



IsDB Technical Assistance Program for Regional and Global Integration in Trade

The IsDB Group delegation, usually headed by the President of the IsDB, participates in the annual session of the COMCEC, which is held in Istanbul, Türkiye. The IsDB and the other members affiliated to the IsDB Group participate in different committees and meetings of the working groups of COMCEC, such as the Financial Cooperation Working Group, the Poverty Alleviation Working Group, the Transport and Communication Working Group, the Agriculture Working Group, and the Trade Working Group. The IsDB publishes an annual report on the Technical Assistance Program (TAP) for Regional and Global Integration in Trade.

40th Session of the COMCEC (Istanbul, Türkiye, 2-5 November 2024) Status Report

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

IsDB Technical Assistance Program for Regional and Global Integration in Trade

I. Introduction

The IsDB submits regular progress reports on the implementation of the Technical Assistance Program (TAP) to the COMCEC meetings. These reports highlight the major WTO-related technical assistance activities undertaken under the TAP since the 39th Session of the COMCEC held in Istanbul, Türkiye, in December 2023.

The Technical Assistance Program for Regional and Global Integration in Trade assists IsDB 57 member countries in their efforts to achieve integration among themselves and with the rest of the world, through training, policy advice and technical assistance. The interventions led under the program aim at rapid integration and increasing connectivity in order to unlock global opportunities for member countries as they become more integrated with the global market.

II. Background

The IsDB WTO-related Technical Assistance and Capacity Building Program (WTO-Program) was launched in 1997 with the prime objective of helping IsDB Member Countries (MCs) upgrade their human and institutional capacities to adjust to the new multilateral trading system. The aim of the program is to provide greater awareness to OIC member states on WTO agreements and their implementation, and to facilitate the process of their accession to the WTO. It also serves as a forum where relevant officials from MCs can exchange views and discuss various multilateral trade matters. The program which was later renamed (IsDB Technical Assistance Program (TAP) for Regional and Global Integration in Trade), aims to build the institutional and human capacities of IsDB member countries in the area of multilateral trade negotiations, such as those conducted under the auspices of the WTO, including acting as an interface for regional trading arrangements with the view to facilitating their effective participation into the global economy and fostering regional integration.

III. Major components of the program

The main components of the TAP consist of organizing seminars and workshops on the WTO and other regional agreements; conducting technical courses on trade policy; holding consultative meetings on important issues and in preparation for the WTO ministerial conferences; undertaking WTO-related studies; and providing advisory services through financing experts/consultants for the benefit of MCs on WTO-related matters. All IsDB MCs benefit from the components of the program. With the view to maximize the reach of the program, its activities are often replicated in different regions where MCs are clustered in regional groups. The following is a brief summary of the activities undertaken under the TAP since inception:

1- Seminars and workshops

The IsDB organizes seminars and workshops covering a wide range of regional integration and trade-related matters. The aim is to familiarize the MCs with the contents and provisions of regional trade and WTO agreements and activities to help them better defend their national interests. As of October 2024, 190 seminars and workshops were organized since the program's inception. In terms of topics, the program has recently been focusing more and more on trade in services, follow-up on WTO ministerial conferences' decisions, WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement as well as MCs' accession to WTO.

2- Trade policy courses

Organized in collaboration with the WTO, these courses are short versions of the WTO trade policy course which is a three-month curriculum offered by the WTO in Geneva. The trade policy course covers a wide spectrum of topics such as market access, customs and trade administration, agriculture, textile and clothing, sanitary and phytosanitary measures, technical barriers to trade, government procurement, general agreements on trade in services, intellectual property rights, anti-dumping, subsidies and countervailing measures, dispute settlement, agreement on trade-related investment measures, trade and competition policy, trade and environment, and regionalism. Recently, the program has discontinued its trade policy courses and shifted its focus to longer-term capacity development activities.

3- Special studies

Based on member countries' requests, the IsDB undertakes in-depth studies on WTO-related issues. The studies conducted so far have covered the sectors of agriculture, investment and services, trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights, and e-commerce. Each study featured a set of case studies on OIC member states and contained valuable practical tips and negotiation strategies thereon. Recently, the program has supported MCs, particularly those in the MENA region, in their quest to access WTO.

