

The IsDB Technical Assistance Program
(TAP) for Regional and Global Integration
in Trade

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Status Report
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The IsDB Technical Assistance Program (TAP) for Regional and Global Integration in Trade

INTRODUCTION

The IsDB regularly submits progress reports on the implementation of this program to the COMCEC meetings. This report highlights the major WTO-related technical assistance activities undertaken under this program since the 35th Session of the COMCEC held in Istanbul, Turkey, in November 2019.

The Technical Assistance Program (TAP) for Regional and Global Integration in Trade – formerly the WTO Program - assists IsDB 57- Member Countries in their efforts to integrate among themselves and with the world through training, policy advice and technical assistance. The interventions under this program aim at rapid integration and increasing connectivity - this is expected to generate both global opportunities for Member Countries as they become more integrated with the global market.

Background:

The IsDB WTO-related Technical Assistance and Capacity Building Program (WTO-Program) was launched in 1997 with the prime objective of helping 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 on issues related to the framework of the Doha Work Program. The program was later renamed as the IsDB Technical Assistance Program (TAP) for Regional and Global Integration in Trade aimed to build the institutional and human capacities of its MCs on Multilateral Trade Negotiations, such as those conducted under the auspices of the WTO, including acting as the interface with regional trading arrangements with a view to facilitating their effective participation into the global economy and fostering regional integration.

Major elements of the program: The main elements of the IsDB Group's TAP program include organizing seminars and workshops on WTO and other regional 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 IsDB Group's TAP Program since its inception are as follows:

- I. **Seminars and Workshops:** The IsDB organizes seminars and workshops covering a wide range of regional integration and trade issues with the view to familiarizing the member countries with the contents and provisions of the regional trade and 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 its inception until end-September 2021, around 164 Seminars and Workshops have been organized by IsDB under this program
- II. **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 now, Trade Policy Courses have been organized by the IsDB under this program

- III. **Special Studies:** The IsDB occasionally undertakes in-depth studies on WTO-related issues based on the requests of the member countries. So far, the IsDB has undertaken studies on: Agriculture sector, Investment, Services sector, Trade-related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs), and Electronic-Commerce. 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
- IV. **Consultative Meetings:** The IsDB 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 IsDB has organized nine consultative meetings for both capital-based and Geneva-based officials
- V. **WTO Specific Technical Assistance to OIC Member Countries:** The IsDB 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

It is worth mentioning that in December 2019, the Islamic Development Bank launched its Regional Cooperation and Integration Policy and Strategy (RCI). The RCI Policy/Strategy are intended to address the priority needs of IsDB Member Countries and to improve effectiveness and efficiency of IsDB interventions. The RCI policy/strategy will enable IsDB to become a primary connecting platform for Member Countries, Regional Cooperation Organizations and relevant communities to cooperate with each other. Strengthen economic cooperation among MCs and enable greater trade and investment with the global economy.

ACTIVITIES PLANNED/ORGANIZED AFTER THE 36th SESSION OF THE COMCEC

Based on the feedback and requests of the member countries, the current focus of the Program is on two themes: (i) Accession and other matters related to the WTO and (ii) Regional integration. There were delays in many activities for 2020 due to the COVID 19 situation. The major activities organized/planned by the IsDB since the 36th Session of the COMCEC are the following:

Organized Activities

- IsDB – UNCTAD Webinar on "The Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on the Global Investment Outlook" Completed – Nov. 2020)
- Virtual Training Workshop on Data Collection and Analysis of Trade-in-Services among the OIC Member States with ICDT and SESRIC (23-25 March 2021)
- Regional Workshop on the current WTO State of Negotiations for the Benefit of OIC Countries Training Workshop on Negotiations Techniques on Trade in Services for OIC MCs with ICDT (21-23 June 2021)
- Part One: A Capacity Development Program with World Association of Investment Promotion Agency with WAIPA (Completed Aug. 2021)
- Expert Group Meeting and Panel of Discussion on FDI Policies in OIC Countries organized by RCI and ICDT as part of UNCTAD World Investment Forum 2021 (Completed October 2021)
- Strengthening Regional Value Chains and Market Access in The ECOWAS Region with UNCTAD and BADEA (on-going)

- Initiative to Revitalize Health Markets for Universal Access to Primary Health Care in D8 Member Countries with D8 (on-going)

Planned Activities

- Annual Investment Meeting 2020 (December 2020)
- Part Two: Capacity Development Program with World Association of Investment Promotion Agency with WAIPA (4th Quarter 2021)
- Niger IPA (ANPIPS) Institutional Capacity Development in partnership with World Bank Group (4th Quarter 2021)
- An investment promotion capacity development program for African MCs IPAs in partnership with GAFI Egypt (4th Quarter 2021).
- An Online Free Zone Management Diploma Program in partnership between IsDB, World FZO and the University of Dubai (4th quarter 2021)
- Investment Promotion Agencies Policy Dialogue, at the margin of the OIC- International Trade Fair in Dakar – Senegal (4th Quarter 2021).
- International Conference on OIC Regional Trade Integration Approaches Action Plan with ICDT (December 2021)
- Workshop on WTO TFA and Trade Integration in OIC MCs with ICDT (Dubai EXPO, 10-11 January 2022)
- Workshops with the Arab Monetary Fund (AMF) to help countries accede to WTO (TBA)
- Multi-Agency Investment Promotion Support Program for the LDC in collaboration with UNCTAD, WAIPA, Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) and UNIDO (Date TBA)

V. CONCLUSION

The IsDB endeavors to facilitate the OIC countries in every possible way in building their human and institutional capacities to enable them to address the challenges of the multilateral trading system. The IsDB has implemented its TAP program – formerly WTO Program - in close collaboration with the WTO and other relevant international, national and OIC institutions and highly appreciates their cooperation and support. The IsDB 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

WTO Members	Date of Accession	Observers	No Status
1. Albania	8 September 2000	1.Somalia	1. Palestine
2. Bahrain	1 January 1995	2. Algeria	
3. Bangladesh	1 January 1995	3. Azerbaijan	
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		
8. Chad	19 October 1996	7. Lebanon	
9. Cote d'Ivoire	1 January 1995	8. Libya	
10. Djibouti	31 May 1995	9. Sudan	
11. Egypt	30 June 1995	10. Uzbekistan	
12. Gabon	1 January 1995		
13. Gambia	23 October 1996	11. Turkmenistan	
14. Guinea	25 October 1995		
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. Tajikistan	2 March 2013		
37. Togo	31 May 1995		
38. Tunisia	29 March 1995		
39. Turkey	26 March 1995		
40. Uganda	1 January 1995		
41. UAE	10 April 1996		
42. Yemen	26 June 2014		
43. Afghanistan	29 July 2016		
44. Kazakhstan	45. 30 November 2015		