



Agenda n° 4

REPORT ON

THE ISSUES RELATING TO THE ACTIVITIES
OF THE WORLD TRADE ORGANISATION

SUBMITTED BY
THE ISLAMIC CENTRE FOR DEVELOPMENT
OF TRADE

TO

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INTRODUCTION

The Islamic Centre for Development of Trade (I.C.D.T) is a subsidiary organ of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (O.I.C) in charge of Trade Promotion between Islamic Countries. ICDT was mandated by the Secretary-General of the O.I.C and the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation for Islamic Countries (COMCEC) to follow up, in collaboration with the Group of the Islamic Development Bank on the multilateral trade negotiations held by the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and provide support, relevant training, and technical assistance to the OIC Member States.

Within this framework, I.C.D.T submits regularly progress reports on WTO negotiations to the COMCEC annual meetings, the Islamic Commission for Economic, Cultural and Social Affairs of the O.I.C, and the Council of the Foreign Affairs Ministers (CFM).

In the same vein, ICDT elaborates reports and studies within the framework of the preparations for the WTO ministerial meetings to shed light on the points of view of the Islamic countries and to seek a common platform to reconcile the different standpoints on the subjects under discussion.

Besides, the Centre organizes seminars and workshops on Multilateral Trade Negotiations for the benefit of the representatives of the OIC Member States from both the public and private sectors as well as intra-OIC trade negotiations.

The report of this year comes in a particular situation due to the COVID-19 pandemic and geopolitical conflicts in several regions of the world.

After the pandemic-related downturn, the recovery in world trade in 2021 was relatively temporary. According to WTO and UNCTAD estimates, the volume of world trade fell by 5.29% in 2023, compared with the previous year, due to the impact of geopolitical tensions on international distribution channels, fluctuations in commodity prices and in the exchange rate of the US dollar against other international currencies.

The economies of the OIC countries have demonstrated resilience to the various factors leading to a decline in international trade. As a result, the overall trade volume of OIC Member States with the rest of the world has recorded an increase of 1.75%, rising from 4.5 trillion USD in 2022 to 4.6 trillion USD in 2023.

The determination of OIC member states to contribute to the recovery of world trade is illustrated by several initiatives launched at international level. Kazakhstan chaired the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference (CM12), which took place from June 12 to 17, 2022 at the Organization's headquarters in Geneva. In 2024, the United Arab Emirates hosted and chaired the 13th WTO Ministerial Conference (CM13) in Abu Dhabi from February 26 to March 2, 2024. Other OIC member countries have been involved in a large number of decisions promoting the development of international trade as a vector of prosperity throughout the world.

In addition to the DOHA agenda items currently under ongoing discussion in the WTO, this report summarizes the main outcomes of the MC13. Besides, it covers the state of play of the implementation of the Investment Facilitation Agreement which holds great importance for the OIC Member States. The focus will also be on the status of the accession process of

the OIC Member States to the WTO. MC13 has witnessed the successful completion of the WTO accession process of one of the OIC's member countries, the Union of Comoros.

The present report is divided into four major sections: **Section I:** Recent developments of the WTO activities regarding the OIC Member States; **section II:** ICDT activities within the framework of WTO; **section III:** Training of companies on international trade issues **section IV:** Current status of OIC member countries' accessions to the WTO.

SECTION I: RECENT DEVELOPMENTS OF THE WTO ACTIVITIES REGARDING THE OIC MEMBER STATES

Recent developments at the WTO are marked by the results of the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC12) held from 12 to 17 June 2022 as well as the ongoing discussions on the themes covered by the DOHA agenda. These discussions are scheduled to take place at the 13th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC13), to be held from 26 to 29 February 2024 at the Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre. It should be noted that WTO Members have elected H.E. Mr Thani bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi, Minister of State in charge of Foreign Trade, to chair the CM13.

Besides, this section covers the implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), one of the most pressing issues for OIC member countries.

A. RECENT WTO DEVELOPMENTS

The year 2024 saw the holding of the 13th WTO Ministerial Conference in Abu Dhabi (United Arab Emirates) from February 26 to March 2, 2024. The MC13 took place in a difficult international context, requiring solutions to sustainable economic development issues. To this end, the Ministers attempted during this conference to reach a consensus on the outstanding issues, while consolidating the achievements of the MC12 held in June 2023, known as the "Geneva package".

The "Geneva package" and the results of MC13 are summarized in the following paragraphs:

1. Review of the conclusions of the twelfth WTO ministerial conference (MC 12) :

The Geneva Package covers the results of the MC12 negotiations, as follows:

- **WTO Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic Preparedness for Future Pandemics** was reflected in a Ministerial Declaration prioritizing the removal of barriers to prompt access to pharmaceuticals (including vaccines and medicines) and the means to scale up research and manufacturing of essential health-related goods. The main decisions of the MC12 address several aspects, including: transparency in the application of measures related to COVID-19 and future pandemics, trade barriers, trade facilitation, and regulatory cooperation on patents protecting COVID vaccines.
- The Reaffirmation of the key role of trade in **global food security**. The discussions on agriculture were concluded with the adoption of a ministerial declaration on the urgent response to food insecurity and a ministerial decision on the World Food Programme (WFP).
- **The adoption of the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies**, aiming at prohibiting subsidies to fisheries that contribute to the overexploitation of marine resources.
- The members' commitment to work towards necessary **reform of the WTO** with the aim of improving all its functions.
- The discussion of **the Moratorium on tariffs on electronic transmissions**. Members decided to maintain the current practice of not imposing tariffs on electronic transmissions until the next WTO Ministerial Conference (MC13).