4- Consultative Meetings

The IsDB organizes consultative meetings for its MCs, mostly in conjunction with the WTO ministerial conferences. These meetings provide a forum for MCs delegations to exchange views and, where possible, coordinate their positions on WTO-related matters and share valuable suggestions on potential focus areas for the program. So far, the IsDB has organized nine consultative meetings.

All the MCs are invited to the consultative meetings which are usually held on the eve of WTO ministerial conferences to ensure high level participation. As a regular practice, the MCs are invited to chair with the IsDB such consultative meetings. The last consultative meeting was organized during the 11th WTO Ministerial Conference held in December 2017 in Argentina.

5- WTO specific technical assistance to OIC/IsDB MCs

The IsDB also provides specific technical assistance to MCs through hiring consultancy services or fielding in-house WTO experts on vital WTO issues such as accession to WTO,

drafting national laws, establishing WTO units, and providing capacity development for all general purposes.

IV. Activities planned/organized after the 39th Session of the COMCEC

Based on MCs feedback and requests, the TAP shifted its focus to two themes, namely (i) accession, post-accession and other WTO-related matters and (ii) regional integration and connectivity and investment promotion. The following are the main activities organized/planned by the IsDB since the 39th Session:

A. Activities organized

- IsDB-World Bank Group collaboration on updating HDM4 Software (*ongoing*)
- Opportunities for a regional domestic market for oil and gas in the East African region with the African Energy Commission (*ongoing*)
- A study on promoting food security and climate resilience through trade in the IGAD region, with IGAD, ICDT and UNCTAD (*ongoing*)
- Supporting the advancement of the Arab economic integration with ITFC AFTIAS-2 and the League of Arab States (*ongoing*)
- Cross-border trade between Algeria and Tunisia with ITFC AFTIAS-2 (*ongoing*)
- Support to organizing a validation workshop on the Sahel Initiative with BADEA and the United Nations Office of the Special Coordinator for Development in the Sahel (OSCS) (*completed*)
- Implementation of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) – e-Phyto Solution – for Togo with ICDT and the Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation (GATF) (*completed*)
- Implementation of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) – e-Phyto Solution – for Nigeria with ICDT and the Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation (GATF) (*completed*)
- Technical study on e-commerce within the framework of the African Continental Free Trade Area, with ICDT and ITC (*completed*)
- Study on trade policies and frameworks to foster regional integration and achieving Sustainable Development Goals in selected conflict and post-conflict Arab countries, including Iraq and Palestine, with UNCATD (*completed*)
- Study on promoting Chad-Sudan transit trade, transport, and regional integration through enhanced port connectivity, dry port/logistics hubs, and PPPs development, with ICDT and UNCTAD (*ongoing*)
- Study on improving risk management of import control and inspection system of Fish Quarantine and Inspection Agency (FQIA) in Indonesia, with ICDT and Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation (*completed*)
- IsDB-ICIEC-ICDT panel discussion on Non-Binding Investment Guiding Principles at the World Investment Forum in Abu Dhabi (*completed*)
- IsDB-ICIEC meeting on organizing a capacity building program on OIC Business Intelligence Centre (OBIC) (*completed*)
- Study on Business Support Network for Improving Competitiveness of SMEs in COMCEC countries, with KOSGEB and ICDT (*completed*)

- Phase II study of the Trans-Maghreb Corridor, with ICDT and the Centre for Transportation Studies for the Western Mediterranean (CETMO) (*ongoing*)
- Executive meeting under the theme of Making the Middle Corridor an e-TIR Corridor in Samarkand, Uzbekistan with ICDT and ECE (*completed*)
- Turkmenistan WTO accession Support program, with ECE and ICDT (*ongoing*)
- IsDB-ICDT collaboration on a study related to the Implementation of the International Plant Protection Convention – e-Phyto Solution – for Togo and Nigeria (*completed*)
- Second Open-Ended Intergovernmental Expert Group Meeting for the establishment of a permanent mechanism for the settlement of disputes arising out of OIC Investments Treaty (*completed*)
- IsDB-EIF-WAIPA workshop as part of a capacity development program for French-speaking least-developed countries during the Annual Investment Meeting held in Dubai (*completed*)
- IsDB-FZO capacity building activity (Free Zone Management Capacity Development Program), on the sideline of AICE 2023 – World FZO's 9th Annual International Conference in Dubai, (*ongoing*)
- IsDB-UNCTAD Program of Cooperation on Investment Promotion and International Investment Policies for the Year 2022 (*ongoing*)
- IsDB-UNESCWA collaboration on SAFE AND INCLUSIVE ROAD DESIGN in North and West Africa Project (*ongoing*)
- IsDB-ICDT capacity development program for African Investment Promotion Agencies – Phase 1 (*ongoing*)
- Study on attracting foreign direct investments in renewable energy for Central Asia member countries (*ongoing*)

