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REPORT ON

THE ISSUES RELATING TO THE ACTIVITIES
OF THE WORLD TRADE ORGANISATION

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OF TRADE

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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.

This report is produced within a particularly unstable international context, marked by the persistence and intensification of geopolitical tensions across several regions of the world, notably in the Gulf region. This situation has led to significant disruptions in the supply of energy products, with adverse repercussions on international trade as well as on global production chains.

According to recent estimates by the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the volume of global trade, following a contraction of approximately -5% in 2023, recorded only a modest recovery in 2024 (+2.3%), followed by still fragile growth in 2025 estimated between +2.5% and +3%. Projections for 2026 remain uncertain, with expected growth of around +3%, subject to developments in geopolitical tensions and international financial conditions. These fluctuations are primarily attributable to persistent disruptions in supply chains, the recent rise in petroleum prices, the volatility of commodity prices, as well as restrictive monetary policies and fluctuations in the US dollar.

Within this constrained context, the economies of the Member States of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) have demonstrated relative resilience. The overall volume of their trade with the rest of the world, after reaching USD 5 trillion in 2025, is projected to stabilize at around USD 5.1 trillion according to 2026 estimates. This trend is driven in particular by the recovery of services exports, the diversification of trading partners, and the strengthening of intra-OIC trade, despite an international environment that remains uncertain.

The commitment of the Member States of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation to contributing to the recovery of global trade has been reflected in their active participation

in the work of the World Trade Organization. In this regard, the 12th Ministerial Conference (MC12), held in Geneva in 2022, was chaired by Kazakhstan, followed by the 13th Ministerial Conference (MC13), organized in Abu Dhabi in 2024 under the presidency of the United Arab Emirates. Continuing this momentum, the 14th Ministerial Conference (MC14), held from 26 to 29 March 2026 in Cameroon, marks a significant milestone by highlighting the growing role of developing countries in global trade governance. This dynamic reflects the commitment of OIC Member States to promoting a more inclusive and balanced multilateral trading system, notably through support for reforms related to special and differential treatment, dispute settlement, and the enhanced integration of developing economies into international trade.

This report summarizes the main outcomes of MC14. 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 in WTO activities have been marked by the holding of the 14th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC14) in March 2026 in Yaoundé (Cameroon). Discussions held in this context primarily focused on reforming the dispute settlement system, ensuring the sustainable integration of the digital economy through the extension of the moratorium on customs duties on electronic transmissions, and strengthening food security by reducing agricultural distortions. Besides, the agenda addressed support for the entry into force of the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies, notably through technical assistance and capacity-building initiatives for developing countries and least developed countries (LDCs).

Furthermore, the discussions reaffirmed the importance of revitalizing multilateralism in trade, promoting greater inclusiveness within the international trading system, and ensuring that development priorities are more effectively considered. The year 2025 witnessed the organization of the Public Forum, under the theme “Strengthen, Create, and Preserve,” which provided a platform for dialogue among policymakers, the private sector, and civil society on emerging global trade issues.

In addition to providing a summary of the outcomes of MC14, this section also addresses the implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), one of the key areas of interest for OIC Member States.

A. Recent WTO Developments

As noted above, the year 2026 was marked by the holding of the 14th WTO Ministerial Conference at the end of March in Yaoundé, Republic of Cameroon. The outcomes of this meeting¹, which reflect gradual progress on the key issues under discussion at the WTO, can be summarized as follows:

- Fisheries Subsidies Agreement: Ministers were unable to adopt the second component of the Agreement, relating to disciplines on overcapacity and overfishing, during this session. They agreed to continue negotiations in Geneva with the aim of formulating final recommendations for the 15th Ministerial Conference (MC15), in accordance with Article 12 of the partial Agreement already in force.
- Ministers adopted two MC14 decisions that had already been approved by members in Geneva: (1) a decision aimed at improving the integration of small economies into the multilateral trading system, and (2) a decision concerning the strengthening of the precise, effective, and operational implementation of provisions on special and differential treatment in the Agreements on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) and on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT).
- “Yaoundé Package”: It was decided to refer the following issues back to Geneva for finalization:

¹ WTO | News 2026 – MC14 Concludes with the Adoption of Decisions and Progress on Key Outstanding Issues

- WTO Reform: A declaration was adopted; however, it is largely limited to a work programme for the next two years and does not resolve the deadlock in the dispute settlement system.
- E-commerce and Moratoria: This remains the main point of contention. The moratorium on customs duties on electronic transmissions expired at the end of March 2026 due to the lack of consensus. Members nevertheless agreed to continue discussions on a new framework for digital trade.
- Non-Violation Complaints (TRIPS): The moratorium also expired at the end of March 2026, and discussions are ongoing in Geneva to avoid immediate legal uncertainty.
- LDC Package: Commitments in principle were made; however, concrete measures regarding market access remain to be negotiated within the framework of the Yaoundé follow-up process.

