable development strategies will not succeed without scaling-up climate financing. Even by conservative estimates, annual financing for climate goals is orders of magnitude too low. Before the pandemic, UNCTAD estimated that delivering both climate and development goals demanded closer to \$2.5 trillion of annual financing. The subsequent failure to meet this figure and the effects of multiple and compounding economic shocks will have likely pushed this number higher; and with 60 per cent of Low-Income Countries and 30 per cent of Emerging Markets in or on the edge of debt distress, the space to mobilise domestic resources has diminished further. The paucity of affordable climate and development finance, increasingly unsustainable external debt burdens and rising climate impacts are forming a vicious cycle of perpetual vulnerability and economic stagnation in many developing countries. Undertaking the significant investments in mitigation and adaptation to achieve climate-

resilient structural transformation will require many developing countries to take on more debt, but this is neither realistic nor desirable under current financing arrangements.

466. In 2024, at the 29th Conference of the Parties (COP 29) in Baku, Azerbaijan, Parties agreed a New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) for climate finance from a floor of \$100 billion per year (decision -/CMA.6). Key discussions around it at the multilateral level involved the interplay of development finance, debt, macroeconomics, and climate change. As the previous COP outcome texts highlighted, tackling climate change will require a transformation of the financial system and its structure and processes. Underpinning the successful delivery of adequate financing is thus an enabling multilateralism, equipped with the governance and institutional norms, practices and regulations necessary to respond to contemporary challenges and drive climate-resilient development.

467. **Objectives and features.** Under one component of the project on “UNCTAD Sustainable Development Initiatives” funded by the Foundation to Promote Open society, UNCTAD assists developing countries on climate finance for development. Its focus is on outcomes that prioritize development goals, ensuring developing countries have access to the financial resources they need, including financial resources to adapt to the impacts of climate change. The component also promotes a reform necessary in global economic governance to ensure that macroeconomic policy, development finance, and regional and global economic coordination are aligned with the goals of the Paris Agreement and the SDGs, supporting just transitions to a low-carbon, climate-resilient future.

468. UNCTAD aims to help build a consensus around a New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) for climate finance that can reflect the real needs of developing countries and that can be achieved alongside a climate and development retrofit for the global financial architecture and economic cooperation more broadly. This overall objective would be achieved through 1) new economic analysis of global climate financing needs; 2) capacity building with finance ministries and climate negotiators; and 3) outreach activities with different audiences to promote new research findings and policy recommendations.

469. **Outputs.** The outputs 2024 under the component “Climate finance for development” included the production of a technical report based on economic modelling; one side event during the Bonn Climate Change Conference to present the preliminary results; one workshop with government officials to present the final report; dissemination activities related to the findings of the report; and analysis on the NCQG outcome.

(a) In 2024, UNCTAD produced estimates for a new climate finance goal to be agreed at the UN Climate Change Conference COP29 in Baku based on developing countries’ needs and priorities using the UN Global Policy Model (UN GPM). The GPM attempts a complex and realistic representation of the interaction between the climate and the economy, inspired by the concept of strong sustainability and attempting to address just transition considerations from a multidimensional perspective. The result is a proposal for the New Collective Quantified Goal on climate finance (NCQG) of 1.4 per cent of developed countries’ GDP from 2025. Therefore, it is proposed that the NCQG contribution target for developed countries would be USD 0.89 trillion in 2025, reaching USD 1.46 trillion by the fifth year of implementation.

(b) By the meetings of Subsidiary Bodies (SB60) in Bonn in June 2024, UNCTAD was able to present preliminary results of the modelling exercise. UNCTAD macroeconomic analysis indicates that reducing emissions to stabilize the climate, in line with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) scenarios, requires profound changes in the global energy mix as well as in the composition and size of investment. The preliminary results were presented and discussed on 6 June, during the SB60 side event “NCQG: Bringing accountability, trust and developing country needs to climate finance”¹⁰⁰ co-hosted with The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI, from India) and Transforma (Colombia).

(c) On 23 October, UNCTAD organized a Roundtable titled “Countdown to a New Climate Finance Goal: Priorities and Next Steps” on the sidelines of the IMF and WB

¹⁰⁰ <https://unctad.org/meeting/bonn-climate-change-conference-sb60-side-event-ncqg-bringing-accountability-trust-and>.

Annual meetings in Washington D.C.. The meeting brought together a small group of experts, civil society stakeholders and Party representatives to explore the NCQG in the context of the systemic challenges facing developing countries and just transition pathways. The event of the Annual Meetings presented an ideal opportunity to convene a group of experts to discuss climate, development and finance issues, and consider priorities for a transformative climate finance regime.

(d) The report “The New Collective Quantified Goal on climate finance. Quantitative and qualitative elements”¹⁰¹ was published in November 2024. On 4 November it was launched online: Presentation of the report on the New Collective Quantified Goal on climate finance: Quantitative and qualitative elements.¹⁰² The report was accompanied by three summaries : The new collective quantified goal on climate finance (report summary); Qualitative elements; and A quantum to match the climate challenge.

(e) UNCTAD published two blog analysis to comment the NCQG and COP29 outcomes: “Countries agree \$300 billion by 2035 for new climate finance goal – what next?” and “Key takeaways from COP29 and the road ahead for developing countries”.¹⁰³

(f) UNCTAD also launched one news story in three languages: “A new climate finance goal is on the horizon. How can developing countries benefit?”¹⁰⁴ in English and translated in French and in Spanish.

470. **Results and impact.** At COP 29 in Baku, Azerbaijan (11–22 November 2024), the NCQG negotiation was at the centre, with spillover effects on other workstreams that depended on the finance discussion. The UNCTAD report was widely used during negotiations and debates on the NCQG. UNCTAD staff disseminated its results widely, during strategy meetings, public events and bilateral consultations with government representatives. For instance, UNCTAD was invited to present the report to the COP 29 side event entitled “Last push for an ambitious and equitable NCQG that meets developing country needs”, organised by the Zurich Climate Resilience Alliance and the Overseas Development Institute. The team was regularly engaging with negotiators, country teams and civil society actors in order to maximise its impact. At the closing of COP29, Parties agreed to a goal of \$300 billion per year mobilized by developed countries for developing countries by 2035, within the context of a wider goal involving all actors to scale up financing to developing countries to at least \$1.3 trillion per year by 2035. A potential opportunity for further engagement comes with the establishment of the “Baku to Belem Roadmap for \$1.3 trillion”. The Roadmap will see COP 29 and 30 Presidencies, Azerbaijan and Brazil, work together through 2025 to present a menu of options at COP 30 to raise resources to get to USD 1.3 trillion for developing countries.

471. In 2025, UNCTAD will strengthen its work around the Roadmap according to developing countries’ needs and priorities, through engagement with relevant stakeholders such as the Azeri COP 29 and the Brazilian COP 30 Presidencies; country representatives and negotiators; Civil Society Organizations (CSOs); and other UN agencies. The update of the technical report will be adapted to the new circumstances.

3.4. *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.*

472. **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

¹⁰¹ <https://unctad.org/publication/new-collective-quantified-goal-climate-finance-quantitative-and-qualitative-elements>.

¹⁰² <https://unctad.org/meeting/presentation-report-new-collective-quantified-goal-climate-finance-quantitative-and-#:~:text=A%20main%20focus%20at%20the,transition%20to%20low-carbon%20economies>.

¹⁰³ <https://unctad.org/news/countries-agree-300-billion-2035-new-climate-finance-goal-what-next>.

¹⁰⁴ <https://unctad.org/news/new-climate-finance-goal-horizon-how-can-developing-countries-benefit#:~:text=Instead%20of%20exacerbating%20debt%20burdens,implement%20national%20climate%20action%20plans>.

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.

473. **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 jointly 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.

474. 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) an 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.

475. **Outputs and results.** The project's implementation started in 2022 and will end in December 2025. In 2024, the following project's outputs were finalized:

(a) Updated Dashboard of the Sustainable Development Financing Assessment Framework (SDFA), which enables countries to input country-level data and visualize the impact of varying climate financing strategies on their external and public sector financial positions. The dashboard provides a powerful tool for policymakers to compare and contrast these strategies with visual aids.

(b) Climate adaptation and mitigation report for each beneficiary country that accesses the climate-related investment needs and funding gaps, the potential returns on investments in adaptation and mitigation, and the costs of inaction.

(c) Team missions to the two African beneficiary countries. The missions to Cabo Verde and the Union of the Comoros occurred in April and October 2024, respectively. During the missions, UNCTAD project team met with stakeholders from the government, the private sector, UN agencies and other international organizations. Prior to the meetings, a questionnaire was sent out to stakeholders from the government, the private sector and civil society organizations to identify blockages and impediments that inhibit the uptake of innovative financial instruments and identify the regulatory, institutional, and market-related changes required to encourage these innovations.

(d) SDFA reports for the African beneficiary countries, providing country analysis of the financial requirements and funding gaps for achieving greener, more equal, and sustainable development and more equitable societies while reliably meeting external financial obligations.

(e) Country studies for the four beneficiary countries, providing detailed country analysis of the regulatory, institutional and market-related changes required to facilitate innovative financial instruments.

4. SME participation in regional value chains

4.1. *Adopting policy incentives and innovative instruments for SMEs participation in African regional value chains*

476. **Development context.** The potential of the African private sector, which is dominated by small and medium size enterprises (SMEs), and its role in diversifying economies and improving competitiveness is critical and will continue to grow as it is increasingly being called upon to provide innovative and efficient ways of transforming countries and supporting the Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, the private sector, especially in vulnerable African countries, faces tremendous challenges to survive, grow, transform and be resilient, which limit their potential to drive structural change and sustainable development.

477. **Objectives and features.** The project “Enhancing the capacity of African vulnerable countries in adopting policy incentives and innovative instruments for SMEs participation in regional value chains”, financed by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Sub-Fund, aims to increase the role of SMEs in the manufacturing and supply of value-added goods and services. It will do so by building the knowledge and capacity of select African countries (Benin, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Central African Republic, Togo, Uganda) to adopt policy incentives and innovate instruments (e.g., digital and technology tools for data analysis, market information, access to financing and businesses opportunities) that can strengthen the ability of SMEs to produce and trade efficiently, and at scale, towards regional markets. This will contribute to the creation of new market niches and expansion of cross-border trade under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). The project will directly contribute to SDGs 1, 5, 8, 9 and 17.

478. The project will be implemented by UNCTAD in close collaboration with UNECA, UNDP, UNCDF and RCOs in target countries. It will provide policy advice on the necessary tools and instruments to promote higher productivity activities and support the process of industrial agglomeration; conduct research and analysis of industrial policies, value chain mapping, regional markets opportunities, and determinants of sustainable digital and financing technologies; design and pilot test statistical standards, data collection and analysis, and transactional trade, services and financial data through innovation and new technologies; and build stronger partnership and coordination for the expansion of value-added cross-border trade and regional industry clusters under the AfCFTA.

479. **Outputs.** On 21 November 2024, UNCTAD, in collaboration with ECA Subregional Office for Central Africa (SRO-CA) and the Ministry of Trade and Industry of the Central African Republic (CAR), concluded a national stakeholder consultation workshop in Bangui, to launch the project in CAR (32 participants were in attendance, of which 5 women.). In the margins of the workshop, UNCTAD conducted consultative meetings with the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC) and the Ministry of Economy, Planning, and International Cooperation of CAR in order to gather inputs for the national impact study on SMEs’ participation in regional production and supply chains.

480. National stakeholder consultation meetings (bilateral) for the launch of the project were held in Lome Togo from 26 to 27 August 2024.

481. A national stakeholder consultation workshop for the launch of the project in Praia, Cabo Verde was held on 12–14 October 2024. Seventy participants were in attendance (in person and online), of which 30 were women.

482. From 10 to 12 December 2024, UNCTAD, in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Energy, and the Ministry of Finance and Business Development of Cabo Verde organized a joint workshop to validate an UNCTAD study titled *Cabo Verde: Opportunities and Challenges for Expansion of SMEs Exports in the Context of the AfCFTA* and the AfCFTA National Strategy of Cabo Verde.

483. The workshop discussed the challenges and opportunities of SMEs in exporting to Africa and was attended by 63 people (23 women) including national stakeholders,

development partners, and the private sector. The outcome of this workshop will contribute to a robust AfCFTA implementation strategy, ensuring Cabo Verde's SMEs are integrated into the process. The study on the integration of SMEs was shared with Pro-Empresa (the public institution mandated to promote the development of Cape Verdean micro, small and medium-sized enterprises through mechanisms that facilitate access to technical assistance, financing and innovation, ensuring competitiveness to the national economy), and the United Nations Resident Coordinator Office (RCO).

484. In addition, UNCTAD developed an Excel-based data analysis tool to help beneficiary countries identify niche markets, value chains, and diversification opportunities, which will be peer reviewed in subsequent phases of the project.

485. **Results and impact.** 2024 marked the first year of implementation of the project. Key achievements include the organization of national stakeholders' consultation workshops in Cabo Verde and Central African Republic, in collaboration with UN partners. These workshops served to officially launch the project in each country, present its objectives and planned activities as well as engage national stakeholders in dialogues on existing policies and programmes to identify synergies for effective implementation of the project. Held in a hybrid format (both in-person and online), the consultations established an initial platform for exchanging ideas and discussing methodologies for national policy dialogues, research and analysis, and capacity-building initiatives.

486. The expected outcomes of the project in target countries are enhanced research and policy analysis on inclusive industrial development; SMEs' improved access to knowledge and information on industries and markets (domestic and regional) and enhanced production capabilities for value-added products and services; and increased participation of SMEs in value-added activities and regional trade. The expected results of the project will contribute to economic diversification, income generation and sustainable development prospects in the target countries.

III. Theme C: Fostering economic efficiency, improving governance

487. 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.

488. 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.

489. 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 2024 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

490. **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.¹⁰⁵ Its outcome, the “*Revised Methodological Guidelines for Peer Reviews*”¹⁰⁶ 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.

491. **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 Conferences¹⁰⁷ of the United Nations Set of Multilaterally Agreed Equitable Principles and Rules for the Control of Restrictive Business Practices¹⁰⁸. 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.

492. **Outputs.** In 2024, UNCTAD conducted the voluntary peer review of competition law and policy of Egypt, which was self-funded and supported by the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). For the voluntary peer reviews of consumer protection law and policy, UNCTAD conducted a report to assess the implementation of the recommendations issued so far since 2018.

493. *Impact assessment of UNCTAD voluntary peer reviews of consumer protection law and policy.*¹⁰⁹ For the voluntary peer reviews of consumer protection law and policy,

¹⁰⁵ 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.

¹⁰⁶ 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).

¹⁰⁷ <https://unctad.org/meeting/eighth-united-nations-conference-competition-and-consumer-protection>.

¹⁰⁸ <https://unctad.org/topic/competition-and-consumer-protection/the-united-nations-set-of-principles-on-competition>.

¹⁰⁹ https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/cicplpd40_en.pdf.

UNCTAD undertook an assessment of the implementation of recommendations from five of the six countries that have been peer-reviewed so far: Morocco (2018), Indonesia (2019), Peru (2020), Chile (2021) and Thailand (2022). UNCTAD is the first international organization to facilitate voluntary peer reviews for consumer protection law and policy. After conducting six peer reviews, UNCTAD undertook an assessment to evaluate the implementation of the peer review recommendations. The assessment drew conclusions that would enhance UNCTAD 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. The impact assessment of UNCTAD voluntary peer reviews of consumer protection law and policy revealed that, on average, 61 per cent of the recommendations have been implemented by the reviewed countries. The implementation rate for legal and public policy framework recommendations stands at 53 per cent, while institutional framework recommendations show a higher implementation rate of 66 per cent.

494. For example, Chile has advanced financial education efforts including developing guidelines on financial literacy and education. Moreover, Chile formulated e-commerce regulations, enhancing product safety rules, and proposing a law to grant the National Consumer Service sanctioning powers, though legislative amendments on class actions and damages remain pending. However, Chile faced delays in legal reforms due to political circumstances. Indonesia has implemented 74 per cent of the peer review recommendations, including proposing a new consumer protection bill that refines the legal framework, enhances protections for online and cross-border transactions, and introduces an integrated electronic complaints system. The National Consumer Protection Agency has also improved inter-agency cooperation, expanded training initiatives for businesses and government officials, and strengthened its participation in regional and international consumer protection networks. Morocco is in the process of adopting a new law that incorporates several peer review recommendations, including expanding the definition of unfair commercial practices, addressing e-commerce challenges, and strengthening the investigative and sanctioning powers of the Directorate for Consumer Protection. Peru reported having integrated recommendations into its 2030 national consumer protection and defence policy, including the protection of vulnerable and disadvantaged consumers and improvements in e-commerce regulations. Thailand has made progress in implementing peer review recommendations by amending legislation to better protect vulnerable consumers, addressing e-commerce challenges, and redefining the concept of unsafe products. The Office of the Consumer Protection Board has also improved consumer dispute resolution mechanisms, upgraded digital infrastructure for complaint handling, and reinforced consumer education initiatives, though some key legal reforms, such as the revision of consumer contract regulations, remain pending. Gabon, the most recent peer-reviewed country, reported using the recommendations to establish a national consumer protection strategy.

495. Despite these achievements, most countries cited budgetary constraints as a major limitation in fully implementing recommendations, while the complexity of legal reforms and institutional coordination further slowed progress. Countries, including Indonesia, Peru and Thailand, highlighted the importance of UNCTAD technical assistance in overcoming these challenges. In cases where technical cooperation projects were implemented, such as the “Delivering Digital Trading Infrastructure and Online Dispute Resolution (DODR) for Consumers” project in Indonesia and Thailand, countries reported a higher implementation rate. Political dynamics and shifting national priorities also influenced the extent to which recommendations were adopted, with Chile noting that consumer protection had been deprioritized compared to other public policies.

496. During the presentation of the assessment, at the eighth session of the IGE on Consumer Protection Law and Policy, the delegations of Chile, Gabon, Indonesia, Morocco, and Thailand expressed their commitment to strengthening consumer protection frameworks and shared insights on their progress in implementing peer review recommendations.

497. *Voluntary peer review of competition law and policy of Egypt.*¹¹⁰ The voluntary peer review of competition law and policy of Egypt was held in July 2024. The peer review report analysed the Egyptian competition law and its accompanying Executive Regulations by assessing the substantive aspects of the law relating to the prohibition of anti-competitive behaviour and merger control. It also assessed the Egyptian Competition Authority (ECA) as an institution, namely regarding its independence, powers, and case record, as well as its broader competition advocacy role. Based on the analysis, it provided recommendations, including a clear distinction between agreements that were anticompetitive per se and other types of agreements; exclusive jurisdiction to enforce competition law across all sectors; enhancement of cooperation between the authority and sector regulators; a new methodology for fines, increasing the amount of fines and providing more discretion to the ECA; providing the Board of the ECA to impose administrative monetary sanctions; and strengthening the independence of the ECA.

498. During the presentation of the peer review report at the twenty-second session of the IGE on Competition Law and Policy, the delegation of Egypt expressed the support for the recommendations.

499. UNCTAD subsequently presented a proposal for a technical assistance project to implement the recommendations. The project would involve updating the competition law of Egypt, to address existing gaps based on the recommendations, as well as developing awareness-raising and advocacy programmes for relevant stakeholders, such as sector regulators, on the benefits of competition law and policy.

500. For the voluntary peer reviews of competition law and policy, UNCTAD is conducting a report on a brief assessment of 20 years of the exercise that took place for the first time in 2005.

501. **Results and impacts.** The UNCTAD secretariat outlined a tailor-made technical assistance project for Egypt, for the implementation of the peer review recommendations, and invited other authorities and development partners to assist Egypt in improving policies, enhancing enforcement capacities, and developing a competition and consumer protection culture. In December 2024, UNCTAD hosted an event to disseminate the findings and recommendations emanating from the report, and to raise awareness among stakeholders on the importance of implementing the recommended actions for Egypt.¹¹¹ The event was attended by high-level government officials, particularly sector regulators and policymakers, as well as the representatives of the business community. The event was covered by the media to amplify outreach and raise awareness among citizens. On this occasion, on the following day of the event, UNCTAD and ECA co-organized a training for judges and counsellors of judicial bodies and entities, to enhance institutional capacity for the effective enforcement of competition law and policy in Egypt.

502. The assessment of UNCTAD voluntary peer reviews of consumer protection law and policy demonstrated positive results and impacts in the reviewed countries, with an overall implementation rate of 61 per cent for peer review recommendations. Countries such as Indonesia, Peru and Thailand have integrated key reforms into their legal and institutional frameworks, addressing issues such as e-commerce regulations, dispute resolution mechanisms, and protections for vulnerable consumers. Institutional capacity has been strengthened through increased training for officials, improved consumer complaint systems, and greater inter-agency and international cooperation. The assessment also highlighted the role of UNCTAD technical assistance, which has been instrumental in supporting legal reforms and institutional improvements, particularly in countries like Indonesia and Thailand, where targeted capacity-building projects have led to higher implementation rates.

503. Regarding the voluntary peer review on consumer protection law and policy of Gabon, which took place in 2023, UNCTAD and the Directorate General for Competition, Consumption and Fraud Repression of Gabon hosted a series of public and private events in

¹¹⁰ <https://unctad.org/publication/voluntary-peer-review-competition-law-and-policy-egypt>.

¹¹¹ <https://unctad.org/meeting/dissemination-unctad-voluntary-peer-review-competition-law-and-policy-egypt>.

Gabon in February 2024.¹¹² The purpose was to share the findings and recommendations from the review and to increase awareness of the key policymakers 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.

