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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 2025*

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

Contents

Abbreviations

AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASYCUDA	Automated System for Customs Data
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
DMFAS	Debt Management and Financial Analysis System
EAC	East African Community
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FDI	foreign direct investment
GDP	gross domestic product
GSP	Generalized System of Preferences
GSTP	Global System of Trade Preferences among Developing Countries
ICT	information and 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
MPTFO	United Nations Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office
MSME	micro, small and medium-sized enterprise
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OECS	Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
PCI	Productive Capacities Index
PPP	public–private partnership

SIDS	small island developing States
STI	science, technology and innovation
UNCITRAL	United Nations Commission on International Trade Law
UNDA	United Nations Development Account
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNECLAC	United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
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
WAEMU	West African Economic and Monetary Union
WHO	World Health Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

Country/territory/region codes

AFG	Afghanistan
ALB	Albania
ALG	Algeria
ANG	Angola
ANL	Anguilla
ANT	Antigua and Barbuda
ARG	Argentina
ARM	Armenia
ARU	Aruba
AZE	Azerbaijan
BAH	Bahrain
BAR	Barbados
BDI	Burundi
BEN	Benin
BER	Bermuda
BES	Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba
BGD	Bangladesh
BHU	Bhutan
BIH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
BKF	Burkina Faso
BOL	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)
BOT	Botswana
BRA	Brazil
BRU	Brunei Darussalam
BUL	Bulgaria
BYE	Belarus
BZE	Belize
CAF	Central African Republic
CHD	Chad
CHI	Chile
CMB	Cambodia
CMR	Cameroon
COI	Comoros
COL	Colombia
COS	Costa Rica
CPR	China
CUB	Cuba
CVI	Cabo Verde
CZE	Czechia
DJI	Djibouti
DMI	Dominica
DOM	Dominican Republic
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
ECU	Ecuador
EGY	Egypt
ELS	El Salvador
EQG	Equatorial Guinea
ERI	Eritrea
EST	Estonia
ETH	Ethiopia
EUR	Europe
FIJ	Fiji
GAB	Gabon
GAM	Gambia
GBS	Guinea-Bissau
GEO	Georgia
GHA	Ghana
GIB	Gibraltar
GLO	Global
GRN	Grenada
GUA	Guatemala
GUI	Guinea
GUY	Guyana
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 2025. 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 Geneva Consensus 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, eight products under the theme "Transforming economies, fostering sustainable development" are reported on.[2] The reports highlight main technical cooperation activities carried out in 2025 and key results to date. Technical cooperation projects that are pertinent to the aforementioned theme and not linked to any of the existing products under this thematic area, are reported on under "A99 Other".

A1 Investment policy reviews

Table A1
Investment policy reviews

Project number	*Short title*	*Period covered*	*Source of funds*
INT/0T/3AW	Examen des Politiques d'Investissement et Programme de Suivi	2003 -	Multidonor

[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". There was no activity in 2025 under product "Trade policy framework reviews".

Project number	Short title	Period covered	Source of funds
BGD/0T/OAS	Report on the Implementation of the Investment Policy Review of Bangladesh	2025 -	UNDP Bangladesh
INT/0T/HCJ2	Strategic Partnership the Netherlands - (linked with THCE04)	2023 -	Kingdom of the Netherlands
INT/0T/BAQ	Capacity-building in investment for development	2011 -	Group of donors

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 potential harms, investments should target activities that drive sustainable development. To support countries in their efforts to diversify their economies, attract higher levels of FDI, and promote 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 staff. Policymakers at the highest level and a wide range of relevant 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 matrix,[3] 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 country's request, conducts an assessment to evaluate the implementation progress and identify areas requiring further support.

7. **Outputs**. In 2025, the programme delivered the following key outputs:

[3] Available on https://investmentpolicy.unctad.org/investment-policy-review.

(a) Preparation and publication of the IPR of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC);

(b) Preparation and publication of the Implementation Report of the IPR of Bangladesh;

(c) Finalisation and publication of "International investment in the digital economy: A toolkit for policymakers". The toolkit provides concrete, action-oriented guidance for policymakers, based on national digital strategies, investment policy trends and the experience of 15 developing countries with more mature digital frameworks. It translates the *World Investment Report 2025* recommendations into practical guidance and supports the Digital Infrastructure Investment Catalyser, launched by ITU and UNCTAD and endorsed by the Sevilla Platform for Action.

(d) Follow-up activities on the IPRs of Chad, Côte d'Ivoire and Tunisia and of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU);

(e) Introduction to the Live implementation matrix in Bangladesh;

(f) Technical assistance activities and advisory services to support the implementation of IPR recommendations and address issues related to investment policies, promotion strategies, international investment agreements, and business facilitation. These activities benefited 41 countries including Bangladesh, Cabo Verde, the Caribbean Association of Investment Promotion Agencies (CAIPA, 24 members), CEMAC member States (Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Republic of the Congo), Mauritania, Tunisia, Sierra Leone, and WAEMU member States (Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo).

Country-level and regional activities in 2025

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

9. *Bangladesh*. A fact-finding mission to Dhaka (October 2025) supported the preparation of the IPR Implementation Report. The mission validated progress on the 2013 IPR recommendations and assessed recent developments to inform updated recommendations, including in view of the country's scheduled graduation from LDC status in November 2026. UNCTAD presented preliminary findings, including a demonstration of the Live implementation matrix, delivered a capacity-building workshop for the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA) on investment policies, strategies and the negotiation of preferential trade and investment agreements. The Implementation Report was finalized in December 2025.

10. *Cabo Verde*. UNCTAD continued its cooperation with the UN country team throughout the year by contributing to key country assessments and programmatic documents, including inputs for the UN Country Analysis update 2025.

11. *CAIPA*. At the CAIPA Annual Meeting on 26 November 2025, UNCTAD presented key FDI trends and policy recommendations from the World Investment Report 2025, with a focus on the digital economy.

12. *CEMAC*. At the request of the CEMAC Commission, UNCTAD prepared a regional IPR covering the six member States. Through a participatory and inclusive process, stakeholders engaged in dialogue on the strategies and policies to facilitate and promote investment in the region. A regional validation workshop was held from 27 to 29 October 2025, bringing together representatives from the six member States, the Commission and UNCTAD. The IPR was subsequently finalized and published.

13. *Chad*. On 16 October 2025, UNCTAD delivered a presentation to eight (including three women) policymakers from the Agency for the Administration of Economic and Special Zones (AAZES) on investment promotion policies and approaches for special economic zones.

14. *Côte d'Ivoire*. At the request of the Investment Promotion Centre of Côte d'Ivoire (CEPICI), UNCTAD conducted a series of training events for its staff. Four sessions were

held on 26 and 27 August 2025 and on 9 and 10 September 2025, focusing on best practices in designing sustainable and inclusive investment policies, as well as strategies to attract international investment in the digital economy. A total of 66 CEPICI staff members (including 30 women) participated.

15. *Tunisia*. Following the publication of the country's IPR, UNCTAD contributed to three events aimed at disseminating the report's findings and recommendations. The first was a briefing for the UN country team on 23 January 2025. The second, held on 3 June 2025 in cooperation with the UN Resident Coordinator's Office, briefed the Tunisia Economists' Group on the IPR and its implications for investment promotion and facilitation. The third, held on 12 June 2025 in cooperation with the EU Migration Policy Institute, focused on the economic impact of enhanced investment attraction for Tunisia and its sustainable development

16. *WAEMU*. To follow up on the regional IPR published in 2024 covering WAEMU's eight member States—Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo—UNCTAD presented the report's findings and recommendations at the online launch of the region's investment guide on 7 May 2025. The meeting was attended by development partners, including the World Bank and the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD). UNCTAD also participated in the annual meeting organized by the WAEMU Commission for its member States' investment promotion agencies, where it presented the latest FDI trends and the policy framework outlined in the World Investment Report 2025, with a focus on stimulating international investment in the digital economy.

17. **Results and impact**. Since 1999, IPRs have served as catalysts for change, supporting developing countries, including least developed countries (LDCs), in improving their investment climates and advancing national development priorities and the SDGs. Mandated by successive Ministerial Conferences, most recently through the Bridgetown Covenant (2021) and the Geneva Consensus (2025) and recognized in the Sevilla Commitment of the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, the programme has delivered tailored, concrete and action-oriented policy guidance to 64 economies. Tangible results include strengthened legal and institutional frameworks, higher-quality FDI as well as closer alignment between investment policies and countries' long-term development objectives. For example, Reichel (2023) notes that the IPR "contributes to improving and strengthening the investment climate of beneficiaries," [4] while the 2019 Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) report highlights IPRs as a particularly effective area of UNCTAD work, citing reported increases in FDI inflows and enhanced stakeholder knowledge.[5]

18. The trust placed in the programme is further reflected in countries' sustained engagement with UNCTAD platforms, including the participation of 63 countries in the Investment Village at the World Investment Forum 2023. Taken together, these outcomes underscore the IPR programme's unique and enduring role in helping countries harness investment for sustainable development.[6] Evidence of impact can be observed at three levels: country commitment to and endorsement of recommendations; implementation of IPR recommendations; and effects on investment flows and the broader investment environment.

Commitment at the highest level and endorsement of recommendations

19. The importance and relevance of the IPR work is reflected by the involvement of Heads of State or Government and their commitment to implement its outcome. In most

[4] 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.

[5] See report at https://www.mopan.org/en/our-work/performance-evidence/unctad.html.

[6] Additional 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) Sauvant, 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.

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 UN country teams through the UN Resident Coordinator Offices (UNRCO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in many countries. The following endorsements show the value and impact of UNCTAD IPR work:

(a) "…the review of our investment policy framework that came with numerous recommendations…gave us the opportunity to know the areas we need to focus on as a country to bring in the much-needed investment. The Investment Policy Review was critical in terms of support we got from UNCTAD." Minister of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration and Employment, The Gambia, October 2025.

(b) "The training sessions [delivered to IPA staff as follow-up activities to the IPR of Côte d'Ivoire] made it possible to acquire knowledge of best practices and strategies for investment promotion at the regional and global levels." CEPICI, Abidjan, September 2025.

(c) "This validation [of the Investment Policy Review of CEMAC] marks the conclusion of a crucial technical phase leading to the revision of the CEMAC Investment Charter, paving the way for a major reform ahead." CEMAC Commission, Douala, October 2025.

Implementation of IPR recommendations

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

21. Since 1999 and the inception of the IPR programme, UNCTAD has published 55 IPRs, involving 64 economies worldwide, and 24 reports on the implementation of the IPR. Assessments conducted in some of these countries showed that to date more than 670 recommendations have been implemented, a significant number of which benefited from the technical assistance of UNCTAD. This assistance took different forms, including advisory services and consensus building on policy, legal, regulatory and institutional issues.

Direct impact on investment flows and improvement of the investment environment

22. The programme's long-term impact is also reflected in FDI trends. While investment flows are influenced by a range of internal and external factors, countries that have undergone an IPR have consistently outperformed global averages. Whereas worldwide FDI flows declined by 23 per cent between 2015–2019 and 2020–2024, they increased by 14.4 per cent across IPR economies, and by 17 per cent in the 24 countries that benefited from a UNCTAD follow-up assessment of IPR recommendations.

23. Another marker of the IPRs' impact is their integration into national policy reform efforts, as they often serve as the main platform for investment climate improvements. For many beneficiary countries, the IPR constituted the main document guiding investment climate reforms at the strategic, legal and institutional level (see statements above).

24. Finally, the widespread interest in IPRs is evident in the number of countries requesting to benefit from the programme, including follow-up technical assistance. UNCTAD currently has 29 requests in the pipeline, including 28 countries: Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bhutan, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Chile, Eswatini, Fiji, Haiti, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kiribati, Kuwait, Malawi, Naoero, Nicaragua, Niue, Oman, Papua New Guinea, Pakistan, Philippines, Saint Lucia, Somalia, South Sudan, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkmenistan and Viet Nam. UNCTAD has also received a request for a regional IPR involving 10 countries in the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO): Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Islamic Republic of Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Türkiye, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

A2 Services policy reviews

Table A2
Services policy reviews

Project number	*Short title*	*Period covered*	*Source of funds*
ROA-2427 (K16)	Strengthening capacity for evidence-based policymaking and the economic resilience of CARICOM	2024 -	Development Account

26. **Development context**. The services sector provides essential services, including health, education, water and sanitation services, energy distribution, transport, and telecommunications services. It generates opportunities for greater income, employment, investment, and trade. Services contribute directly to exports, as final products that are exported, and indirectly, as inputs that promote exports of other sectors. 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. 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. Some developing countries face important challenges in benefitting from the significant potential of the services sector. Especially, they face limitation in their services supply capacity and in designing and implementing a coherent policy mix to strengthen services sectors.

27. **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.

28. 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.

29. **Outputs**. In 2025, UNCTAD continued 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, funded by the 16th tranche of the Development Account. In 2025, four CARICOM countries (Dominica, Grenada, Saint Lucia and St. Kitts and Nevis) undertook a series of policy, institutional and statistical actions relevant to services trade, in the context of this project. UNCTAD provided advisory support to national authorities and coordinated with the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank (ECCB). Participating countries took concrete steps to adopt UNCTAD Trade-in-Services Information System (TiSSTAT). Dominica and Grenada have already begun implementing the system, and all four have initiated new data collection efforts on trade in services. Throughout 2025, UNCTAD held regular consultations with OECS, ECLAC, and policy focal points in the four participating countries to define the scope of the policy component and agree on the approach

and timeline for implementation in early 2026. The policy component will focus on analysing the role of services and services trade—including creative, ICT, and business services—in national economies, while strengthening the use of data to support evidence-based policy and strategy development. Together, these developments reflect growing use of improved data collection, institutional coordination and evidence-based approaches to inform services-related policy development, with further activities on the use of services trade data planned for 2026.

30. UNCTAD continued to engage in technical discussions with the secretariat of the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP) in 2025 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 2025, Portugal provided funds to support the implementation of some pilot capacity building activities by UNCTAD to CPLP countries on trade in services.

31. **Results and impact**. The assessments that UNCTAD had undertaken 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, through 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.

A4 Science, technology and innovation policy reviews

Table A4
Science, technology and innovation policy reviews

Project number	*Short title*	*Period covered*	*Source of funds*
	No projects		

32. **Development context**. The basic assumption that underpins capacity-building for science, technology and innovation (STI) policy is that innovation, particularly innovation based on knowledge and technology, is a key driver of economic growth, productivity, structural transformation and sustainable development. However, left on its own, without competent policy support, STI tends to underperform on development aspirations. 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 due to lack of capacity to develop and implement appropriate policy instruments. There is a clear need to support a process of STI policy learning, experimentation and the dissemination of good practices including through various forms of capacity building activities. STI policy reviews and their recommendations can only have the desired effect if the recipient public and government bodies and agencies have a solid grasp of the socio-economic working of STI policies and policy instruments.

33. **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. This is complemented by providing capacity-building services so that advice and recommendations can be considered effectively and productively. This ensures that national STI programmes become an instrument for supporting the national development agenda and promoting sustainable development. Capacity-building follows on STI reviews' assessments of strengths and weaknesses of a country's innovation systems and develops an appropriate and practical pedagogy focusing on understanding key concepts as well as using practical examples in a "what works" format of exercises and case studies. Such training includes addressing issues related to policy framework, institutions, capabilities, and innovation effort

as well as performance. Key STI issues that affect the productivity and competitiveness of firms and industries are examined and special attention is given to SME sector considerations, common in many developing countries and LDCs. Capacity-building provides insight that can support countries aiming to revamp their 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.

34. The primary beneficiaries of the STI policy reviews and complementary capacity-building 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, citizens and beneficiaries of public services, 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.

35. **Outputs**. Based on requests expressed during practically all policy review exercises since 2014 (STI Policy Review of Oman),[7] UNCTAD has provided capacity-building services focused on STI policy and practice, both in general and specific to the policy review under way. This has been implemented in three specific ways.

36. The first is through capacity-building in the form of in-person workshops tailored to a specific country and policy review. The workshops aim to explain the foundations of STI policy and its practice while engaging in common inescapable theme of the role of science and technology for socio-economic development and the meaning and necessity of innovation as the place where value for society and citizens materializes. Topics covered include definitional issues, the evolution of policy for STI, national systems of innovation and technology transfer. Specific issues may be addressed reflecting specificities of the economy and particular challenges encountered such as structural issues and reliance on extractive industries, blue economy, or agriculture and the like.

37. The second capacity-building output was conceived in the co-creation of the United Nations Technology Facilitation Mechanism Inter-Agency Task Team Workstream 6 (WS6) on capacity-building for STI for the SDG. WS6 was formed in 2017 as mandated by paragraph 70 of the 2030 Agenda. WS6 has the responsibility for STI for SDGs capacity building, designing and delivering training courses and workshops on STI Policy for SDGs, particularly for developing countries. The goal is to assist policymakers, public service experts, and key STI stakeholders in keeping abreast of most current approaches to STI policy design, and to enhance their ability to mobilize STI as part of strategies to achieve the SDGs[8]. In 2025, two online events were delivered.

38. Online training on STI policy and policy instruments for SDGs for Africa was held on 19, 21 and 26 May 2025. The event developed three online sessions of training for STI officials, policy analysts and experts in Africa, covering: (i) current approaches to STI policymaking in the SDG context; (ii) STI policy instruments design and implementation; and (iii) STI policy monitoring and evaluation. The participation consisted of 393 registrations from 65 countries, including 31 African countries, of which 45.2 per cent women participants.

39. A second WS6 online training for Latin America on STI policy and policy instruments for the SDGs was conducted during 3–7 November 2025. One thousand seven hundred and thirty (1730) participants registered from 24 countries, of which 58 per cent were women. Sessions included:

(i) Current approaches in STI policy formulation in the context of the SDGs;

(ii) STI policy instruments;

(iii) Fostering innovative entrepreneurship;

[7] https://unctad.org/publications-search?f[0]=product%3A635.

[8] https://sdgs.un.org/tfm/interagency-task-team/capacity.

(iv) Implementation of STI policies;

(v) Monitoring and evaluation of STI policies.

40. Thirdly and finally, a key capacity-building activity for UNCTAD in this reporting period was an online e-learning course on STI policy and practice. The objective of this course is to build capacity among policymakers and stakeholders to better understand their STI ecosystems and thus design and implement successful STI policies.

41. Effective policy action requires a shared understanding among a wide number of stakeholders of what STI policy is and how innovation emerges and contributes to economic growth and sustainable development. The course discusses following topics:

(i) What is innovation and what is the role of STI policy;

(ii) What is the relationship between innovation and entrepreneurship;

(iii) How can we finance innovation and stimulate demand for innovation;

(iv) What is a national system of innovation and how can we use it to frame STI policy;

(v) What is the role of technology transfer in STI.

42. The course presents 20 lessons through more than 120 videos and over 40 points of online interactions in the form of quizzes, questionnaires and assignments. Launched in 2024 as a pilot, it had completed its first full session by 29 April 2026 and had certified 106 participants from 65 registered countries. Five hundred and ninety (590) participants registered, of which 209 enrolled, for the second session in April 2026.

43. **Results and impact**. In 2025, UNCTAD engaged with more than 2,200 STI stakeholders, of which approximately 57 per cent were women, in its capacity-building activities aimed at supporting the implementation of STI technology assessments and policy reviews. The figures indicate both a strong interest in STI policy matters as well as an accelerating demand for capacity-building and training events. The key issue is the complementarity between training for STI policymakers and the provision of advisory services in the form of STI technology assessments and policy reviews. Capacity-building enables policymakers and other STI stakeholders to have 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 the contribution of STI to socio-economy development and to the SDGs. They also help to develop a common policy language which, in turn, enables better and greater collaboration among stakeholders.

A5 E-commerce and the digital economy

Table A5
E-commerce and the digital economy

Project number	*Short title*	*Period covered*	*Source of funds*
BOT/0T/HBM	ICT Policy Review: National E-commerce Strategy for Botswana	2018 -	Botswana
GHA/0T/NAP	E-commerce Strategy, under the joint project Leveraging digital ecosystem for increased MSMEs’ productivity (OUN SDG-F Digital Transformation Window)	2024 -	United Nations MPTFO
INT/0T/FAQ	eTrade for all coordination	2016 -	Group of donors
INT/0T/HCE04	Strategic Partnership the Netherlands (linked with THCJ2)	2021 -	Kingdom of the Netherlands

Project number	*Short title*	*Period covered*	*Source of funds*
INT/0T/IBN	E-commerce and the Digital Economy (ECDE) for Development	2019 -	Group of donors
MAU/0T/NBK	E-commerce Strategy of Mauritania	2024 -	Germany
RAF/0T/LBJ	eTrade Readiness Assessments of Algeria and Mauritania	2022 -	Germany
RAS/0T/KAJ	Pacific Digital Economy Programme	2021 -	United Nations MPTFO
RAS/0T/KAJ2	Pacific Digital Economy Programme Support	2023 -	United Nations Capital Development Fund
RAS/0T/MBD	Support to e-commerce and the digital economy in South and Southeast Asian developing countries (DFAT 2023-26)	2023 -	Australia
RAS/0T/MBD2	Joint statement initiative on E-Commerce: Pilot Implementation Assessment	2025 -	Australia
SAU/0T/NAJ	Measuring e-commerce and digital trade to empower digital economy policymaking in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	2025 -	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
TRI/0T/TLAQ	Trinidad and Tobago E-commerce Strategy Development Project	2023 -	Trinidad and Tobago
ZIM/0T/MAM	eTrade Readiness Assessment of Zimbabwe	2023 -	Republic of Korea

44. **Development context**. In 2025, mounting geoeconomic tensions and breakthroughs in artificial intelligence (AI) set the scene for growing but uneven investment in the digital economy, widening the already large disparities in countries' readiness to engage in and benefit from the data-driven digital economy, including digital trade. These developments underlined a growing need for international support to developing and least developed countries (LDCs), to bridge gaps in digital infrastructure, skills, and the legal and regulatory environment and enable a more equitable and inclusive sharing of the gains of digitalization as well as of its costs. Persistent concerns related to digital transformation outpacing the readiness of some countries to adapt to it, the gender digital divide, and the environmental footprint of digitalization resonated in major global fora and were stressed in the outcomes of UNCTAD's 16th Ministerial Conference and the overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS).

45. 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.

46. **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, including

digital trade. 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.

47. In the Geneva Consensus, which sets the basis for UNCTAD's work for the next four years, member States underscored that technological advances are creating opportunities as well as divides and expanded UNCTAD's mandate for the ECDE Programme. The Consensus calls on UNCTAD to enhance its support to develop countries' capacity for electronic commerce, support the development of an enabling environment for digital infrastructure, skills and frameworks necessary to harness the digital economy and digital trade, and assist countries in building circular approaches to the digital economy.

48. **Outputs**. UNCTAD completed the 41st eTrade Readiness Assessment (eT Ready) 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. Three eT Readies were completed in 2025 - for Algeria, Zimbabwe, and Indonesia – the first G20 country to benefit from UNCTAD assistance in this area. Ghana, Mauritania, Samoa, Timor-Leste, and Trinidad and Tobago were supported to develop national e-commerce strategies/policies, in most cases as a follow-up to an eT Ready. In the Gambia, a compliance assessment was conducted against the "stabilized text" of the Joint Statement Initiative on e-commerce. In Solomon Islands, UNCTAD contributed to strengthening data governance through the drafting of a Data Privacy and Protection Bill.

49. The *4th eTrade implementation* review[9] highlighted notable advances in establishing e-commerce strategies and governance frameworks, strengthening coordination mechanisms and enhancing monitoring capacities, based on inputs from 23 countries and 3 regional organizations.[10] To further advance implementation, UNCTAD expanded its support to partner countries adopting the eTrade Reform Tracker to better coordinate and monitor e-commerce and digital economy reforms. License agreements were signed with Fiji, Kenya, Mauritania, Peru, Samoa, and Solomon Islands, while new expressions of interest were received from Algeria, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Jordan, Indonesia, Trinidad and Tobago, Zimbabwe and the ECOWAS Commission.

50. In the area of measurement, working closely with the IMF, OECD, WTO and other parts of the UN and beyond, UNCTAD delivered in-person training to more than 130 participants (more than 50 per cent women) from National Statistical Offices, Central Banks and other relevant agencies of 56 countries across Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean.[11]

51. A new cooperation agreement with Saudi Arabia marked the start of a three-year project to enhance statistics on e-commerce in the country and support UNCTAD work to develop internationally agreed guidelines and recommendations in the Task Group on Measuring E-commerce Value (TG-eCOM). UNCTAD also provided initial technical assistance with the measurement of e-commerce and the digital economy in Fiji, triggering a request for further support in 2026.

52. Two in-person eTrade for Women Masterclasses brought together a total of 46 women entrepreneurs from 16 developing countries across Latin America and the Caribbean (Bogotá, April) and Southeast Asia and the Pacific (Manila, November). Topics included investment readiness, digital marketing and AI among others, complemented by practical exercises and leadership dialogues with more experienced entrepreneurs, including eTrade for Women Advocates.

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9 See https://unctad.org/publication/fast-tracking-implementation-reforms-enabling-e-commerce-and-digital-trade.

10 See https://unctad.org/news/mind-gap-getting-digital-ready-shared-prosperity.

11 Partners outside the UN system included the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) Secretariat, Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), and Pacific Community (SPC).

53. Delivered in close collaboration with the Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) of the People's Republic of China and the Academy for International Business Officials (AIBO), a second edition of the Study Tour for women digital entrepreneurs from the Global South enabled 31 participants from 12 countries to benefit from direct exposure to Beijing, Shanghai, and Hangzhou's leading digital players and to participate in the 4th Global Digital Trade Expo.

54. The eTrade for Women Communities welcomed 100 new members, bringing the total number to over 400, and expanded opportunities for regional collaboration and collective empowerment across 65 countries. Throughout the year, Community Leaders facilitated 20 regional online sessions, providing trusted spaces where entrepreneurs could share practical insights, exchange solutions to business challenges, and learn from one another's experiences.

55. At the regional and global level, eTrade for Women Advocates, Community Leaders and members brought the perspectives of women digital entrepreneurs to numerous policy dialogue events, including a meeting of the WSIS Focus Group on the Digital Economy, the WTO Public Forum, UNCTAD16, and an ECOWAS e-commerce meeting and eTrade for Women joint workshop.

56. A study entitled "Breaking down barriers for women digital entrepreneurs: Insights from Africa" offered new evidence on the challenges and opportunities facing women digital entrepreneurs involved in the eTrade for Women initiative, and outlined actionable policy recommendations to enable them to participate fully in the digital economy.

57. Following on from the *Digital Economy Report 2024: Shaping an Environmentally Sustainable and Inclusive Digital Future,* the eighth session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts (IGE) on E-commerce and the Digital Economy highlighted the need for stronger governance of the environmental impacts of digital technologies across their entire life cycle, the uneven value capture in transition mineral supply chains, and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

58. A new task group was established under the Working Group on Measuring E-commerce and the Digital Economy to update the core indicators on ICT business and the ICT sector, to ensure their continued policy relevance. A two-day in-person meeting of the Task Group on measuring e-commerce value (TG-eCOM) reviewed the draft guidelines and recommendations on measuring e-commerce value before they are finalized and published as a first edition in 2026.[12]

59. The eTrade for all initiative welcomed the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) as its 36th member. The online platform was upgraded with dynamic country profiles, providing easy-to-navigate, data-driven insights on the state of e-commerce and digital readiness of 193 economies.[13] A total of 21 eTrade for all partners engaged in various UNCTAD-led activities throughout the year, including 14 partners supporting eTrade Readiness Assessments, e-commerce strategies and their implementation, 6 contributing to eTrade for Women activities, 5 involved in research, analysis and statistics, and 8 engaging in various digital for development cooperation processes.

60. As part of its support for the implementation of the Global Digital Compact, UNCTAD contributed to the development and launch of the United Nations Digital Cooperation Portal, in close collaboration with the Office for Digital and Emerging Technologies and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization.[14] Under the UNCTAD chairmanship, the United Nations Group on the Information Society (UNGIS) played an active role in the 20-year review of outcomes of the WSIS.

61. **Results and impact**. The second independent evaluation of the ECDE Programme (2022-2024) found it increasingly relevant to the needs and priorities of developing countries, noting a high level of satisfaction from beneficiaries and other stakeholders with the support provided and the quality of products delivered. There was also recognition of progress made

[12] See https://unctad.org/news/stronger-statistics-measure-e-commerce-and-digital-economy.

[13] See https://etradeforall.org/country-profiles.

[14] See https://unctad.org/news/un-launches-new-portal-digital-cooperation.

since the previous evaluation in terms of enhanced coherence, outcomes across UNCTAD's three pillars, and cross-cutting issues.

62. The message of the UNCTAD *Digital Economy Report 2024* was reflected in the Geneva Consensus, the OECD 2025 Recommendation of the Council on Digital Technologies and the Environment – a legal instrument representing a political commitment to implementation, and the outcome document on the overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of the WSIS (A/RES/80/173). The report was also referenced in publications by other international organizations, regional governments, the private sector and non-profits, as well as in academic literature.

63. The eighth session of the IGE on E-commerce and the Digital Economy delivered as a main outcome a set of agreed policy recommendations that aim to reverse the current trend of developing countries facing disproportionate burdens as the most affected by environmental degradation, yet the least in a position to fully harness digital technologies to mitigate negative environmental impacts.

64. The National E-commerce Strategy 2025–2030 of Trinidad and Tobago, which builds on the findings of an eT Ready (2024), was officially launched in March. An updated National E-commerce Committee was inaugurated, enhancing its role and mandate for the implementation of the strategy. Fiji, Peru, Samoa and Solomon Islands advanced substantially in the deployment of the UNCTAD eTrade Reform Tracker.

65. A renewed contribution agreement with the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) of Switzerland was signed during UNCTAD16, giving fresh impetus to the work of the ECDE Programme. The contribution of 4 million Swiss francs until 2029 will bolster UNCTAD capacity to deliver innovative research, technical cooperation, and intergovernmental consensus-building support to countries seeking to advance their digital trade readiness.

66. A follow-up survey of participants in the first China Study Tour for women digital entrepreneurs from the global South highlighted the tour's transformative effects. All respondents had reportedly implemented concrete actions – ranging from AI integration to launching a digital content distribution platform – while 95 per cent reported measurable improvement in their business performance, such as reduced operational costs (up to 50 per cent), expanded customer base, and increased revenue. The tour also sparked cross-border collaboration: 7 participants forged partnerships with Chinese companies while 14 strengthened business ties with peers from the cohort.

67. The outcome document on the overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of the WSIS (A/RES/80/173) was adopted by consensus by the UN General Assembly. The resolution recognizes that "without the appropriate and adequate provision of means of implementation, the rapid pace and scale of digitalization may outpace the ability and readiness of some countries to adapt to digital transformation and its subsequent social and economic challenges".

68. The etradeforall.org online platform attracted more than 100,000 visitors, with approximately half originating from developing countries. This is a two-fold increase from 2024, reflecting the platform's relevance, recent upgrade and growing content base.

69. The UNCTAD secretariat received 11 new requests for technical cooperation from member States from across Africa, Latin America and the Pacific. These ranged from requests for new eT Readies, e-commerce strategies and deployment of the eTrade Reform Tracker, to requests for technical assistance with measuring e-commerce and the digital economy.

A7 Non-tariff measures

Table A7
Non-tariff measures

Project number	*Short title*	*Period covered*	*Source of funds*
EUR/0T/KBJ	Support to CEFTA for monitoring and reporting of NTMs and implementation of Dispute Settlement Mechanism	2021 -	European Union
MOZ/0T/JAH	Building Competitiveness for Exports in Mozambique	2020 -	UNIDO (with funding from the EU)
RAF/0T/MAZ	Support project for the African Continental Free Trade Area to eliminate non-tariff barriers and increase regulatory transparency	2024 -	Germany
RAS/0T/JBO	Improving Pacific Islands Customs and Trade (IMPACT)	2021 -	European Union

70. **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.

71. **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.

72. **Outputs.** In 2025, UNCTAD reached a coverage of non-tariff measure (NTM) data of 152 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 65,000 in 2025.

73. The Latin American Integration Association (ALADI) continued to work in 2025 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.

74. UNCTAD in 2025 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 24 participants, 10 of them, including 6 women, graduated. A joint course organized by the Trade Analysis Branch and the Trade and Environment Branch on Harnessing Trade to Advance National Climate and Development Goals enrolled 251 participants and graduated 151 participants, 62 per cent of them are women. A course on NTMs and data collection tailored for participants in the Pacific region enrolled 74 participants of whom 24 graduated, including 10 women. In addition, in-person workshops took place in Comoros, Ghana, Nigeria, Kiribati, Niue, Republic of Marshall Islands and Timor-Leste. Overall, over 600 government officials, traders and researchers have completed the courses on non-tariff measures provided by UNCTAD, of whom more than 50 per cent are women.

75. In 2025, UNCTAD further advanced regulatory transparency under the AfCFTA by completing NTM data collection in Ghana, Malawi, Nigeria, South Africa and Zimbabwe, which was an important development given that Ghana, Nigeria and South Africa are among the continent's largest economies and key markets for intra-Africa trade. With these additions, NTM data collection has now been completed in 35 African countries, including 19 LDCs, representing the most comprehensive mapping of NTMs undertaken on the continent and providing a robust foundation for reducing information asymmetries and enhancing predictability in intra-African trade. The expanded dataset supports policymakers and the private sector in identifying regulatory requirements more clearly and contributes to broader efforts to reduce trade costs and strengthen regional value chains. UNCTAD continues to collaborate closely with the AfCFTA Secretariat to operationalize transparency commitments and ensure that LDCs can fully benefit from improved access to regulatory information.

76. Implementation of the AfCFTA Non-Tariff Barriers (NTB) Online Mechanism progressed further in 2025, with 18 NTB cases resolved through UNCTAD's mediation support and 19 new NTBs reported, reflecting increasing awareness and confidence in the system following joint outreach and sensitization efforts by UNCTAD, the AfCFTA Secretariat and national governments. Developed by UNCTAD together with African Union member States and launched by African Heads of State in 2019, the AfCFTA NTB Online Mechanism serves to implement Annex 5 of the Protocol on Trade in Goods. Its accessibility to MSMEs, women and youth entrepreneurs and informal traders ensures that those most affected by trade barriers can report obstacles directly. User engagement continued to expand, with registrations rising from 1,408 to 1,942. This reflects an increase of 534 users and the highest annual growth since the platform's launch and underscores the mechanism's growing relevance for the private sector and its contribution to more transparent and predictable

trading conditions. Ongoing UNCTAD technical support continues to strengthen the capacity of national focal points and enhance coordinated NTB resolution across member States.

77. In Mozambique, UNCTAD concluded its activities under the UNIDO-led project funded by the European Union (EU) and developed in the context of the Mozambique-EU Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA). UNCTAD provided the Government of Mozambique with policy recommendations on identified agriproduct value chains with potential for exports, inclusion and sustainability improvement focusing on non-tariff measures faced in the country's exports.

78. 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, NTM data of the Cook Islands, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Naoero, Niue, Palau and Tuvalu were collected for the first time, while the data of Samoa, Tonga and Timor-Leste were updated. With respect to knowledge products, UNCTAD reviewed the Papua New Guinea tariff reduction programme together with the Government, supporting evidence-based policymaking and trade analysis. Several rounds of online consultations (18 June 2025; 25 August 2025) took place during the review. The final report was submitted to the Government in October 2025. Furthermore, a workshop was held on 18 November 2025 to present the final report and provide training on the underlying methodology, thereby supporting capacity-building.

79. Moreover, a Guide on Exports to the European Union for Pacific Island Economies, focusing on six Pacific export products was drafted (and published in March 2026). Concerning the technical support for regulatory transparency, UNCTAD integrated TRAINS database with the trade information portals – the official platform for disseminating trade-related regulations and their detailed information – of Kiribati, Niue and Tuvalu, with Vanuatu expected to follow. The integration consolidated efforts by government authorities and UNCTAD to improve data consistency and increase the likelihood of timely updates to the portals. The NTM data, knowledge products and integration of TRAINS database were validated and disseminated at the in-person and hybrid workshops in Timor-Leste (15 May 2025), Kiribati (29 October 2025), Niue (5 November 2025) and the Marshall Islands (16 December 2025). Following on the workshop, as per the request of the government of Niue, UNCTAD participated in the meeting of the National Trade Facilitation Committee of Niue and provided advisory support (18 December 2025).

80. In 2025, UNCTAD, in cooperation with 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. By the end of 2025, 14 countries' data was completed, and the data for Japan was completed in June 2026 and for South Korea data is expected later in 2026.

81. UNCTAD continues its support to Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) Parties and the Secretariat within the project "EU4Business support to CEFTA for Non-Tariff Measures monitoring and reporting and support to the implementation of the CEFTA Dispute Settlement Mechanism" which started in June 2022. As the agreement on CEFTA Additional Protocol 7 (AP7) on Dispute Settlement Mechanism (DSM) was reached in October 2024, UNCTAD continued its support for the implementation of DSM by preparing more than 60 supporting documents/secondary legislation for the operationalization of the AP7 in collaboration with the CEFTA Secretariat. Moreover, UNCTAD developed a first test version of the CEFTA Dispute Electronic Communication System (DECoS) for the digital management of the dispute cases under the AP7 which was presented to CEFTA Parties and the Secretariat in February 2025. UNCTAD conducted a regional training workshop for all seven CEFTA Parties and the Secretariat on AP7 DSM Implementation and DECoS on 30-31 July 2025 in Tirana, Albania. The workshop was designed to build capacity of CEFTA Parties to better understand the AP7 DSM process with hands-on training testing the DECoS system and using the document and templates that are necessary in each stage of the legal process.

82. UNCTAD also assisted efforts to resolve barriers reported through the CEFTA Market Access Barriers Database (MABD). UNCTAD reviewed the portal in depth and proposed new functionalities to improve the effectiveness of the system based on the feedback received by CEFTA Secretariat and CEFTA Parties. After numerous consultations and technical sessions, UNCTAD Recommendations on improved functionality of MABD were endorsed by all CEFTA Parties in August 2025, which paved the way for the IT adjustment of the system and preparing new guidelines for its use. UNCTAD delivered a regional workshop on the upgraded MABD to the focal points of CEFTA Parties and the Secretariat on 5 November 2025 in Skopje, North Macedonia. This online tool used for raising and resolving trade obstacles related to NTMs was released for utilization in December 2025. UNCTAD also incorporated trade services categories and problem categories related to trade in services according to the additional protocol 6 for CEFTA. By doing this, CEFTA Parties can now successfully raise concerns on trade obstacles in services as well as in goods.

83. Moreover, UNCTAD supported CEFTA Parties to enhance transparency in regulations affecting trade by collecting data on NTMs of the CEFTA economies. By the end of 2025 the data collection for all CEFTA economies was finalized. CEFTA Parties participated in the validation workshops held between January and October 2025 in which the data collection methodology used as well as key statistics and specificities of data for each CEFTA economy were presented. The NTMs data for CEFTA economies is published and disseminated through UNCTAD TRAINS online database.

84. The private-public dialogue can also be enhanced by developing a strategy for a monitoring and reporting mechanism on trade obstacles by the private sector. As a follow-up of seven UNCTAD workshops on strategy for private sector trade obstacles reporting mechanism in all CEFTA economies in 2024, UNCTAD delivered seven online workshops to present the final strategy at CEFTA Party level to the key public sector stakeholders between May and November 2025. The final regional report on strategy for private sector trade obstacles reporting mechanism will be launched in 2026.

85. Finally, 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 (GTAP), 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.

86. **Results and impact.** Awareness raising for the AfCFTA Non-Tariff Barriers Online system resulted in increased registered users. Furthermore, UNCTAD's mediation has supported the resolution of 18 concrete, private sector-reported non-tariff barriers in Africa. 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. The integration of TRAINS database with trade information portals resulted in the update of regulatory information in Tuvalu, Kiribati and Niue. 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.

87. The dissemination of research results on NTMs has improved awareness of the importance of non-tariff measures for the updated 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.

88. The CEFTA economies are better prepared to avoid and deal with trade obstacles. The MABD system is a tool for raising and resolving claims against each other. The features in the updated MABD system for CEFTA now overcome hindrances that were faced in the past

because of its design. Furthermore, it now allows reporting trade barriers in services as well as in goods, by the incorporation of services problem categories, following the previously agreed Additional Protocol 6 in CEFTA. The Parties are also better prepared to use the newly agreed Dispute Settlement Mechanism, once it enters into force after ratification, through hands-on training using the documents and templates prepared by UNCTAD for every stage in the litigation process. The economies in CEFTA are also now more transparent in what regards regulations that affect trade, NTM, as their data is now collected, coded and published in TRAINS online for the first time.

A9 Trade negotiations and the international trading system

Table A9
Trade negotiations and the international trading system

Project number	*Short title*	*Period covered*	*Source of funds*
INT/0T/9AU	Trust Fund on WTO Accession	2009 -	Group of donors
INT/0T/9BG	Trust Fund on Services, Development and Trade	2015 -	Group of donors
INT/9X/00M	Support to the GSTP	2020 -	Group of donors
INT9X77I	Technical cooperation on market access, trade laws and preferences	2015 -	Group of donors

89. **Development context**. A universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory, and equitable multilateral trading system continues to be the cornerstone of a global trade partnership, contributing particularly 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.

90. 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.

91. 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 entry into force of the Sao Paulo Round Protocol and its effective implementation, and in follow-up discussions.

92. **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).

93. 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 enhances supply capacity in services for direct and indirect trade.

94. 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, help developing countries, in particular LDCs, increase the utilization of GSP and other trade preferences, and support graduating LDCs during the transition against preference losses in major markets. 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.

95. 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.

96. **Outputs**. The main outputs in 2025 in the area of trade negotiations and the international trading system are reported as follows:

Trading systems

97. UNCTAD continued to monitor and assess the evolution in international trade and the trading system from a development perspective. In 2025, UNCTAD published its second issue of Trade Preferences Outlook. It also continued to deliver policy discussions and promoted focused and candid debate on new and emerging issues affecting developing countries such as rising global trade policy uncertainty due to increasing use of unilateral tariffs, global shift towards economic fragmentation and protectionism, and weakening of rule based multilateral system. 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.

98. In 2025, UNCTAD provided focused and targeted technical support to Iraq and Ethiopia to help them in their preparation for their respective accession negotiations. These include updating and reviewing the memorandum on foreign trade regime (MFTR) and the market access offers on goods and services trade which allowed both countries to timely submit the required accession documentation to the relevant WTO bodies. Ethiopia conducted bilateral negotiations on services in the run up to the 6th Working Party on its accession to the WTO, which was held on 26 September 2025. UNCTAD provided substantive legal and technical inputs for the preparation by Ethiopia of its revised offer on specific market access for financial and telecommunications sectors under the GATS agreement.

99. In addition, support was also provided to Comoros in the implementation of its national post-accession strategic plan of action.

Services, development and trade

100. 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.

101. In 2025, UNCTAD supported its member States in using trade in services for diversification with several initiatives:

(a) UNCTAD organized the sixth edition of the Global Services Forum (GSF) on 23 October 2025, in the context of the sixteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. The GSF focused on strategies and policies to leverage the services sector as a new frontier for structural transformation, economic diversification, and resilience-building.

(b) UNCTAD made a presentation on trade in services at the World Trade Organization (WTO) Council for Trade in Services (CTS) thematic session on *Good Regulatory Practices (GRP)* on 12 June, to share examples of GRP covered in sessions of the Multi-year Expert Meeting (MYEM) on Trade, Services and Development and in Services Policy Reviews (SPR).

(c) UNCTAD analysed how services contribute to commodities value chains, contributing to their diversification, upgrading and resilience in Namibia (7–11 July) and Zambia (22–26 September). This was in the context of the project entitled "Critical energy transition minerals (CETM): Rapid assessment of value addition and diversification capacity in Southern Africa".

(d) UNCTAD organized, on 12 September, a session on "Servicification and trade in services: Unlocking opportunities for developing economies". This was in the context of the China International Fair for Trade in Services (CIFTIS).

(e) UNCTAD organized a dialogue on trade and Sustainable Development Goals with mediterranean countries on 23 September 2025 on how trade in services and servicification held the potential to transform production and trade, how this potential depended on addressing data challenges, and how it was important to identify partnership opportunities. In follow-up to this dialogue, UNCTAD has already been invited to further discussions with Mediterranean countries.

(f) UNCTAD made a presentation on trade in services for renewable energy at the World Trade Organization (WTO) Council for Trade in Services (CTS) thematic session on the green services economy and sustainable development on 11 December.

102. 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.

103. In 2025, UNCTAD helped its member States improve its data ecosystems to better inform trade in services policymaking, through several initiatives:

(a) UNCTAD organized, on 6 February, an "Open consultation for the Primer on data for trade in services and development policies".

(b) UNCTAD prepared a *Primer on data for trade in services and development policies,* which provides a tool to developing countries on how to better access and use data to improve trade in services policymaking. The Primer was published on 12 September 2025.

(c) UNCTAD co-organized, on 18 September 2025, a session at the WTO Public Forum 2025 on "Invisible trade – data, services and the digital divide".

(d) UNCTAD DITC delivered, under the 2025 webinar of the "Train for Trade Statistics on International Trade in Services (SITS)" programme, a presentation on "*Primer on data for trade in services and development policies*" respectively in English (11 November) and in French (12 November).

(e) UNCTAD organized, on 4 December, a session on "*Making the Invisible Visible: Data for Services Trade and Development Policy*" in the context of the WTO Trade in Services for Development (TS4D) Conference.

104. 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. Trade in services agreements can contribute to governing temporary labour migration, for example with provisions related to the recognition of qualifications.

105. In 2025, 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 Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD), including in the preparatory meetings for the Summit, on 19 and 20 February 2025.

(b) UNCTAD participated in the United Nations Network on Migration, including in its annual meeting on 19 June 2025.

Market access and trade preferences

106. 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 2025. This second issue of the outlook analyses the impact of rising geopolitical tensions, global trade policy uncertainty, shift towards economic fragmentation and protectionism, and disruptions of global value chains on the beneficiaries of non-reciprocal trade preferences programmes. The report also highlights the significance of instituting smooth transition mechanisms and promoting export diversification for graduating LDCs and the cost of abrupt changes in preferential market access conditions on beneficiary countries. UNCTAD also continued to compile and update the GSP database based on data submitted by GSP donor countries, which provides useful information on trade conducted under each preferential scheme.

107. 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 2025, UNCTAD focused on the implementation of the workplan of 2023–2025, approved during the Committee of Participants in September 2023. As part of the workplan, the technical note "The potential of the GSTP: The case of agricultural trade" was published on 30 September 2025. In addition, UNCTAD organised the 33rd session of the Committee of Participants (COP) of the GSTP on 25 October 2025, where discussions focused on South-South trade cooperation under global uncertainties, and the status of the ratification and the technical preparations for the entry into force of the Sao Paulo Protocol. Possible areas for future cooperation under GSTP were then discussed, with a particular emphasis on the two technical notes produced under the GSTP on marine fishery products and agriculture respectively, and possible arrangements under article 4 of the GSTP. The COP also discussed and approved the proposed work-plan for 2026-2028 and the joint-communiqué, paving the way for the approval of the latter at the GSTP Ministerial meeting during UNCTAD16. At the special ministerial session of the Committee of Participants of the GSTP, which took place on 22 October 2025, Ministers from GSTP participating countries reaffirmed their commitment to the GSTP framework and

outlined a path for deeper and more effective trade cooperation. The main output of the meeting was the Joint Communiqué, where members charted together the way for the years ahead. In the framework of UNCTAD16, UNCTAD also organized the South-South Cooperation Forum, which took place on 23 October 2025. Divided in three panels, the second panel focused on South–South trade partnerships for accelerating the Sustainable Development Goals, with a particular focus on the GSTP. UNCTAD has also moved forward with the update of the São Paulo Round (SPR) tariff concessions. All schedules were converted and the Secretariat is currently engaging with the SPR participants to have the schedules approved.

108. **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.

109. UNCTAD support enabled Iraq and Ethiopia to complete a series of WTO accession related documentation. For Iraq, this included the preparation of the revised memorandum on the foreign trade regime (MFTR), revised legislative action plan (LAP), revised market access offers in goods and services, and formulation of replies to over 160 questions received from WTO members. Ethiopia's WTO membership bid registered significant progress as Ethiopia sought to complete its accession by the WTO ministerial conference (MC14) held from 26 to 29 March 2026 in Yaoundé, Cameroon, even though this did not materialize. UNCTAD assistance in this context has been essential for Iraq and Ethiopia to successfully meet major WTO accession challenges related to the technical preparation. UNCTAD received testimonial letters from both countries attesting the important role of UNCTAD and appreciating the support received from it in relation to the WTO accession process.

110. For Comoros, the preparatory work for the first phase of a post-accession technical assistance project was completed with the identification of priority areas and activities related to Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS)/ Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT). In addition, a detailed work programme for UNCTAD interventions was completed. Furthermore, outreach efforts to secure extrabudgetary funding of the project's activities have been undertaken. These resulted in financial contributions received from the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) and the Islamic Centre for the Development of Trade (ICDT).

111. In terms of impact, these technical assistance activities allowed Iraq to meet main accession's obligations by aligning its trade policy frameworks on WTO rules. It has also enabled the country to timely submit statutory accession documents to further advance the accession negotiations and to adequately prepare for the next WTO Working Party session (4th meeting), planned for 2026. Ethiopia's WTO accession process has made tangible progress demonstrated by the country's preparation for and conduct of the bilateral market access negotiations that took place in parallel to the 6th Working Party meeting on the accession of Ethiopia to the WTO held on 26 September 2025. The assistance to Comoros is expected to enhance its readiness to fulfil WTO membership legal obligations, including the establishment of a WTO-compliant TPF and SPS/TBT legal regime.

112. 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, for example, the lessons and exchanges from the 11th session of the MYEM on Trade, Services and Development, where delegates from member States

welcomed the draft report of the informal working group on data for services trade and development policies, including its recommendation to develop the Primer on data for trade in services and development policies. Based on the guidance of member States, UNCTAD conducted research and analytical work which resulted in the publication of the Primer. The technical assistance project on "Strengthening capacity for evidence-based policymaking and the economic resilience of CARICOM" is using the Primer as a reference document and a tool that provides lessons on how the use of data on services trade is relevant for development policies, thus contributing to the project's goals. The use by each pillar of inputs from other pillars illustrates synergies across UNCTAD pillars of work. UNCTAD assistance was also 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.

113. 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, which was addressed through a standing item in MYEM on Trade, Services and Development and through a Primer on data for trade in services and development policies. 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.

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 , the Trade Preferences Outlook 2025, 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

Project number	*Short title*	*Period covered*	*Source of funds*
INT/0T/7BS	Climate change programme	2007 -	Portugal
INT/07/BS5	Ocean and Blue Economy programme	2017 -	France and Portugal
INT/0T/HAI	BioTrade Facilitation Programme: Linking trade, biodiversity and sustainable development	2019 -	Switzerland
INT/0T/HBD	Sustainable manufacturing and environmental pollution programme	2018 -	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
ROA-2528(A17)	Evidence-based climate action through artificial intelligence and data innovation in Caribbean SIDS	2025 -	Development Account

Project number	*Short title*	*Period covered*	*Source of funds*
ROA-2528(F17)	Sustainable product export strategies and traceability for a green, sustainable and inclusive economy in Asia	2025 -	Development Account

114. **Development context**. Population growth and rising prosperity have intensified climate change, terrestrial and marine biodiversity loss, pollution and ecosystems degradation, creating a triple planetary crisis that disrupts trade, investment and value chains, especially in vulnerable developing countries. Trade and environment policies must therefore work together to shift towards sustainable production and consumption patterns, reduce pollution and resource overuse, and unlock low carbon green and blue export opportunities.

115. The Convention on Biological Diversity's Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF), the Pact for the Future, the UNGA Oceans Conference resolution[15] and two new multilateral outcomes - the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies and the United Nations treaty on Biodiversity in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement on high seas biodiversity - will continue offering trade opportunities in sustainable use of land and ocean-based biodiversity products/bioeconomy.

