

FROM PROMISE TO PROGRESS:

Taking stock of trade elements of the Doha Programme of Action

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Key messages

The international community has made tangible progress since 2022 towards meeting many of the Doha Programme of Action for LDCs' trade-related objectives, despite downward pressure on development assistance flows. The upcoming Mid-Term Review of the DPoA offers a vital opportunity to celebrate and learn from these gains but also to identify blockers and explore fresh strategies for LDCs to drive sustainable growth through trade.

This report – produced as part of a collaboration between the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF), the WTO and the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UNOHRLLS) to support the implementation of the DPoA's trade-related elements – is intended to aid this process.

WTO members have thrown their weight behind DPoA aims. They have taken steps to implement LDC-specific decisions. They have also been working more closely with LDCs to understand their needs and advance their priorities.

For example, in the area of market access, in line with DPoA calls, members have made significant progress in providing duty-free quota-free (DFQF) market access for LDC products, which now enjoy either full or nearly full DFQF market access in most key export destinations. As part of global efforts to boost LDC services exports, to date 51 WTO members have notified measures under the LDC Services Waiver, which aims to facilitate preferential market access for LDC services and service suppliers.

Members have also supported LDCs with policy flexibilities to implement WTO rules. For example, LDCs have until 1 July 2034 to implement the

WTO's Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS Agreement). LDCs also benefit from flexibilities in implementing the Agreement on Trade Facilitation, which allows developing members, including LDCs, to determine their own pace of implementation and identify areas where they need technical assistance and capacity-building support. So far, 24 LDCs have notified their technical assistance needs to implement 252 provisions of the Agreement in the coming years.

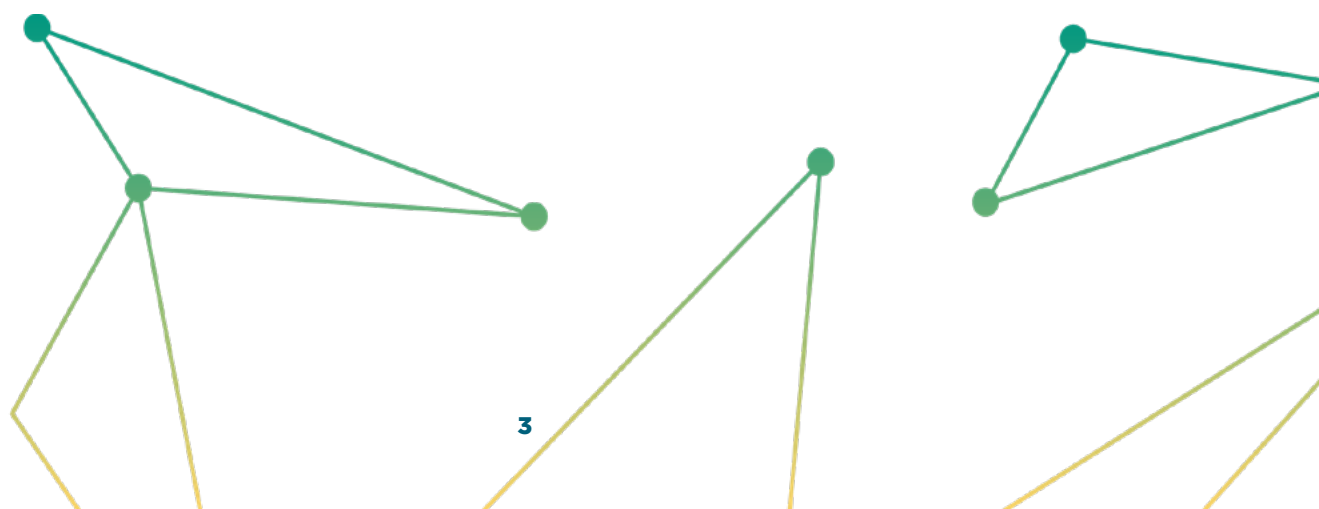
Increased LDC participation in the WTO has simultaneously been fostered through LDC-centred discussions and experience-sharing. Since 2022, the WTO's Sub-Committee on LDCs has held seven experience-sharing sessions on topics of interest to LDCs, ranging from their participation in agricultural supply chains to preferential rules of origin to emerging opportunities, including in services, digital trade and transition to net zero.

LDCs receive priority under the WTO's technical assistance and capacity building (TACB), which the DPoA flags as vital for boosting LDCs' capacity to trade and integrate into the global economy. During 2022–2025, the WTO Secretariat provided TACB to over 16,000 participants – around half of whom were women – from 42 LDCs. Its Technical Assistance and Training Plans include trade policy and thematic courses that strengthen LDCs' institutional capabilities to engage in multilateral trade.

Several LDCs have leveraged the opportunities offered by the multilateral trading system and stepped on the path to graduation from the LDC category – another key priority of the DPoA. WTO members have supported countries graduating from LDC status. For example, they have encouraged preference-granting members to consider providing a smooth transition period before withdrawing duty free market access. They have also offered three years for LDC graduates to integrate WTO rules and to benefit from LDC-specific technical assistance.

Achieving the DPoA's target for Aid for Trade to double between 2018 and 2031 is proving more challenging. In the first six years of that period, disbursements to LDCs grew only slightly while commitments declined 5 per cent. Ensuring targeted trade support to the most vulnerable, including LDCs, remains an important priority for development assistance providers.

WTO members responded by launching in March 2026 the third phase of the EIF, which connects LDCs with donors but also helps them develop capabilities to navigate resource-constrained environments. The EIF's 2026–2031 plan includes a strengthened results framework, a refreshed resource mobilization strategy and a new country programming model that enables LDCs to identify their own trade challenges and develop targeted solutions.





Introduction

Trade remains one of the pillars of the Doha Programme of Action (DPoA) for the decade 2022 to 2031. The Mid-Term Review of the DPoA in 2027 is an important milestone for the international community to take stock of the implementation of the DPoA, including its trade targets.

WTO members share aspirations outlined in the DPoA. They have been supporting the greater integration of least developed countries (LDCs) into global trade. Since the adoption of the DPoA, efforts have been made to implement past LDC-specific decisions which offered LDCs greater market access opportunities and flexibilities in implementing WTO rules. Since 2022, two LDCs – Comoros and Timor-Leste – have joined the WTO.

Members have also been responsive to LDCs' request to support their smooth transition out of the LDC category. First, they encouraged preference-granting members to provide a transition period before withdrawing duty-free market access. Second, they offered LDC graduates three years to integrate WTO rules

and to continue benefiting from the WTO's LDC-specific technical assistance. Since 2022, Bhutan and Sao Tomé and Príncipe have graduated from the LDC category, in 2023 and 2024. Lao PDR is expected to graduate from LDC status in 2026.

Deliberations in the Sub-Committee on LDCs have also been supporting LDC members to identify emerging trade opportunities, ranging from LDCs' participation in global value chains to services to agriculture.

While LDCs are gradually increasing their share in global trade, the DPoA target of doubling LDC exports is yet to be realized. LDCs' exports continue to remain concentrated among a few exporters, products and markets.

The latest LDC Trade Ministers' Declaration identifies LDCs' trade priorities, including the implementation of past LDC decisions, LDC graduation and WTO reform.¹ In addition, the Declaration covers LDC priorities in broader areas of negotiations, including agriculture and food security, fisheries subsidies, development, the environment and LDC accessions.

While the DPoA aims at doubling Aid for Trade to LDCs by 2031, Aid for Trade disbursements to LDCs grew on average by only 1.2 per cent between 2018 and 2024. Recognizing the need for continued trade support for LDCs, implementation of the EIF, the only Aid for Trade partnership aimed at supporting LDCs' trade development, has been extended to its third phase, which will run until 2031.²

The WTO has partnered with the UNOHRLLS to support LDCs to fully realize the DPoA's trade ambitions. As part of these joint efforts, over 100 capital-based officials in LDCs have been consulted on their most important trade priorities, and five analytical notes aimed at supporting LDC policy makers in identifying emerging trade opportunities have been published. This report is also part of UNOHRLLS-WTO joint efforts.

The report is structured as follows. Section 1 looks at LDC trade trends from 2022 to 2025. Section 2 examines LDCs' participation in the WTO. Section 3 highlights some recent efforts towards strengthening LDCs' capacity to trade. Section 4 provides an overview of LDC graduation discussions.



1. LDC trade trends

Overall evolution of exports and imports

The DPoA calls for significantly increasing the exports of LDCs, with a view to doubling their share of global exports by 2031.

Overall, LDC exports of goods and commercial services expanded between 2022 and 2025 (see Table 1). Following strong growth in 2022, total exports of goods and commercial services declined by 5.4 per cent in 2023 before recovering in 2024 and 2025, with a double-digit growth rate of 11.3 per cent in 2025. On the import side,

total imports of goods and commercial services also declined in 2023 before recovering in 2024 and 2025. In 2025, the value of LDC exports of goods and commercial services reached US\$ 362.4 billion, while imports amounted to US\$ 471.6 billion. Overall, LDCs as a group continue to register a trade deficit.

Table 1. Trends in LDCs' trade of goods and commercial services, 2020–2025(US\$ billion and percentage; BOP/BPM6)³

	VALUE (US\$ BN)		ANNUAL PERCENTAGE CHANGE (%)						
	2020	2025	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2020-2025
Exports									
Total goods and commercial services	209.8	362.4	-12.2	27.3	18.0	-5.4	9.3	11.3	11.5
Goods	182.6	309.4	-6.8	29.7	16.7	-7.6	7.9	12.2	11.1
Commercial services	27.2	53.1	-36.9	11.3	27.9	9.9	17.5	6.1	14.3
Imports									
Total goods and commercial services	299.7	471.6	-10.5	25.9	18.0	-8.4	5.7	9.5	9.5
Goods	239.6	381.9	-10.2	29.8	17.3	-9.9	5.9	9.8	9.8
Commercial services	60.1	89.7	-11.3	10.4	21.0	-1.5	4.9	8.2	8.3

Source: Estimates by the WTO and the UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

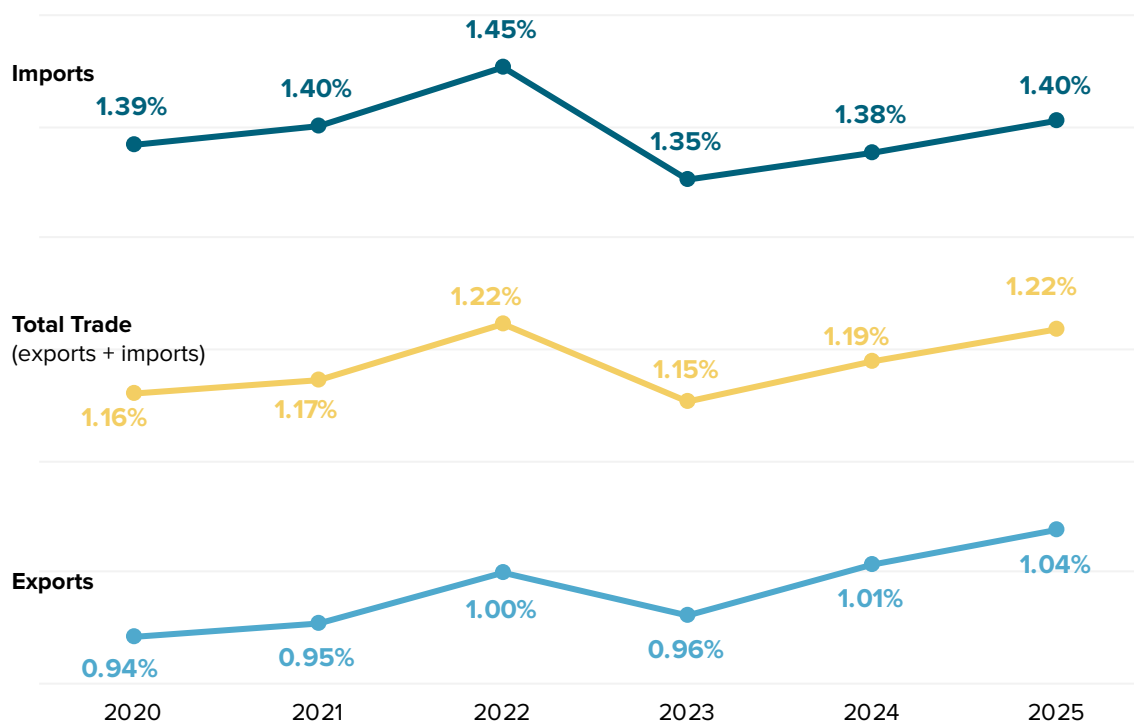
LDCs' share in world trade

LDCs' share in world trade increased moderately over the period 2022–2025. The share of LDC exports of goods and commercial services in world exports rose from 1.00 per cent in 2022 to

1.04 per cent in 2025 (see Figure 1). LDCs' share in world imports remained broadly stable over the same period, at around 1.4 per cent.