504. As a follow-up to 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>
ARG/0T/MAQ	eRegistrations Lomas de Zamora Argentina	2024–	Argentina
BEN/0T/MAT	eRegistration Benin Phase II	2023–	Kingdom of the Netherlands
CMR/0T/IBH	EU-Extension du système my business.cm au Cameroun	2020–	European Union
CMR/0T/JBD	E-registrations Cameroon Phase III	2021–	Cameroon
KEN/0T/MBI	eRegistrations Kenya Investment Single Window	2023–	Kingdom of the Netherlands
LES/0T/NAI	Integrated online Business Facilitation Window Lesotho	2024–	Lesotho
LIB/0T/LAT	eRegistration Libya	2022–	Expertise France
PSE/0T/MAE	The Innovative Private Sector Development Project Palestine	2023–	DAI Global UK LTD
TOG/0T/KAM	Renforcement des capacités du Ministère de la Promotion de l'Investissement (MPI) au Togo	2021–	United Nations Development Programme
INT/0T/6AT	Business Facilitation Multi-donor Fund	2006–	Multi-donors
INT/0T/6AT2	ITC Trade Facilitation Programme in Central Asia & the overall region	2023–	International Trade Centre
INT/0T/HCI2	Strategic Partnership the Netherlands – (linked with THCE04)	2023–	Kingdom of the Netherlands

¹¹² <https://unctad.org/meeting/dissemination-unctads-voluntary-peer-review-consumer-protection-law-and-policy-gabon>.

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
INT/0T/MAV	Business and Investment Facilitation Capacities ACP countries	2023–	European Union
ROA-2427 (B16)	Attracting Finance and Investment for the Energy Transition in Africa	2024–	Development Account

505. **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. UNCTAD has developed a series of web-based digital government systems and digital public infrastructure 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 train their colleagues to progressively make entire governments digital, using its easy-to-customize platform that does not require programming skills. Finally, it provides essential digital public infrastructure allowing governments to develop e-services across all ministries.

506. 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.

507. **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.

508. 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) reaffirms 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”.

509. **Outputs.** In 2024, the programme benefited 17 countries and territories. Online single windows and new online services were developed, implemented or further enhanced in Angola, Benin, Bhutan, Colombia, Jordan, Kenya, Lesotho, Mali, Nigeria, State of Palestine, The Gambia, Syria and Zimbabwe 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.

510. National experts in Angola, Benin, Bhutan, Cameroon, Cuba, El Salvador, Jordan, Kenya, Lesotho, Mali, Rwanda, Palestine, Syria, The Gambia have trained civil servants of

their countries or provinces on the use of UNCTAD business facilitation tools and methodologies.

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

512. Below are some highlights in 2024.

513. In Argentina, the Municipality of Lomas de Zamora, upgraded its online single window (SW) for business registration and operations to the latest version of the eRegistrations system. This new, high-performance version enables the SW operators to configure and modify online services through a user-friendly no-code platform, eliminating their reliance on external IT service providers. Municipal civil servants were trained in service design and file processing.

514. In Angola, UNCTAD is supporting the implementation of the Sustainable Investment Facilitation Agreement with the EU (with EU funding). This involves simplifying and digitalising procedures for investors including their integration across different ministries. Service design workshops took place in 2024.

515. In Cameroon, UNCTAD supported the implementation of EasyBusiness.cm an online digital single window for business registration built on the eRegistrations no-code platform. As part of the initiative, UNCTAD equipped 10 regional one-stop business registration canterers, managed by the National Agency for the Promotion of SMEs (APME), with all necessary IT infrastructure. It also provided comprehensive training to local staff to ensure effective use and delivery of the new digital services. In parallel, UNCTAD collaborated closely with the Government, particularly the National Treasury, to integrate the national online payment system into the platform.

516. In Colombia, UNCTAD in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment is completing its system for 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.

517. UNCTAD is assisting The Gambia with accelerating business registration through a digital investment single window. International and local businesses will use the eRegistration system to obtain online required authorizations to start and get operating.

518. In Kenya, UNCTAD configured the Kenya Investment Window (KIW) system, and it was made available for soft launch. To date, the KIW mirrors Kenya Investment Authority (KenInvest)'s current facilitation services online, such as issuing recommendation letters for taxpayer registration, work permits, local bank account openings, and tax exemptions. Investor registration and investment certificates procedures have also been digitized, bringing the total services to 6. The services were co-developed with KenInvest staff using the eRegistrations no-code platform, with weekly programming and design sessions held.

519. In Mali, UNCTAD, together with the Ministry of Health and the Employers completed the service design for a digital licensing process for the commercialization of pharmaceuticals. The system will enable the online licensing of the import, distribution and local production of pharmaceuticals. Public launch is planned for Spring 2025. 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.

520. In the State of Palestine, UNCTAD, in collaboration with the Ministry of National Economy, successfully completed and launched a new fully digital Companies Registry, with the official inauguration by the Prime Minister. The system enables investors and entrepreneurs to create, modify, float, merge, acquire and close any type of company online, with shareholders able to individually approve decisions. This provides Palestine with one of the world's most advanced business registries.

521. In Syria, UNCTAD, in collaboration with the Ministry of Internal Economy, successfully completed the digitalization of company creation. This initiative is a significant step in regenerating the country's economy as it streamlines the registration process, enabling both national and foreign entrepreneurs to set up their business swiftly. This project was undertaken jointly with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA).

522. In Lesotho, UNCTAD launched the simplification of key procedures, including company incorporation, business permit for foreigners, business registration, trade or industrial license based on business activity. A prototype of the simplified services was launched, with implementation scheduled for 2025.

523. In Libya four services were designed for the online reservation of business names, companies' registration, tax number registration and income tax declaration. The eRegistrations system and the Generic Database builder systems were installed on a local server hosted at the Libyan General Information Authority. Civil servants were trained on the design of online services and on creating user-friendly and easily configurable databases.

524. In Benin, UNCTAD, in collaboration with APIEx (Agency for Investment and Export Promotion) configured a digital Single Window for Investment. The new Single Window will allow businesses to comply with the requirements of local Special Economic Zones and to benefit from investment incentives.

525. The joint UNCTAD-UNITAR Digital Government Academy started training courses for government digital service designers. The partnership has also been used to jointly bid for digital government projects.

526. **Results and impact.** Over 7 million people visited information portals worldwide in 2024, enabling the creation of about 100,000 new businesses through online licensing. In addition, 750 government officials, 53 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. In Benin, for example, business registrations tripled through the online system. It is estimated that this includes a considerable amount of business formalisation, leading to better quality jobs. Further, it has shown to have a clear impact on women and young entrepreneurs as well as rural and vulnerable communities.

C3 Trade facilitation

Table C3

Trade facilitation

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
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 Ireland
RAB/0T/MAX	Strengthening Abu Dhabi's trade facilitation committee	2023–	United Arab Emirates
RAF/0T/LAP	Strengthening Capacity of the National Trade Facilitation Committees in the	2022–	World Bank

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
ECOWAS Region			
RAS/0T/NAA	Capacity Building for EAC Trade Portals Connectivity	2022–	African Development Bank
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

527. **Development context.** Trade of goods is crucial for developing and least developed countries (LDCs) as part of their socio-economic development and in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Trade facilitation reforms expedite cross-border trade, making it faster, cheaper, and more transparent. When implemented correctly, these reforms enhance compliance controls, ensuring the collection of duties and taxes while maintaining the safety standards of imported goods.

528. Trade facilitation follows principles of simplification, standardization, harmonization, and modernization, primarily achieved through digitalization and cooperation. The entry into force of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) in 2017 places it at the heart of national trade policy, significantly influencing national development frameworks.

529. As of 21 February 2025, 160 out of 166 WTO Members have ratified the TFA. Its provisions are observed not only in national implementations but also across many regional agreements, such as the African Continental Free Trade Area.

530. Beyond enhancing trade across borders, trade facilitation assists in improving government efficiency, promotes good governance, safeguards product standards and compliance, aids small cross-border traders - often women - in entering the formal sector, and facilitates job creation and digitalization. These reforms are essential for developing countries and LDCs to integrate into and benefit from global supply chains.

531. Trade facilitation reforms contribute directly to achieving several SDGs, including Goal 10 (reducing inequality) and Goal 16 (promoting inclusive societies). Furthermore, UNCTAD support for national trade facilitation committees (NTFCs) aligns with Goal 17, which emphasizes effective public, private, and civil society partnerships.

532. **Objectives and Features.** In alignment with the UNCTAD Bridgetown Covenant, para. 127 (n), the Trade Facilitation Programme aims to simplify processes, reduce transaction costs, and enhance the competitiveness of developing countries, including LDCs and landlocked developing countries. The goal is to boost countries' capacities to implement trade facilitation reforms in line with international rules, creating transparent global trading environments.

533. UNCTAD assists developing countries through various activities, such as: (1) conducting needs assessments and implementing national and regional trade plans; (2) aiding with the ratification of national obligations; (3) developing projects; (4) providing advisory services and capacity-building for countries and NTFCs; (5) implementing monitoring and evaluation tools; (6) rolling out transparency tools like Trade Information Portals; (7) offering technical assistance for trade reforms, including issues such as blockchain, transit, facilitation of emergency and humanitarian goods, gender mainstreaming, etc; (8) supporting the implementation of national and regional measures; and (9) promoting climate-smart trade facilitation reforms.

534. A pivotal aspect of UNCTAD technical assistance focuses on coordination and cooperation of trade facilitation reforms, especially through assistance in establishing and sustaining NTFCs, which are mandated as national coordination bodies according to the

TFA. The recent supply chain disruptions have further highlighted the significance of coordination, including cooperation on borders, which UNCTAD is increasingly assisting with.

535. UNCTAD has a comprehensive technical assistance program featuring a variety of trainings and tools to improve decision-making and operational skills for NTFCs. The Empowerment Programme specifically helps committees implement trade facilitation reforms in a coordinated manner. Additionally, UNCTAD has developed the Trade Facilitation Reform Tracker which offers NTFCs a professional project management tool for monitoring the implementation of reforms, operational in over 30 countries.

536. UNCTAD supports countries to fulfil their transparency obligations under the WTO TFA through the implementation of Trade Information Portals that provide for a national interactive online step by step descriptions of import, export and transit procedures from the trader's point of view. UNCTAD has assisted more than 30 countries in implementing such transparency tools. The portals can also provide the basis for work at national level on trade facilitation business process analysis and the simplification of procedures, which aims at reducing time and cost for cross-border trade transactions.

537. In 2024, UNCTAD supported the implementation of specific trade facilitation measures, including legal frameworks for trade-related single windows, the simplification of procedures, and national trade information portals, among others, which promote transparency in cross-border trade.

538. The success of the program stems from a focus on building and sustaining national capacity through knowledge transfer and collaboration with local partners, with the support of a range of donors, as well as through South-South collaboration and best practice exchange. Regular webinars between countries facilitate sharing best practices, and partnerships extending across various UNCTAD expertise areas, integrating customs, trade automation, e-commerce, and other fields.

539. **Outputs.** In 2024, UNCTAD issued almost 1,000 training certificates to trade facilitation stakeholders, with more than 50 per cent of the recipients being women. Participants included members of NTFCs and representatives from both public (65 per cent) and private sectors (28 per cent). Additionally, the UNCTAD e-learning platform recorded over 230,000 pages impressions in 2024.

540. UNCTAD provided technical assistance and capacity building to 62 countries in 2024, namely, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Benin, Plurinational State of Bolivia, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, China, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Dominica, Ecuador, Egypt, Eswatini, Equatorial Guinea, Fiji, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Honduras, Kenya, Kiribati, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Maldives, Mali, Mongolia, Namibia, Nauru, Niger, Nigeria, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Rwanda, Salomon Islands, Samoa, Sao Tomé and Príncipe, Somalia, South Sudan, St. Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and Grenadines, Senegal, Sierra Leone, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Tuvalu, Uganda, Vanuatu, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

541. UNCTAD also supported 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

542. In May 2024, UNCTAD, together with partners, organized the 3rd Global NTFC Forum held in Barbados as part of the 2024 Global Supply Chain Forum which had over 1,000 participants from 127 countries with a significant number of attendees participating in the 3rd Global NTFC Forum. A series of 12 sessions was included in the Global NTFCs Forum tackling different issues in Trade Facilitation.

543. **Results and Impacts.** UNCTAD hybrid capacity-building approach, emphasizing digital management tools and support for NTFCs, remains highly valued by beneficiary countries.

544. Fifteen implementation notifications were submitted to the WTO Trade Facilitation Committee in 2024 by countries that received UNCTAD technical assistance.

545. The Reform Tracker recorded 242,818 visits, marking 228 trade facilitation reforms as completed. Maybe the most telling in relation to the impact of UNCTAD is that more than one third (35 per cent) of WTO Members' notifications on the TFA in 2024 were from countries supported by UNCTAD.

546. The relevance and importance of UNCTAD work on trade facilitation is further underscored by stakeholder testimonials, as shown below:

(a) "The Eswatini Committee for Trade Facilitation is now stronger than ever. We meet regularly and are advancing the trade facilitation agenda with renewed confidence and purpose. This progress would not have been possible without the support of the UNCTAD through the Accelerate Trade Facilitation Programme. International backing for trade facilitation committees, particularly in Least Developed Countries, is essential to foster sustainable and equitable global trade – and must continue to ensure long-term success." Member of the NTFC Secretariat of Eswatini, November 2024.

(b) "The support by UNCTAD in the creation and use of the Reform Tracker have helped us to better understand the needs and commitments the country assumed under the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, by knowing in detail the measures, tasks and activities according to the TFA. This tool allowed us to better grasp the spirit of the Kyoto Convention when we were conducting the gap and feasibility analysis." Chief, Department of Customs Policies, Customs Administration of Honduras, 2024.

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/HBU	Emergency funding for Supporting ASYCUDA and Exemption systems operation in Afghanistan	2018–	UNDP Afghanistan
AFG/0T/HBU3	Continuation of UNDP emergency funding to UNCTAD for Supporting Exemption systems operation in Afghanistan	2023–	UNDP Afghanistan
AFG/0T/HBU4	Support to Humanitarian Aid Flow in Afghanistan	2024–	UNDP Afghanistan
AFG/0T/NAS	Cross-sectoral Cluster Survey of Afghanistan's Micro, Small, and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs)	2024–	UNDP Afghanistan
ALB/0T/LBL	ASYHUB & ASYCUDAWorld systems in the Albanian Customs Administration	2023–	Albania
ALB/0T/NAV	Maintenance of Operational ASYCUDAWorld System of the Albanian Customs administration in 2024–2026	2024–	Albania
ANG/0T/NBC	ANGOLA - ASY5 Computerization of Customs Procedures	2024–	Angola
ARU/0T/KAY	ASYCUDA World Consolidation at the Aruba Customs and Excise Department	2021–	Aruba

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
BAR/0T/JBM	Electronic single window for Trade	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
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/MAF	For customization deployment & piloting of a solution for pre-arrival/departure processing for Express consignments	2023–	Germany GIZ
CUW/0T/FAY	Customs and Excise Department of Curacao	2016–	Curacao
CVI/0T/MAS	Digital Cabo Verde Project SYDONIA	2023–	Cabo Verde
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/MBJ	Renforcement de la mise en œuvre de SYDONIAWorld	2024–	African Development Bank
ERI/0T/NAW	Implementation of ASCUDAWorld Eritrea	2024–	Eritrea
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
GEO/0T/NBD	Development of Georgia Revenue Service Digital Customs Platform	2024–	Georgia
GUI/0T/NAN	Automatisation de l'ETNM (étude du temps nécessaire de la mainlevée) dans SYDONIA	2024–	Expertise France
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
JAM/0T/GAS	Electronic Single Window for Trade in Jamaica	2017–	Jamaica
JAM/0T/KAN	ASYCUDA World Upgrade Project at the Jamaica Customs Agency	2023–	Jamaica

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
JOR/0T/MBB	The Implementation of the Expander - an Extraction Tool - Jordan	2023–	Jordan
JOR/0T/MBF	Customization and deployment of ASYHUB Maritime & piloting of ASYHUB Express a solution for Pre-Arrival/Pre-Departure processing for Maritime & Express consignments	2023–	Germany
JOR/0T/MBG	JORDAN Implementation of ASYCUDAWorld Authorized Economic Operators module	2024–	Jordan
KAZ/0T/KAE	Technical Support & Upgrade of IS ASTANA-1	2021–	Kazakhstan
LEB/0T/5BK	Implementation of ASYCUDAWorld in Lebanon	2005–	Lebanon
LES/0T/HBF	Business Facilitation Lesotho	2018–	Lesotho
MAG/0T/NAE	Support of the Customs of Madagascar	2021–	Madagascar
MAU/0T/CAD	Projet de Modernisation des Douanes de la République Islamique de Mauritanie	2013–	Mauritania
MDV/0T/HBK	ASYCUDA Support Mechanism for the Asia Region (ASMA)	2018–	TradeMark Africa
MLI/0T/9BF	ASYCUDA project - Mali	2010–	Mali
MLI/0T/KAG	Renforcement de SYDONIAWorld Mali	2021–	Mali
MLI/0T/LBE	Southern Africa Trade and Connectivity Malawi	2022–	Malawi
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
NCA/0T/HBZ	Implémentation de SYDONIA World en Nouvelle Calédonie	2020–	New Caledonia
NEP/0T/GAU	ASYCUDA Support Mechanism for Asia	2017–	Nepal
NER/0T/JAL	ASYCUDA World, phase III	2021–	Niger
PSE/0T/KBM	Strengthen the use of ASYCUDAWorld in Palestine	2022–	Palestine
RWA/0T/HBE	Rwanda Electronic Single Window - TMEA	2018–	TMEA

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
SEY/0T/BBO	ASYCUDA Project in Seychelles	2018–	African Development Bank
STP/0T/NAR	ASYCUDAWorld Upgrade in São Tome and Principe	2024–	Sao Tome and Principe
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
SWA/0T/HBB	Reinforcing Analysis of Risk Profiling and Install & Implement – ASYPM – Swaziland	2018–	Eswatini
SWA/0T/NAG	Upgrading Of ASYCUDAWorld Eswatini	2024–	Eswatini
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
UGA/0T/HCH	Uganda Electronic Single Window – Phase II	2019–	Uganda
VAN/0T/HBJ	Technical Consulting Services Agreement (Vanuatu ESWS)	2019–	Vanuatu
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

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
			Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
INT/0T/IBB	Enabling PaP and PdP of ocean cargo through digital B2B exchange between ASYCUDA-GIZ	2019–	Germany GIZ
INT/0T/ICD	Evaluation and Improvement of the Region, Transit & Connectivity in ECOWAS Region	2020–	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/0T/NAY	Electronic approaches to the notification and movement documents of the Basel Convention	2024–	Secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions (BRS Secretariat) through UNEP
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
RAS/0T/1DA	ASYCUDA Support Mechanism for the Pacific (ASMP)	2002–	Multi-donors
RAS/0T/DBT	ASYCUDA Support Mechanism for Asia	2015–	Sri Lanka
RAS/0T/IAK	The Implementation of the Pacific Trade and Customs Harmonization Project	2019–	Group of sponsors
RAS/0T/JBO	Improving Pacific Islands Customs and Trade (IMPACT)	2021–	European Union
RLA/0T/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

547. **Development context.** The ASYCUDA Programme is mandated to reform, streamline and automate the customs clearance process, to increase trade facilitation and strengthen the institution 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, by assisting the Government with the implementation of national and international trade policy, by protecting the country against fraud and the illegal trafficking of prohibited and restricted goods, by providing statistical information on foreign trade transactions, which is essential for economic planning, and by supporting international trade needs.

548. The ASYCUDA programme is committed to providing sustained support for development, both in-country and remotely. Over a period of 43 years, it has supported the changing and evolving needs, addressed challenges of the customs administrations of more than 120 countries and territories, and facilitated their international trade. Having originated as a means to help 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 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 Partner Governmental Agencies (PGA) for exchange of information, making available trade statistics, establishing 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.

549. The mandate of the ASYCUDA programme is reflected in paragraph 127 (c) of the Bridgetown Covenant, an outcome of the fifteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 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, 37 Least Developed Countries, 41 Small Island Developing States and 24 Landlocked Developing Countries, which represents a unique opportunity as a base repository for the extraction of trade and customs related data to strengthen statistical capacity and to support trade policymakers.

550. 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 the 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/tobacco products with ASYCUDA-DCTS, by strengthening customs and inter-agency controls at borders of pharmaceutical products and drugs precursors, and by introducing 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 applies in their controls the international conventions of Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm;

(f) Goal 8. Decent work and economic growth: Customs makes 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 the 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 the export and import of chemicals;

(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 action 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.

551. **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, to stimulate international trade, to reduce/eliminate the use of paper, to 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 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.

552. **Outputs.** In 2024, ASYCUDAWorld was successfully launched in the 9 largest customs offices in Iraq. The system was also rolled out in the Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall Islands and Palau. ASYCUDAWorld is now operational in all 15 Pacific SIDS. The system was upgraded to its latest version in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini, Kosovo¹¹³ and Zambia.

553. The ASYCUDA-based Single Window was officially launched in Barbados in 2024 with the integration of the Barbados Investment and Development Corporation into the system. In Turkmenistan, 22 Partner Governments Agencies were simultaneously integrated into the ASYCUDA Single Window in 2024. ASYCUDA also prepared and handed over a Single Window blueprint to the Government of Papua New Guinea. It provides strategic guidance, prerequisites and recommendations for building a trade single window, in line with national and regional requirements as well as international standards.

554. Cambodia deployed ASYCUDA's ASYHUB Postal and ASYHUB Express platforms to digitalize, facilitate e-commerce and make it more efficient through the streamlining of procedures and electronic data exchange with UPU's Customs Declaration System and express consignments data provider's ICT systems. In this context, Cambodia Post was honored at the 2024 UPU's TradePost Awards for the implementation of ASYHUB Postal.