- **The decision on the work program on Small Economies** aims at facilitating the full integration of small economies into the multilateral trading system.
- **The decision on non-violation and other TRIPS-related complaints**, whereby members requested the Council on Intellectual Property Rights to further examine the scope and modalities of non-violation and other TRIPS-related complaints and make recommendations to the MC13.
- **The declaration on Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) issues** calls for further improvements in the implementation of the SPS Agreement to address issues related to international trade in food, animals, and plants.

2. Results of the 13th WTO ministerial conference (MC 13) :

In her closing remarks, Mrs. Okonjo-Iweala, Director General of the WTO, emphasized that MC13 had led to the adoption by consensus of 10 multilateral ministerial decisions and declarations, which can be summarized as follows:

1. Finalization of the Agreement on Facilitation of Investment and Development, enabling 123 developing countries to attract FDI. According to the WTO Director-General, this agreement will make the global economy more resilient and inclusive. The discussions on this subject lasted 6 years.
2. The two-year extension of the moratorium on customs duties on e-commerce, which maintains the current practice of not imposing customs duties on electronic transmissions until the next WTO Ministerial Conference ("MC14"), which is expected to take place in 2025.
3. The completion of accession procedures for two LDCs: Comoros (an OIC member) and Timor-Leste.
4. Encourage the work of the WTO Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT Committee) to advance the implementation of the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT Agreement).
5. The implementation of special and differential treatment for sanitary and phytosanitary measures and technical barriers to trade. This represents a major breakthrough for LDCs after years of discussion.
6. The entry into force of new standards on domestic regulation of services, which should reduce trade costs by more than 125 billion USD worldwide. It should be noted that these disciplines are incorporated in Schedules of commitments by participating Members concerning services, and will be applied on a "most-favored-nation" basis.
7. The commitment to improve the day-to-day functioning of WTO Councils, Committees and Negotiating Groups with a view to increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the Organization and facilitating the participation of Members in WTO work. Ministers instructed the General Council and its subsidiary bodies to continue this work and to report on progress, as appropriate, to the next Ministerial Conference.
8. Continuation of support measures for members graduating from the LDC category, in terms of technical assistance and also special treatment in dispute settlement for a period of 3 years.
9. Commitment to the Work Programme on Small Economies to facilitate the

integration of Small and Vulnerable Economies (SVEs) into the multilateral trading system by continuing to focus on their priorities and to seek solutions in all aspects of WTO work.

10. Progress recorded in Abu Dhabi on the number of formal acceptances of the Fisheries Subsidies Agreement, with 72 formal acceptances received and only 38 missing for the Agreement to enter into force. A further 15 formal acceptances are expected in April 2024.

Other outstanding issues, which will be the subject of negotiations with a view to reaching a consensus at the next Ministerial Conference, include :

- The cotton sector, where discussions are underway along two complementary axes: 1) trade aspects in the context of multilateral negotiations on distorting subsidies; 2) development assistance for cotton production and value chains. It should be emphasized that these discussions are the result of the "Sectoral Initiative on Cotton" of the Group C- 4 countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali and Chad, later joined by Côte d'Ivoire), which defines the cotton issue as a priority on the agenda of the multilateral trading system.
- Structured discussions on trade and environmental sustainability, whose work plan is based on in-depth analytical work and the identification of various good practices.
- Work towards the rationalization, phasing out or total elimination of harmful fossil fuel subsidies under the Sustainable Development Goal.

B. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TRADE FACILITATION AGREEMENT¹

The Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) concluded in Bali in December 2013 came into force on 22 February 2017, following its ratification by two-thirds of WTO members. Four years following the entry into force of the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), the WTO Trade Facilitation Committee, adopted, on March 3rd, 2021, a roadmap for reviewing the progress achieved in its implementation.

As of April 16th, 2024, the current rate of implementation of TFA commitments amounted to 79.4% for all WTO Members². This figure is expected to reach 83 percent by 2023, based on the notifications provided by Members in respect of their respective implementation dates.

According to development levels, the current rate of implementation for commitments is 100% for developed Members, 83.5% for developing Members, and 46.6% for least developed countries (LDCs).

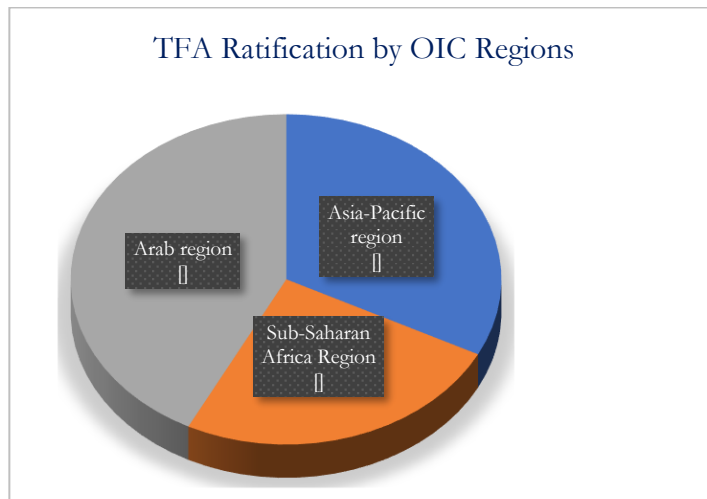
At the OIC level, the current rate of implementation of commitments is 100% for 16 developed members, 80-99% for 5 developing members, 50-79% for 7 member countries, 20-49% for 11 member countries and less than 20% for 5 OIC member countries³.