Figure 1. LDCs' shares in total world trade of goods and commercial services, 2020–2025

(Percentage shares; BOP/BPM6)



Source: WTO-UNCTAD estimates.

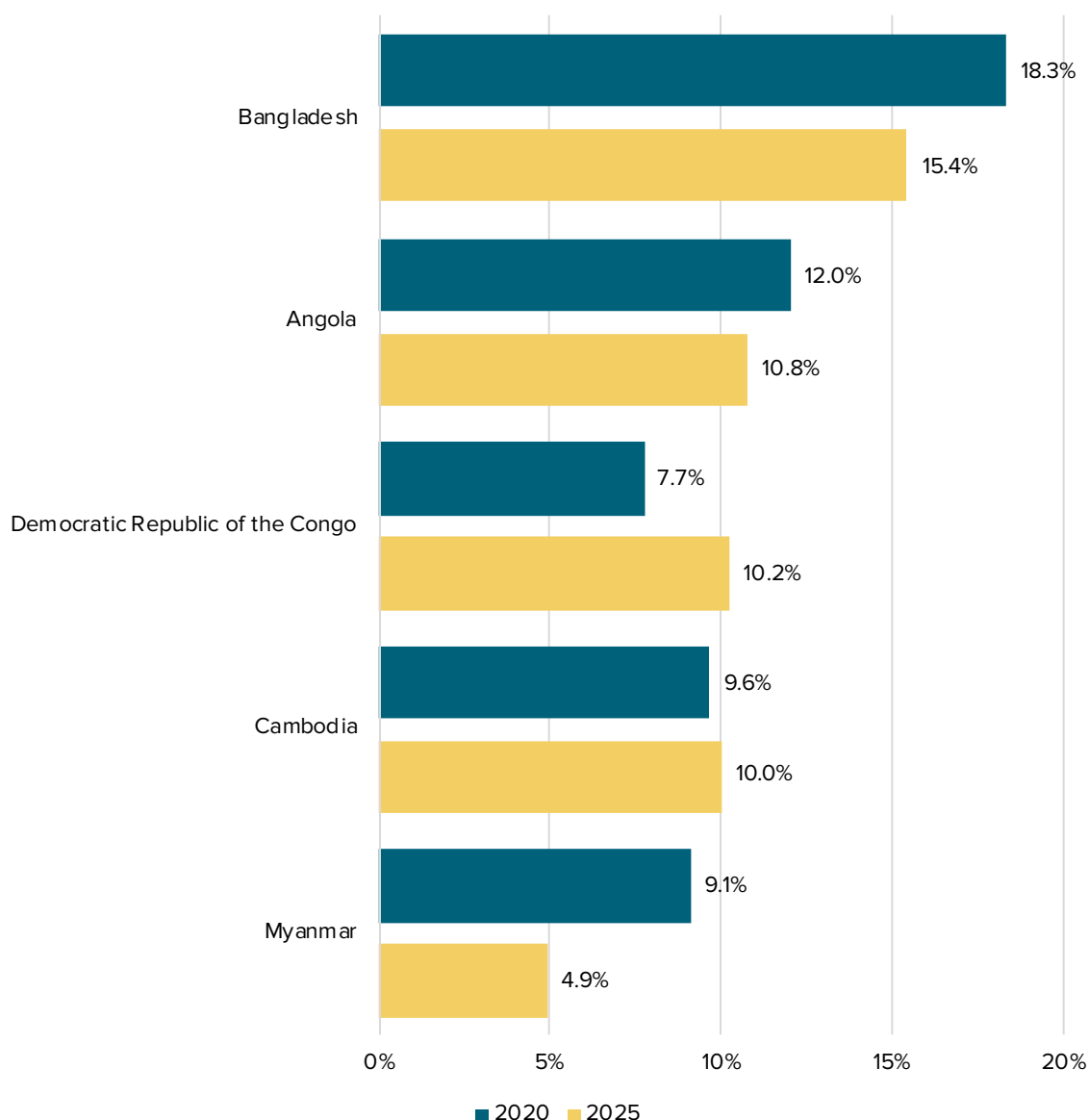
Major merchandise exporters and importers

LDCs' merchandise trade remains concentrated among a few economies in the group and destination markets. In 2025, the ten largest merchandise exporters accounted for over 70 per cent of total LDC merchandise exports.

Bangladesh remained the largest exporter within the group (15.4 per cent), followed by Angola (10.8 per cent), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (10.2 per cent), Cambodia (10 per cent) and Myanmar (4.9 per cent) (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Top five LDC exporters, 2020 and 2025

(Percentage shares)



Source: WTO-UNCTAD.

On the import side, the ten largest importers represented approximately two-thirds of total LDC merchandise imports in 2025. Bangladesh remained the largest importer among LDCs

(18.1 per cent), followed by Cambodia (8.8 per cent), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (7.3 per cent), Ethiopia (6.0 per cent) and Uganda (4.8 per cent).

Main export markets

In terms of destination markets, LDC merchandise exports have become more concentrated. The ten largest export destinations accounted for 83.1 per cent of exports in 2025, compared with 81.2 per cent in 2020 (see Table 2). In 2025, China was the principal export destination, accounting for 23.7 per

cent of total LDC merchandise exports, followed by the European Union (17.9 per cent), the United Arab Emirates (12.0 per cent), the United States (10.0 per cent) and India (6.7 per cent). Together, these five markets absorbed around 70 per cent of total LDC merchandise exports.

Table 2. LDCs' top ten export markets, 2020 and 2025

(US\$ billion and percentage shares)

TOTAL TRADE					
2020			2025		
Market	US\$ bn.	% Share	Market	US\$ bn.	% Share
China	46.4	23.1%	China	85.6	23.7%
European Union	35.6	17.7%	European Union	64.6	17.9%
United Arab Emirates	22.6	11.2%	United Arab Emirates ^a	43.5	12.0%
United States	18.3	9.1%	United States	36.2	10.0%
India	10.0	5.0%	India	24.2	6.7%
Thailand	8.5	4.2%	Viet Nam	10.7	3.0%
Switzerland	8.1	4.0%	Thailand	10.1	2.8%
Japan	5.2	2.6%	Switzerland	10.0	2.8%
United Kingdom	4.8	2.4%	United Kingdom	7.9	2.2%
Singapore	3.8	1.9%	Japan	7.2	2.0%
Top 10 export markets	163.3	81.2%	Top 10 export markets	300.0	83.1%
All markets*	201.1	100.0%	All markets*	361.2	100.0%

AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS					
2020			2025		
Market	US\$ bn.	% Share	Market	US\$ bn.	% Share
China	5.9	20.4%	European Union	9.4	18.5%
European Union	4.5	15.5%	China	8.2	16.1%
India	3.6	12.6%	Viet Nam	7.7	15.1%
Viet Nam	1.7	6.1%	India	7.1	13.9%
Thailand	1.4	5.0%	Saudi Arabia	1.9	3.7%
United States	1.1	4.0%	Thailand	1.8	3.5%
Saudi Arabia	0.9	3.0%	United States	1.7	3.4%
Pakistan	0.7	2.6%	Malaysia	1.2	2.3%
Japan	0.6	2.2%	Japan	0.8	1.6%
Türkiye	0.5	1.6%	Türkiye	0.8	1.5%
Top 10 export markets	21.0	73.0%	Top 10 export markets	40.4	79.6%
All markets*	28.7	100.0%	All markets*	50.8	100.0%

FUELS AND MINING PRODUCTS					
2020			2025		
Market	US\$ bn.	% Share	Market	US\$ bn.	% Share
China	35.8	56.6%	China	69.2	52.0%
European Union	6.9	11.0%	European Union	18.3	13.9%
Thailand	5.5	8.7%	India	10.5	7.9%
India	3.7	5.9%	Thailand	6.5	5.0%
United Arab Emirates	1.1	1.7%	United States	3.4	2.6%
Republic of Korea	1.0	1.6%	United Arab Emirates ^a	2.7	2.1%
Chinese Taipei	0.9	1.4%	Republic of Korea	2.6	2.0%
Mali	0.9	1.4%	Indonesia	2.0	1.6%
United States	0.7	1.2%	Saudi Arabia	1.8	1.4%
South Africa	0.7	1.2%	South Africa	1.8	1.3%
Top 10 export markets	57.3	90.6%	Top 10 export markets	118.9	90.1%
All markets*	63.3	100.0%	All markets*	132.0	100.0%

MANUFACTURES					
2020			2025		
Market	US\$ bn.	% Share	Market	US\$ bn.	% Share
European Union	23.8	32.9%	European Union	36.4	29.0%
United States	16.1	22.2%	United States	30.5	24.0%
United Kingdom	4.3	6.0%	United Kingdom	7.1	6.0%
Japan	4.2	5.8%	China	7.0	6.0%
China	3.1	4.3%	India	5.8	5.0%
Canada	2.6	3.6%	Japan	5.6	4.5%
United Arab Emirates	1.8	2.5%	Canada	4.3	3.4%
India	1.4	1.9%	United Arab Emirates ^a	4.1	3.3%
Russian Federation	1.2	1.7%	Switzerland	1.9	1.5%
Switzerland	1.2	1.7%	Republic of Korea	1.7	1.4%
Top 10 export markets	59.8	82.5%	Top 10 export markets	104.3	83.6%
All markets*	72.5	100.0%	All markets*	124.6	100.0%

^a Estimate.

* Aggregated export values for all markets may not coincide with total trade figures reported by LDCs.

Source: WTO estimates based on WITS/Comtrade and Trade Data Monitor [importer data].

Export destinations varied across product groups. In 2025, the European Union was the largest market for LDC agricultural exports, accounting for 18.5 per cent of the total, followed by China (16.1 per cent), Viet Nam (15.1 per cent) and India (13.9 per cent). For fuels and mining products, China remained the main destination, absorbing

more than half of LDC exports in this category (52.0 per cent), while the European Union accounted for 13.9 per cent. Manufactured goods were primarily destined for developed markets, with the European Union and the United States accounting for 29.0 per cent and 24.0 per cent respectively of total LDC manufactured exports.

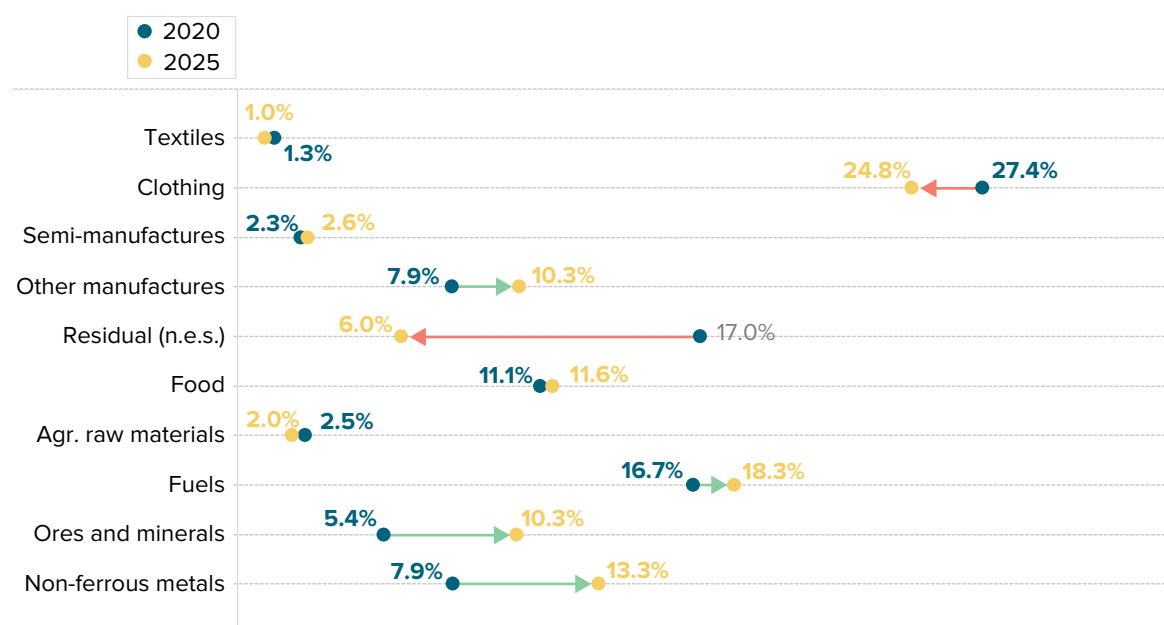
Export composition and leading products

LDC merchandise exports continued to be dominated by a few manufactures and primary products between 2020 and 2025 (see Figure 3). Clothing remained the largest manufacturing category, accounting for 25 per cent of total merchandise exports in 2025. Primary products, comprising food products, agricultural raw materials, fuels, ores and minerals, and non-ferrous metals, together represented just over half of total merchandise exports. Fuels accounted for 18 per cent of exports, followed by non-ferrous metals (13 per cent), food products (12 per cent) and ores and minerals (10 per cent).