555. In Georgia, the ASYCUDA-based New Computerized Transit System (NCTS) was launched in 2024. Following successful conformance testing of the solution by the EU, Georgia is now ready to join EU's Common Transit Convention (CTC) in 2025.

556. In 2024, ASYCUDA organized 2 regional workshops for ASYREC (ASYCUDA's Automated System for Relief Consignments) awareness in Fiji for 14 states of the Pacific. The workshops consisted of simulating disasters (such as a cyclone, a volcanic eruption,

¹¹³ United Nations Administrative Region, Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

landslides) and launching ASYREC to coordinate the stakeholders' interventions and facilitate the clearance of relief consignments.

557. To enhance the users' capacity, ASYCUDA delivered, in Malawi, ASYCUDAWorld functional training to 3,000 economic operators in 2024. In Zimbabwe, ASYCUDA delivered training on the issuance of a Preferential Certificate of Origin in the Single Window to 803 users.

558. **Results and impact.** The deployment of ASYCUDA in beneficiary countries has contributed to the increase in customs revenue and improved trade efficiency, as shown in the examples below:

Customs Revenue and Trade Transactions:

(a) In Bangladesh, export transactions increased by 12 per cent from period July 2023 - January 2024 to period July 2024 -January 2025.

(b) In Gambia, customs revenue increased by 32 per cent from 2023 to 2024.

(c) In Iraq, customs revenue increased by 106 per cent from 2023 to 2024.

(d) In Vanuatu, revenue collection has increased by 400 per cent since the implementation of the ASYCUDA Single Window in 2016.

Trade Efficiency:

(a) In Afghanistan, the time taken in customs headquarters for processing the exemption and humanitarian consignment through ASYCUDA solutions was reduced from 10 days to a few hours.

(b) In Jamaica, US\$ 6 million have been saved since 2016 by converting paper forms to digital through ASYCUDAWorld and Single Window.

(c) In Kazakhstan, transit declarations processing time had been reduced by 67 per cent from 2017 to 2024.

(d) In Turkmenistan, average processing time for submissions was reduced by 50 per cent in 2024 compared to 2023.

559. In addition, ASYCUDA published the ASYCUDA Report 2024¹¹⁴ under the theme "Innovation for a changing world". It details and evaluates the activities, achievements and impact of ASYCUDA with a special focus on innovation.

C5 Statistics

Table C5
Statistics

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
INT/OT/LAY	Compilation framework for an extended and enhanced Global Transport Costs Dataset on International Trade (GTCDIT)	2022–	World Bank
INT/OT/MAY	Sustainable Development Initiatives grant – IFFs	2024–	Foundation to Promote Open Society
ROA-2124 (A13)	DESA - Joint Project on Financing	2021–	Development Account
ROA-2326	Quantifying South-South cooperation to mobilize funds for the Sustainable	2023–	Development

¹¹⁴ <https://unctad.org/publication/asycuda-report-2024>.

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
(D15)	Development Goals		Account
ROA-2326 (M15)	Measuring and curbing illicit financial flows	2023–	Development Account
ROA-2427 (K16)	Strengthening capacity for evidence-based policymaking and the economic resilience of CARICOM	2024–	Development Account

560. **Development context.** Harnessing the power of data and statistics is a necessary condition to fully implement and measure progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and to enable evidence-based trade and development policies. For instance, data on South-South cooperation, both financial and non-financial flows, is increasingly important for informed action to pursue the SDGs and by tracking illicit financial flows governments can strengthen domestic resource mobilization and allocate financing to address persisting gaps such as in women's economic empowerment. UNCTAD trade statistics and data sets offer vast analytical potential for developing more gender-responsive trade policy, diversifying economies towards services, and ensuring the availability of healthy food via trade. Countries require accurate, timely and relevant statistics on trade, investment, finance, sustainable development, productive capacities, and technological readiness, among other areas, on which UNCTAD provides statistics and capacity support. UNCTAD Statistics assists developing countries to enhance their statistical capacity.

561. The global landscape of international development cooperation is undergoing a transformative shift, as progress towards the SDGs is stalling. 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 of resources, and exchanging know-how between countries of the global South. Thanks to their joint efforts, for the first time, there is now a global, voluntary UN Conceptual Framework to measure South-South cooperation. It feeds a related SDG indicator 17.3.1, for which developing countries invited UNCTAD as a co-custodian with a mandate to enable global reporting of data on South-South cooperation and provide capacity support.

562. Higher shipping and transport costs in general are particularly detrimental for LDCs and SIDS, and their engagement in global trade. This higher cost is partly due to the greater distances that goods must travel in many developing countries, particularly in landlocked economies and small island countries, which are farther from global markets. This also leads to higher consumer prices. As new information in the UN Comtrade became available about mode of transport, UNCTAD developed a dataset for the analysis of transport costs be it by air, road, sea or rail, which enables the estimation of emissions from transport of global goods traded.

563. 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 by funding illicit activities. These risks have been recognized most recently in the Pact for the Future which calls for strengthening of current efforts to address IFFs. These are measured by SDG indicator 16.4.1 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with the target to significantly 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.

564. 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 analyse trade in healthy food or processed food items to understand the overall health effects.

565. International trade influences the employment and business opportunities, income, social status, welfare and equality of women and men in various ways, but data with a gender lens has not been collected systematically. Therefore, it is difficult to design gender-responsive policies that could address gaps in women's empowerment in international trade. UNCTAD research also shows that services trade provides important employment and business opportunities for women.

566. **Objectives and features.** UNCTAD Statistics supports countries' capacity to compile statistics and report progress on Sustainable Development Goals, with a particular focus on trade and the interrelated issues of finance, technology, investment, and sustainable development.

567. E-learning courses, carried out by UNCTAD Train for Trade and Statistics jointly with UN Statistics Division and the World Trade Organization, aims to build national capacities to collect, harmonize, analyse, and disseminate statistics related to international merchandise and services trade. Furthermore, a previous capacity development project carried out with the Western African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), developed a trade-in-services statistics information system (TiSSTAT) which provides a tool for interested countries to scale up their services trade statistics with online data collection from businesses. In 2024, UNCTAD launched a new capacity building project to enhance services trade statistics and related policies in the CARICOM jointly with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ELCAC). As part of the project activities, TiSSTAT will be adjusted to meet the needs of target countries.

568. As a co-custodian of SDG indicator 17.3.1, UNCTAD works to strengthen the capacity of developing countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America to measure and report South-South cooperation data. A project on quantifying South-South cooperation is carried out jointly with the UN Office for South-South Cooperation and UN Regional Commissions which lead regional activities and support the development of country-owned mechanisms to collect data on South-South cooperation across countries. The objective of this effort is to enable interested countries to report the first-ever data on South-South cooperation in 2025.

569. UNCTAD hosts the global trade matrix compiled from UN Comtrade data and has developed methods for the compilation of analytical 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 with the aim to provide the first comprehensive global picture of the transport of merchandise trade, including the costs associated with moving different products between economies.

570. UNCTAD and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) support a global capacity development project with all UN Regional Commissions, led by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) to measure IFFs with internationally comparable methods, and enhance investigative and analytical capacities to develop evidence-based policy responses to curb IFFs. In addition, UNCTAD leads a project funded by the Open Society Foundation strengthening statistical capacities of Ghana, Namibia and Zambia to continue the measurement of tax and commercial IFFs and refine previous estimates and develop evidence-based policy responses to curb them. This follows up on the project of UNCTAD and ECA which ended up engaging eleven interested African countries in pilots to measure selected types of IFFs with existing data available to government agencies, and the project with the Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) with five country pilots.

571. 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 granular analysis of the health effects of international food trade across countries and over time. The data is based on the trade flows on identified goods as reported in the UN Comtrade.

572. UNCTAD Statistics also helps countries link national statistical data for new insights on gender equality in trade. The aim is to provide a global set of indicators of gender equality in trade and offer guidance on how to compile and use statistics to analyse gendered impacts of trade, female and male employment relying on trade, and the impacts of crises transferred through international trade flows. 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.

573. **Outputs.** Two global e-learning courses on merchandise and services trade statistics were offered in 2024 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. In 2024, under the capacity building project to enhance services trade statistics and related policies in the CARICOM, UNCTAD organized a kick-off workshop in May 2024 in Barbados and an online workshop to follow up and prepared the launch of national pilots to test and adjust UNCTAD trade in services statistics information system (TiSSTAT) to country needs.

574. Under the project on quantifying South-South cooperation, in June 2024, UNCTAD held the second inter-regional expert meeting on the UN Framework to measure South-South cooperation in Doha, Qatar, with the participation of nearly 70 developing countries and many international and regional organizations. The event discussed an early version of a Manual for the UN Framework to support interested countries in developing mechanisms for collecting and reporting country-owned data on South-South cooperation. UNCTAD also contributed to a regional event held by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) at the 6th Directors General Forum for South-South and Triangular Cooperation, and the XXXII meeting of directors of international cooperation agencies of countries in Latin America and the Caribbean organized by the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System (SELA) and ECLAC, participated in a national workshop in Nigeria, and held a session at the WTO Aid-for-Trade review. UNCTAD also released the *Manual for the Framework to Measure South-South Cooperation: Technical and procedural aspects for pilot testing*.

575. In May 2024, UNCTAD released the 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.

576. In the course of 2024, UNCTAD trained three countries, Ghana, Namibia and Zambia, in two national workshops each to measure IFFs, and supported UN Regional Commissions with two pilots in each region under the joint UN Development Account project, providing continued support to the development of methodologies and coordination of global work in the UNCTAD/UNODC Task Force on Statistics on IFFs. This work is grounded in the Conceptual Framework for the Statistical Measurement of Illicit Financial Flows developed by UNCTAD and UNODC, in consultation with the Task Force, and adopted by the UN Statistical Commission in 2022.

577. In 2024, UNCTAD released the first-ever set of trade and gender indicators, and an analysis of findings in its SDG Pulse publication. The methodology applies the UNCTAD 'Compilation guidelines for measurement of gender-in-trade statistics', published in August 2023, and the Conceptual Framework released in 2018 to enhance countries' capacity to measure gender equality in trade.

578. In March 2024, UNCTAD released a new trade in processed food database in a joint project with the World Health Organization. The agencies elaborated a classification of food items by the level of processing, which was used to derive a dedicated database. The data show that the share of processed food is higher in developed economies' imports at 48 per cent of their total food imports, compared to around 35 per cent for developing economies. The Trade in Processed Food Matrix will help Governments use trade policies more effectively to fight hunger, promote healthy and nutritious diets and increase food security.

579. **Results and impact.** In 2024, two e-learning courses, offered by Statistics and Train for Trade on international merchandise and services trade statistics trained 2 264 participants (45 per cent women) from 178 economies. Since 2016, over 13 000

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 84 per cent in 2024.

580. In 2024, UNCTAD developed a test version of TiSSTAT to enable exploration of the tool by interested countries. UNCTAD supported the use of TiSSTAT in Western African countries for data collection on trade in services and had early discussions with many Southern African and Gulf countries, as well as Mexico and Peru on the use of TiSSTAT in these countries in the future. UNCTAD is partnering with the International Monetary Fund and other international and regional organizations to enable support to interested countries.

581. As an outcome of the Doha expert meeting, developing countries requested strengthened support from UNCTAD to enable measurement of South-South cooperation. This was taken up by the 2nd Committee of the General Assembly which requested the development of technical tools and methods, and provision of a regular meeting platform to enable exchange of best practices with South-South cooperation data and peer learning. By the end of the year, three countries reported the first-ever data to UNCTAD to test the UN Framework to measure South-South cooperation.

582. UNCTAD 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 data set 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. The data will help countries identify high transport costs, address bottlenecks and facilitate transport, port activity, and trade flows. The data set 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.

583. The first ever data on SDG indicator 16.4.1 on IFFs were reported by countries in 2023 on crime related flows, and in 2024 estimates of tax and trade related IFFs were refined for the first global reporting expected in 2025. Altogether, pilots carried out in 22 countries on three continents show the feasibility of measuring IFFs based on existing data. The benefits of measuring IFFs go beyond data. For example, Egypt established a new department to coordinate IFF response; Southern African countries engage in bilateral meetings to correctly record commodity trade and more accurately identify illicit flows; Zambia established a mechanism to track destinations of exports of critical minerals; and Angola seeks financing for better education and health services by curbing IFFs. As a result, the Second Committee of the General Assembly requested for stronger technical support and platforms for the exchange of innovative methods and practices to measure IFFs beyond pilots.

584. According to the analysis of the first-ever gender equality in trade indicator set, women are still underrepresented in tradable sectors and contribute less to creating domestic value-added content in exports in all regions. The sectoral analysis reveals opportunities to catalyse trade for women's economic empowerment. Especially, services trade presents an opportunity for women to contribute more. UNCTAD will continue to expand the indicator set for further research and policy analysis. These advances have been taken up in the update of the United Nations Trade Statistics Manuals and the guidance on linking trade and business statistics expected to help many more countries to compile gender-related trade statistics.

585. Finally, the collaboration between UNCTAD and the World Health Organization resulted in enhanced capacity to analyse 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. It was released with an analytical report to offer policy insights into food trade. The dedicated website,¹¹⁵ publicly launched in January 2024, offers

¹¹⁵ <https://unctadstat.unctad.org/EN/Index.html>.

access to the food 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/BCP	Accounting and Corporate Governance Trust Fund	2012–	Multi-donors
INT/0T/H CJ2	Strategic Partnership the Netherlands – (linked with THCE04)	2023–	Kingdom of the Netherlands
INT/0T/MAR	Supporting the implementation of sustainability reporting standards in developing countries	2023–	Germany GIZ
ROA-2124 (A13)	DESA - Joint Project on Financing	2021–	Development Account
ROA-2427 (L16)	Strengthening sustainability reporting to foster sustainable finance and investment in selected developing countries in Asia and Latin America	2024–	Development Account

586. **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 could adopt as voluntary standards for annual reporting periods beginning on or after 1st January 2024. Consequently, member States need to accelerate national efforts to establish or strengthen their regulations, institutions, and technical capacity to meet these new requirements.

587. Effective implementation of such standards and codes remains a challenge for many developing countries. Factors impacting the corporate reporting environment include weaknesses in legal and regulatory frameworks, a lack of human capacity and supporting institutions, and obstacles to adequate monitoring and enforcement of international standards and codes. Therefore, coherent efforts are needed to support capacity-building in the area of corporate reporting, aiming to align 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, nine years after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and Addis Ababa Action Agenda, mobilization of sufficient finance remains a critical challenge for most countries.

588. **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 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.”

589. 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.

590. 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 (ISAR)

591. The forty-first session of the Intergovernmental Working Group of Experts on ISAR took place in Geneva from 6 to 8 November 2024. In accordance with the agreement reached among member States at the previous session, the forty-first session dealt with the following main agenda items:

- (a) Review of progress in harmonization and practical implementation of sustainability reporting, assurance and ethical considerations; and
- (b) Integrating reporting on the financial and sustainability performance of entities: Leveraging digitalization.

592. Two background documents were prepared by the UNCTAD secretariat on the main agenda items, and a series of panel discussions facilitated delegates’ consideration of the key issues. Regarding the first main agenda item, the Group of Experts commended the UNCTAD secretariat for its support to regional efforts and partnerships for promoting sustainability reporting, as well as for further consultations on launching similar initiatives in other regions. They called upon the UNCTAD secretariat to continue following developments on sustainability reporting requirements, including the development of sustainability reporting standards for public sector entities, and to act as a channel for the views and positions of members of the Group of Experts. To support this process, they requested the UNCTAD secretariat to establish a consultative group.

593. With respect to the second main agenda item, the Group of Experts, acknowledged the significant benefits of integrated financial and sustainability reporting for a diverse range of users, including governments and regulators, investors, employees, and the wider public. The Group requested the UNCTAD secretariat to continue monitoring developments on this topic and to provide updates as necessary.

594. On topics discussed under other business, the session requested the UNCTAD secretariat to track potential improvements to the ADT, considering new developments, including sustainability reporting standards for both private and public sector entities, as well as accounting and reporting requirements for microenterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises. It also requested continued support to member States in implementing the ADT; and requested the UNCTAD secretariat to facilitate the establishment of a consultative group to provide advice on the composition and terms of reference for a future advisory panel.

595. To further promote sustainability reporting, the ISAR Honours 2024 Edition took place, highlighting key national and international initiatives on the promotion and harmonization of sustainability/SDGs reporting by companies. The ISAR Honours aims to raise awareness and disseminate best practices in this area. From a total of 50 nominee institutions, ISAR Honours recognized six honourees—three in the international category and three in the national category—as well as three special nominations in each category.

596. On 5 November 2024, a consultative meeting was held to discuss capacity-building needs for the effective implementation of sustainability reporting requirements, as a pre-event to the forty-first session of ISAR. Participants noted a strong need for training and education, both in professional and academic settings, to build expertise in sustainability reporting and integrate sustainability concepts into financial practices. National and international capacity-building initiatives, including tailored workshops and mentorship programs, were recommended to support the development of the necessary skills.

Online webinar on the IESBA Exposure draft

597. On 6 March 2024, an online webinar was held on the recently published International Ethics Standards Board for Accountants (IESBA) Exposure Drafts on International Ethics Standards for Sustainability Assurance (including International Independence Standards) (IESSA) and other revisions to the Code relating to sustainability assurance and reporting, as well as using the work of an external expert. The webinar provided its 116 participants with further information on these Exposure Drafts and offered opportunities for interaction with the IESBA, with the goal of facilitating the preparation of responses to the Exposure Drafts.

Technical assistance projects on sustainability reporting

598. In 2024, 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

599. To support countries in strengthening their sustainability reporting systems, the Secretariat developed and promoted regional partnerships aimed at promoting sustainability reporting. The partnerships were designed to encourage mutual support among countries as they work towards developing national strategies and policies that aim to:

- (a) Establish and/or strengthen the national infrastructure to facilitate the preparation of high-quality sustainability reports by companies,
- (b) Increase the number of high-quality sustainability reports issued by companies;
- (c) Measure the contribution of the private sector to the implementation of the SDGs;
- (d) Promote sustainable enterprise development.

600. The Latin American Partnership for the promotion of sustainability reporting (ARL) held three significant meetings in 2024. The first meeting took place virtually from 3 to 4 April 2024 and focused on updates regarding the implementation of the IFRS S1 and S2 standards and the ISSB's capacity-building framework. Participants also discussed IESBA's ongoing public consultations on ethics standards. The second meeting, held

virtually from 10 to 12 July 2024, included updates on actions by standard setters such as ISSB, the International Auditing and Assurance Standards Board (IAASB), and IESBA. Highlights included a presentation by CINIF, Mexico's Financial and Sustainability Reporting Standards Board, on sustainability standards for non-public entities, as well as insights into IESBA's new tax planning standard and IFAC's revisions to international education standards. The third meeting, convened in Sao Paulo, Brazil, on 29 October prior to the FACPCS International Seminar, provided updates on the implementation of IFRS S1 and S2, IESBA's ethics and assurance standards, and a presentation by the Group of Latin American Accounting Standard Setters (GLENIF). During this session, the Partnership also elected its Chair for 2025. Collectively, these meetings underscored the progress in sustainability reporting, fostered regional collaboration, and advanced the development of relevant standards, ensuring alignment with international best practices.

601. The African Regional Partnership for Sustainability and SDG Reporting (ARP) held a virtual meeting in February 2024 to discuss and prepare comments to the IESBA on the Exposure Drafts that the IESBA published in the previous month.

602. On 13 September 2024, the ARP convened in Yaoundé, Cameroon, with over 70 key stakeholders, including government, regulators, professional accountancy organisations (PAOs), private sector, and academia. The event, organized in collaboration with the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC), ISSB, and Pan African Federation of Accountants (PAFA), focused on accelerating the adoption of international sustainability standards and strengthening sustainability disclosures across Africa. Discussions focused on the adoption of ISSB standards, aligning global standards with regional needs, green finance strategies, and the importance of high-quality assurance for sustainability disclosures. The workshop facilitated the approval of the proposed Action Plan for further implementing the new requirements in sustainability reporting.

603. A Regional Partnership for the promotion of sustainability reporting in Asia was formally launched on 6 November 2024, on the margins of the forty-first session of ISAR. The Chair and Vice Chair of the Partnership presided over the launch.

604. The Eurasian Regional Partnership for Sustainable and SDG Reporting successfully convened in Kyrgyzstan on 4 October 2024 in hybrid format. The meeting gathered over 50 participants from numerous countries in the region, including Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. Attendees represented diverse sectors such as national institutions, government, professional associations, banks and international organizations. Discussions centred on sustainability disclosure standards and guidelines, as well as current practices and tools to promote sustainability reporting. Key topics addressed included the state of play on sustainability disclosure and assurance, updates on the ISSB standards and the application of IFRS S1 and S2, with insights provided by distinguished representatives from ISSB, IFAC, IAASB, IESBA and International Public Sector Accounting Standards Board (IPSASB). In addition, the meeting showcased lessons learned from the ADT assessment conducted in Belarus and Kyrgyzstan. Furthermore, Kyrgyzstan held a national online meeting on 10 December 2024, during which the ADT Action Plan was approved for further implementation.

605. On 9 May 2024, the Regional Partnership for the Promotion of Sustainability Reporting in Gulf States and neighbouring countries was formally launched at the National Exhibition Centre in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, during a working lunch hosted by the Saudi Organization for Chartered and Professional Accountants (SOCPA). On the same day, Partnership members participated in training sessions organized with the support of the AIM Congress. The sessions covered the current state of sustainability reporting in the Gulf States and neighbouring countries, practical implementation of sustainability reporting and assurance standards from practitioners' perspectives, and training on standards issued by the ISSB, including IFRS S1 and IFRS S2. Representatives of the "big four" accounting firms –Deloitte, EY, KPMG and PwC – shared valuable insights on strategies for preparing sustainability reports and related assurance engagements.

