



Report on the 14th capacity building webinar on “How to use the WTO Investment Facilitation for Development Agreement to improve the FDI environment”

20 February 2024

The 14th capacity building webinar on “How to use the WTO Investment Facilitation for Development Agreement to improve the FDI environment” took place on 20 February 2024, virtually via zoom and hosted 170 participants online. The webinar was organized in the framework of ITC’s [Investment Facilitation for Development project](#).

The webinar focused on how countries can make use of the WTO Investment Facilitation for Development (IFD) Agreement to develop action plans to improve their investment climates for attracting more foreign direct investment (FDI). It also discussed the role of the IFD Agreement as an instrument to advance domestic efforts to enhance investment facilitation measures. The webinar furthermore addressed technical assistance and capacity building support to be provided to developing and least developed countries to conduct investment facilitation self-assessments and to implement the IFD Agreement.

The webinar was organized to enhance awareness and build capacity of WTO Members regarding the IFD Agreement, the text negotiations of which were finalized in November 2023. The webinar was open to all WTO delegates and government representatives from capitals. It was held under the Chatham House Rule to facilitate open and results-oriented discussions.

The webinar’s programme is annexed to this report.

Summary of the main outcomes of the webinar

1. The WTO Investment Facilitation for Development Agreement and its benefits

Focus: The IFD Agreement aims to create a more transparent, efficient and investment friendly business climate by improving the transparency of measures and streamlining administrative procedures. The objective is to facilitate global FDI flows, to help boost Members' economic growth, particularly in developing and least developed countries, with the overarching goal of fostering sustainable development. The IFD Agreement also seeks to help attract not only more but better, longer-term investment, contributing to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). For more on the IFD Agreement please [click here](#).

Exclusions: The IFD Agreement does not include provisions on investment liberalization (or market access), investment protection and investor-state dispute settlement.

Key benefits mentioned during the webinar: (i) Through a comprehensive Section on Special and Differential Treatment, the Agreement allows developing and least developed countries to implement the Agreement at their own pace and receive the technical assistance and capacity building support they need to do so. The purpose is to ensure that these countries can fully implement the IFD Agreement and, therefore, reap its full benefits. (ii) Considering economic impacts of the Agreement, a recent study shows empirically gains associated with the implementation of investment facilitation measures. According to this study, the expected global welfare gains derived from implementation range between US\$250 and US\$1,120 billion. For more on the benefits of the IFD Agreement please [click here](#).

2. Lessons learnt from ongoing investment facilitation (IF) self-assessments

The Philippines Over 30 government agencies as well as the private sector participated in an IF self-assessment workshop. This assessment started in early February with the support of the ITC. The observations from the assessment work shared in the webinar include:

- A strong national partner agency that takes the lead in coordinating the participation of stakeholders is essential. In this case of the Philippines, the Board of Investment (BOI) set up an inter-agency group that comprised over 30 agencies. This group was consulted during the negotiations of the IFD Agreement and participated in the assessment and associated trainings.
- It is important that the lead agency should take ownership of the process by functioning as the focal point, to lead the assessment exercises. This builds in-house expertise for the agency to continue leading investment facilitation efforts in the country after the assessment is completed.
- Pre-assessment training is key. The assessment exercise is not only about information collection, but also about knowledge building on best practices in facilitating FDI, as well as the exchange of information among the participating agencies. This helps generate strategies that are particularly useful in the specific context of the country to enhance investment facilitation efforts.

Ecuador sees the IFD Agreement as supporting its national investment promotion efforts and complementing its work in facilitating FDI. As for Ecuador's investment facilitation self-assessment, the process took place over a period of 5 to 6 months and involved around 30 national agencies working in investment facilitation related areas. The observations from the assessment work shared in the webinar include:

- It is important to ensure that all relevant agencies participating in the assessment have a sound knowledge on the IFD Agreement and its implications. The Investment Facilitation Self-Assessment Guide can serve as a useful tool in this regard.

- The discussions should focus on “needs assessment” rather than “performance assessment”, to ensure that the assessment yields results that reflect gaps and identify implementation needs.