While the overall composition of exports remained broadly stable, important shifts occurred within categories. The shares of non-ferrous metals and ores and minerals increased from 8 per cent to 13 per cent and from 5 per cent to 10 per cent respectively between 2020 and 2025. By contrast, clothing's share declined slightly from 27 per cent to 25 per cent, while the share of residual products fell markedly from 17 per cent to 6 per cent. Food products, agricultural raw materials and fuels remained relatively stable over the period.

Figure 3. Composition of LDC merchandise exports, 2020 and 2025

(Percentage share of total merchandise exports)



Source: WTO estimates based on WITS/Comtrade (2020) and Trade Data Monitor (2025) [importer data].

The changes observed at the category level were accompanied by shifts in the composition of individual export products (see Table 3). Crude petroleum oils remained the leading export product in 2025, accounting for 13 per cent of total merchandise exports. Refined copper emerged as the second-largest export product, increasing its share from 4 per cent in 2020 to 9 per cent in 2025. Gold followed an opposite trajectory, with its share declining sharply from 16 per cent to 5 per cent over the same period.

Aluminium ores and concentrates also gained importance, joining the group of leading export products by 2025.

Manufactured goods continued to feature prominently among leading exports. Clothing products, including sweaters, pullovers, T-shirts and men's and women's suits, remained among the top merchandise export items, although their shares were generally slightly lower in 2025 than in 2020.

Table 3. Leading merchandise export products of LDCs, 2020 and 2025

(Percentage shares)

MANUFACTURES	2020 SHARE (%)	2025 SHARE (%)
Crude petroleum oils	12	13
Gold, unwrought/semi-manufactured/powder	16	5
Refined copper and alloys, unwrought	4	9
Aluminium ores and concentrates	-	4.3
Sweaters, pullovers and similar articles, knitted or crocheted	4	3.8
T-shirts, singlets and similar articles, knitted or crocheted	4	3
Men's or boys' suits, jackets, trousers, etc.	4	3
Women's or girls' suits, jackets, trousers, etc.	3	3
Petroleum gases	3	3
Unrefined copper	2	2
Others	46	50

Source: WTO estimates based on WITS/Comtrade (2020) and Trade Data Monitor (2025) [importer data].

Overall, while LDCs increased their participation in world trade between 2022 and 2025, exports remained concentrated among a limited

number of countries, markets and products, underscoring the continued importance of diversification efforts.

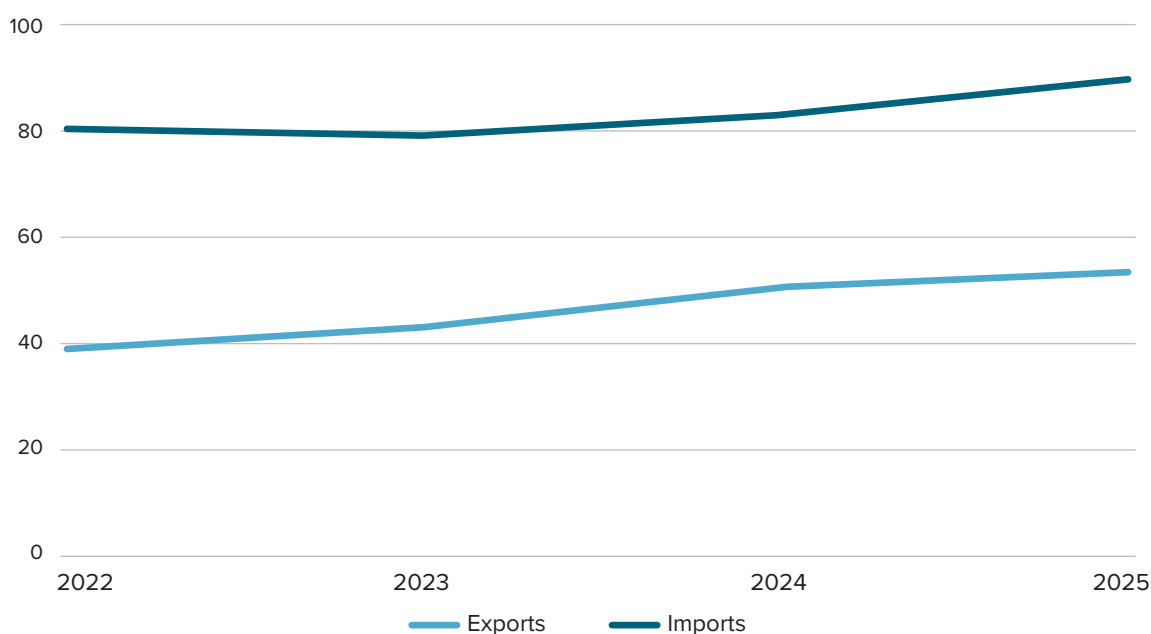
LDC services trends

LDC exports and imports of commercial services followed a sustained upward trend between 2022 and 2025. Commercial services exports increased from US\$ 38.7 billion in

2022 to US\$ 53.1 billion in 2025. Commercial services imports also expanded, rising from US\$ 80.3 billion in 2022 to US\$ 89.7 billion in 2025 (Figure 4).

Figure 4: LDCs' exports and imports of commercial services, 2022–2025

(US\$ billion)



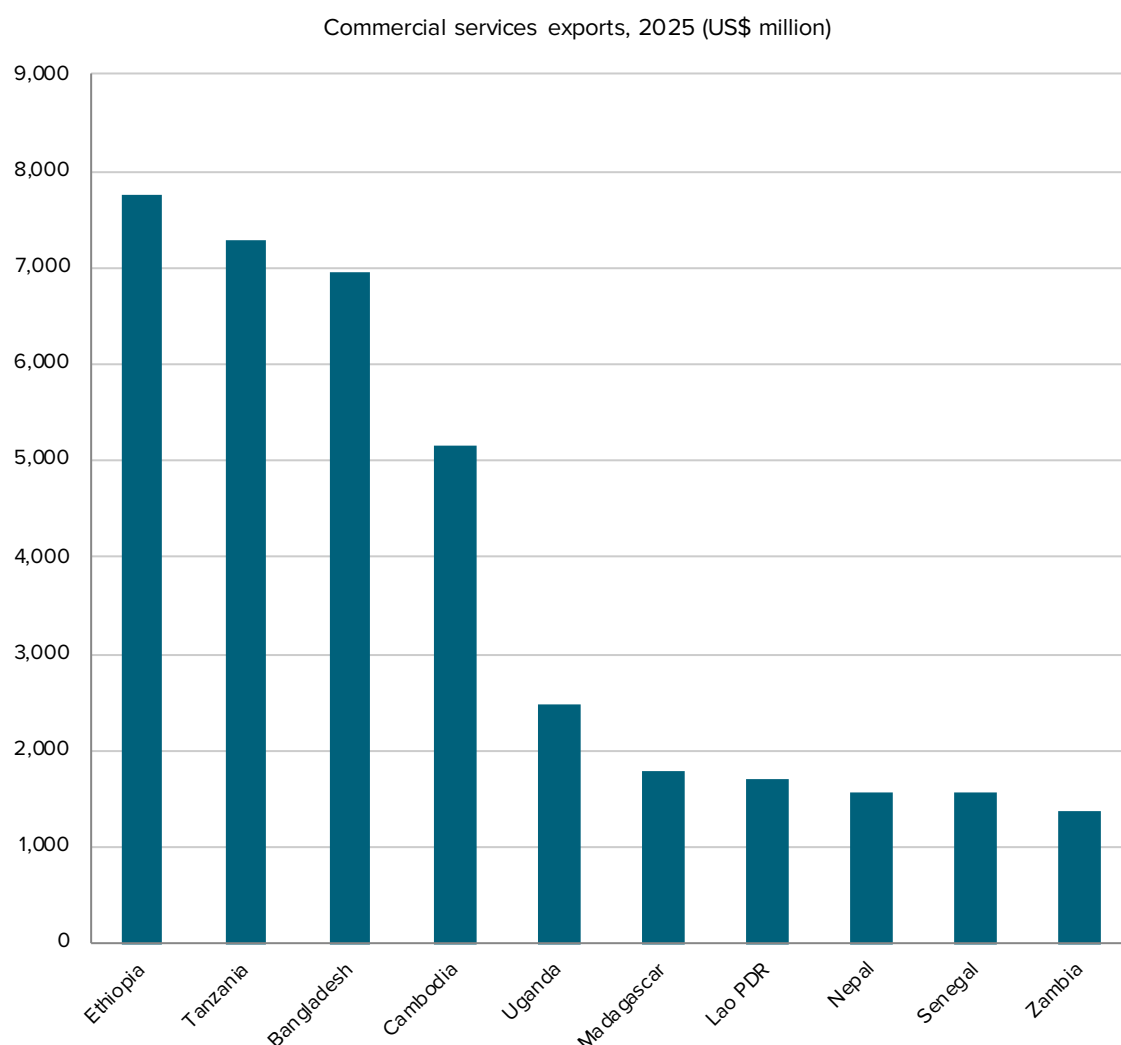
Source: WTO Stats.

Commercial services exports remained concentrated among a limited number of LDCs. In 2025, the ten largest services exporters accounted for approximately 75 per cent of total LDC commercial services exports. Ethiopia, Tanzania and Bangladesh were the leading exporters, followed by Cambodia (Figure 5). Collectively, these

four economies represented just over half of the group's commercial services exports. Despite the expansion of commercial services exports across the LDC Group, the continued concentration of exports among a relatively small number of economies points to the scope for further broadening participation in international services trade.

Figure 5: Top ten LDC commercial services exporters, 2025

(US\$ million)



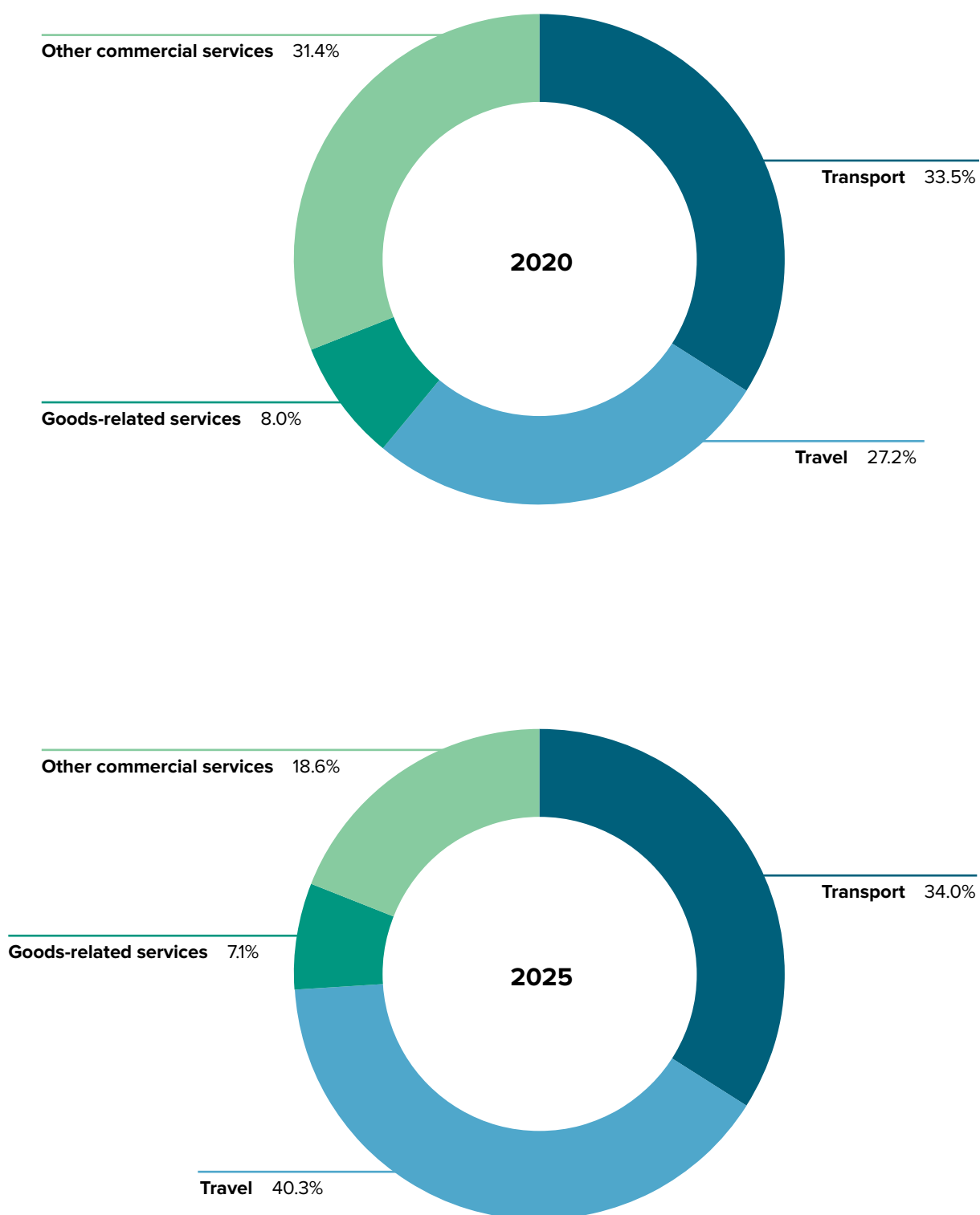
Source: WTO Global Services Trade Data Hub.