Other activities in support of sustainability reporting infrastructure

606. *Mexico.* Mexico, along with Cameroon, is one of the two beneficiary countries of a pilot technical cooperation project funded by the German government that UNCTAD has been implementing since 2023. As part of this project, in May 2024, the Financial and Sustainability Reporting Standards Board (CINIF) of Mexico published a simplified sustainability reporting standard for non-listed companies and SMEs. The standard is based on the Guidance on Core Indicators for Sustainability and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Impact Reporting published by ISAR. It is also consistent with IFRS S1 and IFRS S2, published by the International Sustainability Standards Board.

607. *Cameroon.* In December 2023, UNCTAD launched a national assessment of the reporting infrastructure in Cameroon, based on the UNCTAD Accounting Development Tool (ADT). The aim was to monitor progress made since the ADT's initial implementation. A brief overview was prepared in 2021–2022, and since then, the stakeholder base expanded to nearly 50 local and regional institutions, including the Organization for the Harmonization of Business Law in Africa (OHADA), the Supervisory Commission of the Financial Market of Central Africa, the Bank of Central African States (BEAC), and the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA). This expansion enhanced the response rate and feedback quality, enabling a more comprehensive analysis. The overall results were presented at a workshop organized by UNCTAD on 16 May 2024 in Yaoundé, Cameroon. During this workshop, a multistakeholder group, led by the Ministry of Finance of Cameroon and including local and regional institutions, discussed the strengths, gaps, and recommendations that emerged from the ADT assessment and proposed an action plan for further developments. The project contributed to strengthening the national infrastructure and advancing practices in ESG reporting, resulting in numerous applications from Cameroon to the 2024 UNCTAD ISAR Honours programme, highlighting the country's progress in SDG and sustainability reporting.

608. *Uganda.* UNCTAD continued the implementation of the Informality Management for Compliance and Revenue Mobilization (IMCORE) Programme on MSME formalization, supported by funding from the Netherlands. On 20 December 2024, a workshop on the e-accounting tool was conducted in Kampala, with the objective of introducing the UNCTAD e-Accounting Tool for MSMEs to the selected Business & Enterprise Start-up Tool (BEST) training participants for piloting purposes. After being trained for five days on entrepreneurship skills, this tool proved to be highly beneficial for the equipped business owners. The half-day session featured a presentation on the financial transactions, financial statement, and tax simulation modules of the tool. UNCTAD has partnered with the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MoFPED) to provide free technical support, enabling all benefiting enterprises to integrate the UN-developed e-accounting tool into their financial reporting infrastructures.

609. *Nigeria.* UNCTAD, in collaboration with the Financial Reporting Council of Nigeria (FRC), has implemented two key initiatives to enhance financial reporting and promote MSME financial inclusion in Nigeria: The Accounting Development Tool (ADT) Project and the Training-of-Trainers (TOT) Workshop, held in Lagos on 16 December 2024. The ADT project assessed Nigeria's financial reporting framework and identified key reforms needed, while the TOT workshop trained 59 facilitators to equip MSMEs with essential financial reporting skills. These initiatives have improved regulatory compliance, capacity building, and financial inclusion, particularly by introducing e-accounting tools to enhance record-keeping and credit access. Sustained collaboration and technical support will be crucial for scaling these efforts nationwide and ensuring their long-term impact.

610. **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.

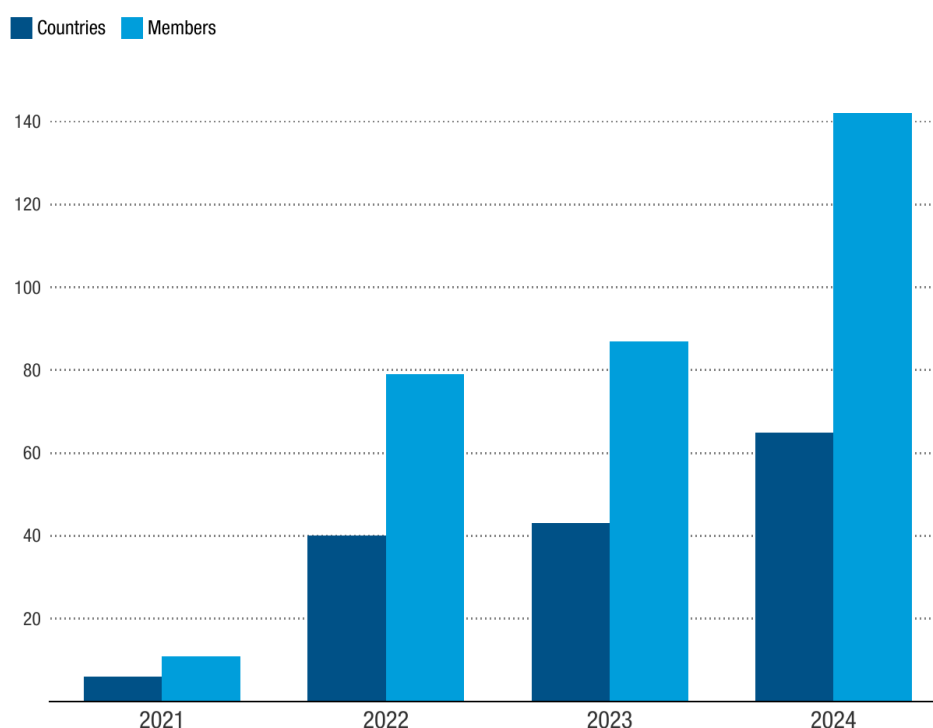
611. The 41st session of ISAR attracted 294 registered participants from 66 countries. Feedback received from participants indicated that 100 per cent were very satisfied or

satisfied with the organization and quality of discussions and presentations 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.

612. The Group of Experts requested the UNCTAD secretariat to continue its support to member States, particularly developing countries, in building capacity for the implementation of sustainability reporting requirements, including through technical cooperation projects. The Group also invited donors in a position to do so to support the secretariat in this endeavour. Additionally, it encouraged the UNCTAD secretariat to maintain its cooperation with relevant United Nations agencies and other institutions on sustainability reporting in general, and on measuring the contribution of the private sector to the achievement of the SDGs.

613. UNCTAD plays a key role in supporting regional partnerships by sharing experiences, organizing capacity-building workshops on sustainability reporting, and providing access to its materials, guidance, and tools. Responding to a call from member States, UNCTAD established new regional partnerships in 2024 in Asia (16 members, representing 6 countries), Eurasia (14 members, representing 7 countries), and the Gulf region (11 members, representing 5 countries). The Regional Partnerships Initiative was first launched in Latin America in 2021, comprising 11 members from 6 countries. By the end of 2024, the initiative had expanded to five regions, bringing together a total of 142 members representing 65 countries. This growth highlights the relevance and effectiveness of the approach adopted. The success of these partnerships was further confirmed by an external independent evaluation, which identifies “The creation of regional partnerships as a good practice that should be replicated”. At ISAR 41, member States “commended the UNCTAD secretariat for the support provided to the regional partnerships for the promotion of sustainability reporting” (figure 2).

Figure 2
Regional partnerships, 2021–2024



614. Further evidence and positive feedback received in 2024 include:

- (a) “I convey my appreciation for the positive response and continued support to this initiative. Over the years, the UNCTAD team has been very instrumental in the

development of both accounting and BDS [business development service] tools for the Informality Management for Compliance and Resilience (IMCORE) programme, registering a number of successful outputs.” Minister, Ministry of Finance, Planning, and Economic Development, Uganda

(b) “This partnership has significantly advanced Nigeria’s accounting and financial reporting landscape, with particular emphasis on fostering the formalization of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs).” Chief Executive Officer, Financial Reporting Council, Nigeria.

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/H CJ2	Strategic Partnership the Netherlands – (linked with THCE04)	2023–	Kingdom of the Netherlands

615. **Development context.** Investing in health sectors of developing countries continues to be essential to achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3, which aims to ensure good health and well-being for all. 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. Achieving the SDGs therefore requires considerable investment by the private sector, governments and development partners, as well as coherence in various policy domains and institutions covering, *inter alia*, health, investment, intellectual property (IP) and trade.

616. Developing countries recognized the need to improve their access to medicines and vaccines, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. While there has been widespread recognition by both political and business leaders that scaling up local production would be an important means to achieve better health security in support of SDG3, progress has often been slow. UNCTAD work in this area focuses on providing policy support to developing countries, especially in Africa, to make a more convincing case for sustainable investments in the local manufacture of medicines and vaccines.

617. **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.

618. **Outputs.** In 2024, the work programme continued to support the building of vaccines manufacturing capacity in Africa in the context of the Partnership for Africa Vaccines Manufacturing (PAVM) and, in addition, concentrated on efforts to support an improved business case for pharmaceutical production in Africa. These efforts are designed to help encourage investment in and the sustainability of pharmaceutical manufacturing capacity on the continent.

619. In April 2024, UNCTAD was invited to lecture at a symposium at the World Trade Organization (WTO) entitled “‘TRIPS at 30 – WTO Symposium on Policy Insights and Practical Lessons from TRIPS Implementation’”. The event was attended by over 140 participants, including WTO delegates. During the symposium, UNCTAD work on intellectual property, technology transfer, and investment issues was highlighted, with a particular focus on its research and technical assistance related to the local production of medicines in developing countries.

620. As reported in the previous year, UNCTAD commissioned a study on the current landscape for vaccine manufacturing in Africa and an assessment of the pain points of investment initiatives that were announced since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Studies were also prepared on building a better business case for local pharmaceutical production in Africa, as well as on the potential of African Special Economic Zones to attract pharmaceutical investment, respectively. These three studies have been completed and will be launched at the WHO World Local Production Forum in April 2025.

621. On 27 November 2024, UNCTAD delivered capacity-building activities in the context of the annual meeting of the African Economic Zone Organization (AEZO) in Nairobi, Kenya. A plenary intervention and separate workshop event discussed strategies to enhance the role of special economic zones (SEZs) as engines of economic growth, addressing issues including investment facilitation, promotion of SMEs investments, and sustainable infrastructure development. The event, attended by over 40 representatives of African SEZs, included a focused session on the promotion of local production of pharmaceuticals, which is an important workstream of UNCTAD. The event included high-level participants, including ministers, the AEZO Secretary-General and CEO, and representatives from UNECA, the ADB and the ILO.

622. **Results and impacts.** The work of UNCTAD continues to be appreciated by stakeholders, who praised its longstanding efforts to support medicine and vaccine manufacture in developing countries at both the WTO and AEZO forums. Additionally, the UNCTAD Investment and Public Health programme utilized its established history of providing technical assistance in support of local pharmaceutical production to carry out important studies to scale up local manufacture of medicines and vaccines in Africa. These studies offer a comprehensive framework for evaluating and ensuring the viability of local pharmaceutical production in Africa, thus serving as a valuable resource for stakeholders across the region. The studies will be launched by UNCTAD at the WHO' World Local Production Forum, which will take place in Abu Dhabi in April 2025, and is intended to lay the groundwork for future technical assistance activities.

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/OT/BAQ	Capacity-Building in Investment for Development	2011–	Multi-donors
INT/OT/H CJ2	Strategic Partnership the Netherlands – (linked with THCE04)	2023–	Kingdom of the Netherlands

623. **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 require reform. In recent years, efforts to modernize the international investment agreements (IIAs) regime have intensified, particularly at the regional level. In 2024, the content of IIAs has become increasingly diverse, reflecting efforts to address emerging global challenges.

624. Concerns are growing about the current functioning of the global IIA regime and the investor–State dispute settlement (ISDS) system. This unease, combined with shifts in the international investment landscape, the increasing role of governments in the economy, and the pressing need for sustainable development, has prompted countries to pursue reforms of their IIA regimes and engage in multilateral discussions on ISDS reform. Currently, there is broad consensus that reform is not merely an option but a necessity.

625. Immediate IIA reform measures are needed to alleviate ISDS risks and create the necessary policy space for States to take urgent climate action. While new-generation IIAs

offer improvements in safeguarding the States' right to regulate, both old and recent IIAs lack proactive provisions that effectively support 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.

626. 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.

627. **Objectives and features.** The UNCTAD work programme on IIAs addresses ongoing reform efforts, aiming to improve the IIA regime for both States and investors, while placing sustainable development at its core. The programme covers activities spanning the three pillars of UNCTAD work (research and policy analysis, technical assistance and advisory services, and intergovernmental consensus-building).

628. **Outputs.** For 2024, the main outputs are outlined below.

Research work related to technical assistance

629. In addition to regular reporting on and monitoring of international investment policy developments, the IIA work programme conducts research and policy analysis, contributing to key publications, including:

(a) *World Investment Report 2024:*

(i) The chapter on trends in international investment policies provides an overview and analysis of the latest trends in IIAs and ISDS. In 2023, 29 new IIAs were concluded, most of which were broad economic agreements that included investment provisions, while traditional bilateral investment treaties accounted for fewer than half. About half of the global stock of FDI remains covered by IIAs that have not been reformed, which exposes countries to higher risk of ISDS cases. This share is about two-thirds for developing countries and closer to three quarters for LDCs. Today, only 16 per cent of global FDI stock is covered by a new-generation IIA; reform efforts have so far had a limited effect on mitigating the risk of ISDS, especially in the poorest countries. By the end of 2023, the total ISDS case count reached 1,332, with 60 new arbitrations initiated that year. About 70 per cent of new cases were brought against developing countries, including three LDCs. International investors in the construction, manufacturing and extractive sectors accounted for over half of the claims in 2023. IIA reform efforts continue with newer treaties including features aimed at safeguarding the right to regulate and increasingly cover a broader range of issues, including investment facilitation. Reform of the stock of old-generation IIAs continues to be slow.

(ii) The chapter on investment facilitation and digital governance in international investment policies highlights the upward trend of including investment facilitation provisions in recent IIAs. Investment facilitation plays an increasingly prominent role in IIAs, often encouraging digitalization. Yet, much more is needed to gear facilitation commitments in IIAs towards sustainable investment and to render them operational on the ground. To support this, UNCTAD has developed a set of policy options to help Governments leverage facilitation commitments in IIAs for sustainable investment, with the support of strategic digitalization.

(b) *IIA issues notes and technical briefs.* The following issues notes were produced in 2024:

(i) *Compensation and Damages in Investor-State Dispute Settlement Proceedings.* This note examines the sharp rise in ISDS compensation awards and provides policy options for IIAs aimed at countering excessive awards.

(ii) *International Investment Agreement Trends: The increasing dichotomy between new and old treaties.* This note highlights the growing divide

between new and old IIAs. While recent agreements emphasize facilitation and cooperation, outdated treaties persist, increasing investor-State dispute risks. Half of global FDI stock remains under old IIAs, with higher exposure in developing economies. UNCTAD offers policy options to align facilitation commitments with sustainable investment through strategic digitalization.

(iii) *Facts and Figures on ISDS Cases.* This note highlights the doubling of ISDS cases in the past decade, reaching 1,332 by 2023. Developing countries face most disputes, particularly in sectors such as energy and extractive industries. The UNCTAD ISDS Navigator tracks publicly known cases.

(iv) *Comprehensive updates to the IIA and ISDS databases.* In March 2024, UNCTAD updated its IIA Navigator with bilateral investment treaties (BITs) and treaties with investment provisions (TIPs). The database now includes more than 3,120 IIA texts. UNCTAD also updated its ISDS Navigator, incorporating new cases, awards, and arbitrator appointments compiled from public sources and specialized reporting services. Significant progress was made in updating the mapping of IIA content (with approximately 100 IIAs mapped), along with the development of a new component to map investment facilitation provisions in IIAs, which will be integrated into the IIA Navigator.

Consensus-building

630. *2024 High-Level IIA Conference: The Path to Mainstreaming Sustainable Development in IIAs.* The conference brought together 336 participants (45 per cent of whom were women), including high-level experts from government, regional and international organizations, civil society and academia. Discussions focused on the need for reforming the IIA regime to better reflect the regulatory challenges of the 21st century, with a particular focus on accelerating the reform of old-generation agreements. Panellists stressed the need for reform efforts to mainstream sustainable development by moving it from the IIA regime's periphery to its core. As a key outcome, stakeholders called on UNCTAD to develop a set of guiding principles to facilitate IIA reform for sustainable development.

631. UNCTAD launched the Multi-Stakeholder Platform for IIA Reform during the 2023 World Investment Forum to pave the way for an investment regime centred on sustainable development. The first meeting of the Platform took place on 29 February 2024 with more than 48 participants (21 of whom were women) engaged in an interactive dialogue to identify key obstacles to IIA reform. The second meeting, held on 10 September 2024, gathered 60 participants (including 22 women) from Governments, civil society, academia, and international and regional organizations to discuss both converging and diverging trends in the substantive areas covered by reformed IIAs.

632. UNCTAD conducted a briefing session on the interplay between IIAs, ISDS and climate action at the request of the Group of 77 and China and the Permanent Mission of Indonesia. Held on 4 October 2024, the session brought together 36 delegates and participants (including 19 women) to discussion key issues on the relationship between the IIA regime and climate action.

633. From January to October 2024, at the request of G20 Presidency under Brazil, UNCTAD led substantive discussions on the investment track of the G20 Trade and Investment Working Group (TIWG) and prepared a report aligned with the strategic priority of *Sustainable Development in Investment Agreements*. The report and its recommendations were acknowledged in the outcomes of the Trade and Investment Ministerial Meeting held in Brasília on 24 October 2024. On 27 and 28 June 2024, UNCTAD participated in the third meeting of the G20 Trade and Investment Working Group in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Invited by 'G20 Presidency of Brazil, UNCTAD presented updates on its report, which maps sustainable development and investment facilitation provisions in IIAs concluded by G20 members and invited countries. This updated report informed and enriched discussions within the Working Group's investment track.

Capacity-building and advisory services

634. Drawing from the UNCTAD Investment Policy Framework for Sustainable Development (IPFSD), its Reform Package for the International Investment Regime, and the UNCTAD IIA Reform Accelerator –which offers options for modernizing the existing stock of treaties – UNCTAD conducts a wide range of training activities and advisory services. These services include: review of a country or region’s IIA network, comments on a country or region’s model treaties, analysis of various aspects of countries’ IIA frameworks, including the interaction between IIA obligations and measures taken to address global crises such as climate change. UNCTAD provides tailored recommendations aimed at maximizing IIAs’ contribution to sustainable development. The analysis considers the specificities of each country or region, and written advisory services are typically supplemented by videoconferences to discuss the findings and recommendations in detail.

635. UNCTAD contributed to a training session on bilateral and plurilateral IIAs at the “Capacity-Building Programme on Trade Negotiations” for African countries, organized by Singapore’s Ministry of Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 16 to 18 January 2024. The UNCTAD-led sessions on investment negotiations covered key aspects of the AfCFTA Investment Protocol and the reform of key IIA provisions for sustainable development. The interactive session included proactive training components comparing old and new generation approaches to treaty scope, protection standards, and ISDS provisions.

636. UNCTAD continued to provide support to the AfCFTA Secretariat on the Investment Protocol of AfCFTA and the Annexes to it. 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 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 Dispute Settlement Annex to the Protocol.

637. On 30 and 31 January 2024, UNCTAD, in collaboration with the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), organized a workshop on New Approaches to IIAs in Africa, in Casablanca, Morocco. The workshop gathered 34 participants (including 11 women) from IsDB member countries, covered a broad range of topics which included key innovations in the Investment Protocol to the AfCFTA and recent developments in investment facilitation within IIAs. Participants also discussed global challenges, such as climate change, public health, the global tax regime, and the reform of IIAs to respond to these challenges in line with sustainable development objectives.

638. UNCTAD organized a workshop on modern approaches to treaty drafting at the request of Belize on 5 February 2024. The workshop, dedicated to the negotiation of new-generation IIAs (Phase 1 of IIA reform), provided an overview of UNCTAD policy guidance on the subject matter and compared old- and new-generation approaches to treaty scope, protection standards, and termination clauses of IIAs. It also covered ISDS and explored modern treaty clauses that seek to proactively foster sustainable investment.

639. On 14 March 2024, UNCTAD delivered a capacity building workshop on key issues in IIAs for Sierra Leone. The workshop brought together 50 government officials (30 of whom were women) from various ministries, including high-level representatives, to discuss key policy and legal issues in IIA reform, inter-ministerial consultation on IIA reform in Sierra Leone, as well as the AfCFTA Investment Protocol, among other topics.

640. On 18 April 2024, UNCTAD conducted a workshop on key issues in IIA reform for government officials from El Salvador. The workshop presented the findings of the UNCTAD IIA Review of El Salvador’s IIA network and offered action-oriented guidance on developing and implementing a national IIA reform strategy. It also offered policy options for IIA reform that are aligned with sustainable development.

641. UNCTAD, in collaboration with the Egypt National Training Academy, co-organized a Workshop on Key Issues in IIAs. Held on 29 August 2024, the workshop brought together 23 participants (including 5 women) from Government and the private

sector. Discussions focused on recent trends in the IIA and ISDS regime, policy options for the reform of investment protection provisions, and the move towards investment facilitation in recent IIAs.

642. UNCTAD organized a technical assistance workshop to support the finalization of the Belize Model BIT. Held on 9 October 2024, the workshop built on previous meetings aimed at strengthening the capacity of Belize's IIA investment policy team, including a model BIT review and an inter-ministerial validation workshop conducted earlier in 2024. Discussions focused on the definitions of investor and investment, the substantive protection standards contained in Belize's draft model BIT, and small outstanding refinements to the ISDS process in the draft model treaty.