Furthermore, MC14 was marked by several plurilateral announcements and commitments, often described as “significant progress” in the absence of a comprehensive multilateral agreement. These include the following:

- Investment Facilitation for Development (IFD): One of the notable outcomes, albeit plurilateral (not involving all members), is the joint ministerial declaration by the 129 participants in the Investment Facilitation for Development Agreement. The objective is to establish a legally binding framework to simplify investment procedures and attract capital to developing countries. Signatories reaffirmed their intention to formally integrate this agreement into the WTO architecture, despite continued opposition from certain members, notably India.
- Promotion of SMEs and women’s entrepreneurship: The Conference placed particular emphasis on inclusiveness, with dedicated discussions on the transformation of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and the role of women in international trade. There was increased recognition of the need for digital tools to support women entrepreneurs – particularly in Africa – in accessing global markets.
- “Cotton” Initiative: The C4 countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Chad) achieved progress on the cotton dossier. Enhanced collaboration between the WTO and institutions such as the World Bank was endorsed, with a view to supporting local value chains and promoting the processing of cotton directly on the African continent.
- Agriculture: This issue will be subject to renewed negotiations in Geneva starting next month, with the aim of unlocking progress ahead of MC15. Discussions during MC14 highlighted three major issues: (1) public stockholding for food security purposes, (2) domestic support (subsidies), and (3) food security and export restrictions.

In conclusion, MC14 was widely perceived as a “transitional” conference that helped secure gains for least developed countries (LDCs) and small economies, while at the same time confirming the existence of deep disagreements on issues such as digital trade and fisheries.

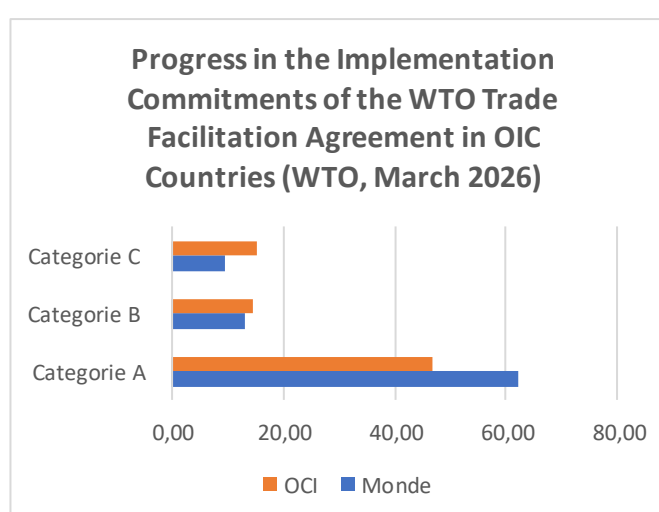
B. Implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement

The Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), concluded in Bali in December 2013, entered into force on 22 February 2017, following its ratification by two-thirds of WTO Members. Four years after the Agreement's entry into force, the WTO Trade Facilitation Committee adopted, on 3 March 2021, a roadmap to review progress in its implementation.

To date, 162 WTO Members have deposited their instruments of acceptance of the Agreement, representing a ratification rate of approximately 97.6%. The most recent ratification was by Tonga on 26 January 2026. The overall implementation commitment rate of TFA provisions across all WTO Members stands at around 87.6%.