116. The ongoing negotiations for an international legally binding instrument (ILBI) on plastic pollution, will also open space to use trade measures and incentives to support sustainable use of biodiversity, including circularity and pollution reduction.

117. The Geneva Consensus adopted at UNCTAD16 reaffirmed the role of UNCTAD at the heart of this evolving trade and environment agenda, including support for implementation of the Paris Agreement and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), analysis of trade-related environmental measures, and facilitation of access to climate and biodiversity-relevant technologies and finance. Trade is now firmly on the climate and biodiversity agenda, from COP30's new dialogue on trade and climate cooperation and the "Harnessing Trade Policy for NDCs, Low Carbon Economic Diversification and Climate Resilience" initiative, to the Integrated Forum on Climate Change and Trade, each with mandated participation of UNCTAD. The Geneva Consensus also reaffirmed mandates on sustainable use and conservation of marine resources and in building circular approaches and to address climate vulnerabilities

118. **Objectives and features**. UNCTAD explores trade opportunities arising from multilateral environmental agreements and the Geneva Consensus. Its work helps developing countries harness sustainable products and green and blue value chains, manage impacts of climate and environmental policies and standards, and design strategies that align trade and investment with environmental goals and the SGDs. These efforts aim to create jobs, diversify economies, and reduce poverty by positioning trade as a driver of green, blue, and circular economies operating within planetary boundaries.

119. UNCTAD work on sustainable trade and the environment strengthens developing countries' capacity to design and implement mutually supportive trade, environment, climate, and sustainable development strategies. It also promotes the integration of sustainable development objectives into national development policies and NDCs, through the expansion of green, blue, and low-carbon exports.

120. UNCTAD promotes sustainable trade in sectors that contribute to economic growth, job creation, social inclusion, biodiversity conservation, climate mitigation and adaptation, and dependence on plastics. As countries raise their climate ambitions to meet the Paris Agreement goals, UNCTAD analyses the potential trade impacts of climate and environmental policies, such as increased trade costs or reduced market access, particularly for SMEs, and provides data-driven policy advice to help governments mitigate negative spillovers and seize new opportunities.

[15] See United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/79/314 at digitallibrary.un.org/record/4085144/files/A_RES_79_314-EN.pdf.

121. **Outputs**. In 2025, outputs were delivered though its four programmes: (a) trade and climate; (b) sustainable ocean and blue economy; (c) trade and biodiversity; and (d) sustainable manufacturing and environmental pollution.

122. Under the **Trade and Climate Change Programme**, in 2025, UNCTAD continued its collaboration with UNECA for the implementation of a new Development Account Project on *Innovative Climate Action to Accelerate Green Industrialization in the Southern Africa Region*. UNCTAD conducted preparatory and conceptual work to lay the groundwork for the start of country-level work in 2026. This effort includes support for the conceptualisation of a set of four regional studies on green industrial policy, energy transition, innovation, and MSEs and circular economy. Project beneficiary countries include Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

123. Following the pilot implementation in the Gambia, in 2024, of the UNCTAD guide for policymakers on the inclusion of trade-related measures in national climate plans, UNCTAD collaborated with the Trade Ministry and the Permanent Mission of the Gambia on the identification of funding sources to support the implementation of the conclusions from the consultations. As a result of a technical assistance request from the Gambia, UNCTAD also provided training to 40 nominated Gambian officials on the inclusion of trade in climate plans. Building on this experience, UNCTAD, in partnership with UNECA, ISO, ITC, an academic institution, and Global South Nexus, developed and delivered an e-learning course on harnessing trade to advance national climate and development goals. Over 150 participants (about 87 women) completed this online training.

124. The Programme is also implementing the UN Development Account 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 is implemented in cooperation with the Commodities Branch and the Gender, Trade and Development Programme.

125. The Programme published the report *Fostering BRICS leadership on climate ambition amid trade and climate tensions* to support the 2025 Brazil BRICS Presidency.

126. During COP30, trade was elevated within the non-negotiated Action Agenda, with UNCTAD leading the "*Harnessing Trade Policy for NDCs, Low-Carbon Economic Diversification and Climate Resilience*" initiative [16] and contributing to the COP30 Presidency-led Integrated Forum on Climate Change and Trade.

127. The **Oceans and Blue Economy Programme** supports developing countries in responding to the triple planetary crisis by seizing opportunities from sustainable ocean trade. At UNCTAD16 (Geneva, October 2025), member States renewed the UNCTAD mandate to continue supporting developing countries to sustainably harness the ocean economy, strengthen ocean governance and support implementation of relevant international commitments, including those related to maritime transport and sustainable use of marine resources.

128. In 2025, the Programme focused on consensus building, dialogue and policy research to support the success of the third United Nations Ocean Conference, as well as on follow-up and capacity building in relation to major multilateral ocean governance outcomes, the decarbonisation and diversification of ocean-based sectors, and on targeted training. UNCTAD organized the 5th UNCTAD Ocean Forum[17] on trade-related aspects of SDG 14 (Geneva, 3–5 March 2025), co-chaired by France and Costa Rica, bringing together over 500 participants from governments, international organizations, academia, civil society and the private sector of which 206 were women, representing 41 per cent of total participants. The Forum culminated in 15 co-chairs' recommendations – that were submitted to the Third UN Ocean Conference (UNOC3) – to better align trade and finance with ocean sustainability,

[16] With the Coalition of Trade Ministers on Climate, ICC, ITC, TESS, UNCTAD, UNEP FI, the World Bank Group, WBCSD, the World Economic Forum and the WTO Secretariat.

[17] See https://unctad.org/meeting/5th-united-nations-ocean-forum-trade-related-aspects-sustainable-development-goal-14.

including on decarbonisation pathways for ocean sectors, sustainable fisheries value chains and subsidies reform, innovation in marine-based products (including marine-based non-plastic substitutes) and scaling up blue finance.[18]

129. UNCTAD supported preparations for and engagement at the UNOC3 held in June in Nice, France.[19] UNCTAD contributed substantively to Ocean Action Panel 6[20] on sustainable ocean economies and organised a two-week “Ocean that Feeds Us” pavilion (Green Zone), in partnership with FAO and the Aquatic Blue Food Coalition, attracting over 100,000 visitors and hosting more than 50 events with the support of Angola, France and Portugal.

130. Building on UNOC3 momentum and a recommendation from the 5th UNCTAD Ocean Forum, the United Nations Global Seaweed Initiative (UNGSI)[21] was officially launched during the UN General Assembly in September 2025, spearheaded by Madagascar, France and Indonesia and supported by UNCTAD and other UN entities and partners. The UNGSI is a development platform seeking to strengthen standards, regulation, traceability, investment, and capacity-building to unlock the sector’s multiple benefits for aquatic food security, livelihoods, climate action and circular economy transitions. By the UNFCCC COP30 (November 2025), Chile and Brazil joined the UNGSI and a Plan of Action under the Climate Action Agenda was adopted on the multiple benefits of algae aquaculture.[22]

131. UNCTAD strengthened the evidence base for policymaking by updating and expanding its databases and indicators on trade in ocean goods and services (including data[23] and visualisations[24] updated to 2024) and by producing analytical outputs on sustainable ocean economy opportunities and risks in the context of market fragmentation and the climate and biodiversity crises.[25] Training and capacity-building activities were expanded in 2025, including through UNCTAD e-training and knowledge products on the trade–ocean–climate and circular economy nexus, reaching 340 participants, of which 194 were women, representing 57 percent of all participants, and supporting policy dialogue on implementation needs arising from new and emerging ocean-related commitments.[26]

132. Under the UN Development Account project *Evidence-based climate action through artificial intelligence and data innovation for Caribbean small island developing States*[27] implemented with UN DESA, UNCTAD advanced technical work to help Barbados, Belize, the Dominican Republic and Trinidad and Tobago measure and mitigate carbon emissions from maritime transport and fisheries and to strengthen their technical and institutional capacities to compile data under the System of Environmental Economic Accounting (SEEA) on assets.

133. The **Global BioTrade Facilitation Programme: Linking trade, biodiversity and sustainable development**[28] 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 (KMGBF).

134. In 2025, eighty countries were implementing the biotrade principles and criteria – a guideline that supports the implementation of social, economic and environmental

[18] See https://unctad.org/system/files/information-document/5unof-chairs-summary-format-v-final-rev.pdf.
[19] See https://unctad.org/topic/trade-and-environment/unctad-at-unoc3.
[20] See https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2025-05/25-00810%20ATT%20Formatted%20%20OAP6%20Coastal%20community.pdf.
[21] See https://unctad.org/topic/trade-and-environment/united-nations-global-seaweed-initiative
[22] See https://climateaction.unfccc.int/assets/documents/78_.pdf.
[23] See https://unctadstat.unctad.org/datacentre/.
[24] See https://unctadstat.unctad.org/insights/theme/116.
[25] See Global Trade Update (June edition): https://unctad.org/publication/global-trade-update-june-2025-sustainable-ocean-economy.
[26] See https://unctad.org/meeting/e-training-course-emerging-issues-interplay-between-trade-and-sustainable-development.
[27] See https://unctad.org/project/evidence-based-climate-action-through-artificial-intelligence-and-data-innovation-caribbean.
[28] https://unctad.org/topic/trade-and-environment/biotrade.

sustainability criteria across the entire value chain. The BioTrade Initiative and the UNCTAD Statistics, Data and Digital Service continue promoting the Trade and Biodiversity (TraBio) statistical tool[29] that provides trade flows of biodiversity-based products for over 185 economies dating from 2010 onwards and updated annually.

135. UNCTAD convened six events[30] to enhance knowledge and technical cooperation on the links between trade and biodiversity: the BioTrade Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS) round tables (7–10 January), a BioTrade Self-Assessment Tool workshop (27 January), a briefing on achieving biodiversity goals through trade (28 January), a data webinar on TraBio and the KMGBF (20 February), the 6th informal working group on trade and biodiversity statistics (26 August), and the launch of the COP30 bioeconomy challenge market development working group (14 November).

136. UNCTAD issued the technical cooperation publication *Trade and BioTrade's contribution to the KMGBF and synergies with the other Sustainable Development Goals*,[31] which outlines how trade, particularly when conducted under BioTrade Principles and Criteria, can support implementation and monitoring of the KMGBF while generating social, economic and environmental co-benefits aligned with the SDGs, including through tools such as the Trade and Biodiversity (TraBio) statistical tool.

137. The UNCTAD **Sustainable Manufacturing and Environmental Pollution (SMEP) Programme**[32] continues to generate evidence to 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. This work also addresses the issue of plastic pollution, focusing on the development of solutions towards material substitution and enhanced biodegradation options.

138. In 2025, UNCTAD continued its engagement and deliverables under the SMEP programme, in close cooperation with the Programme Management Agent[33], in line with the scope of activities for UNCTAD defined in the MoU with Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) – United Kingdom (former DFID) signed on 20 August 2018 and amended on 19 September 2019 (1st amendment) and on 20 October 2022 (2nd amendment, adding to the project activities work on plastic substitutes in the Indo-Pacific region). In 2025, the main accomplishments by UNCTAD under the SMEP programme were as follows:

139. On the 5th United Nations Ocean Forum, SMEP worked with the Oceans and Blue Economy Programme and other partners to bring together businesses, researchers, and innovators engaged in marine-based products, ocean conservation, and sustainable materials to participate in the Marine-based Products and Services (MAPS) Expo.[34] By fostering awareness and partnerships, the MAPS Expo supported the ongoing shift towards ocean-safe, low-carbon products that redefine industries and consumer behaviour.

140. In relation to the UN international legally binding instrument (ILBI) on plastic pollution negotiations, UNCTAD supported several countries from sub-Saharan Africa through research papers, policy briefs and the organization of side events focused on (1)

[29] https://unctadstat.unctad.org/datacentre/.
[30] https://unctad.org/meetings-search?f%5B0%5D=sitemap%3A773.
[31] See https://unctad.org/publication/biotrades-contribution-to-the-kunming-montreal-global-biodiversity-framework.
[32] https://unctad.org/project/sustainable-manufacturing-and-environmental-pollution-smep.
[33] SMEP's Programme Management Agent is a consortium comprised of Pegasys and SouthSouthNorth.
[34] https://unctad.org/meeting/marine-based-products-and-services-expo.

Trade at the Core;[35] (2) Materials Spectrum;[36] (3) Regional Pillars;[37] and (4) West African Voices.[38]

141. To promote broader awareness and adoption of existing knowledge on transitioning to a circular economy and the requirements for societies and countries to move towards it, UNCTAD organised a workshop[39] to highlight these innovations and empower civil society with knowledge to drive systemic change. Organised with Africa 21 and the Embassy of Switzerland in the United Republic of Tanzania, this training workshop on environmental sectors was tailored to communicators. By fostering informed and engaging journalism on environmental topics, this initiative aims to enhance public discourse and decision-making among civil society stakeholders.

142. UNCTAD organized a workshop[40] in São Paulo, as an official side event to the World Circular Economy Forum 2025.[41] This event promoted a bottom-up, evidence-based exchange by showcasing concrete cases from grantees of the SMEP Programme active in West and East Africa, where challenges – and potentials – around organic residues are very similar to those in South America and other world regions. The concrete projects demonstrated how organic residues can be transformed into high-value products with immediate market and international trade potential, highlighting opportunities for South–South cooperation. The event examined national circular economy roadmaps and their organic components, including reforms to waste management laws and contracts that prioritize value addition over landfilling, discussing strategies to support uptake.

143. UNCTAD hosted an East African Alternative Fibres Symposium[42] in Nairobi, bringing together key producers, buyers and enablers of the alternative and natural fibres sector across East Africa to: (1) map the natural fibre stakeholder ecosystem, from farmers and processors to innovators, buyers and policymakers; (2) host producer–buyer–financier roundtables to accelerate collaboration and investment; (3) explore enabling environments, including policy levers, financing models and market standards needed to scale the industry; and (4) open dialogue on regional coordination, including exploring the idea of a voluntary industry association. This initiative supported the strengthening of industry coordination and fostering of dialogue around a shared regional agenda to scale the use of organic waste and grow the alternative fibre sector as a pillar of a resilient, inclusive circular bioeconomy. It follows the regional dialogue initiated at the World Circular Economy Forum 2025, embedding the bioeconomy into national circular economy plans, deepening the focus on trade-linked opportunities and industry development in sub-Saharan Africa region. This also builds upon UNCTAD's experience in supporting organic agriculture movements across Africa and Southeast Asia as part of the United Nations Inter-Agency Cluster on Trade and Productive Capacity.

144. Also, under SMEP, UNCTAD published official reports including: (1) *Opportunities for plastic substitution in critical economic sectors of developing countries*[43]; (2) *Solutions in traditional knowledge: How gravity water filters could help reduce single-use plastics in sub-Saharan Africa*[44]. In addition, several SMEP Programme studies, policy briefs and tools

[35] https://unctad.org/meeting/inc-52-pre-event-trade-core-treaty-data-investment-services-and-consumer-information

[36] https://unctad.org/meeting/inc-52-pre-event-navigating-materials-spectrum-criteria-based-approach-product-design-and

[37] https://unctad.org/meeting/inc-52-pre-event-building-regional-pillars-plastics-treaty

[38] https://unctad.org/meeting/inc-52-pre-event-west-african-voices-plastics-controls-and-innovative-recycling

[39] https://unctad.org/meeting/2nd-training-workshop-communicators-circular-economy

[40] See https://unctad.org/meeting/embedding-bioeconomy-national-circular-economy-plans.

[41] The workshop was jointly organized with University of São Paulo and Chatham House.

[42] See https://unctad.org/meeting/scaling-sustainable-natural-fibres-circular-bioeconomy-and-industrial-growth-east-africa.

[43] https://unctad.org/publication/plastic-substitution-developing-countries-sectoral-opportunities-and-challenges

[44] https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/tcsditcinf2025d5_en.pdf

arising from the various projects contributed to furthering knowledge that can be used by policymakers to make informed decisions to promote trade that supports circular economy.

145. **Results and impact**. In 2025, UNCTAD work on sustainable trade and the environment built the capacity of and provided technical assistance and cooperation with developing countries through its robust and groundwork research (7 publications) and online and hybrid panels, trainings, workshops, and side events at the national, regional, and international levels (55 events).

146. The 15 policy-oriented recommendations advanced by the Co-Chairs of the 5th UN Ocean Forum, convened by UNCTAD and partners, were reflected in the UNOC3 Political Declaration[45] as part of an "acceleration agenda" for a sustainable ocean economy. They helped shape a call for urgent, coordinated and action-oriented measures to advance the conservation and sustainable use of marine resources in line with SDG 14. Key priorities include strengthening the ocean–climate–biodiversity nexus; phasing out harmful fisheries subsidies while promoting sustainable and inclusive livelihoods; accelerating the decarbonization of maritime transport and ocean-based sectors through NDCs; reducing marine pollution, particularly plastics; and scaling up blue finance, investment, innovation and marine research and development to close critical gaps.

A11 Investment promotion and facilitation

Table A11
Investment promotion and facilitation

Project number	*Short title*	*Period covered*	*Source of funds*
ROA-2427 (B16)	Attracting Finance and Investment for the Energy Transition in Africa	2024 -	Development Account

147. **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.

148. **Objectives and features**. UNCTAD work on investment promotion and facilitation aims to assist developing countries in strengthening their capacity to design, implement and manage policy and institutional framework for attracting and retaining foreign investment. It also supports the creation of an enabling business environment 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, promotion strategies and practices, investment facilitation, aftercare services, and institutional arrangements and good governance for attracting and retaining sustainable FDI. Particular emphasis is placed on strengthening investment promotion programmes in least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs), and small island developing States (SIDS). This work contributes directly to the achievement of SDGs 9 (Industry, innovation and infrastructure) and 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). In addition, the Development Account project "Attracting finance and investment for the energy transition in Africa" that the programme is implementing also contributes to SDG 7 (Affordable and clean energy).

149. **Outputs**. The main outputs of the programme in 2025 are detailed below.

Workshops, seminars and conferences

150. Under the Enhanced Integrated Framework – Capacity-development programme for IPAs of LDCs, the annual one-week training workshop for investment promotion officials

[45] See UNOC3 declaration - zero draft.pdf.

from developing countries was held in May 2025. Organized jointly by UNCTAD, the International Labour Organization (ILO), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and World Association of Investment Promotion Agencies (WAIPA), it brought together 26 participants (including 12 women) from 21 countries and the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), including seven participants from LDCs. UNCTAD delivered three sessions from 27 to 28 May 2025 (in person and online), on investment facilitation for the energy transition, mechanisms of transmission and policies for FDI and sustainable development, and the assessment of bankable projects.

151. In collaboration with the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), UNCTAD organized a webinar on 11 November 2025 on risk perception, risk mitigation, and national branding as critical factors for attracting sustainable investment in the COMESA region. The webinar reached a peak of 120 participants (33.3 per cent female) out of the 150 registered, representing government agencies of COMESA member states for investment promotion, tourism, economic development, finance, and commerce. Out of the 35 survey respondents, 88 per cent rated the webinar as “very useful” or “useful”.

152. UNCTAD, in collaboration with the Caribbean Association of Investment Promotion Agencies (CAIPA) held a joint Digital Investment Webinar on 26 November 2025. The event focused on attracting investment into the digital economy and equipping Caribbean investment promotion agencies (IPAs) with evidence-based strategies for promoting digital sector growth as well as using digital and AI to enhance efficiency. The webinar brought together 72 participants (approximately 60 per cent women) from government agencies and partner institutions across 17 countries and territories.

153. As an output of the Development Account project “Attracting finance and investment for the energy transition in Africa”, UNCTAD and the Namibia Investment Promotion and Development Board (NIPDB) organized a capacity-building workshop on 1–2 December 2025, in Windhoek, on the bankability of energy transition projects. The workshop was attended by 37 participants, including 15 women, from the NIPDB, regulatory agencies, development finance providers, and the private sector. Participants surveyed rated the workshop highly across all evaluation criteria. A full 95 percent of participants were “very satisfied” with the overall content, followed by 90 percent “very satisfied” with the use of technology, 85 percent "very satisfied” with the topic relevance, and 80 percent “very satisfied” with the facilitator/trainer. All participants rated the training as either “very useful” or “useful” to their work.

154. Under the same Development Account project, UNCTAD and the Ethiopian Investment Commission (EIC) organized a capacity-building workshop on 4–5 December 2025, in Addis Ababa on the bankability of energy transition projects. The workshop was attended by 38 participants, including eight women, from the Ethiopian Investment Holdings, Ethiopian Electric Utility, Ethiopian Electric Power, regulatory agencies, development finance providers, and the private sector. Participants surveyed rated the workshop highly across all evaluation criteria. Ninety-six percent of participants rated their satisfaction with the training as either a five or four out of five. Ninety-six percent of participants found the training to be either “very useful” or “useful” to their work.

Advisory services

155. In cooperation with WAIPA, UNCTAD contributed to the first WAIPA Master Class (Geneva, May 2025), delivering a session on investment facilitation in SDG sectors for 20 participants. UNCTAD also participated in the WAIPA Investment Conference (Sharjah, United Arab Emirates, October 2025), contributing to two panels, and served on the judging board of the WAIPA Investment Promotion Awards.

156. UNCTAD participated in the Tunisia Investment Forum (Tunis, 20 June 2025), marking the 30th anniversary of the Foreign Investment Promotion Agency (FIPA), and contributed to a panel on the role of IPAs in the era of artificial intelligence.

157. Under the Development Account project on *Attracting finance and investment in the energy transition in Africa*, UNCTAD participated in the SDG Investment Fair organized by

UNDESA during the fourth Financing for Development Conference (Seville, 30 June - 3 July 2025) where beneficiary countries presented energy transition projects to potential investors.

158. Within the same project, UNCTAD organized two events at the inaugural Future Investment Conference (FIC) held on 7 September 2025, including a session on "Strategic partnerships for Africa's energy transition: country investment showcases", and a high-level panel on attracting private investment in Africa's energy transition. The conference was held in cooperation with the 25th China International Fair on Trade and Investment (CIFIT) in Xiamen, China. UNCTAD supported officials from Ethiopia, Malawi, and the United Republic of Tanzania in both events, providing capacity-building on project pitching, facilitated engagement with investors, including through a dedicated exhibition area.

Training material

159. As part of the development account project, training modules on the bankability of energy transition projects were developed and piloted in Ethiopia and Namibia. This work complements UNDESA's training programme on financing SDG projects and is now being delivered jointly, with ongoing improvements.

160. **Results and impact**. In 2025, investment promotion and facilitation training, seminars, and conferences – both in person and online – attracted 205 participants from 50 countries, including IPA officials, policymakers, and other stakeholders. Of these, 58 per cent (119) were women. On average, 95 per cent rated the activities as "useful" or "very useful".

161. Beneficiaries' reactions to UNCTAD's work on investment promotion and facilitation in 2025:

(a) "On behalf of the Caribbean Association of Investment Promotion Agencies (CAIPA), sincere thanks are extended to you for your invaluable contribution as presenters and panellists at our CAIPA Webinar on, "Attracting Investment in the Digital Space,"…Your insights, experiences, and practical examples brought the agenda to life and provided CAIPA members with concrete pathways for advancing digital investment across the region. Special appreciation is extended to UNCTAD, our co-host and strategic partner for this event, for the keynote and technical presentations that framed the global landscape for investment in the digital economy and highlighted critical trends for IPAs." President of CAIPA, November 2025.

(b) "Malawi's participation at the FIC and CIFIT 2025…was highly successful in promoting the country's energy transition agenda. The presentation on Malawi's projects… attracted attention from key investors and opened pathways for financing, technology transfer, and capacity-building partnerships.*"* Chief Energy Officer, Ministry of Energy, Malawi, September 2025.

(c) "The pitching format allowed us to present our investment propositions to a targeted audience of international investors and development finance institutions. The conferences provided the opportunity for TISEZA to fulfil part of its mandate of promoting and mobilizing investment in renewable energy projects.*"* Director General, Tanzania Investment and Special Economic Zones Authority (TISEZA), September 2025.

A99 Other

Table A99
Other

Project number	*Short title*	*Period covered*	*Source of funds*
Division on Investment and Enterprise			
INT/0T/BAQ	Capacity-building in investment for development	2011 -	Group of donors

Project number	*Short title*	*Period covered*	*Source of funds*
INT/0T/HCJ2	Strategic Partnership the Netherlands – (linked with THCE04)	2023 -	Kingdom of the Netherlands
RAS/0T/EAY2	ASEAN Investment Report 2024–2026	2024 -	ASEAN Secretariat
Division on International Trade and Commodities			
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
Division on Technology and Logistics			
INT/0T/7CB	Special Trust Fund for Activities Related to the Commission on Science and Technology for Development’s Twenty-year WSIS Review	2007 -	Group of donors
INT/0T/KAL	CropWatch Innovative Cooperation Programme	2021 -	Aerospace Information Research Institute Chinese Academy of Sciences
INT/0T/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
Division on Globalization and Development Strategies			
BAR/0T/JAX	Promoting Economic Diversification and Resilience in Barbados for Sustained Recovery from Covid-19 Shock	2021 -	China
INT/0T/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
INT/0T/NBF	Policy Strategies Research and Sharing to promote Sustainable Development for the Global South	2025 -	China
INT/0T/OAB	Turning the Tide - How V20 countries can harness climate and development	2025 -	United Nations Office for Project Services
VEN/0T/MAW	Venezuela Project 2023 CAF-UNCTAD	2023 -	Corporacion Andina de

Project number	*Short title*	*Period covered*	*Source of funds*
			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

1. Trade and creative economy

162. **Development context**. 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. UNCTAD's biennial report called Creative Economy Outlook was last published in 2024 and showed that in 2022, creative goods and services represented approximately 2.9 and 19.3 per cent of total merchandise and services exports, respectively.

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

164. First in December 2019 and again in December 2023, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolutions on the creative economy (A/RES/74/198 and A/RES/78/133). These resolutions noted that the creative economy was an important tool for the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals and encouraged UNCTAD to continue its work in this area and produce concrete actions in support of the SDGs.

165. **Objectives and features**. Since the establishment 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 research, analysis, capacity and consensus-building.

166. 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. Today it has a unique database of the creative economy in more than 60 countries to help member States make more informed policy recommendations.

167. UNCTAD creative economy programme at its core aims to collate reliable and consistent data on the trade in creative goods and services. 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.

168. 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.

169. **Outputs**. As a leading agency in the implementation of the United Nations resolution on the creative economy, UNCTAD assisted member States in 2025 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.

170. UNCTAD Division on International Trade and Commodities co-organized with the Permanent Mission of Uzbekistan, the Permanent Mission of Indonesia and UNCTAD New York office a High-Level Panel Discussion titled “Fostering Culture and Creative Economy for Sustainable Development” in New York on 4 March 2025. The event increased awareness and knowledge among public sector stakeholders about global trends and impacts of creative industries, enhanced their ability to identify and assess key creative industries, and built capacities to formulate and implement strategies and policies to promote creative industries. Specifically, the High-Level Panel Discussions called for the full integration of culture into global policy-making efforts.

171. UNCTAD, in collaboration with the International Training Centre of the ILO (ITCILO) and the British Council, hosted a “Culture and creative economy foresight workshop” in Turin, Italy on 23–25 April 2025. The workshop examined the impact of technology, particularly Artificial Intelligence (AI) on cultural and creative industries; trade and investment patterns and export promotion strategies; comprehensive strategies for upskilling and reskilling; advancements in gender equality, diversity and inclusion; and decent work in culture and creative industries.

172. UNCTAD participated in an online workshop on artificial intelligence in creative industries in the Russian Federation on 28 May 2025, which brought together the private sector, policymakers and academia. The workshop explored how AI was not merely reshaping the way people produce, distribute, and consume creative goods and services but also transforming the creative economy itself. UNCTAD was able to share its global research to help foster consensus building on the way forward.

173. UNCTAD participated in the regional conference hosted online simultaneously in Manila and Cotabato (Philippines), Bangkok (Thailand), Hanoi (Viet Nam), Phnom Penh (Cambodia), Vientiane (Lao People’s Democratic Republic) and Yangon (Myanmar) 4 June 2025 titled “Impact Creativepreneurs Summit 2025”. The hybrid event brought together Southeast Asia’s young digital creatives, creative industry leaders, ecosystem builders, impact investors, and various other partners to advance creativity, innovation, entrepreneurship and impact across the region.

174. UNCTAD presented, on 29 September, its research and analysis on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development at the G20 side-event on creative economy in Barcelona, in the context of MONDIACULT, a gathering which brought together more than 150 ministers of culture.

175. UNCTAD, with support from the Asian Development Bank, the British Council and UNDP, participated in a regional roundtable hosted online on “*Economic Diversification: The Creative Economy*”. The initiative aimed at fostering dialogue, knowledge-sharing, and innovation in support of inclusive and sustainable economic growth in the Asian region. Discussions centred on advancing the Government’s strategic goals, improving profitability in tourism and trade, and enhancing the production of goods and services tailored to the tourism industry[46].

176. **Results and impact**. UNCTAD’s leadership in trade and creative economy 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.

177. In 2025, UNCTAD technical cooperation on trade and the creative economy 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

[46] https://unctad.org/publication/creative-economy-outlook-2024
https://unctad.org/publication/advancing-measurement-creative-economy-revised-framework-creative-industries-and-trade

integrate creative economy strategies into broader national development and trade agendas. UNCTAD's assistance also 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.

Numerous stakeholders acknowledged the value and relevance of UNCTAD work. For instance, the Minister of Economic Development and Trade from the Republic of Maldives highlighted: "We extend our sincere appreciation to you for supporting the Workshop Series on Economic Diversification: The Creative Economy, held from July 1st to 7th, 2025. Your team's engagement greatly enriched the dialogue. The perspectives brought to this series offered technical depth, strategic vision, and inspiration that will inform and shape the Maldives' path forward in developing a creative economy that is diverse, resilient, and future-ready".

2. Voluntary sustainability standards

178. **Development context**. With sustainability governance rapidly shifting from voluntary to mixed regimes of soft and hard law, the 2025 landscape saw tighter due diligence rules and diverse regulatory approaches co-evolving with voluntary sustainability standards across global value chains (GVCs). Voluntary sustainability standards (VSS) is a tool that can be leveraged to verify product sustainability claims. VSS aim to ensure that a product in question is produced, processed or transported following certain sustainability qualities, such as minimal or zero environmental impacts. VSS foster sustainable production and consumption and can also help to empower developing countries to effectively use GVCs to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The work links directly to Sustainable Development Goal 12, responsible production and consumption. UNCTAD VSS program is also the Secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Sustainability Standards (UNFSS), a joint UN platform composed of 6 agencies including the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Trade Centre, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

179. **Objectives and features**. UNCTAD's VSS programme supports the implementation and facilitation of Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS) in developing countries as an avenue to improve market access for these economies to more profitable markets. To help developing countries grow economically and contribute positively to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), UNCTAD's work on VSS strives to 1) increase the ability of developing countries to boost their export markets with sustainably produced goods; 2) help countries establish a platform on VSS that leads to better communication and coordination among stakeholders; and 3) equip countries with better knowledge on VSS, so they can leverage them strategically. With that, the VSS programme continued to (i) provide evidence and policy dialogue on VSS and due-diligence interactions; (ii) strengthen inter-agency and multi-stakeholder coordination via UNFSS; and (iii) support developing countries and SMEs to leverage VSS for sustainable trade and market access. A priority in 2025 was to translate research into practice via the UNFSS Academic Advisory Council, the 6th UNFSS Flagship Report, thematic roundtables and global convenings to help policymakers navigate compliance, traceability and inclusion challenges.

180. **Outputs**. Within the framework of the United Nations Forum on Sustainability Standards, supported by UNCTAD, the following activities were implemented in 2025:

181. Throughout January 7-10, a series of three roundtables[47] were organized online by UNCTAD VSS and BioTrade programmes as well as KU Leuven. Sessions were convened by either VSS systems (e.g. Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO), Rainforest Alliance), researchers or UNCTAD to map current approaches, evidence and future research for biodiversity outcomes in standards.

182. On 31 March and 1 April, UNCTAD as secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Sustainability Standards organized, in collaboration with KU Leuven and a German

[47] https://unctad.org/meeting/biotrade-roundtables-biodiversity-and-voluntary-sustainability-standards.

institute,[48] the 5th UNFSS Academic Advisory Council (AAC) Meeting titled "The changing landscape of sustainability governance: What next for VSS?".[49] The event brought together United Nations agencies, academics, government officials and national platforms to examine how VSS – amid expanding due diligence regulation and fragmented geopolitics – are adapting and reshaping global governance. Structured panels explored regulatory interplay, evidence on effectiveness and future research gaps. Moreover, UNCTAD and partners prepared a report synthesizing AAC insights on VSS' roles vis-à-vis mandatory measures and trade policy. Both helped build consensus among the scientific community, notably on the adaptation of VSS vis-à-vis mandatory due diligence regulations, their interactions, challenges and opportunities.

183. During the Hamburg Sustainability Conference in June 2025, UNCTAD/UNFSS organized a press-release of the 6th UNFSS flagship report titled "The future of sustainable trade: Due diligence initiatives, voluntary sustainability standards and developing countries". The report maps the due diligence regulatory landscape, draws lessons learned from more than 30 years of research on VSS, and discusses impacts on producers in developing countries. At the same conference, the UNFSS organized a round table on "Exploring market solutions for biodiversity conservation in global trade" thus convening dialogue on biodiversity-linked market instruments and VSS.

184. Together with the China Association for Standardization which hosts the VSS National Platform, UNCTAD organized the China Sustainable Business and Brands Senior Dialogue on 4 September 2025 in Geneva. It aimed at connecting VSS with sustainable trade and brand-building. The dialogue delivered the "Commitment Initiative to Build Sustainable Brands" signed by a first cohort of 24 large companies, strengthening business uptake of sustainability practices.

185. UNCTAD, together with UNEP, convened an International Cooperation Seminar titled "*Building Sustainable Brands*" and the Sustainable Business Leaders Forum (SBLF), a dialogue between senior UN officers and company leaders from the China Association for Standardization's Sustainable Business and Brands Committee (SBBC). The Sustainable Business Leaders Forum (SBLF) gathered public and private leaders as well as UN counterparts for the launch of the voluntary "*Guidelines for Building Sustainable Brands*" and the SBLF Annual Report. The events took place on 15–16 December in Nairobi, Kenya.

186. As part of the activities of the 30th Conference of the Parties (COP) held in Belém on 10–21 November, UNCTAD/UNFSS co-convened with ISO and partners of the Standards Pavilion, namely ITC, UNIDO, FAO and others, a Boardroom session on "*Trading sustainably: How standards build resilient markets*". The session positioned standards as tools that align climate ambition with trade competitiveness and resilient markets.

187. On 11 and 12 October, UNFSS/UNCTAD co-organized a panel at the World Trade Forum in Florence titled "*VSS, Sustainability, Standards and Trade*", contributing to trade-policy debates on integrating VSS and due diligence into open, inclusive trade frameworks.

188. As part of the *project Harnessing trade policy and transport and logistics to build sustainable and resilient food supply chains in the Caribbean and the Arab region* funded via the 16th Tranche of the Development Account, UNCTAD implemented several activities in 2025. Notably, the project delivered a series of analytical reports followed by validation workshops at both regional and national levels. At the regional level, the Trade Policy Regional Report for the Caribbean was presented on 20 March 2025 to the Permanent Missions of Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago in Geneva, while the Regional Report for Western Asia and North Africa was finalized and presented at two major regional fora, first at UNESCWA preparatory meeting for the Food Systems Summit+4 on 16–17 April 2025, and second at the World Bank's MENA Food Security Workshop in Cairo in mid-June 2025, with all feedback incorporated into the final versions. At the country level, a national validation mission was carried out in Morocco on 21 November 2025 to present and validate

48 German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS).

49 https://unctad.org/meeting/5th-united-nations-forum-sustainability-standards-unfss-academic-advisory-council-meeting.

both the trade policy and transport/logistics assessments[50]. It was followed by a national validation workshop in Trinidad and Tobago on 3–4 December 2025 to validate the trade policy national report[51]. In Barbados, the national trade policy assessment was drafted, while in Lebanon the final draft of the trade policy national assessment was presented to ESCWA colleagues, marking the last stage before validation. Additionally, the project convened a meeting on 7 November 2025 with regional, national, and international experts to launch the development of the tailored national capacity-building package, resulting in the preparation for an online training tool.

189. **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) Building research consensus: The AAC meeting and its subsequent report offered a consolidated, policy-relevant picture of how VSS can complement or interface with due diligence regimes, informing regulatory design and country responses. In the same vein, the January BioTrade-VSS roundtables consolidated practitioner evidence and research agendas on biodiversity outcomes of standards, setting a pipeline for joint work under UNCTAD's trade-and-biodiversity track.

(b) Fostering knowledge and partnerships: The China Sustainable Business and Brands Senior Dialogue held in Geneva and the two events - seminar on "*Building Sustainable Brands*" and the Sustainable Business Leaders Forum - held in Nairobi catalysed commitments from the business side, strengthening VSS compatible practices and corporate engagement across regions and sectors.

(c) Through the COP30 Standards Pavilion session, UNFSS/UNCTAD fostered the dialogue on standards and climate change, elevating standards within climate-trade discussions, showcasing how interoperability and credible assurance help countries and firms meet sustainability goals while preserving competitiveness.

(d) On project *Harnessing trade policy and transport and logistics to build sustainable and resilient food supply chains in the Caribbean and the Arab region*, by the end of 2025, UNCTAD had commissioned studies for the four beneficiary countries (Barbados, Lebanon, Morocco, and Trinidad and Tobago) and performed validation workshops on trade policy in three of them (Barbados, Morocco, and Trinidad and Tobago), thus contributing to awareness raising on the nexus between trade, policy and food security. Countries that already hosted national assessment validation workshops thanked UNCTAD for the support given. The validation of the trade policy report for Lebanon is expected in 2026.

3. Investment trends and issues

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

190. **Development context**. The scarcity, unreliability, and inconsistency in existing data reporting systems can pose significant challenges in formulating policies and strategies concerning FDI. In addition, there is a limited number 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.

191. Building on 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 its technical assistance to support developing countries in strengthening FDI statistics and related policy

[50] https://unctad.org/meeting/workshop-present-and-validate-national-assessment-trade-policies-and-transport-logistics.

[51] https://unctad.org/meeting/workshop-present-and-validate-national-assessment-sustainable-food-supply-chains-and-trade.

analysis. The relevance of this work is reaffirmed in UNCTAD mandates. Most recently, the Geneva Consensus calls for UNCTAD to "Continue its research, monitoring and policy analysis on international investment flows and policies, including through the provision of detailed investment data and identification of emerging trends and their implications, challenges and opportunities, as well as preparation of actionable recommendations." (TD/561/Add.2, para. 80.19).

192. **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.

193. **Outputs**. In 2025, technical assistance focused on enhancing methodologies for the collection of FDI data. This involved verifying data provided by national authorities and promoting the standardization of reporting methods. Countries were requested to report FDI data based on directional basis rather than asset or liability basis. This approach showcased strong synergies between research conducted for the *UNCTAD World Investment Report*, the Global Investment Trends Monitor, and the technical assistance on improving FDI data.

194. UNCTAD continued its inter-agency cooperation by actively engaging in the Working Group on International Investment Statistics of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the IMF Committee on Balance of Payments Statistics. Contributions included discussions related to the finalization of the IMF's Integrated Balance of Payments and International Investment Position Manual, seventh edition (BPM7) and the OECD Benchmark Definition of FDI, fifth edition (BD5).

195. In collaboration with World Association of Investment Promotion Agencies (WAIPA) and ProDominicana, UNCTAD provided technical assistance to investment promotion agencies from different regions to improve the collection of FDI statistics and data on activities of multinational enterprises. This initiative also aimed to raise awareness of internationally accepted standards and guidelines for FDI data compilation, as outlined in BPM7 and BD5. A presentation on FDI statistics related to climate change was also delivered at the 37th meeting of the Standing Committee on Finance, organized by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

196. **Results and impact**. According to the UNCTADstat data centre, in 2025 the FDI tables were the most viewed datasets, accounting for more than one tenth (13.3 per cent) of all page views.

197. UNCTAD also received positive feedback from participants from various countries and regional groupings that benefitted from this capacity building activity. The Executive Director of ProDominicana highlighted the value of collaboration with UNCTAD: "The knowledge shared and the high technical quality of the discussions strengthen our institutions and improve our ability to attract investments that generate real impact for our economies…" and reaffirmed its commitment to continue collaborating with UNCTAD and its research branch for the benefit of the region.

3.2. Technical assistance on ASEAN Investment Report series

198. **Development context**. An important pillar of UNCTAD activities is supporting developments in ASEAN member States and regional integration through analytical work and technical cooperation. In this context, UNCTAD has been providing technical assistance to ASEAN in the preparation of the annual ASEAN Investment Report (AIR) since 2012. In addition, UNCTAD has supported ASEAN in implementing an investment work programme linked to the ASEAN Economic Community 2025 Blueprint and the ASEAN Comprehensive Investment Agreement.

199. **Objectives and features**. The AIR series presents an analysis of the latest developments in FDI, emerging industries and the investment environment in an integrating ASEAN region. It also aims to provide analytical inputs to support discussion by relevant ASEAN bodies on emerging investment trends, industrial development and related policy issues.

200. **Outputs**. The *ASEAN Investment Report 2025: Foreign Direct Investment and Supply Chain Development* was published in October 2025. The report provides an in-depth analysis of FDI and supply chain development in ASEAN. It highlights the region's evolving supply chain landscape, key challenges and opportunities, and identifies priority areas for strengthening policy environment to attract supply chain-intensive FDI, enhance resilience and support regional production networks. Gender considerations were reflected in different parts of the report, in line with the outline agreed with the ASEAN Secretariat and the donor. The report was launched at the ASEAN Business and Investment Summit in Kuala Lumpur in October 2025, which brought together around 1,500 participants from business, industry and policymaking communities.

201. In preparing the report, UNCTAD collaborated with the ASEAN Coordinating Committee on Investment, the ASEAN Secretariat and the ASEAN Business Councils. Two capacity-building and consultative events were organized in partnership with the ASEAN Secretariat and the Australia for ASEAN Futures initiative (Aus4ASEAN Futures): the UNCTAD-ASEAN Consultative Forum (involving Business Councils of ASEAN Dialogue Partners, industry experts and ASEAN policymakers) and the AIR 2025 Policy Implementation Workshop. The ASEAN Consultative Forum, held from 27 to 29 March 2025 in Bangkok, brought together more than 70 experts and representatives, approximately half of whom were women. The AIR 2025 Policy Implementation Workshop, held on 26-27 October 2025 in Kuala Lumpur, was attended by about 35 ASEAN policymakers, the majority of whom were women.

202. **Results and impact**. The report provided insights and policy recommendations that informed discussions among ASEAN committees and contributed to the region's economic work programmes. It served as a background document for deliberations among ASEAN Ministers at the ASEAN Investment Area-ASEAN Economic Minister Meeting in September 2025. The findings were subsequently disseminated through high-level regional platforms, including the ASEAN Business and Investment Summit, and through policy discussions with national stakeholders, including a seminar organized by the Thai Senate, Finance Committee, in October 2025.

203. The AIR 2025 was well received by the ASEAN Ministers and other stakeholders. The Secretary-General of ASEAN thanked "UNCTAD for its relentless assistance to ASEAN in producing the ASEAN Investment Report series. The recommendations in this ASEAN Investment Report 2025 have been immensely useful, and officials shall refer to it as a reference in their deliberations." During the ASEAN Business and Investment Summit, the Australian High Commissioner to Malaysia noted that "The *ASEAN Investment Report 2025* provides timely and highly relevant insights into foreign direct investment and supply chain development, and we commend the team for delivering an analysis that is both rigorous and policy relevant."

204. The report was distributed by the ASEAN Secretariat to its Member States, ASEAN committees and other stakeholders and can be accessed through the internet[52].

3.3 *Technical assistance on the COMESA Investment Report series*

205. **Development context**. An important pillar of UNCTAD activities is to support development efforts in member countries and regional groupings through analytical work and technical cooperation. In this context, UNCTAD provided technical assistance to the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) for the preparation of the inaugural *COMESA Investment Report 2025*. COMESA comprises 21 member States, including 13 least developed countries (LDCs) and several nations affected by conflict or fragility. Persistent structural challenges, including weak investment climates, fragmented

[52] https://unctad.org/publication/asean-investment-report-2025.

regulatory systems and limited digital capacities, continue to constrain the region's ability to attract, retain and facilitate investment. The initiative was undertaken following a formal request from the Secretary-General of COMESA. The report was designed to strengthen evidence-based investment policymaking and support the implementation of the COMESA Medium-Term Strategic Plan 2026–2030.

206. **Objectives and features**. The *COMESA Investment Report* series aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of recent developments in foreign direct investment (FDI), sectoral patterns, special economic zones (SEZs), project finance trends, and the investment environment across Eastern and Southern Africa. It examines infrastructure, renewable energy, and other sustainable development–related investment, while highlighting concentration patterns, regional integration challenges, and diversification opportunities. The report is intended to provide analytical inputs to support discussions by relevant COMESA bodies on regional investment trends, industrial development, intra-regional investment linkages, and related policy issues.

207. **Outputs**. The inaugural *COMESA Investment Report 2025*: *Investment trends and policy insights* was published in December 2025. It provides an in-depth assessment of recent FDI dynamics in COMESA, including greenfield investment and international project finance trends and special economic zones, with particular attention to SDG-related sectors. The report analyses structural challenges related to investment concentration and proposes policy actions to strengthen investment facilitation and regional integration. It was officially launched during the COMESA Ministerial Meeting held on 3–4 December 2025, with the participation of more than 300 senior policymakers and regional stakeholders. The launch was accompanied by a high-level policy dialogue on regional investment trends, infrastructure finance and sustainable investment priorities.

208. **Results and impact**. The *COMESA Investment Report 2025* provided an evidence-based diagnostic of investment trends in the region and supported regional policy coordination efforts. Its recommendations were aligned with the COMESA Medium-Term Strategic Plan 2026–2030, reinforcing coherence between analytical findings and regional development priorities. The report strengthened dialogue among member States on intra-regional investment, infrastructure finance, and diversification strategies.

209. The report was well received by COMESA Ministers and stakeholders. The Secretary-General of COMESA conveyed formal appreciation and underscored its significance, noting that "the COMESA Investment Report is a remarkable achievement for the COMESA Secretariat; it is not merely a report, but a guideline and a road map for the years ahead." She further requested that the report be institutionalized as an annual flagship publication, recognizing its value not only as an analytical product but also as a strategic tool to deepen regional integration and strengthen investment-facilitating policies across member States.

210. The report was distributed by the COMESA Secretariat to its Member States, COMESA committees, and other stakeholders, and is publicly accessible online[53].

3.4 *World Investment Report series*

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

212. **Objectives and features**. The WIR series is a key instrument in helping policymakers better understand emerging FDI-related issues and their policy implications for development,

[53] https://unctad.org/publication/comesa-investment-report-2025-investment-trends-and-policy-insights.

thereby strengthening their capacity 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 of each edition involves the following interrelated activities:

(a) *Policy analysis and research*. Extensive peer review of the WIR outline, draft chapters and final text. The preparation of each chapter involves dialogue with relevant stakeholders and experts, including those from developing countries, to ascertain facts and determine trends.

(b) *Capacity-building workshops and seminars*. These activities enable policymakers, researchers and other experts from developing countries to contribute knowledge, experience and information relevant to the themes of each report. They also constitute an important component of the peer review process.

(c) *Dissemination of findings*. Dissemination begins with press conferences and webinars organized on the launch date of the report, followed by seminars and workshops for policymakers in developing countries. These events allow stakeholders to discuss the report's findings and explore ways to apply them in policymaking and implementation.

(d) *Dedicated expert networks*. To maintain the report's analytical quality, dedicated networks of experts are engaged through seminars, conferences and other collaborative activities.

213. **Outputs**. The *World Investment Report 2025 (WIR25)*: International Investment in the Digital Economy was released on 19 June 2025, during press conferences in Geneva and Mexico. The report examines recent trends in global FDI and analyses the growing role of the digital economy in shaping international investment patterns.

214. The report highlights the rapid expansion of international investment in digital sectors —including digital infrastructure, data centres and digital services — particularly through greenfield investment projects. At the same time, it shows that such investments remain highly concentrated in a limited number of countries, with many developing economies facing structural barriers such as inadequate digital infrastructure, limited digital skills and regulatory challenges.

215. To ensure broad global outreach, a range of dissemination and communication activities accompanied the launch of the report. Four press releases were prepared and translated into official United Nations languages. Four videos were also produced and translated into ten languages, alongside blogs and opinion pieces. Numerous dissemination events were organized including presentations in Türkiye, Bahrain, Egypt and the Republic of Korea, as well as regional online briefings for Africa and Eurasian Economic Union. The report was also presented at the annual conference of the Academy of International Business and served as background document for high-level policy discussions at international events, including Sibos 2025, which featured the 2024 Nobel Laurate in Economics, financial sector leaders, and chief economists from international organizations.

216. **Results and impact**. The WIR25 achieved strong global reach, recording nearly 133,000 downloads within six months of release. In the first month following publication, 819 outlets covered 1,386 stories in 17 languages. Social media posts through UNCTAD and UN accounts reached 710,000 people, representing a 73 per cent increase compared with 2024. The WIR 2025 minisite was the most viewed UNCTAD minisite in 2025, attracting nearly 110,000 views. The WIR 2024 and WIR 2025 minisites ranked third and fourth among all UNCTAD webpages, underscoring the continued relevance and visibility of the report series.

217. In 2025, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution on investment for sustainable development (A/RES/80/127). The resolution reaffirmed UNCTAD's work in this area and "Takes note of the World Investment Report 2025: International Investment in the Digital Economy of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and invites the consideration of the proposals contained therein." Furthermore, the resolution requests UNCTAD "to inform the eight-first session on the implementation of the present resolution…through a dedicated section of the WIR, 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…"

218. During the fifteenth session of the Investment, Enterprise and Development Commission, regional groups and delegates discussed the theme of WIR25 and contributed to the debates on its key findings and policy recommendations. These discussions helped strengthen the link between UNCTAD analytical work and the intergovernmental process, reinforcing the role of the WIR as a platform for policy dialogue and consensus-building on international investment issues.

4. Macroeconomic and development policies

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

219. **Development context**. Since 2008, when the global financial crisis 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.

220. **Objectives and features**. Against this backdrop, the project aims to assist Barbados in combating COVID-19 pandemic particularly the associated economic shocks and overcoming 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.

221. 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 in improving 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.

222. **Outputs**. Implementation of the project started in 2021 and ended in 2025. After completing all planned activities in 2024, there were some unspent funds of the project. Following the consultation with the donor agency, UNCTAD, in collaboration with the Institute for Development of Economics and Finance (INDEF), organized an international seminar entitled Diversification Strategies in the Global South: Rethinking Development 70 Years After Bandung on 23–24 April 2025 in Bandung, Indonesia. About 70 participants joined the meeting. Speakers from UNCTAD, Indonesia, several other global South countries shared their views on the topics of new development pathway, trade, investment and industrial cooperation among the global South, role of critical minerals for sustainable development, and diversification strategies of SIDS.

223. **Results and impact**. The project has achieved well recognized results and impact. For the policy strategy report on economic diversification in Barbados, the Minister of Economic Affairs and Investment recognizes in a message that the report "will assist

Barbados in further building our sustained and robust economic growth through strategic policy formulation”. The workshops and seminars organized by the project attracted many high-level participants such as President of Uganda, Heads of United Nations entities, ministers, vice-ministers, ambassadors, etc., which greatly improved the impact of the project on the policymakers in the global South.

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*

224. **Development context**. The project, that ended in September 2025, addressed the widely recognized dual challenge for developing countries of advancing their development strategies while also responding to climate change adaptation and mitigation requirements as well as wider environmental crises.