643. In cooperation with the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), UNCTAD organized a workshop on key issues in international investment policies. Held on 20 November 2024, the meeting gathered 38 participants (including 19 women) to discuss global trends in IIAs and dispute settlement, key challenges in the current regime amid emerging global challenges, and UNCTAD tools for the reform of investment protection. The workshop also explored UNCTAD IIA toolbox for promoting investment in the energy transition, the move towards investment facilitation in IIAs, and the emerging content on responsible and inclusive investment in IIAs.

644. On 9 December 2024, UNCTAD, in collaboration with the League of Arab States (LAS), organized a regional workshop on the negotiations of the Arab Investment Agreement. The session facilitated substantive discussions on the LAS-proposed regional investment agreements and brought together 30 participants, of whom 13 were women, comprising investment negotiators from all 22 Arab countries. UNCTAD continues to provide backstopping support to LAS for the finalization of the regional investment agreement.

645. Other training courses that UNCTAD hosted, co-hosted or contributed to in 2024 include the following:

(a) From March to October 2024, UNCTAD actively contributed to the work of UNCITRAL Working Group III on ISDS Reform. This included participation in the 7th and 8th Intersessional Meetings, as well as the 49th session held in Vienna.

(b) From 30 September to 1 October 2024, UNCTAD co-organized the Regional Physical Validation Workshop on the Revised COMESA Common Investment Agreement - to achieve alignment with the emerging continental framework for investment governance (AfCFTA Investment Protocol) as well as best practice identified since the last revisions in 2017. The two-day, in-person event in Cairo, Egypt brought together government delegates to review and discuss the proposed revisions and develop a roadmap for its adoption. Additionally, UNCTAD presented its IIA review report of bilateral investment treaties concluded by COMESA Member States.

(c) On 11 March 2024, UNCTAD contributed to the 9th Annual OECD Investment Treaty Conference on *Supporting the global energy transition - Methods to align investment treaties with the Paris Agreement*. UNCTAD presented its work on investment treaty reform aimed at aligning the IIA regime with today's emerging global challenges, including the promotion and facilitation of climate-friendly investments.

(d) On 8 May 2024, UNCTAD organized a session on Investment Facilitation Provisions in IIAs during the Annual Investment Meeting Congress in Abu Dhabi, UAE. Discussions addressed the role and importance of facilitation provisions in enhancing sustainable investment flows.

(e) On 31 May 2024, UNCTAD contributed to the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) webinar on *Rethinking Investment Treaties: Lessons for Policymaking*. The webinar focused on the goals of IIA reform and ways to redesign the IIA regime to support sustainable development. Topics covered included UNCTAD work on enhancing the developmental potential and social aspect of IIAs, flexible approaches to investment facilitation and promotion, transforming IIAs into tools for lasting cooperation, and fostering responsible business conduct and inclusive investment practices.

(f) From 9 to 11 July 2024, UNCTAD contributed to the Conference on Tax and Good Governance Project 2015–2024. The panel discussion focused on the tax and investment provisions of the AfCFTA, examining their similarities with other investment agreements while also addressing their unique impact on domestic and cross-border taxation policies. Key topics included: investment facilitation, the digitalization of government administrative systems, including tax and customs, the impact of these measures on investment attraction and revenue collection. The session underscored the importance of effective cooperation between government agencies to ensure the smooth implementation of these policies.

(g) On 22 July 2024, UNCTAD contributed to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Forum and presented its work on IIAs and implications for APEC economies.

(h) On 11 September 2024, UNCTAD collaborated with the Columbia Center on Sustainable Investment (CCSI) 2024 Executive Training on Investment Treaties and Arbitration for government officials. Presentations focused on investment facilitation, IIAs and the financial cost of investor-State disputes. The training gathered over 100 officials in charge of investment policy.

(i) From 16 to 17 October 2024, UNCTAD participated at the 16th Investment Policy Forum for developing country negotiators, organized by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) and the government of the Philippines. During the meeting, UNCTAD contributed to key discussions, including: (i) a presentation on the role of IIAs in facilitating investment for climate change and the energy transition, (ii) an analysis on trends in the reform of the international investment regime, highlighting the diversification of IIAs towards investment facilitation; and (iii) active engagement with over 50 delegates.

(j) On 23 October 2024, UNCTAD participated in a webinar on Stability and Change in International Investment Law, organized by the Swiss Institute of Comparative Law and the Center for International Arbitration at the Washington College of Law. The UNCTAD presentation focused on the role of the organization in the international investment regime, and both its past and future path.

(k) From 30 to 31 October 2024, UNCTAD contributed to the Conference on the Rule of Law and the Future of Investment Protection, organized by the German Arbitration Institute in Berlin, Germany. UNCTAD presented its work on the need to reform the IIA regime in line with sustainable development objectives.

(l) From 1 to 2 November 2024, UNCTAD contributed to the Annual Conference of the African Society of International Law held in Lagos, Nigeria. UNCTAD presented and discussed the role of IIAs in facilitating investment for climate change and the energy transition.

(m) On 6 November 2024, UNCTAD contributed to the OECD Roundtable on Investment and Sustainable Development, as part of the 4th Session on Strengthening Sustainable Investment through IIAs. UNCTAD discussed key questions on the most effective tools to channel investment towards sustainable development, ways to move towards broader IIAs that focus on cooperation and proactive promotion and facilitation, and what are the best avenues for countries and regional organizations to accelerate IIA reform.

(n) On 7 November 2024, UNCTAD contributed to a conference organized by K&L Gates Straits Law on International Investment Law and ISDS. Discussions focused on emergent trends in ISDS practice in the Middle East.

646. **Results and impact.** There is strong evidence that the IIA work programme has a concrete and positive impact on aligning the investment treaty regime with sustainable development objectives while maintaining a conducive environment for FDI. UNCTAD policy tools have played a pivotal role in shaping investment policymaking at all levels.

(a) Forward-looking IIA reform is well under way and involves countries at all levels of development and geographical regions. Currently, new IIAs systematically incorporate sustainable development-oriented reform elements aligned with UNCTAD policy tools (see WIR 2024). Provisions that were considered innovative in pre-2012 IIAs

now appear regularly. Highlights of modern treaty making include a sustainable development orientation, investment facilitation and promotion, 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 integrated numerous ISDS reform elements into recent treaties, further shaping the evolving international investment landscape.

(b) Feedback from participants in capacity-building workshops and conferences on IIAs is generally very positive. On average, 91 per cent of respondents stated that the sessions substantially contributed to improving their understanding of the key issues at stake. Additionally, an average of over 81 per cent of respondents indicated that they had used recommendations found in the UNCTAD IPFSD in their work, while 44 per cent noted that the IPFSD had prompted their country to reconsider its investment policy strategy. To date, some 145 countries and regional economic integration organizations have used UNCTAD recommendations on IIA reform to (re)design investment policies and IIA treaty clauses.

647. Further evidence and positive feedback received in 2024 include:

(a) “We are grateful for your assistance in reviewing the existing COMESA Common Investment Area (CCIA) and in leading the technical discussions with the COMESA Secretariat on the proposed amendments aimed at aligning the CCIA with the AfCFTA Protocol on Investment and international best practices. I am convinced that the revised CCIA will ultimately contribute to a more conducive FDI environment in the region.” Secretary-General, COMESA.

(b) “The work of the IIA team at UNCTAD continues to be invaluable for our mission to reform international investment law and policy to advance sustainable development.” Co-President and Co-CEO, Vice President, Global Strategies and Managing Director, Europe, IISD.

(c) “The content of the presentations [from the workshop on Key Issues in IIAs for Sierra Leone] ...are useful in developing a framework that will guide the review of existing IIAs or in developing new ones.” Executive Director, National Investment Board, Sierra Leone.

(d) “We are satisfied with the outcome of the training and the efforts to help policymakers and negotiators in our member countries, enhancing their understanding of the ongoing reforms of IIAs and gaining insights on the recent developments in investment facilitation policies in Africa. The workshop was also an opportunity to emphasize the importance of our joint publication on Guiding Principles for Investment Policymaking in fostering consensus at the regional level concerning investment policy reforms.” Director, Cooperation and Capacity Development Department, IsDB.

(e) “The UNCTAD Multi-Stakeholder Platform on IIA Reform provides a forum for very well-targeted discussions, effectively organized and thoroughly discussed. We have been inspired by the discussion.” Investment Law Division, Department of Treaty and Law, Ministry of Commerce, People’s Republic of China.

(f) “The Multi-Stakeholder Platform on IIA Reform established by UNCTAD, is an excellent forum for sharing ideas on the reforms required in IIAs in the light of the changing global investment landscape.” Additional Secretary (Investment Reforms and Policy), Board of Investment, Islamabad, Pakistan.

(g) “On behalf of the Arab League, I would like to extend...gratitude for [the] valuable comments on the final draft of the Arab Regional Investment Agreement. [The] comprehensive review and insights are deeply appreciated.” Communication and Economic Officer for Investment and Economic Cooperation, Economic Relations Department, Economic Affairs Sector, LAS.

(h) “The UNCTAD Workshop on New Approaches to IIAs in Africa was an enriching experience that allowed us to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities...By highlighting the importance of the IsDB-UNCTAD Guiding Principles for Investment Policymaking, we were able to discuss ways to strengthen regional cooperation and promote sustainable development through more effective investment

policies.” Cooperation and Partnerships Director, Moroccan Investment and Export Development Agency (AMDIE).

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>
ALB/0T/NAK	Fostering Competition Law and Policy and Competition Culture in Albania	2024–	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
GLO/0T/NAB	UN2UN Transfer Agreement on consumer information and consumer protection	2024–	United Nations Environment Programme
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

648. **Development context.** Competition law and policy drive economic growth and sustainable development by promoting market openness, innovation, and efficiency, ultimately enhancing consumer welfare. It complements trade policy by ensuring that trade and investment liberalization benefits are not undermined by anticompetitive practices. Similarly, consumer protection empowers individuals to make informed, responsible, and sustainable choices while safeguarding their rights against unfair commercial practices. In a globalized economy, competition and consumer protection policies must evolve to address cross-border challenges. Strengthening regional and international cooperation is crucial for maintaining fair and dynamic markets that benefit both businesses and consumers.

649. Developing countries face unique challenges in fostering competitive and fair markets. Weak business infrastructure and complex regulatory and licensing regimes make it harder for companies to enter these markets. Strengthening policies, laws and enforcement mechanisms is essential to effectively detecting and addressing anticompetitive behaviour. Increasing awareness among consumers and businesses about the importance of competition further ensures that consumers exercise their rights and businesses uphold their responsibilities.

650. **Objectives and features.** UNCTAD aims to assist developing countries in adopting or revising competition and consumer protection laws and policies to align with international best practices and regional frameworks in these areas. UNCTAD also contributes to fostering the capacities of government officials and experts and raising awareness among stakeholders involved in both fields. These policies play an essential role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially Goals 8, 9, 10, 12 and 17.

651. **Outputs.** Under the project on “Technical assistance and capacity building in competition and consumer protection for African Portuguese-speaking developing countries and Timor-Leste”,¹¹⁶ UNCTAD, in co-operation with the Competition Authority of Cabo Verde, organized an in-person seminar on competition in March 2024.¹¹⁷ The seminar

¹¹⁶ <https://unctad.org/project/technical-assistance-and-capacity-building-competition-and-consumer-protection-african>.

¹¹⁷ <https://unctad.org/meeting/webinar-competition-law-and-policy-portuguese-speaking-countries-seminario-sobre-direito-da>.

provided a platform for competition officers from beneficiary countries to engage with counterparts from more advanced competition authorities, such as Brazil and Portugal, to discuss anticompetitive practices and analyse closed cases. UNCTAD also conducted two webinars in December 2024, offering an in-depth exploration of competition law and policy, focusing on key principles and their connection to public interest considerations, as well as consumer rights to information, health, safety and sustainability.¹¹⁸ Furthermore, UNCTAD continued to provide tailored support to national authorities, including assistance to the Competition Authority of Mozambique on its leniency programme and an ongoing review of the competition and consumer protection draft bills of Guinea Bissau to strengthen their legal frameworks.

652. Under the trilateral cooperation agreement between UNCTAD, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UN-ESCWA) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which seeks to support the formulation or improvement of national competition laws, procedures, and enforcement in the Arab countries, the fifth Joint annual Competition Forum for the Arab Region¹¹⁹ was held in May 2024 in cooperation with the Tunisian Competition Council. In this fifth edition, Arab countries discussed strategies for competition advocacy, convergence and cooperation between Arab competition authorities, competition and industrial policies as well as competitive neutrality.

653. In February 2024, the first Arab Consumer Protection Forum¹²⁰ was launched by UN-ESCWA, in partnership with UNCTAD and the Consumer Protection Directorate of Bahrain, as a platform for knowledge-sharing on consumer protection policy and enforcement among Arab stakeholders. Aimed at enhancing economic growth and governance in the region, the Forum promoted collaboration and coordination among consumer protection authorities in UN-ESCWA member States, guided by international best practices.

654. Following the successful completion in early 2023 of a self-paced online training course on competition policy and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)¹²¹ 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)”, UNCTAD relaunched the same five-module course that concluded in 2024. UNCTAD organized an online graduation ceremony for this second edition of the online course in May 2024, and awarded 48 certificates, of which 60 per cent were awarded to female participants.¹²² This wide interest demonstrates the member States’ interest in this interphase and underscores the impact of UNCTAD initiatives in this sphere.

655. On the interplay between consumer protection and sustainability, UNCTAD, in collaboration with United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), launched a project titled “Advance consumer information and consumer protection in alignment with multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) through a synergistic partnership between UNEP and UNCTAD”.¹²³ Under this project, a panel discussion was held in April 2024 and explored the impact of these agreements on consumers, businesses, government policies, and academic research.¹²⁴ Findings from an ongoing report were presented during regional webinars for Latin America in October 2024¹²⁵ and Eastern and Southern Africa in

¹¹⁸ <https://unctad.org/meeting/webinar-consumer-protection-policy-portuguese-speaking-countries-africa-and-timor-leste>; <https://unctad.org/meeting/webinar-competition-law-and-policy-portuguese-speaking-countries-africa-and-timor-leste>.

¹¹⁹ <https://unctad.org/meeting/fifth-joint-un-escwa-unctad-oecd-competition-forum-arab-region>.

¹²⁰ <https://unctad.org/meeting/first-arab-consumer-protection-forum>.

¹²¹ <https://elearning.unctad.org/course/index.php?categoryid=6>.

¹²² <https://unctad.org/meeting/graduation-ceremony-second-edition-online-course-interface-between-competition-policy-and>.

¹²³ <https://unctad.org/project/advancing-consumer-information-and-consumer-protection-alignment-multilateral-environmental>.

¹²⁴ <https://unctad.org/meeting/panel-discussion-revealing-consumer-protection-multilateral-environmental-agreements>.

¹²⁵ <https://unctad.org/meeting/webinar-consumer-protection-multilateral-environmental-agreements-meas>.

December 2024,¹²⁶ where experts highlighted synergies, tools, and frameworks to support the implementation of MEAs while fostering consumer rights. The findings were also presented at the One Planet Network Forum in September 2024,¹²⁷ the Convention on Biological Diversity - COP16 in October 2024,¹²⁸ and the Trade and investment house during the UN Climate Change Conference - COP29 in November 2024.

656. Moreover, under the Sustainable Manufacturing and Environmental Pollution Programme¹²⁹, UNCTAD produced a report titled “a review of parameters and requirements for an effective consumer label on plastics and plastics alternatives”. The report identified and compared global best practices in plastic consumer labelling, from developed and developing countries and explores the key factors needed to equip consumers with the accurate information on labels to make informed and sustainable choices.

657. 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. The fourteenth UNCTAD-COMPAL International Consumer Protection Forum was co-organized with the consumer protection agency from Colombia in November 2024.¹³⁰ The discussions explored adaptive legal frameworks for protecting consumers in the digital age, innovations in consumer education, and the role of regional trade agreements.

658. As part of the longstanding cooperation between UNCTAD and Latin American and Caribbean Economic System (SELA)¹³¹, the twelfth Annual meeting of the Working Group on Trade and Competition (WGTC) of Latin America and the Caribbean took place in Tegucigalpa, Honduras in August 2024.¹³² This twelfth edition addressed the challenges and opportunities of artificial intelligence in public procurement, followed by an academic forum exploring disclosure, compensation for damages, and confidentiality.¹³³ The WGTC was attended by over 46 participants -of which 40 per cent were women, from 15 countries, six international and regional organizations and five academic institutions.

659. In 2024, UNCTAD launched a technical cooperation project funded by the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) titled “Fostering competition law and policy and competition culture in Albania”.¹³⁴ During this period, two training courses for over 15 judges and magistrates were organized in cooperation with the School of Magistrates of Albania. The first training course took place in November 2024 and laid the foundations covering the substantive and procedural aspects of competition law,¹³⁵ and the second training course in January 2025 deepened the knowledge of judges and magistrates in specific areas such as merger control and regulated sectors.¹³⁶

660. In 2023, UNCTAD launched a technical cooperation project in the Democratic Republic of Congo aimed at strengthening competition and consumer protection frameworks.¹³⁷ A fact-finding mission¹³⁸ assessed existing legislation and recommended

¹²⁶ <https://unctad.org/meeting/webinar-consumer-protection-multilateral-environmental-agreements-eastern-and-southern>.

¹²⁷ <https://www.unep.org/events/conference/one-planet-network-forum-2024>.

¹²⁸ <https://unctad.org/meeting/trade-day-convention-biological-diversity-cop16>.

¹²⁹ <https://smepprogramme.org/>.

¹³⁰ <https://unctad.org/meeting/fourteenth-international-consumer-protection-forum-latin-america>.

¹³¹ In Spanish, Sistema Económico Latinoamericano y del Caribe.

¹³² <https://unctad.org/meeting/working-group-trade-and-competition-latin-america-and-caribbean-12th-annual-meeting>.

¹³³ <https://unctad.org/meeting/academic-forum-competition-latin-america-and-caribbean>.

¹³⁴ <https://unctad.org/project/fostering-competition-law-and-policy-and-competition-culture-albania>.

¹³⁵ <https://unctad.org/meeting/training-workshop-judicial-enforcement-competition-law-substantives-and-procedural-aspects>.

¹³⁶ <https://unctad.org/meeting/training-workshop-judicial-enforcement-competition-law-merger-control-and-regulated-sectors>.

¹³⁷ <https://unctad.org/Topic/Competition-and-Consumer-Protection/project-in-the-democratic-republic-of-the-congo>.

¹³⁸ <https://unctad.org/meeting/launch-unctads-technical-assistance-project-democratic-republic-congo-institutional-and>.

actions for strengthening institutional and regulatory structures, and for adopting consumer protection legislation. The recommendations were outlined in a three-year roadmap and presented to Government authorities in February 2024 during a dissemination event that gathered 61 participants, of which 23 per cent were women.¹³⁹

661. Following the four successful workshops since 2020, UNCTAD co-organised with the European Commission the fifth joint workshop titled “Developing Bridges: UNCTAD Recommendation on General Product Safety Principles” in October 2024, explored the draft UNCTAD recommendation on general product safety principles and its guidance on international cooperation.

662. Under the 2019 memorandum of understanding between UNCTAD and the European University Institute (EUI), since 2021, UNCTAD has contributed to enhancing the capacities of competition authorities’ experts from developing countries by facilitating free access to different training courses organized by the EUI, including the Florence Competition Autumn School in 2024, on recent developments on competition policy.¹⁴⁰

663. **Results and impacts.** Technical assistance remains a key pillar of UNCTAD work on competition and consumer protection laws and policies and has delivered tangible results. The growing number of formal requests for capacity building from developing countries highlights UNCTAD expertise and the relevance of its technical cooperation. The flexibility and responsiveness of the UNCTAD approach have enabled it to meet member States’ needs. Online and hybrid events have expanded participation, allowing global experts to contribute. In 2024, UNCTAD organized and co-organised 29 public events in 12 countries and intervened in over 60 events, responding to member States’ invitations, on competition and/or consumer protection (both online and in-person).

664. UNCTAD has actively supported member States in addressing market disruptions, including unfair commercial and anticompetitive practices, through technical assistance activities implemented in 2024. These services disseminated best practices and international experiences, helping to shape policy, legislation and regulatory frameworks. The UNCTAD multi-stakeholder approach, combining national and regional-level activities, has proven highly effective in the fields of competition and consumer protection.

665. Collaboration with international and regional organizations has further enhanced the impact of technical assistance and increased complementarities between institutions, combining technical, financial and knowledge-based support. This aligns with UNCTAD technical cooperation strategy, which emphasizes strengthening cooperation and joint activities with other agencies.¹⁴¹

666. 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.

667. UNCTAD will continue supporting regional economic organizations in developing countries to implement and enforce competition and consumer protection laws. Regional cooperation is particularly beneficial for young and small authorities, fostering South-South cooperation. This work is expected to grow, especially in Africa and Central America, reinforcing regional frameworks and promoting fairer, more competitive markets.

668. UNCTAD technical assistance has received positive feedback from beneficiary countries. At the twenty-second session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Competition Law and Policy in 2024,¹⁴² the President of the Competition Authority of Dominican Republic praised UNCTAD technical support and emphasized that the

¹³⁹ <https://unctad.org/meeting/validation-du-projet-en-republique-democratique-du-congo-mission-denquete>.

¹⁴⁰ <https://digitalsociety.eui.eu/course/florence-competition-autumn-school/>.

¹⁴¹ TD/B/69/4/Add.1, paragraph 20 (b).