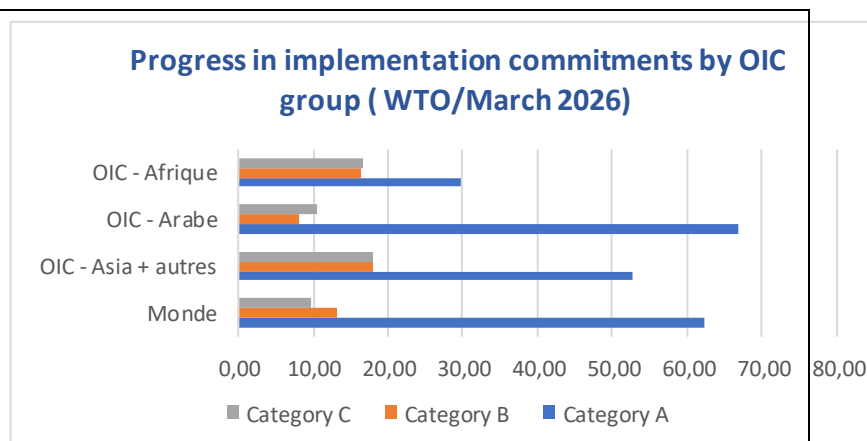
With regard to the OIC region, as of March 2026, 54 OIC Member States had ratified the TFA. The OIC Member States that have not yet ratified the Agreement are Mauritania, Suriname, and Yemen. The full list of ratification dates is available in the TFA database².

The overall implementation commitment rate of the TFA provisions for OIC Member States stands at 79.5%,³ which is below the global average. This gap is mainly explained by the high proportion of developing countries and least developed countries within the OIC, as well as the significant share of Category C measures requiring technical and financial assistance.



Progress in implementing the TFA according to OIC groupings shows that the Arab group exceeds the global rate, reaching 85.5%. The African OIC group achieves only 63%⁴.

This rate varies according to categories A, B, and C. The lowest rates are found in Africa.



² <https://tfadatabase.org/fr/ratifications>

³ <https://tfadatabase.org/fr/communities/oic>

⁴ <https://www.tfadatabase.org/fr/implementation/comparisons>

The WTO database summarizes the status of implementation of the TFA by OIC member states. It also indicates details regarding the application of the measures of the Trade Facilitation Agreement by OIC ⁵countries and regions.

The status of ratification of the TFA by OIC countries is available in the annex to this report.

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 13th and 14th WTO Conferences, as well as technical assistance for the accession to the WTO of certain OIC member countries.

1. ICDT Participation in the 2025 Edition of the WTO Public Forum:

Mrs. Latifa Elbouabdellaoui, Director General of the ICDT, participated as a speaker in a session of the WTO Public Forum on 18 September 2025 at the WTO headquarters. This session, entitled 'Unleashing Africa's Digital Potential through Infrastructure', examined recent developments in e-commerce and the potential role of the private sector in bridging infrastructure and capacity gaps in Africa.

On this occasion, Mrs. Elbouabdellaoui presented the ICDT's experience in digitalizing foreign trade procedures between African member countries of the OIC. She highlighted the e-phytos and e-TIR initiatives as tools for facilitating trade between these countries.

2. Regional Workshop on Ongoing WTO Negotiations and Preparations for the 14th WTO Ministerial Conference, 9–10 February 2026, Casablanca, Kingdom of Morocco.

This workshop was organized in partnership with the WTO and the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) on 9–10 February 2026 in Casablanca, Kingdom of Morocco. It enabled participants from Member States to be informed of the latest developments in negotiation issues since MC13. The discussions also addressed the preparations and the potential agenda for the 14th WTO Ministerial Conference, which was held in Yaoundé, Republic of Cameroon, from 26 to 29 March 2026.

This workshop builds on previous initiatives, including the MC13 preparatory workshop organized in Tunisia in 2024, and aims to strengthen coordination and cooperation among OIC Member States on WTO-related issues.

⁵ <https://www.tfadatabase.org/fr/implementation/progress-by-measure>

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

Technical assistance in this regard involved the preparation of a study on the challenges and potential opportunities of Arab countries' accession to the WTO. The findings of this study were presented at the 12th Round Table on WTO Accession, held on the sidelines of MC13 on 24–25 February 2024 in Abu Dhabi (United Arab Emirates).