225. Limitations to developing countries’ ability to strengthen their economic resilience and simultaneously implement structural economic change, required to successfully address environmental crises, were highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Since then, rising geo-economic tensions resulting in a largely volatile and uncertain international trade and financial environment have further underlined the vulnerability of developing countries to supply chain disruptions, high or rising transport and trade costs, as well as growing barriers to technology transfer and insufficient affordable external development and climate finance. Consequently, reduced fiscal spaces and potential exposure to debt distress are little conducive 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).

226. 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. 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.

227. **Objectives and features**. The project, funded by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Sub-Fund of the UN Peace and Development Trust Fund, aimed 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).

228. The project was organised in three consecutive phases: The first phase focused on south-south policy experience sharing through conducting research on China’s policy framework in strengthening economic resilience and promoting High Quality Development (HQD) since 2015 and through facilitating policy dialogue on this experience with participating beneficiary countries (regional conference). This reflects the effort of China in this regard. 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 provided 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.

229. The main second phase of the project centred on research and capacity-building to improve the understanding of binding constraints on green transformation processes in the

beneficiary countries and to 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 research inputs to support these discussions and promote South-South peer-learning and experience sharing at the regional level.

230. The final phase of the project was designed to build on earlier project outputs to facilitate leveraging regional policy synergies and furthering regional cooperation on green transformation agendas, including through the planned launch of an Asian Green Development Partnership Network (AGDPN) and the design of an e-course for policymakers from the beneficiary countries, hosted by UNCTAD, on challenges and policy solutions for green transformation strategies in their countries and region.

231. **Outputs**. During 2025, the project fully completed phase two of the project and partially completed phase three. The finalisation of phase two included the implementation of four national consultations, one each in the four project countries, that focused on integrated national policy strategies to promote sustainable transformation and industrialization at country levels and followed an earlier round of consultations to address binding constraints on green transformation in these countries.

232. The first of this second round of national consultations on integrated national policy strategies took place in Ankara, Türkiye, on 29-30 January 2025. A range of sectoral and thematic papers (on industrial development, financing green transformation, gender and equality, decarbonizing the power sector, solar and wind power transition and agriculture) were presented as well as an integrated policy strategy paper for green transformation in Türkiye. The meeting was attended by 105 participants (of which 43 were female) from the governmental and private sectors, international organizations, academia and civil society organizations (CSOs).

233. The second national consultation took place in Islamabad, Pakistan, on 27-28 February 2025. In addition to sectoral and thematic papers presented at the first national consultation, this meeting discussed further micro-sectoral studies relevant to the proposal for an integrated policy strategy for green transformation in Pakistan. The meeting was attended by 105 participants (of which 39 were female) from the federal and province governments, private sector representatives, as well as representatives from international organizations, academia and CSOs. Detailed discussions centred on the draft framework for an integrated policy strategy for green industrialization in Pakistan, based on sectoral and micro-sectoral studies. The project team was subsequently invited to an hour-long meeting with the National Coordinator to the Prime Minister, Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Government of Pakistan, and work and analyses originating with the project have since been circulated and discussed in several ministries, with the direct involvement of the project's implementing partner.

234. The 2025 national consultation meeting in Astana, Kazakhstan, was implemented in hybrid format and brought together 111 participants (of which 64 were female) from government, state-owned enterprises, the private sector, civil society, international organizations and academia. The meeting centred on a detailed discussion of recommendations for the roadmap and integrated policy strategy to achieve carbon neutrality and on macroeconomic policy scenarios for Kazakhstan as climate change intensifies.

235. The final national consultation meeting in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, was organized together with the Khazanah Research Institute. At their request, it was preceded, on 25 June 2025, by a technical workshop on macroeconomic modelling, to which UNCTAD, in collaboration with the University of Boston, also contributed a technical presentation and paper on climate scenarios for macroeconomic policy in Malaysia that, similar to the technical paper for Kazakhstan, examines policies and climate trends by simulating a macroeconomic model in which climate change is triggered by carbon emission and emissions are generated by economic activity. On this basis, different financing and taxation options for mitigation and adaptation are explored, as well as their macroeconomic impacts. The meeting was attended by 51 participants (of which 21 were female) from central government, state-owned enterprises, the private sector, civil society and international organizations. Discussions centred around a range of policy debates of relevance to the quite

advanced state of nationally adopted plans and measures to achieve green transformation and industrialization. This included how further to advance green industrial policy under fiscal constraints, the need (or otherwise) to prioritize national development goals over international frameworks, the role of WTO/FTA flexibilities in facilitating strategic green industrial policies as well as that of south-south cooperation in this regard.

236. Concerning the third phase of the project, a second and final regional meeting took place in Shanghai, China, on 9-10 July 2025 that was co-hosted by UNCTAD and the China Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation (CAITEC). This brought together 33 participants (of which 12 were female), including representatives of the four project countries, of four invited non-project countries (Indonesia, Nepal, Thailand and Sri Lanka) in the region, a representative from UN ESCAP, as well as a high-level team from CAITEC and Chinese academia. The meeting was dedicated to experts and local implementation partners from the four project countries to share their experiences with evolving green transformation policy agendas in their country and their work under this project. Invited officials from four non-project countries, in turn, provided insights from their national experiences in this area. The meeting also discussed draft Terms of References for an Asian Green Development Partnership Network (AGDPN) to facilitate informal exchanges on national policy strategies and regional cooperation on these.

237. In addition to the above activities, an e-course on *Acceleration Green Industrialisation in Asia: Policy Challenges and Solutions* was developed in cooperation with the University of Leeds. The course run for the first time, for 20 course participants from the beneficiary countries, from December 2025.

238. Finally, throughout 2025, over 30 project papers were finalized and published.

239. **Results and impact**. The project reached a large number of participants (742 in total, of which 314 were female), including high-level policymakers (ministerial, vice-ministerial, departmental directors), CEOs or high-level representatives of private companies or state-owned enterprises (SOEs), Heads of Think Tanks and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and academics/experts. Overall, the project galvanized national policy debates on green and resilient structural transformation in the beneficiary countries, facilitated inclusive participation by a range of societal sectors at national levels in these debates, and laid foundations for informal regional coordination and cooperation processes on green and resilient structural transformation, including beyond the beneficiary countries. High-level ministerial and vice-ministerial participation in three out of four beneficiary countries (Kazakhstan, Malaysia and Pakistan) ensured that the project's core messages – on learning from policy strategies of China for green low-carbon development, on binding constraints on green transformation, on integrated national policy strategies to address these constraints and on the role of regional coordination and cooperation – were effectively communicated to relevant decision makers. Participant feedback from eight national consultations and two regional project meetings was consistently very positive. Moreover, the substantive body of policy-oriented analyses, at national and sectoral levels, developed in close cooperation between local experts and UNCTAD, represents a lasting project output that will be helpful to inform future work in this area and region, through ongoing capacity building (the online course developed) and the integration of project-based efforts to strengthen regional policy coordination on green structural transformation through integration with similar efforts.

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

240. **Development context**. Venezuela has a long history of export dependence on few commodities, primarily oil but also a range of precious metals and natural liquidised gas. This history has heavily affected the economic trajectory and structure of the country, resulting most importantly in a stalled industrialisation process over almost four decades. Thus, employment shares in manufacturing sectors peaked in the mid-1980s, after which these sectors gradually released labour to low-value added service sectors, a defining characteristic of premature deindustrialisation. At the same time, Venezuela's already high reliance on extractive industries for its exports grew further, from around 75 per cent of its total exports in 1995 to almost 95 per cent since the mid-2010s.

241. While the country made considerable progress, since the early 2000s, to leverage its natural resource wealth for substantive improvements in reversing high levels of income inequality and strengthening its social infrastructure, continued high vulnerability to commodity price volatility and fluctuations undermined efforts to achieve longer-term structural transformation and economic diversification. In addition, the adoption of unilateral coercive measures by consecutive US administrations since 2014, eventually affecting not only individuals but the entire public sector, strongly limited space for day-to-day economic management. This, in conjunction with the impact felt of the COVID-19 pandemic, led to a series of economic reforms that, under these generally adverse conditions, included a renewed focus on export diversification and structural change with the active participation of the private sector.

242. **Objectives and features**. This project, funded by the Latin American Development Bank (CAF or Cooperación Andina de Fomento), has been designed to respond to this renewed urgency to facilitate export diversification and strengthen higher-value-added manufacturing production in Venezuela. Specifically, the objectives of the project are: (i) to increase exports with small export shares or add new products; (ii) to move into processing (and away from natural resources) and generate employment; (iii) to upgrade production in these areas and generate foreign exchange from these; and (iv) to help develop industries with strong linkages to the rest of the economy and strengthen national value chains.

243. To meet these objectives, the project employed a two-step approach. The first phase of the project, completed in 2024, employed product space analysis using trade data to determine specific products and product groups most suited to export diversification and technological upgrading. The second phase, finalised at the end of 2025, complemented this macroeconomic approach with a microeconomic focus on firm-level data (private domestic sectors and foreign direct investment) as well as geospatial data (nighttime luminosity and CO_2 emissions) to approximate the geographical distribution of economic activity in the country and identify geographical clusters of industrial production with the potential to support structural change by contributing to higher value-added activities and employment creation. This second phase also encompassed the development of detailed proposals for an industrial policy strategy, based on both macro- and microeconomic findings.

244. **Outputs**. The first phase of the project resulted in the identification of 205 products and 5 product groups as the most suitable for export diversification and industrial upgrading on the basis of a range of criteria (closeness to existing export structures, technological complexity and upgrading potential, new market opportunities, import substitution potential, or a combination of several such criteria). Core findings were presented at a workshop in Venezuela in December 2024 and the underlying first report validated by government representatives.

245. In 2025, research for the second phase of the project was completed despite delays in obtaining access to core firm-level data and limitations of data coverage. The second project report identified four geographical clusters of specialised industrial production in Venezuela with the potential to contribute to export diversification as well as technological upgrading and, ultimately, structural economic change. These geographical clusters or regional corridors of specialised industrial activities strongly overlap with the findings of the first project report in regard to recommended products and product groups for export diversification based on the analysis of macroeconomic trade and trade-related data. This has allowed to develop detailed proposals, at the national level as well as the level of individual clusters, for an industrial policy strategy to strengthen the potential of these sectoral clusters. In addition to proposals of concrete and sector-specific industrial policy tools, the report also provides a roadmap for implementation 2026–2029.

246. **Results and impact**. While this second project report has been shared with representatives of the CAF and the Venezuelan government, final validation meetings were postponed due to the complex political situation in the country. The project will therefore be extended until mid-2026 to allow time for this final process. Informal feedback so far has been very positive, and it is expected that the project findings and proposals will directly feed into government policies for the project objectives.

4.4. Turning the Tide: How V-20 countries can harness climate and development finance for an inclusive and sustainable future

247. **Development context**. Members of the Vulnerable Twenty (V20) grouping, now totalling 74 countries, are highly exposed to economic shocks stemming from their severe financial, climatic, and developmental vulnerabilities. In each of these vulnerabilities, the V-20 have little self-determination – they are not responsible for global climate degradation and can contribute little to changing its trajectory; they lack the domestic resources to finance adaptation to the changing climate challenges around them or to meet the developmental targets of the SDGs; and they find it difficult to attract finances on international capital markets and to pay the high interest rates such borrowing entails.

248. However, this does not mean they can do nothing, and indeed several V20 countries are at the forefront of mobilizing awareness about the climate change problem and seeking economic strategies to adapt and to help mitigate it. Many have adopted national industrial and financial policies and called for international support as well. Initiatives include active financial guidance and credit creation policies by their central and national banks; trade and industrial policies to promote the shift to greener production and consumption; national Climate Prosperity Plans to merge climate responses with long-term development goals; and the creation of new, group-wide institutions for long-term development, insurance and liquidity finance. Nonetheless, the countries are constrained by a lack of information about financial options and the complementary development policies to support national climate goals and initiatives, as well as the international action that is essential at the regional and global multilateral levels.

249. **Objectives and features**. This project aims to address this lack of information, by mapping financial and other resources currently available to V20 countries and clarifying their differing implications for country financial and debt profiles. Equally, it links this with the industrial, trade and other policies that are the essential complement to utilise and guide finance, when it is available. The approach includes conceptual, empirical and country case-studies, and the creation of peer-learning and experience-sharing events for dissemination. Research activities include an analysis of the availability and comparative costs of concessional finance and innovative instruments, including the use of Special Drawing Rights (SDRS) and public development banks; improving information about the risk of debt distress and options for sustainable debt management; clarifying the extent to which existing industrial, trade and institutional policy supports V-20 climate and development goals; and identifying feasible national and regional policies. Dissemination and consensus-building activities include national, regional and international events, building where possible on synergies with existing United Nations, academic or country initiatives and processes.

250. **Outputs**. The project began in mid-2025 and outputs are therefore still preliminary. Research activities completed during 2025 included a conceptual and empirical paper on access to the global financial safety net (GFSN) for the Climate Vulnerable Forum and V20 (CVF-V20) countries, and in progress are several papers on the financial landscape available to V20 countries and implications for industrial and trade policy for climate prosperity planning and the SDGs. This includes a three-country comparative study (South Africa, Tanzania and Ethiopia) to see how V20 members can benefit from triangular integration with fellow members and a stronger anchor economy; a parallel study is taking place in 2026 for Latin America. UNCTAD also began a case-study comparing country examples of policy space available to central banks in SIDS, focusing on the Pacific and the Caribbean. UNCTAD contributed to research and dissemination activities relating to the establishment of a new public development bank in Sri Lanka, one of the founding V20 country members. Dissemination activities included contribution to regional events with ESCAP, as part of broader Financing for Development debate, and participation in a side event on the role of public banks and development finance as part of the Seville Finance for Development events held on 1st July 2025.

251. **Results and impact**. The analytical studies and policy dialogues carried out under the project are expected to contribute to the consolidation of a shared vision about the needs and policy options available to support the world's most vulnerable developing economies, and to support the public institutions that serve them. Preliminary findings have already informed the *Trade and Development Report 2025* and other research and policy activities of

UNCTAD, and through 2026 the project should inform concrete policy actions in participating countries, in developing countries more generally, and in public banks and other essential development institutions that serve them.

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

252. **Development context**. The impacts of climate change are expected to be particularly severe in Latin America, with significant implications for the region's trade and development prospects. Shifting precipitation patterns, rising temperatures and increasing frequency of extreme weather events, including floods and droughts, are already affecting economic activity across the region. At the same time, the global push towards decarbonization is reshaping international trade patterns, creating both challenges and opportunities for Latin American economies. On the one hand, several fossil-fuel producing countries, such as Colombia, face increasing uncertainty as global demand for hydrocarbons is projected to decline over the medium to long term. On the other hand, the region possesses substantial endowments of minerals critical for low-carbon technologies as well as considerable renewable energy potential. However, even for countries rich in so-called "minerals of the future" or renewable energy resources, long-term prospects remain characterized by significant uncertainty and risks associated with technological change and evolving global value chains.

253. Latin American countries display diverse and often complementary comparative advantages. Some economies possess abundant reserves of critical minerals distributed across the region (for example Colombia), while others benefit from relatively strong manufacturing capacities (such as Brazil), significant renewable energy potential (such as Mexico), or strategic proximity to major trade routes (including Honduras and the Dominican Republic). If supported by appropriate policy frameworks and coordinated regional strategies, these assets could form the basis of a regional industrial ecosystem centred on low-carbon technologies and sustainable value chains.

254. The design and implementation of such a regional strategy nevertheless face several challenges, particularly in terms of political coordination and technical policy design. While many countries in the region have recently adopted ambitious green transition strategies and new international agreements signal growing commitment to sustainable trade and investment, stronger coordination and more decisive policy action will be required. Governments, together with their trade and investment partners, will need to translate these ambitions into concrete policies capable of capturing the significant opportunities associated with the green transition while managing its economic and social risks.

255. **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, seeks to address these challenges by providing analytical support and policy capacity-building to national and subnational authorities in beneficiary countries. The project aims to facilitate more coordinated and effective implementation of industrial and trade policies linked to the green transition. More specifically, the project seeks to strengthen the design of industrial policy and economic integration among selected Latin American economies, enhance policy coordination at the regional level, and contribute to structural transformation, economic recovery and reduced inequality in the region. Its activities are expected to generate positive spillovers across multiple sectors, including renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, carbon markets, electromobility and the bioeconomy.

256. To achieve these objectives, the project follows a sequential approach. It first aims to foster a shared regional vision for productive green transformation and to build consensus around the role of regional value chains (RVCs) as a key mechanism to support this transition. The subsequent phase focuses on strengthening national and regional capacities to design and implement industrial policies capable of supporting such value chains. This approach seeks to ensure coherence between strategic vision and policy implementation across participating countries, while promoting the alignment of trade, investment and industrial strategies in support of structural transformation. In this respect, the project aims not merely to increase intra-regional trade and investment flows, but to ensure that these flows contribute to a coordinated regional development strategy.

257. **Outputs**. Implementation of the project began in July 2024 with consultations involving the Governments of the beneficiary countries (Brazil, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Honduras and Mexico) and their respective missions in Geneva.

258. During 2025, significant progress was achieved in advancing both the analytical and policy-dialogue components of the project. A series of background studies has been prepared by international and regional experts examining key opportunities for strengthening green regional value chains among the participating economies. These studies cover, inter alia, critical minerals value chains, regional coordination for the transition of the energy matrix and renewable energy value chains, electric bus value chains, and policy coordination for green industrial development. Additional analytical work has focused on the use of input-output tables as a tool to support industrial policy design and to identify opportunities for green transformation, electromobility and digitalization.

259. The project has also facilitated policy dialogue and regional cooperation through targeted workshops. In May 2025, a regional workshop hosted in Mexico brought together policymakers, experts and international organizations to discuss the development of a common regional agenda for sustainable industrialization and green value chains in Latin America. This was followed by a national workshop in Brazil, which focused on strengthening regional integration as a tool to support green industrial development and economic resilience. In parallel, UNCTAD and ECLAC have been working jointly on the preparation of a regional policy document aimed at supporting governments in identifying opportunities for coordinated industrial policy and regional value chain development linked to the green transition.

260. **Results and impact**. The analytical studies and policy dialogues carried out under the project are expected to contribute to the consolidation of a shared regional vision and to inform concrete policy actions in participating countries.

4.6. Policy strategies research and sharing to promote sustainable development for the global South

261. **Development context**. In the last three decades, the international economic landscape has evolved to feature the economic rise of the Global South. As of 2024, developing regions together had accounted for approximately 40 per cent of the world's output, 44 per cent of international trade, and 58 per cent of foreign direct investment (FDI) inward flows. South-South merchandise trade represents over one-fourth of the world's total, yet growth performance varies among developing countries. Some countries have significantly improved their productive capacity and raised income levels, while others still struggle to achieve these goals. To reach their development objectives in a globalized world, it is crucial for Global South countries to adopt effective policy strategies that encompass both national development initiatives and integration efforts. Consequently, it is essential for these countries to enhance their knowledge and institutional capacities regarding policy formulation.

262. **Objectives and features**. This project aims to help countries in the global South devise better policy strategies through conducting research and analysis, transferring knowledge, sharing findings and experiences, and promoting peer learning among developing nations. Two main intended outcomes are included for this project:

1) Enhanced understanding of (i) the binding constraints to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the context of evolving national and international dynamics; and (ii) successful policy experiences and relevant recommendations for managing global and regional integration, as well as for national policy strategies.

2) Improved capacities of developing countries in formulating and implementing customized development strategies through policy advocacy, knowledge transfer and sharing, peer learning, international cooperation forums, and regional or national policy dialogue.

263. **Outputs and results**. Implementation of the project started in 2025. During the year, the project delivered three main outputs:

1) UNCTAD co-organized, with the Ministry of Commerce of China and an academic institution, a sub-forum session titled "Networked Multilateralism for Resilient Development in the Global South" during the 8th Hongqiao International Economic Forum in Shanghai, China. The sub-forum invited speakers from governments, international organizations, academia and the private sectors to exchange views on global economic outlook, emerging trends in multilateralism, strategies for building inclusive global economic governance, and how to build networked multilateralism that can assist global South to enhance economic resilience.

2) A research publication titled "Two decades of intra-BRICS trade: Trends, patterns and policies" was prepared, which examines the intra-BRICS trade among the 10 member states with analysis on the trade flow, patterns, tariff levels and policy cooperation as well as the policy recommendations on how to further tap the trade potential of the bloc.

3) UNCTAD participated in the deliberations in the G20 Development Working Group and Development Ministerial Meeting.

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

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

264. **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. 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.

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

266. **Outputs**. In 2025, the project achieved substantial progress in advancing its planned activities and delivering concrete results. The final national training workshop on STI park policies and practices was held in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia (22-24 April), with 37 participants including 18 women from government, academia, private sector and civil society. Interactive sessions led by international experts improved understanding of policy frameworks, operational management and inclusive innovation systems, with all participants receiving certificates and indicating 100 per cent satisfaction. UNCTAD then organized multi-stakeholder roadmap development workshops in Uzbekistan (Tashkent, 9–11 May) and Ghana (Accra, 12–14 August), engaging ministries, research institutions, STI park management and private sector stakeholders. Through plenary discussions, expert inputs and study tours, country-specific roadmaps were produced, covering governance, technology transfer, innovation clustering, financing mechanisms and inclusive entrepreneurship. The roadmaps define measurable objectives and clear frameworks for implementation and policy support. At both events, the Resident Coordinator's Offices (RCO) delivered remarks highlighting the project's alignment with UN support, with the Ghana RCO further publishing a news item on the workshop.

267. Building on earlier project activities, UNCTAD took further steps to promote knowledge exchange, policy learning and international cooperation among STI park experts and practitioners. In October 2025, a virtual pre-launch meeting of the STI Park Expert Network was held, bringing together 17 experts (including 3 women) in STI park development and innovation policy from Africa, Asia and Europe, as well as country focal points from the four beneficiary countries. The network provides a structured platform for peer learning, exchange of good practices and collaboration across regions, with particular attention to inclusive approaches to STI park development, including entrepreneurship and the participation of women and youth.

268. In November 2025, UNCTAD organized a side event during the Intersessional Panel of the twenty-ninth session of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) in Geneva, at which three technical notes were launched. Drawing on international experience, the technical notes synthesize best practices and offer evidence-based policy recommendations tailored to diverse national contexts. They highlight the transformative potential of STI parks when designed and managed effectively and demonstrate that clustering within STI parks offers a proven pathway to innovation-led growth. The three technical notes are: (a) Strengthening science, technology and innovation parks in national innovation systems of developing countries; (b) Strengthening science, technology and innovation parks for industrial development through clustering; and (c) Strengthening science, technology and innovation parks as catalysts for fostering entrepreneurship in developing countries.

269. Also in 2025, UNCTAD began developing a self-paced e-learning course on STI park policy and practice. Course materials were prepared in 2025, and a two-week pilot session was launched in February 2026 with 31 enrolled policymakers and practitioners from the project's beneficiary countries and non-beneficiary countries that have officially requested for participation in future technical assistance activities from UNCTAD in this field.

270. **Results and impact**. The project ended in April 2026 with tangible results achieved in beneficiary countries. First, the understanding of stakeholders in the four beneficiary countries regarding how to leverage STI parks as an instrument for national development has been further enhanced.

271. Second, in all the four beneficiary countries, actions have been taken to implement the national roadmaps developed with UNCTAD assistance. In Uzbekistan, the project has enabled the country to reconceptualize STI parks not merely as real estate facilities or administrative structures, but as active operational platforms that accelerate innovation, facilitate technology transfer and support startups in accessing domestic and international markets. A national model accelerator as recommended in the above-mentioned roadmap is being established and its operation will build upon the proven successful practices Uzbekistan learned from this project. In Mongolia, the project's work has directly informed the development of the country's first STI Park Law and a new mid-term STI policy framework, fostering a shared policy language across institutions and stronger alignment among ministries, universities, research organizations and industry. The Ulaanbaatar Science and Technology Park which was set up by the National University of Mongolia, after participating in the project, has recently commenced operation with the objective of strengthening knowledge-based innovation, public–science–industry collaboration, and technology-based entrepreneurship. In Mozambique, by applying the knowledge and skill acquired from the UNCTAD project, the only existing science and technology park has witnessed notable achievements after it was created in 2013. In Ghana, STI park has been included as a mechanism in the draft implementation plan for the country's updated national STI policy. Applying the learned knowledge from the project, the Ghana Innovation Hub has raised funds from a foreign partner and other companies to commence the construction of thematic hub, which is built on the concept that Ghana presented in the simulation exercise held during the training workshop at Shenzhen, China in September 2024. University of Ghana officially launched its Innovation Enclave and Makerspace in December 2025, with a dedicated staff under the Director of Research and Innovation, to coordinate all innovations in the university and nurture students with innovative minds.

272. Third, the establishment of the STI Park Expert Network and the launch of the e-learning course further created new platforms for knowledge exchange and capacity-building

across developing countries, which will enhance project sustainability and foster the replication of project activities in other developing countries. After learning what the project has done, several developing countries have submitted official requests to UNCTAD for technical assistance in this field. All participants in the pilot session of the e-learning course found the course a useful guide for their work and indicated that they planned to apply the knowledge acquired through the course, reflecting the practical relevance of the course content. For instance, the Institute of Science and Technology at Kumasi, Ghana, is implementing some of the knowledge its participants in the pilot session of the e-learning course have gained.

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

273. **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.

274. **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.

275. **Outputs**. In 2025, the secretariat supported the 28th Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) to review annually the follow-up of the implementation of Summit outcomes in April 2025. It also supported the Commission in 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). Building upon the global and regional multi-stakeholder open consultation on WSIS+20 held from October 2023 to December 2024 and five thematic focus group discussions from January to February 2025, as well as written inputs from various WSIS action line facilitators or cofacilitators, the secretariat prepared, with assistance from an external expert funded by financial contribution from the United Kingdom to the Trust Fund, a substantively comprehensive report (UNCTAD/TCS/DTL/INF/2025/2) reviewing the 20 years' implementation of the WSIS outcomes and presented it to the 28th CSTD as background information for the Commission's review of the WSIS+20 in line with the request in the ECOSOC resolution (E/RES/2023/3). This report, along with the outcome of the 28th CSTD's discussion on WSIS+20 which was contained in the 28th CSTD's resolution on ICT for Development, was submitted to the General Assembly as inputs to its preparatory process for the High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly to review the 20 years' implementation of WSIS outcomes held in December 2025. Close partnerships with DESA, the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), UNESCO, Internet Governance Forum, Office of the Secretary-General on Digital and Emerging Technologies (ODET), UNDP and regional commissions were established through joint consultations and the WSIS+20 review. The secretariat also participated in the High-Level WSIS+20 Forum organized by ITU and Switzerland in July 2025, including an exhibition of the WSIS+20 work by the CSTD. The

secretariat maintained close cooperation with DESA during the preparatory process for the General Assembly's high-level meeting on WSIS+20 review and provided inputs and comments to DESA on the zero-draft resolution on the outcome of the General Assembly's WSIS+20 review. The secretariat also provided assistance upon request from the G77 and China group in New York in the negotiations on the General Assembly's resolution on ICT for development during its 80th session (A/RES/80/118) and the General Assembly's resolution on the outcome of the WSIS+20 review adopted in December 2025 (A/RES/80/173). Steps were taken to ensure that women's voices were heard during the open consultations. A focused group discussion on the theme of WSIS impacts on Women was conducted in February 2025 and there are specific sections on gender in the report (UNCTAD/TCS/DTL/INF/2025/2) presented to the 28th CSTD in reviewing the 20 years' implementation of the WSIS outcomes in April 2025.

276. **Results and impact**. The General Assembly in its resolutions (A/RES/80/118 and A/RES/80/173), and the Economic and Social Council in its resolution (E/RES/2025/18), 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. Further, the General Assembly in its Resolution (A/RES/80/173) strengthens the role of CSTD in future reviews of the WSIS implementation and the follow-up to the Global Digital Compact by requesting WSIS-related networks including WSIS action line facilitators/co-facilitators and Partnership on ICT for Development to report to the CSTD in 2026 and 2027 on their roadmaps to implement WSIS and the Global Digital Compact, and requesting the Internet Governance Forum to report its work and outcome to the CSTD for consideration. The reaffirmation and strengthening 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. The support of the Trust Fund is indispensable. Close partnership was established with WSIS stakeholders, which include international organizations, such as DESA, ITU, UNESCO, Internet Governance Forum, ODET, UNDP and regional commissions, in the context of the WSIS annual review and the WSIS+20 review. Gender equality and women's empowerment have been integrated in the review process and results.

5.3. CropWatch Innovative Cooperation Programme

277. **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.

278. **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". The programme also contributes to SDG target 17.10 (trade) through the increase in export of crops resulting from enhanced agricultural production thanks to crop monitoring.

279. **Outputs**. As of December 2025, 23 countries across Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean had benefited from the training activities under this programme: Algeria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Lebanon, Liberia, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Syria, Thailand, Mauritius, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Dominican Republic, Ecuador,

Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica and Peru. At the Women and STI exhibition organized by the secretariat during the 28th annual session of the CSTD in April 2025, Nigeria exhibited the role of females in advancing the use of CropWatch system in Nigeria after participating in the project. The female-led team has strengthened institutional interest and built technical capacity to deploy and use the system. UNCTAD organized jointly with Aerospace Information Research Institute (AIR)/CAS a national training workshop on 18 and 19 September 2025 at Port Louis in Mauritius, which allowed experts in Mauritius to deepen their skills in using the CropWatch system, including the ability to capture data using the GVG App and to export data files on the CropWatch cloud.

280. In December 2025, a physical regional workshop for Latin American countries was held in Lima, Peru. Twenty-three participants (including 8 women) from 6 countries (Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica and Peru) attended the training and conducted field work on farms outside Lima. The regional workshop obtained a 100 per cent satisfaction rate from the participants. Participating countries confirmed benefits gained from the workshop, especially in geospatial analysis and the utilization of high-resolution imagery for crop classification. The incorporation of crop field size estimation and yield prediction was appreciated by the participants. Participants gained insights into interpreting output from the Crop Explorer tool and conducting geospatial investigations using GPS for vegetation cover selection and acreage calculation.

281. In July 2025, the West Africa Regional Centre of Excellence, hosted by the National Space Research and Development Agency of Nigeria, delivered the first CropWatch training for West African countries. The centre was established at the West Africa Regional Training Workshop that UNCTAD organized jointly with AIR/CAS at Abuja, Nigeria in July 2024 with a view to ensuring sustainability of the benefits of this project to these countries. AIR/CAS experts participated in the delivery of training courses.

282. **Results and impact**. To its user countries, CropWatch has helped with access to real-time and reliable information on crop conditions, guiding interventions such as targeted agricultural support, early warning systems, emergency response plans, monitoring and assessing the impacts of drought on crops, and assessing crop production and predicting yields. In Nigeria, CropWatch has provided timely and accurate information on crop conditions and agricultural trends. The country can independently produce quarterly bulletins through its customized national CropWatch cloud platform, which provides global and regional agroclimatic assessments and country-level crop conditions, informing policymaking at national, provincial and local level agriculture departments. In Mauritius, the additional training in 2025 enabled experts to acquire deeper knowledge and skills in using the CropWatch system, including capturing field data using the GVG App and exporting data files on the CropWatch cloud. Ghana signed MOUs with AIR/CAS for tailor-made further assistance. The Dominican Republic has proposed hosting a training workshop for Caribbean countries with the assistance from UNCTAD and AIR/CAS.

5.4. Young Female Scientist Programme and Young Scientist PHD Programme

283. **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 Okayama University (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 till January 2029.

284. **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 these programmes, a new mode of global collaborative and valuable research for the post-COVID-19 era.

285. **Outputs**. The UNCTAD–Okayama University Programmes continued to deliver results in 2025 across both its short-term and long-term tracks. In the short-term research track, the first cohorts from the Latin American and Caribbean region, including Guatemala, Ecuador and Peru, together with the United Republic of Tanzania, participated in and completed the programme. The 2025–2026 short-term cohort thus concluded its programme cycle. The short-term track is currently open and receiving applications for the next round.

286. In the long-term (PhD) track, the second cohort celebrated the completion of their programme. This cohort includes candidates from Madagascar and the Philippines. The PhD ceremony, marking the 2025 graduates, underscored the programme’s contribution to long-term research capacity-building and academic advancement. Participants from both tracks continued to work in diverse scientific fields, including medical and health sciences, agricultural sciences and engineering.

287. **Results and impact**. The programmes continued to generate benefits beyond the fellowship period itself. Participants strengthened their research skills under the guidance of researchers at Okayama University and expanded their access to international academic and research networks. The programmes also supported sustained academic engagement after completion of the research stay, including continued collaboration with supervisors and follow-up exchanges. These activities contributed to building human capital in science, technology and innovation in beneficiary countries, while also advancing women’s participation and inclusion in scientific research.

II. Theme B: Tackling vulnerabilities, building resilience

288. 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.

289. 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.

290. In this section, five products under the theme “Tackling vulnerabilities, building resilience” are reported on[54]. The reports highlight the main technical cooperation activities

[54] There was no activity in 2025 under product “UNCTAD Contribution to the Enhanced Integrated Framework”.

carried out in 2025 and key results to date. Technical cooperation projects that are pertinent to the aforementioned theme and not linked with any of the existing 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

Project number	*Short title*	*Period covered*	*Source of funds*
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
INT/9X/77J	Trust fund for least developed countries: Core Project	1997 -	Group of donors
INT0T5BP	Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action	2015 -	Portugal

291. **Development context**. The process of graduating from 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). Since the creation of the LDC category more than five decades ago (in 1971), only eight countries have graduated. 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. The CDP deferred a decision on Comoros and Myanmar, 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.

292. **Objectives and features**. Graduating from the LDC category is a milestone towards achieving structural economic 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 help (pre-)graduating countries identify their policy priorities to ensure they achieve graduation with momentum. It helps countries make progress towards achieving 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 lays 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.

Outputs

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

293. With funding support from the UN Development Account, UNCTAD is delivering a project to support structural economic progress towards and beyond graduation from least developed country status for pre-qualified African and Asian countries.

294. In May 2025, UNCTAD, in cooperation with the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the UN Country Team in Djibouti, delivered the National Validation Workshop of the Vulnerability Profile of Djibouti and the study on the *Analysis of the Impact of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) on the Industrial Development of Djibouti*. The workshop was opened by the Minister of Trade and Tourism of Djibouti and brought together 65 participants (17 female), including senior government officials, focal points, and experts from 13 ministries, as well as representatives from the private sector, academia, civil society, and Djibouti's development partners. Discussions examined the country's economic, social, and environmental vulnerabilities, with a view to diagnosing the current situation. The dialogue among stakeholders focused on possible solutions to the challenges identified through the implementation of programs, policies, and strategies. The key recommendations are summarized in the Roadmap for the Graduation with Momentum of Djibouti from the LDC category, which aims to guide the Djiboutian economy along a smooth, sustainable development path towards graduation and beyond.

295. Training workshops on industrial policy were organized and delivered by UNCTAD in three requesting target countries (Cambodia, Senegal and Zambia). Training was based on the training manual originally developed by the UNCTAD Virtual Institute and updated by the project during 2024/2025. The scope of the training was aligned to manual modules chosen by the target country ministries responsible for industrial policy.

296. In May 2025, UNCTAD delivered an Industrial Policy Training Workshop in Lusaka, Zambia, which trained 20 Zambian industrial policymakers (8 women) on the rationale, arguments, principles, instruments, and current challenges of industrial policy. It was organized by UNCTAD in collaboration with the Ministry of Industry and Commerce. African industrial policy scholars, including professors from the universities of Cape Town and Johannesburg, UNECA and UNIDO also participated in the training. Participants actively discussed case studies, practical applications, overcoming challenges and developing strategies for sustainable industrialization. They gained a better understanding of how to address industrial policy challenges in light of current international constraints and became better equipped to implement these policies.

297. UNCTAD organized and delivered a capacity-building activity in Phnom Penh, Cambodia in July 2025. Organized in collaboration with the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, it trained 24 Cambodian industrial policymakers (of which 8 were women) from the capital and from provinces on the rationale, arguments, principles, instruments, and current challenges of industrial policy. Participants also included UNIDO, ESCAP and industrial policy scholars. Participants actively discussed case studies, practical applications, overcoming challenges and developing strategies for sustainable industrialization. Participants gained a better understanding of how to address the challenges of industrial policy given current international constraints and became better equipped to implement these policies.

298. Moreover, UNCTAD, in partnership with UNIDO delivered a capacity-building training for Senegal in September 2025, organized in collaboration with the Ministry of the Economy, Planning and Cooperation. A total of 20 participants, of which 7 were female, actively participated in the training. On the margins of the workshop, UNCTAD provided advisory services on the country’s graduation with a focus on the development of Senegal’s Smooth Transition Strategy, which incorporated finding and recommendations of the Vulnerability Profile of Senegal (previously prepared by UNCTAD). UNCTAD also discussed with the national authorities how Senegal can make best use of LDC-specific international support measures (ISMs), pre- and post-graduation. The Senegalese

Government also requested UNCTAD to provide advisory services on the diagnostic of Senegal's industrial policy.

299. In addition, industrial policy profiles for all target countries (Cambodia, Senegal and Zambia, Djibouti, Comoros) were completed during 2025, and progress has been achieved on producing shorter, standardized policy briefs that will form part of the background material for the inter-regional workshop on industrial policy scheduled to take place in 2026.

300. Three target countries (Cambodia, Senegal and Zambia) requested industrial policy advisory services. During 2025, advisory services were successfully delivered to Zambia over a 3-month period.

Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action

301. In March 2025, UNCTAD (staff from the Division for Africa, Least Developed Countries and Special programmes and Statistics, Data and Digital Service) attended the 56th session of the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) in New York. The primary objectives were to discuss the guidelines on the Productive Capacities Index (PCI) and to engage with UNSC members. The UNSC meeting was critical to validate the PCI, which is intended to support LDCs recommended to graduate from the category. It is also designed to improve the quality of policy formulation and implementation capacities in structurally weak and vulnerable economies for which the UNSC's recognition and support were needed. Additionally, UNCTAD exchanged views with experts and senior UNDP officials on integrating the PCI into the work of UN Regional Representatives.

302. A report containing the PCI guidelines was submitted for the 56th session of the UN Statistical Commission, and consultations were conducted with key national and regional statistical offices. The Commission took note of the UNCTAD guidelines and invited the Bureau to explore how to integrate the PCI in the context of the Commission's work especially enhanced statistical support for developing economies.

303. Furthermore, several UNSC members, including representatives from Benin and France's National Statistical Office (NSO), expressed interest in joining the PCI's Statistical and Technical Advisory Group.

Other technical assistance 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 2025 – Are services the new path to structural transformation?*[55] which was publicly launched in February 2026.

305. A Dialogue on inequality, poverty and trade in Africa and the LDCs was held on 23 September 2025. It was organized by UNCTAD and the Geneva-based Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), in collaboration with the think tank (REPOA) of Tanzania, and the University of Warwick, United Kingdom. The dialogue aimed to identify actionable policy measures to tackle inequality and poverty at the national level. The event was attended by the Chair of the LDC Group at UNCTAD, the Chair of the Africa Group at UNCTAD, delegates of permanent missions based in Geneva, government officials from capitals, representatives of international organizations, and development experts.

306. At the request of the UN Committee for Development Policy (CDP), UNCTAD has undertaken National Productive Capacities Gap Assessments (NPCGAs) for LDCs that met graduation criteria at previous triennial reviews (Cambodia, Comoros, Djibouti, Senegal and Zambia). The NPCGAs articulate gaps, limitations and prospects for building the countries' respective productive capacities and provide country-specific recommendations to address these challenges. The assessments also identify challenges for graduating LDCs, together with policy actions at the national, regional and global levels, including through renewed and expanded development partnerships during and beyond graduation. Preliminary findings and

[55] See https://unctad.org/publication/least-developed-countries-report-2025.

outputs of the NPCGAs were shared and discussed with representatives of the beneficiary countries, and with the CDP membership and UNDESA at a meeting of the Subgroup of LDCs in December 2024.

307. UNCTAD actively participated in the 2025 plenary of the CDP, which took place in New York on 24-28 February 2025. UNCTAD delivered a presentation on “The LDC Category in Challenging Times”. The presentation was based on the institutional memory of UNCTAD on doing ahead-of-the-curve thinking and research on LDCs. The presentation focused on considerations on the future of the LDC category, including a new generation of international support measures.

308. UNCTAD also contributed to the Interagency Task Force on LDC Graduation meeting in July 2025. Organized by OHRLLS, it was an occasion for different international agencies and UN departments to share their plans of support to LDC graduation until the end of 2025 and in early 2026. The purpose was to strengthen the coherence of international support to graduation from the LDC category and create synergies among the activities of different entities.

309. In addition, UNCTAD participated in the “Regional Workshop on Smooth Transition from the LDC Category”, organized by DESA and the Ministry of Planning of Cambodia, held in Phnom Penh on 30 and 31 October 2025. The workshop aimed to provide a forum for graduating LDCs to learn from the experiences of recently graduated countries and countries in the process of graduating in the preparation and implementation of smooth transition strategies. In addition to Cambodia, other LDCs present included Bangladesh, Bhutan, Lao PDR, Nepal and Senegal. Other UN agencies presenting included DESA, ESCAP and OHRLLS. UNCTAD and the other UN agencies also participated in a panel discussion of lessons learned from their work on aligning smooth transition strategies with national planning processes, and the elements that contribute to their practical design and implementation.

310. Finally, UNCTAD contributed to the meeting for the monitoring of Senegal’s actions in preparation for graduation from the LDC category, organized by the CDP Secretariat (DESA) and held virtually on 19 November 2025. The Senegalese authorities acknowledged the contribution of UNCTAD to the preparation of the country’s Smooth Transition Strategy (STS) and thanked UNCTAD for its ongoing support.

311. **Results and impact**. The activities of the project *Supporting structural economic progress towards and beyond graduation from least developed country status* have not only helped improve the beneficiary countries’ understanding of the LDC graduation process but also increased their understanding of the role of industrial policy in strategies for graduation with momentum. In addition, the support provided facilitated experience sharing and knowledge transfer among beneficiary African countries on how the AfCFTA could be leveraged to strengthen their industrial sectors. The project activities exposed the limited availability of practical industrial policy know-how in the LDCs and led to a strong demand among the beneficiaries for further assistance in translating industrial policy into practice.

312. The draft report of the 56th Session of the UNSC acknowledged the discussions on the Productive Capacities Index (PCI) and its relevance for improving the quality of policy formulation and implementation in vulnerable developing economies, stating that the commission "Took note of the forthcoming UNCTAD Guidelines for measuring productive capacities, and invited the Bureau in this context to consider how to address the topic in discussions at the Commission, especially enhanced statistical support for developing economies." Moreover, the UN Committee for Development Policy recognizes the key role of productive capacity building in supporting countries efforts towards graduation with momentum. The Productive Capacities Index in this regard is a practical tool to help diagnose strengths and weaknesses in productive capacity development and identify areas for potential evidence-based policy responses.

313. The Dialogue on inequality, poverty and trade was devoted to substantive discussions on the interlinkages between inequality and poverty and the role that trade, as well as domestic economic and social policies, could play in combatting them. Against this background, the discussions at the Dialogue identified policy actions that governments in Africa and the LDCs should consider adopting to accelerate progress in addressing inequality

and poverty. The meeting also underscored the need for UNCTAD to provide support to Africa and the LDCs to enable them to operationalize the recommendations of the Dialogue, better exploit the potential of trade for inequality and poverty reduction, and make trade work for development. The need for UNCTAD to continue to provide support to the LDCs for smooth transition and graduation support was also underscored.

314. The demand for UNCTAD technical support continues to exceed the extrabudgetary resources allocated to the activities. The rising demand from Member States, United Nations system-wide partners and other stakeholders points to the need for further UNCTAD engagement in technical cooperation on LDC vulnerabilities and graduation issues. However, lack of adequate, stable, and reliable financing has limited the extent of the assistance provided. In this regard, member States called for the replenishment of the Trust Fund for LDCs in the agreed conclusions reached at the executive session of the Trade and Development Board on LDCs in February 2025. Furthermore, the Geneva Consensus has called for a strengthened focus of UNCTAD support to LDCs through the implementation of a Graduation Support Programme (para 80.71).

B2 DMFAS - Debt Management and Financial Analysis System

Table B2
DMFAS - Debt Management and Financial Analysis System

Project number	*Short title*	*Period covered*	*Source of funds*
DJI/0T/KAK	Renforcement des capacités de gestion de la dette publique du Djibouti : SYGADE 6	2022 -	World Bank
EQG/0T/IBI	SYGADE project Equatorial Guinea	2022 -	AfDB/ Equatorial Guinea
GAB/0T/9AT	Renforcement des capacités d'études de gestion de la dette	2017 -	Gabon
INT/0T/2AO	Strengthening the debt management capacity of developing countries	2002 -	Group of donors
INT/0T/HCB	Strengthening Public Debt Management in Selected Low and Middle-Income countries	2018 -	Switzerland
INT/0T/MBK	Supporting Debt Management and Transparency-Support to Public Debt Management in Pakistan	2024 -	Asian Developme nt Bank
IVC/0T/BCF	Projet de modernisation des outils informatiques et de renforcement des capacités de gestion de la dette SYGADE 6 (Côte d'Ivoire)	2013 -	Côte d'Ivoire
MAU/0T/LAI	Renforcement des capacités de gestion du système d'information de la dette	2022 -	World Bank
MAU/0T/MBC	Renforcement des capacités de gestion du système d'information de la dette en Mauritanie	2024 -	Mauritania
MOL/0T/EAF	DMFAS 6 implementation in Moldova	2015 -	Republic of Moldova
NIG/0T/JAG	Mise en œuvre du SYGADE 6 et renforcement des capacités de gestion de la dette au Niger	2023 -	African Developme nt Bank

Project number	*Short title*	*Period covered*	*Source of funds*
PRC/0T/AAQ	DMFAS project - Republic of Congo	2015 -	Republic of Congo
RAF/0T/NBA	Strengthening Public Debt Management Capacities of the Directorate of Debt & State	2025 -	African Developme nt Bank
SUD/0T/NBB	Strengthening Public Debt Management in South Sudan through the Debt Management and Financial Analysis System (DMFAS)	2024 -	African Developme nt Bank
UZB/0T/NBI	Supporting Debt Management and Transparency-Support to Public Debt Management in Uzbekistan	2024 -	Asian Developme nt Bank
ZAM/0T/MBM	Installing DMFAS 7 and strengthen debt management at the DMO MoF Zambia	2024 -	Zambia

315. **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.

316. 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 Assembly 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”.

317. The 4th International Conference on Financing for Development (FFD4) underscored enhanced transparency and data sharing as well as debt management capacity, in particular improving debt recording, forecasting, reporting, and risk analysis as part of the priorities for improving debt sustainability.

318. 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.

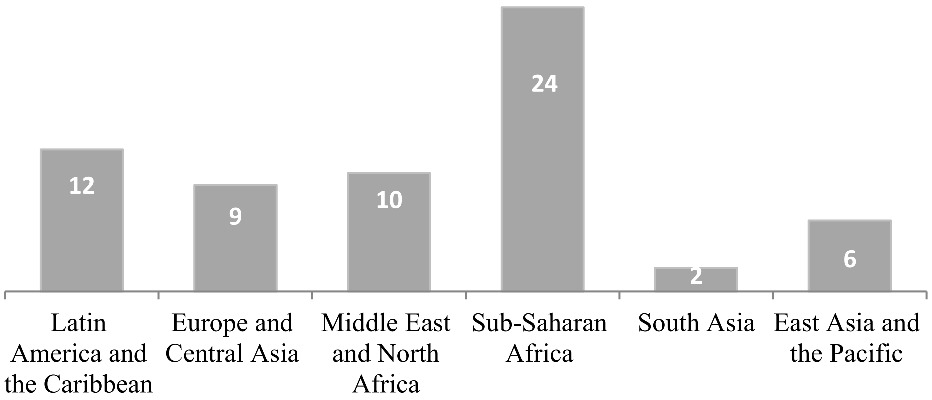
319. Despite the growing importance of effective debt management, many developing countries still struggle with the human capacity, gaps in legal and institutions frameworks, weakening the capacity of the debt management offices to manage national debt effectively. Fragmented debt data, incomplete records on contingent liabilities, subnational debt and state-owned enterprises’ debt limits the capacity of debt offices to effectively analyse risks and take informed borrowing decisions.

320. In this context, the new DMFAS strategic plan 2025–2028 has been developed to respond to these challenges, placing DMFAS 7 at the heart of DMFAS capacity-building support. This strategic plan focuses on strengthening debt data transparency through expanded debt data coverage and related capacity development in recording, processing, monitoring, reporting and analysing public debt – all areas of debt management which are foundational for effective debt management.

321. **Objectives and features.** The DMFAS Programme is a leading provider of technical cooperation and advisory services in the area of debt management. It offers a set of proven solutions to improve the capacity of beneficiary countries to manage public debt, handle the day-to-day management of public liabilities, produce reliable debt data and perform basic debt analysis for policymaking purposes.

322. **Outputs**. In 2025, the DMFAS Programme continued to provide effective support to the 63 countries actively using its software. (see figure 1).

Figure 1
Geographical distribution of active DMFAS users, 2025



323. The Programme delivered country-specific technical assistance and trained 643 debt officers, of which 33 per cent were women, from 22 countries through 84 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 30 active technical assistance projects and signed four new projects, including with one new beneficiary country.

324. DMFAS 7 was released in March 2025. In response to countries' needs, the priority was to distribute the new version, and support capacity development to ensure that comprehensive, accurate and timely information on public debt is available in support of reporting, policy decisions and risk management. During the year, DMFAS 7 was installed in three countries, and the Programme prepared the distribution in other countries, in particular in French speaking countries with the development of the system in French.

325. 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 2025, as part of the partnership with the Macroeconomic and Financial Management Institute of Eastern and Southern Africa (MEFMI), the Programme participated in several activities and co-organized a regional workshop on DMFAS 7. UNCTAD is also partnering with the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) in a joint project on sustainable debt financing strategies. It participated in 13 partner events including with the African Development Bank, ESCWA, the International Monetary Fund, MEFMI, and the World Bank.

326. In 2025, the DMFAS Programme, together with the Debt and Finance Analysis Unit, organized the 14th Debt Management Conference, which was attended by 467 participants, of which 34 per cent were women, from 107 countries, international organizations, academia and civil society. The 2025 conference on "Innovative and resilient debt management: managing risks and navigating crises" discussed pressing issues related to rising cost of sovereign debt which has led to a worsening of external debt sustainability. The conference explored innovative strategies for debt management, with a focus on building resilience, mitigating risks, and navigating the complexities of global crises.

327. **Results and impact**. 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: In 2025, ninety-five per cent of DMFAS client countries have developed comprehensive and reliable debt databases in respect of government and government-guaranteed external debt. Seventy-nine per cent of DMFAS user-countries whose debt management office is responsible for monitoring domestic debt were using DMFAS to manage their entire domestic debt portfolio.

(b) Enhanced debt management transparency and accountability:

- Improved debt statistics and debt analysis: 45 DMFAS user countries regularly produce statistical bulletins on debt and 32 DMFAS user countries regularly produce a debt portfolio analysis.
- Improved capacity for effective international debt reporting: In 2025, 91 per cent of DMFAS client countries with low or middle-income levels reported to the World Bank through the Debtor Reporting System. In addition, 76 per cent of DMFAS clients participating in the World Bank Quarterly External Debt Statistics database reported on a timely basis.

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

(d) Results-based management (RBM): The DMFAS Programme applies comprehensive RBM to its strategic planning and project implementation. In 2025, the Programme started its new four-year strategic plan, with defined objectives, results, measurable indicators and means of verification that will be used to monitor and evaluate progress during the implementation period between 2025 and 2028. 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.