¹ For more details, please consult the WTO database at:

<https://tfadatabase.org/implementation/timeline-table?category=b&from=2017-02-22&to=2022-10-17>

³ <https://www.tfadatabase.org/fr/implementation/progress-by-member>

The OIC Member States that have ratified the TFA are 41 out of 154. The list of these countries by date of notification is attached (Table 4). Furthermore, it is worth noting that 40 OIC countries have notified Category A, 37 countries have notified Category B and 34 countries have notified Category C of the Agreement according to the WTO data of October 2022.



The latest countries to ratify the TFA are Morocco, Egypt, Tajikistan, Maldives, Guinea and Tunisia. The first member to ratify the Agreement was Hong Kong-China.

The WTO database summarizes the status of implementation of the TFA by OIC member states. In addition, it provides details on the implementation of Trade Facilitation Agreement measures by OIC ⁴country and region.

SECTION II: ICDT ACTIVITIES IN THE FIELD OF WTO ISSUES

Within the framework of assisting member states in multilateral and regional trade negotiations, ICDT has carried out a number of capacity-building activities on WTO issues, including the preparation of Ministerial Conferences, accession to this organization, implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) and regional integration. These activities are as follows:

A. TRADE NEGOTIATIONS

Activities relating to trade negotiations recently involved preparations for the 12th and 13th WTO Conferences, as well as technical assistance for the accession to the WTO of certain OIC member countries.

1. *Regional Virtual Workshop in Preparation For the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference on May 31st, 2022*

As part of the preparations for the participation of OIC member states in the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC12) to be held in June 2022 in Geneva, Switzerland, ICDT organized, in partnership with the World Trade Organization Secretariat and the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), a regional virtual workshop in preparation for this Conference, on May 31, 2022.

The main objective of this workshop, a follow-up to the two workshops held in June and November 2021, is to provide an opportunity for the countries of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to exchange views on the issues on the agenda of the MC12, and to obtain the latest information on the state of negotiations and potential outcomes. This workshop

⁴ <https://www.tfadatabase.org/fr/implementation/progress-by-measure>

focused on the latest developments since November 2021, with the aim of better preparing the proceedings of this conference. The workshop was attended by 95 participants from 21 OIC member countries.

2. Regional Preparatory Workshop for the 13th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC13) for OIC Member States, Held on January 10-11, 2024 In Tunis, Tunisia.

This workshop, organized in partnership with the WTO and the Islamic Development Bank, aimed to prepare the participation of OIC member states in the proceedings of MC13, by enabling them to coordinate their positions and exchange experiences. The event also provided an opportunity to take stock of the latest developments in WTO negotiations, since February 2023, on the various subjects under discussion at the WTO. Topics covered included WTO discussions on trade and health, fisheries subsidies, food safety, e-commerce and WTO reform. In addition, the meeting enabled participants to understand the issues and procedures involved in adopting and implementing the WTO's legal framework. The workshop was attended by 50 representatives from 19 member states and 6 international organizations.

3. Technical Assistance for the Accession of OIC Member States to the WTO

The results of this study were the subject of the 12th Round Table on WTO Accession, held on February 24 and 25, 2024 in Abu Dhabi (United Arab Emirates), on the sidelines of MC 13.

The ICDT will continue consultations with its partners for the organization of activities in support of WTO accession, in particular :

- Mentoring mission for the benefit of Comoros, which has recently acceded to the WTO;
- Workshop to review the study on accession to the WTO for Arab countries - preparation of a study in partnership with the WTO and the ISDB;
- Workshop on WTO accession requirements for Central Asian countries.

4. Activities on Trade Negotiations

In line with the support provided to member states in the area of regional integration, the following activities have recently taken place:

- Workshop on Digital Trade Development in Africa for African OIC Member States, organized from January 8 to 10, 2024 in Casablanca/Royal Morocco in partnership with the Ministry of Industry and Trade of the Kingdom of Morocco. The overall objective of the workshop was to build the capacity of African OIC Member States on digital trade issues and to provide them with a deeper understanding of the African and international context in which the negotiations of the draft ZLECAf Digital Trade Protocol are taking place. The aim of the workshop was to enable countries to finalize their national consultations on the Protocol. The workshop was attended by 24 participants from 14 OIC member countries.
- Signing of a partnership agreement between ICDT and the Mauritanian Diplomatic Academy, on March 15, 2023 in Nouakchott, concerning the training of Mauritanian executives on various subjects of negotiations and economic diplomacy. Contacts are underway to identify the needs of other African countries in this field.

B. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WTO TRADE FACILITATION AGREEMENT:

The implementation of the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation (TFA) is a key factor in the development of intra-OIC trade. It consists of initiatives to simplify and reduce import and export procedures, notably through digitalization and the adoption of international best practices in terms of regulations, in compliance with the provisions of the TFA. ICDT's initiatives in this area are described in the following paragraphs.