B. Activities planned

- Study on an Economic Corridor Linking Tripoli, Niamey and Ndjamena (Libya – Niger – Chad)
- COMESA Cooperation – studies on support to COMESA Trade in Services negotiations, with ICDT and COMESA
- IsDB support to organizing the High-Level Workshop on Logistics Development and Regional Integration in Africa with ITFC
- Advancing Trade Digitalization through Single Window Interoperability in Asia with ESCAP
- Improving the Capacity and Engagement of SME Support Institutions and the Private Sector on Using Online B2B Matchmaking Tools in OIC member states with KOSGEB and ICDT
- Rehabilitation of the WAEMU CU18 Ghana Border – Benin Border Road Project
- Study on the Role of IPAs in the digital economy and digitalization of investment services, with ICDT
- Boosting Exports through foreign direct investments in Central Asia project, with ESCAP and ITFC ACCA+

V. Conclusions

The Islamic Development Bank continues to support OIC member states' efforts aimed to build their human and institutional capacities in order to meet the challenges of the multilateral trading system. The IsDB highly appreciates its collaboration with the WTO, international organizations, and national bodies and OIC institutions. The IsDB welcomes new ideas and suggestions to further enhance the impact of the Technical Assistance Program and looks forward to working more closely with all partners for the effective delivery of the program.

ANNEX: STATUS OF OIC/IsDB MEMBER COUNTRIES IN THE WTO

Country	Accession date	Observer status	No status
1 Albania	8 Sep. 2000	1 Somalia	1 Palestine
2 Bahrain	1 Jan. 1995	2 Algeria	
3 Bangladesh	1 Jan. 1995	3 Azerbaijan	
4 Brunei Darussalam	1 Jan. 1995	4 Iran	
5 Burkina Faso	3 Jun. 1995	5 Iraq	
6 Chad	19 Oct. 1996	6 Lebanon	
7 Côte d'Ivoire	1 Jan. 1995	7 Libya	
8 Djibouti	31 May 1995	8 Sudan	
9 Egypt	30 Jun. 1995	9 Uzbekistan	
10 Gambia	23 Oct. 1996	10 Turkmenistan	
11 Guinea	25 Oct. 1995		
12 Guinea-Bissau	31 May 1995		
13 Guyana	1 Jan. 1995		
14 Indonesia	1 Jan. 1995		
15 Jordan	1 Jan. 1995		
16 Kuwait	1 Jan. 1995		
17 Kyrgyzstan	20 Dec. 1998		
18 Malaysia	1 Jan. 1995		
19 Maldives	31 May 1995		
20 Mali	31 May 1995		
21 Mauritania	31 May 1995		
22 Morocco	1 Jan. 1995		
23 Mozambique	26 Aug. 1995		
24 Niger	13 Dec. 1996		
25 Nigeria	1 Jan. 1995		
26 Oman	9 Nov. 2000		
27 Pakistan	1 Jan. 1995		
28 Qatar	13 Jan. 1996		
29 Saudi Arabia	11 Dec. 2005		
30 Senegal	1 Jan. 1995		
31 Sierra Leone	23 Jul. 1995		
32 Suriname	1 Jan. 1995		
33 Tajikistan	2 Mar. 2013		
34 Togo	31 May 1995		
35 Tunisia	29 Mar. 1995		
36 Türkiye	26 Mar. 1995		
37 Uganda	1 Jan. 1995		
38 UAE	10 Apr. 1996		
39 Yemen	26 Jun. 2014		
40 Afghanistan	29 Jul. 2016		
41 Kazakhstan	30 Nov. 2015		
42 Comoros	26 Feb. 2024		