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

Project number	*Short title*	*Period covered*	*Source of funds*
INT/9X/77J	Trust fund for least developed countries: Core Project	1997 -	Group of donors
INT0T4AY	Mainstreaming LDCs Countries in the Global Economy	2015 -	Group of donors
INT/0T/4AY2	Research Project on Cumulation	2024 -	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

328. **Development context**. Least developed countries (LDCs) receive preferential tariff treatment in many developed and developing country markets through schemes such as the Generalized System of Preferences, the European Union’s Everything but Arms initiative, the United States’ African Growth and Opportunity Act, and preferences under ACP–EU Partnership Agreements. These arrangements rely heavily on rules of origin. Despite these mechanisms, LDCs continue to face major barriers to effective market access.

329. UNCTAD offers policy advice, capacity-building and technical assistance to help developing countries meet rules-of-origin requirements and improve their use of available trade preferences. Since 2006, UNCTAD has supported WTO LDC members in implementing the 2005 Hong Kong Ministerial Declaration on duty-free, quota-free market access, which calls for simple and transparent rules of origin. UNCTAD also assists countries in applying the WTO Bali Ministerial Decision on preferential rules of origin for LDCs.

330. **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 to access different markets. 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. 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.

331. 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 preferences made available under DFQF and regional trade agreements.

Outputs

Building capacity among LDC Group Delegates on Rules of Origin

332. UNCTAD continues to closely partner 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 Centres of Excellence.

333. During the period under review, the LDC Trust Fund was used to carry out several activities geared towards enhancing the capacity of least developed countries to design and implement trade and development policies, and strengthening their ability to coordinate, negotiate, and advance common positions in multilateral processes. To this end, UNCTAD delivered *Executive Training Workshops on Negotiating and Drafting Rules of Origin (RoO)* for the LDC WTO Group. These were held from 31 March to 1 April and from 28 to 29 October 2025, at the European University Institute in Florence. The meetings were attended by Geneva-based negotiators, trade experts, and technical partners and were aimed at refining the LDC Group's position and negotiating text ahead of the 14th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC14). The meetings also reviewed progress made in previous consultations and technical meetings on Rules of Origin and examined current challenges and best practices arising at the multilateral and regional levels.

334. The events strengthened the Group's negotiating capacity ahead of the WTO Committee on Rules of Origin (CRO) sessions of 3-4 April and 5-6 November 2025 and MC14. National delegations from Cambodia, Zambia, Nepal, Burkina Faso, Togo, Senegal, Madagascar, Guinea, the Gambia and others presented findings and proposals to consolidate positions for MC14.

Research project on cumulation

335. In 2025, an in-depth research project 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 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.

336. 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 cumulation provisions.

337. At the November 2025 Session of the WTO Committee on Rules of Origin (CRO) UNCTAD presented the study titled "The Use of Cumulation by African Firms: Evidence, Insights and Policy Options" which was funded by the UK Government. The study provided evidence from Mauritius, Kenya, Mozambique, South Africa, and Ethiopia, combining legal and policy review, input–output analysis, questionnaires and firm-level interviews. Findings showcased successful cumulation cases but also highlighted persistent barriers, including high logistical costs, limited awareness of preferences and cumulation provisions, institutional weaknesses, and limited transparency of national regulations. The study was also presented in February 2026 at the TCRO (Technical committee on rules of origin at the World Customs Organization).

338. **Results and impact**. As a result of UNCTAD support, and in line with the Bridgetown Covenant and the Geneva Consensus, LDCs have enhanced their participation in relevant multilateral fora and multilateral trade negotiations, including within the WTO. LDC stakeholders based in Geneva are now better informed about the policy issues and challenges their countries face regarding rules of origin and have improved knowledge of the preference utilization database, which covers major preference-granting members, including Canada, Japan, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and the European Union, and improved understanding of the strategic issues shaping the MC14 WTO negotiations. Practical training and capacity-building activities sensitized delegates to relevant policy-oriented tools to support evidence-based policymaking, strengthened their negotiating skills, enhanced their use of evidence-based arguments and enabled WTO LDC Group delegates to form a more coherent Group position and participate more effectively in the Committee on Rules of Origin. The Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Djibouti, in her letter of 7 May 2025, expressed, on behalf of the World Trade Organization (WTO) LDC Group, their appreciation for the longstanding and strategic support provided by UNCTAD in strengthening the voice and negotiating capacity of LDC delegates at the WTO.

339. The findings of the United Kingdom-funded study on cumulation 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. Delegates appreciated the timeliness of the study and expressed appreciation for the firm evidence-base provided in the study.

B6 Breaking the chains of commodity dependence

Table B6
Breaking the chains of commodity dependence

Project number	*Short title*	*Period covered*	*Source of funds*
RAF/0T/OAH	Critical Energy Transition Minerals (CETM): Rapid Assessment of Value Addition and Diversification Capacity in Southern Africa	2025 -	Japan
ROA-2528 (F17)	Sustainable product export strategies and traceability for a green, sustainable and inclusive economy in Asia	2025 -	UN Development Account
INT/0T/9AX	Global Commodity Forum	2009 -	Group of donors

340. **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, diversification and value addition as well as strengthening domestic value chains 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.

341. **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.

342. 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.

343. **Outputs**. In 2025, UNCTAD implemented the project "Critical Energy Transition Minerals (CETM): Rapid Assessment of Value Addition and Diversification Capacity in Southern Africa" in partnership with the Governments of Namibia, Zambia and Madagascar, with financial support from the Government of Japan. As part of this initiative, UNCTAD conducted rapid assessment studies combining economic complexity and product space methodologies with extensive stakeholder consultations, industry interviews and national validation workshops. In Namibia, consultations and workshops were held in Windhoek in May and July 2025, while in Zambia stakeholder engagements took place in Lusaka between May and September 2025. In Madagascar, stakeholder consultations and policy engagement workshops were organized in Antananarivo between January and February 2026. These activities enabled the identification and validation of diversification opportunities within and beyond the critical minerals value chains, grounded in country-specific productive capacities and institutional contexts.

344. The rapid assessment studies identify a broad portfolio of diversification opportunities across the three countries, highlighting the role of critical energy transition minerals as entry points for structural transformation while emphasizing the importance of complementary sectors. In Namibia, the analysis identifies 353 products across 23 sectors, including 60 directly linked to CETM value chains, with a weighted export opportunity of approximately US$811 million and strong potential in chemicals, machinery and metal products. In Zambia, 412 products across 25 sectors were identified, including 73 CETM-related opportunities, with a weighted export potential of about US$1.4 billion, particularly in copper-based products, chemicals and industrial manufacturing. The Madagascar assessment similarly points to diversification opportunities that build on mining, agroprocessing and light manufacturing capabilities, highlighting the need to leverage both mineral and non-mineral sectors to support long-term upgrading. Across all countries, the methodology integrates quantitative analysis with stakeholder validation, ensuring that identified products are technically feasible and aligned with market demand and domestic capabilities.

345. The studies further demonstrate the significant economic and employment potential associated with a targeted subset of validated products. In Namibia, priority products could generate approximately 26,460 jobs with an estimated investment requirement of US$2.13 billion, while in Zambia, validated opportunities could create around 115,000 jobs with

investments of approximately US$1.21 billion. These opportunities are concentrated in sectors such as iron and steel, machinery, electrical equipment and chemicals, which offer strong linkages to the CETM value chains and high employment intensity. In Madagascar, the analysis similarly emphasizes the role of selected priority products in strengthening domestic productive capacities, supporting job creation and facilitating gradual industrial upgrading. Across countries, the findings highlight that diversification pathways are both economically significant and labour-intensive, providing a basis for mobilizing investment and fostering inclusive growth.

346. The results of the country studies and the broader project were disseminated through policy engagement workshops and international events, including sessions in Geneva and national-level workshops organized in collaboration with government institutions and development partners. These events brought together policymakers, industry representatives, development partners and academia to discuss policy implications, investment priorities and implementation pathways. They also served to showcase UNCTAD's analytical work on economic complexity and its application to critical minerals, highlighting how data-driven approaches can support countries in identifying diversification opportunities, strengthening value addition and enhancing participation in regional and global value chains. Follow-up discussions with national authorities have focused on scaling up the methodology, integrating findings into national development strategies and exploring opportunities for replication in other countries.

347. In March 2025, UNCTAD started implementing the project "*Sustainable coffee export strategies and traceability for a green, sustainable, and inclusive economy in Asia*". The project, funded by the United Nations Development Account and with planned activities in Lao PDR, Thailand and Vietnam, aims to improve the capacity of public and private stakeholders to define gender-sensitive policy options to support the development of sustainable arabica coffee value chains and the adaptation to deforestation free regulations, as well as to strengthen the capacity of those stakeholders to implement priority policies to support inclusive and sustainable trade in the targeted value chains.

348. During 2025, UNCTAD engaged with the authorities of the three countries in order to obtain project validation and set up the stage for implementation. UNCTAD also carried out background research on this value chain in the three countries, and other preparatory work. During the period, both Thailand and Lao PDR approved the project, while formal project approval from Viet Nam was granted in April 2026.

349. UNCTAD, with the support of its partners, held the 2025 Global Commodities Forum on 22 October 2025 in Geneva, in the framework of the sixteenth session of UNCTAD. The Forum, convened under the theme "Critical Energy Transition Minerals and Sustainable Development", brought together representatives from governments, regional organizations, industry and academia to examine how developing countries can harness critical minerals for structural transformation, economic diversification and resilience. The Forum featured two high-level panel discussions addressing: (i) harnessing critical energy transition minerals for diversification and global supply chain resilience; and (ii) advancing the principles of benefit-sharing, value addition and economic diversification. Discussions highlighted country experiences, including policies to promote local processing, industrialization strategies, and regional cooperation initiatives such as the African Continental Free Trade Area. Experts also addressed key challenges related to governance, financing, supply chain disruptions and policy coherence, while emphasizing the importance of transparency, international collaboration and capacity-building. The Forum reaffirmed its role as a multi-stakeholder platform for shaping international policy debates on commodities and supporting developing countries in leveraging critical minerals for sustainable development.

350. **Results and impact.** The successful implementation of the rapid assessment studies in Namibia, Zambia and Madagascar served as a key demonstration of the practical applicability and scalability of UNCTAD's methodology on economic complexity and product space analysis. These country experiences highlighted how data-driven approaches, combined with stakeholder engagement and validation workshops, can effectively identify actionable opportunities for value addition and diversification within and beyond critical energy transition minerals value chains. By translating analytical insights into concrete policy recommendations and investment pathways, the project reinforced the relevance of this

approach for supporting structural transformation in commodity-dependent developing countries and helped generate interest among national authorities and development partners for further replication and scale-up in other contexts.

B9 Sustainable and resilient transport and logistics services

Table B9
Sustainable and resilient transport and logistics services

Project number	*Short title*	*Period covered*	*Source of funds*
INT/9X/31Y	Introduction of multimodal transport and microcomputer software programmes	1993 -	Group of donors
INT/0T/MAH	Global Supply Chain Forum: Transport, logistics and trade facilitation for trade-driven development	2023 -	Group of donors
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

351. **Development context**. The transport sector, including maritime transport, continued to face growing complexity and persistent uncertainty in 2024 and 2025, 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 disruptions to supply chains and their underlying transport networks and logistics. Disruptions at critical maritime chokepoints, such as the Red Sea, the Suez Canal – which saw around 70 per cent reduced traffic in 2024, 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, with trade policy shifts in 2025, 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.

352. As highlighted in UNCTAD’s Review of Maritime Transport 2025,[56] in 2024, global maritime trade experienced a 2.2 per cent growth. At the same time, average distances travelled per ton of cargo continued to expand in 2024, part of a trend that began about two decades ago and that has been exacerbated by vessel rerouting, particularly in response to the disruption in the Red Sea. Total estimated ton-miles increased by 6.1 per cent in 2024 over 2023, close to three times the increase in the volume of maritime trade, driving up both costs and emissions from international shipping.

353. The repercussions of persistent uncertainty and increasing 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.

[56] https://unctad.org/publication/review-maritime-transport-2025.

354. 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.

355. **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, adapt and recover from disruptions, drive sustainable and inclusive economic growth, and improve global and regional trade efficiency.

356. In 2025, 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).

357. 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 2025*[57] (RMT) made a comprehensive assessment of international maritime trade, developments in the world shipping fleet and maritime business, freight rates and transport costs, port performance and trade facilitation, as well as evolving legal and regulatory frameworks. The report also examined the implications of heightened geopolitical tensions, supply- and demand-side dynamics, and continued disruptions affecting major maritime routes. In particular, it analysed the widespread rerouting of vessels around the Cape of Good Hope and its implications for shipping schedules, freight rates, transport costs and carbon emissions. These developments have contributed to longer transit times, increased operational costs and greater market volatility, with disproportionate impacts on developing economies and vulnerable trading nations. The report further assessed policy and regulatory developments shaping the maritime sector, including measures related to maritime decarbonization, environmental performance, seafarer rights and entry into force of the Hong Kong International Convention for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships. Insights from RMT 2025 informed targeted advisory services delivered during the year, supporting member States and partner institutions in assessing the effects of ongoing disruptions, strengthening supply-chain resilience and advancing the transition towards more sustainable and resilient freight transport and logistics systems. UNCTAD also increased the frequency of updating its Liner Shipping Connectivity Index (LSCI), which measures a country's integration into global liner shipping networks, from quarterly to monthly updates. This enhancement improves the timeliness and granularity of maritime connectivity data, enabling countries to better monitor developments in shipping networks and assess the impact of disruptions on trade and transport systems.[58]

358. Where appropriate, the technical assistance provided draws on synergies and cooperation with various partners, including United Nations entities such as the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNECLAC), the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA), 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 Commission for Europe (UNECE), the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), the United Nations Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries, and Small Island Developing States (UNOHRLLS), the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL). In addition, UNCTAD

[57] https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/rmt2025_en.pdf.

[58] https://unctadstat.unctad.org/datacentre/reportInfo/US.LSCI; https://unctadstat.unctad.org/datacentre/dataviewer/US.LSCI.

collaborates with United Nations country teams and Resident Coordinator Offices, as well as regional organizations, and port and industry associations such as the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) and Federation of International Freight Forwarding Associations (FIATA), multilateral and development banks, including the African Development Bank, intergovernmental organisations such as the International Transport Forum (ITF) at the OECD, as well as multi-stakeholder organizations and programmes such as SLOCAT.[59] By leveraging these partnerships, UNCTAD provides comprehensive and effective technical assistance in support of resilience building and sustainable development in 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.

359. **Outputs**. A key milestone for 2025 was the organisation under the auspices of the sixteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development [60] (UNCTAD16), of a ministerial roundtable titled "*Towards resilient, sustainable and inclusive supply chains and trade logistics"*[61], which brought together ministers and other prominent players from the industry to address key challenges and potential solutions and opportunities, and identify policy priorities for enhancing supply chain resilience and sustainability in developing countries. The outcomes of the round table will inform discussions at the second UNCTAD Global Supply Chain Forum, to be held in Saudi Arabia in November 2026, in collaboration with the Saudi Ports Authority, MAWANI.[62] The organization of the UNCTAD Global Supply Chain Forum was expressly highlighted as part of UNCTAD's mandate in the Geneva Consensus, the UNCTAD16 outcome document, attesting to the success of the inaugural Global Supply Chain Forum, held in 2024, in collaboration with the Government of Barbados,[63] as well as the importance member States attach to the establishment of a platform for continued discussion of supply chain related issues.

360. As part of its work on sustainable and resilient freight transport and finance, UNCTAD continued updating the Sustainable Freight Transport (SFT) Index.[64] First launched in 2024, the Index provides an internationally comparable measure of countries' performance across the three pillars of sustainable development - economic, social and environmental. During 2025, work focused on further refining the methodology, updating the underlying dataset and expanding coverage. The Index currently covers approximately 160 economies, with a comprehensive revised edition scheduled for publication in 2026. In addition, UNCTAD published, in four languages, the SFT Assessment for Angola, which presents the main findings of the SFT Assessment conducted in Angola under the UNCTAD SFT Framework. It analyses the performance of Angola's freight transport system, identifying key challenges and structural obstacles affecting the sustainability and efficiency of the sector, and examining their underlying causes. Particular attention is given to the role of freight transport and logistics in supporting agribusiness and value chains, as well as the development of transport corridors and their contribution to improving connectivity, trade facilitation and sustainable economic development in Angola.[65] In parallel, UNCTAD is developing online training modules on sustainable and resilient transport systems and finance, which will be made available in 2026.

361. In the area of the sustainable smart ports (SSP), UNCTAD completed the implementation of the UNDA project entitled "Sustainable Smart Ports for African countries,

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59 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/.

60 https://unctad.org/unctad16.

61 https://unctad.org/unctad16/ministerial-roundtable-towards-resilient-sustainable-and-inclusive-supply-chains.

62 https://unctad.org/news/global-supply-chains-under-strain-ministers-call-just-and-resilient-transitions.

63 https://unctad.org/conference/global-supply-chain-forum-2024.

64 https://sft-framework.unctad.org/about-sft-index.

65 https://unctad.org/publication/angola-sustainable-freight-transport-assessment.

including Small Island Developing States, to ‘recover better’ from COVID-19”[66] (2022–2025). The project supported African ports - Port of Tema in Ghana, Port of Tanger Med in Morocco and Port Louis in Mauritius - in integrating renewable energy and low carbon energy solutions and green and smart technologies through SSP assessments, policy recommendations, tailored capacity-building and experience-sharing activities. The project contributed to the transformation of African ports by promoting the transition to renewable energy, enhancing energy efficiency and encouraging the adoption of green and smart technologies. It also aligns with the African Union’s Agenda 2063 by advancing sustainable growth, regional integration and climate resilience.

362. For Mauritius (Port Louis)**,** UNCTAD and the Mauritius Ports Authority (MPA) organized back-to-back national validation and capacity-building workshops from 27 to 30 May 2025 in Port Louis to support the implementation of selected priority recommendations of the SSP assessment. The national validation workshop, held on 27 May 2025, brought together 29 participants (20 men and 9 women) from 17 organizations, including representatives from port authorities, government ministries, energy agencies, shipping lines, private sector operators and academic institutions. During the workshop, national stakeholders reviewed and endorsed the recommendations and priority actions emerging from the Port Louis SSP assessment. These included scaling up solar photovoltaic installations, advancing the electrification of port equipment and exploring onshore power supply (OPS) solutions to support more sustainable port operations and framing next steps for coordinated follow-up and delivery.[67] A three-day capacity-building workshop followed on 28-30 May 2025, with 40 participants (33 men and 7 women) from 15 organizations. The training focused on port equipment electrification, including planning, implementation and financing considerations, in line with priority actions identified in the SSP assessment. Best practices were shared by the ports of Singapore and Valencia and APM terminals.

363. For Morocco **(**Port of Tanger Med), back-to-back validation and capacity-building workshops were held from 25 to 27 November 2025 in Tangier. The national validation workshop brought together 33 participants (17 women and 16 men) from 16 organizations, including government entities, the Tanger Med Port Authority (TMPA), terminal operators and other entities across the Tanger Med Group ecosystem. Participants validated the SSP assessment findings and key recommendations for advancing SSP development at Tanger Med. Following the validation, a capacity-building workshop was held on 25-27 November 2025, with 45 participants (16 women and 29 men) from 15 organizations. Participants were drawn primarily from TMPA and Tanger Med Group entities, the private sector and government representatives. The workshop focused on scaling up renewable energy, developing and standardizing key performance indicators (KPIs), and establishing a stakeholder coordination task force across terminals. International experience was shared by the Port of Antwerp-Bruges, the Busan Port Authority, and the Port of Amsterdam.[68]

364. For Ghana (Tema Port), a validation meeting and capacity-building workshop were conducted in Tema from 10 to 12 December 2025. Ghana’s validation meeting was held in Tema on 10 December 2025, with 68 participants (62 men and 6 women) from 17 organizations, including the Ghana Ports and Harbours Authority (GPHA), relevant ministries, energy providers, academia and private sector actors. Participants formally endorsed the SSP assessment and main outcomes.[69] The capacity-building workshop ran from 10 to 12 December 2025, involving 65 participants (58 men and 7 women). It addressed regulatory planning and institutional readiness to implement key recommendations, including scaling solar energy, ensuring grid readiness, electrifying port equipment, developing onshore power supply (OPS), planning for future fuel pathways and implementing energy management systems (including ISO 50001). Case studies from Tanger

[66] https://unctad.org/project/sustainable-smart-ports-african-countries-including-small-island-developing-states-recover.

[67] http://oracleuat.mauport.com/sites/default/files/public/communique.ssp.28.05.25.pdf.

[68] https://unctad.org/meeting/workshop-validate-sustainable-smart-port-ssp-assessment-report-tanger-med-morocco and https://unctad.org/project/sustainable-smart-ports-african-countries-including-small-island-developing-states-recover.

[69] https://unctad.org/meeting/workshop-validate-sustainable-smart-port-ssp-assessment-report-port-tema-ghana.

Med and Port Louis illustrated practical pathways for renewable energy integration and energy efficiency at the port level.[70]

365. As part of its work on *sustainable and resilient transport and logistics and food security*, UNCTAD continued implementation of the UNDA project on “Harnessing Trade Policy and Transport and Logistics to Build Sustainable and Resilient Food Supply Chains in the Caribbean and the Arab region”[71] (2024-2027). In 2025, work under Phase 1 included two regional assessments (Caribbean and Arab region) and four national assessments (Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, Lebanon and Morocco). These examined food trade and food transport/logistics systems, identified challenges, opportunities, and capacity gaps, and set out context-specific recommendations to guide priority capacity-building areas in 2026–2027. A national validation workshop co-organized with the Ministry of Industry and Trade was held in Rabat, Morocco on 20 November 2025 to present and validate the national assessment on trade policies and transport/logistics systems for food supply chains. Participants from relevant ministries and public institutions reviewed UNCTAD’s two-pillar assessment (trade policy; transport and logistics), validated recommendations, and discussed next steps to strengthen sustainable and resilient transport and logistics for food-supply-chain resilience.[72] Stakeholders identified priority areas for capacity-building in 2026, including governance and coordination, cold-chain reliability and eco-driving, professional skills development, port operation, intraregional shipping, multimodal corridor performance, digitalization, and traceability. A similar validation approach will be carried out in 2026 for Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, and Lebanon to present and validate national assessments and agree on transport- and logistics-focused capacity-building priorities under the project’s Phase 2.

366. As a follow-up to the capacity-building activities on public-private partnerships (PPPs) conducted in Zambia in 2024 under the UNDA project “Towards Integrated National Financing Frameworks (INFF)”[73], UNCTAD organized an online training workshop in March 2025 in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance and National Planning of Zambia (MFNP).[74] The training responded to a request from the Government of Zambia and the PPP Council of Ministers for continued technical support. The workshop brought together over 150 participants from the PPP Unit of the MFNP and other relevant government contracting authorities for five sessions, with approximately 30 participants per session, nearly half of whom were women. The workshop aimed to strengthen institutional capacity to structure and implement sustainable PPPs projects, with a focus on financial modelling for PPPs project preparation and evaluation. It also explored the potential benefits of establishing a Project Preparation Facility (PPF) to support the development of bankable PPP projects in Zambia.

367. 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 related UNCTAD mandate and longstanding work on climate change adaptation, resilience-building and disaster risk reduction (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. To this end, UNCTAD continued its active participation in the work of the UNECE Group of Experts on Assessment of Climate Change Impacts and Adaptation for Inland Transportation, and contributed a substantive chapter to the final report of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on “Policies and legislation for acting on adaptation of climate change in transport”,

[70] https://unctad.org/meeting/capacity-building-workshop-assessment-action-strengthening-energy-transition-pathway-port

[71] https://unctad.org/project/sustainable-and-resilient-food-supply-chains

[72] https://unctad.org/meeting/workshop-present-and-validate-national-assessment-trade-policies-and-transport-logistics

[73] https://unctad.org/meeting/capacity-building-workshops-public-private-partnerships-zambia

[74] https://unctad.org/meeting/online-capacity-building-course-introduction-financial-modelling-ppp-projects-government

focusing on the important role of policies and legislation in reducing vulnerability and, ultimately, climate risk for critical transport infrastructure assets[75]. The contribution to the *UNCTAD SDG Pulse* annual statistics publication report 2025[76] underlined the escalating risks faced by ports and coastal infrastructure related to climate and weather extremes, including sea level rise, extreme winds and waves, extreme heat, heavy precipitation and flash floods. Related issues were also highlighted in a substantive contribution to the United Nations Secretary-General report on challenges related to sea level rise and on ways and approaches to address this issue, pursuant to General Assembly decision 78/558. In addition, two side events – one on *Climate-resilient ports for sustainable trade, tourism and disaster response and recovery* and the other on *Sustainable and climate-resilient ports for food security* - were organised under the auspices of the 5th UNCTAD Ocean Forum[77] and the 3rd United Nations Ocean Conference in Nice France,[78] respectively. The events highlighted the pressing need for the incorporation of climate adaptation considerations in policy and legal frameworks and informed participants of technical guidance and methodological tools available for the climate proofing of critical coastal infrastructure.

368. Advice and assistance as part of intergovernmental work and multistakeholder collaboration on policy and legal issues affecting transport and trade included participation in the 112th session of the IMO Legal Committee and the ILO fifth meeting of the Special Tripartite Committee (STC) established under the Maritime Labour Convention. Key developments in these fora are reflected in Chapter 5 of the *Review of Maritime Transport 2025*[79], which informed, among others, on the proposed amendments of Annex VI of MARPOL for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in shipping (the draft Net-Zero Framework), amendments of the ILO's Maritime Labour Convention to strengthen seafarer rights, as well as other developments relating to automation, ship recycling and fraudulent ship registration and registries. UNCTAD also continued its active participation in work under the auspices of UNCITRAL towards the development of a Convention on Negotiable Cargo Documents. To this end, UNCTAD submitted a written contribution for consideration by the UNCITRAL Commission at its session in July 2025,[80] and participated as an invited speaker at a related UNCITRAL Conference,[81] organized by UNCITRAL, in partnership with the ITC, UN/CEFACT and ESCAP, in May 2025, with an intervention entitled "*Implications of the draft Convention on Negotiable Cargo Documents for future Multimodal Transport: Potential practical and legal challenges*". Furthermore, UNCTAD provided advisory services in response to a range of requests, including from global and national industry associations on the formulation of Service Standards for Shipping, as well as on the 1974 UNCTAD Code of Conduct for Liner Conferences. 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, including as part of side events at the UNFCCC COP 30[82] and at the United Nations Oceans Conference[83] co-organized by UNCTAD; as well as an *E-training course on Emerging issues at the interplay between trade and sustainable development*, jointly organized and serviced by two UNCTAD Divisions (DITC and DTL), in collaboration with partner organizations.[84]

[75] Final report in press for publication. A draft version of the chapter is available at https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2025-06/ECE-TRANS-WP5-GE3-2025-12e.pdf.

[76] https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/stat2025d2_en.pdf.

[77] https://unctad.org/meeting/5th-united-nations-ocean-forum-trade-related-aspects-sustainable-development-goal-14.

[78] https://unctad.org/meeting/la-baleine-event-unoc3-sustainable-and-climate-resilient-ports-food-security.

[79] https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/rmt2025ch5_en.pdf.

[80] Available at https://docs.un.org/en/A/CN.9/1214/Add.1.

[81] https://uncitral.un.org/en/ncdconference2025.

[82] https://unctad.org/meeting/cop30-side-event-ocean-climate-biodiversity-nexus-leveraging-synergies-across-frameworks ; https://unctad.org/meeting/cop30-side-event-charting-course-energy-transition-global-shipping.

[83] https://unctad.org/meeting/unoc3-side-event-un-oceans-mechanism-to-mobilise-multilateral-ocean-action.

[84] https://unctad.org/meeting/e-training-course-emerging-issues-interplay-between-trade-and-sustainable-development.

369. Dissemination of UNCTAD work on policy and legal issues through contributions to international meetings and Conferences also included participation in the International Transport Forum (ITF/OECD) Working Group on Transport Network Resilience to Critical Events[85], the 28th and 29th sessions of UNECE's Group of Experts on Assessment of Climate Change Impacts and Adaptation for Inland Transport[86], and the annual ITF consultations with international organisations[87], as well as the 11th International Conference of Maritime Law[88], in Piraeus, Greece. A keynote presentation on issues related to the critical importance of effective action on port adaptation was delivered at the International Association of Maritime Economists (IAME) Annual Conference in Bergen, Norway.[89] Furthermore, UNCTAD contributed presentations to the 2nd International Conference on Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience[90], organised by the Institute of Mechanical Engineers in London; the Latin America Regional Workshop on Building Resilience of Transportation Infrastructure,[91] organised by the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI); and to the Think Resilience Dialogue, organised by UNDRR and Co-Chairs of the Group of Friends for Disaster Risk Reduction[92] in preparation for the Third UN Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries. In addition, UNCTAD organised a number of seminars, including on key insights from the Review of Maritime Transport at the University of Malta and the World Maritime University.

370. **Results and impact**. 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 in other fora, including discussions under the auspices of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), in particular the implementation plan for the United Nations Decade of Sustainable Transport (2026–2035), launched in December 2025, as well as intergovernmental deliberations and processes at the IMO, the ILO and UNCITRAL, contributing to global policymaking on transport and logistics, including maritime transport, in support of sustainable and resilient trade and development.

371. One of the key outcomes of the UNCTAD16 Conference was a series of ministerial declarations, by the SIDS, LLDCs, LDCs and the G77 and China, respectively,[93] calling for further technical assistance from UNCTAD, particularly in developing resilient, sustainable and inclusive transport and logistics systems, facilitating trade, supporting export diversification, and addressing structural constraints such as high transport costs, connectivity deficit, transit-related challenges, and vulnerability to external shocks. The ministerial declarations further highlighted the need for scaling up sustainability and climate-action related support, including assistance for nationally determined contributions including related to transport and logistics, developing climate-resilient infrastructure, and strengthening sustainable and resilient supply chains. They also urged the international community and development partners to increase development finance, especially Aid for

85 https://www.itf-oecd.org/transport-network-resilience-critical-events-working-group

86 https://unece.org/info/Transport/Transport-Trends-and-Economics/events/397378 and https://unece.org/info/events/event/399926

87 https://itf-oecd.org/itf-2026-annual-consultation-international-organisations

88 https://imlc2025piraeus.gr/en/

89 https://iame2025.dryfta.com/

90 https://www.imeche.org/training-qualifications/training-details/2nd-international-conference-on-climate-change-adaptation-and-resilience

91 https://cdri.world/capacity-building/building-resilience-of-transportation-infrastructure-in-latam/

92 https://www.undrr.org/event/think-resilience-dialogue-unlocking-potential-resilience-core-lldcs-sustainable-development

93 Available at https://unctad.org/unctad16/documents

Trade and innovative sustainable and climate finance mechanisms, leveraging public-private partnerships, while strengthening multilateral cooperation, regional integration, digital trade systems, multimodal transport transit corridors and transparent trade frameworks to better integrate vulnerable economies into global trade and value and supply chains.[94]

372. Following the delivery of project activities on sustainable smart ports (SSP), beneficiary countries demonstrated strengthened capacity to advance SSP development and began implementing priority actions identified through the project. The initiative significantly enhanced stakeholders' understanding of the SSP concept, its relevance, and associated cross-sectoral policy measures. Through country-level assessments, each pilot country identified priority actions to advance sustainable port development, which were formally validated by policymakers and stakeholders.

373. All beneficiary countries have initiated follow-up actions based on SSP recommendations. In Mauritius, priority measures are being integrated into national strategies and investment planning, including through the Green Port Strategy. In Morocco, stakeholders have established coordination mechanisms, including a multi-stakeholder task force, to support implementation and monitor progress. In Ghana, stakeholders are advancing regulatory, technical, and planning frameworks to promote renewable energy deployment and port electrification. These developments reflect improved coordination among port authorities, energy regulators, ministries, and private sector actors, addressing key governance gaps identified during project implementation.

374. The project's final regional webinar in March 2026 provided a platform to disseminate findings, share country experiences, and highlight progress made in implementing SSP roadmaps, further reinforcing peer learning and regional exchange.[95] To help ensure sustainability and continued capacity-building beyond the project lifecycle, UNCTAD is also developing an online learning platform that will compile the project's methodology, training materials, case studies and knowledge resources, while providing a space for continued knowledge-sharing and exchange among stakeholders. The platform will also support UNCTAD's continued advisory and technical assistance efforts to participating countries and ports.

375. Following the online training course on public–private partnerships (PPPs) for sustainable and resilient infrastructure delivered for Zambia,[96] UNCTAD received requests for additional support to further strengthen capacity in this area. In response, UNCTAD is developing an online training module to ensure the continuity of capacity-building efforts, expand accessibility to a wider pool of participants, and deepen the technical and practical knowledge of government officials and other stakeholders involved in PPPs processes. The training will also support UNCTAD's efforts to design and deliver further tailored capacity-building and advisory activities based on country-specific needs and priorities.

376. An important aspect of collaboration was the strengthened engagement with the United Nations Resident Coordinator's Offices (UN RCOs) in all beneficiary countries. UN RCOs supported stakeholder mapping and outreach, participated in national validation workshops, and contributed to selected capacity-building activities. In some cases, they also engaged in follow-up technical discussions with UNCTAD and national institutions, including ministries, port authorities, and other relevant stakeholders, focusing on the implementation of SSP roadmaps and priority actions identified through the project. In Mauritius, under the SSP project, the UN RCO supported stakeholder mapping and outreach, participated in person in the opening and validation workshop as well as subsequent capacity-building activities, and engaged in follow-up discussions with UNCTAD and national institutions to help ensure the sustainability and continuity of activities beyond the project.[97] In Morocco, collaboration with the UN RCO covered both the SSP and the food security and logistics projects, including participation in workshops, exchanges on progress in implementing SSP recommendations, and support to inter-agency coordination. In

[94] https://unctad.org/unctad16/documents
[95] https://unctad.org/meeting/webinar-sustainable-smart-ports-africa-assessment-action
[96] https://elearning.unctad.org/course/index.php?searcher=zambia
[97] https://mauritius.un.org/en/295492-building-sustainable-future-transforming-port-louis-smart-green-maritime-hub

Trinidad and Tobago, activities under the food security and logistics project were reported through United Nations country-level reporting processes, contributing to strengthened coordination and visibility of UNCTAD’s contribution within the UN country team framework.

377. UNCTAD will build on these initiatives, technical cooperation activities, capacity-building programmes, tools, and partnerships to continue supporting developing countries in addressing key transport and logistics challenges and advancing greater resilience, sustainability, and efficiency in global and regional trade, transport, and supply chains.

B99 Other

Table B99
Other

Project number	*Short title*	*Period covered*	*Source of funds*
Division on Globalization and Development Strategies			
INT/0T/MAP	G77 - Development Priorities for a Climate-Resilient Financial System at COP28	2023 -	Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors Inc.
INT/0T/MAY	UNCTAD Sustainable Development Initiatives Grant	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
Division for Africa, Least Developed Countries and Special Programmes			
INT/0T/IAH	Finding Opportunities for Niche Commodities from DC in Health Food Markets	2021 -	Common Fund for Commodities
RAF/0T/JBS	Developing Integrated Programmes to Alleviate Binding Constraints to Development by Fostering Structural Transformation, Building Productive Capacities and Enhancing Investment Opportunities and Linkages with China	2021 -	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
RAF/0T/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
RAF/0T/OBC	To support the Benguela Current Commission (BCC) in the partial implementation of components two (2) and four (4) of the Project Mainstreaming Climate-Resilient Blue Economy in the BCLME Region (BCLME IV Project)	2025 -	UNDP

Project number	Short title	Period covered	Source of funds
ROA-2528(E17)	Stronger and greener productive capacities for just transitions in Caribbean SIDS	2025 -	Development Account

1. Assistance to the Palestinian people

378. **Development context.** The escalation of hostilities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory since 7 October 2023 has deepened the effects of a 59-year occupation, triggering an unprecedented socioeconomic collapse. The scale of destruction has unleashed cascading crises, economic, humanitarian, environmental and social. The crises combined to push the Occupied Palestinian Territory from prolonged de-development to utter ruin. Military operations have decimated critical infrastructure, including hospitals, universities, schools, cultural heritage sites, water and sanitation systems, agricultural land and telecommunications and energy networks. Beyond Gaza, the West Bank has also suffered severe economic fallout, with escalating violence and restrictions triggering mass displacement and an unprecedented scale of demolition of Palestinian public and private assets, both personal and productive.

379. For more than two and half decades, the Palestinian economy has been set on a relentless course of de-development, with systemic constraints stifling investment, trade and productive activities. In Gaza, the private sector has been crippled by nearly two decades of closure, stringent restrictions, chronic electricity shortages and severely limited access to essential resources, technology, and critical imports. Meanwhile, the West Bank economy has struggled in a politically volatile environment impacting production and trade costs, deteriorating infrastructure, and restrictions on land, water and other vital resources. These structural barriers have collectively strangled economic development, eroded productive capacity, entrenched widespread poverty, and deepened dependence on increasingly scarce foreign aid.

380. Invoking security concerns, the occupying Power deploys a complex matrix of administrative and physical controls over Palestinian natural and economic resources, trade, and the movement of people and goods. In the occupied West Bank, this multilayer system imposes costly fragmentation of the Palestinian economy and communities. It includes a stringent permit regime, bureaucratic controls, and hundreds of permanent and "flying" checkpoints, roadblocks, earth mounds and trenches, in addition to the Separation Wall and the infrastructure of settlements. By July 2025, some 849 such movement restrictions continued to control the movements of 3.3 million Palestinians. These barriers suppress economic activity and inflate costs by increasing distance and travel time between towns and localities.

381. Since the early 1990s, Israel has imposed restrictions on the movement of goods and people into and out of Gaza. The restrictions have been intensified since Hamas took control of Gaza in 2007. For 19 years, 2.3 million Palestinian people have been confined to a small, 365 km^2 enclave with one of the highest population densities in the world. Since October 2023, evacuation orders, issued by the occupying Power, have forcibly concentrated Palestinians into ever smaller, shrinking spaces. This compression has exacerbated a pre-existing crisis of overcrowding and extreme population density, amplifying the attendant erosion of welfare and heightened health hazards. The Israeli military operations and restrictions ─ that followed the attacks by Hamas, and other Palestinian armed groups, on 7 October 2023 ─ devastated the remnants of the economy and infrastructure of Gaza. The intense military operations resulted in an unprecedented humanitarian, environmental and social crises. The far-reaching repercussions will linger for years to come, and it may take decades to return Gaza to the status quo ante.

382. In the Occupied Palestinian Territory, GDP has collapsed, unemployment has soared and poverty has surged to unprecedented levels. Meanwhile, Gaza stands at a critical juncture. The central question, and the core uncertainty, is whether it can recover the foundational pillars needed to reconstitute itself as a viable and functioning society.

383. The direct damage to the economy of Gaza and the West Bank continued to accumulate throughout 2024 and 2025. The damage was immediate; it occurred mainly in the last quarter of 2023 and persisted throughout 2024, and the year 2025 passed with little sign of recovery. In 2024, the GDP of the Occupied Palestinian Territory had plummeted by 27 per cent from the previous year, standing at only 70 per cent of its 2022 level. In less than 15 months, more than two decades of hard-won economic progress were erased. The economic decline 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.

384. In 2025, an estimated a 6.5 per cent increase in overall GDP, has been driven primarily by the West Bank, reflecting low base effects and representing a fragile rebound from a catastrophic low. Total output remained 25 per cent below its 2022 level, and GDP per capita 30 per cent lower than before the crisis.

385. By early 2025, Gaza's economy had shrunk to 17 per cent of its 2023 size and just 13 per cent of its 2022 level. Every dollar of GDP shrunk to 13 cents. Real GDP per capita collapsed to $161 per year— or about 6.4 per cent of its level in 2005. In 2025, the situation worsened, with GDP declining by another 13 per cent, reaching a mere 11 per cent of its 2022 level. GDP per capita declined further to around $138, which is also just 11 per cent of its 2022 value. Meanwhile, unemployment has surged to 80 per cent, and multidimensional poverty engulfed the entire population.

386. This economic collapse is mirrored by the physical obliteration of Gaza's infrastructure. By October 2025, 81 per cent of all structures had been damaged or destroyed, including over 330,000 housing units. This has left some 1.5 million people in desperate need of shelter assistance. The very means of survival have been eroded, with 87 per cent of cropland and a similar proportion of water wells damaged, rendering 96 per cent of farmland unusable. That is to say the backbone of Gaza's economy and food system has been dismantled.

387. Similarly, in the West Bank, the impact of the escalation was immediate. GDP contracted by 17 per cent in 2024, and per capita income fell by 19 per cent. In 2025 GDP remained at 12 per cent of the 2022 pre-crisis baseline. Correspondingly, GDP per capita regressed to conditions comparable to 2010.

388. On the fiscal front, the Palestinian Government has been systematically weakened. The Cumulative deductions, by the occupying Power, and the withholding of Palestinian clearance revenues between 2019 and January 2026 exceeded $4.4 billion—equivalent to 40 percent of GDP in 2024 and 120 per cent of total net revenues.

389. These severe fiscal losses have forced the Palestinian Government to pay partial salaries, reduced to 60-70 per cent of commitment, which in turn has further depressed aggregate demand and deepened the economic contraction.

390. The upshot is a Palestinian economy doubly constrained from both the supply and demand sides. The fiscal crisis has three primary causes: the unilateral deductions, the systematic withholding of revenue by the occupying Power, and a severely constricted tax base – a direct consequence of the occupation's restrictions on economic activity.

391. Beyond its inability to disburse full public salaries, fiscal collapse fundamentally undermines the Government's capacity to deliver core services, including education and healthcare.

392. **Objectives and features**. The UNCTAD programme of assistance to the Palestinian people responds to paragraphs (80.68) and (80.69) of the Geneva Consensus and paragraph 127 (bb) of the Bridgetown Covenant, which request 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.

393. For over four 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.

394. The UNCTAD programme, which aims to build and strengthen the institutional capacities of the Palestinian public and private sectors, addresses the constraints and emerging needs 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.

395. **Outputs and results.** In 2025, UNCTAD continued its support to the Palestinian people in coordination with the Government of the State of Palestine, Palestinian civil society, international organizations 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 severely adverse and increasingly difficult field conditions.

396. In 2025, UNCTAD continued to assess the impact of the Israeli military operations, restrictions, closures and the escalations post-October 2023 on the economic development prospects in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

397. In response to the above-mentioned resolutions, in 2025, UNCTAD prepared a report to the General Assembly entitled “Economic costs of the Israeli occupation for the Palestinian people: the post-October 2023 shocks compounding the historical cumulative cost of the occupation of the West Bank”. The report focused on the economic repercussions of the occupation of the West Bank since October 2023 and estimated the cumulative cost of the occupation from 2000 to 2024, particularly in relation to restrictions on Palestinian movement and access to natural resources in the occupied West Bank.

398. In December 2025, UNCTAD finalized a study on the cumulative economic cost of occupation for the Palestinian people and the long road to recovery. The study was issued in February 2026. In addition, UNCTAD briefed Member States on its assessment of the economic damages incurred by the Palestinian people and the long road to recovery.

399. In 2025, UNCTAD provided advisory services to a Palestinian institution on relevant quantitative methodologies for assessing the economic impact of the Israeli military operation in Gaza. Further advisory services covered the potential for the rollout of universal basic income programs as a temporary response to the unprecedented socioeconomic crisis engulfing Gaza.

2. Productive capacity-building in vulnerable economies

2.1. Mainstreaming climate-resilient blue economy in the BCLME Region (BCLME IV Project) - Components 2 and 4

400. **Development context**. The BCLME Region, or Benguela Current Large Marine Ecosystem, is a highly productive marine area in the southeast Atlantic Ocean that spans the coasts of Angola, Namibia, and South Africa. It is one of the world's significant coastal upwelling ecosystems, recognized for its rich biodiversity and abundant fisheries, which are vital to the economies of these three nations.

401. The countries within the BCLME region rely heavily on their marine and non-marine resources for socio-economic development. Despite ongoing management efforts at both regional and national levels, the marine environment and living resources of the BCLME continue to be significantly affected by human activities and climate change. These combined pressures have led to drastic and, in some cases, irreversible changes. Key issues include the depletion of fish stocks, degradation of critical coastal habitats, and loss of marine

biodiversity, all of which threaten the ecosystem's ability to provide essential goods and services.

402. **Objectives and features**. The objective of the BCLME IV project is to mainstream the development of climate-resilient Blue Economy in the implementation of the updated Strategic Action Plan (SAP) of the Benguela Current Large Marine Ecosystem, which will, over the longer term, contribute to restoring depleted living marine resources and degraded marine habitats, enhancing livelihoods opportunities within the coastal communities, and increasing resilience of marine ecosystems and dependent coastal communities to climate change impacts. By strengthening policy and regulatory frameworks and institutional and private sector capacities, developing viable finance mechanisms to stimulate investment in Blue Economy interventions, and promoting blue carbon finance mechanisms, the project will contribute to developing regional and national frameworks for innovative Blue Economy finance, which will make transition to Blue Economy (BE) in BCLME region a reality. The project aligns with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 14, 8, and 9, as well as contributes to additional goals such as SDGs 1, 2, and 5. It also supports the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework Targets 2, 7, 14, 15, 16, and 20.

403. The project's activities will contribute to strengthened regional cooperation and coordination and increased technical capacity within relevant institutions to sustainably manage marine and coastal resources. It is expected that the above will help reduce the discharge of pollutants from land- and ocean-based activities as well as the impacts of the exploration and extraction of non-living marine resources, and, in general, contribute to more rational use of marine and coastal resources. All the above will be based on a strengthened policy and regulatory framework leading to a sustainable and innovative Blue Economy, including improvements in respective financing opportunities, which will improve socio-economic conditions of coastal communities.

404. The role of UNCTAD in the project covers (i) work to enhance sustainable and climate resilient marine living resources and their value chains in the BCLME region, including diversification strategies; mariculture development; joint management of transboundary fish stocks; sustainability certification; fish, seafood and mariculture market research and strategies and related capacity building; exploring and engaging with new climate resilient markets; and (ii) work to promote regional and national frameworks for innovative Blue Economy finance to foster positive ecosystem, social and economic impacts, including Blue Economy finance strategies; support to the design and implementation of bankable Blue Economy projects, including with innovative financing, principles, standards and green investments; and technical assistance to research feasibility and set up blue carbon finance mechanisms to accelerate innovative Blue Economy finance at national and regional levels.

405. **Outputs**. At the start of the project, UNCTAD organized the project delivery workstreams and set up an internal management / coordination structure for the project to facilitate operations, exchange substantive and technical information as well as synthesize lessons. Detailed, sequenced and budgeted workplans both for the entire six-year period and for the first year were developed and discussed with the implementing partners. These included an inventory of the methodologies to be used, geographic focus, institutional partners, and capacity-building plan.

406. UNCTAD participated in the Inception workshop organized in Windhoek at the end of November 2025. It delivered technical and policy-level presentations during the workshop and led the work of one of the working groups reviewing components 2 (enhancing sustainable and climate resilient marine living resources and value chains) and 4 (promoting regional and national frameworks for innovative Blue Economy finance mechanisms) in the project document. UNCTAD took the opportunity to meet bilaterally with stakeholders based in Windhoek where it discussed initial plans for collaboration. Following the inception workshop, UNCTAD revised its work plan for the first year, reflecting the consensus reached during the inception workshop. UNCTAD also prepared the first financial and narrative report on the project for the 4th quarter of 2025.

407. In substantive terms, UNCTAD conceptualized the global level research to be undertaken in the first year, with links clearly defined to national level research supporting the overall outputs. Existing resources among the Benguela Current Commission (BCC)

Secretariat were identified and shared for the purposes of building on these frameworks. Primary research and literature review were started and internal research teams organized for the following research products: (i) market research; (ii) needs analysis and identification of third-party certification; and (iii) analysis of investment and Blue Finance policies. An overall Research Plan and detailed Terms of Reference were finalized for the market research activity and agreed upon by the BCC Secretariat. In 2026, in-depth research will be conducted on market research as a priority, with a view to holding preliminary stakeholder focus group discussions and consultations on that basis back-to-back to the Project Steering Committee meeting.

408. Furthermore, UNCTAD held consultations both bilaterally with the BCC Secretariat and trilaterally with the BCC Secretariat and UNDP Namibia on the implementation of activities during the first year. Based on preliminary research and stakeholder mappings, UNCTAD has started to prepare concept notes and agendas for the foreseen substantive events, including with key stakeholder participation in the programme delivery.

409. **Results and impact**. Project implementation began in late 2025 with an inception phase. At the end of the project's implementation, it is expected that the UNCTAD-specific components will identify and support sustainable Blue Economy value chains development in the region, including relevant market engagement strategies, as well as support Blue Investment and Blue Finance to enable the upgrading of the sectors.

2.2. Challenges and opportunities of international standards for commodity-dependent developing economies

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

411. This is despite the fact that many of these countries, particularly LDCs, enjoy preferential market access for their exports to major developed country markets. 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.

412. 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.

413. **Objectives and features**. Research, financed by Common Fund for Commodities (CFC), seeks to explore the opportunities and challenges related to international standards and regulations in agri-commodity value chains. The primary location of interest is the Global South, in particular LDCs and LLDCs.

414. **Outputs and results**. At the Third United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDC3) which took place in Awaza, Turkmenistan, from 5 to 8 August 2025, UNCTAD organized a side event on international standards to highlight the potential impacts of standards on LLDCs, particularly those heavily reliant on commodities.

415. On 9 December 2025, UNCTAD participated in an event on "Empowering Smallholders to Drive Climate-Resilient and Sustainable Commodity Value Chains" to present research on productive capacities and commodities. The event preceded the main CFC (Common Fund for Commodities) Governing Council meeting. The event was attended

by over 100 participants in person and online, from developed and developing countries that are members of the CFC, including the private sector and civil society entities.

416. UNCTAD provided its perspective on the status of productive capacities in weak and vulnerable countries and discussed the main drivers of growth and development, related challenges and solutions, particularly limited access to finance, a weak private sector, and excessive reliance on commodities without a feasible strategy for economic diversification and structural transformation. The UNCTAD presentation was well received by meeting participants.

2.3. Stronger and Greener Productive Capacities for Just Transitions in Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

417. **Development context**. Climate change poses systemic risks and structural vulnerability to shocks that undermine SIDS' capacity to achieve inclusive growth and sustainable development. Due to their unique geography and size, SIDS have long faced hazards such as hurricanes, floods, volcanoes, earthquakes, sea level rise, and tsunamis. The impacts of climate change on SIDS are well documented, as it increases the frequency and intensity of these hazards, exacerbates coastal erosion, flooding, and drought, while intensifying coral bleaching, invasive species, and infectious diseases. SIDS also suffer from water pollution, which undermines the health of the oceans and which, in turn, are critical resources for their survival. Collectively, SIDS, which account for two thirds of the countries facing the greatest environmental losses and damage, experience growing, complex and interrelated trade and development challenges.

418. SIDS lack productive capacities, climate-resilient infrastructure, and systems for managing evacuations and distributing basic relief supplies. Environmental problems also intersect with high levels of poverty, socioeconomic exclusion, and existing ecological degradation, which is further intensified by massive tourism development and irregular governance frameworks. Most vital infrastructure, including airports, roads, tourist facilities, and housing, is located in low-lying coastal areas of SIDS. This exacerbates the problem of flooding, as development is disproportionately coastal, protection costs are high relative to the size of their territory, and there is little alternative land to which to redirect them. Climate change adds pressure to tourism and agriculture, potentially reducing air travel and food production due to mitigation efforts and decreasing the attractiveness of SIDS as destinations. As the 1.5°C warming limit becomes more difficult to achieve, SIDS urgently need new adaptation strategies for their economies.

419. In its resolution 74/217, the General Assembly expressed concern that “many SIDS have not achieved sustained high levels of economic growth, owing in part to their vulnerabilities to the ongoing negative impacts of environmental challenges and external economic and financial shocks”. It therefore called for integrating economic, social, and environmental aspects and recognizing their interconnections at all levels to advance sustainable development.