1. Supporting the Digitization of Foreign Trade Procedures:

The digitalization of foreign trade procedures will help reduce the transaction costs of exports and imports of goods in the Member States. To meet the expectations of Member States, ICDT and GATF in partnership with IsDB are pursuing the identification of the needs of countries in terms of digitalization of foreign trade procedures which concern phytosanitary and transport certification. In this regard, the Centre has proceeded with the following:

- **Electronic phytosanitary certification:**
 - Organization of two exploratory missions for the implementation of the e-Phyto solution in the process of international trade, in Nigeria (November 28th - December 2nd, 2022) and in Togo (March 13th -17th, 2023). These two missions, coming in response to requests from these two countries, aim to assess the needs of key players in the public and private sectors in terms of digitalization. Furthermore, the missions are intended to identify the difficulties encountered in the field to obtain the phytosanitary certificate as well as the best ways to successfully digitalize this process to maximize its impact in terms of trade facilitation of the countries concerned.
 - National workshop for the official launching of the project of the digitization of the procedures of granting of phytosanitary certificate (e-phyto) on May 24th, 2023 in Lagos (Togo) and on September 27th, 2023, in Lomé (Togo).
 - The actions carried out within the framework of this project during the year 2023 include:
 - Organization of 5 training workshops in Nigeria and 3 in Togo for exporting companies, forwarding agents and administrative staff.
 - Exploratory mission with public treasuries for the electronic payment project.
 - Acquisition of IT equipment by the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), a member of GATF. To date, 9 computers, 80 tablets and accessories, and 80 SIM cards have been distributed to Nigeria, along with 13 computers, 47 tablets and accessories, antivirus software, 10 printers and 47 SIM cards.
 - Technical and financial opportunities will continue to be explored with ICDT partners, with a view to conducting e-phyto activities in Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Benin, as well as regional workshops (Africa, Asia, Arab World).
 - Organization of a workshop on June 3 and 4 in Bangkok (Thailand), to launch a report entitled "Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation in Asian OIC Countries". This report is based on the results of the 5th United Nations Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation (2023).

- **Digitalization of Land Transport Procedures:**

Assistance to African OIC Member Countries in their process of digitalizing transport procedures (e-TIR) has involved supporting African OIC countries in adopting International Road Transport (TIR) Conventions, including the issue of digitalizing procedures. Activities to digitize foreign trade procedures will help reduce the transaction costs of exporting and importing goods in Member States. Actions undertaken in 2023 and those scheduled for 2024 are:

- Participation in a workshop on the TIR Convention held in Geneva on February 8, 2023 under the theme: "Implementation of the TIR Convention - Challenges and Opportunities" organized by UNECE and IRU.
- The holding of a TIR workshop for IGAD countries that are members of the OIC, in Djibouti on March 1 and 2, 2023, in collaboration with UNECE and IRU.
- Consultations with ISDB and other partners such as UNCTAD and UNECE to explore the possibility of carrying out the following activities in 2024:
 - Workshop to raise awareness of the importance of adopting the International Road Transport Conventions (TIR and CMR) for OIC member countries in sub-Saharan Africa;
 - Training workshop on the digitization of transport procedures (e-TIR) between cross-border posts. The first project will involve the Chad-Sudan project in 2024.

2. *Implementation of the WTO TFA Category C:*

The technical assistance for the implementation of the TFA category C concerns, first of all, the African OIC member countries that have requested assistance. National and regional workshops have been scheduled during the first half of 2023. These include the following:

- Virtual sessions in partnership with UNCTAD and the World Bank to provide technical assistance to the members of the National Trade Facilitation Committee of the Republic of Guinea for the identification of the state of play of the implementation of the TFA Category C measures and technical assistance needs.
- Organising, in partnership with Morocco's Administration des Douanes et Impôts Indirect, a national training workshop for the streamlining of customs procedures, for the benefit of Gabon in Libreville from 13-17 March 2023.
- Organising a national training workshop on setting appropriate timeframes for implementing these measures, from 7 to 9 June 2023 in Conakry (Guinea).
- Organising national and regional workshops for the benefit of other OIC African Member States during the 2nd quarter of 2024.

SECTION III: TRAINING OF COMPANIES ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE ISSUES

Within the framework of technical assistance and capacity building in member states in the field of international trade, ICDT has organized a series of thematic training courses for companies. Particular emphasis has been placed on supporting female and youth entrepreneurship. Similarly, the tourism sector is a priority, given its role in improving local incomes. ICDT's activities are summarized in the following paragraphs :

A. TRAINING WORKSHOPS DEVOTED TO INTERNATIONAL TRADE

1. *Online training cycle on international trade:*

The Workshops organized during 2023 focused on new topics in international trade. These training workshops, which took the form of 3-hour webinars, were facilitated by international experts. This cycle was structured around the following 3 modules:

- Module 1 covered Transport and Logistics, with the following topics:
 - Techniques for drawing up transport contracts in international trade ;
 - Audit of the import process ;
 - Control and inspection of goods in international trade ;
 - Auditing the international freight transport process;
 - Securing the supply chain for exporting companies.

- Module 2 covered Digital Marketing with the following topics:
 - Needs analysis and market research in digital marketing ;
 - Analysis of international digital marketplaces ;
 - Digital communication management;
 - Digital strategy;
 - International payment and distribution management ;
 - Creating your online store.

- Module 3 focused on International Trade with the following topics:
 - Rules of origin ;
 - Customs valuation ;
 - Intellectual property ;
 - Preferential agreements;
 - Sanitary & phytosanitary norms and standards.

2. *Cycle of on-site training workshops:*

Within this framework, ICDT, in partnership with the IsDB's Cooperation and Capacity Building Department and KOSGEB, organized a workshop on SME capacity building in the export field on December 1 and 2, 2023. The workshop was attended by 12 member countries, who shared their experiences and national SME development programs. Participants put forward the idea of creating a network of OIC SME agencies. In addition, Senegal proposed to organize, with ICDT, IsDB and KOSGEB, the OIC African SME Forum in Dakar in 2024.

