



ISLAMIC DEVELOPMENT BANK

REPORT ON IDB GROUP'S WTO-RELATED TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAM

28th Session of the COMCEC
(Istanbul, Turkey, 8-11 October 2012)

IDB GROUP'S WTO-RELATED TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAM

I. INTRODUCTION

The IDB Group has been implementing the WTO-related Technical Assistance and Capacity Building Program for the last fifteen years and has regularly submitted progress reports on this program to the COMCEC meetings. The last report was submitted to the 28th Meeting of the Follow-up Committee of the COMCEC which was held in Ankara, Turkey on 9-10 May 2012. This report highlights the major WTO-related technical assistance activities undertaken under this program since the 27th Session of the COMCEC held in Istanbul, Turkey, on 17-20 October 2011.

The WTO-related Technical Assistance and Capacity Building Program was launched by the IDB in 1997 to help its member countries 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 the OIC member countries on WTO Agreements and their implementation and facilitate the process of their accession to the WTO. It also serves as a forum where relevant officials from member countries can exchange views and discuss various multilateral trade matters. In the recent years, the focus of the Program has been more on helping the member countries in their accession to WTO, strengthening their negotiation skills and issues related to negotiations within the framework of the Doha Work Program.

The objectives of this Program are to: (i) assist member countries that are in the process of accession to WTO to negotiate the best possible terms of accession; (ii) upgrade the human and institutional capacities of member countries that are already members of WTO to implement the Uruguay Round Agreements and undertake the necessary economic restructuring to take maximum advantage of the new opportunities; and (iii) assist member countries in harmonizing their positions and to be well prepared for negotiations on new trade-related issues that are likely to emerge in future Ministerial Conferences of the WTO.

II. MAJOR ELEMENTS OF THE PROGRAM

The main elements of the IDB Group's WTO Program include: organizing seminars and workshops on WTO agreements; conducting technical courses on Trade Policy; organizing Consultative Meetings on important issues and in preparation for the WTO Ministerial Conferences; undertaking WTO-related studies; and providing advisory services through financing of experts/consultants to member countries on WTO-related matters. Briefly, the activities that have been undertaken under the IDB Group's WTO Program since its inception are as follows:

Seminars and Workshops: The IDB organizes seminars and workshops covering a wide range of WTO issues with the view to familiarizing the member countries with the contents and provisions of the WTO Agreements as well as the with the activities of WTO so that they may be in a better position to defend their interests. Since the inception of IDB Group's WTO-related Technical Assistance and Capacity Building Program till end-August 2012, 60 Seminars and 35 Workshops have been organized by the IDB under this program.

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 course offered by the WTO in Geneva. The Trade Policy Course covers a wide range of topics, such as, market access, customs and trade administration, agriculture, textile and clothing, sanitary and photo-sanitary 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. Since the inception of the Program till end-August 2012, 18 Trade Policy Courses have been organized by the IDB under this program.

Special Studies: The IDB occasionally undertakes in-depth studies on WTO-related issues based on the requests of the member countries. So far, the IDB has undertaken studies on: Agriculture sector, Investment, Services sector, Trade-related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs), and Electronic-Commerce. In this regard, the IDB obtained the services of experts in these fields and collaborated with UNCTAD in supervising some of these studies. Each study included a set of case studies on OIC member countries and contained valuable practical tips and negotiation strategies on the various issues concerning the OIC member countries.

Consultative Meetings: The IDB organizes consultative meetings for the member countries mostly in conjunction with the WTO Ministerial Conferences. These meetings provide a forum for the delegations of member countries to exchange views and, where possible, coordinate their positions on matters related to the WTO, adopt a common stance and act as a group to acquire stronger bargaining power. So far, the IDB has organized seven consultative meetings for both capital-based and Geneva-based officials.

WTO Specific Technical Assistance to OIC Member Countries: The IDB also provides specific technical assistance to member countries through hiring consultancy services or fielding in-house WTO experts on vital WTO issues such as, WTO accession, drafting of national laws, establishing WTO Units and providing capacity building for all general purposes.