420. In alignment with these goals, the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS) emphasizes the importance of productive capacities in advancing sustainable development, as highlighted in paragraphs 7, 21, 23, and 25. ABAS recognizes the need for capacity building to strengthen data governance and management, including in measuring and benchmarking productive capacities. It also calls for the implementation of Holistic Productive Capacities Development Programmes (HPCDPs) and the conduct of National Productive Capacities Gap Assessments (NPCGAs) (see para 21).

421. **Objectives and features**. The project titled “*Stronger and Greener Productive Capacities for Just Transitions in Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS)*” responds to these calls by strengthening and greening productive capacities in SIDS through a novel approach to just transition specifically designed for SIDS. In addition to fostering new productive capacities, this approach acknowledges the need to rebalance mitigation and adaptation strategies, expand adaptation options in key service sectors, and scale up successful approaches at regional and global levels. This approach also highlights the vital role that services such as tourism play in the economic development of SIDS and in shaping

equitable adaptation strategies. The project addresses SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth), 9 (Industry, innovation and infrastructure) and 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

422. The project is implemented by UNCTAD in collaboration with UNDESA, ECLAC and the UN Resident Coordinator Offices (RCOs). It supports four SIDS – Antigua and Barbuda, the Dominican Republic, Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica – in developing and implementing comprehensive policies and strategies for a just transition that is meaningful and relevant to SIDS. This is achieved by improving and environmentally optimizing their productive capacities through UNCTAD's programme on productive capacity-building and structural transformation for sustainable development. The key elements of this programme focus on long-term, integrated, and program-based approaches to building productive capacities and achieving structural economic transformation. Such transformation is essential to effectively mitigate and adapt to climate change while ensuring equitable social benefits, promoting gender equality, and leaving no one behind. Using tools such as the Productive Capacity Index (PCI) to identify gaps in productive capacities, the programme helps develop targeted policies for critical sectors.

423. The objective of the project is to strengthen and green productive capacities in selected Caribbean SIDS, with the goal of boosting just transitions that align with the unique needs of SIDS and advancing economic transformation. The project will contribute to the achievement of this objective by:

(a) Strengthening SIDS' statistical capacity for improved data collection and measurement of productive capacities and related vulnerabilities, with emphasis on climate change, gender and finance.

(b) Developing National Productive Capacities Gap Assessments (NPCGAs) by applying the Productive Capacities Index (PCI) to identify gaps, limitations and challenges in building and greening productive capacities, structural transformation and economic diversification.

(c) Formulating Holistic Productive Capacities Development Programmes (HPCDPs), which serve as holistic, economy-wide and long-term roadmaps to address these gaps and facilitate the development of critical economic sectors based on comparative advantages, paving the way for SIDS-compatible just transitions.

(d) Training policymakers, national technical experts, private sector entities, academia and civil society stakeholders to address gaps in productive capacities and facilitate structural transformation, economic diversification and just transitions.

424. **Outputs**. Several key activities and meetings were held in 2025 to advance the project.

425. On 18 March 2025, UNCTAD organized a kick-off meeting of the project, bringing together focal points from the four beneficiary countries, representatives of their Permanent Missions in Geneva, and representatives of the four UN Resident Coordinator Offices (RCOs). The meeting established timelines for the project's deliverables, agreed on modalities for bilateral communication with each country through Permanent Missions and RCOs, and laid the groundwork for the terms of reference (ToRs) of the Committee of Focal Points. The finalized ToRs were circulated on 9 May 2025. Participants also agreed to organize online brainstorming meetings to further develop the Productive Capacities Index (PCI), specifically enhanced and tailored for SIDS.

426. UNCTAD also shared data dashboards with beneficiary countries assessing data availability across the PCI input indicators in order to solicit feedback on the potential use of national data sources where international datasets are incomplete or unavailable. Bilateral follow-up sessions with stakeholders and national statistical offices were conducted to validate these datasets and identify potential national substitutes for missing indicators.

427. The third meeting of the Statistical and Technical Advisory Group (STAG) on the Productive Capacities Index (PCI) was held on 23 June 2025 in Lisbon, with the support of Banco de Portugal. Organized by UNCTAD (Division for Africa, Least Developed Countries and Special Programmes (ALDC) in collaboration with Statistics, Data and Digital Service), the meeting brought together 34 experts from international and regional organizations

including the OECD, IMF, UNDP, ILO, ECLAC, ESCAP, ECA and UN-Habitat, as well as representatives from academia and national institutions. [98] During this meeting, the conceptual framework and methodological considerations for the development of a new SIDS-focused index were presented. Experts provided feedback on the proposed methodology and recommended adopting the term "SIDS Satellite PCI" to designate the new index developed under the project.

428. Building on these discussions, UNCTAD convened an online brainstorming session on 30 July 2025 on the development of the SIDS Satellite Productive Capacities Index. The meeting brought together UNCTAD experts, focal points from the four beneficiary SIDS countries, representatives of UN Resident Coordinator Offices, regional organizations such as ECLAC and CARICOM, statisticians, policymakers, and academic experts specializing in SIDS. The session reviewed progress in tailoring the PCI to better capture the unique vulnerabilities and opportunities of SIDS, including small size, remoteness, climate risks and limited diversification. Participants highlighted key data challenges, particularly in transport and energy, and discussed innovative approaches such as the use of geographic information system (GIS) and satellite data. Strong emphasis was also placed on integrating gender-sensitive and youth-focused indicators, as well as on reflecting sectoral dynamics, such as the blue and digital economies, and incorporating enabling conditions such as climate resilience, financial vulnerability and social factors.

429. In addition, on 14 August 2025, UNCTAD delivered a presentation entitled "*Strategies for Effectively Measuring Productive Capacities to Drive Efficiency Analysis*" at the Jamaica Productivity Centre's World Productivity Day Forum 2025.

430. On 31 December 2025, UNCTAD finalized the first drafts of the methodological paper and the dataset for the SIDS Satellite PCI. These documents were prepared for review at the regional expert meeting on 2 and 3 February 2026 in Santo Domingo. The scope of the SIDS Satellite PCI has expanded beyond the initial focus of the project and now covers all 39 SIDS, including the four beneficiary countries.

431. Detailed outcomes of the project meetings have been documented in summary reports available on the project website. [99]

432. **Results and impact**. 2025 was the first year of the project implementation. The STAG expressed strong interest in the development of the SIDS Satellite Productive Capacities Index, recognizing its potential policy relevance for addressing the specific development challenges faced by SIDS. The SIDS Satellite PCI is divided into 10 categories: in addition to the eight categories also found in the core PCI, it includes two new categories–Climate Resilience and Financial Resilience.

433. UNCTAD has reviewed the dashboards received from the Dominican Republic, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago and is continuing to work with statistical focal points to collect identified national input indicators for testing and simulations. These efforts contribute to improving the statistical foundations needed for evidence-based policymaking and for designing targeted strategies to strengthen productive capacities and support just transitions in SIDS.

3. Mobilizing financial resources for development

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

434. **Development context**. Accomplishing the goals of the Paris Agreement (PA) will require a momentous multilateral effort, entailing profound structural transformations of every economy and society, backed by an unprecedented global investment push. Yet by all estimations, the world is severely off track. Current policy commitments put the world on course for a temperature increase of 2.6-3.1°C over the course of this century, implying

[98] The academia representatives included those from the Federal Institute of Technology Zurich (ETH Zurich), University of Lausanne, Centre for the Study of the Economies of Africa, Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU) and ISCTE (University Institute of Lisbon).

[99] https://unctad.org/project/stronger-and-greener-productive-capacities-just-transitions-caribbean-small-island.

potentially catastrophic impacts to people, planet and economies. Estimated global climate finance flows in 2024 were around $2.0 trillion, compared to the $6.5 trillion needed. New geopolitical challenges are putting further pressure, including on public budgets, diverting resources away from sustainable, climate-resilient investments.

435. The already insufficient support to developing countries is now in jeopardy after a succession of aid cuts in 2025 alongside emerging policy trends in advanced economies that tend to prioritize environmental and trade protectionism, through industrial support schemes and regulatory shifts, over inclusive development - leaving trust and confidence in the multilateral climate regime and global economic governance hanging by a thread. 2025 was also a year of strong polarization and of an increasing weaponization of trade, finance and technology. The vulnerability of many developing countries to deteriorating global economy and reduced policy space prevents them to adopt a more ambitious climate agenda. In the absence of stronger multilateral action and support, developing countries are less able to devise and implement adequate climate and development strategies.

436. To address these issues, and to respond to requests of climate negotiators to support them in the UNFCCC processes, UNCTAD has developed research and analysis, policy recommendations, publications, and capacity building in 2025. These activities directly relate to SDGs 13 (Climate action) and 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

437. **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 Conference of the Parties (COPs). UNCTAD works with relevant agencies and organizations to deliver an inclusive programme to respond to these requests from developing countries.

438. **Outputs**. In 2025, the project outputs included one COP debrief event for Geneva delegates, UN staff and international organizations based in Geneva; two events on the sidelines of the UNFCCC meetings for climate finance negotiators on relevant topics for COP30 negotiations; support for developing countries positions and strategizing during COP30, through active engagement, side-event participation and expertise sharing; and one publication.

439. In relation to the Conference of the Parties of the UNFCCC, UNCTAD organized an event titled "*COP29 debrief on relevant outcomes and looking ahead to COP30*" on 7 February 2025. The objective of the meeting was to discuss relevant outcomes of COP29 and the main topics for COP30 and thus provide both delegates of Member States and UNCTAD staff members with an indication of priority areas and topics for the potential future activity of UNCTAD.

440. UNCTAD collaborated closely with the Iraqi G77 and China Chairmanship in the organization of two workshops for climate finance negotiators of developing countries focused on climate finance issues. The events took place in September in Rome, Italy, back-to-back with the second workshop in 2025 under the Sharm el-Sheikh Dialogue (September 6-7) and the UNFCCC Standing Committee on Finance (SCF) Forum (September 8), to facilitate participation of country representatives. The objective of these working dinners was firstly to create a space of dialogue to build greater collective understanding of finance priorities as COP30 approached. Secondly, the meetings aimed to share recent UNCTAD research, analysis, and data relevant to finance discussions at COP30, while facilitating strategic dialogue to shape a collective vision for strong finance outcomes at COP30.

441. Furthermore, UNCTAD participated in the UNFCCC 30th Conference of Parties held in Belem, Brazil in November. UNCTAD supported climate negotiators on different workstreams, including Article 9, Article 2.1c and Just Transition. UNCTAD regularly engaged with negotiators, UNFCCC colleagues, the Brazilian Presidency, and other developing countries such as Morocco, Cuba, Colombia, Iraq and South Africa. Meetings with civil society representatives took place.[100] On November 14, UNCTAD co-organized

[100] Civil society representatives included the Third World Network, Climate Action Network (CAN)

the side-event "*COP30 side event: Care, climate and the just transition*" in cooperation with the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), UN-Women, Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (GI-ESCR), Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), Fundación AVINA, International Development Research Centre (IDRC). The discussion explored the links between climate change and care to inform work towards a just transition.

442. In the role of panellists, UNCTAD participated in three panels during the COP 30: *Policy Matters: From Pledges to Delivery – A Decade After Paris Report Launch of the Taskforce on Net Zero Policy* on November 11 (morning and afternoon sessions); *Towards and Beyond $1.3 Trillion: Innovative Solutions to Address the Finance Gap* on November 20.

443. In 2025, UNCTAD also engaged with the 2025 BRICS Presidency (Brazil) on the topic of enhancing climate finance. The inadequacy of current financial flows is not merely a technical issue, but it is a profound equity challenge that threatens to derail global climate and development goals. By leveraging their distinct experiences and collective strengths, BRICS countries can offer a compelling alternative to the current climate finance paradigm-one that prioritizes development, resilience, and mutual prosperity. UNCTAD joined two BRICS meetings in person where UNCTAD presented its analytical work on climate finance. As a result of that collaboration with BRICS, UNCTAD published a paper titled "*A BRICS agenda for enhancing climate finance*". It proposes an array of ideas for a BRICS agenda for enhancing climate finance, grounded in the principles of climate ambition, solidarity, and respect for national sovereignty. The paper identifies four interrelated pillars of action: increase the availability of climate finance through BRICS institutions; strengthen South-South coordination to overcome fragmentation and enhance the effectiveness of climate finance; build resilience to systemic shocks; and advocate for broader reforms in global economic governance to ensure a more just and inclusive financial system.

444. **Results and impact**. At the closing of COP30, key climate finance outcomes agreed by countries included a new work programme on climate finance, and the Veredas Dialogue to make global finance flows consistent with efforts towards low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development. Related to the Just Transition work programme, countries agreed to develop a dedicated mechanism to enhance international cooperation for just and equitable transitions. This corresponds with UNCTAD's recommendations that just transitions need to be interlinked with Sustainable Development Goals, offering development opportunities for developing countries. A new cooperation mechanism for just transition should also tackle the structural constraints currently holding back developing countries in making their economies greener and more sustainable.

445. The Brazilian BRICS Chairship concluded in December 2025, while the BRICS summit took place in July 2025. At the Summit, Leaders of BRICS adopted a Framework Declaration on Climate Finance with the objective of leading a global mobilization for a fairer and more effective International Monetary and Financial System to enhance climate finance, and a commitment to leveraging BRICS's economic strength and innovation capacity to demonstrate that ambitious climate action can advance prosperity and a better future for everyone. That outcome adopted many ideas from the input provided by UNCTAD.

446. Considering the generally male-dominated representation of Parties delegations, ensuring a gender balance in project activities has been challenging but always an important consideration. The number of climate negotiators participating in UNCTAD's workshops in 2025 was 53, of which 37 females. The side-event organized during COP30 specifically exploring the links between climate change and care has shed light on the gendered impacts of climate change and helped to understand the structural challenges and opportunities that arise when care is central to how we address the climate crisis. Finally, as the main goal of the project is to contribute to climate-resilient development in developing countries, it indirectly addresses the most vulnerable groups.

International, Action Aid, Recourse, Christian Aid and Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) India.

3.2. UNCTAD Sustainable Development Initiatives – Debt and Development Initiative

447. **Development context**. Ongoing external shocks—including trade uncertainties, 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.

448. **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.

449. In pursuit of this goal, this component aims to strengthen coordination among borrower 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 borrower countries in the global discourse. 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

450. **Outputs**. In 2025, UNCTAD continued to deliver, reaching key milestones toward the establishment of the Borrowers' Platform. This progress was driven by active engagement of UNCTAD at key international fora to secure political momentum for the reform of the international financial architecture, including establishing a Borrowers' Platform.

451. As the fourth session in the series of borrower meetings under this component, a meeting of 12 borrowing countries took place in March 2025 alongside the 14th Debt Management Conference. At the meeting, representatives from the debt management offices shared their perspectives on sovereign debt challenges facing their countries and their support on improving coordination between borrower countries.

452. The Financing for Development Forum (FfD) was an important avenue for UNCTAD to advance the Borrowers' Platform in 2025, which was marked by the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4). UNCTAD served as the secretariat of the Expert Group on Debt, which was appointed by United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres on December 6, 2024, to promote actionable policy solutions and galvanizing political and public support required to resolve the debt crisis.[101] Over a period of seven months, UNCTAD facilitated 18 weekly meetings of the Expert Group, involving a wide range of stakeholders. A series of advocacy events were organised for the Expert Group, including one expert panel at UNCTAD Debt Management Conference in Geneva in March, two roundtable events alongside the IMF-World Bank Spring and Annual Meetings in Washington, D.C., in April, and one side event at the FfD4 in Sevilla in July. Based on expert consultations and with the assistance of UNCTAD, the Expert Group on Debt developed a set of 11 concrete proposals, resulting in the final report "Confronting the Debt Crisis: 11

[101] The Expert Group was led by Mahmoud Mohieldin, the United Nations Special Envoy on Financing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and co-chaired by Paolo Gentiloni, former European Commissioner for Economy, Trevor Manuel, former Minister of Finance of South Africa, and Yan Wang, Senior Academic Researcher at the Boston University Global Development Centre.

Actions to Unlock Sustainable Financing – Report of the UN Secretary-General's Expert Group on Debt". Among these proposals, the proposal for the Borrowers' Platform has received broad support and is included in the Sevilla Commitment, the FfD4 outcome document.

453. Following the call for establishing a Borrowers' Platform in the Sevilla Commitment, UNCTAD, with several Member States as co-hosts, organized a ministerial roundtable to advance the formalization of the Borrowers' Platform, including governance, scope and the role of the UN Secretariat. Eleven countries participated in this Roundtable. A Working Group of 7 countries was established during the session to serve as a bridge until the formal establishment of the Borrowers' Platform. It was tasked with drafting foundational aspects necessary for the effective establishment and functioning of the Platform, with secretarial support from UNCTAD, drawing on expertise across the UN system as needed. The composition of working group members was agreed during the meeting and included geographically representative group of seven countries from three developing regions. UNCTAD has been facilitating weekly meetings of the Working Group since November 2025.

454. In parallel with informing international discourse and building multilateral momentum, UNCTAD also organized peer-learning workshops to demonstrate the technical value of the Borrowers' Platform. UNCTAD organized a study tour from 28 July to 1 August in Lusaka, Zambia, and brought together 30 technical staff from the ministries of finance of Ethiopia and Zambia to discuss various aspects of the Common Framework (CF) debt restructuring. As the two countries are at different stages of CF debt restructurings, a structured dialogue between the technical teams was held to unlock significant value through knowledge sharing and peer learning. The event provided a valuable opportunity for Ethiopia to gain more clarity on the CF restructuring process and for reflection on Zambia's CF experience to preserve key insights. Another workshop on sovereign credit ratings and market communication was organized in December in Geneva, alongside the 9th session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Financing for Development. In light of the strong influence of credit rating agencies on the financial terms available to sovereign borrowers, this workshop facilitated exchanges of valuable insights from practitioners at the debt management and investor relation offices of Brazil and Zambia on their market engagement strategies to enhance transparency, maintain credibility, and navigate periods of market stress.

455. The impact of this component relies on the active engagement of UNCTAD at key international fora to build political momentum and raise awareness of the pressing need to address the ongoing debt and development crisis. UNCTAD provided sustained contribution to the preparatory phase and ensured a meaningful presence at the FfD4 conference, where UNCTAD organized 3 side events and attended 9 additional events from 30 Jun to 3 July. UNCTAD remained active in the G20 South African presidency in 2025. The publication titled Sovereign Debt Vulnerabilities in Developing Countries was finalized in 2025, building on the research input for the Brazilian G20 presidency. UNCTAD is producing research on the cost of capital, one of the focuses of the South African G20 presidency in 2025. The initiatives within this component were also presented at the IMF-World Bank Spring and Annual Meetings and various UN fora, including the UN General Assembly, UNCTAD Debt Management Conference, UNCTAD16 and the FfD4.

456. UNCTAD also delivered research on the external liquidity resources in the Global Financial Safety Net (GFSN) to support UNCTAD engagement and policy recommendations on debt vulnerabilities of developing countries and the need for a more development-oriented international financial architecture, including adequate liquidity support for developing countries. This activity focused on data collection and visualization for tracking available external liquidity resources across the GFSN institutions and their actual lending since the onset of COVID-19. This database and its visualization are updated in 2025, with a policy brief that summarizes the data and methodology.

457. **Results and impact**. Sustained efforts by UNCTAD—mobilizing political support, producing sound research, consulting with governments, and convening borrower meetings—have yielded concrete results, including open discussions, technical cooperation, and a network of borrowing countries. These dynamics, grounded in peer learning and

practical cooperation, were crystallized in the Sevilla Commitment, the outcome document of FfD4 that defines the development agenda for the next decade, underscoring countries' willingness to establish a dedicated borrowers' space. The borrowers' meeting organized by UNCTAD in March 2025 is part of the meeting series that bring together debt management practitioners of borrowing developing countries to discuss their debt challenges and exchange experiences. UNCTAD's work in the UN Expert Group on Debt informed the conceptual framework of the Borrowers' Platform, which achieved widespread awareness and was included in the consensus outcome document, the Sevilla Commitment. The peer learning exchanges facilitated by UNCTAD, including the study tour in Lusaka and the workshop on credit ratings, have demonstrated the technical value of the Borrowers' Platform. The study tour in Lusaka, highly appreciated by 30 participants from the Ministries of Finance of Zambia and Ethiopia, effectively demonstrated the value of the peer learning process, which is a unique modality that fills a critical gap and provides a source of experience exchange, benefiting all stakeholders. The workshop on sovereign credit ratings and market communication echoed these constructive impacts through the peer exchanges on engagement with credit rating agencies and investors. The ministerial meeting in October 2025 marked the start of the working group process to establish the Borrowers' platform. UNCTAD is the technical secretariat and continues to work toward the formal establishment of Borrowers' Platform.

458. The Borrowers' Platform, as a permanent and inclusive forum, will fill a critical gap in the international financial architecture where borrowers can share knowledge, bringing together policymakers and technical experts from capitals to foster open dialogue, enable practical peer learning, and project a stronger collective voice for sustainable reform of international financial architecture. The implementation of the Borrowers' Platform is the first of the actions on debt to be achieved from the Sevilla Commitment. In a press statement issued during the conference, Minister of Planning, Economic Development, and International Cooperation of the Arab Republic of Egypt and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Development of the Republic of Zambia emphasized the importance of this initiative for their countries.

459. The research initiatives undertaken under this component, including those addressing sovereign debt vulnerabilities and the Global Financial Safety Net, have been instrumental in grounding UNCTAD engagement in international fora in evidence and analysis. Credible and research-driven voice of UNCTAD has helped steer discussions and advance key agendas in these spaces such as the UN General Assembly, FfD Forum, the G20 Forum, and the IMF-World Bank Spring and Annual Meetings.

3.3. UNCTAD Sustainable Development Initiatives – Climate finance for development

460. **Development context**. The international community has agreed upon a series of goals to ensure an inclusive and sustainable future for people and the planet (Agenda 2030 and the Paris Agreement). To achieve that, a large investment programme on an unprecedented scale globally is needed. UNCTAD estimates that climate and development goals of developing countries alone would need an investment of around $4 trillion each year. Mobilizing investments on this scale would be challenging even in best of times. Doing it in the midst of a series of cascading crises this decade is extremely challenging, especially for the most vulnerable countries. Thus, climate finance is one of the crucial elements developing countries need to accomplish the goals of the international community.

461. 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. 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. This is far from UNCTAD's estimates, that projected the NCQG contribution target for developed countries to be US$0.89 trillion in 2025, progressively rising year on year to reflect needs.

462. A potential opportunity for further engagement and more ambition is the establishment of the "*Baku to Belem Roadmap for $1.3 trillion*". The Roadmap is an initiative mandated for the COP 29 and 30 Presidencies, Azerbaijan and Brazil, as part of the NCQG

outcome, to present a report with proposals and a collection of instruments to raise resources to get to $1.3 trillion for developing countries.

463. **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. Responding to the mandates contained in the Bridgetown Covenant, paragraphs 127 (kk), 127 (ll) and 127 (oo), the component was implemented by the Climate and Development Strategy Unit (CDSU) of the Division on Globalization and Development Strategies. The aim of the component in the final year of the project was to support developing countries' negotiators and help build a consensus around a New Collective Quantified Goal for climate finance that could reflect the real needs of developing countries and that can be achieved alongside a climate and development retrofit for the financial architecture and economic cooperation more broadly. UNCTAD's work in this area directly contributes to SDGs 13 and 17.

464. **Outputs**. In 2025, the component's outputs included one side event during the Bonn Climate Change Conference; a publication that considered new developments in 2025; dissemination activities related to the findings of the report; and engagement in key forums and meetings.

465. UNCTAD attended the 62nd session of the UNFCCC Subsidiary Bodies (SB62) which focused on advancing technical negotiations across the range of UNFCCC workstreams.

466. In terms of UNFCCC engagement, UNCTAD attended consultations with Parties and non-Parties related to the Roadmap work and the Sharm-el-Sheikh Dialogue on the scope of Art. 2.1(c) and its complementarity with Article 9 where UNCTAD moderated two sessions. UNCTAD also moderated one break out group at the third biennial in-session workshop on information to be provided by Parties in accordance with Article 9, paragraph 5, of the Paris Agreement.

467. In Bonn, UNCTAD closely worked with civil society partners as well and was invited as speaker to the CAN workshop with negotiators on "*Baku to Belem Roadmap: Pathway to a meaningful outcome*", with a focus on key priorities and risks associated with the Baku to Belem Roadmap, and its connections with broader reform of the international financial architecture. UNCTAD staff also participated in two working dinners. The first was organized by CAN and CSE India on trade and industrialization, with consideration of just transition and global economic governance issues, with UNCTAD joining as opening speaker. The second on "*Reflections on the Sharm El Sheikh Dialogues: Harnessing the transformational potential of Article 2.1c*" was hosted by CAN- Europe, CAN-South Asia, and CAN-Latin America to explore interlinkages with processes outside the UNFCCC including on international financial architecture reform.

468. On 24 June 2025, UNCTAD co-organized one side event at the meetings of Subsidiary Bodies (SB62) in Bonn, in cooperation with two non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and an academic entity.[102] The event "*What can we expect from climate finance in 2025? Article 2.1c, the $1.3T Roadmap and the road to COP30*" explored the practical pathways and emerging challenges surrounding Article 2.1c, delving into the risks and opportunities within the $1.3T Roadmap, and examining key negotiations and strategic positioning as actors prepared for COP30.

469. UNCTAD published the report "*All roads lead to reform: A financial system fit to mobilize $1.3 trillion for climate finance*", ahead of COP30 that was hosted in Belem, Brazil, in November. The report calls for faster progress on the goal agreed at COP29 to mobilize at least $300 billion per year by 2035 – led by developed countries – and an aspirational target of $1.3 trillion from all sources. It argues that climate finance, which aims to support countries' efforts to address climate change, is not separate from the broader financial architecture but is embedded in it. For many developing countries, the same financial constraints that have slowed growth are now holding back climate action. That's why

[102] The two NGOs are CSE India and the Climate Finance Group of Latin America and the Caribbean (GFLAC). The academic entity refers to Clingendael Institute.

reaching the $1.3 trillion goal brings renewed urgency to reform of the international financial architecture.

470. The report outlines three priorities for systemic reform that can contribute to accelerating equitable finance delivery and allow all countries to meet their climate and development goals:

(1) Enhancing access to liquidity and stability tools, reducing vulnerability to boom-bust cycles and climate shocks and establishing a fairer global financial safety net that offers timely, unconditional support to all countries in need;

(2) Scaling up adequate and predictable climate finance to support resilient structural transformation in developing countries, including addressing unsustainable sovereign debt and enhancing domestic resource mobilization; and

(3) Re-balancing global economic governance with a more representative and accountable system that reflects all countries' interests and needs in the face of climate and development challenges.

Furthermore, analyzing nine reform proposals launched between 2022 and 2025, the report maps how they respond to the three reform areas outlined above. The results show that broad consensus for change is emerging, but implementation is still fragmented, insufficient and restrained to the bounds of perceived "political feasibility" rather than the transformative ambition that responds to climate change challenges.

471. **Results and impact**. The component's focus is on outcomes that prioritize development goals, ensuring developing countries have access to the financial resources they need, including adaptation to the impacts of climate change. The component also promotes the deployment of nationally determined developmental strategies, supported by financing mechanisms to scale public sector resources for development and climate action. This includes consideration of the 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.

472. UNCTAD's report "*All roads lead to reform: A financial system fit to mobilize $1.3 trillion for climate finance*" analysed these issues, and it was launched also on the broader UN website homepage, giving it relevance and broader outreach. In addition, ONU News featured an interview about the report for its page in Portuguese: "Arquitetura financeira global impede financiamento climático adequado" ("*Global Financial Architecture impedes adequate climate financing*" in English) in order to maximize it impact in Brazil, the host country of the COP 30.

473. The report's findings were widely disseminated, with UNCTAD staff highlighting its key messages in different spaces. For instance, on November 18, the report was presented during the COP30 side event "*Towards and Beyond $1.3 Trillion: Innovative Solutions to Address the Finance Gap*", an event co-organized by several NGOs,[103] that examined pathways to bridge the critical climate finance gap and analysed the then ongoing negotiations.

474. Regarding gender equality and women's empowerment, the main goal of the component was to contribute to climate-resilient development in developing countries, so the component indirectly addresses the most vulnerable groups.

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.*

475. **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

[103] The NGOs refer to GI-ESCR, Rosa Luxembourg Foundation, the Climate Finance Group of Latin America and the Caribbean, Tax Justice Network and Dejusticia.

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.

476. **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 United Nations 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.

477. The project helps to 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 provides two main outputs to the beneficiary countries: (i) a UNCTAD Sustainable Development Finance Assessment (SDFA) Framework Mark II considering the funding gaps related to the climate-related SDGs; (ii) a national external financial strategy and related roadmap that encompass climate-related innovative financial instruments, such as green bonds and debt-to-climate or nature swaps.

478. The project contributes primarily to three SDG targets: target 17.4 (Assist developing countries in attaining long-term debt sustainability through coordinated policies aimed at fostering debt financing, debt relief, and debt restructuring, as appropriate, and address the external debt of highly indebted poor countries to reduce debt distress; target 7.1 (By 2030, ensure universal access to affordable, reliable, and modern energy services); and target 13b (Promote mechanisms for raising capacity for effective climate change-related planning and management in least developed countries and small island developing States, including focusing on women, youth, and local and marginalized communities). In addition, the project contributes to two secondary targets: 17.14 (Enhance policy coherence for sustainable development) and 13.2 (Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies, and planning).

479. **Outputs**. The project's implementation started in 2022 and ended in December 2025. In 2025, the following project's outputs were finalized:

(a) Team missions to the two beneficiary countries from Latin America and the Caribbean (Belize and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines).

(b) SDFA reports for the two beneficiary countries from Latin American and the Caribbean (Belize and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines), 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 and public sector financial obligations.

(c) Two regional workshops (one in Africa and the other in Latin America and the Caribbean) convening the policymakers and other stakeholders, including international, regional and national experts and UN resident coordinators, to share findings of the project associated with the SDFA reports and the country studies on the regulatory, institutional, and market-related challenges to mobilizing affordable external climate financing.

(d) Four national external financial strategies (one for each beneficiary country) to mobilize financial resources geared towards greener, more equal and sustainable development compatible with external and public sector financial sustainability.

(e) Four national roadmaps (one for each beneficiary country) to implement the national external strategy.

(f) Four national workshops (one in each beneficiary country) to present and discuss the financial strategy and the roadmap with policymakers, central bankers and other invited national experts with the aim of ensuring the acceptance and endorsement of these two pillars of the policy.

(g) Virtual technical assistance to the Ministry of Finance of Cabo Verde to hand over the Dashboard of the Sustainable Development Finance Assessment (SDFA) Framework Mark II.

(h) Two virtual regional workshops (one in Africa and the other in Latin America and the Caribbean) with the participation of policymakers and other stakeholders from beneficiary and non-beneficiary countries of the region – including UN resident coordinators – to share learnings of the project and elucidate the usefulness of the financial strategy and roadmap that could be provided in the future for non-beneficiary countries.

480. **Results and impact**. The project has enhanced capacities of the four beneficiary SIDS - Cabo Verde, Comoros, Belize and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines - to diagnose funding gaps and reconcile them with external and public sector financial sustainability in the post-COVID-19 setting to achieve greener, more equal, and sustainable development. It has also enhanced their capabilities to design policies that enable the mobilization of affordable external financial resources for achieving such development while ensuring external and public sector financial sustainability.

481. In the case of Cabo Verde, during the project implementation, the country further strengthened its climate governance structure by establishing a new climate governance framework in May 2024.The project contributed to the setting up of this new governance, which considered recommendations from the country report on the regulatory, institutional, and market-related challenges to mobilize climate finance. The government also endorsed the financial strategy and the roadmap in the national workshop held in Praia on 8 October 2025, with the presence of the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance who committed to the implementation of actions of the roadmap to improve further the new climate governance framework.

482. Following the national workshop, the project delivered key capacity development for 27 policymakers and government officials from the National Secretariat for Climate Action (SNAC) and the Ministry of Finance through virtual capacity-building sessions on using the SDFA Framework Mark II dashboard, a policy tool that enables the construction of scenarios with different combinations of external financial sources and private and public investments, as well as the adoption of development policies (which change the export-output ratio and the import content) to meet the climate-related SDGs while ensuring external and public financial sustainability. The SDFA Framework Mark II dashboard will be particularly helpful for assessing policy options to finance the country's climate-related goals sustainably under the new climate governance framework

4. SME participation in regional value chains

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

483. **Development context**. The potential of the African private sector, which is dominated by small and medium-sized 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.

484. **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 help create new market niches and expand cross-border trade under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). The project will directly contribute to SDGs 1, 5, 8, 9 and 17.

485. The project is being implemented by UNCTAD in close collaboration with UNECA, UNDP, United Nations Capital Development Fund (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.

486. **Outputs**. In 2025, the project made good progress in delivering the planned outputs in six beneficiary countries.

487. *Benin*: UNCTAD held consultations and focus group meetings with SMEs in the agroprocessing sector to gather input for the national impact study. A preliminary version of the study, identifying key sectors for Benin SMEs, such as agroprocessing (cotton and pineapple value chains) and iron & steel, was drafted.

488. In collaboration with the Ministry of SMEs and Employment Promotion and the UNDP office in Benin, UNCTAD organized a national validation workshop on 11 and 12 September 2025in Cotonou. The workshop brought together 23 participants, including 3 women, from government institutions, the private sector and development partners. The findings of the national impact study on the participation of Benin SMEs in regional value chains were reviewed and validated.

489. *Burundi*: Between 30 July and 18 August 2025, ALDC held a series of consultation meetings with eleven (11) key stakeholders in Burundi. The objective of these consultations was to collect inputs and data to inform the national impact study on Burundi SMEs' participation in regional value chains, conducted under the project. The study focuses on the agro-processing and light manufacturing sectors, identified as having high potential for Burundian SMEs. These consultations supported the preparation of a validation workshop, held from 27 to 28 August 2025 in Bujumbura, organized in collaboration with the Bureau of Strategic Studies and Development within the Office of the President of Burundi and the Ministry of Trade, Transport, Industry and Tourism. Thirty-two (32) stakeholders, including 10 women, from across the public and private sectors participated in the workshop to review and validate the findings of the national impact study.

490. *Cabo Verde*: On 2 October 2025, UNCTAD presented the technical cooperation outcome report titled "*Promoting sustainable intra-African export growth for Cabo Verde's small and medium-sized enterprises through the blue economy*" to the Cabo Verde UN Country Team meeting. The report examines the opportunities and challenges associated with expanding exports from small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Cabo Verde, particularly in the context of AfCFTA and identifies the blue economy sector as key to Cabo Verde SMEs' integration into regional markets.

491. On 4 November 2025, UNCTAD presented the project and highlighted the role of Blue Economy diversification for Cabo Verde's SMEs. In a panel on "Blue Economy and Finance", UNCTAD underlined how domestic resource mobilization can be reinforced through economic diversification and better support to SMEs, particularly by improving access to finance and value addition in the fisheries sector. Other panellists included

representatives from the banking sector, investment promotion entities and the European Commission (BlueInvest).[104]

492. On 7 November 2025, UNCTAD, in collaboration with the Cabo Verde National Institute for Business Support and Promotion (PROEMPRESA), organized a training workshop for 19 small fisheries businesses (including 15 women) in São Vicente, as a side event to Ocean Week. The training, delivered with certified trainers, focused on access to finance, national regulation and certification of fish products, regional market opportunities and trade rules. Its objectives were to strengthen business skills, improve access to finance, enhance compliance with food safety and hygiene standards, and support better integration into local and regional supply chains. Most participants were women, representing fish traders, and processors of fish and fish products.

493. *Central African Republic*: UNCTAD, in collaboration with ECA's Subregional Office for Central Africa and the Ministry of Trade and Industry, organized a national validation workshop on 6–7 May 2025 in Bangui, Central African Republic (CAR). The workshop brought together 60 participants, including 21 women, from government institutions, the private sector and development partners, to validate the findings of the national impact study on the participation of SMEs in regional value chains. UNCTAD is developing training modules based on the impact study and the capacity-building needs assessment conducted during the workshop. Identified priority areas for capacity-building include packaging, certification, digital tools and access to regional markets, focusing on women and youth-led enterprises.

494. In September 2025, UNCTAD published the country impact report titled "Intégration des PME aux chaines de valeur régionales: Un levier stratégique pour la transformation économique de la République Centrafricaine" ("*Integrating SMEs into Regional Value Chains: A Strategic Lever for the Economic Transformation of the Central African Republic*" in English). It identifies strategic opportunities for the integration of SMEs of the Central African Republic in high-potential regional value chains in the cotton, timber, and agribusiness sectors, especially within the framework of the AfCFTA. Moreover, the report offers a mapping of regional market niches for the Central African Republic and recommends priority actions to strengthen productive capacities, facilitate access to finance, improve infrastructure, foster regional trade integration, and promote local entrepreneurship. The findings and recommendations of the report will help inform the design of training materials to build the capacity of SMEs of the Central African Republic in AfCFTA export strategy, quality and norms and entrepreneurship skills.

495. *Togo*: UNCTAD, in collaboration with UNDP Togo and the Ministry of Trade, Crafts and Local Consumption, organized a validation workshop on 10-11 April 2025 in Kpalimé to discuss the challenges and opportunities for the Togolese SMEs to export under AfCFTA and validate the findings of the national impact study. Twenty-six (26) participants, including 2 women, from the government, private sector, academia and development partners reviewed and validated the national impact study on the opportunities and challenges of Togolese SMEs' participation in regional value and supply chains.

496. The national impact report, published in September 2025 and titled "Renforcer l'intégration et la compétitivité des petites et moyennes entreprise togolaises sur les marchés régionaux" ("*Strengthening the integration and competitiveness of Togolese small and medium-sized enterprises in regional markets*" in English), provides concrete steps to maximize the economic and social benefits of the AfCFTA while advancing Togo's industrialization and export capacities. It details a mapping of the continental value chain that allows Togo to more easily position its exports of products and services in the continental market network, particularly in the sectors of agro-industry, the textile industry, renewable energy, fisheries and aquaculture, and maritime and logistics services. The report's findings

[104] The Banco Cabo-Verdiano de Negócios (BCN), a commercial bank operating in Cabo Verde, represented the banking sector as panellist. Pró-Capital, a State-owned venture-capital company established to improve access to finance for Cabo Verdean businesses, and the Ocean Risk and Resilience Action Alliance (ORRAA), an international, multi-sector coalition aiming to mobilise investment in coastal and ocean resilience and the sustainable blue economy, represented the investment promotion entities as panellists.

and recommendations will inform the design of training materials to build the capacity of Togo's SMEs in agroprocessing, entrepreneurial skills, quality standards and certification, and access to finance.

497. *Uganda*: In collaboration with the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Cooperatives and the UN Resident Coordinator’s Office (RCO) in Uganda, UNCTAD organized a national validation workshop on 16–17 June 2025 in Kampala. The workshop brought together 32 participants, including 14 women, from government institutions, the private sector, and development partners to validate the findings of the national impact study on the participation in regional value chains. The study focuses on high-potential sectors, including iron and steel, automotive, and coffee. The national impact study is currently being finalized based on the participants’ inputs and recommendations

498. On 19 June 2025, UNCTAD shared the project’s results with the Uganda-based UN Deputies' monthly meeting. Deputies from the UNRCO, UNFPA, UNDP, UNICEF, UN Women and International Organization for Migration (IOM) provided positive feedback on UNCTAD’s project and initiative in supporting SMEs and trade integration in Uganda. They further noted the need for UNCTAD to collaborate with other UN agencies and partners that also provide technical and financial support for regional trade and SME empowerment, to strengthen synergies and achieve greater impact.

499. UNCTAD, in partnership with United Nations International Computing Centre (UNICC) and national statistics offices, is pilot-testing My Africa Cross-Border Trade Assistant (myACTA), a digital mobile application developed under the project to modernize the collection, analysis, and use of data on Informal Cross-Border Trade (ICBT) across Africa. Designed to replace paper-based systems, myACTA enables near real-time capture of transaction-level data and trader demographics, supporting more accurate, gender-responsive, and inclusive trade statistics. Its key functionalities include user-friendly interfaces for rapid data entry on traded goods, quantities, transportation modes, currencies, trader demographics, trade flows, and border locations. Its integrated geolocation feature ensures that data points are linked to specific border crossings. An additional module of the mobile application MyACTA, the “business profile”, is under development to allow small business owners to create a profile within the application, record trade operations, access trade and market data, and use the insights to access financial services.

500. The pilot testing of the mobile application (myACTA) was conducted in Benin from 18 to 24 December 2025 at five informal border crossing points in the departments of Ouémé, Plateau, Mono, and Couffo. The pilot resulted in 602 transaction records, representing an informal cross-border trade flow amounting to XOF250 million (approximately US$454’000), capturing both export and import flows between Benin and its neighbouring countries, notably Togo and Nigeria. The pilot testing highlighted the need for simplified product classifications to improve enumerators’ usability and data reliability. Engagement with national statisticians underscored the importance of local ownership of the application. These lessons directly shaped the platform’s architecture and scaling strategy.

501. **Results and impact**. 2025 marked the second year of implementation of the project. Key achievements include the completion of stakeholder consultations, country assessments, and national validation workshops in the six beneficiary countries, namely Togo, Central African Republic, Cabo Verde, Uganda, Burundi and Benin. These activities served as important platforms for fostering dialogue on policy coherence, ensuring that national stakeholders contribute to shaping strategies that support regional trade, and identifying priority sectors where countries possess regional comparative advantages, particularly in agro-processing, light manufacturing, mining, timber, and textiles. UNCTAD finalized technical cooperation outcome reports for Togo, Central African Republic, Cabo Verde and Benin.

502. Beyond knowledge generation, the project demonstrated tangible impact through enhanced stakeholder collaboration and the development of practical tools to facilitate regional trade and SME participation in value chains. Notably, the introduction and refinement of the “My Africa Cross-Border Trade Assistant” (myACTA) mobile application represents a forward-looking digital solution aimed at supporting cross-border trade by improving access to market information and trade procedures. Engagement with national

statistical offices and government institutions during technical meetings also laid the groundwork for pilot testing and long-term data collaboration. Collectively, these efforts have strengthened national ownership of project outputs, improved the evidence base for policymaking, and created pathways for SMEs to better integrate into regional markets, ultimately contributing to more sustainable, competitive, and inclusive industrial development across the participating countries.

503. 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

504. 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.

505. 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.

506. 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 2025 and key results to date. Technical cooperation projects that are pertinent to the aforementioned theme and not linked with any of the existing 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

Project number	*Short title*	*Period covered*	*Source of funds*
INT/8X/603	Training programmes on restrictive business practices (competition and consumer protection policies)	1986 -	Group of donors

507. **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.

508. **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 Conferences to Review All Aspects of the Set of Multilaterally Agreed Equitable Principles and Rules for the Control of Restrictive Business Practices.[107] 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.

509. **Outputs**. In 2025, UNCTAD undertook an implementation assessment of the voluntary peer reviews of competition law and policy, marking 20 years since the first peer review exercise in 2005.[108] UNCTAD also conducted the voluntary peer review of consumer protection law and policy of Angola, under the project on "*Technical assistance and capacity building in competition and consumer protection for African Portuguese-speaking developing countries and Timor-Leste*".[109]

510. *A brief assessment of 20 years of voluntary peer reviews of competition law and policy*.[110] Since 2005 when the first peer review exercise was carried out, 30 jurisdictions have undergone voluntary peer reviews of competition law and policy. The assessments illustrated how the peer reviews have been used, and what their effects and challenges have been over the past twenty years.

511. Voluntary peer reviews have supported many countries in strengthening their legal and institutional frameworks, often acting as catalysts for revising competition laws, adopting clearer procedures and enhancing the mandates of competition authorities. The peer reviews have also helped to promote competition awareness raising activities, provide opportunities for competition authorities to engage more actively with other government bodies, judges, businesses and civil society, and to promote a broader competition culture through training and outreach. This is exemplified by the dissemination events typically organized following the completion of peer review reports, which bring together these stakeholders to present findings and recommendations and support their effective and timely implementation.[111]

512. At the same time, competition authorities reported persistent obstacles in implementing some recommendations, including limited resources, competing government priorities and the need for sustained political will and cross-ministerial coordination, factors

[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.

[107] https://unctad.org/topic/competition-and-consumer-protection/the-united-nations-set-of-principles-on-competition.

[108] https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/tdrbpconf10d2_en.pdf.

[109] https://unctad.org/project/technical-assistance-and-capacity-building-competition-and-consumer-protection-african.

[110] https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/cicplpd40_en.pdf.

[111] For example, see: https://unctad.org/meeting/dissemination-unctad-voluntary-peer-review-competition-law-and-policy-egypt.

that can slow or stall reforms even when recommendations are widely endorsed. For example, Egypt highlighted that human and financial resources were limited and that, critically, investment in staffing, training and infrastructure was required, to support implementation efforts.

513. Regarding ways forward, peer reviewed competition authorities highlighted the importance of stronger and more sustained follow-up, recommending expanded technical assistance, clearer monitoring of progress, and more robust capacity-building support to ensure that peer review recommendations translate into concrete and lasting improvements.

514. *Voluntary peer review of consumer protection law and policy of Angola*.[112] The voluntary peer review of consumer protection law and policy of Angola was held in July 2025. The peer review report outlined the legislative and institutional framework for consumer protection in Angola, including progress made under the 2003 consumer protection law, and ongoing efforts to update and consolidate the framework. It recommended revising the consumer protection law to address new and emerging areas such as e-commerce and telecommunications and enhancing cooperation among all public bodies responsible for consumer protection through cooperation agreements or memoranda of understanding. The report also recommended increasing Angola's National Institute for Consumer Protection (INADEC)'s human and financial resources, supporting the professionalization of consumer associations, and promoting extrajudicial mechanisms for dispute resolution. Further recommendations focused on developing INADEC's website and consumer portal, expanding consumer education programmes with particular attention to vulnerable populations, and strengthening dialogue with business associations to promote good business practices in accordance with the United Nations guidelines for consumer protection.

515. During the presentation of the peer review report at the Ninth United Nations Conference to Review All Aspects of the Set of Multilaterally Agreed Equitable Principles and Rules for the Control of Restrictive Business Practices, the delegation of Angola expressed the support for the recommendations.

516. UNCTAD subsequently presented a proposal for a technical assistance project to implement the recommendations. The project would involve updating the consumer protection law of Angola, to address existing gaps based on the recommendations, strengthen educational and awareness-raising campaigns on consumers' rights for relevant stakeholders, and enhancing INADEC's coordination and cooperation with other governmental sectors.

517. In the meantime, the process for the voluntary peer review of consumer protection law and policy of Argentina has started, and UNCTAD conducted a fact-finding mission to collect data and information;[113] identified the panel of peer reviewers; and worked on the peer review report.

518. **Results and impact**. The UNCTAD secretariat outlined a tailor-made technical assistance project for Angola, for the implementation of the peer review recommendations, and invited other authorities and development partners to assist Angola in improving policies, enhancing enforcement capacities, and developing a consumer protection culture. In October 2025, 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 Angola.[114] The event was attended by high-level government officials, particularly sector regulators and policymakers, consumer and business associations, chambers of commerce, academia, and the media. On this occasion, UNCTAD and INADEC representatives participated in a live radio broadcast on Radio Nacional de Angola, which provided an opportunity to raise public awareness about UNCTAD's work on consumer protection, emphasizing Angola's progress in developing its consumer protection framework, while also highlighting opportunities for improvement in consumer education, information, and international cooperation.

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[112] https://unctad.org/publication/voluntary-peer-review-consumer-protection-law-and-policy-angola.

[113] https://unctad.org/meeting/kick-unctads-voluntary-peer-review-consumer-protection-law-and-policy-argentina.

[114] https://unctad.org/meeting/dissemination-unctads-voluntary-peer-review-consumer-protection-law-and-policy-angola.

519. The assessment of voluntary peer reviews of competition law and policy demonstrated positive results and impact in the reviewed countries, with all authorities surveyed agreed that the peer reviews served to improve the national competition system due to positive reactions from the executive and legislative branches to the requested reforms. Countries such as Albania, Egypt, Paraguay and the Philippines, as well as West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) also responded that the peer reviews have helped promote competition awareness raising activities. At the same time, these countries noted that they would welcome more active involvement from UNCTAD in the implementation of the recommendations, to reinforce their relevance and accelerate intervention by public authorities. Requests and recommendations from various authorities highlight the increasing need for continued involvement by UNCTAD in capacity-building, legal and regulatory support and policy dissemination through the peer review process.

C2 Business facilitation

Table C2
Business facilitation

Project number	*Short title*	*Period covered*	*Source of funds*
ARG/0T/MAQ	eRegistrations Lomas de Zamora Argentina	2024 -	Argentina
CUB/0T/OAN	Cuba Foreign Trade Single Window - Phase 2. Extension of the scope of the SW to new procedures	2025	UNDP
KEN/0T/MBI	eRegistrations Kenya Investment Single Window	2023 -	Kingdom of the Netherlands
LES/0T/NAI	Integrated online Business Facilitation Window Lesotho	2024 -	Lesotho
INT/0T/6AT	Business Facilitation Multi-donor Fund	2006 -	Group of donors
INT/0T/HCJ2	Strategic Partnership the Netherlands – (linked with THCE04)	2023 -	Kingdom of the Netherlands
INT/0T/MAV	Business and Investment Facilitation Capacities ACP countries	2023 -	European Union
RAF/0T/OAL	Rwanda. UN Inter-Agency Cluster. IOM-UNCTAD. Promoting Shared Prosperity between Rwanda and DRC through Cross-Border Trade (PSP-CBT)	2025	European Union
ROA-2427 (B16)	Attracting Finance and Investment for the Energy Transition in Africa	2024 -	Development Account
RWA/0T/NBH	Amplifying digital opportunities in cross-border trade	2024 -	United Nations MPTFO

520. **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.

521. 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.

522. **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.

523. 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 Geneva Consensus 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 by way of simplification of trade-related administrative procedures. (TD/561/Add.2, para 80.17 (ii)).

524. **Outputs**. In 2025, the programme benefited 16 countries and territories. Online single windows and new online services were developed, implemented or further enhanced in Angola, Argentina, Benin, Bhutan, Colombia, Cuba, Kenya, Lesotho, Mali, Nigeria, The Gambia, Rwanda 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.

525. National experts in Benin, Bhutan, Cameroon, Cuba, El Salvador, Kenya, Lesotho, Mali, Rwanda, Palestine, The Gambia and Zimbabwe have trained civil servants of their countries or provinces on the use of UNCTAD business facilitation tools and methodologies.

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

527. Below are some highlights in 2025:

(a) In *Argentina*, the Municipality of Lomas de Zamora added new functionalities and services to its online single window (SW) for business registration and operations, using the latest version of the eRegistrations system. Municipal civil servants were trained in service design and file processing.

(b) In *Angola*, UNCTAD is supporting the implementation of the Sustainable Investment Facilitation Agreement with the EU (with EU funding). It helped simplify and digitalise procedures for investors.

(c) In *Colombia*, UNCTAD, in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment, completed a system for allowing companies to assess emissions of greenhouse gases 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).

(d) In *Cuba*, a capacity building workshop was organised for the Ministry of Commerce staff on the design and implementation of five new services. The services will be tested and put in use in 2026. UNCTAD provided continued support to the Ministry staff on requirements for the upgrade and improvement of the electronic identification system integrated in the single window.

(e) UNCTAD assisted *The Gambia* in accelerating business registration through a digital investment single window. A prototype was developed and submitted for agencies' testing prior to launch. International and local businesses will use the eRegistrations system to obtain online required authorizations to start and get operating.