During 2025, the Centre will pursue its efforts to better position OIC countries on international markets, and will organize the following activities:

- Training sessions for TPO & IPA executives, on the sidelines of the 19th Trade Fair of OIC Member States;
- Workshop on participation in trade fairs, on the sidelines of the 19th Trade Fair of OIC Member States,

- Training workshop on access to markets and financing for SMEs;
- Workshop on strengthening cooperation between SME Agencies;
- Forum on SME development opportunities in OIC countries.

B. PROGRAMS AND TRAINING FOR WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN OIC COUNTRIES

Women's entrepreneurship is playing an increasingly important role in the economic fabric of OIC Member States. Today, women contribute to the creation of jobs, the improvement of family incomes and the socio-economic development of member states. However, women's activities in OIC Member States still face several challenges, including low incomes, lack of access to markets, poor training in the field of trade and limited access to sources of financing. Taking these challenges into account, ICDDT works within the framework of its programs to develop women's commercial activities with a view to strengthening their economic and social empowerment.

1. Training workshops on market access for women entrepreneurs from OIC Member States:

Within this framework, the Centre organized the following training workshops in collaboration with the Trade Facilitation Office of Canada (TFO-Canada):

- Training Workshop on "Market Access and Value Chain Management for Women-Owned Enterprises and Cooperatives in Arabic-speaking OIC Member Countries", Casablanca, Kingdom of Morocco, July 17-21, 2023: This Workshop enabled participants to better manage their value chains and develop their skills in international trade, including marketing, e-commerce and digital trade. In addition, it led to the creation of a network of businesswomen from Arabic-speaking OIC member countries.
- Training workshop on "Market Access and Value Chain Management for Women-Owned Enterprises and Cooperatives in English-speaking OIC Member Countries", December 18 to 20, 2023, Banjul, Republic of the Gambia: On this occasion, participants strengthened their skills in international trade, management, product development and marketing, and export. They also enhanced their leadership and communication skills.

Another workshop dedicated to women entrepreneurs in French-speaking OIC member countries is scheduled for this year in N'Djamena, Republic of Chad.

2. Women's economic empowerment project in sub-Saharan Africa:

The year 2024 will be dedicated to the design and launch of the Women's Economic Empowerment Project. The aim of this project, which will implement promising pilot initiatives contributing to inclusive growth, is to demonstrate the potential of women, paving the way for new employment opportunities and improved well-being in the region, with support from financial institutions.

In this context, the institutional meeting to launch the project took place on March 7, 2024, by virtual means, and was devoted to presenting the project and discussing ways and means of implementing it.

This high-level meeting was attended by representatives of the Ministries of Commerce of the following OIC member countries in Sub-Saharan Africa: Republic of Chad, Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, Republic of the Gambia, Republic of Guinea, Republic of Senegal, and Republic of Togo. The following points were approved at the end of the meeting:

- ✓ Launch of the program in the target countries (Guinea, Senegal, The Gambia, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Togo, Burkina Faso, Nigeria) during 2024;
- ✓ Creation of a steering committee in each country, comprising public and private sector authorities, ICDT, BADEA and other partners in the field;
- ✓ Mission to diagnose needs and identify clusters and partners in each country;
- ✓ Setting up an operational plan in each country to launch activities in the field.

As part of its ongoing activities dedicated to women, in 2025 the Centre will be launching its women's economic empowerment program in Arab countries, following the example of the program launched in sub-Saharan Africa.

C. TRAINING COURSES FOR TOURISM OPERATORS

ICDT and the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC) have been appointed by the OIC General Secretariat to jointly promote tourism in the OIC region. To this end, as part of their respective TOURDEV and Tourism-CaB programs, the two institutions have organized the following training webinars:

- Webinar on Digitization of Tourism Services in OIC Countries held on May 24-25, 2023. Providing participants with valuable information on the latest trends and best practices in this field, this training enabled countries to familiarize themselves with the knowledge and skills needed to leverage digital technologies and optimize their tourism offerings.
- Webinar on Gastronomic Tourism in OIC Countries held from October 4 to 5, 2023. This training enabled participants to familiarize themselves with the tools of Gastronomic Tourism in order to put them in place to accelerate the sector's development. It also emphasized the essential role of Gastronomic Tourism in promoting sustainable tourism and in the economic empowerment of local communities, particularly women.
- Webinar on Strengthening Ecotourism and Conservation Practice in OIC Countries, held November 29-30, 2023. This training enabled participants to build their capacity to develop a competitive ecotourism sector, through the presentation of essential tools, the obstacles hindering the development of the sector in OIC countries, the latest trends and best practices in this field. On this occasion, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of the Republic of Türkiye and the Turkish Tourism Promotion Agency presented their country's rich experience in ecotourism and best practices in this field. The representative of the World Tourism Organization presented the key concepts of Ecotourism, as well as UNWTO initiatives in this field around the world.

During 2025, the Centre will continue its efforts to better position OIC countries on the tourism market by organizing the following activities:

- Training on strategies for developing the tourism sector in OIC countries, in conjunction with the 4th Tourism Fair of OIC Member States;
- Training on financing procedures for tourism projects, on the sidelines of the 4th Tourism Fair of the OIC Member States;

SECTION IV : STATUS OF ACCESSION OF OIC MEMBER STATES TO WTO

A. PROCESS OF ACCESSION AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

1. *Process of Accession to WTO*

OIC States members of the WTO are still 44 countries. 11 OIC Member States are in the process of accession to the WTO.