¹⁴² https://unctad.org/system/files/information-document/ccpb_IGECOMP2023_PROG_Tech_Assist_Cap_Building_en_6.pdf.

organization was an invaluable and indispensable partner in strengthening institutional capacities and promoting effective competition policies in developing countries.

669. Additionally, during the same event, the President of the Competition Authority of Cabo Verde delivered a video address, commending UNCTAD for its significant efforts in assisting Portuguese-speaking developing countries in Africa and Timor Leste in establishing, implementing, and advancing competition and consumer laws and policies, ultimately benefiting both markets and consumers.

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/OT/BAQ	Capacity Building in Investment for Development	2011–	Multi-donors
INT/OT/ICC	Sustainable stock Exchanges (SSE) Multi-donor	2020–	Multi-donors
ROA-2427 (B16)	Attracting Finance and Investment for the Energy Transition in Africa	2024–	Development Account
ROA-2427 (L16)	Strengthening sustainability reporting to foster sustainable finance and investment in selected developing countries in Asia and Latin America	2024–	Development Account
<i>Division on Globalization and Development Strategies</i>			
INT/OT/FAP	Wuhan Globalization Seminars	2016–	China

Capital markets and sustainable investment

Sustainable Stock Exchanges initiative

670. **Development context.** UNCTAD has strengthened its work on responsible investment through various channels, most notably through the Sustainable Stock Exchanges Initiative (SSE), which now includes the majority of the world's stock exchanges. Launched in 2009 by the UN Secretary General, the SSE was created in response to stock exchanges' demand for a platform to engage with investors, companies, regulators, standard setters and policymakers in a multi-stakeholder setting to exchange good practices and address shared challenges related to sustainable development. Since its inception, the initiative has evolved into a global partnership platform. As of 2024, its membership has expanded to 134 exchanges worldwide.

671. **Objectives and features.** UNCTAD work on responsible investment, including Sustainable Stock Exchanges initiative, aims to achieve the following objectives through research, consensus-building and technical assistance:

- (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.

672. **Outputs.** In 2024, in collaboration with the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) foundation, the SSE initiative produced model guidance on sustainability related financial disclosures, available in English and Spanish. The SSE also published 4 Market Monitors in collaboration with IFC and UN Women: (a) an analysis of boardroom gender equality in G20 markets and 7 regional or country groupings; (b) an analysis of boardroom gender equality in the 10 largest Latin American markets; (c) an analysis of boardroom gender equality in the 11 largest Eastern European and Central Asian markets and (d) an analysis of gender equality disclosure metric found in stock exchange guidance documents around the world.

673. The SSE initiative further strengthened and expanded its existing online databases including: (a) its stock exchange database with data on the sustainability practices of over 122 stock exchanges and 14 derivative exchanges worldwide, the most comprehensive dataset of its kind publicly available; (b) its database of stock exchange sustainability disclosure guidance documents, the only complete inventory of all such guidance documents in the world; (c) and the gender equality database providing data on boardroom gender balances in 39 markets around the world.

674. 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 IFC and IFRS foundation to deliver 38 online training workshops in 2024 on the topic of “ISSB sustainability reporting standards” in 130 markets, training 12,415 participants, including stock exchange officials, security market regulators, investors and listed companies, with an average female participation of 54 per cent.

(b) SSE partnered with IFC and UN Women to deliver 15 online training workshops in 2024 on the topic of gender equality in capital markets in 85 markets, training 2,403 participants, including stock exchange officials, security market regulators, investors and listed companies, with an average male participation of 33 per cent.

(c) In March 2024, on the occasion of International Women’s Day, SSE partnered with UN Women, UN Global Compact, IFC and the World Federation of Exchanges to convene 111 “Ring the Bell for Gender Equality” events at exchanges around the world 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.

(d) SSE convened four quarterly webinars for SSE Partner Exchanges and other capital market stakeholder, covering the following topics: (Q1) market education; (Q2) climate transition plans; (Q3) European sustainability reporting standards; (Q4) gender equality.

(e) SSE partnered with International Organization for Securities Commissions (IOSCO) and UN-supported Principles for Responsible Investment (PRI) to organize two in-person sessions at COP29, including 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.

675. The SSE also provided technical assistance to stock exchanges who are working to develop guidance on sustainability reporting for their market as part of its objective to have all stock exchanges providing guidance on sustainability reporting.

676. **Results and impacts.** In 2024, in addition to the 53 online training sessions organised, the SSE conducted 10 consensus-building events, including webinars and in-person events involving more than 109 speakers from the private and public sector including international organizations and the regulatory community. The SSE’s membership increased to 120 stock exchanges and 14 derivatives exchanges for 134 SSE partner exchanges in total. A total of 73 stock exchanges provide guidance on ESG disclosure, 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).

677. SSE work was endorsed by a number of key institutions and private sector partners, as reflected in the following statements:

(a) “The UN SSE Sustainability Disclosure webinar provided invaluable insights into how to use IFRS S1/S2 and the importance of reliable, meaningful data which will allow investors and companies to streamline their decision-making processes, paving the way towards a more sustainable future in line with the Global Goals.” Head of Sustainability at B3 (Brazil Stock Exchange), 2024.

(b) “It has been a great pleasure for the Egyptian Exchange to collaborate with the UN SSE and take part in the workshop on the IFRS Sustainability Disclosure Standards. Our team and market participants have truly gained impeccable insights on the topic, which we are expecting to be soon reflected within our scope of work.” Vice Chairman, Egyptian Exchange, 2024.

(c) “We are proud to have hosted the ‘Gender Equality and Global Markets’ training program...By fostering transparency and education in capital markets on this topic, we not only advance social equity but also promote economic growth and contribute to building a sustainable, inclusive economic landscape.” Group Head of ESG and Sustainable Finance, Euronext Stock Exchange, 2024.

(d) “...the recent workshop on Gender Equality and Capital Markets facilitated by the UN SSE...proved to be incredibly valuable for our employees as well as market participants in Indonesia. The training provided essential insights into advancing gender equality within our organization and the market, equipping us with practical tools to enhance our gender equality practices and effectively communicate related information. This workshop was a significant step in strengthening our market’s capabilities and fostering a more inclusive and sustainable environment.” President Director, Indonesia Stock Exchange, 2024.

(e) “We were pleased to participate in the seminar on standards for disclosing information on sustainable development in accordance with IFRS...The training was highly informative and accessible...The interactive part of the seminar also contributed to a deeper understanding of the material. Additionally, having access to the seminar materials and recordings is extremely helpful for our ongoing work on studying reporting standards within the framework of the Sustainable Development Sector of KSE CJSC and in our interactions with listed companies.” President, Kazakhstan Stock Exchange, 2024.

(f) “KSE (Kyrgyz Stock Exchange) as a member of the UN Sustainable Stock Exchanges initiative promotes sustainable development principles in the country’s capital market. The Exchange’s commitment to gender equality is a good example how to attract attention, and most importantly, correctly shape public consciousness regarding equality for the future sustainable development of the companies...We are grateful to UN SSE for supporting KSE and providing training to participants in the capital market of Kyrgyzstan and for opportunity to obtain best practices for implementing and promoting successful gender equality policies.” Vice President, Kyrgyz Stock Exchange , 2024.

(g) “UN Sustainable Stock Exchange Initiative’s collaborative efforts will play a significant role in advancing understanding and implementation of sustainability reporting standards, fostering transparency and accountability in our financial market. Pakistan Stock Exchange appreciates UN Sustainable Stock Exchange Initiative’s dedication to promote sustainable finance and unwavering support which will help driving positive change within our industry. We look forward to continuing our partnership to further the cause of sustainable development.” Chief Marketing and Business Development Officer, Pakistan Stock Exchange, 2024.

(h) “The Dar es Salaam Stock Exchange (DSE) had a very successful, productive and collaborative session with the UN SSE...on the sustainability disclosure standards set forth by the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS). The session was very value-adding to all participants, and it helps us as a market to continue improving in our sustainability disclosure and the development of the policies and standards that govern the members of the exchange.” CEO, Dar es Salaam Stock Exchange, 2024.

Sustainable Institutional Investment Facilitation programme

678. **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.

679. **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.

680. **Outputs.** In 2024, the programme updated the 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 about 3,000 sustainable funds, including their alignment with the SDGs and their climate impact, which helped enhance the transparency and credibility of the sustainable investment market.

681. 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 2024, and in the GSFO with an aim to encourage sustainable investment by institutional investors, in particular in developing economies.

682. In a technical assistance effort to address Africa's substantial infrastructure financing gap, UNCTAD released a report titled *Leveraging the Potential of Sovereign Investors for Infrastructure Investment in Africa*, based on international best practices. With more than half of African countries having established or in the process of establishing sovereign wealth funds (SWFs), the report called for action to integrate SWFs and public pension funds into national development financing architecture and proposed a range of practical policy measures to leverage the potential of these sovereign and public investors for investment in key SDG sectors, with a particular focus on infrastructure.

683. Building on the policy recommendations of the above report, and in the context of a Development Account project on promoting investment in energy transition in Africa, the programme organized capacity building sessions on the promotion of long-term institutional investment in renewable energy. These sessions targeted regulators, investment promotion agencies, and other key stakeholders and were conducted as part of national stakeholder meetings in Ethiopia, Malawi, Namibia, Seychelles, and Tanzania.

684. The programme began implementing a Development Account project to support Ecuador, Peru, the Philippines, and Viet Nam in integrating sustainable development considerations into the investment decisions of institutional investors and exploring the opportunities offered by sustainable finance, as well as the impact of sustainability reporting requirements for these investors. In November 2024, a consultative meeting on financing sustainable development through long-term institutional investment was held, bringing together policymakers and international investors to discuss practical measures and tools to mobilize capital for sustainable development. Following the meeting and subsequent consultations with beneficiary countries, a draft sustainability integration and disclosure framework was developed, drawing on international best practices featured in UNCTAD Sustainable Finance and incorporating substantive inputs from external experts.

685. To support capacity building on sustainability disclosure for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in developing economies, the programme submitted a policy paper on the subject to the G20 Sustainable Finance Working Group. The paper

emphasized that, while global sustainability efforts have largely focused on large corporations, SMEs are increasingly affected by supply chain and investment pressures. However, fragmented reporting standards, limited resources, and insufficient expertise make sustainability reporting challenging for SMEs. To address policy spillover effects of international sustainability disclosure standards, the paper called for targeted support and proposed specific policy recommendations to enhance SME sustainability disclosure in developing economies.

686. Throughout 2024, the programme continued to support stakeholders in the financial industry working on sustainable finance through advisory services and technical assistance. For example, the programme provided expertise to academia, financial industry professionals and conferences in both developed and developing country member States.

687. **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) “UNCTAD technical support has been invaluable in strengthening Tanzania’s capacity to attract long-term institutional investment in energy transition and infrastructure. Through tailored capacity-building initiatives and policy guidance, the programme has helped us create a more enabling environment for sovereign and public investors to finance sustainable development.” Principal Director of Investment, Tanzania Investment Centre, 2024.

(b) “As sovereign and public investors, we play a crucial role in financing sustainable infrastructure and climate transition. UNCTAD policy recommendations and capacity-building initiatives have provided valuable guidance, helping us integrate sustainability considerations into our investment strategies and scale up financing for key SDG sectors.” Secretary General, World Federation of Development Financing Institutions (WFDI), 2024.

(c) “I do believe that your action is very positive for finding common ground between the different parties needed for financing projects on the ground and for the people.” Président du Conseil d’Administration/Chairman of the Board, Caisse des dépôts, France, 2024.

IV. Theme D: Empowering people, investing in their future

688. 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.

689. 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.

690. 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 2024 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>
INT/OT/CAI	Capacity-Building in Trade and Gender	2013–	Multi-donors

691. **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.

692. 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.

693. **Objectives and features.** The Trade, Gender and Development Programme assists UNCTAD member States 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.

694. **Outputs.** In 2024, 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 did so through its e-learning programme to train policymakers on the trade and gender nexus.

Training

695. Delivery of one iteration of the online course on trade and gender titled "The Impact of non-tariff measures on women's e-commerce businesses in developing countries" (17 June to 21 July 2024). A total of 146 stakeholders, of which 105 were female, 37 were male and 4 identified as another gender, were selected to participate in the courses. Beyond the pedagogical manuals, trainees benefited from various audio-visual aids developed by UNCTAD, combined with peer-to-peer exchanges and webinars with experts, for a concrete application of the themes addressed.

696. Delivery of a 5-day workshop on Trade and Gender Linkages in Lima, Peru for policymakers of the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Tourism. The workshop included presentations by UNCTAD, hands-on activities, and sessions with experts from the region, which provided an opportunity to learn about best practices in other countries, including participation of representatives from ECLAC, the Government of Chile and the Government of Mexico.

Analytical activities

697. The analytical work conducted by the Trade, Gender and Development Programme in 2024 focused on the drafting and publication of a study entitled "The Impact of non-tariff measures on women's e-commerce businesses in developing countries". The publication

analyses the gendered barriers to e-commerce transactions for women-led firms. It highlights some of the areas where these barriers are likely to be found, including in firm capacities, sector concentration, and the use of support services, and analyses the policy and initiatives that are needed to support women-led e-commerce firms in better managing the challenges of non-tariff measures.

Events and workshops – Awareness-raising and policy dialogue on the trade and gender nexus

698. 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) CSW68 side event “Empowering Women Through Trade: Breaking barriers and transforming subsistence into value chain participation?”. The event was held on 13 March 2024 during the sixty-eight session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). The side event explored the bottlenecks and opportunities that determine women’s capacity to benefit from trade, and proposed solutions and strategic interventions to address the many barriers that stand in the way of women’s active participation in value chains. The event discussed approaches to identify key economic activities that have higher potential to be integrated into regional or global value chains, providing avenues for transforming women’s economic participation.

(b) WTO Public Forum event “Disability inclusive trade – leveraging digital technologies to make trade work for all” held on 11 September 2024. By drawing lessons from efforts to promote gender issues in trade, the session looked at the multifaceted impact of international trade on persons with disabilities. The event represented the first activity organised by the Inter-Agency Technical Working Group on Trade and Disability Inclusion, bringing together Geneva-based international organizations to focus on integrating and enhancing disability inclusion within trade and development agendas.

(c) A webinar on “Empowering Women-led SMEs: Bridging Trade, Gender, and Consumer Protection” organized on 8 March 2024 on the occasion of International Women’s Day. The webinar explored the synergies between trade, gender, and consumer protection, offering insights into how to leverage consumer rights and improve women business resilience and growth.

(d) The Trade, Gender and Development programme contributed to workshop sessions focusing on trade and gender in the following contexts:

(i) Seminars on trade and gender benefiting the National Board of Trade of Sweden and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (23 April 2024);

(ii) Session delivered at the APEC SOM3 workshop “Promoting women’s economic empowerment through trade policy and trade agreements”, organized by the Ministry of Trade of Peru (19 August 2024);

(iii) Session delivered at the SALMA Dialogue for Gender Equality 2024, organized by Konrad Adenauer Foundation (10–12 July 2024);

(iv) TG presentation on women in cross-border trade at the UNODC “Youth Workshop on Illicit Trade and Trafficking and its Impact on the AfCFTA, Peace and Security in Southern Africa” (9 October 2024);

(v) TG presentation on NTMs and gender in e-commerce at the meeting of the Team of Specialists on Gender-Responsive Standards (6 November 2024);

(vi) TG presentation on gender and critical minerals at the IGF Annual Meeting on “Redefining Mining: Balancing the Need for Minerals with Protecting People and the Planet” (19 November 2024).

699. **Results and impact.** The above activities yielded positive and multiplier effects in terms of enhanced capacities to mainstream gender into trade policy.

700. In 2024, the online courses had an average success rate of 93 per cent, with 122 participants, 72 per cent of which were women, successfully completing all course activities and scoring passing grades in the quizzes. Over 95 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. Eighty-seven 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 73 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.

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>
SAU/OT/CBI	Entrepreneurship Development Programme (Saudi Arabia)	2014–	Saudi Arabia
INT/OT/HCJ2	Strategic Partnership the Netherlands – (linked with THCE04)	2023–	Kingdom of the Netherlands
ROA-2124 (A13)	DESA - Joint Project on Financing	2021–	Development Account

701. **Development context.** The General Assembly of the United Nations, in its resolutions, including the latest one - 79/201 of 23 December 2024, recognizes the important contribution that entrepreneurship makes to sustainable development by creating jobs, fostering innovation, promoting social inclusion and cohesion, empowering vulnerable populations, contributing to environmental conservation and the resilience of ecosystems, and driving inclusive economic growth. Acknowledging the value of entrepreneurship education and the dissemination of entrepreneurial thinking across all sectors, the General Assembly invites UNCTAD to continue its work in support of entrepreneurship through its Empretec and Women in Business programmes, 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).

702. 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*:

(a) 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;

(b) Entrepreneurship policy support for the implementation of robust national and regional policy frameworks.

703. 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, 8 and 9.

704. These mandates underpin UNCTAD technical assistance work on entrepreneurship for sustainable development.

705. **Objectives and features.** UNCTAD 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 MSMEs. 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 strategy¹⁴³: optimizing the regulatory environment; enhancing entrepreneurship education and skills development; facilitating technology exchange and innovation; improving access to finance; and promoting awareness and networking.

706. 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.

707. Since its inception in 1988, 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 560,000 entrepreneurs have benefited from Empretec workshops and business development services available in the existing network of Empretec centres worldwide. Empretec centres help small businesses improve their efficiency and contribute to job creation and competitiveness in the hosting countries.

708. Through its network of Empretec centres, UNCTAD also assists 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 the 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.

709. **Outputs.** The main outputs in 2024 in the areas of entrepreneurship for sustainable development are reported below.

Entrepreneurship policies

UN Secretary-General Report on Entrepreneurship for Sustainable Development (A/79/208)

710. Published on 22 July 2024, the report reviews the progress on implementing General Assembly resolution 77/160 of December 2022 concerning entrepreneurship for sustainable development. It was prepared by UNCTAD, with contributions from more than 10 UN entities, and presented to the Second Committee of the UN General Assembly. The report discusses the challenges and transformations that entrepreneurs and MSMEs face due to ongoing social, economic, and geopolitical shocks, and emphasizes the need for coherent policies and consistent strategies through a multi-stakeholder approach, considering the impact of rapid digital transformation and the need for energy transition.

Multi-year Expert Meeting on Investment, Innovation and Entrepreneurship for Productive Capacity-building and Sustainable Development

711. The eleventh session of the Multi-year Expert Meeting on Investment, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship emphasized the critical role of MSMEs in sustainable development and economic growth. Discussions highlighted successful global examples of entrepreneurship support and emerging trends in the provision of inclusive business development services. The meeting also stressed the need for multi-stakeholder cooperation to foster inclusive and resilient economic growth, urging stakeholders to strengthen business ecosystems through leveraging digital tools and collaborative approaches to tackle the challenges faced by small businesses in a context of global technological advancements.

2024 ECOSOC Partnership Forum Side Event: Circular economy for SDGs

712. On 30 January 2024, UNCTAD co-hosted an online event titled “Circular Economy for SDGs: Inspiring Transformations Towards Sustainable, Resilient, and Innovative Solutions”, in collaboration with a non-governmental organization with ECOSOC (United

¹⁴³ As identified in the UNCTAD Entrepreneurship Policy Framework – EPF, launched in 2012.

Nations Economic and Social Council) consultative status. Building on the UNCTAD publication “Entrepreneurs riding the wave of circularity”, the event highlighted the circular economy as a central model that can support the 2030 Agenda by promoting sustainable practices that address poverty, resilience, and innovation amid various crises. Attended by 150 participants from over 40 countries, the event shared successful case studies emphasizing circular systems as a possible solution to resource shortage, economic shocks and environmental issues. Another major theme discussed was the importance of innovation driven by collaboration among academia, financial institutions and industries, as emphasized in the UNCTAD publication.

713. The programme also provided assistance to the following countries.

Angola – Entrepreneurship Policy Review

714. As part of the Train for Trade II EU-UNCTAD joint Programme, and further to the request of the government of Angola to provide support in the design of a national entrepreneurship strategy (NES) aligned with the country’s long-term vision and development plans, UNCTAD published a comprehensive review of Angola’s entrepreneurship policy.¹⁴⁴ The review provides a detailed overview of Angola’s existing entrepreneurial ecosystem and outlines strategic objectives to improve business creation and growth, enhance entrepreneurial skills, promote innovation, and facilitate access to finance. The review stressed the importance of a coordinated approach involving various government sectors and private stakeholders to create a robust entrepreneurship environment that can lead to sustainable economic growth and diversification in Angola.

Consultations on South Africa’s National Entrepreneurship Strategy

715. Since 2021, UNCTAD has supported the Department of Small Business Development (DSBD) of the government of South Africa, by conducting a comprehensive review of the country’s entrepreneurial ecosystem and identifying priority actions. Building on this work, UNCTAD participated in an online consultation in November 2024, organized by DSBD to share updates on the national entrepreneurship strategy, gather input on the proposed theory of change, and discuss the high-level implementation framework. Key stakeholders such as government representatives, educational institutions, and support organizations, were involved in the discussions, ensuring a comprehensive and inclusive approach to developing and refining the strategy.

Training and technical material

716. *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 2024, the course was completed by 691 people from 63 countries.

717. *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 policymakers 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 2024, the e-learning course – made available in English, French and Spanish – was completed by 345 people from 100 countries.