The ICDT continued consultations with its partners to organize activities supporting WTO accession, including:

- The launch of a joint publication by the ICDT, the IsDB, and the WTO entitled "*Best Practices for WTO Accession in the Arab Region*", on the occasion of the 13th China Round Table on WTO Accession, held from 12 to 14 May 2025 in Muscat, Sultanate of Oman.
- Participation in the 14th China Round Table on WTO Accession, held on 25 March 2026 in Yaoundé, on the sidelines of the 14th WTO Ministerial Conference.
- Capacity-building support provided to the Comoros on post-accession practices to the WTO;
- Presentation of the recommendations of the study prepared in collaboration with the WTO, the IsDB, and the Arab Monetary Fund on best practices for WTO accession, during the last quarter of 2026 in Abu Dhabi.
- Examination of opportunities to provide support to Asian countries seeking accession to the WTO.

4. Activities to support regional integration projects

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

- Regional Workshop and Conference of the Private Sector of North Africa and the Middle East on the theme, organized by the FAO MENA, from January 20 to 23, 2025 in Tunis on the theme "How to finance the transformation of agri-food systems?" On this occasion, the ICDT presented the OIC's experience in the development of agri-food trade between member countries.
- The ICDT took part in the 14th edition of the Abu Dhabi Annual Investment Meeting (AIM2025), held under the theme "The Roadmap for the Future of Global Investment." On this occasion, the ICDT, in partnership with the World Economic Forum, organized a breakfast debate on April 8, 2025, focusing on the WTO Investment Facilitation Agreement. The event brought together over 40 participants, including representatives from OIC Member States' Ministries of Investment, investment promotion agencies (IPAs), international organizations, and expert consulting firms.
- A webinar to present the 2024 edition of the FAO report on the state of agricultural commodity markets in OIC Arab Group countries is scheduled for 8 May 2025. The session will focus on highlighting trade opportunities that support the achievement of food security objectives in the OIC Arab Countries.

- The Organization, in partnership with the International Trade Centre (ITC), of an online workshop on July 15 and 16, 2025, on “Mechanisms for promoting digital trade as an engine of economic and social development.” This initiative targeted executives from institutions in charge of trade in the Republic of Iraq. The webinar brought together 39 officials from the Iraqi Ministry of Trade and other institutions involved in digital trade, as well as representatives from the ICDT and ITC.
- Participation of the ICDT in the Morocco-Togo economic and diplomatic symposium held on June 17 and 18, 2025, in Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco, under the theme “Morocco-Togo Cooperation: Consolidating Achievements to Build the Future Together.” In this regard, Mrs. Elbouabdellaoui stressed the importance of developing the partnership between the two countries and with other OIC countries as a lever for economic resilience in the face of challenges arising from the unstable international context.
- The 4th and 5th Regional Cooperation Organizations (RCO) Forums, held on November 19-20, 2024, in Marrakech, Morocco, and October 2-3, 2025, in Istanbul, Türkiye, in partnership with the IsDB. The two meetings brought together more than 40 representatives from 22 international organizations and identified a roadmap for joint activities to be carried out by the participating RCOs.
- The organization, from 24 to 26 November 2025 in Casablanca, Kingdom of Morocco, of a capacity-building workshop under the theme “The Role of Credit Information and Unique Entity Identifiers in Supporting Decision-Making in Trade and Investment”, in partnership with ICIEC, the IsDB Group, BADEA, and Afreximbank.

B. Trade Facilitation Activities:

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) finalized in June 2024 and on September 27th, 2023, in Lomé (Togo) and executed in July 2024.
- 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.
- The implementation of simplified procedures and international trade controls for agricultural products will continue in 2025 through the introduction of electronic phytosanitary certificates, or "e-Phyto", in Chad, Mauritania, and Burkina Faso.
- Organization of a workshop on June 3 and 4, 2024 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).
- A training workshop was organized from August 5 to 7, 2024 in Bogor, Republic of Indonesia, focusing on improving the risk management of the control and inspection system for imports of fish and fishery products in Indonesia. The event was held in partnership with the Islamic Development Bank, the Global Trade Facilitation Alliance, TFO Canada, the Indonesia Quarantine Authority (IQA), and the Marine & Fishery Quality Assurance Agency (MFQAA).

- **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 :

- The ICDT, IsDB, UNECE, IRU, and CETMO are organizing a regional workshop on "Road Connectivity and its Impact on Regional Trade in Atlantic Africa" on November 11 and 12, 2025 in Casablanca, Kingdom of Morocco. The objective of the

workshop is to raise awareness among Atlantic African countries, particularly within the Morocco–Gabon Arc, about the importance of implementing the TIR and CMR Conventions. The event will emphasize the need to establish effective road connectivity in partnership with key stakeholders in the transport and trade sectors.