(f) In *Kenya*, building on the Kenya Investment Single Window (KISW) system, Kenya Investment Authority (InvestKenya's) current facilitation service, UNCTAD started with the creation of a digital online service centre, where investors can obtain their mandatory registrations online. Work is ongoing. Services are being co-developed with InvestKenya staff using the eRegistrations no-code platform, with weekly programming and design sessions held.

(g) In *Mali*, UNCTAD, together with the Ministry of Health and the Employers, finalized a platform for the digital licensing for commercialization of pharmaceuticals. The system will enable the online licensing of the import, distribution and local production of pharmaceuticals. 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.

(h) In *Rwanda*, UNCTAD enhanced the trade portal with documented procedures to support small cross border traders. With the aim to maximize impact at the country level, UNCTAD activities were delivered through inter-agency collaborations.

(i) In *Lesotho*, UNCTAD developed prototype services simplifying key procedures, including business name reservation, company incorporation, business permit for foreigners, trade or industrial license based on business activity.

(j) In *Benin*, UNCTAD, in collaboration with APIEx (Agency for Investment and Export Promotion), upgraded the digital Single Window for Investment. The new Single Window allows businesses to comply with business procedures and obtain their certificates online.

(k) In *Zimbabwe*, UNCTAD launched an online investment portal providing step-by-step information for investors to obtain over 60 different mandatory licenses and registrations across 21 different ministries, departments and agencies. Based on its success, training began on developing an online single window prototype.

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

529. UNCTAD developed an updated and revamped version of its eOpportunities portal, a comprehensive, turn-key platform designed to strengthen investment facilitation and project visibility on a global scale. The enhanced portal enables countries to showcase bankable, investment-ready projects through a modern, user-friendly interface that streamlines the connection between project promoters and potential investors. By providing a structured and standardized framework for presenting project details, financial requirements, and expected returns, the platform reduces barriers to entry for countries with limited technical capacity while ensuring that projects meet the quality and transparency standards expected by the international investment community. The revamped version incorporates improved navigation, richer project profiling features, and enhanced matchmaking capabilities, making it easier for governments, private sector actors, and development finance institutions to identify and engage with high-potential opportunities across key sectors such as infrastructure, agriculture, energy, and digital services.

530. **Results and impact**. The programme generated considerable impact on the ground, particularly with regard to the economic and social benefits. In Benin, Bhutan, Cuba, Iraq and Palestine 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. In Mali, companies owned by under-30s increased by 350 per cent following the implementation of a digital single window for business registration. In Lesotho, annual registration of women-owned businesses grew by 30 per cent. In Benin, 48 per cent of registered businesses are now in rural areas.

C3 Trade facilitation

Table C3
Trade facilitation

Project number	*Short title*	*Period covered*	*Source of funds*
DRC/0T/OBN	Facilitating trade through the development of the national Trade Information Portal and NTFC capacity in the Democratic Republic of the Congo	2025 -	TradeMark Africa
INT/0T/LAL	Accelerate Trade Facilitation	2022 -	United Kingdom
INT/0T/LAL3	Strengthen the capacities of members of Egypt's National Trade Facilitation Comm	2025 -	United Kingdom
INT/0T/OAX	Reform Tracker for Secretariat for Central American Economic Integration (SIECA) Trade Facilitation Strategy	2025 -	SIECA
RAB/0T/MAX	Strengthening Abu Dhabi's trade facilitation committee	2023 -	United Arab Emirates
RAF/0T/MAZ	AFCFTA Support programme to eliminate non-tariff barriers, promote trade facilitation and industrial diversification	2022 -	Germany
RAF/0T/NAA	Capacity Building for EAC Trade Portals Connectivity	2022 -	African Development Bank
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
ROA-2528 (D17)	Climate-smart trade facilitation for economic and climate resilience in Africa and Asia-Pacific	2025 -	Development Account

531. **Development context**. 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.

532. 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.

533. As of 16 March 2026, 162 out of 164 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.

534. 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.

535. 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.

536. **Objectives and features**. Geneva Consensus, outcome document of UNCTAD16, renews UNCTAD’s mandate in trade facilitation. The paragraph (80.37) states that UNCTAD should continue and reinforce its work, through its three pillars, to support the implementation of trade facilitation reforms, including the Agreement on Trade Facilitation of the World Trade Organization, and continue its support to the development and the implementation of appropriate legal and regulatory frameworks that reduce trade transaction costs. The paragraph (80.38) underlines that UNCTAD should continue its work on building the capacity of national trade facilitation committees and bodies to increase the harmonization and coordination of trade facilitation measures at the national and regional levels. The paragraph 80.17 (ii) also highlights the need for 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 by way of simplification of trade-related administrative procedures.

537. 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 obligations under the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement and their domestication at national level; (3) developing and implementing national and regional trade facilitation reforms in order to reduce time and costs of trade procedures and strengthen global, regional and national supply chains; (4) providing advisory services and capacity-building for countries and NTFCs; (5) implementing monitoring and evaluation tools through the Reform Tracker; (6) rolling out transparency tools like Trade Information Portals and simplification of trade-related procedures; (7) offering technical assistance for trade reforms, including issues such as blockchain, transit, facilitation of emergency and humanitarian goods, gender mainstreaming, etc.; and (8) promoting climate-smart trade facilitation reforms.

538. 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.

539. 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.

540. 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 description 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.

541. In 2025, 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, and has developed capacity of beneficiary countries in strengthening border agency cooperation.

542. 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 extend across various UNCTAD expertise areas, integrating customs, trade automation, e-commerce, and other fields.

543. **Outputs**. In 2025, UNCTAD issued 1,545 e-learning certificates to trade facilitation stakeholders under the Empowerment Program for Trade Facilitation, reflecting continued strong engagement across the trade facilitation community. Women accounted for 44.2 per cent of certificate recipients. Participants included both members of National Trade Facilitation Committees (34.6 per cent) and non-members (65.4 per cent). They represented both the public sector (79.5 per cent) and the private sector (20.5 per cent). The UNCTAD Trade Facilitation e-learning platform also continued to grow strongly from 2024 to 2025 in both reach and engagement, with active users increasing by 37 per cent to 16,433, overall tracked interactions rising by 56.4 per cent to 721,000, and average engagement time per active user increasing by 20.2 per cent to 11 minutes and 20 seconds. In addition, the platform recorded over 418,000 views in 2025.

544. UNCTAD provided technical assistance and capacity building in the area of trade facilitation to 62 countries in 2025, namely, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Benin, Plurinational State of Bolivia, Botswana, Burkina Fasso, 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, Naoero, Niger, Nigeria, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Rwanda, Salomon Islands, Samoa, Sao Tomé and Principe, Somalia, South Sudan, St. Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and Grenadines, Senegal, Sierre Leone, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Timor-Leste , Togo, Tonga, Tuvalu, Uganda, Vanuatu, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

545. 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.

546. Since 2025, the preparation of the 2nd Global Supply Chains Forum, to be held in November 2026, has been underway with trade facilitation as one of the core components of the Forum. The discussions on trade facilitation will focus on (i) how the role of trade facilitation reforms and digital solutions in the clearance of goods can increase the resilience of the supply chains; and (ii) the coordinating role of the NTFCs in enhancing border agency cooperation and making trade flows along transport corridors smooth and reliable.

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

548. Out of the 154 notifications submitted to the WTO Trade Facilitation Committees in 2025, a third (33 per cent) were submitted by countries that received UNCTAD technical assistance, showing significantly improved capacity of beneficiary countries not only to fulfil their international obligations but also to implement - sometimes even earlier than expected - key trade facilitation reforms.

549. In 2025, UNCTAD delivered its programme on Transit Coordination which trained 344 experts (40 per cent women) worldwide and, in a few months, resulted in the submission of 12 official nominations for transit coordinator to the WTO Trade Facilitation Committee, compared to only 4 submissions in the previous seven years.

550. The Reform Tracker is an inclusive tool that improves transparency and coordination among trade facilitation stakeholders. In 2025, the Reform Tracker recorded over 122,000 visits, almost doubling the results of 2024. A total of 30 countries (five more than in 2024) kept tracking the progress of trade facilitation initiatives using the UNCTAD Reform Tracker. Moreover, the Secretariat for Central American Economic Integration (SIECA) is using Reform Tracker to monitor the implementation of its Central American Trade Facilitation and Competitiveness Strategy.

551. UNCTAD technical assistance and advisory services have reinforced the capacity of developing countries and LDCs to accelerate the implementation of trade facilitation reforms. In 2025, NTFCs marked 348 reforms as completed in their Reform Trackers, representing a 52 per cent increase compared to 2024 results.

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

(a) “What we really appreciated about the UNCTAD’s support is the results-oriented approach which has been adopted. UNCTAD has supported us in elaborating a roadmap, accompany us in the monitoring of the reforms, helping us with the capacity building of the NTFC members. They have also helped us with innovative tools such as the Reform Tracker and the business process analysis, which is the heart of the trade facilitation. Thanks to the support, we can say that the NTFC is fully equipped to drive those reforms in trade facilitation.” Chief of the Corporate Audit Division at the Anti-Fraud Unit in Customs and Member of the Permanent Secretary of the NTFC, Madagascar, 2025

(b) “The UNCTAD course on Transit Coordination provided practical, well-structured insights into international and regional transit facilitation. It deepened my understanding of WTO TFA obligations, and the role of national coordination. Highly relevant for landlocked countries like Armenia, it offers real tools to strengthen efficient, secure transit systems.” Chief Customs Officer, Armenia, 2025

C4 ASYCUDA – Automated System for Customs Data

Table C4
ASYCUDA – Automated System for Customs Data

Project number	*Short title*	*Period covered*	*Source of funds*
INT/9X/89S	Support for ASYCUDA implementation activities	1998 -	Group of donors
INT/0T/FAK	Support to the Centre of Excellence, Gibraltar	2017 -	National Governments
INT/0T/NAY	Electronic approaches to the notification and movement documents of the Basel Convention	2024 -	UNEP

Project number	*Short title*	*Period covered*	*Source of funds*
INT/0T/OAI	Support the planning and implementation of the e-permitting system for CITES in Vietnam	2025 -	CITES
RAF/0T/IAA	COMESA Trade Facilitation Programme	2019 -	European Union
RAF/0T/IBC	Etude de diagnostic pour l'interconnexion des systèmes informatiques des douanes	2020 -	CEMAC
RAF/0T/OAL	Upgrading ASYCUDAWorld & SSCBT	2025 -	International Maritime Organization/ European Union
RAS/0T/1DA	ASYCUDA Support Mechanism for the Pacific (ASMP)	2002 -	Multi-donor
RAS/0T/DBT	ASYCUDA Support Mechanism for Asia	2014 -	Sri Lanka
RAS/0T/JBO	Improving Pacific Islands Customs and Trade (IMPACT)	2021 -	European Union
RAS/0T/OBA	Development of additional modules and enhancements of ASYCUDAWorld	2025 -	Pacer Plus Implementation Unit
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
AFG/0T/HBU5	UN2UN Agreement for support of humanitarian aid flow to Afghanistan/SHAFA (ASYCUDA Exemptions System)	2024 -	UNDP
AFG/0T/LAB	Multi Agency Trust Fund	2021 -	UNDP
AFG/0T/LAB4	STFA Joint Programme for the South-Eastern Region of Afghanistan	2023 -	UNDP
AFG/0T/NAS	Cross-sectoral Cluster Survey of Afghanistan’s Micro, Small, and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs)	2024 -	Afghanistan
AFG/0T/NAS2	Strengthening Afghanistan's Industrial Parks	2025 -	UNDP
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	2024 -	
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

Project number	*Short title*	*Period covered*	*Source of funds*
BAR/0T/JBM	Implementation of the Barbados Electronic Single Window for Trade	2021-	Barbados
BDI/0T/OAA	Deployment of a web module for the electronic Single Window	2025 -	TradeMark Africa
BDI/0T/OBH	Deployment of a web module for the electronic Single Window	2025 -	TradeMark Africa
BGD/0T/FAC	ASYCUDA World – ASYCUDA Support Mechanism for Asia	2016 -	Bangladesh
BIH/0T/OAM	Pre-Arrival Processing for Express Consignments & AEO in Bosnia and Herzegovina	2025 -	Germany
BKF/0T/KAO	Development of Interfaces with eDOUANES	2021 -	World Bank
CUR/0T/FAY	ASYCUDA World consolidation - 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 -	World Bank
DRC/0T/MAD	Renforcement de l'environnement électronique de la DGDA	2023-	D.R. Congo
ELS/0T/JAN	ASYCUDAWorld - El Salvador	2020-	El Salvador
EQG/0T/MBJ	Mise en place de la phase II du logiciel SYDONIA (Système Douanier Informatique Automatise) hors Malabo en République De Guinee Équatoriale	2024 -	AfDB
ERI/0T/NAW	Implementation of ASCUDAWorld Eritrea	2024 -	UNDP
GAB/0T/MBH	Renforcement de la mise en œuvre de SYDONIAWorld Gabon	2024 -	AfDB
GAM/0T/HAJ	Implementation of ASYCUDA World in Gambia	2019 -	Gambia
GBS/0T/MAU	Implementation of ASYCUDAWorld in Gambia	2024 -	AfDB
GEO/0T/NBD	Development of Georgia Revenue Service Digital Customs Platform	2024 -	Georgia
GIB/0T/NAQ	Upgrade of ASYCUDAWorld system operational at HM Customs Gibraltar	2024 -	Gibraltar
GUI/0T/NAN	Automatisation de l’ETNM (étude du temps nécessaire de la mainlevée) dans SYDONIA	2024 -	Expertise France
HAI/0T/DAO	Consolidation of ASYCUDAWorld	2014 -	Haiti
IRQ/0T/KAA	Automatization and Modernization of Customs	2021 -	Iraq
JAM/0T/GAS	Electronic Single Window for Trade	2017 -	Jamaica

Project number	*Short title*	*Period covered*	*Source of funds*
JAM/0T/KAN	ASYCUDA World Upgrade Project at the Jamaica Customs Agency	2021 -	Jamaica
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
KAZ/0T/KAE	Technical Support and Modernization of ASTANA-1	2021-	Kazakhstan
LAO/0T/NAZ	ASYCUDAWorld (AW) Version Upgrade Project in Lao PDR	2025 -	World Bank
LEB/0T/5BK	Implementation of ASYCUDA World in Lebanon	2005 -	Lebanon
MAG/0T/NAE	Support of the Customs of Madagascar	2024 -	USAID
MAU/0T/CAD	Projet SYDONIA – Mauritania	2015 -	Mauritania
MDV/0T/HBK	ASYCUDA Support Mechanism for the Asia Region (ASMA)	2018 -	Trademark Africa
MLI/0T/9BF	ASYCUDA project - Mali	2013 -	Mali
MLW/0T/LBE	Southern Africa Trade and Connectivity Malawi	2022 -	World Bank
MOL/0T/KAP	Digitalization of Moldova Customs Service	2021 -	EBRD
MOL/0T/LBB	Development & Implementation of the National Transit System (NTS) of the Customs	2023 -	European Union
MON/0T/LBA	Mongolia: Digitalization of customs services	2022 -	EBRD
NAM/0T/MAN	Upgrade and Enhancement of ASYCUDAWorld	2025 -	Namibia
NCA/0T/HBZ	Implementation of ASYCUDAWorld in New Caledonia	2019 -	New Caledonia
NEP/0T/GAU	ASYCUDA Support Mechanism for Asia	2017 -	United Nations Office for Project Services
NER/0T/JAL	Migration to ASYCUDAWorld (phase 3)	2020 -	Niger
PNG/0T/NBG	eCITES Feasibility Study in Papua New Guinea	2024 -	Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)
PRC/0T/OBF	Migration to the latest version of ASYCUDAWorld and ASYVal module	2025 -	Congo
SEY/0T/OBB	Upgrading Of ASYCUDAWorld & Support Mechanism	2025 -	Seychelles

Project number	*Short title*	*Period covered*	*Source of funds*
SOI/0T/OAK	eCITES Feasibility Study in Solomon Islands	2025 -	SPREP
SPM/0T/DAF	ASYCUDA World Implementation	2014 -	Saint Pierre and Miquelon
STP/0T/NAR	ASYCUDAWorld Upgrade in São Tome and Principe	2024 -	AfDB
STV/0T/MBE	ASYCUDA Electronic Single Window for Trade in St Vincent	2023 -	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
SUD/0T/JBT	ASYCUDAWorld Support Mechanism	2020 -	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 installation and implementation of ASYPM 2018	2014 -	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 -	World Bank
TIM/0T/HCR	Implementation of the Trade Single Window System for Timor-Leste	2019 -	Timor-Leste
TRI/0T/OAO	ASYCUDA Extended Digitalization of the Customs Clearance in Trinidad and Tobago	2025 -	Trinidad and Tobago
TUK/0T/NAO	Phase 3. Enhancing Digitalization and Regional Transit Connectivity	2025 -	Turkmenistan
VAN/0T/HBJ	Technical Consulting Services Agreement (Vanuatu ESWS)	2018 -	Vanuatu
VEN/0T/LBN	ASYCUDAWorld Support to the SENIAT - Venezuela new version	2023 -	Venezuela
VEN/0T/MAC	ASYCUDAWorld Support to the SENIAT – Venezuela	2023 -	Venezuela
VEN/0T/OAJ	ASYCUDA Single Window Venezuela	2025 -	Venezuela
VIE/0T/NBE	Support the planning and implementation of the e-permitting system for CITES in Viet Nam	2024 -	CITES
ZAM/0T/MAK	Enhancement of ASYCUDAWorld Zambia	2023 -	COMESA
ZAM/0T/OBU	Upgrading and Support Mechanism for ASYCUDAWorld	2025 -	TradeMark Africa
ZIM/0T/JBB	Zimbabwe Electronic Single Window	2021 -	Zimbabwe

553. **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 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 essential for economic planning and by supporting international trade needs.

554. The ASYCUDA programme is committed to providing sustained support for development, both in-country and remotely. Over a period of 44 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.

555. The mandate of the ASYCUDA programme is reflected in paragraph 80.36 of the Geneva Consensus, an outcome of the sixteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, as it was in the Bridgetown Covenant (paragraph 127 (c)). The document states that UNCTAD should "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). 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 39 African countries and territories, 37 Least Developed Countries, 41 Small Island Developing States and 22 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.

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

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

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

(c) Goal 3. Ensuring healthy lives and promote well-being, in particular targets 3a and 3d, by automating customs control of movement of excisable goods/tobacco products with ASYCUDA-DCTS and by strengthening customs and inter-agency controls at the borders of pharmaceutical products, 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 empowerment in Customs local teams.

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

(f) Goal 8. Decent work and economic growth: Customs 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) and Small and Medium-Sized Industries (SMIs) and to improving regional and cross-border infrastructure, especially in the least developed countries and Africa;

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

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

557. **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. ASYCUDA systems and solutions – including its flagship customs management solution, single window concept, platform for pre-arrival/departure processing and humanitarian relief coordination – manage the entire customs clearance process, from and prior to the arrival of goods until ultimate release and facilitate international trade through the integration into a one-stop shop of trade stakeholders from the public and private sectors. These solutions include 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.

558. **Outputs**. In 2025, at UNCTAD16, ASYCUDA organized a high-level side event on "*New technology to foster efficient, secure and sustainable trade*", which brought together ministers, ambassadors, and international partners to discuss how digital innovation can strengthen global trade systems and promote inclusive development. ASYCUDA took this opportunity to officially launch its new generation technology and software suite (including ASY5, the 5th generation of ASYCUDA Customs Management Software, and enhanced versions and framework for the Single Window concept, namely ASYHUB, ASYNTS, ASYREC and eCITES).

559. In Djibouti, the processing of all declarations and related documents has become 100% digital through ASYCUDAWorld, making the customs clearance procedure 100% paperless. In D.R. Congo, ASYCUDA and Customs continued the deployment of ASYCUDAWorld additional developments, including the Dynamic Selectivity, delay penalty and transit modules. Equatorial Guinea completed nationwide rollout of ASYCUDAWorld in 2025 following the successful piloting in Malabo in 2020. Eritrea piloted ASYCUDAWorld at Customs Headquarter in December 2025, initiating national deployment and full migration from ASYCUDA++ scheduled for 2026. Iraq and Sao Time and Principe successfully upgraded their ASYCUDAWorld national systems to version 4.4. Tajikistan officially launched ASYCUDAWorld in all customs offices in October 2025, shifting from paper-based processes to automated procedures and supporting cashless payments. In Venezuela, ASYCUDAWorld replaced ASYCUDA++ in the last 4 remaining customs offices. ASYCUDA++ is therefore no longer operational in Venezuela.

560. In 2025, 10 additional border regulatory agencies and Partner Governmental Agencies in 6 countries (Barbados, Jamaica, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Timor-Leste, Vanuatu and Zimbabwe) have benefitted from nationally implemented Single Window systems based on ASYCUDA technology, transitioning from paper-based procedures to digitalized procedures. In the Pacific, ASYCUDA prepared and handed over 4 single window blueprints to the Governments of Kiribati, Palau, Samoa and Tonga. They provide strategic guidance, prerequisites and recommendations for building a single window, in line with national and regional requirements as well as international standards.

561. In Jordan, ASYHUB Maritime and ASYHUB Express were piloted and went fully live in 2025. ASYHUB is a cloud-native platform for pre-arrival/departure processing and integrating data between ASYCUDAWorld and other external systems.

562. In Moldova, the ASYCUDA-based New Transit System (ASYNTS) was successfully upgraded to Phase 6 (NCTS-P6), which includes alignment with European Union regulations

and standards and participation in the Common Transit Convention (CTC) through more secure data exchange, shorter transit procedures and lower administrative costs.

563. In Niger, ASYCUDAWorld implementation was extended to a new border customs office and the ASYCUDA SIGMAT Regional Transit Solution was deployed in the corridors Bamako-Niamey and Accra-Niamey.

564. ASYCUDA Published the ASYCUDA Report 2025 under the theme “The new generation of ASYCUDA for efficient, secure and sustainable trade”. It details the Programme's highlights and achievements of 2024, with a focus on new technology developed by ASYCUDA and its alignment with UNCTAD16 and ASYCUDA's renewed mandate.

565. **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 earnings from July-Sept 2024 to July-Sept 2025 increased by 5.6 per cent.

(b) In Gambia, customs revenue increased by 21 per cent from 2024 to 2025. It increased by 96 per cent since the implementation of ASYCUDAWorld in 2022.

(c) In Iraq, customs revenue increased by 25 per cent from 2024 to 2025.

(d) In Sri Lanka, customs revenue increased by 64 per cent from 2024 to 2025.

(e) In Timor Leste, customs revenue increased by approximately 20 per cent from 2024 to 2025.

(f) In Turkmenistan, following transit digitalization and facilitation through ASYCUDAWorld and ASYCUDA-based Single Window, rail container traffic increased by 90 per cent from 2024 to 2025, showing the country's growing role as a transit hub in Central Asia.

Trade Efficiency:

(a) In Afghanistan, the number of physical papers attached with exemption consignment was reduced by 93 per cent.

(b) In Cook Islands, the passenger processing time was reduced to less than 60 seconds.

(c) In Eswatini, the average customs processing time was reduced to 28 minutes in 2025 from 90 minutes in 2021.

(d) In Kazakhstan, e-commerce documents processing time was reduced to 5 minutes.

C5 Statistics

Table C5
Statistics

Project number	*Short title*	*Period covered*	*Source of funds*
INT/0T/MAY	Sustainable Development Initiatives grant – IFFs	2024 -	Foundation to Promote Open Society
INT/0T/OAZ	Beyond GDP: Advancing global and national initiatives to develop, compile and integrate beyond-GDP metrics to foster	2025 -	United Nations Department of

Project number	Short title	Period covered	Source of funds
	inclusive, sustainable, and forward-thinking policy making		Economic and Social Affairs
INT/9X/77J	Trust fund for the least developed countries: Core project	2015 -	Group of donors
ROA-2326 (D15)	Quantifying South-South cooperation to mobilize funds for the Sustainable Development Goals	2023 -	Development Account
ROA-2326 (M15)	Measuring and curbing illicit financial flows	2023 -	Development Account
ROA-2427 (K16)	Strengthening capacity for evidence-based policymaking and the economic resilience of CARICOM	2024 -	Development Account
ROA-2528 (A17)	Evidence-based climate action through artificial intelligence and data innovation in Caribbean small island developing States	2025 -	Development Account

566. **Development context**. Reliable data and statistics underpin the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and form the basis for evidence-based trade and development policy. As the 2030 deadline approaches, the demand for high-quality, actionable data has intensified across multiple fronts: from tracking illicit financial flows that drain public resources, to measuring the growing but statistically invisible contribution of South-South cooperation, to rethinking how development progress is assessed beyond conventional GDP metrics. UNCTAD works to close these gaps by strengthening developing countries' capacity to produce, analyse and use statistics on trade, investment, finance, productive capacities and sustainable development.

567. South-South cooperation has become an increasingly significant channel of development support, yet it remains the only major form of international cooperation without systematic, comparable data. The adoption of SDG indicator 17.3.1 by the UN Statistical Commission in 2022, together with the voluntary UN Conceptual Framework to Measure South-South Cooperation, created for the first time a globally agreed basis for countries of the South to quantify and report their own cooperation flows. UNCTAD, as co-custodian of the indicator, is working with UN Regional Commissions and partner countries to move from framework design to operational data collection and global reporting. In 2024 and 2025, Member States asked UNCTAD in the General Assembly (A/RES/156) to urgently strengthen support to developing economies to enable measurement of South-South cooperation using the UN Framework, repeating the call at the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4) in Sevilla.

568. Measuring progress through GDP alone fails to capture wellbeing, sustainability and equity, dimensions that are central to the 2030 Agenda. This recognition gained decisive political momentum in 2024 when the Pact for the Future mandated the establishment of an independent High-Level Expert Group to develop complementary metrics. Led by UNCTAD, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the Executive Office of the Secretary-General (EOSG), the Beyond GDP initiative responds to SDG target 17.19 and aims to equip governments with country-owned indicator dashboards that reflect what societies need to thrive.

569. Illicit financial flows (IFFs) continue to pose serious threats to sustainable development by diverting resources from essential social and health spending and productive investment and by impeding structural transformation. IFFs are critical enablers of organised crime, corruption and terrorism, so they are also detrimental to peace, security and justice. Curbing IFFs can provide much needed revenue for governments to advance sustainable

development, enhance economic resilience, and increase investment. The urgency of this agenda was reaffirmed in July 2025, when the Compromiso de Sevilla, the outcome of the FfD4, emphasized stronger measures against tax evasion, trade misinvoicing and money laundering, and called for timely, accurate data exchange to combat illicit finance. In December 2025, Member States renewed their 2024 request to UNCTAD and UNODC for strengthened support for IFF measurement (A/RES/80/126).

570. The implementation of climate change mitigation measures, in particular the energy transition in maritime transport and fisheries, poses new challenges for vulnerable economies that rely on the ocean, such as Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Access to reliable data on maritime transport emissions, fisheries and coastal ecosystem services is a critical precondition for evidence-based climate action. Caribbean SIDS require strengthened national statistical capacities to produce and apply such data in support of their climate commitments, in alignment with the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS and with SDG targets 13.2, 14.2, 14.7 and 17.18.

571. **Objectives and features**. UNCTAD equips developing countries with the tools, training and institutional support needed to compile statistics and track SDG progress, with particular emphasis on trade and the interrelated dimensions of finance, technology, investment and sustainable development. Global e-learning courses on merchandise and services trade statistics, delivered jointly by UNCTAD Statistics, Data and Digital Service (SDDS) and Train for Trade with the UN Statistics Division and the World Trade Organization (WTO), provide an effective means for building national trade statistics capacity. In parallel, the TiSSTAT system, originally developed with the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA), continued to be enhanced through methodological updates, streamlined workflows and improved user interface, while expanding to additional countries. UNCTAD supported use of TiSSTAT in Eastern Caribbean countries under a Development Account project implemented by SDDS and DITC with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and regional partners. The project aims to enhance services trade statistics availability and use for policy, with particular attention on creative services and digital trade. A further Development Account project for improved statistics on digital services trade for gender-responsive trade policy in Asia and the Pacific was prepared in 2025 for implementation from 2026.

572. As co-custodian of SDG indicator 17.3.1, UNCTAD works to enable developing countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Arab region to measure and report data on South-South cooperation for the first time. A Development Account project is carried out jointly with four United Nations regional commissions and in collaboration with the UN Office for South-South Cooperation with the objective to support the development of national data collection mechanisms in seven pilot countries, Ecuador, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Namibia, Nigeria, Peru and Qatar, to test the UN Framework and provide feedback for refinement of methodological guidance for countries.

573. At the centre of the Beyond GDP initiative is the High-Level Expert Group (HLEG), appointed by the UN Secretary-General on 7 May 2025.[115] The 14-member group, reflecting gender and geographical diversity, is developing a conceptual framework organized around three pillars (well-being, inclusiveness and equity, sustainability) together with a dashboard of country-owned indicators. UNCTAD's role focuses on analytical and statistical support for indicator selection and following HLEG's work on national testing and implementation of metrics, ensuring that the resulting framework addresses the statistical and policy priorities of developing economies.

574. UNCTAD and UNODC, as co-custodians of SDG indicator 16.4.1, co-lead global efforts to build countries' capacity to measure illicit financial flows using internationally comparable methods under the Conceptual Framework for the Statistical Measurement of Illicit Financial Flows, endorsed by Member States at the United Nations Statistical Commission in 2022. A global Development Account project, coordinated by the Economic Commission for Africa and implemented with United Nations regional commissions, extends measurement capacity to new pilot countries. UNCTAD also led a dedicated project funded

[115] The High-Level Expert Group on Beyond GDP is co-chaired by Kaushik Basu and Nora Lustig.

by the Open Society Foundation (OSF) to strengthen statistical and policy capacities in Ghana, Namibia and Zambia, applying the UNCTAD triple-A framework (assess-analyse-apply) to advance efforts in countries to develop and implement effective policies to tackle tax and commercial IFFs based on robust measurements, and in so doing enable increased fiscal space for sustainable development.

575. Under Development Account project on Evidence-based Climate Action through Artificial Intelligence and Data Innovation for Caribbean SIDS, UNCTAD SDDS and DITC work with DESA, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), ECLAC and the International Maritime Organization (IMO) to strengthen the capacity of Barbados, Belize, Trinidad and Tobago, and the Dominican Republic for detailed monitoring of maritime trade and fisheries and their emissions and to institutionalize ocean economy accounts. The project deploys automated identification system (AIS) satellite data, combined with data from national sources, and advanced data science techniques to enable measurement of greenhouse gas emissions and support evidence-based decarbonization and conservation policies.

576. **Outputs**. In 2025, UNCTAD developed the TiSSTAT Playground for countries to test the system and delivered many online training sessions. Pilot surveys on creative services were launched in Dominica, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis and Saint Lucia, and UNCTAD prepared a TiSSTAT online course to be offered through the Train for Trade e-learning courses from 2026. UNCTAD supported Benin and Côte d'Ivoire in completing a full data collection and compilation process using TiSSTAT. In 2025, UNCTAD delivered a regional workshop on trade-in-services statistics for Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries, introducing 46 participants to the TiSSTAT system with hands-on training through the TiSSTAT Playground. Following the training, several countries submitted requests to UNCTAD for bilateral capacity support to use TiSSTAT. A dedicated trust fund was established to sustain long-term capacity-building and respond to growing demand for TiSSTAT implementation.

577. In early 2025, UNCTAD released the Manual for the Framework to Measure South–South Cooperation, welcomed by the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation in July 2025, encouraging its broad application by developing economies. The UN Framework and its Manual were presented at many online and in-person events: a side event to the UN Statistical Commission in February (111 participants), an interregional webinar in June (177 participants, including 102 women), a side event at the FfD4 in Seville in July which launched a Community of Practice on South–South Data, and the UNCTAD16 South-South Cooperation Forum in October, involving panellists from Brazil, Colombia, Qatar, India and Nigeria calling for data of the global South to inform development support debates. National training workshops were held in Namibia in February, Jordan in November, and Nigeria in December with United Nations regional commissions. In July 2025, a regional workshop, organized with ECLAC, brought together Argentina, Chile, Ecuador, Peru, the Dominican Republic and Uruguay in Santiago. An e-learning course was developed to be launched in 2026, and UNCTAD started preparing a South–South Data Fund to sustain technical support over time.

578. In 2025, UNCTAD, SDDS and ALDC, held a data and policy expert group meeting in Geneva for Ghana, Namibia and Zambia, applying the triple-A framework and national action plans to address IFFs based on newly generated data. National training workshops on tax and commercial IFF measurement were held in Burkina Faso in January (online) and in Senegal in February (in-person). The expert meeting and measurement workshops confirmed that IFFs can be systematically measured despite methodological challenges, yielding actionable insights into illicit flow channels, particularly trade misinvoicing and tax avoidance. Online technical assistance to Mexico's national statistical office (INEGI) was carried out throughout the year. Later on, a series of in-person national training workshops guiding the development of targeted policy solutions informed by national IFF measurement results were held, together by SDDS and ALDC, in Namibia in May, Zambia in June and Ghana in September. The initiative culminated in a December briefing to Geneva-based permanent missions, presenting the triple-A policy framework and country outcomes. Three training modules were developed for an e-learning course on combating illicit financial flows, hosted by ECA covering the IFF Conceptual Framework and measurement of tax and

commercial IFFs. Automated R codes were developed as tools to support pilot countries. UNCTAD and UNODC defined a draft outline and structure for the forthcoming Statistical Framework for the Measurement of Illicit Financial Flows, to be finalised in 2026.

579. Since May 2025, the High-Level Expert Group discussed the conceptual framework to measure progress Beyond GDP, considering wellbeing, inclusiveness and equity, and sustainability. In July, UNCTAD, OECD and the Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB), jointly with Spain, launched a Global Alliance on Beyond GDP at the FfD4 in Sevilla, at a minister-level side event. A high-level event at UNCTAD16 in October facilitated close dialogue with member States and stakeholders ensuring no country is left behind in measuring broader progress. In October, UNCTAD co-organized with OHCHR and other partners an expert roundtable to discuss countries' needs and challenges in Embedding Human Rights in Metrics of Progress. In November, UNCTAD and partners organized two Beyond GDP events at the World Social Summit in Doha: one with UN DSG launching the interim report jointly with the youth network on Beyond GDP, hosted by UNOG Beyond Lab in partnership with UNCTAD; and another session on Insights for the Beyond GDP Global Alliance. The interim report was adjusted based on feedback from a global survey and consultations toward a final report, which will be submitted for member States' consideration during the 80th session of the General Assembly.

580. In June 2025, UNCTAD featured the goals of the Climate Action and AI project for Caribbean SIDS in sessions organized at the 3rd UN Oceans Conference in Nice. In December 2025, a national workshop in Barbados on Enhanced Statistics for Evidence-based Climate Action in Maritime Trade, Transport and Fisheries brought together 56 participants (30 female and 26 male), including 30 national stakeholders, establishing a technical roadmap to integrate AIS satellite data with national statistics for greenhouse gas emissions. A draft methodological concept note was prepared to guide implementation across the four target countries in 2026.

581. **Results and impact**. *Enhanced availability of services trade statistics*. In 2025, two e-learning courses on international merchandise and services trade statistics trained 3,625 participants (42 per cent women) from 187 economies, jointly with Train for Trade and partners. Since 2016, over 18,000 participants have been trained through these courses. Demand continues to rise across developing and developed economies alike, with satisfaction rates increasing steadily, reflecting growing quality and relevance of the programme. In 2025, in Western Africa, Benin and Côte d'Ivoire completed a full survey using the UNCTAD TiSSTAT system to produce their official trade in services statistics after successive capacity-building missions, noting that TiSSTAT has modernized enterprise surveys, streamlined operational costs and ensured secure data storage, enhancing services trade data quality and availability. In the Caribbean, pilot surveys on trade in services, in particular creative services, were initiated in Dominica, Grenada, Saint Lucia and Saint Kitts and Nevis. The TiSSTAT Playground also lowered the barrier for TiSSTAT adoption by enabling countries to explore the system prior to full-scale deployment. UNCTAD also supported the United Arab Emirates in assessing and redesigning the national trade-in-services survey.

582. *First-ever South-South cooperation data*. Nine countries from the ECLAC region, including Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, and Uruguay, submitted data on South-South cooperation to UNCTAD for review and validation, enabling upcoming reporting on SDG indicator 17.3.1 in 2026. In Africa, Namibia and Nigeria shared their early data in the UN Framework with ECA after having tested its application and are finalizing their data for submission to UNCTAD in 2026. In the Arab region, UNCTAD and ESCWA supported Jordan by utilizing newly translated Arabic technical tools, and Jordan successfully mapped the roles of various national authorities and established the necessary institutional framework for systematic reporting of South-South cooperation data in the future. These data enable for the first time, the contribution of the global South to sustainable development to be visible alongside long-established data on North-South flows. Over 60 countries have requested UNCTAD's support to begin reporting. The Community of Practice launched at FfD4 now provides a platform for peer learning and methodological exchange to encourage all countries of the global South to collect and report these data.

583. *Beyond GDP: shaping new development metrics*. The High-Level Expert Group made substantive progress in 2025, converging on a conceptual framework, advancing their report and recommendations and launching indicator selection. The group of experts engaged in intensive consultations with member States, statistical agencies and civil society. The UNCTAD16 high-level event confirmed strong interest from developing nations in country-owned indicator dashboards, and the interim progress report released in November was adjusted based on rich feedback toward finalization in spring 2026. UNCTAD co-organized many events that enabled an inclusive and consultative process for the experts.

584. *Illicit financial flows data helps regain domestic resources*. UNCTAD capacity building support continued based on targeted project interventions, while over 40 countries await support to start measuring illicit financial flows as soon as possible. At FfD4 in Seville, a Community of Practice on tracking illicit finance, co-led by UNCTAD and UNODC, was launched with strong developing-country endorsement. In the three Open Society Foundation project countries, all national estimates of trade misinvoicing IFFs were refined and policy workshops completed. Findings from early estimates reveal high vulnerability to IFFs in crucial commodities, primarily critical minerals. Ghana is prone to trade-based IFFs due to its exports of raw minerals, such as gold, manganese, crude oil, and agricultural produce, and imports of processed goods. In Namibia, early estimates indicate high risks emerging from trade of copper, uranium and other high-value exports. Zambia's analysis flagged IFF risks in copper, gold, oil and cobalt trade, pointing to potential revenue losses. Evidence-based policy analysis, using UNCTAD's Triple-A framework (Assess-Analyse-Apply), identified specific fiscal leakages and regulatory gaps, such as Namibia's freight taxation loopholes and mining license transfer practices, and trade valuation discrepancies in Zambia's copper and petroleum sectors, leading to the formulation of targeted policy options including withholding tax mechanisms, strategic audits of double taxation agreements, strengthened beneficial ownership frameworks, and enhanced mineral valuation systems. These outcomes demonstrate that when robust measurement is linked to evidence-based policy frameworks, it can help target action to expand fiscal space for sustainable development.

585. *Data innovation enhances climate action in the Caribbean*. The Barbados national workshop laid the foundations for integrating AIS satellite data with national statistical systems to track greenhouse gas emissions. By engaging30 national stakeholders and setting up a dedicated national taskforce, a major milestone for the development of a sound and comprehensive evidence-base has been laid to inform national decarbonization policies in support of the Paris Agreement, the IMO Net-zero Framework and the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS. The first country engagement prepared the foundations for further activities with Belize, Trinidad and Tobago, and Dominican Republic, to be carried out in 2026 in coordination with Resident Coordinator Offices and UN Country Teams.

586. Across its technical cooperation activities in 2025, UNCTAD Statistics, Data and Digital Service delivered a strong set of results-based outcomes: first-ever South-South cooperation data submitted by nine countries for global SDG reporting; IFF measurement capacity extended to new countries with concrete policy outcomes in three African economies; Caribbean SIDS launching pilot activities in climate statistics and services trade; the Trade in Services information system (TiSSTAT) being applied by more countries in Africa and the Caribbean to fill pressing data gaps and the Beyond GDP initiative advancing well toward its final recommendations and a dashboard on Beyond GDP. UNCTAD's statistical work has effectively supported developing economies to apply international statistical standards and measure progress to enable evidence-based development, trade and economic policy.

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

Project number	*Short title*	*Period covered*	*Source of funds*
INT/0T/BCP	Accounting and Corporate Governance Trust Fund	2012 -	Group of donors
ROA-2427 (L16)	Strengthening sustainability reporting to foster sustainable finance and investment in selected developing countries in Asia and Latin America	2024 -	Development Account
INT/0T/BAQ	Capacity-building in investment for development	2011 -	Group of donors

587. **Development context**. A high-quality corporate reporting environment is a critical facilitator for attracting investment, enabling the effective allocation of 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 UNCTAD member States. Furthermore, as sustainability reporting provides 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.

588. 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, limited human capacity and supporting institutions, and obstacles to the effective monitoring and enforcement of international standards and codes. Coherent efforts are therefore needed to support capacity-building in corporate reporting, with the aim of aligning national reporting environments with global standards and codes, including those related to sustainability reporting. Member states require tools that facilitate the identification of gaps through international benchmarking, the development of action plans for accounting and sustainability reporting reform, and the measurement of progress in priority areas. In addition, eleven years after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the mobilization of sufficient finance remains a critical challenge for most countries.

589. **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 United Nations member States in harmonizing their accounting and reporting practices with international standards and codes, with the aim of improving enterprise governance, enhancing transparency, facilitating international investment flows and strengthening financial stability. The Geneva Consensus reaffirmed the relevance of UNCTAD's work in the area of accounting and reporting in paragraph 80.18, which calls on UNCTAD to "continue to support member States... through harmonization of sustainability standards by the Intergovernmental Working Group of Experts on International Standards of Accounting and Reporting."

590. Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, ISAR has focused its work on promoting the harmonization of company reporting on contributions to the implementation of the SDGs. 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.

591. 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 ADT 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)

592. The forty-second session of the Intergovernmental Working Group of Experts on ISAR was held in Geneva from 12 to 14 November 2025. In accordance with the agreement reached among member States at the previous session, the forty-second session dealt with the following main agenda items:

(a) Review of developments in the harmonization of sustainability reporting requirements and their practical implementation; and

(b) Integrating biodiversity and human capital considerations into sustainability reporting.

593. Two background documents were prepared by the UNCTAD secretariat on these agenda items, and a series of panel discussions facilitated delegates' consideration of the key issues.

594. Under the first agenda item, the Group of Experts called on the secretariat to continue monitoring developments in sustainability reporting requirements and to act as a channel for the views and positions of ISAR. It also encouraged the secretariat to continue its cooperation with relevant United Nations agencies and other institutions on sustainability reporting and on measuring the private sector's contribution to the achievement of the SDGs. In this context, the secretariat was requested to conduct research and review advancements related to the measurement and recognition of the financial impacts of sustainability issues.

595. With respect to the second agenda item, the Group of Experts requested the secretariat to continue monitoring developments in this area, provide updates to ISAR as appropriate, and facilitate the communication of ISAR's views to relevant stakeholders.

596. Under other business, the session requested the secretariat to continue supporting member States in implementing the ADT. It also requested continued support to member States, particularly developing countries, in building capacity for the implementation of financial and sustainability reporting requirements, including through technical cooperation projects, and invited donors in a position to do so to support these efforts. In addition, the secretariat was requested to facilitate the establishment of a consultative group to provide advice on the composition and terms of reference for a future advisory panel.

597. To further promote sustainability reporting, the ISAR Honours 2025 edition was held during the session, highlighting key national and international initiatives that promote and harmonize sustainability and SDG-related reporting by companies. The initiative aims to raise awareness and disseminate best practices in this area. Out of 60 nominee institutions, six honourees—three in the international category and three in the national category—were recognized, along with one special nomination.

598. On 11 November 2025, UNCTAD co-organized a joint event with the International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI) on building competencies and capacities for auditing and assurance of sustainability reporting in the public sector. The event brought together members of ISAR and INTOSAI communities, including policymakers, government representatives Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs), international standard-setters, development partners, and professional accountancy bodies, for a high-level dialogue. Discussions focused on the role of SAIs in advancing auditing and assurance of sustainability reporting in the public sector, with participants sharing experiences and lessons learned. The event also explored opportunities for collaboration to strengthen the competencies of public sector accountants and auditors, and highlighted plans under the INTOSAI Development Initiative to support SAIs in building capacity and advancing sustainability reporting through its Auditing Sustainability Reporting in the Public Sector Initiative.

599. On 29 January 2025, UNCTAD convened an online Consultative Group meeting to gather feedback from experts, formal members and ISAR's Regional Partnerships for the Promotion of Sustainability Reporting on the International Public Sector Accounting Standards Board (IPSASB) Exposure draft on Climate Related Disclosures. The meeting provided its 73 participants with further information on the Exposure Draft and offered opportunities to contribute to the ISAR expert group's comments. Key issues highlighted included the need for differentiated disclosure requirements, particularly for smaller public sector entities, and the importance of capacity-building programmes and technical assistance to support implementation.

Technical assistance projects on sustainability reporting

600. In 2025, 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.

(a) Regional partnerships

601. To support countries in strengthening their sustainability reporting systems, the secretariat continued to develop and promote regional partnerships aimed at promoting sustainability reporting. These partnerships encourage countries to support one another in developing national strategies and policies to:

(i) Establish and/or strengthen the national infrastructure to facilitate the preparation of high-quality sustainability reports by companies,

(ii) Increase the number of high-quality sustainability reports issued by companies;

(iii) Measure the contribution of the private sector to the implementation of the SDGs; and

(iv) Promote sustainable enterprise development.

602. The Latin American Partnership for the promotion of sustainability reporting (ARL) held three virtual meetings in 2025. Discussions focused on developments in sustainability reporting standards, including the implementation of the IFRS S1 and S2 standards, the IPSASB's exposure draft on climate related disclosures, and updates from international standard-setting bodies on assurance and professional education standards. Participants also exchanged experiences on national sustainability reporting initiatives, including developments in Mexico, Costa Rica and Uruguay, and elected the Partnership Chair for 2026. These meetings contributed to strengthening regional cooperation and supporting alignment with international sustainability reporting practices.

603. In 2025, the African Regional Partnership for Sustainability and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Reporting strengthened continental capacity for sustainability and SDG reporting through a series of virtual events. On 3 April, the partnership held a meeting to present its new Advisory Committee and 2025 work programme, during which UNCTAD provided training on the ARP online platform to support collaboration and knowledge sharing among members. On 22 May, ARP and the International Ethics Standards Board for Accountants (IESBA) co-hosted a webinar on key topics in IESBA's recently approved ethics standards for sustainability reporting and the Ethics and Independence Standards for Sustainability Assurance (IESSA), highlighting the importance of a coherent global reporting, assurance, and ethics ecosystem and the joint launch of the IESBA standards with the International Auditing and Assurance Standards Board's (IAASB) ISSA 5000. On 16 October, ARP convened a regional workshop on best practices for adopting the International Sustainability Reporting Standards (ISSB), bringing together sustainability, transparency, and corporate accountability experts from ISSB, the Pan African Federation of Accountants (PAFA), and the Organisation for the Harmonization of Business Law in Africa (OHADA) to share national and institutional roadmaps, achievements, and strategies for strengthening sustainable reporting across Africa.

604. The second meeting of the members of the Eurasian Regional Partnership on Sustainability and SDG Reporting (ERP) was convened on 27 February 2025, following the launch of regional activities in October 2024. The meeting brought together 10 members and resulted in the adoption of key decisions, including approval of the 2025 workplan and the timeline for the preparation of the Partnership's foundational documents. Members also elected the Head of the Working Group on the Key Terms in sustainability and SDG reporting and established a committee to review initiatives under the ERP Honours 2025 nominations. The meeting also reviewed the Partnership's activities carried out between October 2024 and February 2025.

605. On 9 April 2025, the Regional Partnership for the Promotion of Sustainability Reporting in Gulf States and neighbouring countries held its second in-person meeting at the National Exhibition Centre in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, within the framework of the 2025 Annual Investment Meeting (AIM) Congress. The session covered developments in the implementation of ISSB standards in the Gulf region, practical aspects of sustainability reporting from practitioners' perspectives, new assurance and ethics standards, and sustainability reporting standards for the public sector.

(b) Other activities in support of sustainability reporting infrastructure

606. UNCTAD is implementing a Development Account project entitled "*Strengthening sustainability reporting to foster sustainable finance and investment in selected developing countries in Asia and Latin America*". The project aims to strengthen the capacity of four beneficiary countries - Cambodia and Philippines in Asia, and Ecuador and Peru in Latin America - to reinforce their sustainability reporting infrastructure to promote sustainable finance, enterprise sustainability and attract investment geared towards the SDGs. Through the project, UNCTAD supports countries in identifying gaps in their reporting ecosystems and developing action plans and policy recommendations to strengthen regulatory, institutional, and human capacity elements required for high-quality sustainability reporting. Given the growing demand for technical assistance to support the implementation of ISSB standards and strengthen sustainability reporting by listed companies, non-listed companies (including SMEs), and public sector entities, the project includes global, regional and national activities.

607. At the global level, UNCTAD revised its Accounting Development Tool (ADT) to reflect recent development in the global sustainability reporting ecosystem. The updated tool incorporates new international sustainability reporting standards and related developments in auditing, ethics, assurance and accountancy education. The revised ADT also expands the assessment of public sector reporting and includes additional considerations related to institutional investors and micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), enabling a more comprehensive evaluation of national financial and sustainability reporting infrastructures.

608. At the national level, several activities were undertaken in beneficiary countries.

(a) *Peru*. A kick-off meeting was held in Lima on 22 October 2025 in a hybrid format in collaboration with the Ministry of Economy and Finance of Peru, bringing together 41 representatives (including 17 women) from key national institutions involved in financial and sustainability reporting. The meeting launched project activities and introduced tools to be used to assess the country's reporting infrastructure, including the ADT and a diagnostic note on the status of sustainability reporting in Peru. In addition, a series of bilateral meetings were held between UNCTAD, national regulators, and international partners to secure stakeholder buy-in and strengthen collaboration. Subsequently, in December 2025, UNCTAD supported the National Accounting Council of Peru (CNC) in developing a proposed roadmap for the implementation of a national sustainability reporting framework aligned with international standards and best practices. The roadmap includes recommendations on implementation timelines, disclosure requirements for different types of entities, assurance requirements, and capacity-building measures. Following consultations with national authorities, UNCTAD is currently finalizing the roadmap.

(b) *Ecuador*. The project's kick-off meeting was held in Quito on 25 November 2025 in a hybrid format, in cooperation with the Ministry of Economy and Finance of Ecuador. The meeting brought together 58 stakeholders (including 33 women) from the public and private sectors and civil society, including regulators, standard-setters, professional accountancy organizations, and business associations. UNCTAD presented the project's objectives, activities, timeline, and tools that will be used to assess the country's sustainability reporting ecosystem and identify priorities for strengthening national reporting infrastructure.

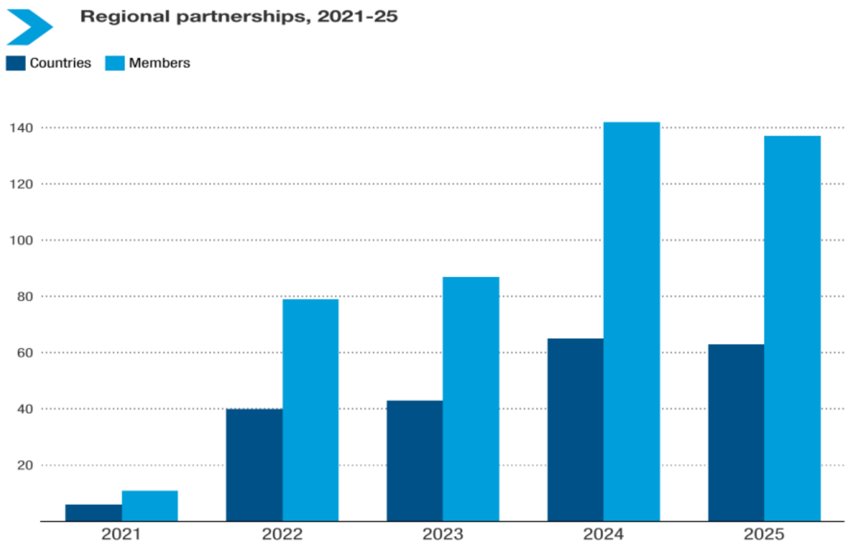
(c) *The Philippines*. The government focal point for project implementation has been designated within the Securities and Exchange Commission. The initial phase of project implementation began in December 2025.