III. ACTIVITIES ORGANIZED SINCE THE 27th SESSION OF THE COMCEC

Based on the feedback and requests of the member countries, the current focus of the Program is on three themes: (i) Accession to the WTO (ii) Regional integration and (iii) Negotiation skills. The major activities organized by the IDB since the 27th Session of the COMCEC are the following:

1. **Seminar on “Trade and Environment and their Implications for Sustainable Development in the Arab Region”:** The main objectives of this seminar were to examine the intersections between trade and the climate change and to highlight the national environmental policies and their effect on trade and the sustainable development in the Arab region. The seminar was organized in Dubai, UAE, on 24-26 October 2011.
2. **Seminar on “Trade and Development for African Countries”:** The seminar was aimed at explaining how the WTO agreements affect the developing countries by

limiting their ability to adopt and implement pro-development policies and analyzing in detail (focussing on the areas of agriculture, industrial goods and services) the economic rationale for preserving some development space in trade negotiations and why it is justified. The seminar was organized in Casablanca, Morocco, on 24-27 October 2011.

3. **Ministerial Consultative Meeting of the OIC Member Countries:** The IDB organized a Ministerial Consultative Meeting of the OIC Member Countries on 14 December 2011 in Geneva. The Meeting was held on the eve of the 8th Ministerial Conference of the WTO. It provided an informal forum for the Ministers of Trade and Heads of delegation of member countries to exchange views and ideas on the issues which were likely to be discussed in the Conference. Moreover, it offered an opportunity for them to discuss the IDB Group's WTO- related Technical Assistance and Capacity Building Program and provide their valuable suggestions on the structure of the program and the subjects to be covered under it. The meeting was organized on 14 December 2011 in Geneva, Switzerland.
4. **Workshop on "Trade in Services":** The main objectives of this workshop were to take account of the current status of the negotiations on Trade in Services; to conduct simulation exercise on the "Request-Offer Approach" for scheduling of commitments under the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS); and discuss the way forward for the IDB member countries in the negotiations. The workshop was organized in Istanbul, Turkey, on 16-19 January 2012.
5. **Regional Workshop on "Trade Policy Review Mechanism":** The aim of this workshop was to provide a detailed, step-by-step review of the WTO Trade Policy Review process (TPR), the requirements of member states in developing the TPR report, the process for drafting of the TPR Report based on TPR templates, and required timelines for the process, and to help officials from the Ministries of Foreign Trade and related stakeholders have a better understanding of the policy review process and measure the country's compliance. The workshop was organized in Abu Dhabi, UAE, on 30 January - 1 February 2012.
6. **Seminar on "Non-Agriculture Market Access (NAMA) Negotiations":** The seminar was aimed at explaining and analyzing all issues pertaining to the ongoing negotiations on NAMA under the Doha Work Program in the WTO, discussing the present course of action and future prospects for the OIC Member countries, and sharing the national experiences vis-à-vis the ongoing NAMA negotiations. The seminar was organized in Baku, Azerbaijan, on 13-15 February 2012.
7. **Seminar on "the Impact of Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) on Regional Integration in Africa: Challenges and Opportunities":** The main objectives of the seminar were to discuss the latest developments in EPA negotiations with a focus on the escalating pressures exercised by the EU on individual African countries, to explain the divergent positions in EPAs (scope and depth of market access liberalization in both goods and services, rules of origin, intellectual property and agricultural subsidies); to exchange views on the obstacles and challenges underlying regional economic integration in Africa, and to share the experiences of different regional groupings currently negotiating EPAs. The seminar was organized in Dakar, Senegal, on 23 – 25 April 2012.

8. **Seminar on “the Proliferation of Regional and Multilateral Trade Agreements and their Impact on Regional Integration of Arab Countries”:** The main objectives of the seminar were: to discuss and analyze the legal texts and the regulations in the WTO Agreements in relation to the Free Trade and Regional Agreements (FTAs/RTAs); to assess the impact of this rush to the PTAs on the prospects of the developing countries to integrate with the multilateral trading system and meet their WTO commitments; to explore the opportunities and challenges emerging by these agreements for developing countries and to analyze the experiences of some regional Arab agreements and review the similarities between the North-South and South-South Agreements. The Seminar was organized in Casablanca, Morocco on 4 to 6 June 2012.

9. **Seminar on “Doha negotiations and accession process to WTO for the ECO Member States: Experience of the Republic of Turkey”.** The main objectives of the seminar were: to introduce participants to the Multilateral Trading System and the main GATT/WTO principles, provisions, rights and obligations; to brief them about the state of play of Doha negotiations; to provide a forum of exchange of views and experiences of recently acceded OIC countries in elaborating appropriate national negotiating strategies; and to analyze the accession process, its challenges and opportunities. The seminar was organized in, Istanbul, Turkey on 18-20 June 2012.