The composition of LDC commercial services exports changed noticeably between 2020 and 2025. Travel became the largest services export category, increasing its share from 27.2 per cent in 2020 to 40.3 per cent in 2025. Transport became the second largest category, accounting for 34.0 per cent of total commercial

services exports in 2025, broadly unchanged from 33.5 per cent in 2020. Together, travel and transport represented more than 74 per cent of LDC commercial services exports in 2025, highlighting the continued concentration of services exports in a limited number of sectors.

Figure 6: Structure of LDCs' exports of commercial services, 2020 and 2025

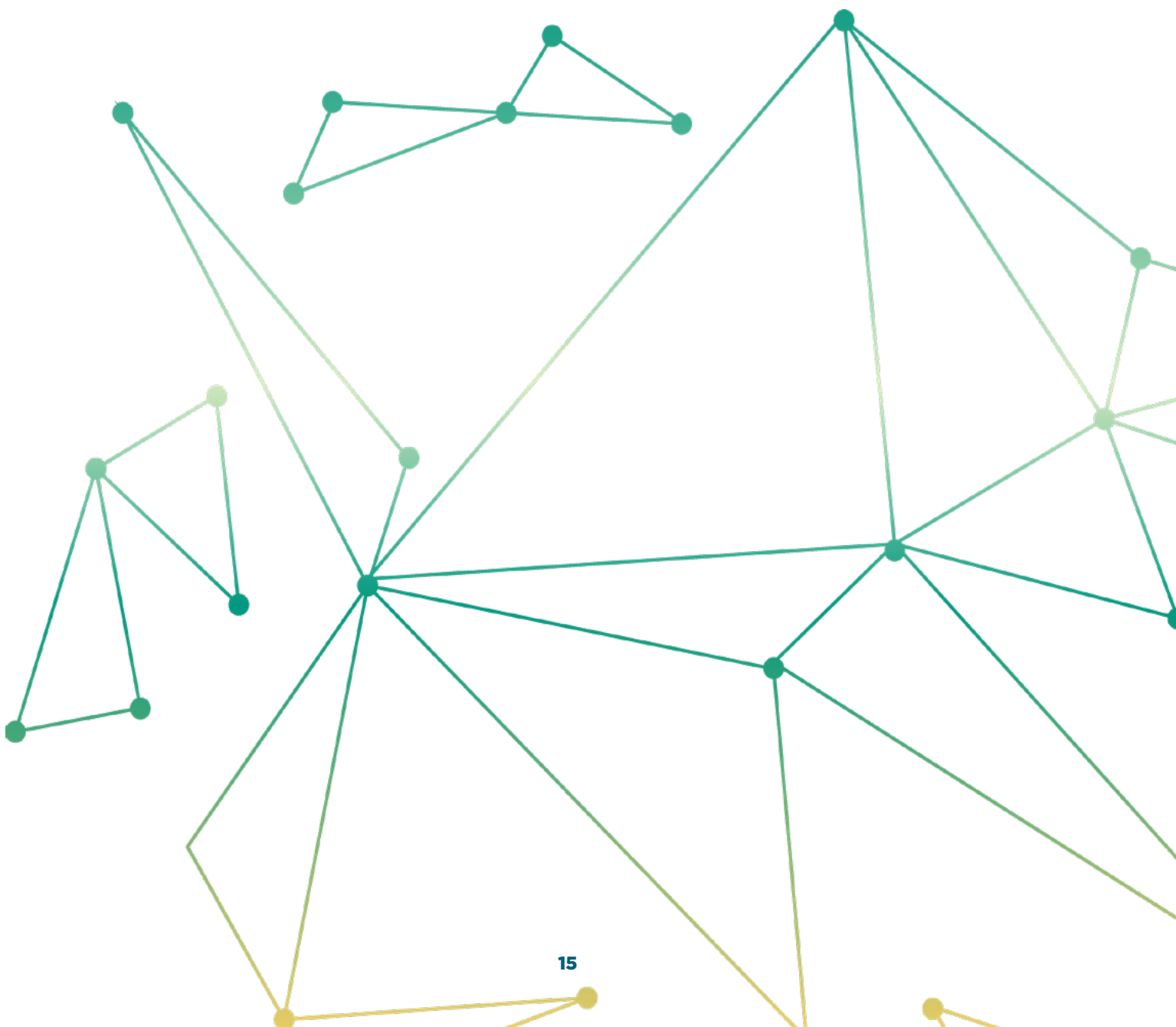
(Percentage shares)



Source: WTO Global Services Trade Data Hub.

By contrast, the share of other commercial services declined from 31.4 per cent in 2020 to 18.6 per cent in 2025, while goods-related services accounted for a relatively small share of exports, decreasing from 8.0 per cent to 7.1 per cent over the same period. Despite this decline in relative importance, exports of other

commercial services increased in value terms, reaching approximately US\$ 9.9 billion in 2025. Within this category, other business services and telecommunications, computer and information services remained the largest components, together accounting for almost three-quarters of other commercial services exports.





2. Supporting LDCs' integration into global trade

Market access for goods and services

WTO members have taken steps over past decades in the areas of duty-free and quota-free (DFQF) market access for LDCs, preferential rules of origin and the LDC Services Waiver. Preferential market access for LDCs' goods and services remains a key instrument for deepening LDCs' trade integration.

Duty-free and quota-free market access

Even prior to the DPoA, most developed members, and a number of developing members, have provided comprehensive duty-free coverage for LDC exports.

The DPoA calls for the facilitation of market access for products originating from LDCs. In the WTO context, members have made significant progress in providing DFQF market access for LDC products. The adoption of the Ministerial Decision on Duty-Free and Quota-Free Market

Access for Least-Developed Countries at the Bali Ministerial Conference in 2013 marked an important milestone in this regard.⁴

The Decision calls on developed-country members to improve existing DFQF coverage for products from LDCs, and on developing-country members in a position to do so to provide DFQF market access for products originating from LDCs. Since then, developed-country members have expanded their DFQF coverage, while a number

of developing-country members have introduced specific DFQF schemes for LDCs.

The WTO's Committee on Trade and Development reviews the steps taken by members to provide DFQF market access. In addition, the Sub-Committee on LDCs regularly reports data on market access for LDCs. Recent findings suggest that LDCs enjoy either full or nearly full DFQF market access in most of their key export destinations. Australia, New Zealand, Norway and Switzerland offer 100 per cent duty-free access to LDCs. Several other members provide coverage exceeding 95 per cent, including Canada, China, Chile, the European Union, Iceland, Japan and the United Kingdom.

Since 2022, a number of members – including Canada, China, Japan, Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation – have introduced adjustments to their preferential schemes in favour of LDCs and graduating LDCs. In 2024, Canada extended its preferential scheme for LDCs until 2034 and introduced simplified rules of origin.⁵ In the same

year, China extended zero-tariff treatment to 100 per cent of its tariff lines for all LDCs with which it maintains diplomatic relations.⁶

Members have also taken steps to support a smooth transition following graduation from the LDC category. Pursuant to the 2023 Decision by the WTO's General Council, preference-granting members are encouraged to provide a transition period before withdrawing DFQF market access to LDCs after graduation.⁷ As a result, some members, including Japan, Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation, now grant transition periods for graduated LDCs to continue benefiting from preferential tariff treatment under their preference schemes for a period of time after graduation.⁸ To date, China, the European Union, Japan, Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation and Türkiye provide such transition periods, while other members have indicated their intention to grant a three-year transition period for graduated LDCs. These measures underscore members' continued commitment to strengthening LDCs' participation in global merchandise trade.

Preferential rules of origin

Rules of origin are criteria used to define the economic nationality of a good, i.e. where a product was made. Preferential rules of origin are those which apply in reciprocal trade preferences (i.e. regional trade agreements or customs unions) or in non-reciprocal trade preferences (i.e. preferences in favour of developing countries or LDCs). The DPoA calls for preferential rules of origin applicable to imports from LDCs to be transparent, simple and conducive to facilitating market access. In Bali (2013) and Nairobi (2015), members adopted two sets of guidelines on preferential rules of origin for least developed countries.⁹ These instruments provide recommendations on key rules of origin requirements, including those related to assessment of substantial transformation, cumulation possibilities and documentary requirements. Preference-granting members have notified their preferential rules of origin through

a template adopted by the WTO's Committee on Rules of Origin (CRO) in 2017, thereby enhancing transparency and contributing to the review of preference utilization by LDCs.¹⁰

Most recently, the CRO adopted a Decision encouraging members to continue their efforts to ensure that preferential rules of origin for LDCs are transparent, simple and contribute to facilitating market access.¹¹ The Decision emphasizes the importance of identifying and addressing challenges faced by LDCs in complying with preferential rules of origin requirements. Since then, members have engaged in discussions on preferential rules of origin for LDCs in the CRO, including through a workplan proposed by LDCs.

As a result, LDCs have presented recommendations regarding the design and administration of rules of origin, including on the

method of calculation and percentages used for value-based origin criteria; the simplification of rules based on a change of tariff classification; cumulation; direct consignment; proof of origin; and flexibilities for low-value shipments.¹² Several preference-granting members – including Australia, Canada, China, the European Union, Japan, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States – have also shared updates on recent developments in their preference-granting

schemes and preferential rules of origin for LDCs, as well as preference utilization. Members have also considered updates regarding self-certification, cumulation flexibilities, local content requirements, and the application of electronic systems for issuance of certifications of origin. WTO members review developments in preferential rules of origin for LDCs on an annual basis.¹³



Box 1: Experience-sharing on preferential rules of origin

Experience-sharing on preferential rules of origin is part of the regular work of the WTO Committee on Rules of Origin (CRO).¹⁴ In 2023, the Sub-Committee on LDCs held a dedicated **experience-sharing session** focused on the role of preferential rules of origin in enhancing LDC trade opportunities. The session brought together capital-based officials from LDCs and their trading partners, and representatives from the private sector, international organizations and academia.

The discussions highlighted key challenges affecting LDCs' ability to benefit from preferential rules of origin, including high compliance costs, administrative burdens and limited awareness of benefits from preferences. At the same time, speakers emphasized opportunities arising from simplified and more flexible rules of origin requirements and greater use of digital tools. The importance of strengthening domestic productive capacities was also underscored, with a view to enabling LDCs to make effective use of preferential market access.

Private sector representatives shared their experiences in making use of preferential rules of origin, highlighting that the simplification and harmonization of rules of origin could contribute to increasing preference utilization rates. The role of capacity building for business representatives, as well as the use of digital technologies, were also identified as possible contributors to higher utilization rates. Burdensome customs procedures and formalities at the border were identified as the main challenges for exports within the African region. From an academic perspective, speakers highlighted opportunities for LDCs in the digital economy and environmental sustainability, while stressing the challenges associated with overly lenient rules of origin that may undermine LDCs' efforts to increase domestic value-added. The exchanges underscored the importance of carefully designed rules of origin frameworks, supported by capacity-building and trade facilitation efforts, to ensure that preferential market access translates into meaningful outcomes for LDCs.

LDC Services Waiver

The DPoA calls for increasing LDCs' exports of services by fully implementing the WTO Ministerial Decision on the Operationalization of the Waiver Concerning Preferential Treatment to Services and Service Suppliers of Least-Developed Countries, and encourages members that have not yet notified their preferences under the Least Developed Countries Services Waiver, to also do so.