Accessions to the WTO take place through interdependent channels of multilateral, plurilateral, and bilateral negotiations. Some processes have made significant progress since 2013, while others have not progressed as expected due to various factors, including further negotiations with Members, technical complexities, internal difficulties, and differences in choices.

The terms of accession include a component related to the support of countries through technical assistance, alongside other awareness-raising and dialogue tools enabling acceding countries to better prepare the process of dialogue with other member countries to honor their commitments.

2. *Technical Assistance and Awareness Raising*

Technical assistance and capacity building related to accessions are focused on training government officials. They also include awareness-raising activities for public and private actors. Besides, they include activities for members of parliament, the private sector, academia, civil society, and the media.

In this context, ICDT has launched a study in partnership with IsDB and WTO, intending to identify the type of technical assistance that would facilitate the WTO accession process to OIC member countries.

3. *Tools For accessions*

In July 2016, the WTO launched a new Accessions Intelligence Portal which serves to improve access to information on WTO memberships as well as many new features, such as direct access to all laws notified for completed memberships. The portal is available at: <https://www.wto.org/accessions>.

Membership Commitments Database (ACDB): The Membership Commitments Database was launched in May 2012. It provides access to all the commitments and related information contained in the membership working group reports and membership protocols of the 31 Members under Article XII MC (<http://acdb.wto.org>). In 2018, the database has been updated to include the accession protocols of all Article XII Members and the commitments contained therein.

B. STATUS OF ACCESSIONS TO WTO

The accession status of members is detailed according to each country:

a) ALGERIA:

The Working Group on the Accession of Algeria was established on 17 June 1987. Algeria formally deposited its aide-memoire on Foreign Trade to the WTO in June 1996. Algeria submitted its initial offer of market access for goods and services in 2002. The working group, which is chaired by Ambassador José Luis Cancela (Uruguay) and includes 43 countries, has held 14 meetings to date, the last of which took place in March 2014. The review of the Algerian foreign trade regime is in progress.

b) AZERBAIJAN:

The Working Group on the Accession of Azerbaijan was established on 16 July 1997, the same year Azerbaijan applied for membership. Azerbaijan submitted an aide-memoire on its foreign trade regime in April 1999. Azerbaijan submitted its initial offer of market access for goods and services in 2005. The working group has so far held fourteen meetings, the last of which was held in July 2017. The review of this country's foreign trade regime is in progress.

c) COMOROS:

The Working Group on the Accession of Comoros was established on October 9, 2007, under the chairmanship of Ambassador Luis Enrique CHÁVEZ BASAGOITIA (Peru) and then Ambassador Omar ZNIBER (Morocco). The Aide-Memoire on the foreign trade regime of this country was presented on October 25, 2013. To date, it has held 7 meetings, the last one in May 2022. Comoros presented its market access offers for goods and services in 2016. The Working Party held its tenth meeting in January 2024, and the Ministers formally approved the terms of accession to the WTO of Comoros and Timor-Leste at a special ceremony organized as part of the 13th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC13) in Abu Dhabi on February 26, 2024.

d) IRAQ:

Iraq submitted its application to join the WTO on September 30, 2004. The Working group, chaired by Mr. Guillermo Valles Galmez (Uruguay) and then Ambassador Omar Hilal (Morocco), was established in December 2004. The Working group held its first meeting in 2007. Iraq has not currently submitted its market access offer for products and services.

e) IRAN:

Iran submitted its application to join the WTO in 2004. A working group was established in 2005 which held a single meeting in the same year. The Aide Memoire on the Foreign Trade Regime was circulated in November 2009. Iran has not yet submitted its market access offer for goods and services.

f) LEBANON:

The Working Group on the Accession of the Republic of Lebanon, which was established on April 14, 1999, has so far held 7 meetings, the last one in 2009. Lebanon's aide-memoire on the foreign trade regime was distributed in June 2001. Lebanon submitted its initial offer for access to the goods and services markets in 2003 and circulated its factual summary of the points raised by the Member States. The review of its foreign trade regime is underway based on a draft report of the Working group.

g) LIBYA:

Libya formally applied to join the WTO on November 25, 2001. The Working Group was established in 2004. Libya has not yet submitted an aide-memoire on its foreign trade regime and the working group has not yet met.

h) SUDAN:

The working group for the admission of Sudan was established on October 25, 1994. To date, it has held 5 meetings under the chairmanship of Mr. Naoki HIKOTA (Japan), the last of which was held in 2021. Sudan submitted its initial market access offer for goods and services in 2004 and circulated its factual summary of the points raised by the Member States. The examination of its foreign trade regime submitted in 1999 has not yet been completed.

i) UZBEKISTAN:

The Working Group on the accession of Uzbekistan was established on 21 December 1994. It has held 5 meetings so far, the last one was held in June 2022, under the chairmanship of Ambassador Taeho LEE (Republic of Korea). Uzbekistan submitted an aide-memoire on its foreign trade regime in September 1998 and presented its initial market access offer for goods and services in 2005.

j) SOMALIA:

The Somalia Accession Working group was established on December 7, 2016. The process of appointing a working group chair is ongoing.

k) SYRIA:

The Syrian Arab Republic's Working Group was established on May 4th, 2010. The Working Group has not yet met.

l) TURKMENISTAN

The Turkmenistan Working Group was established on February 23, 2022 but has not met to date.