10. **Seminar on "Aid for Trade: Leading Towards Poverty Alleviation":** The main objectives of the seminar were to discuss and analyse the role of the IDB Group in the area of Aid for Trade (AFT) through its various programs and projects in member countries; to apprise the participants about the regional initiatives taken by the IDB Group, especially with reference to SPECA¹ member countries and the AfT initiative for Arab States; and to discuss the project document of the AfT initiative for the Arab States, jointly prepared by the International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation (ITFC), on behalf of the IDB Group, in collaboration with UNDP, ITC, UNIDO, UNCTAD, and ILO. The Seminar was organized in Tunis, Republic of Tunisia on 25 - 27 June 2012.

IV. ACTIVITIES PLANNED FOR THE REMAINING PART OF 2012 AND FOR 2013

The following activities are planned for the remaining part of 2012 and for 2013:

- Seminar on "Trade Facilitation among Arab Countries within the Context of the ongoing Multilateral Trade negotiations in WTO.
- Workshop on "Concessions and Commitments Undertaken by Arab Countries Accessing to the WTO.
- Seminar on "Made in the World" initiative: Significance of Global Supply Chains to African Countries.
- Seminar on Capacity Enhancement on Doha Negotiations and Accession (for IDB/ECO member countries).
- Workshop on Accession (for Arab acceding member countries)
- Workshop on Services (for Arab countries).
- Workshop on Services (for English speaking countries).
- Seminar on Non - Tariff Barriers to Trade (NTBs).

1 UN Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia

- Two Seminars on Regional Integration.

V. CONCLUSION

The needs of the member countries, especially the least developed member countries, in the area of WTO are enormous. The IDB, with its limited resources, has been trying to assist these countries in building their human and institutional capacities to enable them to address the challenges of the multilateral trading system. The IDB has implemented this program in close collaboration with the WTO and other relevant international and OIC institutions and highly appreciates their cooperation and assistance. It welcomes new ideas and suggestions to further enhance the impact of this program and looks forward to working with them even more closely in the future for the effective delivery of this Program.

**STATUS OF THE OIC MEMBER COUNTRIES IN THE WTO
(as of end-August 2012)**

WTO Members	Date of Accession	Observers	No Status
1. Albania	8 September 2000	1. Afghanistan*	1. Palestine
2. Bahrain	1 January 1995	2. Algeria	2. Somalia*
3. Bangladesh*	1 January 1995	3. Azerbaijan	3. Turkmenistan
4. Benin*	22 February 1996	4. Comoros	
5. Brunei Darussalam	1 January 1995	5. Iran	
6. Burkina Faso*	3 June 1995	6. Iraq	
7. Cameroon	13 December 1995	7. Kazakhstan	
8. Chad*	19 October 1996	8. Lebanon	
9. Cote d'Ivoire	1 January 1995	9. Libya	
10. Djibouti*	31 May 1995	10. Sudan*	
11. Egypt	30 June 1995	11. Tajikistan	
12. Gabon	1 January 1995	12. Uzbekistan	
13. Gambia*	23 October 1996	13. Yemen	
14. Guinea*	25 October 1995	14. Syria	
15. Guinea-Bissau*	31 May 1995		
16. Guyana #	1 January 1995		
17. Indonesia	1 January 1995		
18. Jordan	1 January 1995		
19. Kuwait	1 January 1995		
20. Kyrgyz Republic	20 December 1998		
21. Malaysia	1 January 1995		
22. Maldives*	31 May 1995		
23. Mali*	31 May 1995		
24. Mauritania*	31 May 1995		
25. Morocco	1 January 1995		
26. Mozambique*	26 August 1995		
27. Niger*	13 December 1996		
28. Nigeria	1 January 1995		
29. Oman	9 November 2000		
30. Pakistan	1 January 1995		
31. Qatar	13 January 1996		
32. Saudi Arabia	11 December 2005		
33. Senegal*	1 January 1995		
34. Sierra Leone*	23 July 1995		
35. Suriname	1 January 1995		
36. Togo*	31 May 1995		
37. Tunisia	29 March 1995		
38. Turkey	26 March 1995		
39. Uganda*	1 January 1995		
40. UAE	10 April 1996		

Not yet Member of the IDB.

* Least Developed Member Countries