Global events and outreach:

718. To mark the International MSMEs Day on 27 June 2024, UNCTAD and representatives from the Empretec global network organized an online event titled *Future Proofing of MSMEs*. This annual day, designated by the UN General Assembly, aims to

¹⁴⁴ UNCTAD/TCS/DIAE/INF/2024/1

raise public awareness of the contributions that MSMEs make to sustainable development. During the event, the representatives from the Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA) and the National Association of Women Entrepreneurs of Malaysia (NAWEM), the Empretec counterparts in South Africa and Malaysia, gave an overview of the assistance that the institutions provide to small entrepreneurs in their respective countries. The event was attended by representatives of international organizations, the public sector, industry experts, tech pioneers, and thought leaders to discuss strategies for MSMEs to thrive. Topics included digitalization, up-skilling and re-skilling, women entrepreneurs in logistics, and innovative financing.

719. On International Youth Day, 12 August 2024, UNCTAD partnered with a youth representative from Nigeria to host a podcast focused on the importance of investing in youth entrepreneurship for an inclusive and sustainable future.

Empretec

Global Empretec Forum and Empretec Directors Meeting 2024

720. UNCTAD and the Latin American Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (CELIEM), the hosting institution of Empretec in Costa Rica, organized a five-day event in San José, bringing together representatives from the Empretec global network and local entrepreneurs. The Empretec Global Forum was opened by the UNCTAD Secretary-General and the Minister of Economy of Costa Rica, both of whom emphasized the pivotal role of entrepreneurship in driving sustainable development and economic resilience. The forum highlighted the importance of sustainability and innovation in business, with discussions on entrepreneurship in creative industries, cultural sectors, and migrant communities. Panellists underscored the need for action against environmental challenges like climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution, urging businesses to adopt sustainable practices and align with the SDGs. The annual meeting of Empretec Directors featured discussions on the future of the Empretec programme, resulting in an agreed roadmap.

Empretec 2.0

721. Empretec centres have enhanced their training curricula through two targeted initiatives designed to support innovative start-ups. Leveraging South-South collaboration, UNCTAD partnered with certified Empretec international master trainers and subject matter experts from tech start-ups to develop specialized training materials for early-stage and middle-stage entrepreneurs in the smart logistics and fintech sectors. These materials integrate the Empretec behavioural framework with in-depth technical sessions led by international and national experts, as well as experienced entrepreneurs. Early-stage start-up founders benefit from immersive five-day training workshops, which combine hands-on mentorship with skill-building sessions aimed at fostering collaboration and accelerating digital innovation. For middle-stage entrepreneurs in the smart logistics sector, a dynamic four-day training programme provides advanced insights into scaling businesses and improving operational efficiency. Participants gain firsthand knowledge of market trends, process optimization, and technology integration from industry leaders. This initiative is further reinforced with an extensive mentoring programme and study tours, offering practical exposure to best practices and cutting-edge innovations.

722. Moreover, UNCTAD continued strengthening the cooperation with and amongst over 40 Empretec centres, with 565 certified trainers, 674 workshops and 16,000 entrepreneurs trained in 2024. Particular emphasis was placed on the position of the centres in the national entrepreneurship ecosystem. Empretec's Square for Global Goals, a peer-to-peer networking and learning platform that was launched in 2023 was further enhanced with mentoring services by international business development players. *Empretec activities at the national level*

723. UNCTAD continued to assist the Social Development Bank (SDB), the institution which hosts and runs the Empretec programme in Saudi Arabia, extending the cooperation until 2029. In 2024, eight Empretec Training Workshops (ETWs) were conducted across different parts of the country, benefiting 236 Saudi entrepreneurs, including 100 women. Throughout the year, UNCTAD and SDB also organized two training-of-trainers

workshops involving a total of 22 certified trainers and trainee trainers.¹⁴⁵ As a result, five new local trainers were certified as UNCTAD-Empretec National Trainers, and two advanced with their certification as UNCTAD-Empretec National Master Trainers.

724. In addition, and in collaboration with SDB and national partners, UNCTAD organized four workshops for early-stage start-up founders in the smart logistics and fintech sectors, trained national Empretec trainers on the delivery of the workshops and, at the end of the year, handed them over the workshop for future deliveries. Also, one workshop for middle-stage start-up founders in the smart logistics sector was held. Moreover, an induction workshop for young students in the smart logistics, industrial and mining sectors took place that focused on developing entrepreneurial skills, leveraging technology, and exploring industry-specific opportunities to help these future entrepreneurs navigate the competitive start-up landscape. In total, 165 entrepreneurs were trained among which 49 women.

725. 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 – Directorate General of Customs and Excise, and the State Bank of Indonesia (BNI), organized a second Empretec ETW in the country. The workshop, which took place in Yogyakarta in June 2024, saw the participation of 32 export-oriented entrepreneurs and business owners, including 18 women, and was led by a team of international trainers from Brazil, Malaysia, and Viet Nam.

726. UNCTAD has been assisting Uganda’s Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development with targeted interventions in the implementation of its Informality Management for Compliance and Revenue Mobilization (IMCORE) programme. As a follow-up to a first series of activities aimed at strengthening the capacity of selected Ugandan MSMEs on accounting and reporting issues, UNCTAD and Enterprise Uganda – which hosts the Empretec programme in the country – conducted entrepreneurship capacity-building activities for a group of 100 young entrepreneurs in 2024.

Highlights of activities carried out in Empretec Centres worldwide

727. Angola advanced entrepreneurship through strategic partnerships and training initiatives, kicking off the year with workshops in Luanda and Kilamba focused on entrepreneurship in agribusiness.

728. Empretec Argentina provided over 400 courses on entrepreneurship in 2024. The 15th edition of the BNA Innovative Solutions Competition, organized jointly with the centre, received a record-breaking 1,500 applications. From these, 89 projects were selected for an intensive training programme, which culminated in \$18,000 in prizes awarded to three winners. The centre also strengthened its engagement in the biotechnology ecosystem, through its participation in the Emprande Biotech event. Additionally, it launched its third annual free webinar series for SMEs covering essential topics like finance and marketing. The Caja de Herramienta (Toolbox in English) podcast continued to share expert insights, gathering over 5,000 views, while the centre published its 13th edition of the digital magazine, INNOVACIÓN, featuring key insights into open innovation and business opportunities.

729. Specialized entrepreneurship training workshops were held in The Gambia, targeting women and youth entrepreneurs in information and communication technologies, creative arts, and agriculture. Additionally, 60 women farmers received training on the Farmers Model, aimed at enhancing productivity and strengthening food security.

730. In 2024, Empretec Ghana empowered 8,794 women and youth-led MSMEs with essential entrepreneurship and business management through training workshops focusing on business planning, financial literacy, and productivity management.

731. After a hiatus due to COVID-19, the Empretec Centre in Guyana made a strong comeback in June 2024 with its innovative Community Entrepreneurship Programme. This

¹⁴⁵ Trainee trainers are in the process of becoming certified, while certified trainers completed the certification process and received a certification as Empretec trainers.

initiative focuses on revitalizing community development and reducing unemployment, especially among women and youth in marginalized areas. The programme began with workshops on Business Opportunity Identification, which laid the foundation for more comprehensive Business Capacity Building Workshops. These workshops culminated in a final evaluation where participants presented their business plans and underwent assessments. Out of the participants, thirty were selected to receive grant financing, with an impressive 88 per cent of them being women. These selected participants will also benefit from business advisory and coaching services.

732. The Empretec centre in Malaysia established an Accelerator, Collaborator, and Enabler Hub (ACE HUB), in collaboration with three Empretec from Indonesia and the Koperasi Nawem Berhad Association (Malaysia). This initiative brings together women entrepreneurs to accelerate cross-border trade between Indonesia and Malaysia. On 12 September 2024, an online business matching event showcased 60 Indonesian MSMEs to buyers from Malaysia and Singapore, generating inquiries and orders. This success was further cemented by an MOU with ACE HUB Indonesia at the Bea Cukai Annual MSME Fair, aimed at enhancing entrepreneurial capacity. Domestically, entrepreneurs are flourishing after having attended entrepreneurial training workshops, with plans for additional workshops for various sectors.

733. The Empretec Programme in South Africa, hosted by the Small Enterprise Development Finance Agency (SEDFA), prioritizes inclusive entrepreneurial training for individuals from all backgrounds, focusing on marginalized groups such as people with disabilities, ex-offenders, and retired military veterans. A training session in Tzaneen, Limpopo, empowered 19 disabled entrepreneurs, providing them with essential skills to advance their businesses. By adapting the Empretec methodology to diverse learning needs, the Empretec centre demonstrated that disabled entrepreneurs can thrive in competitive markets, breaking down barriers and significantly contributing to South Africa's economic growth.

734. Through the Empretec centre in Zambia, 5 agri-business MSMEs were connected with retail giants Shoprite and Choppies, enabling direct supply and opening new market opportunities. Ninety-three MSMEs secured \$108,000 in funding and an additional \$113,636 from the Constituency Development Fund, fuelling expansions. Thirty-six MSMEs received intensive investment readiness training to attract local and international partnerships, while 100 entrepreneurs enhanced their export capabilities through readiness workshops. Additionally, 84 MSMEs participated in certification and compliance workshops, improving product quality to meet market standards. The Empretec centre also facilitated partnerships among 21 MSMEs across various sectors, unlocking vital resources and expertise for enhanced innovation and competitiveness.

735. The Empretec centre in Zimbabwe entered into a partnership to develop an Innovative Entrepreneurship curriculum for the leather sector, focusing on cultivating practical entrepreneurial skills that drive innovation and job creation. Another partnership allowed for the delivery of economic empowerment training for individuals with disabilities in Harare and Bulawayo.

736. **Results and impact.** The UNCTAD Entrepreneurship Policy Framework and its participatory, multi-stakeholder approach has been used in the preparation of Angola's Entrepreneurship Policy Review and during the consultations organized by Department of Small Business Development (DSBD) of the government of South Africa in the implementation of its national entrepreneurship strategy.

737. The topic discussed at the Multi-year Expert Meeting on Investment, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship, "Business development services for conducive business ecosystems in support of sustainable development", sparked an enriching exchange of experiences among experts and participants. Some delegates commended the UNCTAD Empretec programme for its role in enhancing managerial and technical skills among SMEs and the role played by business development services, such as the ones provided by Empretec centres, in creating robust entrepreneurial ecosystems.

738. Under the consolidation phase of Empretec in Saudi Arabia, carried out in partnership with SDB, a total of 36 Empretec ETWs were organized between June 2021

and the end of 2024, benefiting 908 entrepreneurs, including 411 women. During this period, 11 national trainers were certified, 5 at the National Master Trainer level. Additionally, five more are expected to receive their certification in the course of 2025. Of the certified trainers, six are women. Furthermore, the new training workshops for tech start-ups received positive feedback from the government and participants. As a result, additional course material for entrepreneurship development will be designed in 2025 to further contribute to the country's Vision 2030.

739. In 2024, an assessment of the impact of Empretec workshops on participants in Saudi Arabia was conducted, involving a sample of 194 people. The results were compared with a previous assessment conducted in 2016 (sample size: 165). Respondents to the 2024 assessment reported significant improvements on selected business performance indicators, such as total sales (+ 60.7 per cent) and jobs creation (+ 60 per cent), in line with the findings of the 2016 assessment. The overall usefulness of the Empretec training as a capacity-building tool to strengthen entrepreneurial skills and improve business performance received an average score of 8.54/10. In terms of business size, before-and-after comparisons show a clear shift towards a reduction in micro and small businesses towards mid-sized and larger businesses. While most respondents were still running the same business they had when attending the Empretec workshop, 23 per cent had also started a new venture. This shift reflects the growth-oriented business mindset fostered by the training. Looking ahead, respondents expressed significant intentions to expand their workforce: 42 per cent anticipated hiring between 6 and 25 new employees, while 38 per cent planned to hire more than 25 employees over the next five years.

740. The second Empretec workshop in Indonesia that took place in June 2024 was highly appreciated by participants (with a score of 4.86/5.00). All participants recognized that the content and methodology were "highly relevant" to their business, exceeding their expectations. They valued the training as a transformative opportunity for personal and entrepreneurial development, which significantly enhanced their skills and mindset, offering a unique and practical experience unlike any other workshop. Most of the participants indicated that what they learned would be helpful in improving professional behaviour, management skills and strengthening their network. They also indicated that the skills acquired 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/0T/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/0T/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/0T/6AR	Train for Trade Trust Fund	2006–	Multi-donors
INT/0T/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	2022–	Development Account

<i>Project number</i>	<i>Short title</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Source of fund</i>
	and Asia and the Pacific		

741. **Development context.** With a view of supporting the development of inclusive and sustainable economic growth, the UNCTAD Train for Trade 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 Train for Trade 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 the E-commerce general course;

(b) Trade Statistics, including Statistics on International Trade in Services (SITS) and 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, the performance indicators scorecard and the new e-learning courses on Digital Transformation in Ports and Energy Transition in Ports.

742. The Train for Trade Port Management Programme plays a vital role in supporting port communities in developing countries in their 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.

743. The activities of the Train for Trade programme in 2024 have contributed to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, as follows:

(a) Goal 2 (End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture) highlights the importance of improving the efficiency of transport and logistics systems to ensure reliable access to food. In line with this objective, Train for Trade has supported the study of the Lomé-Ouagadougou corridor. This project aims to ensure the fluidity of traffic to Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, which would contribute to strengthening food security in these countries. More efficient transport of goods reduces losses and delays, ensuring a more reliable and stable supply. According to this study, creating rest areas for drivers and improving working conditions would contribute to a safer and more efficient transport system, indirectly supporting food security across Togo.

(b) Goal 3 (Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages) includes a focus on the impact of air, water, and soil pollution on the number of deaths and illnesses (Target 3.9). Considering the role of the treatment of waste in ports in improving health and safety conditions, especially when a port is located close to a town. Train for Trade supported its PMP graduates in addressing environmental health challenges within port areas and initiating measures to improve waste management systems. At the Port Autonome de Lomé (Togo), a lack of awareness among port users and insufficient monitoring mechanisms were identified as key challenges. Concrete measures proposed as a remedy included regular waste collection schedules, the introduction of protective equipment for waste handlers, the establishment of an environmental policing unit, and a community-driven environmental network. By implementing these recommendations, the

port aims to improve environmental conditions and ensure a healthier working and living environment for port workers and surrounding communities.

(c) Goal 4 (Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all). The Train for Trade Programme promotes equitable access to quality education and lifelong learning in the port sector. For instance, a dissertation from the PMP focused on improving the training system at the Port Authority of Kribi (Cameroon), and emphasized the need for long-term strategic planning, impact evaluation, and cost management. The study supports the creation of structured learning opportunities that enhance workforce competence, adaptability to technological and regulatory changes, and overall port performance.

(d) Goal 5 (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls). Train for Trade actively promotes women's participation in all Programme activities. In 2024, the women's participation reached 41 per cent with a total of 1,855 women. The Train for Trade 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 activities. For instance, the Programme promoted a study on training programmes in Argentina that actively encourage women to participate in port machinery operations at facilities such as Puerto Buenos Aires, fostering gender inclusion in a traditionally male-dominated sector. Another example presents an innovative training system implemented at the Port Autonome de Kribi (Cameroon) highlighting the importance of structured professional development for all employees, ensuring equitable access to learning opportunities. By integrating gender-sensitive training policies and allocating dedicated resources to skills enhancement, the port has reinforced the role of women in the port industry.

(e) Goal 7 (Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all) improves the port infrastructure in line with the energy transition happening in the port sector. In alignment with this goal, Train for Trade highlighted the implementation of the first electric vehicle charging station at HIT Puerto Río Haina in the Dominican Republic that marks a significant step toward sustainable energy use and the electrification of transport, supporting the broader clean energy transition.

(f) Goal 8 (Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all) underscores the importance of investing in skills development and infrastructure to drive long-term economic progress. In alignment with this objective, Train for Trade has promoted sustainable and comprehensive training, capacity-building, and knowledge exchange programs. For example, Train for Trade has published and shared the expansion of Montevideo Port, which included the development of specialized terminals, the deepening of the access channel, and the modernization of logistics infrastructure, fostering economic growth and enhancing employment opportunities. Furthermore, Train for Trade has given its platform for the creation and the expression of new suggestions for the Matarani Port in Peru; one of the recommendations includes an adaptation project which focuses on enhancing labour resilience by implementing adaptive management strategies, employee training programmes, and operational restructuring that ensure economic stability and workforce sustainability in the face of external disruptions like COVID-19. In a more technology-based approach, the Programme has promoted proposals for the Nigerian Ports Authority that have introduced an Electronic Contract Execution Portal and an Invoice Submission Portal. This initiative aims to enhance transparency and accountability while improving job efficiency and ensuring timely payments to businesses involved in port-related contracts. Under a similar, but yet different, technological solution, Train for Trade has promoted suggestions aimed at improving the services of the Port of Ozamiz in the Philippines. Such suggestions include the implementation of automatic spreader and tractor-trailer system. This tool will enhance job efficiency while reducing operational hazards for stevedores, signalmen, and tractor operators.

(g) Goal 9 (Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation) emphasizes the importance of modernizing infrastructure and advancing sustainable industrial development. For instance, the Programme has supported a case study at the port of Nueva Palmira – a key hub in the Paraguay-Paraná waterway – focusing on the expansion of port infrastructure and the introduction of high-performance equipment to enhance logistical connectivity and support

sustainable industrial growth in the region. Another example concerns a study of the Dock Sud Port of Argentina, aiming to enhance port logistics by implementing a structured traffic control system at the dock, reducing congestion and improving connectivity with Buenos Aires through better infrastructure planning and digital monitoring. The Programme has also promoted other logistics-related recommendations such as the one for Bolivia's Jennefer Port. This plan focuses on enhancing the port's security and compliance with international trade standards to facilitate its integration into global supply chains through the Authorized Economic Operator certification process. At Port Jennefer, the Train for Trade Programme has also shared case studies pushing for the optimization of cargo handling operations, aiming to enhance efficiency in mineral transportation and storage while integrating best practices in logistics and industrial safety. The same type of promotion was seen in Peru, where the Salaverry Multipurpose Port Terminal (TPMS) evaluates the efficiency of cargo handling and infrastructure investments; this assessment emphasizes modernization efforts that enhance the terminal's long-term operational resilience. North of TPMS is the Matarani Port, where Train for Trade has given voice to suggestions related to the implementation of organisational transformation strategies that improve efficiency and sustainability in a rapidly evolving maritime sector.

(h) Goal 10 (Reduced inequalities within and among countries) aims to promote fair opportunities and reduce disparities in economic and social development. In this regard, the Train for Trade Programme has emphasized the significance of Bolivia's first customs port, Puerto Jennefer, and how its new status has reduced the country's dependence on neighbouring countries for trade logistics, positioning Bolivia more equitably in regional and global commerce markets.

(i) Goal 11 (Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable) focuses on improving urban environments through sustainable infrastructure and smart planning. In support of this goal, Train for Trade has shared the Smart Port initiative of Montevideo's Port which aims to transform its operations through digitalisation, enhancing urban-port integration while reducing environmental impact and traffic congestion in the capital city. Case studies supported by the Programme include an introduction of a coordinated response system to combat wildfires near Bolivia's key ports along the Tamengo Canal, ensuring safety for port workers and protecting critical infrastructure. Another example comes from an urban logistics project in Santo Domingo which puts an emphasis on the modernisation of the transportation network surrounding Puerto Santo Domingo. This plan would integrate the port more effectively with the city's infrastructure while reducing environmental and traffic-related disruptions in surrounding communities. The Programme has also supported a project in Apapa Port in Nigeria suggesting a mandatory empty container handling policy and an electronic call-up system for port-bound trucks as a remedy to reduce the number of idling vehicles on roads, minimise greenhouse gas emissions, and improve air quality for residents in Apapa and surrounding communities.

(j) Goal 12 (Ensure responsible consumption and production patterns). Members of the ports networks are managing natural resources, chemical waste in a sustainable manner, implementing responsible procurement policies, making sustainable investments in the port area, encouraging the circular economy, optimizing port operations, and reducing food wastage and food loss in the production and supply chain. For instance, Train for Trade has highlighted the Punta Sayago logistics expansion project at Montevideo Port that integrated energy-efficient infrastructure and optimised cargo handling, minimising environmental impact while maximising port productivity. Another example highlights the A.C.A. Terminal in Quequén Port, with the aim of optimisation of cargo weighing processes through the implementation of Radio Frequency Identification technology and automated scales to reduce inaccuracies, minimise losses, and enhance tracking transparency in Argentina's grain export sector.

(k) Goal 13 (Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts) emphasizes the need for sustainable practices to mitigate environmental impact and build resilience against climate change. The increased use of inland waterways for trade through Puerto Jennefer (Bolivia) aligns with this objective by lowering Bolivia's reliance on high emission trucking routes, thereby reducing the environmental footprint of its export operations and enhancing climate resilience. Another example includes a sustainability initiative at Puerto Río Haina (Dominican Republic) which integrated renewable energy solutions and improved stormwater drainage systems to mitigate environmental risks and

strengthen the port's resilience against climate change-induced flooding and extreme weather conditions. Waste management is an essential part of the fight against climate change as well. The Train for Trade PMP has provided a platform for an initiative at the Port Autonome de Lomé (Togo) which stands for the proper collection of this waste, contributing to a clean and unpolluted environment.

(l) Goal 14 (Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development) emphasises the need for responsible management of marine ecosystems to ensure long-term environmental and economic benefits. In alignment with this goal, Train for Trade has highlighted the Peruvian National Port Authority which actively promotes sustainable maritime practices, including efforts to reduce carbon emissions and protect marine biodiversity in coastal port areas. Another example concerns the Port of Rio Haina in the Dominican Republic with a marine conservation project focused on reducing industrial water pollution through the installation of oil separators and wastewater treatment facilities. This project would help to protect marine biodiversity and maintain water quality in coastal areas.