- The ICDT and UNCTAD organized a webinar on “Trade Facilitation and Global Supply Chains: Objectives and Implications for International Trade” on Thursday, September 25, 2025. This webinar highlighted the legal aspects of trade facilitation and global supply chains, with a particular focus on the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement. The topics discussed also included the consequences of disruptions to transport and logistics chains (ports, corridors, transit routes, etc.) on the flow of trade and security of supply, while presenting possible solutions to cope with this issue.
- Presentation of the recommendations of the study on transport and its role in the development of intra-OIC trade, on the occasion of the 2nd OIC Transport Ministers’ Conference, held in Istanbul, Türkiye, on 12 February 2026.

Section III: Training 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 the past two years 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: Transport and Logistics, Digital Marketing, International Trade.

During 2024, the Centre also organized the following two training trainings in collaboration with SESRIC:

- **Workshop on “Halal Industry Development in OIC Member Countries, 24-25 April 2024:** This training organized in collaboration with the Ministry of National Development Planning of the Republic of Indonesia (BAPPENAS) aimed at facilitating knowledge sharing and the exchange of best practices in Halal industry development among relevant national institutions in OIC Countries. On this occasion, participants which were more than 200 exchanged with experts from Indonesia, Türkiye, Malaysia, ICDT, SESRIC, SMIIC, Durham University on UNWTO on the following topics presented during the Workshop: Introduction to Halal Industry; Halal Certification and Standards; Halal Tourism Development; Islamic Finance and Investment; Policy and Regulatory Frameworks; ICDT’s Efforts on promoting the Halal Industry in OIC Countries. Member Countries also shared their experiences and best practices in Halal Industry.

- **Training Workshop on Islamic Digital Economy in OIC Member Countries, 5-6 August 2024:** This training organized with the Ministry of National Development Planning of the Republic of Indonesia (BAPPENAS) aimed at enriching Member Countries knowledge and strengthening their capacities in Digital Economy. It brought together international organizations and government ministries and agencies to share best practices and discuss existing challenges and opportunities in this area. On this occasion, participants exchanged with Experts from Indonesia, Türkiye, Cameroun, ICDT and other dedicated Organizations, on the following topics presented during the Workshop: Introduction to Islamic Digital Economy (IDE): Opportunities and Challenges ; Integrating Islamic Principle and Moral Values into Economic Development and Digital Transformation ; Strategy in Developing and Operating Islamic Fintech ; Business Ethics in an Islamic Context ; Economic Empowerment in the Digital Age: The Role of Islamic Digital Economy ; Infrastructure for Digital Transformation and Cybersecurity ; The Importance of Economic Intelligence in promoting Intra-OIC Trade and Investments. This Event highlighted Member Countries progress in Digital Economy and revealed the existence of a digital gap within the OIC Region. The organizers seized this opportunity to encourage Member Countries to further network and collaborate in order to enhance the Digital transformation of OIC Economies.
- **Training Workshop on ICDT Trade and Investment Tools for Start-ups, Micro-enterprises, and Trade Support Institutions, 22 April 2026:**

The ICDT organized this training session to present to economic operators from OIC Member States the full range of tools and digital platforms designed to facilitate access to trade information, strengthen business matchmaking, and promote intra-OIC trade.

This workshop, held within the framework of the Centre's Capacity-Building Programme, enabled better appropriation of the Centre's digital tools and platforms, strategic use of trade data, enhanced international visibility of participating enterprises, increased networking, partnerships, and export opportunities in foreign markets, as well as the sustained and inclusive development of intra-OIC trade and investment.

The training brought together start-ups and micro-enterprises, as well as representatives of trade support institutions such as chambers of commerce, trade promotion organizations, and investment promotion agencies from OIC Member States.

B. Programmers and Trainings Targeting Women and Youth Entrepreneurship 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, ICDT 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.

- Training workshop on « Access to markets and Management of value chains for the benefit of Women owned Enterprises and Cooperatives in OIC French speaking

Countries », 21-25 October 2024, N'Djamena, Republic of Chad. A cette occasion, 40 Femmes d'Affaires du Tchad, Bénin, Burkina Faso, Guinée, Guinée-Bissau, Gabon et Côte d'Ivoire ont pris part à cette formation et amélioré leurs compétences managériales ainsi que leurs habilités en communication et leadership.

