

# T4SD FORUM 2021

## Sustainable Trade: the Heart of the Post-COVID Global Economy

Forty years ago, consumers thought very little about their products. Coffee was “just coffee”, and shoppers didn’t care much about where it came from, what variety it was, and even less about how it was produced.

Over time, however, NGO-led initiatives lifted the curtain on production conditions, exposing the steep environmental and social costs of unsustainable sourcing. New sustainability concerns led to the emergence of Voluntary Sustainability Standards to monitor production practices and communicate sustainability efforts.

Evolving from what was once a handful of eco-labels, these sustainability standards became a powerful force capable of sector-wide transformations. Between 2014 and 2018, the certified area of eight commodities like cotton or bananas grew by at least 50%, spurred by climate change concerns and poor production conditions in developing countries.

Against growing demand from buyers and consumers alike, the influence of these standards grew so large that they became a tool for governments to determine the suitability of imports, for companies to monitor supply chain risks and for financial institutions to mitigate portfolio risks.

Then, in 2020, the eruption of COVID on the world stage profoundly altered the sustainability landscape. Suddenly, audits for voluntary standards had to be conducted remotely, companies had to reconfigure their supply chains, and small businesses had to adjust and innovate at lightning speed – all against the backdrop of an impending climate crisis.

In light of these burning new challenges, has sustainability taken a back seat? Has the pandemic slowed the rise of these standards? How can small businesses, governments, and the financial sector make sense of the increasingly complex sustainability landscape? And what is the role of sustainability standards in post-COVID recovery?

To address these questions, the International Trade Centre (ITC) brings together its network of partners and experts, and leverages 10 years of insight as the only global, neutral institution to map these standards.

### OBJECTIVES

- Analyse patterns from the rise of sustainability standards, pre-COVID
- Discuss the impact of the COVID crisis on the governance of global value chains, standards and sustainability at large
- Identify key aspects of value chains, standards and sustainability in ‘building forward better’ post-COVID – ensuring producers get a fairer share of the pie
- Help governments, financial institutions, small businesses, buyers and retailers make informed decisions on sustainability and trade related issues post-COVID
- Look into the crystal ball and explore the future of standards

**PROGRAMME AT A GLANCE**

**DAY 1 Monday, 27 September**

- 10:00-10:10** WELCOME ADDRESS
- 10:10-10:15** INAUGURAL KEYNOTE ADDRESS
- 10:15-10:20** HIGH-LEVEL KEYNOTE STATEMENT
- 10:20- 10:25** SPECIAL KEYNOTE STATEMENT
- 10:30-11:15** PANEL 1  
Kick-off Dialogue: Sustainability Standards - in Retrospect, Introspect & Prospect
- 11:15-11:30** BREAK
- 11:30-12:30** PANEL 2  
Sustainability Standards in Practice
- 12:40-13:10** FIRESIDE CHAT  
AfCFTA: A New Hope for Sustainability?
- 13:10-14:00** LUNCH
- 14:00-15:00** PANEL 3  
The Role of Standards in Sustainable Trade Policy
- 15:10-16:10** PANEL 4  
A Look into the Crystal Ball – The Future of Sustainability Standards
- 16:10-16:25** BREAK
- 16:25-16:50** SPECIAL DIALOGUE  
What’s cooking? A Fresh Take on Sustainability
- 16:50-17:00** CLOSING KEYNOTE

**DAY 2 : WTO Public Forum | Tuesday, 28 September**

- 15:05-16:05** From Competition to Collaboration: Collective Action in Sustainability Standards

## AGENDA

### DAY 1 Monday, 27 September - Morning

**10:00-10:10 WELCOME ADDRESS**

**Pamela Coke-Hamilton**, Executive Director, International Trade Centre (ITC), Switzerland

**10:10-10:15 INAUGURAL KEYNOTE ADDRESS**

**H.E. Andrés Valenciano**, Minister of Foreign Trade, Costa Rica

**10:15-10:20 HIGH-LEVEL KEYNOTE STATEMENT**

**Henry Puna**, Secretary General, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Fiji

**10:20- 10:25 SPECIAL KEYNOTE STATEMENT**

**Jerry Spooner**, Director, Vanuatu Department of Tourism, Vanuatu

**10:30-11:15 PANEL 1**

**Kick-off Dialogue: Sustainability Standards - in Retrospect, Introspect & Prospect**

Sustainability standards have evolved from niche to mainstream, as companies, investors and governments use them to respond to trade-related environmental and social concerns. This session offers new insights into the past and future of these standards, with the launch of two major ITC publications, and a discussion of what standards can bring in a post-COVID era, in the midst of a climate emergency.

*Speakers*

- **Joseph Wozniak**, Head, Trade for Sustainable Development Programme, ITC, Switzerland
- **Vera Thorstensen**, Professor, School of Economics, Getulio Vargas Foundation and Head, Center on Global Trade and Investments, Brazil
- **Gabriela Alvarez**, Co-founder, No Name Chocolate, Colombia

*Moderator*

**Natalie Domeisen**, Head, Corporate Events and Publishing, ITC, Switzerland

**11:15-11:30 BREAK**

**11:30-12:30 PANEL 2**

**Sustainability Standards in Practice**

This session addresses common business challenges related to standards. Small businesses that want to trade internationally often must follow sustainability requirements to break into new markets. How do they choose which standards are right for them, and where can they access finance to implement the changes they need to carry out? Large buyers are using standards. How are they aligning their business strategies in pandemic times, and will their requirements evolve? For those who monitor standards, is remote auditing a feasible solution to reduce audit fatigue, for companies big and small?