(d) *Cambodia*. Following formal communications with beneficiary countries, Cambodia requested to join the project and designated the Accounting and Auditing Regulator of Cambodia (ACAR) as the national counterpart institution. UNCTAD approved the request and started the preparation work to support project implementation.

609. **Results and impact**. For over 40 years, the Intergovernmental Working Group of Experts on International Standards of Accounting and Reporting (ISAR) has provided member States with guidance and tools on corporate reporting, supporting the implementation of international standards for financial and sustainability reporting, corporate governance disclosure, and environmental and social responsibility practices. The 42nd session of ISAR, held in 2025, attracted 314 participants (including 129 women) from 78 countries, with 96 per cent reporting satisfaction with the organization, discussions, and presentations. As the largest UNCTAD expert meeting and one of the longest-standing United Nations expert groups, ISAR continues to shape the global accounting and sustainability reporting agenda, strengthen developing countries' engagement in international standard-setting, and enhance the quality and comparability of corporate reporting worldwide.

610. The Regional Partnerships Initiative, supported by UNCTAD and first launched in Latin America in 2021 with 11 members from six countries, expanded significantly over the period. By the end of 2025, the initiative covered five regions—Latin America, Africa, Asia, Eurasia and the Gulf region—bringing together 137 members from 63 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 the 42nd session of ISAR, member States "commended the UNCTAD secretariat for the support provided during the intersessional period through established regional partnerships for the promotion of sustainability and Sustainable Development Goals-related reporting" (figure 2).

Figure 2



611. Further evidence and positive feedback received in 2025 include:

(a) "[The] regional workshops in Yaounde with relevant partners, enable[ed] our national services to conduct a proper assessment of national policies and legal frameworks in sustainable reporting and recommend appropriate measures to close existing gaps." Permanent Mission to the United Nations Office in Geneva, Cameroon.

(b) "Through this collaboration, we successfully assessed the national reporting infrastructure using the UNCTAD Accounting Development Tool (ADT). This exercise provided a comprehensive understanding of the reporting ecosystem, identified critical gaps, and delivered actionable recommendations to strengthen Nigeria's financial reporting systems. These achievements laid a solid foundation for improving the financial reporting ecosystem, particularly for MSMEs, by addressing barriers to formalization and access to capital." Chief Executive Officer, Financial Reporting Council, Nigeria.

(c) "…the ADT is a unique useful tool for assessment of the corporate reporting infrastructure…[The] application of the ADT in Russia over many years advanced the development and implementation of conceptual documents in the area of public financial and non-financial reporting as part of the national socioeconomic development strategy, promoted creation of effective working mechanism for monitoring and improvement of corporate reporting in the country." Head of Accounting Department, Ministry of Finance, Russian Federation.

C8 Investment and public health

Table C8
Investment and Public Health

Project number	*Short title*	*Period covered*	*Source of funds*
INT/0T/BAQ	Capacity-Building in Investment for Development	2011 -	Group of donors

612. **Development context**. Strengthening local pharmaceutical production capacity has become a strategic priority for many developing economies, particularly in Africa, where heavy reliance on imports continues to expose health systems to supply disruptions. Recent global health crises and shortages of essential medicines have highlighted the need to develop more resilient pharmaceutical production ecosystems supported by investment, including foreign direct investment, to mobilize capital, technology and managerial capabilities

required to scale up manufacturing capacity and support industrial development. In this context, special economic zones (SEZs) are increasingly being used as instruments to attract investment, support industrial development and facilitate integration into global value chains. In the pharmaceutical sector, SEZs can help create a conducive environment for manufacturing investment through specialized infrastructure, regulatory facilitation and industrial clustering, although many developing economies continue to face challenges in attracting investment in technologically complex pharmaceutical industries.

613. **Objectives and features**. UNCTAD continued to support international policy dialogue and analytical work and capacity-building aimed at strengthening local pharmaceutical production in developing economies, particularly in Africa. The activities emphasized the role of coordinated investment policies, financing mechanisms and industrial strategies to develop sustainable pharmaceutical manufacturing capacity, while also supporting policymakers and special economic zone (SEZ) authorities in enhancing the investment attractiveness of zones for pharmaceutical manufacturing through practical policy guidance and technical support.

614. **Outputs**. In April 2025, UNCTAD launched the analytical report *Building the Case for Investment in Local Pharmaceutical Production in Africa*. The report examines the economic, industrial and health rationale for developing pharmaceutical manufacturing ecosystems on the continent. It analyses investment trends in the pharmaceutical sector, identifies key determinants of investment in manufacturing activities and outlines policy options to mobilize investment and strengthen local production capacity.

615. UNCTAD further contributed to several international policy dialogues on pharmaceutical investment and local production. These included participation in the Third World Local Production Forum organized by the World Health Organization (WHO), where UNCTAD presented perspectives on coordinated financing and investment mechanisms for pharmaceutical manufacturing, as well as the first African Ministerial Conference on Local Production of Medicines and Health Technologies, which focused on bridging the financing gap for pharmaceutical industrial development. During the Annual Investment Meeting Congress, UNCTAD also organized a session on investment opportunities in local pharmaceutical manufacturing in developing economies

616. In 2025, UNCTAD additionally published the report *Attracting Pharmaceutical Manufacturing to Africa's Special Economic Zones*, which provides analysis and policy recommendations on how SEZs can position themselves to attract pharmaceutical investment. The report examines global investment trends in the life sciences sector, identifies key location determinants for pharmaceutical production and outlines policy options to strengthen the competitiveness of SEZs.

617. Building on this work, UNCTAD collaborated with the African Economic Zones Organization (AEZO) on a number of capacity-building and policy dialogue activities. These included a joint UNCTAD–AEZO webinar presenting the findings of the report and facilitating exchange among policymakers, zone authorities and development partners. UNCTAD also contributed to the African SEZ Training Academy through a lecture on investment attraction strategies for the pharmaceutical sector and provided technical input to an AEZO policy brief on pharmaceutical SEZ strategies. In addition, UNCTAD participated in the African SEZs Annual Meeting, where it presented policy insights on attracting pharmaceutical investment into African zones.

618. **Results and impact**. These activities strengthened international policy dialogue and cooperation on the role of investment in supporting pharmaceutical industrialization and health resilience in developing economies, particularly in Africa. UNCTAD's analytical work, technical support and participation in the international forums helped raise awareness of policy approaches to attract pharmaceutical manufacturing investment, including through SEZs, while highlighting the importance of mobilizing investment and FDI to support sustainable local production. The work also strengthened collaboration with key partners, including the WHO, regional institutions and African SEZ authorities, and helped translate UNCTAD's analytical insights into practical guidance for policymakers and zone authorities seeking to promote industrial diversification, health security and participation in global value chains.

C9 International investment agreements

Table C9
International investment agreements

Project number	*Short title*	*Period covered*	*Source of funds*
INT/0T/3AO	Support to the UNCTAD/ICC Investment Advisory Council)	2003 -	International Chamber of Commerce
INT/0T/0BG	Capacity-Building in Developing Countries in IIA	2020 -	Group of donors
INT/0T/BAQ	Capacity-Building in Investment for Development	2011 -	Group of donors
INT/0T/HCJ2	Strategic Partnership the Netherlands – (linked with THCE04)	2023 -	Kingdom of the Netherlands

619. **Development context**. The current network of international investment rules comprises over 3,300 bilateral, regional and plurilateral treaties, many of which were concluded decades ago and require reform to safeguard the right to regulate, align with sustainable development objectives and address new policy priorities – with special consideration of the needs and circumstances of developing countries. Over the past 15 years, agreements have increasingly included reformed provisions, and the content of international investment agreements (IIAs) has become more diverse. Efforts to modernize IIA regime have intensified globally, particularly at the regional level. However, challenges persist regarding the large stock of old, unreformed treaties.

620. Concerns continue to be raised about the current functioning of the global IIA regime and the investor–State dispute settlement (ISDS) system. Combined with shifts in the international investment landscape, the increasing role of governments in the economy, and the pressing need for sustainable development, this has prompted countries to pursue reforms of their IIA networks and engage in multilateral discussions on ISDS reform. There is broad consensus that reform is needed. A range of reform approaches and policy options are available for actions at the national, bilateral, regional and multilateral levels.

621. The international investment policymaking landscape has the potential to evolve and align with new priorities. However, capacity and resource constraints, concerns regarding adverse signalling, and limited political buy-in slow down the reform progress. As part of UNCTAD's IIA Reform Platform, participants from governments, international organizations, civil society, academia and the private sector convened to discuss key strategies to overcome barriers to reform. Drawing on insights from over a decade of reform action and existing policy tools, UNCTAD is in the process of developing Guiding Principles for IIA Reform to further support IIA reform for sustainable development.

622. **Objectives and features**. The UNCTAD work programme on IIAs addresses key issues related to investment treaties and ongoing reform efforts. The programme supports the modernization of the international investment regime, considering the challenges faced by developing countries and the importance of promoting sustainable development. The programme covers activities spanning the three pillars of UNCTAD's work (research and policy analysis, technical assistance and advisory services, and intergovernmental consensus-building).

623. **Outputs**. For 2025, the main outputs are outlined below.

Research work related to technical assistance

624. 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 2025*

(i) The chapter on investment policy trends analyses recent developments in IIAs and ISDS. In 2024, countries concluded 30 new agreements and terminated four. While new agreements increasingly emphasize investment facilitation and cooperation, they coexist with an aging network of unreformed treaties that constrain policy space in areas such as public health, climate change and digitalization. Most ISDS cases continue to arise under IIAs signed before 2010. In 2024, investors initiated 58 arbitrations, about 55 per cent of them against developing countries, including six LDCs. Regional and multilateral developments – including discussions on ISDS reform in the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law, the focus on IIAs in the Group of 20 and regional investment policy reform efforts in Africa, Asia and the Middle East – highlight the growing importance of reforming the international investment regime. Building on this momentum, UNCTAD is developing a set of guiding principles to facilitate the reform of IIAs for sustainable development.

(ii) The chapter on international investment in the digital economy examines how new-generation IIAs increasingly facilitate, promote and liberalize investment in the digital economy, including through provisions that ease the establishment, expansion and operations of investors and expand market access in relevant sectors. To support international investment in the digital economy, the World Investment Report 2025 provides a set of recommendations for the consideration of policymakers and other stakeholders.

(b) *IIA issues notes and technical briefs*

(i) *Accelerating IIA reform convergence: Insights from the UNCTAD IIA reform platform*. This note identifies barriers to the reform of IIAs and outlines key strategies to unlock reform, distilling insights from the informal deliberations of the UNCTAD Multi-stakeholder Platform on IIA Reform.

Recent trends in investor–State arbitration cases. This note highlights that the bulk of treaty-based ISDS cases—about 75 per cent—arose over the past 15 years, reaching a total of 1,401 ISDS cases by the end of 2024. About 60 per cent of all ISDS cases involved claims of damages of $100 million and higher, including 143 cases in which investors sought more than $1 billion. Over the past decade, a shift occurred towards larger claims and damages awarded.

(ii) *The reform of international investment agreements – state of play*. This note presents the latest trends and evolution of international investment treaty reform, drawing on new data from UNCTAD's IIA Content Mapping database and the IIA Facilitation Mapping database. Analysis of IIAs concluded between 2010 and 2024 identifies two main phases of reform. The first focused on recalibrating traditional investor protection standards and dispute settlement mechanisms. Since 2015, a second phase has emerged, characterized by the increasing inclusion of investment cooperation and facilitation provisions. New-generation IIAs continue to refine protection standards and gradually expand liberalization commitments. Investor–State arbitration appears less frequently, and sustainable development provisions are becoming more prominent, albeit they are not yet fully mainstreamed across the regime. Despite these advances, a large stock of older agreements, which need reform, continue to dominate the investment regime.

(c) *Comprehensive updates to the IIA and ISDS Navigator databases.* In 2025, UNCTAD updated its IIA Navigator on bilateral investment treaties (BITs) and treaties with investment provisions (TIPs), making more than 3,163 IIA texts publicly available. In August 2025, UNCTAD launched a new IIA Investment Facilitation Mapping database, covering 424 agreements concluded since 2010, reinforcing UNCTAD research, analysis and technical assistance in this area. UNCTAD also upgraded its IIA Content Mapping database, adding over 200 agreements covering 100+ treaty elements, bringing the total mapped agreements to 2,808. Two rounds of data updates were released for the UNCTAD Investment Dispute Settlement Navigator, a comprehensive database of treaty-based ISDS cases, now covering 1,401 arbitrations, including case summaries, awards and outcomes. The data is used for UNCTAD’s research on ISDS trends.

(d) *Other publications:*

(i) Guiding Principles for Sustainable Investment in Tourism. The Guiding Principles, jointly developed by UNCTAD and the World Tourism Organization (UN Tourism), offer a strategic framework to align tourism investment with the SDGs. They call for investments that go beyond profit to empower communities, preserve cultural and natural heritage, and advance climate action. The principles support the development of strong policies, institutions and regulations at all levels to promote sustainable tourism in line with national priorities. They also underscore the importance of fostering public-private partnerships, embracing innovative technologies and ensuring local communities actively participate in shaping the sector’s future.

(ii) International investment agreements toolbox on clean energy, digital transformation and public health: Insights from recent Group of 20 treaties. The publication is based on a report prepared for the G20 Trade and Investment Working Group in 2025, at the invitation of the South African G20 Presidency. It provides a policy resource on IIAs, focusing on provisions relevant to public policy objectives identified as key priorities by the Presidency, namely clean energy, digital transformation and public health. The analysis draws primarily on examples from IIAs concluded by G20 members with a range of partner countries, while also referring to selected agreements involving invited countries participating in the G20 process in 2025. The report is intended to support the voluntary exchange of best practices and experiences in the design and reform of IIAs.

Consensus-building

625. UNCTAD, in partnership with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL), co-hosted the Investment Treaty Conference on “*Modernizing investment treaties to support the sustainable development goals: new approaches and avenues for reform*” on 31 March 2025 in Paris, France. The in-person conference brought together 235 participants (including 128 women) from governments, regional and international organizations, civil society, academia and the private sector, with over 300 participants joining online. Discussions took stock of recent developments in investment treaty reform and explored practical pathways for modernizing more than 2,000 old-generation IIAs at the bilateral, regional and multilateral levels. Participants also highlighted the need for additional capacity-building and resources to support treaty modernization and implementation efforts.

626. UNCTAD held the third online meeting of the *Multi-Stakeholder Platform for IIA Reform* on 30 September 2025, with 58 participants (including 24 women) from governments, international organizations, civil society, academia and the private sector. Participants provided comments on the outline of the guiding principles on IIA reform currently being developed by UNCTAD and discussed ways to ensure the relevance for countries’ reform efforts. The meeting also facilitated an exchange of views and best practices in reforming IIAs and engaging with other countries.

627. UNCTAD, in cooperation with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry of the State of Qatar and the Office of the State of Qatar to the World Trade Organization and other Economic Organizations, held a “*Dialogue on strengthening institutions for sustainable growth: Rethinking international investment agreements in the context of Qatar National Vision 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals 2030*” on 7 February 2025 in Geneva, Switzerland. The dialogue brought together 21 participants (including 8 women). Discussion focused on the latest developments in the field of IIAs, reform efforts for sustainable development and their relevance to the 2030 Agenda.

628. UNCTAD and UN Tourism co-organized a ministerial roundtable on policy innovation for tourism investment during the Annual Investment Meeting (AIM) in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, on 8 April 2025. During the roundtable, the two organizations jointly launched the *Guiding Principles on Sustainable Investment in Tourism*, which provides a framework for governments and investors to align FDI flows with four dimensions of policymaking for sustainable tourism investment.

629. UNCTAD continued its support to the League of Arab States (LAS) during the *3rd Meeting of the Special Committee on International Investment Agreements of the General Secretariat*, held on 14 April 2025. The meeting brought together representatives of the LAS member States and regional experts (26 participants, including 14 women). UNCTAD provided research insights and policy guidance to support negotiations on the draft regional IIA. In December 2025, UNCTAD also submitted written comments on issues related to IIA provisions.

630. From March to October 2025, at the request of South African G20 Presidency, UNCTAD contributed to discussions on investment at *the G20 Trade and Investment Working Group (TIWG)*, participating in several sessions held in-person and online. In response to priorities identified by the Presidency, UNCTAD and the OECD prepared a joint report on *Harnessing Investment Policies for Clean Energy, Digital Transformation, and Public Health*. The report was referenced in the G20 Trade and Investment Ministerial Statement of 10 October 2025 (Gqeberha, South Africa) and the accompanying Chair’s summary.

Capacity-building and advisory services

631. UNCTAD conducts a wide range of training activities and advisory services drawing on its latest policy research and tools for modernizing the investment treaties, including the *Investment Policy Framework for Sustainable Development (IPFSD)*, the *Reform Package for the International Investment Regim*e, and the *International Investment Agreements Reform Accelerator*. Services include review of countries’ or region’s IIA network, comments on model treaties, and analysis of IIA frameworks, including the interaction between treaty obligations and measures addressing global challenges such as climate change. UNCTAD provides tailored recommendations to enhance the contribution of IIAs to sustainable development, with written advice typically complemented by videoconferences to discuss the findings and recommendations.

632. UNCTAD hosted an in-person workshop on “*Key Issues in International Investment Policymaking*” in collaboration with the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) on 25 February 2025 in Geneva, Switzerland. The workshop brought together 18 participants (including 12 women) from the UfM member States, including government officials involved in investment policymaking and other stakeholders. Discussion covered global trends in IIAs and ISDS, key challenges in the existing IIA regime, and emerging issues such as sustainable energy, investment facilitation, and responsible and inclusive investment commitments in IIAs.

633. Together with International Trade Centre and the World Economic Forum, UNCTAD co-organized a webinar on “*Assisting African countries in the implementation of investment facilitation commitments*” on 28 February 2025. It brought together 356 participants (including 134 women), comprising government policymakers from African countries and representatives of African investment promotion agencies. It addressed key investment facilitations provisions in the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Investment Protocol and the WTO Investment Facilitation for Development (IFD) Agreement, highlighting their implication for sustainable development and presenting UNCTAD’s forthcoming investment facilitation mapping on the Investment Policy Hub website.

634. UNCTAD co-hosted sessions on *Global Leadership and Innovation in Investment Promotion* with World Association of Investment Promotion Agencies (WAIPA) on 12 May 2025 in Geneva, Switzerland. The sessions addressed key aspects of the international investment architecture, including investment facilitation, protection and investor–State disputes, highlighting UNCTAD’s tools and resources for modernizing IIAs. Thirty-two participants (including 10 women) from investment promotion agencies attended.

635. UNCTAD delivered a "*Workshop on key reform issues in international investment agreements (IIAs) for ASEAN countries*" via an online webinar on 5 June 2025, with 85 participants (including 61 women) from ministries and government agencies of ASEAN member States. The workshop examined global trends in IIAs and ISDS, assessed key challenges in the current IIA regime, and highlighted UNCTAD tools to accelerate reform in support of sustainable development. Discussions also covered emerging issues in IIAs such as investment facilitation, responsible investment and public policy objectives.

636. UNCTAD delivered an online capacity-building workshop on "*Enhancing sustainable investment flows in Africa: opportunities and challenges of investment facilitation through international agreements*" for policymakers and government officials from African economies on 3 September 2025, in collaboration with the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD). The workshop, attended by 152 participants (including 71 women) raised awareness of opportunities and challenges related to international investment facilitation commitments, and provided knowledge-sharing in preparation for the 14th WTO Ministerial Conference in March 2026 in Cameroon.

637. UNCTAD hosted an online capacity-building workshop on "*Key issues in international investment policymaking for Egypt*" with the General Authority for Investment and Free Zones on 18 September 2025. The workshop examined the latest global and regional trends in the IIA regime, and discussed challenges in IIA negotiations, including issue related to pre-establishment, liberalization, taxation, and financial services.

638. On 25 September 2025, UNCTAD conducted a webinar on *maximizing the developmental potential of investment facilitation through international agreements* for government officials from Tanzania. The webinar, attended by 53 participants (including 17 women), provided guidance on developing and implementing IIA reform in line with sustainable development objectives and national priorities. It covered issues related to investment facilitation in IIAs, the core content and development impact of the WTO IFD Agreement and presented findings of the UNCTAD Review of Tanzania's IIA network, completed in June 2025. The webinar took place withing the framework of UNCTAD's ongoing collaboration with the Government of Tanzania on IIA reform.

639. UNCTAD hosted an online *Capacity-building workshop for the United Arab Emirates on key issues in IIAs* on 11 November 2025, withing the framework of ongoing cooperation following the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding between UNCTAD and the United Arab Emirates in April 2025. The workshop, attended by 43 government negotiators and policymakers (including 19 women), discussed strategies to align the international investment commitments—including those negotiated as part of bilateral investment treaties and investment chapters within comprehensive economic partnership agreements—with global best practices while supporting the country's broader economic and developmental objectives.

640. UNCTAD held an online capacity-building workshop on *key issues in international investment policymaking for BRICS countries* on 1 December 2025, in collaboration with the China National Institute for SCO International Exchange and Judicial Cooperation (CNISCO). The workshop, attended by 27 government officials, policymakers, and legal experts (including 2 women) explored recent trends in the design and content of IIAs and developments in investment treaty arbitration cases. It also addressed priority reform areas for the IIA regime and introduced practical approaches and tools to support reform efforts.

641. Other training courses that UNCTAD hosted, co-hosted or contributed to in 2025 include the following:

(a) UNCTAD contributed to the *2nd Policy Dialogue Forum of African and Asian Investment Promotion Agencies of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)*, organized by the Islamic Centre for Development of Trade (ICDT) and the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), in collaboration with the Ministry of Investment, Convergence, and Public Policy Evaluation of the Kingdom of Morocco. The meeting held in Casablanca, Morocco, from 20 to21 February 2025, focused on enhancing the exchange of experiences and best practices among investment promotion agencies of OIC Member countries. UNCTAD's presentation highlighted best practices and policy recommendations on the role of IIAs in enhancing policy dialogue and strategic collaboration between OIC IPAs in investment facilitation, promotion and cooperation.

(b) UNCTAD contributed to a technical assistance webinar organized by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) for government officials of Jamaica on 1 April 2025. The session, attended by 15 participants (including 9 women), addressed trends and challenges in reforming the IIA regime, including issues such as compensation and damages in investment treaty arbitration.

(c) UNCTAD led a regional session on *Advancing the reform of international investment agreements* with government officials and experts at the 14th Annual Investment Meeting (AIM) in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates on 9 April 2025.

(d) UNCTAD provided substantial contributions and support during an in-person workshop organized by the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) Secretariat on the modernization of the COMESA Investment Agreement in Nairobi, Kenya, from 6 to 7 May 2025. The workshop, attended by 51 participants (including 21 women), examined the revised text of the COMESA Common Investment Agreement under negotiation, with a focus on aligning it with the emerging continental investment framework (AfCFTA Investment Protocol) and discussed emerging best practices since the last revisions in 2017.

(e) In collaboration with the China National Institute for SCO International Exchange and Judicial Cooperation (CNISCO), UNCTAD delivered a joint in-person session on *International Investment Agreements: Trends, Key Issues and Practices* on 12 May 2025 in Shanghai, China. The session, attended by 25 judicial officials and experts from Asian countries (including 11 women) focused on the latest developments in the field of IIAs, UNCTAD policy tools to facilitate IIA reform for sustainable development, and emerging treaty reform practices.

(f) During the third Senior Officials' Meeting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), UNCTAD contributed to APEC's Committee on Trade and Investment (CTI) session on 11 August 2025, discussing the inclusion of investment facilitation content in IIAs and related trends in the evolution of IIA regime.

(g) On 10 September 2025, UNCTAD contributed to the Columbia Center on Sustainable Investment (CCSI) Executive Training on Investment Treaties and Arbitration. UNCTAD participated in a session focused on ongoing reform processes across forums, highlighting UNCTAD's role as a platform for deliberations on IIAs and providing policy guidance on IIA reform. The training brought together 61 officials responsible for investment policy (including 35 women).

(h) UNCTAD contributed to training sessions for government officials participating in the ASEAN Virtual Regional Policy Dialogue Moving forward to the new trend of international investment agreement (IIA) – Bringing the concept of sustainable and responsible investments (SRI) on 18 and 19 November 2025. UNCTAD shared insights on IIA reform initiatives and discussed sustainable and responsible investment considerations in the context of investor–State disputes under IIAs.

(i) UNCTAD, in partnership with the UNESCO Chair on Environmental Law and Sustainable Development at Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU), the Ministry of Commerce and Industry of Qatar, Invest Qatar, and the Golf Cooperation Council (GCC) Branch of the International Law Association organized a conference on *International Investment Promotion and Facilitation in the Context of the Sustainable Development Goals 2030* on 7 December 2025 in Doha, Qatar. The conference brought together leading global experts, policymakers, investors, practitioners, and business stakeholders to discuss how international investment promotion and facilitation frameworks can support the Qatar National Vision 2030 and contribute to achieving the SDGs.

642. **Results and impact**. The IIA work programme has a concrete and positive impact in assisting countries and regions to align 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. New IIAs often incorporate sustainable development-oriented reform elements, which are aligned with UNCTAD policy tools (see WIR 2025). Provisions that were considered innovative in pre-2012 IIAs appear regularly in recent IIAs. Reformed treaties tend to include recalibrated investment protection provisions and safeguards for regulatory space, more investment facilitation and promotion content, sustainable development-oriented features, and improvements to the investment dispute settlement mechanism. As part of broader IIA reform, countries have integrated numerous ISDS reform elements into recent treaties (such as reform-oriented procedural rules, narrower access to investor–State arbitration and/or reliance on other mechanisms). The most broadly pursued area of reform is preservation of regulatory space.

(b) As in previous years, UNCTAD's IIA work programme has delivered many activities upon requests from member States, regional organizations and other partners in 2025. Feedback from participants in capacity-building workshops and conferences on IIAs is generally very positive. On average, 98 per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the sessions enhanced their knowledge of the key issues related to IIAs; and 98 per cent also stated that the UNCTAD workshop was highly useful to the needs of their country.

643. Further evidence and positive feedback received in 2025 include:

(a) "The Government of Tanzania appreciates the contributions and support of UNCTAD for its continued leadership and commitment in advancing global dialogue and cooperation on trade and development issues (…). I would like to extend my sincere appreciation for the comprehensive and insightful analysis report of Tanzania's network of existing International Agreements, including BITs and regional agreements. (…). It not only highlights key performance indicators and trends but also provides actionable recommendations that reflect a deep understanding of the subject matter." Permanent Secretary, President's Office – Planning and Investment, United Republic of Tanzania.

(b) "On behalf of the Union for the Mediterranean Secretariat, I would like to extend our heartfelt appreciation for receiving us in Geneva (…). The engaging discussions and the opportunity to learn directly from the UNCTAD were highly appreciated by all attendees, reinforcing the importance of international collaboration in fostering economic resilience and sustainable development." Senior Economic Advisor, Economic Development and Employment Division, Union for the Mediterranean.

(c) "I sincerely appreciate your kind hospitality in hosting the Multi Stakeholder IIA Reform Platform; I found the discussion to be very insightful. Such platforms are invaluable for fostering reforms in investment and trade, and I look forward to continued dialogue." Ministry of International Relations and Trade, Namibia.

(d) "In line with our ongoing League of Arab States-UNCTAD cooperation I take this opportunity to thank you for the brief memo on Environmental Provisions in the International Agreements concluded by the Arab countries and all the support you have given us." Minister Plenipotentiary, Director of Economic Relations Department, League of Arab States.

(e) "We really appreciate the leadership that UNCTAD has been providing on the investment issues in the G20 Trade and Investment Working Group. The Toolbox on Investment Policies is comprehensive and takes forward the ideas we shared with you for the investment priorities under our G20 Presidency." Chief Director of Trade Policy and Negotiations, Trade Branch, Department of Trade, Industry and Competition, South Africa.

C10 Competition and consumer protection policies and frameworks

Table C10
Competition and consumer protection policies and frameworks

Project number	*Short title*	*Period covered*	*Source of funds*
ALB/0T/NAK	Fostering Competition Law and Policy and Competition Culture in Albania	2024 -	EBRD
GLO/0T/NAB	UN2UN Transfer Agreement on consumer information and consumer protection	2024 -	United Nations Environment Programme
INT/0T/OAY	EC-UNCTAD handbook and training on consumer product safety	2025 -	European Union
INT/8X/603	Training programmes on restrictive business practices (competition policies)	1986 -	Group of donors
RAF/0T/LBG	Cadre de référence de l'assistance technique sur la concurrence et consommation	2023 -	Democratic Republic of the Congo

644. **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.

645. 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.

646. **Objectives and features**. UNCTAD's work on competition and consumer protection policies and frameworks 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.

647. **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 organised webinars on competition and consumer protection laws and policies in September 2025, which covered challenges in less experienced

[116] https://unctad.org/project/technical-assistance-and-capacity-building-competition-and-consumer-protection-african.

jurisdictions, competition in the digital economy, cooperation between competition authorities in the region, and consumers' right to information and education.[117]

648. 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 sixth Joint Annual Competition Forum for the Arab Region[118] was held in May 2025 in cooperation with the Competition and Anti-Monopoly Affairs Council of Iraq. In this sixth edition, Arab countries discussed cross-border mergers and acquisitions, market studies, standard and burden of proof in competition cases, and enforcement against abuse of dominance.

649. UNCTAD and UN-ESCWA co-hosted a webinar "*Ensuring Consumer Protection in the Arab Region Amid the E-Commerce Growth: Challenges and Opportunities*"[119] in November 2025. The webinar convened policymakers, regulators, experts, and consumer protection officials from 17 Arab countries to discuss the impact of digital transformation on consumer protection and the role of behavioural science in strengthening legal and policy frameworks in e-commerce. UNCTAD contribution focused on international standards for consumer protection in e-commerce, and concrete insights on enforcement challenges in the digital economy.

650. Following the successful completion in 2022 and 2024 of a self-paced online training course on competition policy and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)[120] 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 third edition from June to July 2025.[121] UNCTAD awarded certificates to 101 participants (of which 52 per cent were women), from 29 countries of which 13 from Africa, 5 from Asia, 4 from Europe and 7 from Central and Latin America. Such broad interest demonstrates the appreciation of member States for this type of product, underscores the impact of UNCTAD initiatives in this field and confirms that competition law and policy are increasingly seen as a tool to support MSMEs growth.

651. 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) though a synergistic partnership between UNEP and UNCTAD*".[122] Under this project, UNCTAD published a report on "*Empowering Consumers, Protecting the Planet - Aligning consumer protection with selected multilateral environmental agreements*"[123] in July 2025. The publication builds on the insights shared during the expert discussion and subsequent research and consultations conducted throughout the project. This publication is accompanied by a complementary brochure summarizing the key messages, titled "*Consumer information & protection and Multilateral Environmental Agreements: Pathways for Policy Integration*".[124] The outcomes of this project were presented in the framework of the Ibero-American Forum of Consumer Protection Agencies (FIAGC) in Brazil, in November 2025.[125] Also as part of this project, at the request of

[117] https://unctad.org/meeting/webinar-competition-law-and-policy-portuguese-speaking-countries-africa-and-timor-leste-0
https://unctad.org/meeting/webinar-consumer-protection-policy-portuguese-speaking-countries-africa-and-timor-leste-0

[118] https://unctad.org/meeting/6th-arab-competition-forum

[119] https://www.unescwa.org/events/escwa-%E2%80%93-unctad-consumer-protection-arab-e-commerce

[120] https://elearning.unctad.org/course/index.php?categoryid=6

[121] https://unctad.org/meeting/3rd-round-course-competition-policy-and-msmes-development

[122] https://unctad.org/project/advancing-consumer-information-and-consumer-protection-alignment-multilateral-environmental

[123] https://unctad.org/publication/empowering-consumers-protecting-planet

[124] https://unctad.org/system/files/information-document/ccpb_brochure_multilateral_evironmental_agreements_en_1.pdf

[125] https://unctad.org/meeting/presentation-outcomes-unep-unctad-project-consumer-information-and-protection-under

Paraguay's consumer protection authority (SEDECO), UNCTAD provided, in May 2025, an advisory opinion on sustainable consumption to inform the revision of the consumer protection legislation of Paraguay.[126]

652. 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*".[127] In 2025, UNCTAD organised a training course for judges and magistrates, in cooperation with the School of Magistrates of Albania, in January.[128] UNCTAD also, in cooperation with the Competition Authority (CAA) and the Consumer Protection Commission of Albania, hosted an international forum on the interface of competition and consumer protection, fostering collaboration and culminating in a Memorandum of Understanding between the two institutions.[129] Moreover, UNCTAD developed manuals on competition compliance for business associations,[130] health sector[131] and telecommunications sector,[132] as well as a video to promote the leniency programme proposed by CAA.[133] These were launched at a workshop in November 2025,[134] jointly organized with the Albanian Investment Council. A back-to-back training on competition law enforcement was also organised, addressing cartel detection and presentation of economic evidence before the court.[135]

653. In 2023, UNCTAD launched a technical cooperation project in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) aimed at strengthening competition and consumer protection frameworks.[136] UNCTAD developed a comprehensive three-year programme to strengthen competition and consumer protection in the DRC, however, official launch of this program is still awaiting funding.

654. In October 2025, UNCTAD launched a project on "*EC-UNCTAD handbook and training on consumer product safety*", funded by European Commission, in light of the adoption of the United Nations Principles for Consumer Product Safety by the United Nations General Assembly.[137] Under this project, a handbook on consumer product safety is being developed as a practical guide for the implementation of the said Principles by policymakers. This handbook is expected to serve as a global reference for consumer product safety authorities seeking to strengthen their legal and institutional frameworks. Overall, the project aims to enhance the capacity of member States to design, implement and enforce such frameworks, as well as to raise policymakers' awareness of the importance of consumer product safety and enhance international cooperation on consumer product safety.

655. Following the four successful workshops since 2020, UNCTAD co-organised with European Commission the sixth joint workshop titled "*Consumer product safety: From adoption to implementation of the UN Principles*" in December 2025,[138] which discussed practical approaches for implementing the Principles, as well as various key issues on consumer product safety, including information to consumers and international cooperation, regulation, standards and responsibilities of authorities, business engagement and multi-

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[126] https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ditccplpinf2025d2_es.pdf
[127] https://unctad.org/project/fostering-competition-law-and-policy-and-competition-culture-albania
[128] https://unctad.org/meeting/training-workshop-judicial-enforcement-competition-law-substantives-and-procedural-aspects
[129] https://unctad.org/meeting/international-forum-interface-between-competition-and-consumer-protection-policies
[130] https://unctad.org/system/files/information-document/albania-business-association.pdf
[131] https://unctad.org/system/files/information-document/ccpb_manual_albania-health_sector_1.pdf
[132] https://unctad.org/system/files/information-document/ccpb_manual_albania-telecommunications1.pdf
[133] "Competition leniency programme of Albania", available at: https://youtu.be/3SAsUr1SHsA
[134] https://unctad.org/meeting/competition-compliance-albania-launching-competition-compliance-manuals
[135] https://unctad.org/meeting/training-competition-law-enforcement
[136] https://unctad.org/Topic/Competition-and-Consumer-Protection/project-in-the-democratic-republic-of-the-congo
[137] A/RES/80/119
[138] https://unctad.org/meeting/6th-joint-european-commission-unctad-workshop-consumer-product-safety

stakeholder cooperation, risk identification, assessment and corrective measures, and engaging new product safety authorities.

656. 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 2025.[139]

657. **Results and impact**. 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 2025, UNCTAD organized and co-organised 20 public events and intervened in over 60 events, responding to member States' invitations, on competition and/or consumer protection (both online and in-person).

658. UNCTAD has actively supported member States in addressing market disruptions, including anticompetitive and unfair commercial practices, through technical assistance activities implemented in 2025. 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.

659. 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.

660. 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.

661. UNCTAD technical assistance has received positive feedback from beneficiary countries. At the Ninth 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 2025,[140] the Vice Minister of the Ministry of Economy, Culture and Innovation of Albania noted that "the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development has played a crucial role in supporting Albania's journey toward fostering a culture of competition".

662. UNCTAD recognizes that the ultimate value of its technical cooperation lies in the measurable and sustained impact of activities conducted in beneficiary countries. While technical assistance often produces results over the medium to long term which are therefore not immediately tangible, recent experiences demonstrate that UNCTAD's support has contributed to concrete legislative, institutional and policy developments in several developing countries. One example concerns Paraguay, where UNCTAD's advisory opinion on sustainable consumption was incorporated in the draft reform of consumer protection law, which is currently under consideration by Parliament. Furthermore, SEDECO, Paraguay's consumer protection authority, presented this reform initiative to the MERCOSUR (Southern Common Market) Trade Committee as an illustration of how strengthened consumer protection frameworks can support sustainable consumption policies and foster regional dialogue on aligning consumer and environmental regulation within the bloc.

663. In Timor-Leste, UNCTAD's project for Portuguese-speaking developing countries supported the drafting of the country's competition law. The draft law was approved by the Council of Ministers in 2025 and is scheduled for parliamentary consideration in 2026. This development marks a significant milestone in establishing the legal foundation for

[139] https://digitalsociety.eui.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Brochure-CDS-25-1.pdf

[140] https://unctad.org/meeting/9th-united-nations-conference-competition-and-consumer-protection

competition policy in Timor-Leste, illustrating how sustained technical assistance can contribute to building essential market institutions from the ground up.

C99 Other

Table C99
Others

Project number	*Short title*	*Period covered*	*Source of funds*
Division on Investment and Enterprise			
INT/0T/3AO	Support to the UNCTAD/ICC Investment Advisory Council	2003 -	International Chamber of Commerce
INT/0T/BAQ	Capacity Building in Investment for Development	2011 -	Group of donors
INT/0T/ICC	Sustainable stock Exchanges (SSE)	2020 -	Group of donors
INT/0T/ICC2	Sustainable stock Exchanges (SSE) Multi-donor	2025 -	UNEP

1. Capital markets and sustainable investment

1.1 Sustainable Stock Exchanges initiative

664. **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 2025, its membership expanded to 138 exchanges worldwide.

665. **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 and technical assistance to help markets better react to sustainability challenges;

(c) Sharing of experiences and learning from other markets;

(d) Developing a network support system.

666. **Outputs**. In 2025, the SSE initiative published four new guidance Model Guidance documents:

(a) Model Guidance on Preventing and Addressing Modern Slavery (with ILO, OHCHR and Walk Free);

(b) Model Guidance on Nature-related Financial Disclosures (with TNFD, UNDP and UNEP);

(c) Model Guidance on Climate Transition Plans (with UNGC);

(d) Model Guidance for SMEs to integrate sustainable business practices (with IFC).

667. The initiative also published one new Action Plan on How exchanges can promote sustainable SMEs (with IFC), and two Market Monitors on Gender Equality in capital markets (with IFC World Bank and UN Women) as follows:

(a) *Gender-themed financial products - An inventory and critical analysis.*

(b) *Gender equality disclosure metrics - Analysis of standards with guidance for reducing inconsistencies.*

668. The SSE initiative strengthened and expanded its existing online databases including:

(a) *Stock Exchange Database*, covering sustainability practices of over 125 stock exchanges and 15 derivative exchanges worldwide - the most comprehensive publicly available dataset of its kind.

(b) *ESG Disclosure Guidance Database*, the only complete inventory of all stock exchange guidance documents.

(c) *Gender Equality Database*, providing data on boardroom gender balances in 39 markets.

669. In addition, the SSE launched two new databases:

(a) *Exchange Carbon Market Database*, detailing the activities of all exchanges worldwide involved in carbon markets.

(b) *Net Zero Exchange Group Database*, tracking the progress of leading exchanges towards their climate commitments. This database supports markets in transitioning to net zero greenhouse gas emissions.

670. The SSE market education work (SSE Academy) regularly works with development partners and exchanges around the world to deliver high-quality technical training to securities market regulators, listed companies and other market participants to assist them in their efforts to adopt and implement various sustainable development related standards and frameworks. In 2025, the SSE Academy delivered the following training:

(a) Climate disclosure standards - 21 sessions (in collaboration with IFC World Bank and IFRS International Sustainability Standards Board) reached 7,027 participants, including 3,501 women (50 per cent), from 160 countries or territories. Of these, 4,192 (60 per cent) were in management or leadership roles. Participants feedback indicated 95 per cent very satisfied or satisfied with the training and 95 per cent reported improved knowledge of sustainability-related financial disclosures.

(b) Gender Equality in Capital Markets - 18 sessions (in collaboration with UN Women and IFC World Bank) reached 2,905 participants, including 967 men (33 per cent), from 128 countries or territories. Of these, 1,700 (59 per cent) were in management or leadership roles. Feedback showed that 96 per cent very satisfied or satisfied with the training and 95 per cent reported improved knowledge of gender equality in capital markets.

(c) Nature-related financial disclosures - 2 pilot sessions (in collaboration with UNDP and UNEP) reached 147 participants, including 97 women (66 per cent) from 54 countries or territories. Of these, 70 (48 per cent) we in management or leadership roles.

671. The SSE regularly brings together relevant stakeholders to disseminate knowledge and building consensus on capital market transparency and sustainability. In 2025, key activities included:

(a) Provided secretariat support for the Net Zero Financial Service Providers Alliance, part of the Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero, growing the Net Zero Exchange group from six founding members to 23 members by end of 2025; and delivered quarterly peer-to-peer learning webinars, bilateral advisory calls and managing an online progress tracking database.

(b) Organised quarterly briefing webinars for stock exchanges on the following topics: Q1- Gender Equality; Q2 - SME sustainability; Q3 - Climate Transition Plans; Q4 - Technical Assistance and Market Education.

(c) Hosted seven in-person events, including alongside the London Climate Action Week, Building Bridges, OHCHR Business and Human Rights Forum in Geneva and China Sustainable Investment Forum in Beijing.

(d) Organised the global *Ring the Bell for Gender Equality* series with 114 participating exchanges (in collaboration with UN Women, IFC World Bank, UN Global Compact).

(e) Launched the first annual global *Ring the Bell for LGBTIQ+ Equality* series, with 15 participating exchanges (in collaboration with UN OHCHR and UN Global Compact).

(f) Conducted the first pilot *Ring the Bell for World Children's Day*, in partnership with UNICEF, the Government of Finland, and Nasdaq Helsinki.

672. 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.

673. **Results and impact**. In 2025, in addition to the 41 online training sessions, the SSE conducted nine consensus-building events, including webinars and in-person events involving more than 60 speakers (54 per cent women) from the private and public sector, including international organizations and the regulatory community.

674. SSE membership grew to 123 stock exchanges and 15 derivatives exchanges, bringing the total number of partner exchanges to 138. A total of 74 stock exchanges now provide guidance on ESG disclosure, up from just 14 when the SSE started encouraging exchanges to do this in 2015: 80 per cent of these guidance documents making explicit reference to the work of the SSE.

675. SSE work was recognized and endorsed by several key institutions and private sector partners, as reflected in the following statements:

(a) "On behalf of the Cambodian Stock Exchange (CSX), I am honoured to have the CSX participate in the 'Gender Equality and Global Markets' training delivered by the UN Sustainable Stock Exchanges initiative…The programme deepened our understanding of gender-responsive market practices and strengthened our capacity to engage issuers, investors, and other stakeholders on gender issues. These insights are informing our efforts to broaden market participation, improve products and services, and strengthen the pipeline of female talent, all of which contribute directly to a more resilient and inclusive capital market." Chief Executive Officer, CSX, 2025.

(b) "The training was timely and highly relevant to our shared efforts to promote inclusive and sustainable capital market development in Ethiopia. The discussions provided valuable perspectives on integrating gender equality into market practices and advancing women's participation and leadership in the financial sector." Gender Lead, Financial Sector Deepening Ethiopia, 2025.

(c) "We are grateful to the UN SSE for facilitating this timely training in Fiji as we prepare to implement IFRS S1 and S2. It helped strengthen technical capacity…and [provided] the opportunity to engage directly with global experts from the UN SSE and IFRS Foundation, something we have limited access to …For a region as climate vulnerable as the Pacific, such training is not only of professional value but also carries long-term significance for our communities and livelihoods." Chief Executive Officer, Fiji Stock Exchange, 2025.

(d) "Indonesia Stock Exchange is proud to collaborate with the UN SSE and its global partners in advancing sustainable finance in Indonesia's capital market. The recent IFRS Sustainability Disclosure Standards workshop, attended by 649 participants, provided practical insights and showed the strong commitment of our market to strengthen sustainability reporting. This initiative also aligns with Indonesia's efforts in adopting IFRS

S1 and S2, ensuring our market is well prepared for the transition." President Director (CEO), Indonesia Stock Exchange (IDX), 2025.

(e) "Bursa Malaysia was pleased to host this timely workshop on the IFRS Sustainability Disclosure Standards for our listed companies and, by doing so, facilitate the successful implementation of Malaysia's National Sustainability Reporting Framework (NSRF)." Director of Group Sustainability, Bursa Malaysia, 2025.

(f) "As Mongolia prepares to adopt IFRS S1 and S2, this UN SSE training delivered timely and essential knowledge for our participants. The session offered practical guidance that will support stronger, more credible, and globally aligned sustainability reporting across our market. It has also helped build confidence and momentum among local stakeholders as we take concrete steps toward implementing international best practices." CEO, Mongolian Sustainable Finance Association, 2025.

1.2 Sustainable Institutional Investment Facilitation programme

676. **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.

677. **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.

678. **Outputs**. In 2025, 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.

679. The programme continued 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 2025* (Chapter 3), and in the GSFO with an aim to encourage sustainable investment by institutional investors, in particular in developing economies.

680. In a technical assistance effort to address Africa's SDG financing gap, the programme co-organized the *Africa Sustainability Forum* (27–28 March 2025, Johannesburg, South Africa) - a G20 side event held jointly with the South African Reserve Bank, its National Treasury, and the Capacity-building Alliance of Sustainable Investment (CASI). The Forum attracted over 240 participants from 24 countries and produced actionable recommendations on taxonomies and interoperability, blended finance, carbon markets, and capacity building as foundations for Africa's sustainable finance ecosystem. In further support of Africa's infrastructure financing needs, the programme also organised a high-level *Sovereign Wealth Funds Roundtable* (Xiamen, China, September 2025), at which senior officials from some of the world's largest funds discussed how they could partner with each other and other investors to derisk the financing and investment of infrastructure in Africa.

681. In the context of a Development Account project on promoting investment in the energy transition in Africa, the programme supported investment promotion agencies in three beneficiary countries (Ethiopia, Malawi, and the United Republic of Tanzania) to present investment-ready energy transition projects at the *UNCTAD Future Investment Conference* (7-8 September 2025, Xiamen, China). The event provided beneficiaries with a global platform to engage directly with SWFs, pension funds, development finance institutions, and

industry associations. The session reinforced key messages on derisking instruments, blended finance, and long-term investment horizons needed to close Africa's energy financing gap.

682. The programme advanced implementation of a Development Account project to support Ecuador, Peru, the Philippines, and Cambodia 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. UNCTAD's draft *Sustainability Integration Framework for Institutional Investors*, which draws on international best practices and incorporates substantive inputs from external experts, was refined in 2025 to reflect evolving international standards on sustainability disclosure and to address the specific regulatory and institutional contexts of the four beneficiary countries, with a view to supporting their capacities to attract long-term sustainable investment.

683. To support the use of innovative sources of development financing for sustainable development, the programme submitted a policy paper to the G20 Sustainable Finance Working Group (SFWG) on the *role of voluntary carbon markets (VCMs) in global climate action*. The paper examines how VCMs can channel finance to conservation, restoration, and climate mitigation projects, while identifying key barriers to growth including fragmented standards, insufficient cross-border infrastructure under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, and high transaction costs for project development, monitoring, reporting, and verification. It proposes specific policy actions to reform and scale VCMs, including harmonization of standards with the Core Carbon Principles, adoption of digital monitoring, reporting and verification tools, and development of national registries and data-sharing mechanisms. Following the positive confirmation of the policy recommendations outlined in the paper by the members of the G20 SFWG, the SIIF programme has been working with key stakeholders to launch the Global Carbon Market Network, aiming to enhance transparency and integrity in carbon markets and to facilitate climate finance flows to developing economies.

684. Throughout 2025, 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.

685. **Results and impact**. 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. As the representative of the China Investment Corporation highlighted at the *Future Investment Conference* in 2025: "UNCTAD can play a leading role in facilitating relevant connections … UNCTAD can foster intellectual innovation in investment models, advance energy transition, enhance the sharing of energy transition technologies and skills, secure investment for priority projects, seize opportunities, and achieve objectives across diverse markets. China Investment Corporation will continue to look forward to establishing cooperative investment relationships, investing alongside UNCTAD in relevant fields, and contributing to the global energy transition."

IV. Theme D: Empowering people, investing in their future

686. 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.

687. 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.

688. 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 2025 and key results to date. Technical cooperation projects that are pertinent to the aforementioned theme and not linked with any of the existing products in this thematic area are reported on under “D99 Other”.

D1 Trade, gender and development

Table D1
Trade, gender and development

Project number	*Short title*	*Period covered*	*Source of funds*
INT/0T/CAI	Capacity-Building in Trade and Gender	2013 -	Group of donors
ROA-2528 (F17)	Sustainable product export strategies and traceability for a green, sustainable and inclusive economy in Asia	2025 -	Development Account

689. **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.

690. 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.

691. **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.

692. **Outputs.** In 2025, 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, analytical work, and organization and participation in events and workshops on trade and gender.

Training

693. In 2025, activities focused on further enriching UNCTAD’s portfolio of analytical and e-learning resources, while strengthening capacities on the trade and gender nexus in

developing countries. During the reporting period, the Programme supported the delivery of one online course under the Trade and Gender Linkages programme, further strengthening knowledge and policy engagement on the trade and gender nexus.

694. The online course "Non-Tariff Measures from a Gender Perspective" (16 June–20 July) attracted 105 participants, including 64 women and 41 men, with one participant reporting a disability. 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.

Analytical activities

695. The analytical work conducted by the Trade, Gender and Development Programme in 2025 focused on critical minerals and gender as a new strategic area, recognizing its importance in the context of global energy and digital transitions. This priority was advanced through the publication of a new analytical report on critical minerals and gender named "The implications of critical energy transition minerals for women's participation in the mining sector - Insights from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Indonesia". The publication identified concrete, gender-responsive policy options to expand women's access to higher-value, better-paid segments of these supply chains and support more inclusive, trade-led structural transformation. The Programme continued to advance this critical theme by organizing a webinar on gender and critical minerals on International Women's Day in 2026 and will be offering an online course on critical minerals and gender in Summer 2026.

Events and workshops – Awareness-raising and policy dialogue on the trade and gender nexus

696. During the period under review, the Trade, Gender and Development Programme organized or contributed to the following meetings and events on the topic of trade and gender:

(a) During UNCTAD16, the Programme organized a high-level parallel event entitled "*Inclusive trade in a changing global landscape – making trade policy work for women*", which brought together around 100 participants, approximately 70 per cent of whom were women. The event focused on advancing gender equality and inclusivity in trade, while exploring lessons that could be drawn from gender-related provisions in trade agreements in the context of evolving global trade dynamics. The meeting concluded with remarks highlighting that the discussions had demonstrated both the progress made and the persistent challenges in achieving inclusive trade. It was emphasized that further progress would depend on strong commitment to comprehensive financial and policy frameworks supporting women's integration into trade. The closing remarks also underscored the importance of close collaboration among Governments, international organizations, the private sector, academia and women themselves to better understand existing barriers and develop effective and inclusive solutions.