The LDC Services Waiver Decision, adopted in 2011, provides a framework for WTO members to grant preferential treatment to services and service suppliers from LDCs.¹⁵ In 2013, members adopted the Bali Ministerial Decision on its operationalization, with a view to promoting effective implementation.¹⁶ Soon after, LDCs submitted a collective request identifying priority areas of interest for preferential treatment, which include travel, tourism, hospitality, transport, banking and other financial services.¹⁷

The LDC Services Waiver is valid until 2030 or until a member graduates from the LDC category, whichever occurs first.¹⁸ The DPoA calls for full implementation of the operationalization of the LDC Services Waiver, with a view to enhance LDCs' services exports.

To date, 51 WTO members (counting the European Union Member States individually) have notified measures under the LDC Services Waiver. These notified measures cover various sectors and modes of supply, with top sectors including business services, transport, tourism and travel. Some of the notified measures benefiting LDCs include visa waivers for businesspersons, e-visa

applications, granting of authorized destination status for tourism purposes, and designation of specific contact points. Limited data availability makes it difficult to assess whether these measures have created new trade opportunities for LDCs.

In an effort to review the operationalization of the LDC Services Waiver, at members' request, the WTO Secretariat has organized workshops and webinars to promote dialogue among relevant stakeholders on services-related issues of interest to LDCs.¹⁹

In recent years, members have reaffirmed their commitment to review and promote the operationalization of the LDC Services Waiver. Following instructions at the 12th and 13th Ministerial Conferences (MC12 and MC13), members have engaged in discussions at the WTO's Council for Trade in Services to explore improvements in LDC services trade data and review information on LDC service suppliers and consumers of LDC services in preference-granting members. As a result, the WTO Secretariat has explored possible approaches to improving LDCs' services export data, while LDCs have developed an online questionnaire to gather information on suppliers and consumers of LDC services that members are invited to use, alongside any other tool they may deploy to collect this information.²⁰ Members have started to share results from the information they have collected through the questionnaire at meetings of the Council for Trade in Services. Increasing the participation of LDCs in services trade remains a key priority in efforts to advance their integration into global trade.



Box 2: Addressing supply-side constraints to boost LDC services trade

In 2024, the Sub-Committee on LDCs held a dedicated [experience-sharing session](#) focused on strengthening LDCs' participation in services trade. The session benefited from the participation of trade experts, international organizations and stakeholders from Cambodia, Kenya and Mauritania.

The session underscored key challenges affecting LDCs' participation in services trade, including those related to infrastructure, skills development, regulatory environment and limited technological capacity. At the same time, the session highlighted opportunities for LDCs in high-skilled services sectors, such as information communication technology (ICT), finance and business services, and more horizontally in digitally delivered services. Regional integration was also identified as an area of untapped potential for LDCs. The discussions emphasized the importance of improving services trade data, strengthening domestic regulatory frameworks and increasing firm-level competitiveness.

Services experts shared insights on the participation of LDCs in global services trade. While LDCs' services exports remained concentrated in travel and transport, digitally enabled trade and professional services were identified as areas with strong potential to bolster LDCs' services trade. Speakers pointed to a limited impact of the LDC Services Waiver on LDCs' participation in global services trade, stressing the need for continued support to address supply-side constraints. Speakers further underscored the need to improve LDCs' access to key infrastructure, including electricity and telecommunications.

At the regional level, speakers emphasized the role of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) in harmonizing regulatory frameworks and reducing restrictions on services trade. Business representatives shared their perspectives on the opportunities and challenges arising from their participation in services trade. Speakers outlined initiatives to enhance services trade in the African region, including mutual recognition agreements for professional service suppliers and targeted support to strengthen competitiveness. A representative from a professional services firm in Cambodia underscored challenges related to limited market opportunities and access to affordable skilled labour. A representative from Mauritania's tourism industry stressed the need to strengthen tourism infrastructure to unlock the sector's full potential.

LDC flexibilities in WTO rules

Trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights

Over the years, WTO members have continued to provide flexibilities to LDCs in the implementation of WTO rules. One of the key flexibilities afforded to LDCs has been extended transition periods for the implementation of the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS). Under the Agreement, LDCs were initially granted an 11-year transition period for its implementation. This general transition period has subsequently been extended in 2005, 2013 and 2021. The current extension remains in force until 1 July 2034 or until a member graduates from the LDC category, whichever occurs first.²¹

In addition to this general transition period, LDCs benefit from a specific transition period relating to pharmaceutical products, as well as exemptions from mailbox and exclusive marketing rights requirements. Initially valid until 1 January 2016, this specific transition period has been extended until 1 January 2033 or until a member graduates from the LDC category, whichever occurs first.²²

The TRIPS Amendment, which entered into force in 2017, allows members to use the system of compulsory licences to export to countries with limited manufacturing capacity. LDCs are deemed to have limited manufacturing capacity in the pharmaceutical sector, and they are only required to notify their intent to use this system. If a developing member or an LDC uses this system to produce or import pharmaceuticals, and is part of a regional trade agreement in which at least half the parties are LDCs, it can export to other parties of that agreement without submitting another notification. Rwanda is the only LDC to

have submitted a notification related to the use of the special compulsory licensing mechanism.²³

The DPoA reaffirms TRIPS Council decisions on the extensions of the two transition periods for LDCs. The DPoA also calls for the provision of incentives to enterprises and institutions in developed-country member territories, with the purpose of promoting and encouraging technology transfer to LDCs, in order to enable them to create a sound and viable technological base.

The TRIPS Agreement also seeks to promote technology transfer to LDCs so they can build a strong and viable technological base. Article 66.2 of the TRIPS Agreement requires developed members to provide incentives to enterprises and institutions within their territory to promote technology transfer to LDCs. Since 2003, developed members have been submitting annual reports on ongoing or planned initiatives related to technology transfer to LDCs.²⁴ In addition, the WTO Secretariat organizes annual workshops on the implementation of Article 66.2, which provides a platform for discussions on technology transfer to LDCs. In 2026, the workshop on incentives for technology transfer to LDCs took place on 21–22 April, bringing together nearly 25 participants from LDCs, Geneva-based officials, experts from developed members, and representatives from the public and private sector, as well as international organizations. The workshop highlighted the conditions necessary for technology transfer to deliver results in LDCs, including predictable and sound legal frameworks, access to finance, and strong absorptive capacity.

Trade facilitation

The DPoA calls for the full implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) and the provision of assistance and support for LDC capacity building in this regard.

The TFA, which was adopted in 2013 and entered into force in 2017, seeks to reduce trade costs by streamlining and harmonizing customs procedures. As of March 2026, 34 LDCs have

ratified the TFA, representing over 90 per cent of WTO LDC members.

The TFA introduced an innovative approach for its implementation. Self-categorization of provisions allows developing members and LDCs to determine their own pace of implementation. It also enables these members to identify areas where they need technical assistance and capacity-building support. There are three categories of provisions: A) implementation upon entry into force; B) implementation after a transition period; and C) implementation after a transition period and with the provision of technical assistance. So far, 24 LDCs have notified their technical assistance needs in order to implement 252 provisions in the coming years.

The TFA provides additional flexibilities for developing members, including LDCs. For example, through its early warning mechanism, LDCs can request additional time to implement provisions in categories B and C, and timely extensions are automatically granted if the additional time requested is less than three years. Twelve LDCs have requested extensions of the implementation date for certain TFA provisions. Two LDCs (Togo and Zambia) have requested a second extension for certain provisions, while Togo is the only LDC to have requested a third extension for certain provisions of the TFA.

Developing members and LDCs also benefit from flexibilities in shifting provisions between categories B and C. The WTO's TFA Committee has considered requests from 12 LDCs to move certain provisions from category B to C, and from ten LDCs to move provisions from category C to B. Members have positively considered all requests for flexibilities by LDCs.

The TFA also provides flexibilities for LDCs with regard to disputes. Following the TFA's entry into force, LDCs enjoyed a six-year grace period for category A provisions, and they have eight years to implement Category B and C provisions.

With a view to facilitating the monitoring of the provision of technical assistance, the TFA also contains two transparency notifications: i) a notification to report on technical assistance arrangements and provide updates on how that support is being delivered, and ii) an annual notification for donors to report on the assistance disbursed over the past 12 months and committed for the next 12 months. With regard to the first notification, 18 LDCs have notified technical assistance arrangements, of which six LDCs have reported progress.²⁵ With regard to the second notification, nine donors, counting the European Union as one, account for over 60 per cent of submitted notifications.

The Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility (TFAF) was established to help developing members and LDCs access assistance for implementing the TFA from development partners. TFAF collects information on available assistance programmes, monitors accessibility and gaps and builds the capacity of members to engage with development partners. The TFAF also provides funding for implementation-related assistance when no other development partner can be accessed.

The TFAF has played a key role in supporting LDCs with TFA implementation. Angola, Madagascar, Myanmar, Senegal and Togo have benefited from project preparation grants, while Madagascar and Niger benefit from project implementation grants.²⁶ The Facility has directly worked with six LDCs in reviewing their implementation and resource mobilization programmes, trained representatives from eight LDC members in skills and techniques related to resource mobilization, and funded the participation of nine LDC representatives in the Committee on Trade Facilitation to share experiences and challenges in relation to the transit of goods, use of the Time Release Study methodology, and domestic coordination and alignment with development partners.²⁷

LDC accessions

The DPoA calls for the ensured accession to the WTO of all LDCs committed to do so by the end of the current decade.

With a view to facilitating LDCs' accession, WTO members have adopted two sets of guidelines encouraging members to exercise restraint in requesting market access commitments from acceding LDCs.²⁸ These guidelines also establish benchmarks for

market access negotiations in both goods and services.

Since the establishment of the organization in 1995, 11 LDCs have joined through the accession process.²⁹ After the adoption of the DPoA in 2022, two LDCs – Comoros and Timor-Leste – acceded to the WTO in 2024. Currently, four LDCs are at various stages of the WTO accession process: Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan.

LDCs' priorities in broader negotiations

Agriculture

The DPoA calls for the correction and prevention of trade restrictions and distortions in world agricultural and cotton markets, including through the elimination of all forms of agricultural export subsidies. This is consistent with the decision taken at the 10th WTO Ministerial Conference held in Nairobi in 2015, with a view to achieving the long-term objective of substantial progressive reductions in support and protection of agricultural products.

The agricultural sector remains vital for LDC economies for ensuring food security and employment. In the WTO, LDCs benefit from specific flexibilities in agriculture. For example, LDCs are exempt from tariff reduction commitments. LDCs are not required to undertake any reduction commitments in domestic support and export competition – a flexibility that, in practice, has largely not been used. The 2015 Ministerial Decision on Export Competition allows LDCs and net food-importing developing countries (NFIDCs) listed in [G/AG/5/Rev.10](#) to continue providing export subsidies for internal transport and marketing costs until 2030. They also benefit from a longer repayment term for export financing support for the acquisition of basic foodstuffs (36–54 months instead of 18

months). They may also monetize international food aid to address short- or long-term food deficits or insufficient agricultural production resulting in chronic hunger and malnutrition.

LDCs have been actively engaging in agriculture negotiations. They attach particular importance to ensuring food security, reducing trade-distorting domestic support, including for cotton, the special safeguard mechanism and developing a permanent solution for public stockholding for food security purposes.³⁰

In 2022 at MC12, with a view to contributing to food security efforts, WTO members agreed to not impose export prohibitions or restrictions on foodstuffs purchased for non-commercial humanitarian purposes by the World Food Programme.³¹ They also adopted a ministerial declaration on the emergency response to food insecurity.³² It sets out concrete steps to facilitate trade and improve the functioning of global markets for food and agriculture. It indicates that members imposing emergency measures introduced to address food security concerns should take into account their possible impact on other members, particularly LDCs and NFIDCs.



Box 3: Supporting the integration of recently acceded LDCs into the multilateral trading system

In 2025, the Sub-Committee on LDCs considered the experiences of Comoros and Timor-Leste in integrating into the multilateral trading system following their accession to the WTO in 2024. The meeting benefited from the participation of representatives from the World Bank and the International Trade Centre (ITC), who shared perspectives on various initiatives aimed at strengthening the integration of Comoros and Timor-Leste into global trade. The WTO Secretariat also provided insights into the technical assistance support provided to Comoros and Timor-Leste across various areas of WTO work in the period leading up to and following their accession.

The discussions highlighted key challenges faced by these recently acceded LDCs. These ranged from limited technical capacity to implement WTO rules to meeting obligations under WTO agreements to ensuring effective participation in WTO discussions. Speakers emphasized the importance of partnerships, including the need for technical assistance and capacity building throughout the accession process with a view to strengthening the expertise of capital-based officials. The role of national post-accession strategies and implementation plans, supported by adequate financial and technical resources, was also underlined. The meeting highlighted efforts to enhance transparency by recently acceded LDCs, including Timor-Leste's Trade Information Portal developed in collaboration with the World Bank.