3. An investor’s perspective of the IFD Agreement

Robert Bosch, a company with experience in investing in developing countries, mentioned several insights on the relationship of investor needs and the IFD Agreement as follows:

- If a country is part of the IFD Agreement, it signals to investors that the country is serious in its efforts to improve its investment climate and attract FDI.
- Burdensome procedures, as well as complex rules and regulations, can have a negative impact on investors’ decisions to invest. Making them clearer and more transparent can have significant influence on the locational decisions of foreign investors.
- Ensuring transparency of investment measures and streamlining administrative procedures are desirable, as they save time and costs for investors. This is particularly important for SMEs and MSMEs.
- Digital tools are an important solution that make countries more attractive for investors to set up their businesses.
- Coordination among government agencies greatly facilitates the establishment of investment.
- The requirement to provide the same information to several agencies rather than providing it once leads to high costs and delays in the establishment process, making the country less attractive to investors.
- Single points of contact and one-stop-shops are important to investors.
- Setting up a council or implementation committee to jointly look at what works and what is not working in terms of investment facilitation is crucial, as the actual implementation of investment facilitation measures can have a significant impact on investor confidence.

4. The way forward

The IFD Agreement will be made publicly available on 25 February 2024 through a Joint Ministerial Statement by participants of the Agreement. Participants plan to have the IFD Agreement integrated into the WTO rulebook as soon as possible.



How to use the WTO Investment Facilitation for Development Agreement to improve the FDI environment

20 February 2024, 15:00-16:00 CET

Dear Colleagues,

On behalf of the International Trade Centre (ITC) and the World Economic Forum, we cordially invite you to a webinar on:

How to use the WTO Investment Facilitation for Development Agreement to improve the FDI environment

**20 February 2024, 15:00-16:00 Central European Time (CET)
virtually via zoom**

This webinar is meant for government and IPA officials. It is being held in the framework of the ITC [project](#) on Investment Facilitation for Development, in cooperation with the World Economic Forum.

Participation in the webinar is free of charge. However, it is necessary to register for the webinar (please [click here](#)), to receive the meeting link details.

The webinar will have the following agenda and speakers:

Opening remarks

Moderator

Karl P. Sauvant, Senior Fellow, Columbia University, CCSI

Keynote Speaker

Johanna Hill, Deputy Director-General, WTO – ***“Benefits of the Investment Facilitation for Development Agreement”***

Roundtable discussions

Panellists

- **Sofia Boza**, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Chile to the WTO, co-Coordinator of the Structured Discussions on Investment Facilitation for Development – *“The WTO Investment Facilitation for Development Agreement: why WTO members should join”*
- **Mondher Mimouni**, Director, Division of Market Development, ITC – *“Investment facilitation needs assessments and the future implementation of the IFD Agreement”*
- **Carlos Sebastian Guevara Aguirre**, Counsellor, Permanent Delegation of Ecuador in Geneva – *“The experience of Ecuador in conducting needs assessments”*
- **Markus Thill**, President Region Africa, Robert Bosch – *“An investor’s perspective”*
- **Jung Sung Park**, Deputy Permanent Representative to the WTO of the Permanent Mission of Republic of Korea in Geneva, co-Coordinator of the Structured Discussions on Investment Facilitation for Development – *“The way forward”*

Concluding remarks

Matthew Stephenson, Head, Investment and Services, World Economic Forum

To join the meeting online, kindly click on the link that will be sent to you shortly before 3:00 p.m. CET on 20 February 2024 and follow the instructions.

The webinar will be conducted in English and in an interactive manner; it will allow for questions by participants.

At the 13th World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Conference scheduled for 26-29 February 2024, participants of the Investment Facilitation for Development (IFD) Agreement aim to announce the conclusion of the IFD Agreement. Supported so far by over two-thirds of WTO Members, the IFD Agreement seeks to help countries improve their investment climate and—through various concrete measures—facilitate FDI flows, particularly to developing and least developed countries, with the overarching goal of fostering sustainable development.

This webinar will shed light on how countries can make use of the IFD Agreement to develop action plans to improve their investment climates for attracting more FDI. It will also address more technical aspects, such as the investment facilitation needs assessments and technical assistance support to help developing countries implement the IFD Agreement once it is adopted.

The webinar will particularly focus on two issues:

- The role of the IFD Agreement as an instrument to advance domestic efforts to enhance investment facilitation measures to attract more FDI.
- The technical assistance support required by developing countries to implement the IFD Agreement, including support for conducting needs assessments for individual countries.

Thus, the discussion will centre on the following questions:

- Why is the IFD Agreement important for developing and least developed countries to improve their FDI climate and how to request support for needs assessments?
- How can needs assessments contribute to the future implementation of the IFD Agreement?
- How can countries request technical assistance to conduct needs assessments and to implement the Agreement?

We look forward to welcoming you to the webinar!

With kind regards,

Quan Zhao, Senior Programme Manager (Trade Policy), International Trade Centre

Karl P. Sauvant, Senior Fellow, Columbia University, Columbia Center on Sustainable Investment

Matthew Stephenson, Head, Investment and Services, World Economic Forum

Background information:

ITC-IDOS project on [Investment Facilitation for Development](#).

