

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

38th Session of the COMCEC
Status Report
(Istanbul, Turkey, 26-29 November 2022)

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INTRODUCTION

The IsDB regularly submits progress reports on the implementation of the Technical Assistance Program (TAP) to the COMCEC meetings. This report highlights the major WTO-related technical assistance activities undertaken under this program since the 37th 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 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 aims to build the institutional and human capacities of IsDB MCs in the area of Multilateral Trade Negotiations, such as those conducted under the auspices of the WTO, including acting as an interface with regional trading arrangements with the 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 aim of familiarizing member countries with the contents and provisions of the regional trade and WTO Agreements as well as the activities of WTO to help to be in a better position to defend their interests. Until the end-September 2021, around 174 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 also 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 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 38th SESSION OF THE COMCEC

Based on the feedback and requests of member countries, the TAP Program is currently focusing on two themes: (i) Accession and other matters related to the WTO and (ii) Regional integration. So challenges were faced during the COVID19 crisis caused some delays in implementing some TAP activities in 2020. The important activities organized/planned by the IsDB since the 37th Session of the COMCEC are the following:

Organized Activities

- International Conference on OIC Regional Trade Integration Approaches Action Plan with ICDT (20 December 2021)
- Workshop on WTO TFA and Trade Integration in OIC MCs with ICDT (Dubai EXPO, 23-24 March 2022)
- Regional Preparatory Virtual Workshop for The WTO 12th Ministerial Conference -MC12 - (31 May 2022)
- Training Workshop on TIR/eTIR and CMR/eCMR for the OIC Sub-Saharan African Countries (June 28-29, 2022, Casablanca, Kingdom of Morocco)
- 2nd High-Level Regional Dialogue on WTO Accessions for the Arab Region Adaptive Approaches to WTO Accession amid COVID-19 with WTO and AMF (7-9 Feb 2022)
- 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 (1-year program successfully finalized)
- IsDB - D-8 Private Sector Conference for Trade Barriers and Opportunities in the Health sector (26-27 October 2022, Abuja, Nigeria)
- Second High-Level Meeting on the draft new "Pan-Arab Investment Agreement" for Investment and Legal Experts of Arab States with LAS and UNCTAD (May 2022).
- IPAs Policy Dialogue Program at the margin of the OIC- International Trade Fair in Dakar – Senegal with ICDT (15 June 2022).
- Niger IPA (ANPIPS) Institutional Capacity Development in partnership with the World Bank Group (July 2022)
- Open-Ended Intergovernmental Expert Group Meeting for the Establishment of a Permanent Mechanism for the Settlement of Disputes Arising Out of the OIC Investments Treaty with ICDT (3-5 October 2022)
- IsDB-UNCTAD Program of Cooperation on Investment Promotion and International Investment Policies for the Year 2022 (ongoing).
- Free Zone Management Capacity Development Program in IsDB Member Countries Investment Promotion Agencies (IPAs) with World FZO, BADEA and University of Dubai (ongoing).
- Enhancing Investment Promotion Capacities in Francophone Least Developed Member Countries (LDMCs) Program with WAIPA and Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) (ongoing)

Planned Activities

- Workshops with the Arab Monetary Fund (AMF) to help countries accede to WTO (TBA)
- Technical study on e-commerce within the framework of the African Continental Free Trade Area with ICDT and ITC (TBD)
- Trade policies and frameworks to foster regional integration and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in selected conflict and post-conflict Arab countries with UNCTAD (TBD)
- Digitizing Bhomra Land Port in Bangladesh with ICDT and Global Alliance (TBD)
- Improving risk management of import control and inspection system of Fish Quarantine and Inspection Agency (FQIA) in Indonesia with ICDT and Global alliance (TBD)
- Assessment of WTO Article XII 12 with WTO and AMF

- Promoting Chad-Sudan transit trade, transport, and regional integration through enhanced port connectivity, dry port/logistics hubs, and PPPs development with ICDT and UNCTAD (TBD)
- IsDB-ICDT Cooperation Program for Capacity Development of African Investment Promotion Agencies (IPAs) for the Years 2022 -2025 (TBD)
- Third High-Level Meeting on the draft new “Pan-Arab Investment Agreement” for Investment and Legal Experts of Arab States with LAS and UNCTAD (TBD).
- Capacity Development of Public and Private Sector - Scheduling the 4th ECO Investment Conference” (TBD).
- Capacity Development Program on Creating Zones of the Future - Phase 1 (TBD).
- Experience Sharing Program - Tunisian Model of the Pharmaceutical Industry to APIX Senegal with FIPA-Tunisia (TBD).

V. CONCLUSION

The Islamic Development Bank seeks to support the efforts of the OIC countries to build their human and institutional capacities to enable them to meet the challenges of the multilateral trading system. The IsDB highly appreciates the collaboration of WTO, international organizations, and national and OIC institutions. The IsDB welcomes new ideas and suggestions to further enhance the impact of TAP program and looks forward to working more closely with all partners 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	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. Guvana*	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		