Representatives from the World Bank and the ITC shared insights on the support provided for the accession and post-accession processes of Comoros and Timor-Leste. The World Bank highlighted its analytical and institutional support to Timor-Leste, including assistance in developing trade-related legislation and the country's single window, as well as support for the implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) and strengthening private sector engagement. In Comoros, support from the World Bank focused on promoting a private sector-led and export-driven growth model through reforms aimed at improving the country's business environment, expanding its export opportunities and strengthening its infrastructure.

The ITC highlighted its technical assistance to Timor-Leste aimed at strengthening the country's regulatory framework, supporting the ratification of the WTO's Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies and assessing the Agreement on Investment Facilitation for Development. Support to Timor-Leste following its accession focused on strengthening institutional capacity, promoting economic diversification and investment, and supporting the development of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises.

Source: WTO official document WT/COMTD/LDC/M/103.

Cotton remains a priority area for LDCs. As of 1 January 2016, developed members, and developing members that declare themselves in a position to do so have agreed to grant DFQF market access for cotton and cotton-related products originating from LDCs, to the extent provided for in their respective preferential trade arrangements. Development assistance aspects

of cotton are being discussed under the WTO Director-General's Consultative Framework Mechanism on Cotton. Several cotton-producing LDCs are part of the "Cotton partnership" aimed at helping those countries move up the value chain and tap the sports apparel market worth US\$ 260 billion.

Fisheries subsidies

The livelihoods of millions of people in LDCs depend on the sustainability of the oceans. At MC12, WTO members agreed to eliminate subsidies for illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing as part of the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies. With the entry into force of this Agreement in 2025, the Fish Fund became operational. So far, US\$ 5 million has been allocated to support the implementation of this Agreement, benefiting a broad range of developing economies, including LDCs, that have deposited their instrument of acceptance of the Agreement.

LDCs continue to attach priority to the continuation of negotiations on subsidies that contribute to overcapacity and overfishing. In the run-up to MC14, a group of members from the Pacific, including the Solomon Islands, tabled a proposal seeking political support for post-MC14 work to continue negotiations on fisheries subsidies, recognizing that appropriate special and differential treatment (S&DT) for developing economies, including LDCs, should be an integral part of these negotiations.³³ At MC14, members agreed to continue negotiations on fisheries subsidies with a view to making recommendations to the 15th Ministerial Conference.³⁴

Development

The DPoA calls for the full implementation of the provisions of special and differential treatment for developing countries, in particular LDCs, in accordance with WTO agreements.

LDCs have also been participating in trade and development negotiations at the WTO with a view to making S&DT provisions precise, effective and operational. Current discussions have been focusing on ten agreement-specific proposals put forward by the coalition of the G90, comprising Africa, Caribbean and the Pacific, African and LDC groups. Around half of those proposals are focused on LDCs.

At MC13, members adopted a declaration on the implementation of S&DT provisions under the Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Agreements. This marked

the first outcome on agreement-specific proposals applicable to all developing economies after more than two decades of negotiations. The declaration ensures that developing countries, including LDCs, receive timely support when members introduce new standards or technical regulations. And it also provides guidance to continue S&DT work.

Since then, discussions have focused on implementation of the MC13 declaration. At MC14, members agreed that the Committee on Trade and Development, Special Session, has fulfilled its commitment to undertake the work on SPS and TBT.³⁵ Members also noted that the SPS and TBT Committees may continue discussions on improving implementation of the provisions of the SPS and TBT Agreements, including those related to S&DT, based on proposals from members.

In 2025, the G90 also put forward an illustrative list of voluntary technology transfer incentives for LDCs under Article 66.2 of the TRIPS Agreement, directing the discussion to the TRIPS Council with a view to improving the operationalization and implementation of Article 66.2 of the TRIPS Agreement.³⁶ In July 2026, members agreed that the Committee on Trade and Development,

Special Session, has fulfilled its commitment to undertake discussions to improve implementation of S&DT under the TRIPS Agreement and that further discussions on improving implementation of the provisions of the TRIPS Agreement may continue in the Council for TRIPS based on proposals from members.³⁷

E-commerce

The DPoA aims to increase the participation of LDCs in e-commerce by strengthening ICT infrastructure and building their human and institutional capacities to better support the development of and integration into digital value chains.

Ensuring greater participation of LDC economies in digital trade remains an important priority for the LDC Group at the WTO. As part of discussions on the Work Programme on Electronic Commerce, LDCs have highlighted infrastructure-related

challenges and skills shortages that have been holding LDCs back from fully realizing opportunities offered by the digital economy. Since 2025, LDCs have called for the continuation of the current practice of not imposing duty on electronic commerce transactions.³⁸ At MC14, members could not agree on the extension of the moratorium on electronic commerce and the WTO Work Programme on Electronic Commerce, which lapsed at the end of March 2026. Since then, members have been continuing deliberations on this important matter.³⁹

WTO reform

The LDC Group has been taking an active interest in WTO reform discussions. LDCs tabled three proposals on WTO reform in 2019, 2022 and 2026.⁴⁰

Their proposals in 2019 and 2022 covered dispute settlement, notifications and transparency, as well as procedures in different WTO bodies. Regarding dispute settlement, LDCs have been calling for the restoration of a fully functioning dispute settlement process. Regarding notifications, their proposals highlighted capacity constraints faced by LDCs and called on members not to impose new obligations on transparency. The LDC Group also urged the Secretariat to provide necessary support to LDCs with a view to creating a national framework to meet the notification obligations. Regarding procedures, LDCs reiterated the need to avoid scheduling conflicts between the meetings of WTO bodies.

Ahead of MC14, LDCs tabled their latest communication on WTO reform, covering the following elements of reform discussions: i) decision-making; ii) development and S&DT; and iii) level playing field/fairness.⁴¹

Regarding decision-making in the WTO, LDCs acknowledge that consensus is core. They emphasize the importance of building trust among members with a view to advancing negotiations. LDCs are of the view that plurilateral agreements should follow rules and practices of the Marrakesh Agreement.

Regarding S&DT, LDCs note that many developing members, including LDCs, have faced challenges in making use of S&DT provisions. They note that the WTO should adapt to the diversity of its membership in negotiating, implementing and adding any new rules. The S&DT approach

adopted in the TFA was considered pragmatic. LDCs also acknowledge that LDC-specific flexibilities should be ring-fenced.

When it comes to a level playing field, LDCs are of the view that transparency and inclusiveness must remain at the core of reform discussions, while acknowledging the capacity constraints of LDCs in engaging in WTO discussions. LDCs

reiterated the need for greater support to help them meet transparency obligations. They argue that LDCs suffering from arrears should be able to access WTO documents and reports. LDCs also note that active participation in reform discussions extends beyond LDCs' participation in meetings and that LDCs also need access to the latest information and opportunities to contribute to the reform process.



Box 4: LDC participation in joint initiatives

Large groups of WTO members, including LDCs, have been participating in joint initiatives (JIs). As a result, the Agreement on Electronic Commerce (ECA) and the Investment Facilitation for Development (IFD) Agreement came into being.

The ECA aims at promoting digital trade facilitation and ensuring an enabling environment for digital trade. Around 70 members, including five LDCs, are parties to this Agreement. It contains S&DT provisions which enable developing economies, including LDCs, to self-designate for a five- to seven-year implementation period for each provision and request support for needs assessments. At MC14, 67 members, including four LDCs, adopted an interim pathway to bring the ECA into force. At the same time, work towards incorporating the ECA into the WTO rulebook will continue.⁴²

The IFD Agreement aims at improving the investment and business climate by cutting red tape and simplifying investment-related procedures. Around 130 members are parties to the IFD initiative, including 29 LDCs. Since the conclusion of negotiations in July 2023, IFD parties have been exploring ways to integrate the IFD Agreement into the WTO rulebook.⁴³

The IFD Agreement follows the TFA approach to S&DT. It enables developing economies, including LDCs, to define a specific transition period for each provision of the IFD Agreement, consistent with their implementation capacity, and to identify the assistance and capacity-building support needed for implementation. The IFD Agreement allows for self-categorization of commitments based on the following three categories: A) implementation upon entry into force; B) implementation after a transition period; and C) implementation after a transition period and with the provision of technical assistance. It also includes the “Early Warning Mechanism” and the possibility of shifting between categories B and C. Developing economies, including LDCs, may also request support for needs assessments.

LDCs also participate in other joint initiatives, including the Trade and Environmental Sustainability Structured Discussions (three LDCs) and the Dialogue on Plastics Pollution and Environmentally Sustainable Plastics Trade (five LDCs), as well as the Informal Working Groups on MSMEs (five LDCs) and the economic empowerment of women (28 LDCs).



3. Strengthening LDCs' capacity to trade

WTO technical assistance and capacity building

The DPoA recognizes technical assistance and capacity building (TACB) as a critical enabler for LDCs to improve their productive capacity, fulfil international commitments and integrate effectively into the global economy. It also calls upon multilateral institutions, including the WTO, to provide capacity-building support to LDCs. The WTO Secretariat-led TACB primarily concentrates on human capital development and seeks to equip trade officials with necessary know-how related to the multilateral trading system under the WTO legal framework.

During the period 2022–2025, LDCs were accorded priority as recipients of WTO TACB. WTO Technical Assistance Plans include annual LDC-focused, Geneva-based introductory trade policy and thematic courses, and offer LDCs priority in selection for several internship programmes (e.g. the Netherlands Talent Programme, the French Irish Mission Programme, the Regional Coordinator Internship Programme and the China WTO Accessions Internship Programme). These programmes are delivered

under the Progressive Learning Strategy (PLS) of the WTO, i.e. progressively based on the level of difficulty to the target audience. Specific programmes, such as national activities, are demand-led and customized to meet the unique needs of recipient LDCs. By helping participants gain a greater understanding of the day-to-day activities of the WTO, strengthening their institutional capabilities to comply with multilateral commitments, and supporting small-sized missions based in Geneva, these

programmes enhance participants' engagement in multilateral trade affairs.

During the period of 2022–2025, the WTO Secretariat trained 16,670 participants from 42 LDCs across 683 different technical assistance (TA) activities, including through e-learning, regional and global programmes. Twenty-seven per cent of the TA recipients during the period were from an LDC member economy. Notably, in 2024, the Secretariat trained over 19,000 participants, the second highest number on record. Sixty-five per cent of the TA activities that year included LDC nationals. This underscores the continued prioritization of LDCs in the WTO's TA initiatives. Furthermore, it can be asserted that gender balance has been achieved among the TA beneficiaries during the period, as around 50 per cent of the beneficiaries were women. This reflects a concerted effort to promote gender inclusivity, and equitable access to TA activities.

Institutional support

The Sub-Committee on LDCs provides a platform for WTO members to examine systemic issues of interest to LDCs in the multilateral trading system. These include issues related to market access, technical assistance, LDC accession, and monitoring the implementation of trade-related elements of the UN Programmes of Action for LDCs. With regard to market access, the Sub-Committee regularly reviews trends in LDCs' trade in goods and services, based on market access studies prepared annually by the Secretariat. In recent years, the issue of LDC graduation has gained momentum at the WTO, including in discussions within the Sub-Committee (see Section 4).

The Sub-Committee also provides a platform for international organizations to share information on key initiatives supporting LDCs' trade development. These include the World Bank; UNCTAD; UNOHRLS (see Box 6); the ITC; and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Initiatives

Between 2022 and 2026, four South-South Dialogues on LDCs and Development took place. These capacity-building events form part of [China's LDCs and Accessions Programme](#) and aim to strengthen LDCs' participation in the WTO (Box 5).

The Biennial Technical Assistance and Training Plan 2026–2027⁴⁴ reflects a more demand-driven approach to technical assistance, with training activities increasingly shaped by the specific needs identified by beneficiary members and observers through consultations and questionnaires. This need-based approach ensures that capacity-building activities respond to the practical constraints faced by developing countries and LDCs. In operational terms, the Plan sets out to introduce flexibility in TA delivery modalities, including increased use of blended learning and virtual training formats, enabling broader outreach and improved cost effectiveness in TA dissemination.

undertaken by the EIF and the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) in support of LDCs also feature regularly in Sub-Committee discussions.