(m) Goal 15 (Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss) underscores the need for ports to pursue effective land management practices, which includes the prevention of illegal dumping on the port domain by the various port users as well as optimum waste management. By maintaining a clean and well-organised land environment through rigorous land governance, a port can preserve its ecological systems in the long term. The Train for Trade Programme promotes sustainable land management within port areas. One study focused on governance challenges at the Office des Ports et Rades du Gabon, revealing issues like unauthorized land use and poor waste management. By emphasizing the need for improved legal oversight, digital land management tools, and stricter environmental monitoring, the research contributed to efforts aimed at restoring degraded areas and improving waste control.

(n) Goal 16 (Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels) promotes transparent, accountable, and inclusive governance in port management. For instance, Train for Trade promoted a case study focused on optimizing debt recovery at the Port Autonome de Douala (Cameroon). By proposing measures such as stakeholder analysis and transparent financial practices, these recommendations foster institutional efficiency, encourage collaboration among port actors, reduce corruption, and establish clear mechanisms for dispute resolution, aligning with the goal of strengthening justice and governance frameworks.

(o) Goal 17 (Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development) by building global partnerships 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 certified by Train for Trade 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 via the analysis of current problems that their ports are facing, aiding in formulating concrete recommendations. Furthermore, SDG 17 highlights the importance of collaboration between governments, private sector actors, and international organisations to achieve sustainable progress. In line with this objective, the partnership between Bolivia's public and private sectors, facilitated by the UNCTAD Train for Trade Programme, enabled the reform of port regulations and the official international recognition of Puerto Jenner, strengthening Bolivia's integration into global trade networks. By promoting the establishment of port communities, as seen in the case of Conakry (Guinea), the program has encouraged initiatives that strengthen cooperation among port stakeholders, fostering dialogue between public and private actors to improve operational efficiency.

744. Objectives and features. The Train for Trade Programme contributes to the work of development-led globalisation, where the development paths are sustainable and inclusive, by disseminating international trade-related knowledge and developing skills and

capacities. Train for Trade has proven to be very useful and instrumental in connecting UNCTAD research and analysis with sustainable capacity-building activities in developing countries. Train for Trade activities help to facilitate South–South and North–South collaboration and foster communication between trade and training experts. The UNCTAD Train for Trade methodology includes Training of Trainers workshops, Coaching workshops, study tours, in-person training, e-learning 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.

745. 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 (MPM), 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.

746. 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 (triangular exchange). 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, Maldives, Mauritania, Mexico, Nigeria, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Senegal, Togo, Tunisia, United Republic of Tanzania and Uruguay) continued to contribute financially to the programme. This self-sustaining aspect indicates the level of commitment and interest from the national port communities through ownership of their participation in the port networks (public–private partnerships). Partnerships and synergies have also been established with regional organisations, 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 United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), UNCITRAL, UNESCAP, UNECLAC and WTO. Moreover, the Train for Trade Programme collaborates with UNCTAD divisions/programmes according to the mandate/themes and requests from beneficiaries.

747. 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.

748. 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.

749. **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 Train for Trade strategy and experience with blended learning along 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.

750. With the continued support of 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 2024 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 February and March 2024 to port communities worldwide in the three languages for a total of 1,325 port operators and other stakeholders (38 per cent women) from 142 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 93 per cent and the average score was 79 per cent.

751. UNCTAD hosted its inaugural Global Supply Chain Forum in Bridgetown, Barbados from 21 to 24 May. Train for Trade hosted a parallel session on "Efficient and Competitive Port Management" where senior level experts from the port sector came together to discuss port efficiency and sustainability and supply chain resilience in ports. Experts from the Port Authority of Abidjan, Barbados Port Inc., Inter-American Committee on Ports, Caribbean Research Institute, Inter-American Development Bank, the International Association of Port and Harbors, Port Jennefer (Bolivia), Las Palmas Port Authority, and Solomon Islands Ports Authority came together. Train for Trade also hosted a special "Port Endeavor" session which was attended by participants of the conference.

752. *French-speaking network.* In 2024, the French-speaking network of the Port Management Programme was composed of the port communities of Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Gabon, Guinea, Haiti, Mauritania, Senegal, Togo and Tunisia, with the support of ports of Nantes Saint-Nazaire and Marseille Fos.

753. The Training of Trainers 2024 workshop took place in Nantes, France and was hosted by its port partner - the Port of Nantes Saint-Nazaire where the largest group to date attended with 37 participants (10 women) from the network. Port managers from Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Gabon, Guinea, Haiti, Mauritania, Togo, and Tunisia were trained. Prior to this face-to-face training, the modules 1 to 4 of the course on Modern Port Management were delivered online.

754. The Port Management Programme continued being delivered nationally in Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Gabon, Guinea, Haiti, Mauritania, Senegal, Togo and Tunisia. Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire and Togo organized face-to-face juries for the 15th cycle, the 5th cycle and the 12th cycle respectively.

755. New cycles of the PMP were launched in Cameroon (cycle 16 in Douala and cycle 1 in Kribi), Côte d'Ivoire (cycle 6), Haiti (cycle 3), Mauritania (cycle 2), Togo (cycle 13) and Tunisia (cycle 3). Included in this list is the inaugural launch of the Programme in Kribi, Cameroon, newest member to the network.

756. South-South cooperation continued within the French-speaking network. Thirteen experts from Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Guinea, Togo and Tunisia evaluated the quality of the dissertations of the 15th cycle in Cameroon, while 18 experts from Cameroon, Gabon, Guinea, Mauritania, Senegal and Togo did the same in Côte d'Ivoire for the 5th cycle; and 13 experts from Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Guinea and Senegal evaluated the quality of dissertations for the 12th cycle in Togo. Haiti organized online juries for one of the

participants from the 2nd cycle. A total of 44 experts from other port communities of the 9 countries and UNCTAD participated as members in these juries. The participation of port experts from beneficiary countries further contributed to the South–South exchange of knowledge and expertise.

757. Coaching workshops were held in Mauritania in March (for 14 port managers including 2 from Cameroon, 1 from Côte d’Ivoire and 1 from Togo), in Haiti in September (for 12 port managers, including 3 women), and in Kribi, Cameroon in October (for 26 port managers, including 5 women, with 2 from Côte d’Ivoire and 2 from Togo).

758. *English-speaking network.* The English-speaking network continued to benefit from financial contributions of Irish Aid (100,000 Euro in 2024) 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 and the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore (MPA).

759. The Training of Trainers workshop included both online sessions and face-to-face event in Cork, Ireland. It was delivered to 31 senior managers (10 women) from 9 countries (Ghana, Maldives, Namibia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Serbia, Solomon Islands and United Republic of Tanzania) and covered modules 5-8.

760. The Coaching workshop in the Philippines was attended by 12 port senior port managers (3 women) from the Philippines.

761. English-speaking port communities made progress in their national deliveries of the Modern Port Management Course (Ghana: launch of cycle 6 and delivery of module 1; Maldives: launch of cycle 3 and delivery of modules 1-3; Nigeria: delivery of module 8 and international juries for cycle 3; Philippines: delivery of modules 5-8 and international juries; United Republic of Tanzania: delivery of modules 3-4). Modules were delivered with the support of Train for Trade certified local trainers and external port experts from the Network.

762. *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 contributions by hosting events and taking part in field missions and activities.

763. The national deliveries of the Modern Port Management course were organised 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 Train for Trade). An official presentation of the Programme was made in Panama as pre-event for the launch in 2025.

764. The International Coordination Meeting of the Spanish-speaking network was organized on 3 and 4 October in Montevideo, Uruguay 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 as well as the 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 in terms of networking, exchange of information, experiences and good practices, among others. Representatives of the Spanish-speaking network agreed on a draft workplan for 2025 and to continue financing their membership.

765. A Training of Trainers workshop was organised in Valencia, Spain from 1 to 12 July 2024 with the participation of 17 representatives (7 women) from ports of Argentina, Ecuador, the Dominican Republic, Peru, and Mexico. Participants were certified as instructors to deliver Modern Port Management course in their countries.

766. A study tour was organised in the ports of Gijon and Las Palmas (from 13 to 23 July 2024), with the participation of 6 representatives (1 woman) from Argentina, the Dominican Republic, Panama and Peru. Participants were able to visit the installations of

the ports of Gijon and Las Palmas and meet and discuss with the responsible staff of each department.

767. A workshop on Port-City relations was organised from 11 to 15 November 2024 in Buenos Aires, Argentina, with the support from ports of Santander, A Coruna and Sevilla. Fourteen participants (7 women) from Argentina, the Dominican Republic, Peru and Uruguay participated in this event, sharing experiences from their ports.

768. In 2024, 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.

769. The Train for Trade Conference on "Challenges of Maritime Transport and Governance and Innovation in Ports" took place on 11 and 12 April 2024 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. One hundred twenty-four (124) participants (40 women) from Argentina, Peru and Venezuela attended the Conference. The event allowed the participants to identify the challenges related to ports and logistic chains and discuss key aspects of governance and innovation in ports.

770. The volumes 12 and 13 of the UNCTAD Train for Trade Port Management Series (PMS) were published in French and Spanish respectively, featuring the best case studies presented in the French-speaking and Spanish-speaking networks in the latest cycles, with their respective impact on the ports and linked to relevant Sustainable Development Goals.

771. The Train for Trade 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 *Review of Maritime Transport 2024*. 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.

772. In addition to the Port Management Programme, Train for Trade, in collaboration with WTO, UNSD and UNCTAD Statistics, delivered two online courses on statistics (International Merchandise Trade Statistics and Statistics on International Trade in Services) in English and French in 2024. Train for Trade has trained 2,264 statisticians (45 per cent women) from 178 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.

773. The Port Endeavor game focusing on raising awareness of SDGs among the port executives and managers, developed together with International Ports and Harbors Association and Port of Antwerp-Bruges, became an integral part of the TFT Port Management Programme and was played by over 1000 port professionals from five continents.

774. As part of the Development Account project on "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", the last component entitled "Statistics on the digital economy, e-commerce, and digital trade" was agreed to be developed on a structure that will comprise 6 modules:

- (a) Module 1: Digital trade, digital economy and statistical concepts
- (b) Module 2: Setting the objectives, identifying the pre-requisites and defining a roadmap
- (c) Module 3: Data collection
- (d) Module 4: Data compilation
- (e) Module 5: Dissemination and analysis
- (f) Module 6: Trade-in-Services Statistics Information System

775. **Results and impact.** In 2024, the Train for Trade Programme enhanced skills and abilities of 4,534 trade practitioners¹⁴⁶ (41 per cent women) from 185 countries and areas through various courses and activities for a total of 33,978 days of training with the overall satisfaction rate of 88 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 2024

<i>Area</i>	<i>Total number</i>	<i>% Women</i>
Port Management Programme	945	35%
French-speaking network	326	35%
English-speaking network	138	32%
Spanish-speaking network	481	35%
Building Port Resilience Against Pandemics	1,325	38%
Statistics on International Trade in Services blended learning course	1,194	45%
International Merchandise Trade Statistics blended learning	1,070	45%

776. In 2024, the participants of the Port Management Programme prepared a total of 153 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.

777. The exchange of port network instructors is an excellent example of South–South cooperation supported by the UNCTAD Train for Trade Port Management Programme. These exchanges allow for sharing of knowledge and port practices between countries of the region, which often share common issues.

778. 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 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. 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.

779. The scope of the Programme has been extended to cover a total of 220 economies across the globe. The Train for Trade 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. The Train for Trade public website has also been improved, featuring contributions to social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter (officially X), and LinkedIn, along with multimedia materials illustrating the impact of the Programme in member States.

¹⁴⁶ If a person participated in more than one training programme in 2024, each participation is counted separately.

D99 Other

Table D99

Others

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

Course on key issues on the international economic agenda – paragraph 166

780. **Development context.** Development practitioners pay increasing attention to the enhancement of human capabilities as a means to improve the quality of life, promote economic growth and strengthen public institutions. In full alignment with this development strategy, the objective of the P166 program is to build human capital with a special emphasis on economic development policy-making capabilities.

781. For the first time since its creation, P166 was given special attention in the Bridgetown Covenant of 2021 in the context of UNCTAD technical cooperation work and in the chapeau on the conference's role: "The activities under paragraph 166 of the Bangkok Plan of Action have proven to be of great importance and utility and should be continued."¹⁴⁷

782. In this regard, 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 policymakers 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, and the Doha Declaration and reaffirmed by the Nairobi Maafikiano in 2016. Most recently its value and usefulness were recognized in the Bridgetown Covenant in 2021.

783. **Objectives and features.** The UNCTAD P166 program draws on UNCTAD analytical resources to enhance knowledge on policies related to macroeconomic, trade, financial, technology and innovation, foreign direct investment, and entrepreneurship matters. It seeks to enhance the knowledge of policymakers from across the developing regions to develop and implement policies related to these areas with the ultimate goal of promoting economic growth and improving standards of living.

784. 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)—also known as PCBS-P166— provides short courses for Geneva-based delegates and longer, residential regional courses in the five developing regions. The program also launched an e-course entitled "Building Resilience and Responding to Shocks" to mitigate the pressure of in-person training in and post the pandemic. Especially in recent years, e-courses have been offered to support policymakers in responding to shocks.

785. Beneficiaries of the regional courses work in relevant government institutions such as the Ministries of Commerce, Economy, Trade, and Planning, among others. Academics with an economic background are, at times, considered for participation. The program works closely with the Permanent Missions to the United Nations based in Geneva. This covers but does not exclude other areas, such as the processes for the regional and short courses, from notifying, nominating, to communicating with all relevant Permanent Missions in Geneva. Therefore, over decades, the program has established a centralized communication with permanent missions, ensuring that diplomatic missions and capitals are in contact and communicate over the P166 program.

¹⁴⁷ Paragraph 117.

786. The current structure of the regional courses is based on the UNCTAD mandate and is cross-divisional in content. The curricula are designed and developed by PCBS/P166 in collaboration with 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, and technology, among other topics, the program focuses on sustainable development as a central theme.

787. **Outputs.** In 2024, 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. In recent years, it incorporated building resilience and responding to multiple economic shocks. The training includes lectures on economic, trade, and finance theories and their relevance to policy development, investment and technology's role, detailed case studies, and lessons learned from previous policy decisions. Critical thinking, emphasizing policy design, coherence, coordination, implementation, and measurement, is essential. The course also includes simulation exercises, examinations, and best practices in policy development, group work, and debates.

788. The overall curricula of the regional course include three modules with 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 contributes to a better understanding of 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 developing appropriate trade, finance, investment, innovation, and technology policies critical to achieving economic gains, which in parallel meet the development objectives of participating countries.

789. During the training, policymakers are introduced to sound fiscal policies that are 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 to manoeuvre and advocate for their interests from a national policy prism. This space should be safeguarded, ensuring that 'no one is left behind' while participating in the global economy. In a nutshell, enhancing human capabilities and infrastructure and providing policy space are all prerequisites for a prosperous developmental state.

790. In 2024, face-to-face trainings were delivered as part of UNCTAD regional and short courses. Additionally, an e-course entitled "Building Resilience and Responding to Shocks" was delivered along with an e-learning module on the history of UNCTAD that continued to be utilized to prepare selected participants ahead of the regional course.

UNCTAD Regional courses for policymakers

791. In 2024, two regional courses were held: for Africa and for Asia and the Pacific. Due to fiscal limitations, the planned regional course for Latin America and the Caribbean was postponed to 2025. The fifty-first course on key issues on the international economic agenda for Africa was held in Nairobi from 8 to 19 April 2024 in collaboration with the Faculty of Economics, University of Nairobi, with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Twenty-four participants attended the course, representing Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Gambia, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Mauritius, Namibia, the Niger, South Sudan, Togo, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

792. The fifty-second regional course on key issues on the international economic agenda for Asia and the Pacific was held in Islamabad, Pakistan from 2 to 13 December 2024 in collaboration with the Foreign Service Academy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Twenty participants attended, representing Bangladesh, Fiji, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Laos, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

793. A total of 44 policymakers from 27 countries participated in these editions. Out of the total number, 20 participants were women, representing nearly 45 per cent of overall

participants, with a decrease of 13 per cent from the previous year. This is mainly due to the postponement of the regional course for LAC, where female participants/policy makers usually represent the vast majority of participants.

794. By hosting these courses in various capitals across developing regions, the multi-year venue demonstrated its innovative approach to fostering support, gaining insights from different economies, and strengthening bilateral cooperation at the national level. The contribution of national experts in shedding light on national and regional trajectories is significant to the program's curricula which aims at enhancing knowledge and capabilities among policymakers.

795. 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, 2022–2027.

(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, 2015–2029.

(e) University of Nairobi, Faculty of Economics, with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, multi-venue for Africa, 2019–2024.

UNCTAD short courses for Geneva-based delegates

796. Similarly, the short courses continued to update Geneva-based delegates on UNCTAD 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 2024 on the following:

(a) Insights from the UNCTAD *Review of Maritime Transport 2023* (15 February).

(b) Inclusive Diversification and Energy Transition: Prospects and challenges (7 March).

(c) Status of Trade in National Determined Contributions under the Paris Agreement (2 May).

(d) *Digital Economy Report 2024: Shaping an Environmentally Sustainable and Inclusive Digital* (12 September).

(e) Productive capacities and the productive capacities index: Reformulating the paths of structural transformation and sustainable development (3 October).

(f) The UNCTAD *Trade and Development Report 2023–2024: Challenges and Opportunities for fiscal space and economic diversification* (21 November).

797. Considering each short course, 146 delegates from 65 permanent missions participated in these editions. Of the total number, 62 participants were women, representing nearly 42 per cent of the overall participants.

798. The short courses provide a platform where UNCTAD experts can present their recent research to delegates. On the other hand, the comments and questions from delegates provide relevant input and potential research topics for UNCTAD work. This informed dialogue between UNCTAD researchers and Geneva-based representatives of member States bridges the knowledge gap and ensures information-sharing. These sessions are, on average, well attended and provide a forum for delegates and UNCTAD research experts to debate and exchange views. On several occasions, the short courses led to additional technical cooperation projects on a country and regional level.

799. In 2024, the impact of wars and conflict, along with the post-recovery period, the sustainable development agenda and SDGs were all incorporated in the themes addressed in the UNCTAD short courses.

UNCTAD E-course on “building resilience and responding to shocks”

800. Given the ongoing and lingering impact of wars and conflict, in 2024, the program expanded beyond its scope to provide policymakers with further opportunities for enhancing their human capital towards building resilience and responding to shocks. For the second time, it rolled out an e-course entitled “Building Resilience and Responding to Shocks” from 2 September to 14 October 2024 to support Geneva-based delegates and capital-based government officials and policymakers in building resilience and preparing and responding to external shocks, whether they originate in the economic, social, environmental or conflict and health spheres. With three modules, the online course paid special attention to the shock generated by the previous pandemic and discussed the responses given to it by focusing on:

- (a) Vulnerability and resilience: concepts and their implications for policies and strategies for sustainable development.
- (b) Vulnerability and resilience in the response to shock;
- (c) From COVID-19 to prosperity for all.

801. With over 100 nominations made by Permanent Missions in Geneva, and after completing the online course, 72 received certificates for fully completing the course and deepening their understanding of resilience, how to respond to multiple shocks, and enhancing future policies, making them more inclusive and taking an institutional approach. Achieving a perfect gender balance, 50 per cent of those who completed the course were women.

802. **Results and Impact.** Following the completion of the short courses, regional courses, and the e-course on “Building Resilience and Responding to Shocks”, most delegates and participants indicated that the courses led to improved knowledge of development and the issues addressed. For the regional courses, they have noted a deepened understanding of the importance of international trade in improving economic growth, including the links between global economic, social, and financial issues. The approach linking theory, policy, and practice in monetary policy development received high praise. Its approach to trade, development and investment at the regional and international levels was also helpful for the participants.

803. The evaluations of the regional courses continued to illustrate that participants and their sending departments appreciated the debates on development-related topics and the integrated approach of the program 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. It highlights that the debates and the design and implementation of appropriate economic policies can contribute to general growth and development.

804. One alumni participant of the 51st regional course held in Nairobi (2024), acting as the Head of Office in the Multilateral and Regional Trade Agreements Division of the Ministry of Foreign Trade in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, indicated, “After completing the UNCTAD regional course, I was appointed as a member of the National Committee for the Implementation of the AfCFTA in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Thus, I actively participate in the formulation of public policies for the effective integration of the AfCFTA in my country”.

805. To recap, most participants expressed that the curricula had surpassed their expectations, as the courses provide overall knowledge on economic issues and development matters. Most participants praised the lessons learned from the experiences of other countries and how economic gains can be achieved. They also stated that they learned about global economic issues, why economic changes occur, and how economies are impacted. Equally important, they indicated they understood how to tackle economic-related issues through policy.

806. Several participants also 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, many 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. 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.

807. Many also reported a better understanding of the essential role of trade agreements and their role in negotiations. Overall, participants complimented the curricula's ability to promote debate and highlighted the policy development role-playing exercises as an example of how knowledge could be shared among policymakers, both at the national and regional levels.

808. On a related note, the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) issued a report in 2024 evaluating the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and coherence of the RPTC support to enhancing Member State capacity to formulate and implement national development policies, national plans, strategies and laws. According to the beneficiaries in the six case study countries who provided numerous examples of technical support that enhanced their capacities, the following was highlighted: "...for example, UNCTAD P166 regional course on tariff measures, finance and trade issues provided a new understanding to trade officials to develop a dedicated department to create an enabling environment and tap into new markets for diaspora issues."¹⁴⁸

809. These results and evaluations are in line with the feedback received by the program in the previous years. With P166 creating new skills and enhancing knowledge, the programme will continue to bridge the knowledge gap and work towards enhancing capacities in developing countries as per the programmes' mandate.

¹⁴⁸ <https://oios.un.org/file/10201/download?token=UFy407jy>.