- Speakers*
- **Daniel Hopp**, CEO, Hopp, Germany
  - **Salma Abdulai**, Co-founder & CEO, Amaati Company Limited, Ghana
  - **Representative** from private sector - SLCP Network
  - **Representative** from sustainable finance institution

*Moderator* **Natalie Domeisen**, Head, Corporate Events and Publishing, ITC, Switzerland

**12:40-13:10** **FIRESIDE CHAT**  
**AfCFTA: A New Hope for Sustainability?**

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) has the potential to boost intra-African trade, create jobs, and improve African industry competitiveness. However, it remains to be seen whether this development will be sustainable and inclusive. Are there provisions and plans envisioned under the AfCFTA to align with the Sustainable Development Goals? Is there a vision to harmonize sustainability standards and conformity assessment procedures under the AfCFTA framework? This fireside chat with the legal expert of AfCFTA will explore and address these pertinent questions.

*Speaker* **Petina Gappah**, Principal Legal Advisor, Office of the Secretary-General, AfCFTA, Ghana

*Moderator* **Matthew Wilson**, Chief, Special Projects, ITC, Switzerland

**13:10-14:00** **LUNCH BREAK**

**DAY 1 Monday, 27 September - Afternoon**

**14:00-15:00** **PANEL 3:**  
**The Role of Standards in Sustainable Trade Policy**

In recent years, governments have increasingly started to integrate sustainability standards into their trade policy. One may only look at the German *Lieferkettengesetz*, or the Swiss free trade deal with Indonesia, to witness the potential interplay between standards and due diligence initiatives. This session explores how governments use standards, from redirecting bilateral and regional trade agreements to enforcing supply chain compliance with government policies.

- Speakers*
- **Devesh Dukhira**, CEO, Mauritius Sugar Syndicate, Mauritius
  - **Representative** from European Commission, Belgium
  - **Sebastian Herold**, Deputy Head, Division for sustainable textile supply chains and sustainable consumption, German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Germany
  - **Representative** from Government of Indonesia

*Moderator* **Natalie Domeisen**, Head, Corporate Events and Publishing, ITC, Switzerland

**15:10-16:10** **PANEL 4**  
**A Look into the Crystal Ball – The Future of Sustainability Standards**

This forward-looking panel will explore the future of sustainability standards. How will standards have to adjust to the post-pandemic reality? How can they serve the needs of MSMEs, buyers and retailers, governments and financiers? How will they innovate? Looking ahead, what form will they take in 2030? This session will explore sustainability

as the remedy to build forward better, and bring together sustainability standards practitioners and experts to reflect and brainstorm the way forward, against the backdrop of a global climate emergency.

- Speakers*
- **Patrick Mallet**, Innovations Director, ISEAL Alliance, Canada
  - **Rijit Sengupta**, CEO, Centre for Responsible Business, India
  - **Representative** from Unilever
  - **Representative** from Kenya Flower Council

*Moderator* **Mathieu Lamolle**, Senior Advisor on Sustainability Standards & Value Chains, ITC, Switzerland

**16:10-16:25** **BREAK**

**16:25-16:50** **SPECIAL DIALOGUE**  
**What's cooking? A Fresh Take on Sustainability**

A new perspective on standards and sustainability.

*Speaker* **Pierre Thiam**, Chef, Teranga Restaurant & Social entrepreneur, Yolélé Foods, USA

*Moderator* **Susanna Pak**, Public Information Officer, ITC, Switzerland

**16:50-17:00** **CLOSING KEYNOTE**

**Dr. Maria Flachsbarth**, The Parliamentary State Secretary, BMZ, Germany

### **DAY 2 : WTO Public Forum | Tuesday, 28 September**

**15:05-16:05** **From Competition to Collaboration: Collective Action in Sustainability Standards**

How can different sectors work together for more sustainable international trade, particularly within the framework of sustainability standards? In the face of environmental changes and the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for sustainable business has never been greater. From pre-competitive platforms to multi-stakeholder initiatives, how can businesses, NGOs, research institutions and governments collaborate for increased sustainability? And what are concrete examples of successful collaborations? This session will bring together business leaders, highlevel officials and changemakers to explore how different kinds of collective action – within industries, across sectors, and beyond borders – can lead to a greener and more sustainable future for trade, globally.

- Speakers*
- **Afua Asabea Asare**, CEO, Ghana Export Promotion Authority, Ghana
  - **Janet Mensink**, Executive Director, Social and Labour Convergence (SLCP) Secretariat, Netherlands
  - **Jean-Marie Paugam**, Deputy Director-General, World Trade Organization (WTO), Switzerland
  - **Pamela Coke-Hamilton**, Executive Director, ITC, Switzerland
  - **Tyler Gillard**, Head of Due Diligence, Centre for Responsible Business Conduct Unit, OECD, France