CONCLUSION:

Although WTO membership offers significant advantages, accession negotiations present a challenge for all acceding governments, particularly those belonging to LDCs. The terms and conditions of accession require domestic reforms. Acceding LDCs have limited technical, human, and financial resources to address the complex aspects of WTO accession. In this regard, the study to be conducted by ICDT, IsDB and WTO seeks to identify the needs of OIC member countries in terms of facilitating the process of their accession to the WTO.

Given the importance of assisting OIC member countries in these areas, ICDT and IsDB organize annual capacity-building programs in the form of training and awareness-raising workshops. It is worth mentioning that special attention is accorded to the Least Developed Countries.

ICDT, in partnership with IsDB, will pursue joint endeavors in organizing other meetings and workshops for the exchange of experiences and expertise, and the harmonization of countries' positions, especially in view of the 13th WTO Ministerial Conference.

ANNEXES

Table 1: Dates for the setting up of the OIC Observer Working Groups at the WTO

Country	Date of the setting up of a working group	Chairman of the working group
Algeria	June 17 th 1987	Uruguay
Azerbaijan	July 16 th 1997	Germany
Iraq	December 13 th 2004	Morocco
Iran	May 26 th 2005	-
Lebanon	April 14 th 1999	France
Libya	July 27 th 2004	Spain
Somalia	December 7 th 2016	-
Sudan	October 25 th 1994	Japan
Syria	May 4 th 2010	-
Uzbekistan	December 21 st 1994	Korea
Turkmenistan	February 23 rd	-

Source: WTO, March 2020

Table 2: Summary Table of Ongoing Accessions

Acceding Economy	Date of Application	Working Group Established in	Memorandum on the Foreign Trade Regime (MFTR) circulated in	First Working Group Meeting held in	Number of Working Group meetings	offer on goods circulated in		offer on services circulated in		Factual Summary of Point Raised circulated in	Review of foreign trade regime ongoing on basis of a Draft Report of the Working Group
						Initial offer	Last offer*	Initial offer	Last offer*		
Algeria	June 1987	June 1987	July. 1996	April 1998/ March 2014	14	Feb 2002	Nov 2013	March 2002	Oct 2013	Feb 2014	
Azerbaijan	June 1997	July. 1997	April 1999	June 2002/ July 2017	14	May 2005	Sept 2013	May 2005	Feb. 2015	Jan 2015	✓
Iran	July. 1996	May 2005	Nov. 2009		/						✓
Iraq	Sept. 2004	Dec. 2004	Sept. 2005	May 2007/ April 2008	2						
Libya	Jan 1999	April 1999	June 2001	Oct 2002/ Oct 2009	7	Nov 2003	June 2004	Dec 2003	June 2004	Oct 2009	
Uzbekistan	June 2007	Dec. 2007	April 2011	July. 2002/ July 2012	3						
Lebanon	Dec 2004	Feb. 2005	March 2005	Oct 2005/ Oct 2009	7	April 2006	Nov 2008	Oct 2006	Nov 2008	Oct 2012	
Sudan	Dec. 1994	Dec 1994	Oct .1998	July 2002/ July 2017	4	Sept 2005		Sept 2005			✓
Syria	Oct 2001	May201									
Somalia	Dec 2015	Dec 2016									

Source : WTO/ Updated in March 2020

Table 3: LIST OF OIC MEMBER STATES MEMBERS OF THE WTO

COUNTRIES	DATE OF ACCESSION
1. Albania	September 8 th 2000
2. Bahrain	January 1 st 1995
3. Bangladesh	December 13 th 1993
4. Benin	January 1 st 1995
5. Brunei	January 1995
6. Burkina Faso	June 3 th 1995
7. Cameroon	December 13 th 1995
8. Comoros 2024	(exact date to be determined)
9. Chad	October 19 th 1996
10. Côte d'Ivoire	January 1 st 1995
11. Djibouti	May 31 th 1995
12. Egypt	June 30 th 1995
13. Gabon	January 1 st 1995
14. The Gambia	October 23 th 1996
15. Guinea	October 25 th 1995
16. Guinea-Bissau	May 31 th 1995
17. Guyana	January 1 st 1995
18. Indonesia	January 1 st 1995
19. Jordan	April 11 th 2000
20. Kuwait	January 1 st 1995
21. <u>Kazakhstan</u>	<u>November 30th2015</u>
22. Kyrgyzstan	December 20 th 1998
23. Malaysia	January 1 st 1995
24. Maldives	May 31 th 1995
25. Mali	May 31 th 1995
26. Morocco	January 1 st 1995
27. Mauritania	May 31 th 1995
28. Mozambique	August 26 th 1995
29. Niger	December 13 th 1996
30. Nigeria	January 1 st 1995
31. Oman	November 9 th 2000
32. Pakistan	January 1 st 1995
33. Qatar	January 13 th 1996
34. Saudi Arabia	December 11 th 2005
35. Senegal	January 1 st 1995
36. Sierra Leone	July 23 th 1995
37. Suriname	January 1 st 1995
38. Tajikistan	March 2 nd 2013
39. Togo	May 31 th 1995
40. Tunisia	March 29 th 1995
41. Türkiye	March 26 th 1995
42. Uganda	January 1 st 1995
43. United Arab Emirates	April 10 th 1996
44. Yemen	June 26 th 2014
45. Afghanistan	July 29 th 2016