A series of experience-sharing sessions organized under the aegis of the Sub-Committee has enabled members to share experiences and explore solutions to the challenges faced by LDCs in integrating into global trade. The discussions have also explored emerging trade opportunities for LDCs, and have benefited from the participation of government officials and private-sector representatives from LDCs, as well as development partners and international organizations. Since 2022, eight experience-sharing sessions have been held covering a wide range of topics of interest to LDCs, including: [LDCs' participation in global supply chains](#), [preferential rules of origin](#), [LDC graduation](#), [boosting LDCs' services trade](#), [bolstering LDCs' integration into agricultural supply chains](#), [exploring new paths for LDC trade](#)



Box 5: South-South Dialogues on LDCs and Development, 2022–2026

Common themes of the South-South Dialogues include the need for action-oriented outcomes at Ministerial Conferences, revitalizing the WTO's trade and development work and expanding opportunities for LDCs in an evolving trade landscape.

In 2022, discussions focused on MC12 priorities and WTO reform. Participants reviewed progress in the negotiations on agriculture and fisheries subsidies. Pandemic response and LDC graduation also featured prominently in the discussions. In addition, participants explored emerging trade priorities ranging from digital trade to investment facilitation to environmental sustainability.

In 2023, discussions centred on LDC priorities in WTO negotiations ahead of MC13. Main themes included LDC graduation, WTO reform and strategies to deepen LDC integration into global and digital trade. Leveraging public-private partnerships, strengthening regulatory frameworks and building digital infrastructure were some of the proposed solutions for bridging the digital divide in LDCs.

In 2024, participants explored ways to revitalize the WTO's trade and development work, strengthen LDC participation in global supply chains and tap opportunities in digital trade and the green transition. Key constraints included non-tariff barriers, commodity dependence, technology gaps and regulatory obstacles, especially for MSMEs. Trade digitalization, standards harmonization and mutual recognition agreements were highlighted as practical pathways to strengthen LDCs' integration into global supply chains. Speakers noted that the particular challenges of developing economies, including LDCs, required targeted solutions.

In 2026, discussions focused on WTO reform, including ways to revitalize trade and development work, and the evolving trade priorities of LDCs. A suggestion was made to focus on what works in the WTO, with the TBT Committee and LDC success stories featuring as examples. A suggestion was made to have a dedicated space for discussions on evolving trade and development issues. LDC priorities for MC14 included LDC graduation and future trade support through the EIF. China's zero-tariff treatment for LDCs and capacity-building support, as well as the United Kingdom's [Developing Countries Trading Scheme](#) and [Trade and Investment Advocacy Fund](#) initiative were highlighted.

[growth, opportunities for LDCs in a shifting trading landscape](#), and [expanding opportunities for LDCs in services trade](#). Experiences

shared in the Sub-Committee are also featured in the WTO's [LDC success stories blog and magazines](#).

Support to the LDC Group

LDCs represent an important constituency in the WTO, accounting for close to one-fifth of the organization's membership. To date, 37 LDCs are WTO members, while four LDCs are at various stages of the accession process. The LDC Group is active across several areas of the WTO's work, with a view to advancing their priorities in the multilateral trading system.

Under the WTO LDC Consultative Group, LDCs coordinate shared positions and promote their interest in the WTO's work. The Group is led by the LDC Coordinator, a role that typically rotates on a yearly basis among LDC delegations. The LDC Group also designates thematic focal points to follow different areas of WTO work and provide

regular updates to their constituencies. This approach has been instrumental in strengthening the participation of LDC delegations in the WTO and has contributed to the adoption of key decisions in favour of LDCs.

The WTO's Development Division also provides administrative support to the LDC Group, with a view to facilitating LDCs' participation in the multilateral trading system. LDCs also receive travel support to participate in WTO Ministerial Conferences, which are held every two years. Support is provided through a special trust fund, financed by contributions from members, and typically covers travel support for one minister and two high-level officials from each LDC.



Box 6: WTO-UNOHRLLS partnership on trade elements of the DPoA

The WTO and UNOHRLLS work closely to support LDCs in fully realizing their trade potential. At the MC12 in 2022, the two organizations signed a partnership agreement to support the implementation of the trade-related elements of the DPoA for LDCs. Since then, the WTO and UNOHRLLS have intensified their cooperation to support LDCs in realizing the trade objectives of the DPoA.

In preparation for the [Fifth UN Conference on LDCs \(LDC5\)](#) in 2023, the WTO and UNOHRLLS organized two regional consultations on the trade-related elements of the DPoA. These consultations brought together nearly 100 officials from LDCs in Africa and Asia to exchange views on their trade priorities. The outcomes of these consultations were presented at the conference and reflected in a dedicated [takeaway document](#). In addition, the partnership between these institutions has contributed to the development of five analytical notes aimed at supporting LDC policy makers in identifying emerging trade opportunities. Most recently in 2025, the WTO and UNOHRLLS organized a [workshop taking stock of the progress made by countries in the Asia-Pacific region in implementing the trade-related elements of the DPoA](#).

Source: WTO Secretariat.

Aid for Trade

The DPoA aims at doubling Aid for Trade to LDCs by 2031 from 2018 levels. Since 2018, over US\$ 354 billion has been disbursed in Aid for Trade, with the LDCs accounting for around 29 per cent of the total. LDCs remain the second largest recipient of Aid for Trade flows, with the lower middle-income countries accounting for the largest share. In 2024, Aid for Trade disbursements to LDCs reached US\$ 15.7 billion, growing by 4 per cent from 2023.

Between 2018 and 2024, Aid for Trade commitments to LDCs followed a declining trend. After reaching a peak of US\$ 22 billion in 2018, Aid for Trade commitments to LDCs fell by 5 per cent to US\$ 16 billion in 2024 (see Figure 7). The share of total Aid for Trade commitments to LDCs also contracted from 36 per cent in 2018 to 26 per cent in 2024.

Aid for Trade to LDCs remains concentrated among a limited number of recipients and development partners. Between 2018 and 2024, the top five recipients accounted for nearly 40 per cent of total Aid for Trade disbursements to LDCs (see Annex Table 4). Bangladesh was the top recipient (16 per cent), followed by Ethiopia (10 per cent), Tanzania (5 per cent), Mozambique (4.1 per cent) and Senegal (4 per cent).

The top five development partners provided 70 per cent of total support to LDCs. The World

Bank was the top provider (37 per cent), followed by Japan (15 per cent), the European Union (7 per cent), the United States (6 per cent) and the African Development Bank (5 per cent).

In terms of sectors, 98 per cent of Aid for Trade to LDCs goes towards strengthening infrastructure and building productive capacity (see Figure 8). Within the infrastructure support, around 28 per cent was allocated to energy generation and supply, followed by transport and storage (24 per cent). Within productive capacity, 24 per cent was allocated to agriculture, followed by banking and financial services (6 per cent). Support for trade policy and regulations accounted for only 2 per cent.

The Global Reviews of Aid for Trade provide an opportunity for the international community to monitor progress under the Aid for Trade initiative on a biennial basis. Since 2018, three Global Reviews of Aid for Trade have been conducted, covering topics ranging from connectivity and food security to diversification and sustainability. The 10th Global Review in 2026 marks the 20th anniversary of the Aid for Trade initiative, and focuses on the impact of trade-related development interventions, evolving needs, and the role of partnerships in helping developing countries realize their trade potential. It also places a particular spotlight on the evolving trade needs of LDCs.

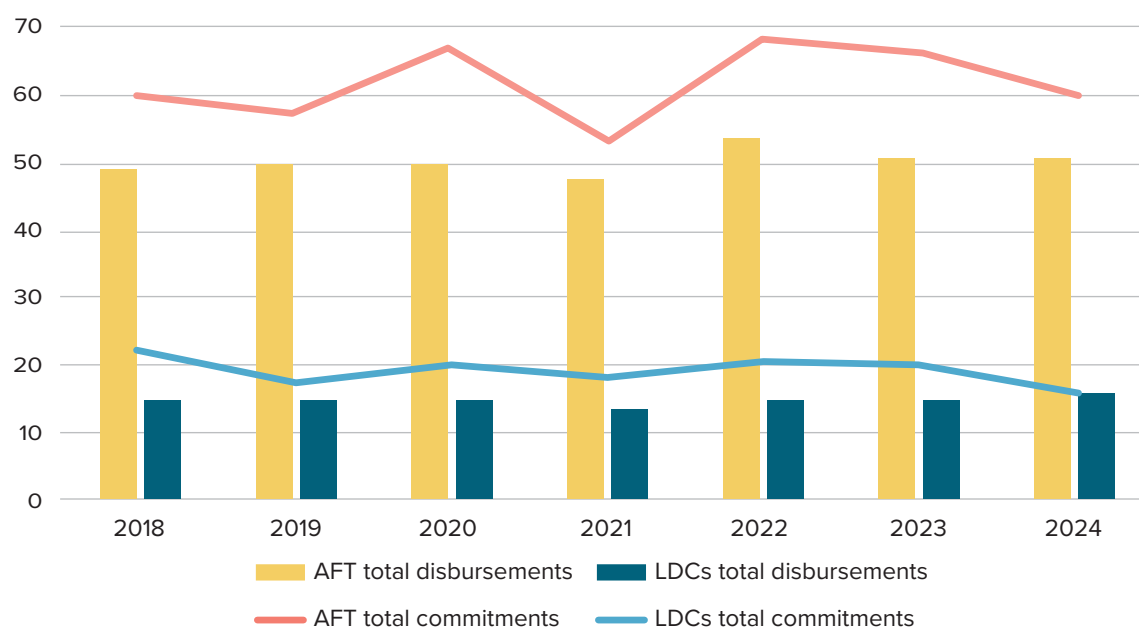
Enhanced Integrated Framework

The EIF is the only Aid for Trade partnership aimed at helping LDCs and recent LDC graduates become more active players in global trade. Between 2022 and 2026, the EIF invested over US\$ 78 million to bolster trade institutions, ensure cutting-edge, evidence-based analysis, and strengthen productive sectors with high export potential.

Since 2022, 10,000 LDC officials have benefited from trade-related training from the EIF. Over 50

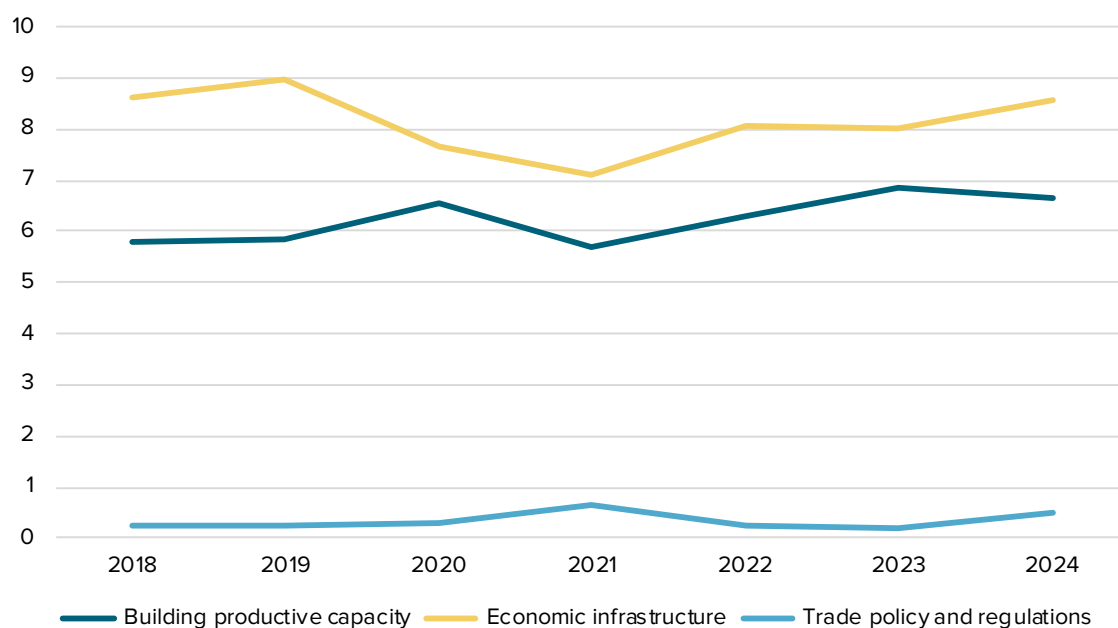
policies and regulations have been developed or updated with a view to improving the business environment. The EIF has supported 94 trade facilitation initiatives and 78 e-commerce initiatives. Examples of trade facilitation support range from the establishment of single windows in Lesotho and Vanuatu to national trade facilitation committees in Chad, Lao PDR, Niger and Rwanda. In the area of digital trade, the EIF has supported Cambodia, Nepal, Senegal and Tuvalu in the development of their national e-commerce strategies.

Figure 7. Aid for Trade flows, 2018–2024, constant prices
(US\$ billion)



Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System, 2026.