Karl P. Sauvant, “[The new WTO Investment Facilitation for Development Agreement](#)”, *Columbia FDI Perspective*, no. 363, 7 August 2023.

Karl P. Sauvant, “[Three Reasons Why a WTO Agreement on Investment Facilitation for Development is Important](#)”, *International Economic Law and Policy Blog*, 21 November 2022.

Karl P. Sauvant, Matthew Stephenson and Yardenne Kagan, “[An Inventory of Concrete Measures to Facilitate the Flow of Sustainable FDI: What? Why? How?](#)” (Third edition) (2022).

Bios:

Carlos Sebastian Guevara Aguirre

Carlos Guevara entered the Ecuadorian Foreign Service in 2006. Currently, he is Counsellor at the Permanent Mission of Ecuador to the WTO. Previously, he served at his country's Embassy in Japan. He has a bachelor's degree in Economics from the Ecuadorian National Polytechnic School, and a master's degree in the same field from the University of Tsukuba (Japan). During his career, he has specialized in trade and trade related matters, working in both, Ecuador's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Trade. He has been involved in the investment facilitation negotiations since 2019.

Sofia Boza

Sofía Boza is the Ambassador of Chile to the World Trade Organization since July 2022. She has also taken over the co-Coordination of the Structured Discussions on Investment Facilitation for Development. Prior to that, she was an Associate Professor and Chief at the Department of Rural Management and Innovation at the University of Chile and Professor at the Institute of International Studies at the same University. She holds a bachelor's degree in economics from the University of Seville and a PhD in Economics from the Autonomous University of Madrid.

Johanna Hill

Johanna Hill has been Deputy Director-General at the World Trade Organization since 13 November 2023. She is a trade expert with more than 25 years' experience in international trade. She previously served as Managing Partner at the CA Trade Consulting Group in San Salvador, advising firms on international trade and FDI. Her previous roles included Executive Director of El Salvador's Chamber of Telecommunications and member of the Board of Directors of Banco Azul. She has also served as Vice Minister of Economy, responsible for conducting and implementing trade policy and negotiations.

Mondher Mimouni

Mondher Mimouni is Director of ITC's Market Development Division. Prior, he was Chief of the Trade and Market Intelligence section, Chief of Market Analysis and Research and Senior Market Analyst at the ITC. He has extensive experience in international trade, trade policy, economic research, and in coordinating and implementing large trade intelligence projects, including the development of market analyses and competitiveness tools and studies. He is a member of various working groups, including the SDGs development group, the United Nations Committee of Coordination of Statistical Activities and the board of GTAP at Purdue University.

Jung Sung Park

Jung Sung Park has been the Deputy Permanent Representative to the WTO of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea in Geneva since January 2022. He has been the co-Coordinator of the Structured Discussions on Investment Facilitation for Development since June 2022. His previous positions include Director-General for policy coordination in industry, energy, trade, science ITC, and SMEs under the Prime Minister; Director for trade policy, Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy; and Director for trade industry, Office of the President. He had participated in various bilateral FTA negotiations and led the single window team at Invest Korea.

Karl P. Sauvant

Karl P. Sauvant introduced the idea of an International Support Program for Sustainable Investment Facilitation in the E15 Task Force on Investment Policy in 2015. From there, the proposal was taken forward in the WTO. He has [written extensively](#) on this subject and currently assists ITC on its project on Investment Facilitation for Development. He retired in 2005 as Director of UNCTAD's Investment Division and established, in 2006, what is now the Columbia Center on Sustainable Investment (CCSI). He stepped down as the Center's Executive Director in 2012, to focus his work on teaching, research and writing.

Matthew Stephenson

Matthew Stephenson is Head, Investment and Services, at the World Economic Forum, which includes the Global Investment Policy and Practice Initiative. Previously, he worked at the IFC, where he led the workstream on outward FDI. He has also worked at the OECD on Africa and investment and served as a diplomat for the U.S. Department of State, leading the economic team on Afghanistan and managing economic programmes in the Middle East. He has a PhD from the Graduate Institute in Geneva, a master's from the Harvard Kennedy School and a bachelor's from Oxford University.

Markus Thill

Markus Thill is President Region Africa for Robert Bosch since 2014, reporting directly to Bosch Group management. Prior to co-founding Bosch's global venture arm as managing director in 2007, he worked as Vice President of Bosch's global corporate strategy department. Before joining Bosch, he was a senior manager in leading strategy consulting firms, heading and implementing projects on strategic and operational issues as well as M&As around the globe. He holds university degrees in mathematics and physics, including a doctorate ("summa cum laude") from Sorbonne Université (Paris/France). He is fluent in English, German, and French.