(b) During UNCTAD16, the Programme contributed to a high-level, invitation-only meeting entitled "*The Dialogue on Women and Trade*". The dialogue highlighted the need for a forward-looking and inclusive trade agenda that places women's economic empowerment at its core. Discussions emphasized that despite progress in gender equality and improved analytical tools, structural inequalities continue to limit women's participation and value addition in trade sectors. Participants underscored the importance of sustained political commitment, gender-responsive trade policies, reliable data, stronger monitoring mechanisms and cross-sectoral coordination to advance inclusive trade. The dialogue also explored emerging challenges and opportunities linked to digital trade and technological transformation, stressing the need for women not only to access digital tools but also to shape and govern their development. The meeting concluded with a call for stronger institutional collaboration, evidence-based policymaking and a more structural, gender-just approach to trade and economic governance.

(c) During the 69th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW69), the Programme organized the Side Event "*Breaking Ground: Critical Minerals, Critical Opportunities for Women's Participation*" held in New York on March 12, 2025. The session addressed strategies to ensure women benefit from the expanding mineral sector. The dialogue stressed that the global energy transition must promote inclusive and equitable development in resource-rich countries rather than deepen existing inequalities. Speakers highlighted the need for gender equality, human rights protections, and meaningful community participation in the mining sector, warning that poor governance can lead to environmental harm, social conflict, and disproportionate impacts on women and Indigenous communities. Participants also emphasized aligning mining practices with international frameworks such as the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, while recognizing opportunities for job creation, technology access, and women's empowerment through stronger local content and gender-responsive policies.

(d) During the 5th UN Ocean Forum, the Programme organized the side event titled "*Women navigating the Blue Economy - A conversation on challenges and opportunities in the context of value addition"*. The event, focused on women's participation in the blue economy, took place in Geneva on March 4th, 2025. It explored how value addition in sectors such as fisheries, aquaculture, and coastal tourism could create opportunities for women, while also addressing persistent barriers including low-paid work, limited access to resources, underrepresentation in decision-making, and the impacts of climate change and global trade. The session brought together stakeholders to discuss challenges, share experiences, and identify priorities for advancing women's equitable participation in the ocean economy.

(e) The Trade, Gender and Development programme contributed to workshop sessions focusing on trade and gender in the following contexts:

(i) Presentation in webinar "Trade and Tariff Wars and their Impact on Women in the Global South" organized by BRICS Feminist watch (24 July 2025);

(ii) Presentation on Gender and critical minerals at the Intergovernmental Forum on Mining, Minerals, Metals and Sustainable Development (IGF) Annual Meeting on "Value for all: Inclusive strategies across mineral value chains" (5 November 2025).

(f) Additionally, the Programme prepared a video to celebrate the International Women's Day. The video highlights progress toward gender equality while stressing the need for continued action. It emphasizes UNCTAD's commitment to advancing women's economic empowerment through inclusive trade and equal opportunities.

697. **Results and impact.** The above activities generated positive outcomes in terms of strengthening capacities, raising awareness and fostering policy dialogue on the trade and gender nexus. The online courses, analytical work and events contributed to enhancing understanding of gender-responsive trade policies and emerging issues such as non-tariff measures, the blue economy and critical minerals. They also provided platforms for exchange among policymakers, researchers, civil society representatives and private sector stakeholders from developing countries.

698. In 2025, the online course "Non-Tariff Measures from a Gender Perspective" organized under the Trade and Gender Linkages programme reached a total of 105 participants from 48 countries, including 17 least developed countries, of whom 61 per cent were women. The course strengthened participants' knowledge on the gender dimensions of cross-border online trade and non-tariff measures, while supporting greater engagement in inclusive and gender-responsive trade policymaking. The course achieved a success rate of 84 per cent, with 88 participants successfully completing the course. Participant feedback was highly positive, with the large majority rating the course as excellent or very good and indicating that the course objectives were fully met or exceeded. Participants also reported increased confidence in undertaking policy-relevant research, teaching, advocacy and policymaking on trade and gender issues in their respective institutions and countries.

D3 Entrepreneurship for sustainable development

Table D3
Entrepreneurship for sustainable development

Project number	*Short title*	*Period covered*	*Source of funds*
SAU/0T/CBI	Entrepreneurship Development Programme (Saudi Arabia)	2014 -	Saudi Arabia
INT/0T/HCJ2	Strategic Partnership the Netherlands – (linked with THCE04)	2023 -	Kingdom of the Netherlands
INT/0T/BBV	Strengthening SMEs in Developing Countries and Countries with Economies in Transition	2011 -	Multi-donor

699. **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 of entrepreneurship to sustainable development. Entrepreneurship supports job creation, fosters innovation, promotes social inclusion and cohesion, empowers vulnerable populations, contributes to environmental conservation and ecosystem resilience, and drives inclusive economic growth.

700. Recognizing 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. It also calls on UNCTAD to assist Member States in identifying, formulating, implementing and assessing coherent policy measures to promote entrepreneurship and support microenterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs).

701. The outcome document of UNCTAD XVI *The Geneva Consensus*, paragraph. 80.17, further mandates UNCTAD, in collaboration with agencies within and outside the United Nations system, to "continue to provide support in the area of development of microenterprises, small and medium-sized enterprises and start-ups, including women- and youth-owned small and medium-sized enterprises, through", inter alia:

(i) Enterprise development initiatives, including capacity-building and assistance to attract investment capital, grow business linkages with transnational corporations and participate in global and regional value chains;

(ii) Entrepreneurship policy support for the implementation of robust national and regional policy frameworks.

702. In addition, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by member States in September 2015, emphasizes the role of entrepreneurship in achieving sustainable development, particularly under SDGs 4, 8 and 9.

703. These mandates underpin UNCTAD technical assistance work on entrepreneurship for sustainable development.

704. **Objectives and features**. UNCTAD assistance to member States in this area includes the identification, formulation, implementation and assessment of coherent policy measures that support entrepreneurship and the promotion of MSMEs. At the request of member States, UNCTAD assists in the design of initiatives and the identification of policy measures and institutions to promote entrepreneurship across five priority areas for the formulation of a national entrepreneurship strategy[141]: optimizing the regulatory environment; enhancing

[141] As identified in the UNCTAD Entrepreneurship Policy Framework – EPF, launched in 2012.

entrepreneurship education and skills development; facilitating technology exchange and innovation; improving access to finance; and promoting awareness and networking.

705. Another pillar of UNCTAD's assistance focuses on developing entrepreneurial skills and building local productive capacities of MSMEs and start-ups, through its Empretec programme and related initiatives that promote entrepreneurship, including among vulnerable groups and innovative start-ups.

706. Since its inception in 1988, the Empretec programme has been established in 42 countries through self-sustained entrepreneurship development centres (Empretec national centres). To date, 572,000 entrepreneurs have benefited from Empretec training workshops and business development services delivered through the global network of centres. These centres support small enterprises in improving performance and contribute to job creation and competitiveness in host countries.

707. Through the Empretec network, UNCTAD also assists local suppliers with training and services to facilitate their integration into national and regional value chains through business linkages with large buyers and processors. This work contributes to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda by supporting the adoption of environmental and labour standards and promoting inclusion of vulnerable populations, especially in rural settings.

708. **Outputs**. The main outputs in 2025 in the areas of entrepreneurship for sustainable development are reported below.

Entrepreneurship policies

709. *UNCTAD XVI*. During the sixteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD16) in October 2025, strategic priorities and emerging directions for investment and entrepreneurship policy were discussed at the Ministerial Round Table. A parallel event on UNCTAD's Empretec programme examined policy tools to support the development of innovative, inclusive and future ready economies. Panellists, including representatives from national institutions hosting the Empretec programme and entrepreneurs who benefited from UNCTAD' entrepreneurship capacity-building activities, discussed the implication of digital and green technological change for entrepreneurship and highlighted policy measures to strengthen entrepreneurship ecosystems.

710. The Conference also hosted the *fifth UNCTAD Youth Forum*, which brought together policymakers, innovators and entrepreneurs to examine how youth-led innovation and financing can drive economic transformation and shape more inclusive economies. Participants noted that the twin digital and green transitions present both significant challenges and opportunities and emphasized the importance of equipping young people with the skills needed to thrive in this evolving landscape, including creativity, digital competencies and entrepreneurial capabilities.

711. *Fourth International Conference – Financing for Development*. At the fourth International Conference on Financing for Development held in Seville, Spain (30 June - 3 July 2025), UNCTAD co-organized an event with the International Organisation of Employers (IOE) on Financial Inclusion for Entrepreneurship Development: Bridging the Formal-Informal Divide. During the panel discussion, experts and entrepreneurs, identified concrete policy recommendations and innovative financial solutions that can enhance access to finance for entrepreneurs, including those in the informal economy, while promoting sustainable business practices and gradual formalization.

712. *Global Entrepreneurship Congress (GEC) Startup Nations Ministerial Roundtable*. In June 2025, UNCTAD participated in the GEC Ministerial Roundtable, where it presented its experience in the implementation of national entrepreneurship strategies and shared findings from its publication on *Artificial Intelligence unleashed: Transforming the entrepreneurial scene in developing nations* [142]. The publication examines the conditions required for entrepreneurs in developing countries to adopt AI in practice and highlights the central role of learning and skills development in helping them move from awareness to effective and responsible use of AI in business decision-making.

[142] https://unctad.org/publication/artificial-intelligence-unleashed-transforming-entrepreneurial-scene-developing-nations

713. The programme also provided assistance to the following countries:

(a) *Angola - Start-up Law proposals*. In June 2025, UNCTAD participated in a government consultation on a legislative initiative for start-ups (Proposta – Lei das Startups), in line with its mandate to assist member States in promoting entrepreneurship as a driver of economic growth and development

(b) *South Africa: Review of the final draft of the National Entrepreneurship Strategy*. UNCTAD continued to support the Department of Small Business Development (DSBD) of the government of South Africa, participating in reviewing and commenting the final draft of the country's National Entrepreneurship Strategy and Implementation Plan in December 2025.

Global and regional events and outreach

714. To mark the International MSMEs Day, on 24 June 2025, UNCTAD participated in an online panel discussion organized at the ILO New York Office. Panellists, including MSMEs representatives, policymakers and business support organisations, highlighted the importance of coherent, targeted policies, with finance as a key enabler, complemented by investments in capacity-building, skills development and innovation support.

715. In June 2025, UNCTAD co-organized an *Empretec for Africa Alumni* event, in collaboration with Empretec trainers of Kenya and in partnership with the Association of Startup and SMEs Enablers of Kenya (ASSEK). Directors and coordinators of Empretec national programmes from Botswana, Ghana, South Africa, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania shared experiences and success stories in their countries, and discussed opportunities to strengthen regional entrepreneurial networks.

716. In September 2025, UNCTAD participated in a workshop on "*Designing a Roadmap for Building an SME Network Platform*" convened by KOSGEB (Türkiye's SME Development Agency). Representatives from SME development institutions of Egypt, Malaysia, Pakistan, Senegal and Türkiye exchanged experiences and initiatives aimed at strengthening institutional capacities and building cross-border SME networks. UNCTAD presented key features of its Empretec programme, emphasizing the role of partnerships in supporting SMEs internationalization.

717. In November 2025, UNCTAD held a session on *policies and instruments to develop innovative entrepreneurship* in the framework of a workshop, organized by Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), with participation from UN agencies including United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), and the United Nations University - Maastricht Economic and Social Research Institute on Innovation and Technology (UNU-MERIT). The session provided practitioners and policymakers from Latin America with practical examples of entrepreneurship development policies and instruments to foster coherent entrepreneurial ecosystems.

Empretec

Empretec 2.0

718. Following the development of new training curricula reported last year, an effort carried out through a South–South collaboration involving Empretec master trainers and experts from across the network, Empretec centres have now moved into full implementation of these programmes. The finalized curricula are being widely disseminated for use throughout the Empretec centres, ensuring consistent support for entrepreneurs across regions. 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.

719. To complement these activities, additional crash courses on fundraising and the application of artificial intelligence (AI) were developed to address the emerging needs of early-stage start-up founders. The fundraising module equips entrepreneurs with a practical understanding of commonly used investment instruments while also strengthening their capacity to anticipate investor expectations, structure effective pitch decks, and formulate clear funding requests.

UNCTAD's support to Empretec activities at the regional and national level

720. UNCTAD continued to strengthen cooperation with and amongst over 40 Empretec centres which had 587 certified trainers, organized 674 workshops and trained 14,500 entrepreneurs in 2025, with female participation at 51 per cent. 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 launched in 2023, was further enhanced with mentoring services by international business development players. Selected entrepreneurs were connected to international startup support programmes, while also benefiting from mentoring, peer learning, and collaboration opportunities across the Empretec network.

721. 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 the end of 2030. In 2025, UNCTAD conducted 13 *Empretec Training Workshops (ETWs)* across different parts of the country, benefiting 428 Saudi entrepreneurs, including 168 women. Throughout the year, SDB also organized training-of-trainers workshops to expand its pool of certified trainers to 20 by the end of 2025.

722. SDB further strengthened engagement with its entrepreneurial community through regular meetings, including advisory sessions, success-story sharing, and peer learning activities which reached 389 participants. It also participated in networking opportunities and events, such as the *DeveGo Entrepreneurship and Modern Business Practices Forum*, where UNCTAD contributed by coordinating entrepreneurship-focused activities, including high-level sessions, business showcases, consultation sessions and targeted networking opportunities for entrepreneurs from the Empretec network and eFounders. In addition, SDB launched a Fellowship Programme aimed at enriching knowledge sharing and capacity development. Three Empretec Club sessions were also convened with the participation of UNCTAD and invited experts, covering topical entrepreneurial themes and fostering stronger networking linkages among entrepreneurs. In collaboration with SDB and national partners, UNCTAD organized four specialized track workshops with early-stage entrepreneurs and founders (industrial track, financial technology track, logistics track, and fundraising crash course). Moreover, SDB launched three new initiatives aimed at developing high-potential sectors and supporting Empretec beneficiaries, benefitting 166 participants (including 20 women).

723. Building on the experience of the specialized tracks workshops in Saudi Arabia, UNCTAD organized two capacity-building activities in the area of supply chain and logistics for early-stage start-up young entrepreneurs (pre-accelerator) in Uganda and South Africa, in partnership with LEARN Logistics by Kühne Foundation and in close collaboration with the respective Empretec centres. These activities supported the development of a pipeline of emerging founders (42 in Uganda and 28 in South Africa) working on logistics and supply chain solutions, contributing to sectors critical for trade efficiency, regional integration, and economic diversification, in line with countries' development plans. Beyond direct support to entrepreneurs, the workshops contributed to strengthening national entrepreneurship ecosystems by fostering collaboration between Empretec centres and key stakeholders, including startup venture studios, innovation hubs, investors and logistics stakeholders.

Highlights of activities carried out in Empretec Centres worldwide

724. The Empretec centre in Angola focused its efforts on expanding the Empretec programme across key provinces through the organization of workshops in Zaire and Cuanza Sul and strengthening strategic partnerships to support entrepreneurship development. This included a cooperation agreement with the National Institute for the Support of Micro, Small

and Medium Enterprises (INAPEM) to establish a “One Stop Shop” model offering integrated services for MSMEs, from business creation and legal support to branding, mentoring, and training.

725. Empretec Argentina delivered Empretec workshops across multiple provinces and expanded open and virtual training programmes that reached more than 10,000 participants (53 per cent women) at the national level. These included various webinars, advisory sessions, and sector-specific trainings aimed at strengthening SMEs and start-ups. In terms of communication and learning resources, Empretec Argentina continued to produce its podcast “Caja de Herramientas” (“Toolbox” in English), and issue newsletters and the digital magazine “Innovación” (“Innovation” in English). It also collaborated in organizing and participating in business roundtables and national competitions, building strategic partnerships to foster innovation, sustainability, and linkages within Argentina’s entrepreneurial ecosystem.

726. In Benin, the Empretec centre (hosted by the Centre for the Promotion and Support of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises - CePEPE) organized five Empretec training workshops benefiting 119 (including 45 women) entrepreneurs, thanks to partnerships with the SME Development Agency (ADPME) and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Benin. It also delivered extensive technical assistance to SMEs, including 20 capacity-building workshops covering accounting, taxation, financial education, business management, and tender preparation, reaching over 1,400 entrepreneurs with market-access support.

727. In Brazil, SEBRAE (Brazilian Micro and Small Business Support Service) organized 525 Empretec Entrepreneurship Training Workshops. It also conducted a major redesign of the Empretec workshop aimed at improving efficiency, sustainability, and participant engagement. The revised format reduces the in-person workshop from six to five days and makes extensive use of a custom digital platform to integrate and complement classroom activities and workshop management. SEBRAE conducted training-of-trainers’ sessions for its large network of trainers and centres and validated the new format through six pilot workshops. The institution also organized an event to strengthen the extensive network of Brazilian Empretec graduates (empretecos), consolidated its community and enhanced the programme’s visibility. More than 640 entrepreneurs from across the country participated.

728. In Cameroon, the Empretec programme, hosted by the Ministry of SMEs, Social Economy and Handicrafts (MINPMEESA), supported 72 entrepreneurs in enhancing product and service quality through certification and standardization. The centre also prepared foundational documents for the launch of a structured school-based entrepreneurship education programme planned for 2026 and held thematic workshops on the 2025 finance law and on opportunities within the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

729. Empretec Costa Rica, hosted by the Latin American Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (CELIEM), supported eight micro and small businesses through technical assistance, business advisory services, training, and seed capital, resulting in the creation of 33 jobs and progress in business development. The centre also delivered specialized workshops on financial education, public procurement and marketing strategies to another group of Empretec beneficiaries, advancing their business growth and access to finance.

730. In the Dominican Republic, the Empretec programme, hosted by the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and SMEs, organized three Empretec workshops for 74 young entrepreneurs (including 24 women) in collaboration with a local School of Management. The programme advanced efforts to expand its pool of certified trainers through a structured multi-stage selection process, which initially involved 32 candidates, of whom five were identified for formal certification in 2026.

731. In Ecuador, the Empretec programme hosted by the Quito Agency for Local Economic Development (ConQuito) delivered eight Entrepreneurship Training Workshops, benefiting more than 170 entrepreneurs (including 101 women). Participants received training, technical assistance, seed capital, and support through pre-incubation and incubation programmes, while collaborations with universities helped optimize their business processes.

732. In Ethiopia, the Entrepreneurship Development Institute (EDI), host of Empretec delivered 53 Empretec training workshops for 1,800 entrepreneurs (including 742 women) and provided sector-specific business skills development activities that reached tens of

thousands nationwide. EDI also offered business development services, incubation support, finance and market-linkage facilitation, while contributing to national initiatives such as the Global Entrepreneurship Week and Ethiopia's first Public Sector Innovation Lab.

733. Empretec Guyana delivered business-planning workshops, organized a business plan competition, and collaborated with the Guyana Economic Development Trust to provide training and facilitate access to funding by entrepreneurs.

734. The Empretec Centre in Jordan, hosted by the Business Development Centre (BDC), delivered 11 Empretec Training Workshops, reaching 186 entrepreneurs (including 82 women). BDC implemented the national self-employment programme "Inhad," providing entrepreneurship training, feasibility-study support, and guidance for youth applying for concessional loans backed by the Central Bank of Jordan. BDC also delivered Empretec components under the "*Project Productivity Enhancement for Micro and Small Enterprises (Iqlaa)*" Productivity Enhancement Project, including workshops on entrepreneurship technology, access to finance, and legal literacy, complemented by tailored mentorship, bootcamps, and business-simulation training for both adults and students across multiple governorates.

735. Empretec Malaysia, hosted by the National Association of Women Entrepreneurs of Malaysia (NAWEM), supported MSMEs empowerment, women entrepreneurship and regional collaboration. A key initiative was the "*Igniting MSMEs Growth – Access to Finance and Beyond*" expo with Public Bank Berhad, which included a Women Entrepreneurs Conference during the International Council for Small Business World Forum.

736. Empretec Mauritius provided access-to-finance initiatives reaching over 650 beneficiaries (including 342 women) and coordinated major ecosystem-building efforts, including Global Entrepreneurship Week 2025 under the theme "Together, We Build", featuring talks, workshops, and networking sessions to strengthen SME competitiveness and foster inclusion.

737. The Enterprise Mozambique Foundation conducted two Empretec Training Workshops, training 40 entrepreneurs (including 14 women), and continued to provide business development services to support SME growth, including business health checks, advisory services, business planning, performance monitoring, and financial literacy.

738. The Empretec Nigeria Foundation organized seven Empretec Training Workshops, training 222 (including 112 women) entrepreneurs, and implemented two major capacity-building programmes targeting strategic national sectors. In partnership with the Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB), the centre trained 100 women entrepreneurs in the oil and gas sector. Such support included business simulations, sector-specific instructions, and industrial field visits, and aimed at boosting women's participation in the energy value chain.

739. Empretec Panama conducted four Empretec Training Workshops in partnership with universities and innovation hubs, training 71 entrepreneurs (including 42 women) across various institutions. The centre also implemented a broad portfolio of technical assistance activities, including virtual Leaders Lab Bootcamps for 64 participants, mini-workshops for high-school students, design thinking and business-model coaching sessions, and specialized competency-based workshops for corporate teams.

740. In 2025, the Empretec Saudi Arabia programme delivered 13 Empretec workshops across various regions. The Saudi Development Bank (SDB), which hosts the programme, also implemented specialized sector-focused tracks in the industrial, financial technology and logistics sectors, in partnership with strategic national partners. The centre strengthened its entrepreneurial community through networking and mentoring initiatives.

741. The Empretec Programme in South Africa, hosted by the Small Enterprise Development Finance Agency (SEDFA), organized 20 Empretec Training Workshops, equipping 500 entrepreneurs (200 men and 300 women) with key entrepreneurial competencies, through its network of 24 certified trainers. As a government agency, the centre continued implementing its broader mandate through programmes that contribute to the development of MSMEs across the country.

742. The Empretec centre in Uganda organized seven Empretec workshops, training more than 200 entrepreneurs (including 127 women), and delivered business development services

to more than 20,000 MSMEs at the national level. Several other initiatives targeted youth entrepreneurship, small enterprises in the agribusiness sector, and women entrepreneurs. The centre also launched its inaugural *Small Enterprise Accelerator (SEA)* programme for 331 growth-ready micro and small business owners.

743. Empretec Zimbabwe advanced the implementation of the *Opportunities for Youth Employment (OYE+)* project, which aims at improving the livelihoods of 11,000 out-of-school youth by supporting green jobs and enterprise opportunities across 11 districts. The centre also delivered business plan reviews for persons with disabilities, continued its work with the Leather Institute, and facilitated a strategic planning session for the Women in Agriculture Union (WAU), engaging participants from diverse agricultural value chains.

744. **Results and impact**. Following a session on innovative entrepreneurship delivered under the framework of a Training Workshop on Science, Technology and Innovation Policies and Instruments for the SDGs, organized by ECLAC in November 2025, Ecuador's Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture engaged with UNCTAD to explore support for the development of a policy on innovation ecosystems and technology-based entrepreneurship. Several follow-up meetings were held between December 2025 and February 2026, reflecting growing interest in UNCTAD's expertise and laying the groundwork for future technical cooperation.

745. In Saudi Arabia, the Empretec project implemented in partnership with SDB delivered 60 Empretec Entrepreneurship Training Workshops since its inception, benefiting 1,690 entrepreneurs, including 762 women. During this period, 15 national trainers were certified, strengthening national capacity to deliver entrepreneurship training sustainably. In addition, UNCTAD and SDB developed and delivered specialized workshops for start-ups and early-stage entrepreneurs in specific sectors. New short courses on access to finance and artificial intelligence (AI) were designed and offered to Empretec beneficiaries. Feedback from participants demonstrated strong practical impact. Following the AI workshop, 8 in 10 participants rated the training as useful for their business or professional work. Participants unanimously requested advanced follow-up training. An investment crash course also delivered strong results: 61 per cent of participants had never pitched to investors prior to the training, while after completion participants rated the workshop 8.5 out of 10 on average for its usefulness to their professional life. Participants highlighted improved understanding of investor expectations, feasibility studies, financial planning and pitching techniques as the most transformative aspects of the training.

746. In Costa Rica, the Empretec centre CELIEM provided business support to 114 micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. Participating businesses made significant progress in their development stages, reaching a growth phase that marked considerable improvements in internal management capacities, clearer business models and strengthened financial planning. CELIEM's initiative supported 537 direct and indirect jobs and increased formal business registrations with the Ministry of Economy, Industry and Commerce by 26 per cent. Eight micro-enterprises received non-reimbursable seed capital equivalent to US$65,700 that enabled them to upgrade and expand their service offerings.

747. Empretec training workshops continued to receive overwhelmingly positive feedback from participants, who appreciated the opportunity to learn how to improve their business competencies, leading to tangible improvements in their operations. Many participants reported increased confidence in their ability to rethink their business models, improve efficiency and adopt innovative strategies for business success. For example, in Uganda, the 30 entrepreneurs who attended the Empretec workshop organized in January 2025 rated the overall training experience as excellent across several dimensions, such as methodology, material, training team performance and its relevance to business needs. The workshop evaluation indicated that it not only met but exceeded the expectations of 83 per cent of participants. Thanks to the learnings, they anticipated positive impact on product quality, operations and customer growth.

D6 Train for Trade

Table D6
Train for Trade

Project number	*Short title*	*Period covered*	*Source of funds*
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 -	Group of donors
INT/0T/7BR	UNCTAD/ Train for Trade Port Training Programme for English-Speaking Developing Countries	2007 -	Group of donors
ROA-2225 (F14)	Train for Trade blended learning strategy to boost the digital economy in small island developing States of Africa, the Caribbean and Asia and the Pacific	2022 -	Development Account

748. **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, International Merchandise Trade Statistics and Statistics on Digital Economy, E-Commerce and Digital Trade;

(c) Port Management Programme (PMP), including the course on Modern Port Management, the compendium 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.

749. The Train for Trade PMP 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.

750. The activities of the Train for Trade Programme in 2025 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 promoted a case study from the Port of Rawson (Argentina) proposing the recovery of fish species of high nutritional value that are typically discarded during shrimp fishing operations. The initiative aims to channel these resources to school canteens in the province of Chubut through coordinated action among public authorities and private stakeholders. By improving the use of available marine resources and enhancing access to nutritious food in school communities, the proposal contributes to strengthening local food security and reinforcing the port's role in sustainable territorial development.

(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 waste treatment 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 in initiating measures to improve waste-management systems. For instance, a dissertation from the Office des Ports et Rades du Gabon shows the importance of maintaining and modernizing the security and health committee. This research focuses on the need to upgrade existing infrastructure to comply with current regulations by strengthening the committee's skills, putting in place an annual workplan, and ensuring the committee's conformity through oversight by a specialized administration.

(c) Goal 4 (Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all). The Train for Trade Programme supports fair access to high-quality education and continuous professional development within the port industry. For example, a dissertation from the PMP focused on improving the digital marketing strategy of the Maldives Port Limited, which included launching a YouTube channel. The videos produced through this initiative would not only enhance the Port's visibility but also serve an educational purpose by providing accessible, high-quality content on port operations and activities.

(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 2025, women's participation reached 42 per cent, with a total of 2,052 women. The Train for Trade 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 its activities.

(e) Goal 6 (Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all) seeks to guarantee reliable water availability through sustainable management, efficiency improvements, and responsible governance of water resources. In alignment with this objective, Train for Trade has promoted a case study that develops an integrated modernization plan for the water provision infrastructure and management system in the Northern Sector of the Port of Buenos Aires (Argentina), with a focus on the Port Support Zone. The initiative is based on criteria of technical efficiency, environmental sustainability, institutional governance, and port competitiveness, thereby strengthening sustainable water management within the port sector.

(f) Goal 7 (Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all) supports the modernization of port infrastructure in line with the ongoing energy transition in the port sector. Towards this objective, a dissertation from the Port of Comodoro Rivadavia (Argentina) proposes transforming the port into a strategic hub for the production and export of green hydrogen in the form of green ammonia, using electricity generated from the region's high-capacity wind farms. By reducing dependence on fossil fuels, replacing carbon-intensive fuels in industry and maritime transport, and supporting a just transition for a region historically dependent on oil production, the project contributes to a cleaner, more resilient and socially responsible energy system.

(g) 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. For instance, Train for Trade has promoted a dissertation from the Port Autonome de Lomé (Togo) on the importance of quality budget planning and communication. A comprehensive budget plan provides greater transparency and a more equitable distribution of salaries. It also supports consistent and sustainable growth for the port while providing mechanisms to monitor the budget.

(h) Goal 9 (Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation) emphasizes the importance of modernizing infrastructure and advancing sustainable industrial development. In line with this objective, the Programme has shared an innovation proposed by a PMP graduate from the Port Authority of Kribi (Cameroon). It consists of a tailor-made loyalty program built and designed specifically for the port logistics environment named TradeWave. It improves client retention and cultivates loyalty to the port through a point-earning system. The program motivates higher volumes, service efficiency and operational discipline, thereby aligning with infrastructure modernisation and innovative, sustainable development. In addition, at Maldives Port Limited, Train for Trade promoted a case study on the development of cold-chain infrastructure at the new Thilafushi Port. The goal is to build robust, reliable infrastructure that supports economic growth and well-being. Such an initiative would allow sustainable development to become a core value for the new port. Similarly, a dissertation from Puerto Gravetal (Bolivia) focuses on optimizing the diesel transfer process to ensure uninterrupted operations and reduced logistical costs. By modernizing port infrastructure and eliminating costly and risky operations, the project strengthens operational efficiency, enhances national energy security, and supports strategic sectors such as agriculture and industry.

(i) 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 highlighted the importance of connecting the new Port Authority of Kribi (Cameroon) to its territory. Indeed, a case study showed that it is essential for the port to develop a cultural and local identity within its environment so that the port's success will benefit neighbouring towns. By strengthening connectivity between the port and nearby towns, not only will the port grow, but it will also reduce inequalities across territories and promote sustainable development.

(j) 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 promoted a dissertation from the Port Autonome de Conakry (Guinea) on the impacts of an explosion at a hydrocarbon storage facility. The thorough examination of the dire consequences of such a tragedy and its repercussions on the nearby city of Coronthie led to the conclusion that dangerous facilities should be kept away from residential areas. The relocation of this facility will result in a safer, more sustainable city that is less exposed to risks caused by port activities.

(k) Goal 12 (Ensure responsible consumption and production patterns). Members of the PMP manage natural resources and chemical waste sustainably, implement responsible procurement policies, make sustainable investments in the port area, encourage a circular economy, optimize port operations, and reduce food waste and loss in the production and supply chain. For instance, an initiative by Maldives Port Limited to strategically dispose of long-term idle, uncleared, or detained imported chemical products has been promoted by Train for Trade. Establishing appropriate chemical disposal mechanisms and enforcing importer accountability will support sustainable waste management practices.

(l) Goal 13 (Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts) emphasizes the need for sustainable practices to mitigate environmental impacts and strengthen resilience to climate change. A Bolivian case study promoted by Train for Trade addresses the increasing impact of drought on the Paraguay River and the Tamengo Canal, where navigability has declined significantly. These shrinking "navigability windows" increase dependence on high-emission trucking routes and raise export costs. The proposed solution introduces a specialized low-draft fleet capable of operating at reduced water levels, ensuring transport continuity while avoiding environmentally invasive dredging in the Pantanal ecosystem. By incorporating lightweight materials, fuel-efficient systems, and solar-powered auxiliary operations, the initiative strengthens climate resilience and supports a more sustainable transport model adapted to changing climatic conditions.

(m) 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 this context, Puerto Quequén (Argentina) provides a strong example through a case study proposing the implementation of the GloLitter project, establishing port reception facilities for ship generated waste and expanding services for oil residues from vessels through dedicated reception and treatment infrastructure, strengthened monitoring procedures, and operational safeguards aimed at preventing marine pollution and protecting coastal ecosystems.

(n) 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. This includes protecting the local environment around ports, such as mangrove ecosystem, as illustrated in a case study proposed within the Office des Ports et Rades du Gabon. By investing in environment protection and restoration and supporting initiatives aimed at reducing harmful waste and urban pressure on mangrove forest, the port would benefit from seabed sedimentation processes that help preserve water levels otherwise threatened by climate change. There is a clear need to adapt port infrastructures and energy resources to climate challenges, and using the natural environment surrounding the port can be key to long term sustainability.

(o) 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. Through its technical assistance to Argentina in reviewing and strengthening the tender process for the Paraguay–Paraná Waterway, the Train for Trade Programme has contributed to advancing SDG 16 by promoting transparency, accountability, and strong institutions, while also generating positive economic spillovers for the wider region, including Brazil, Paraguay, Bolivia, and Uruguay. By supporting the development of clear, objective, and credible tender documents, the Programme helped enhance investor confidence, foster fair competition, and improve the efficiency and sustainability of a strategic regional trade corridor. A more transparent and reliable governance framework for waterway maintenance is expected to reduce logistics costs, improve navigability, and facilitate trade flows, thereby strengthening regional integration, boosting exports, and supporting inclusive economic growth across the River Plate basin. Furthermore, the Programme promoted a case study on implementing a monitoring system for social and environmental governance within the Port Authority of Kribi (Cameroon). Thanks to the creation of an interactive tool that collects, analyses, and verifies data, the social responsibility of the port would be strengthened. Such an initiative allows more transparency and fairer, more responsible governance.

(p) Goal 17 (Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development) highlights the importance of 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 three linguistic networks, port experts certified by Train for Trade contribute to activities in various countries, providing advisory services, training and capacity building, and assessing case studies from peers in port communities. This dimension of the Programme is highly appreciated by beneficiaries, partners and donors. Participants in the Programme have applied 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.

751. **Objectives and features**. The Train for Trade Programme contributes to the work of development-led globalization, where 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 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.

752. The PMP brings together public, private and international entities to share expertise and best practices. Talent management and leadership development are crucial elements 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 compendium on “Building Port Resilience Against Pandemics (BPR)” in three languages (French, English and Spanish) and new materials focusing on Energy Transition in Ports and Digital Transformation in Ports, all with dedicated platforms and support.

753. 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, Côte d’Ivoire, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Gabon, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea, Haiti, Kenya, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritania, Mexico, Namibia, Nigeria, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Senegal, Serbia, 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.

754. 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.

755. 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.

756. **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.

757. During the 16th session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD16), Train for Trade hosted a parallel event on "Future-ready ports: Energy and digital transition strategies". The event welcomed over 50 high-level officials (including about 30 per cent women) engaged in discussions addressing future-proofing of ports by exploring strategies for enhancing port resilience while adapting to evolving energy and digital landscapes, and addressing how solutions can account for local contexts, to increase resilience.

758. *French-speaking network*. In 2025, 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 the ports of Nantes Saint-Nazaire and Marseille Fos.

759. The Training of Trainers workshop 2025 took place in Marseille, France and was hosted by its port partner with 28 participants (25 per cent women) from 8 countries (Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Guinea, Mauritania, Senegal, Togo and Tunisia). Prior to this face-to-face training, modules 1 to 4 of the course on Modern Port Management were delivered online.

760. The Port Management Programme continued to be delivered nationally in Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Guinea, Mauritania, Senegal, Togo and Tunisia. Cameroon (in Douala and Kribi), Gabon and Senegal organized face-to-face juries for the 16th, 1st, 8th and 13th cycle respectively.

761. New cycles of the PMP were launched in Cameroon (cycle 17 in Douala and cycle 2 in Kribi), Gabon (cycle 9), and Senegal (cycle 14).

762. South-South cooperation continued within the French-speaking network. Seventy-four (74) port managers from Cameroun, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Guinea, Mauritania, Togo and Tunisia evaluated the quality of the dissertations in other countries, with all travels financed by their institutions. The participation of port experts from beneficiary countries further contributed to the South–South exchange of knowledge and expertise. In addition, participants from cycle 15 in Douala undertook a study tour and benchmarking of their dissertations in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.

763. The network's senior port managers participated in UNCTAD16, which was held in Geneva in October 2026, with representation from Cameroon, Djibouti, Gabon, Mauritania, Senegal and Togo (self-financed by their institutions).

764. *English-speaking network*. The English-speaking network continued to benefit from the financial contributions of Irish Aid and close collaboration with the Port of Cork Company and Dublin Port Company in Ireland, the Belfast Harbour Commissioners in the United Kingdom, as well as the Port Authority of Valencia in Spain and the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore.

765. The Training of Trainers workshop included both online sessions and a face-to-face event in Dublin, Ireland. It was delivered to 29 senior managers (including 10 women) from 10 countries (Ghana, Kenya, Malaysia, Maldives, Namibia, Nigeria, Philippines, Serbia, Solomon Islands and the United Republic of Tanzania) and covered modules 1 4. The workshop included a coordination meeting with the PMP members to present the results and share the plans for the upcoming months.

766. The Coaching workshop in the Maldives was attended by 12 senior port managers (including 3 women) from the Maldives, including Customs and Immigration participants, expanding the scope of the programme in the port community.

767. English-speaking port communities made progress in their national deliveries of the Modern Port Management Course (Ghana: delivery of modules 2-4; Maldives: modules 4-8 and international juries for cycle 3; Nigeria: launch of cycle 4 and delivery of modules 1-2; the United Republic of Tanzania: delivery of modules 5-8). Modules were delivered with the support of Train for Trade certified local trainers and external port experts from the Network.

768. *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, the Port Authority of Las Palmas and the Port Authority of Santander provide in-kind contributions by hosting events and taking part in field missions and activities. The Ministry of Economy, Trade and Enterprise of Spain also provides financial support to the Spanish-speaking network.

769. The national deliveries of the Modern Port Management course were organized in Argentina, the Dominican Republic, Panama, 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). Guatemala and Mexico requested to join the Programme.

770. The International Coordination Meeting of the Spanish-speaking network was organized on 19 and 20 of November 2025 in Lima, Peru with the participation of representatives of the member countries, Puertos del Estado of Spain and the Spanish Port Authorities of Valencia, Gijon, Las Palmas, Cartagena and Santander 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 2026 and to continue financing their membership.

771. A Training of Trainers workshop was organized in Gijon, Spain from 30 June to 11 July 2025 with the participation of 23 representatives (including 12 women) from ports of Argentina, Ecuador, the Dominican Republic, Panama, Peru and Mexico. Participants were certified as instructors to deliver Modern Port Management course in their countries.

772. A study tour was organised in the ports of Valencia and Las Palmas (from 14 to 23 July 2025), with the participation of 9 representatives (including 3 women) from Argentina, the Dominican Republic, Peru and Uruguay. Participants were able to visit the installations of the ports of Valencia and Las Palmas and meet and discuss with the responsible staff of each department.

773. In 2025, 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.

774. The Train for Trade "International Conference on Port-City Relations and Digital Transformation in Ports" took place on 10 and 11 September 2025 in Montevideo, Uruguay. One hundred and eighty-eight (188) participants (including 68 women) from Argentina, Peru and Uruguay attended the Conference. The event allowed the participants to identify the challenges related to ports-city relationship and digital transformation and innovation in ports.

775. 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 2025. 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.

776. 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 2025. Train for Trade has trained 3,625 statisticians (42 per cent women) from 187 countries or areas. At the end of the courses, about 90 per cent of participants confirmed that their knowledge increased thanks to the course and that they were likely to use this knowledge in their work.

777. The Port Endeavor game focusing on raising awareness of SDGs among port executives and managers, developed together with International Association of Ports and Harbors and Port of Antwerp-Bruges, became an integral part of the TFT Port Management Programme and was played by over 1,000 port professionals from five continents.

778. 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 delivered to 262 participants (61 per cent women) from 37 Small Island Developing States (SIDS) countries or areas. Out of the total registered, 132 have received a certificate of completion. Overall, the average score and satisfaction rates for the course were 72 per cent and 82 per cent, respectively. The project closed with a hybrid restitution workshop held in Singapore, gathering 30 participants (67 per cent women) from 25 SIDS, including 28 in-person and 2 online participants. The conference was also attended by experts from Australia, France, Singapore and UN entities, namely UNICITRAL (online), UN ESCAP, UNCTAD, and UNDESA. Participants’ satisfaction rate was at a very high level of 96 per cent. Policy recommendations that came out of the e-learning components were further refined in Singapore. These final recommendations are captured in the project’s Technical Note, outlining best practices to guide SIDS in developing modern, competitive digital economy strategies[143] .

779. **Results and impact**. In 2025, the Train for Trade Programme enhanced skills and abilities of 4,899 trade practitioners[144] (42 per cent women) from 191 countries and areas through various courses and activities with the overall satisfaction rate of 86 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 2025

Area	*Total number*	*% Women*
Port Management Programme	**982**	**34%**
French-speaking network	461	37%
English-speaking network	113	30%
Spanish-speaking network	408	33%
International Merchandise Trade Statistics	**1,936**	**43%**
Statistics on International Trade in Services	**1,689**	**42%**
Statistics on the Digital Economy, E-commerce and Digital Trade	**262**	**61%**
SIDS Conference	**30**	**67%**

780. In 2025, the participants of the Port Management Programme prepared a total of 143 dissertations with proposals of improvements to the port communities, which were positively evaluated by local and international subject matter experts. These proposals have a high chance of being implemented by the port authorities.

143 More information available at https://unctad.org/publication/trainfortrade-blended-learning-strategy-boost-digital-economy-small-island-developing

144 If a person participated in more than one training Programme in 2025, each participation is counted separately.

781. 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 the sharing of knowledge and port practices between countries in the region, which often share common issues.

782. 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 section 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 used by port communities to help with strategic planning and annual performance benchmarking on regional and global scales.

783. 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" concluded in 2025. By specifically focusing on SIDS, it directly supported populations typically at risk of marginalization in the global digital transition, addressing the structural barriers that limit their participation in the digital economy, such as inadequate digital infrastructure, weak legal frameworks, and limited access to digital identity systems. The project translated into concrete policy impact in Mauritius, where it strengthened regulatory discussions on e-commerce, shaped contributions to the national legal framework, and informed upcoming budget proposals and economic strategies focused on digital trade, AI, and innovation. It also enhanced data systems, policy coordination, and alignment with international standards, positioning the country more competitively in the digital economy. In São Tomé and Príncipe, the project built strategic understanding of digital economy foundations, highlighting digital identity and e commerce law as key enablers. It inspired a policy direction focused on modernizing legal frameworks, improving governance, and using data-driven approaches to overcome geographic constraints, attract investment, and foster inclusive, sustainable growth.

784. 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 for events and link them with the results-based management indicators of the Programme (77 per cent average test score and 86 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 its member States.

D99 Other

Table D99
Others

Project number	*Short title*	*Period covered*	*Source of funds*
INT/0T/KBH	Trust Fund for the UNCTAD Virtual Institute on Trade and Development (formerly T6AP)	2021 -	Group of donors

1. Course on key issues on the international economic agenda – paragraph 166

785. **Development context**. Over the past three decades, development practitioners have increasingly focused on investing in human capital as a means of improving quality of life through better health, education and longer life expectancy, while also promoting economic growth and stronger public institutions. While traditional measures of economic performance have often relied on quantitative indicators, there has been growing recognition of the importance of investing in human capital to achieve broader development outcomes. This approach complements economic growth metrics with qualitative dimensions that capture improvements in well-being, institutional capacity and policy effectiveness.

786. Paragraph 166 of the Bangkok Plan of Action was adopted at the tenth session of the UNCTAD Ministerial Conference. It calls on UNCTAD to strengthen its capacity-building activities, particularly by providing training courses on key trade and development issues for policymakers from developing countries. The paragraph further underlines that these training activities should draw on the expertise and policy analysis work of the UNCTAD secretariat.

787. This mandate was subsequently renewed through several UNCTAD ministerial outcomes, including the São Paulo Consensus, the Accra Accord, and the Doha Mandate. It was reaffirmed at UNCTAD XIV in Nairobi in 2016 and further emphasized in the Bridgetown Covenant of 2021, where paragraph 166 received particular attention in the context of UNCTAD technical cooperation work. The Covenant highlighted that “the activities under paragraph 166 of the Bangkok Plan of Action have proven to be of great importance and utility and should be continued.” The continued relevance of this mandate was further reaffirmed in the most recent negotiated outcome of UNCTAD16 in 2025, in which member States acknowledged the significance of the programme and its contribution to strengthening the policy capacities of developing countries.

788. **Objectives and features**. The objective of the P166 programme is to strengthen human capital in developing countries in support of sustainable development and economic growth. The UNCTAD P166 programme enhances knowledge on trade and trade policy; science, technology, and innovation; foreign direct investment and other forms of financial flows; and entrepreneurship, among other topics. These areas strengthen the capacity of policymakers from developing regions to design and implement policies that address key development challenges.

789. Located in the Technology, Innovation and Knowledge Development Branch (TIKDB) of the Division on Technology and Logistics (DTL), the Policy Capacity Building Section (PCBS), known as PCBS-P166, delivers regional and short courses on economic development and trade-related matters. The regional courses target mid-level policymakers from five developing regions, while the short courses target Geneva-based delegates who follow UNCTAD-related matters. Overall, the beneficiaries of the regional courses work in relevant government institutions, including ministries responsible for commerce, economy, trade, and planning, among others. Academics with an economic background are also eligible to participate.

790. The programme works closely with the Permanent Missions to the United Nations in Geneva. This cooperation covers, among other areas, the processes for organizing regional and short courses, including notification, nomination, and communication with the relevant Permanent Missions. Over the years, the programme has established a centralized communication channel with permanent missions, ensuring that both diplomatic missions and national authorities remain closely engaged in the activities of the P166 programme.

791. Additionally, the structure of the regional courses remains anchored in the UNCTAD mandate and is cross-divisional in terms of content. The curricula are designed and developed by PCBS/P166 in collaboration with experts from various UNCTAD divisions. During the design phase, collaboration is also sought with the regional economic commissions of the United Nations, as well as national experts from the hosting countries, to ensure relevance and coherence across the various economic themes. Ranging from economic theories to trade policy, foreign direct investment, and technology, among other topics, the programme focuses on responses to crises and sustainable development as central themes.

792. **Outputs**. The curricula of the regional courses continue to illustrate the formulation of development policies and strategies within the broader context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals. In recent years, the curriculum has also incorporated themes of resilience and responding to multiple economic shocks. The training includes lectures on economic, trade, and finance theories and their relevance to policy development, the role of investment and technology, as well as case studies and lessons learned from previous policy decisions. Critical thinking, with emphasis on policy design, coherence, coordination, implementation, and measurement, remains central to the programme. Simulation exercises, examinations, group work, and debates are integral to the training methodology.

793. The overall curriculum of the regional course includes three integrated modules covering several substantive topics developed through UNCTAD’s research work. It is adapted to each developing region and aims to enhance knowledge on contemporary

economic issues among trade policy officials, finance and investment experts, and academics working in these areas. The curriculum developed for each region focuses on formulating appropriate trade, finance, investment, innovation, and technology policies that contribute to economic gains while supporting the development objectives of participating countries.

794. Policymakers participating in the training are introduced to sound fiscal policies adapted to the evolving global economic environment. The need to stimulate productive investment, develop local markets, and promote diversification requires the adoption of appropriate industrial policies. Developing countries must also maintain sufficient policy space to design and implement development strategies aligned with national priorities. Safeguarding this policy space remains essential to enabling countries to participate effectively in the global economy while advancing inclusive development and ensuring that no one is left behind. In this context, investing in human capital, strengthening infrastructure, and maintaining policy space remain key prerequisites for successful development strategies.

795. During the reporting period, training activities continued primarily through the short course programme for Geneva-based delegates. Due to the liquidity crisis affecting the United Nations, no regional courses were delivered in 2025. In response, the programme increased the number of short courses offered in Geneva to ensure the continued dissemination of UNCTAD’s analytical work and maintain engagement with member States.

796. Two regional courses had initially been planned for 2025: one for the Latin America and Caribbean region at the University of Buenos Aires (UBA), Faculty of Economics; and the other for Eastern Europe at Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in North Macedonia. Preparations were undertaken for both courses, including coordination with the host institutions, including the development of region-specific curricula. However, as noted above it was ultimately not possible to proceed with their delivery during the reporting period due to financial constraints.

797. The last regional course was therefore held in Islamabad, Pakistan, in December 2024, in collaboration with the Foreign Service Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which serves as the multi-year venue for the Asia-Pacific region. The course illustrated the programme’s continued approach of organizing regional trainings in partnership with national academic and diplomatic institutions, thereby strengthening regional cooperation and fostering the exchange of policy experiences among participating countries.

798. The programme continues to maintain partnerships with several multi-year venues across developing regions, which host the regional courses and contribute to the development of the curriculum. These partnerships remain an important component of the programme’s regional outreach and knowledge-sharing approach. Additionally, the University of Nairobi, Faculty of Economics, was endorsed by the Advisory Body of Paragraph 166, as a multi-venue for Africa 2026-2030.

799. Therefore, the multi-year venues include:

(a) The Foreign Service Academy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pakistan, multi-year venue for the Asia–Pacific region (2022–2027).

(b) University of Buenos Aires, Faculty of Economics, Argentina, multi-year venue for Latin America and the Caribbean (2022–2028).

(c) Ss. Cyril and Methodius University, Faculty of Economics, North Macedonia, with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a multi-year venue for Eastern Europe (2021–2026).

(d) The Institute of Diplomatic Studies of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Egypt, a multi-year venue for the Arab region (2025–2030).

(e) University of Nairobi, Faculty of Economics, with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a multi-year venue for Africa (2025–2030).

800. In the absence of regional courses in 2025, the short courses played an enhanced role in strengthening dialogue between UNCTAD experts and Geneva-based delegates. These sessions provided participants with opportunities to engage directly with UNCTAD research outputs, exchange views on emerging economic and development challenges, and explore policy implications for member States.

801. In cooperation with several UNCTAD divisions, seven short courses were delivered in 2025 on the following subjects:

(a) Trade Preferences Outlook 2024 (21 February 2025).

(b) Global Economic Forecasts and Debt Trends (3 April 2025).

(c) Technology and Innovation Report 2025 (19 June 2025).

(d) UNCTAD lens: Supporting small island developing States in building new development models (10 October 2025).

(e) Market access in times of geopolitical tensions (16 October 2025).

(f) Forecast on the global economy and its trends: Uncertainty and the global trade–finance nexus (10 November 2025).

(g) Where is the LDC group heading in the future? (11 December 2025).

802. A total of 166 delegates participated in these short-course editions. Of these, 74 were women, representing approximately 45 per cent of the overall participants.

803. Participation across the sessions remained strong, illustrating the continued relevance of UNCTAD analytical work for Geneva-based delegates. The short courses provide an important platform for UNCTAD experts to present their latest research findings and policy analysis to representatives of member States.

804. **Results and impact**. Following the completion of the short courses and regional courses, most delegates and participants indicated that the courses led to improved knowledge on development, and the issues addressed. For the regional courses, they have noted a deepened understanding of the importance of the role of international trade in improving economic development, including the links between international economic, social, and financial issues. The approach to link theory, policy and practice in economic policy development was highly rated. Its approach to trade, development and investment at the regional and international levels was also useful for the participants.

805. Evaluations also highlighted the value of the programme's integrated approach to development, which connects theoretical insights with practical policy considerations. The discussions and exchanges of views during the courses strengthened participants' understanding of how economic policies can be designed and implemented to support development objectives.

806. Several participants reported that they were already using the knowledge and tools acquired in their daily work, such as improvement of economic policy, trade negotiations, policy formulation, strategic planning, attracting FDI, employment creation as well as providing advisory services. Additionally, several noted that the knowledge gained helped them achieve a better understanding of contemporary economic issues and how to cope with the challenges of the new multilateral trading system, including responding to various types of crises. Several participants indicated their ability to employ analytical tools in the decision-making process in pursuit of relevant development policies to address economic challenges. Many also mentioned the linkages among international trade, finance, investment, technology and innovation as key pillars of the development strategy.