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

The year 2024 was 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 the implementation of this program, the ICDT seized the opportunity of the 5th OIC Health Expo, held alongside the 10th Edition of SISDAK from April 15 to 19, 2025, in Dakar, to sponsor the participation of a group of businesswomen from Sub-Saharan African countries. The support covered airfare, accommodation, and complimentary exhibition stands, enabling these women to showcase their cosmetic and pharmaceutical products, and to forge business partnerships with fellow participants and economic operators from OIC member states.

On this occasion, approximately twenty women entrepreneurs from Chad, Mali, Benin, Mauritania, Niger, Gambia, Guinea, Cameroon, Togo, and Senegal took part in the exhibitions, panel discussions, and B2B meetings organized on the sidelines of the event.

3. Activities for Young Entrepreneurs:

Youth represent a significant potential for OIC countries, accounting for one-third of the population. However, they face numerous challenges in education, employment, access to health services, and personal development opportunities. The COVID-19 pandemic has severely impacted economies, particularly young entrepreneurs. Additionally, issues like political instability, the energy crisis, population growth, and climate change have exacerbated global humanitarian crises. Further constraints include a challenging legal and institutional framework, limited public sector support, inadequate infrastructure and technology access, a lack of entrepreneurial clusters that foster innovation, gender disparities, and age discrimination. The barriers to entrepreneurship also stem from talent shortages, brain drain, low skill levels, insufficient training, and difficulties in accessing financing. In response to these challenges, the ICDT has decided to organize several training programs and forums to support youth entrepreneurship in OIC countries.

In recent years, ICDT has conducted various training sessions aimed at enhancing young people's skills in international trade, market access, and value chain management.

In June 2024, the ICDT participated in the International Forum “By Youth 4 Youth”, organized by ICESCO in Baku, Azerbaijan, under the theme “Youth Leadership and Innovation for a Sustainable Future in the Islamic World”. The event aimed to promote youth entrepreneurship, foster peace and solidarity, and address climate change challenges across the Islamic world.

On this occasion, 90 young participants from 43 countries took part in the Forum. The ICDT sponsored the participation of the top three winners from Sub-Saharan African countries.

On 19 September 2024, the Centre participated in the OIC Virtual Symposium held under the theme “Achieving OIC Goals and Sustainable Development by Strengthening Youth Partnerships.” During the event, the Centre delivered a presentation highlighting its initiatives and activities that have benefited young people across OIC member countries in recent years.

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:

- A Webinar on the Digitization of Tourism Services in OIC Countries was held on May 24–25, 2023. This training provided participants with valuable insights into the latest trends and best practices in digital tourism. It equipped countries with the knowledge and skills necessary to harness digital technologies and enhance the competitiveness of their tourism offerings.
- The Webinar on Gastronomy Tourism in OIC Countries, held on October 4–5, 2023, focused on familiarizing participants with tools and strategies to develop gastronomy tourism. The session emphasized the sector’s potential to drive sustainable tourism and foster the economic empowerment of local communities, particularly women.
- The Webinar on Strengthening the Practice of Ecotourism and Conservation in OIC Countries took place on November 29–30, 2023. This training aimed to build participants’ capacities to develop a robust and competitive ecotourism sector. It covered key tools, challenges, trends, and best practices in the field. During the webinar, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of the Republic of Türkiye and the Turkish Tourism Promotion Agency shared their country’s extensive experience in ecotourism. A representative from the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) presented key ecotourism concepts and shared global initiatives undertaken by the UNWTO in this area.
- Virtual Training Workshop on « Developing Sustainable Ecotourism in OIC West African Member Countries » held on 28-29 May 2024. The Workshop which aimed at developing Ecotourism within the West African Region, was attended by more than 50 Representatives of Guinea, Gambia, Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, Senegal and Sierra Leone as members of the "Regional Project on Sustainable Tourism Development in a Network of Cross-border parks and protected areas in West Africa".

On this occasion, the UNWTO and the UNEP presented their strategies to develop Ecotourism throughout the World including West Africa, as well as the actions undertaken to protect the environment. Experts from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and the Tourism promotion and development Agency of the Republic of Türkiye as well as the President of DISTED Malaysia also attended this Event to share the best practices in the area of Ecotourism.