LIST OF OIC MEMBER STATES

CANDIDATES FOR WTO MEMBERSHIP

(OBSERVERS)

1. Algeria
2. Azerbaijan
4. Iran
5. Iraq
6. Lebanon
7. Libya
8. Sudan
9. Syria
10. Uzbekistan
11. Somalia
12. Turkmenistan (working group set up on 23 February 2022)

LIST OF OIC MEMBER STATES NON-MEMBERS OF THE WTO

Palestine

Table 4: List of OIC Member States that have ratified the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement

Member States	Date of Ratification
1. Albania	2016-05-10
2. Afghanistan	2016-07-29
3. Bahrain, Kingdom of	2016-09-23
4. Bangladesh	2016-09-27
5. Benin	2018-03-28
6. Brunei Darussalam	2015-12-15
7. Burkina Faso	2018-09-21
8. Cameroon	2018-11-30
9. Chad	2017-02-22
10. Cote d'Ivoire	2015-12-08
11. Djibouti	2018-03-05
12. Egypt	2019-06-24
13. Gabon	2016-12-05
14. Gambia, The	2017-07-11
15. Guinea	2019-10-24
16. Guinea-Bissau	2022-09-20
17. Guyana	2015-11-30
18. Indonesia	2017-12-05
19. Jordan	2017-02-22
20. Kazakhstan	2016-05-26
21. Kuwait, the State of	2018-04-25
22. Kyrgyz Republic	2016-12-06
23. Malaysia	2015-05-26
24. Maldives	2019-10-01
25. Mali	2016-01-20
26. Morocco	2019-05-14
27. Mozambique	2017-01-06
28. Niger	2015-08-06
29. Nigeria	2017-01-16
30. Oman	2017-02-22
31. Pakistan	2015-10-27
32. Qatar	2017-06-12
33. Saudi Arabia, Kingdom of	2016-07-28
34. Senegal	2016-08-24
35. Sierra Leone	2017-05-05
36. Tajikistan	2019-07-02
37. Togo	2015-10-01
38. Tunisia	2020-07-17
39. Türkiye	2016-03-16
40. Uganda	2018-06-27
41. United Arab Emirates	2016-04-18

Table 5: Status of commitments of OIC countries under the Trade Facilitation Agreement

Member	Current rate	The current implementation rate of the implementation of Cat. A	The current rate of Cat. B implementation commitments	The current rate of Cat. C implementation commitments	Rate of implementations of remaining implementations of Cat. B	Rate of implementations of remaining implementations of Cat. C
Afghanistan	21.8%	11.3%	10.5%		16.8%	61.3%
Albania	100.0%	75.6%	21.0%	3.4%		
Bahrein,	100.0%					
Bangladesh	100.0%	61.3%	30.3%	8.4%		
Benin	71.4%	34.5%	36.6%	0.4%		28.6%
Brunei	100.0%	65.5%	21.8%	12.6%		
Burkina Faso	100.0%	91.6%	8.4%			
Cameroun	26.9%	13.0%	13.0%	0.8%	4.6%	68.5%
Chad	46.2%	1.7%	44.5%		0.8%	52.9%
Cote d'Ivoire	47.1%	34.0%	5.0%	8.0%		52.9%
Djibouti	1.7%	1.7%			23.5%	74.8%
Egypt	35.7%	23.1%		12.6%	2.5%	61.8%
Gabon	100.0%	97.1%	2.9%			
The Gambia	17.2%	13.9%	0.8%	2.5%	20.6%	62.2%
Guinea	50.0%	48.7%	1.3%		37.0%	13.0%
Guyana	68.1%	14.7%	53.4%		1.3%	30.7%
Indonesia	96.6%	73.1%	2.9%	20.6%		3.4%
Jordan	100.0%	88.7%	11.3%			
Kazakhstan	100.0%	81.5%	8.8%	9.7%		
Kuwait	100.0%	44.5%	47.9%	7.6%		
Kyrgyzstan	100.0%	59.2%	40.8%			
Malaysia	100.0%	16.4%	17.2%	66.4%		
Maldives	100.0%	94.1%	5.9%			
Mali	77.7%	16.4%	30.7%	30.7%		22.3%
Mauritania	71.0%	65.5%	5.5%		11.8%	17.2%
Morocco	91.2%	91.2%			0.8%	8.0%
Mozambique	39.9%	39.9%			2.5%	57.6%
Niger	100.0%	65.5%	10.5%	23.9%		
Nigeria	34.0%	31.9%	2.1%		4.6%	61.3%
Oman	88.2%	15.1%	39.9%	33.2%	2.5%	9.2%
Pakistan	100.0%	97.5%	2.5%			
Qatar	35.7%	8.4%	27.3%			64.3%
Saudi Arabia,	97.5%	25.6%	42.9%	29.0%		2.5%
Senegal	92.9%	92.9%				
Sierra Leone	53.4%	52.5%		0.8%	10.5%	36.1%
Suriname	37.4%	0.8%	5.0%	31.5%	14.7%	47.9%
Tajikistan	10.1%	10.1%				89.9%
Togo	100.0%	55.9%	21.8%	22.3%		
Tunisia	34.5%	34.5%			30.3%	35.3%
Türkiye	51.3%	42.9%	8.4%		24.4%	24.4%
Uganda	59.7%	59.7%				40.3%

U A Emirates	100.0%	100.0%				
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Source: WTO/ Updated April 2024