It is worth noting that as part of the ongoing implementation of this project, the Centre plans to collaborate with other stakeholders in 2025 to organize the 2nd Donor Conference, aimed at securing funding for the project. Additionally, the Centre will arrange training sessions focused on nature guiding, conservation, marketing, and exploring methods and opportunities for financing the eco-tourism sites involved in the project.

- Training Webinar on “Enhancing the Competitiveness of Halal Tourism in the OIC Countries” organized on 29th July 2024. This Webinar was held in alignment with the resolutions of the 12th Session of the Islamic Conference of Tourism Ministers

held in Khiva from 31 May to 2 June 2024. This Event brought together international experts and government ministries and agencies to exchange ideas and share best practices, challenges and existing opportunities in Halal Tourism with a view to enhancing Member Countries competitiveness in this area.

- Training webinar on “Developing a Targeted Marketing Strategy for Senegal as a Tourism Destination,” held May 6–7, 2025: As part of Dakar's designation as “OIC Tourism City for the year 2025” by the 12th session of the Islamic Conference of Tourism Ministers held in Khiva, Uzbekistan, in 2024, the ICDT and SESRIC organized this webinar in collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism and Handicrafts of the Republic of Senegal. This workshop, aimed at supporting Senegal’s tourism policy and enhancing its positioning in the global tourism market, brought together national tourism authorities and operators, along with representatives from ICDT, SESRIC, the UNWTO Regional Office for Africa, and OIC Member States including Morocco, Turkey, Malaysia, and Uganda. On this occasion, discussions covered the situation and policies of tourism in Senegal, the United Nations strategy to develop sustainable tourism in Africa, and case studies and best practices from OIC countries in tourism.
- At the invitation of SESRIC, the ICDT participated in the virtual workshop “Enhancing Gastronomy Tourism Promotion in Senegal: Marketing and Branding” on July 8 and 9, 2025. The training brought together 63 participants from public and private institutions operating in gastronomic tourism in Senegal, as well as representatives of various international organizations and institutions, including the ICDT, COMCEC, SMIIC, UNWTO, MOTAC, and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Türkiye. This workshop, organized as part of the commemoration of Dakar as the OIC Tourism City for 2025, aimed to strengthen the capacities of professionals and experts operating in gastronomic tourism in Senegal. Moreover, the training shared successful experiences from other OIC countries and promoted collaboration among tourism stakeholders to strengthen public-private partnerships (PPPs). On this occasion, the ICDT expert made a presentation on “Strategies for Developing Gastronomic Tourism in OIC Countries,” with a particular focus on the case of Senegal. This contribution was highly appreciated by the participants as it highlighted the potential of African countries, particularly Senegal, in this field, as well as the strategies to be implemented to access this promising market.

Section IV: Status of Accession of OIC Member States to WTO

A. Process of Accession and Technical Assistance

1. *Process of Accession to WTO*

Out of the 165 WTO Members, 45 are OIC Member States, with the Comoros being the most recent member, joining on April 1, 2025. Additionally, 11 OIC Member States are currently 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:

- **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.

- **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 fifteen meetings, the last of which was held in July 2023. The review of this country's foreign trade regime is in progress.

- **Iraq:**

Iraq submitted its application for WTO membership on 30 September 2004, and the Working Group on Iraq's Accession was established on 13 December 2004. The Working group held its third meeting in July 2024 and is currently chaired by Ambassador Saqer Abdullah ALMOQBEL from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

- **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.

- **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, under the chairmanship of Mr. Etienne OUDOT DE DAINVILLE (France). 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.

- **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.

- **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.

- **Uzbekistan:**

The Working Group on the accession of Uzbekistan was established on 21 December 1994. It has held 7 meetings so far, the last one was held in June 2022, under the chairmanship of Ambassador Seong deok YUN (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.

- **Somalia:**

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

- **Syria:**

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

- **Turkmenistan**

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

Conclusion:

Although WTO membership offers clear 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 prepared by ICDT, IsDB and WTO is designed 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, particularly in light of upcoming deadlines, when OIC member countries are expected to formulate positions at both multilateral and regional levels.

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	Saudi Arabia
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	South Korea
Turkmenistan	February 23 rd , 2022	-

Source: WTO, March 2

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

LIST OF OIC MEMBER STATES NON-MEMBERS OF THE WTO

Palestine