Figure 8. Aid for Trade disbursements to LDCs by sector, 2018–2024, constant prices
(US\$ billion)



Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System, 2026.

The EIF has also supported 150 regional integration initiatives across LDCs. For example, in Africa, 33 LDCs have benefited from EIF support for the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). EIF support has contributed to the

development of 14 national AfCFTA strategies and the establishment of national AfCFTA implementation committees in 22 LDCs. In Asia, the EIF has supported Bhutan's participation in regional trade summits with Bangladesh and Thailand, leading to the conclusion of a

preferential trade agreement with Thailand. It has also assisted Timor-Leste with its accession process to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. In the Pacific, the EIF has supported Kiribati and Tuvalu in their engagement in the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER) Plus.

The EIF has contributed to strengthening productive sectors in LDCs. These interventions have ranged from value chain development to support for MSMEs in the adoption of international standards. As a result, over 50,000 people, of whom 60 per cent are women, have enhanced their skills across the entire value chain spectrum – from production and processing to packaging and storage to logistics and export procedures. EIF interventions have contributed to generating over 40,000 jobs within supported MSMEs.

Comoros and Timor-Leste have benefited from EIF support to complete their WTO accession process as well as post-accession support.

Support is also being provided for the accession of Ethiopia.

The EIF is one of the first mechanisms to have supported LDCs for up to five years following their graduation. Since 2022, the EIF has been supporting Bhutan (2023), Sao Tomé and Príncipe (2024) and Vanuatu (2020). Several additional countries are scheduled to graduate from LDC status between 2026 and 2031, and the EIF will continue to support them for up to five years after graduation.

Following the completion of the first two phases of the EIF, EIF Phase 3 was launched on the eve of MC14. EIF Phase 3 is expected to run until 2031. This phase introduces a strengthened results framework, a revamped resource mobilization strategy and greater flexibility for LDCs in accessing support. In July 2026, members welcomed the launch of the third phase of the EIF and confirmed that its implementation will not involve any cost to the regular budget of the WTO.⁴⁵

Standards and Trade Development Facility

The [STDF](#) contributed to the implementation of the trade-related priorities of the DPoA for LDCs over the period 2022–2025 through targeted support to strengthen sanitary and phytosanitary capacity and facilitate safe trade. Over this period, more than half of STDF grant resources were allocated to LDC-focused projects and project preparation grants, exceeding the STDF's 40 per cent target.⁴⁶ By enabling LDCs to meet international food safety, animal and plant health standards, the STDF supports their integration into regional and global markets. In doing so, it contributes directly to DPoA priorities related to enhancing productive capacity, improving market access and trade performance, and strengthening resilience.

Selected examples illustrating results achieved between 2022 and 2025 include the following. In food safety, [support to the smoked fish value](#)

[chain in Mali](#) led to significant improvements in product quality and compliance with international standards, contributing to an increase in exports from 1,030 tonnes in 2020 to 1,504 tonnes in 2022, while the use of improved processing techniques enabled producers, many of them women, to access higher-value markets and obtain better prices. In plant health, [efforts in Mozambique to establish pest-free areas and areas of low pest prevalence for fruit flies](#) strengthened phytosanitary systems in line with international standards, supported by enhanced surveillance, diagnostics and data management systems, helping to protect production and facilitate market access for fruit exports. In animal health, [support to control African Swine Fever in LDCs such as Cambodia and Lao PDR](#), through a regional initiative in Southeast Asia, strengthened veterinary services, biosecurity practices and disease surveillance capacities, contributing to

safer trade in livestock and animal products. Across these areas, STDF interventions reinforced SPS regulatory frameworks, inspection and certification systems, and reduced compliance constraints, while supporting small-scale producers and MSMEs to participate more effectively in domestic, regional and international trade.

The STDF's contribution also reflects key cross-cutting themes embedded across the DPoA, including digitalization and technology, environmental sustainability, climate resilience and inclusive development. As set out in the [STDF Strategy 2025–2030](#), the STDF advances these priorities across its core workstreams, namely its global platform, knowledge work and grant mechanism. For instance, efforts to strengthen SPS capacity in LDCs have increasingly focused on making systems more inclusive, including through the implementation of the [STDF Gender Action Plan](#), which promotes equitable access to training, resources and decision-making processes. Digital and innovative tools, such as [e-certification](#) and [remote audit](#), have also been introduced to improve transparency, efficiency and compliance in trade processes in LDC contexts (such as Cambodia). Greater attention to environmental sustainability and

climate resilience has supported improved pest and disease management, reduced use of harmful inputs and enhanced links between SPS systems and environmental protection, contributing to more sustainable and resilient agri-food systems in LDCs.⁴⁷ In this context, an [Environment Mainstreaming Action Plan](#), finalized in 2025, will enable environmental dimensions to be further integrated across STDF activities.

These efforts are further supported by the STDF's knowledge work, which focuses on identifying and promoting good practices, innovative approaches and evidence-based tools, including on digitalization, public-private partnerships and climate-resilient SPS systems, to inform policy and investment decisions and facilitate the scaling of effective solutions across LDCs. Additionally, through its global platform, the STDF convenes and connects diverse stakeholders across trade, agriculture, health and development to build dialogue, share knowledge and promote coordinated action on SPS capacity development. This multi-stakeholder partnership fosters synergies, coherence and collaboration at global, regional and national levels, helping to scale up effective solutions and strengthen safe trade outcomes in LDCs.



4. LDC graduation

LDC graduation is an overarching objective of the DPoA. Fourteen LDCs are currently at different stages of the graduation process. They include 12 WTO members: Bangladesh, Cambodia, Comoros, Djibouti, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Nepal, Rwanda, Senegal, Solomon Islands, Tanzania and Uganda. The other two LDCs on the path to graduation are Kiribati and Tuvalu. The DPoA for LDCs (2022–2031) calls for the enablement of an additional 15 LDCs to meet the graduation criteria by 2031.

Since the adoption of the DPoA, Bhutan and Sao Tomé and Príncipe graduated from LDC status in 2023 and 2024. Lao PDR is expected to graduate from the LDC category in November 2026.

LDC graduation remains a key priority of the LDC Group in the WTO. In response to a request from the LDC Group, WTO members adopted two LDC graduation decisions to support the smooth transition of graduating LDCs. First, in 2023, they encouraged preference-granting members to consider a smooth and sustainable transition period before withdrawing duty-free market access after graduation. Second at MC13, they agreed to provide a three-year transition

period for LDC graduates to integrate WTO rules and to continue to benefit from LDC-specific technical assistance. In addition, they instructed the Sub-Committee on LDCs to examine the remaining elements of the LDC proposal with a view to making recommendations, if any, by December 2024. This timeline was extended until July 2025.

Two rounds of technical examinations were held in the Sub-Committee. In June 2025, LDCs tabled a revised proposal which focused on i) subsidies; ii) trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights (TRIPS); and iii) agriculture, and called for a six-year transition period.⁴⁸ Despite

members' active engagement on this proposal, the Sub-Committee was unable to agree on recommendations in time for the General Council in July 2025.⁴⁹ Since then, the LDC graduation proposal was taken up in the General Council.

LDC graduation was one of the key priorities for the LDC Group at MC14. Ahead of MC14, the LDC Group tabled a specific package, including on LDC graduation, for the Ministerial Conference. The main elements included a three-year extension of LDC-specific special and differential treatment provisions in the following three areas: subsidies, TRIPS and agriculture.⁵⁰

At the request of the LDC Group, the WTO Secretariat assessed the impacts of LDC graduation with support from the EIF. The [2020 Trade impacts of LDC graduation report](#) offers an evidence-based assessment of the trade-related impacts of graduation from LDC status. The report finds that in the area of market access the impact would vary across different LDCs depending on several factors, including their export basket and use of preferences offered. Exporters of [textiles and clothing from Asian graduating LDCs](#), including Bangladesh and Cambodia, have been among the most frequent users of LDC trade preferences.

Several LDC trading partners, including China, the European Union, Japan, Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation, Türkiye and the United Kingdom, have offered a transition period for LDC graduates.⁵¹

The report also finds that LDC graduation will require greater alignment with WTO rules. It points to the top three areas that require monitoring, notably LDC-specific flexibilities in the TRIPS Agreement, the use of non-agricultural export subsidies and, to a lesser extent, agriculture. The report highlights that impact will depend on the development and economic policies of each graduating LDC. In addition, the WTO has a range of technical assistance programmes to support members' compliance with WTO rules, including by strengthening institutional capacity to meet enhanced notification or transparency obligations.

In addition, in partnership with the EIF and UNOHRLLS, the WTO Secretariat has organized several capacity-building events and workshops with a view to supporting policy makers in graduating LDCs to assess possible trade impacts resulting from graduation from LDC status. A special edition of the LDC success stories magazine focusing on LDC graduation has also been published.



5. Conclusions

Since the adoption of the DPoA (2022–2031), LDC graduation and trade support through the EIF have featured among the top trade priorities of the LDC Group. In addition, implementation of past LDC-specific decisions and LDC-specific provisions have also been referenced among LDC priorities.

WTO members have taken steps to respond to LDCs' trade priorities. They have adopted two LDC graduation decisions and extended the EIF into its third phase. They have also taken steps to implement past decisions. For example, several preference-granting members, including China, the European Union, Japan, Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation, Türkiye and the United Kingdom, have been providing a smooth and sustainable transition period for LDC graduates.

At the same time, LDCs' share in world trade remains at around 1 per cent, and their share in global services trade remains at around 0.5 per cent. With one-third of LDCs now in various stages of the graduation process, achieving

the DPoA target of doubling the share of LDC exports in global trade will be difficult.

The upcoming Mid-Term Review of the DPoA offers an opportunity for the international community to consider what more can be done to support greater integration of LDCs into global trade. Over the past 20 years, LDCs have relied on preferential market access and policy flexibilities in WTO rules. At the same time, evidence suggests that use of these tools varies from one LDC to another.

LDCs have also been given special consideration in negotiations on agriculture and fisheries subsidies. The Fish Fund has been

established to support developing economies, including LDCs, in implementing the disciplines of the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies. The work of the STDF has been supporting developing economies, including LDCs, to meet evolving SPS standards, thereby allowing them to protect health while accessing regional and global markets.

The global trade landscape has been evolving fast, bringing new challenges and opportunities to all economies, including LDCs. Large groups of WTO members have been exploring new opportunities for cooperation. The conclusion of the ECA and IFD Agreement confirms that. While many LDCs have been participating in the IFD Agreement, only a handful of LDCs have joined the ECA.

The declining development assistance brings to the fore the role of institutional strengthening for ensuring an enabling environment for trade and investment. The launch of the third phase of the EIF and its new country programming model allows individual LDCs to identify their particular trade challenges and seek targeted solutions. The WTO's demand-driven technical assistance is also available to support LDCs' integration of WTO rules.

The Mid-Term Review is a pivotal moment to take stock of the most pressing trade challenges facing LDCs, to examine the effectiveness of international support measures and to explore how to further support LDCs' efforts towards strengthening their trade performance, graduating from LDC status and fully realizing their trade potential.



Annexes

Annex Table 1: Merchandise export values, export growth and trade balance

COUNTRY	EXPORTS (US\$ MILLION)			GROWTH PER ANNUM (%)			TRADE BALANCE (US\$ MILLION)		EXPORTS - IMPORTS RATIO
	2020	2022	2025	2020-22	2025	2020-25	2020	2025	2025
World	17,647,761	24,915,152	26,257,217	18.8%	5.4%	8.3%	-226,311	-350,339	98.7
LDCs	186,301	265,385	308,934	19.4%	16.4%	10.6%	-61,272	-65,950	82.4
Afghanistan	777	615	926	-11.0%	50.6%	3.6%	-5,761	-2,680	25.7
Angola	22,135	51,275	32,492	52.2%	-36.6%	8.0%	12,797	17,527	217.1
Bangladesh	33,605	51,405	48,167	23.7%	-6.3%	7.5%	-19,199	-21,206	69.4
Benin	2,996	3,719	3,988	11.4%	7.2%	5.9%	-559	-963	80.5
Burkina Faso	4,372	4,518	11,076	1.7%	145.2%	20.4%	246	3,504	146.3
Burundi	162	207	332	13.0%	60.4%	15.4%	-747	-856	27.9
Cambodia	17,716	22,472	31,274	12.6%	39.2%	12.0%	-1,398	-2,611	92.3
Central African Republic	134	164	255	10.6%	55.5%	13.7%	-372	-318	44.5
Chad	1,808	4,422	4,000	56.4%	-9.5%	17.2%	222	1,800	181.8
Comoros	21	54	48	60.4%	-11.1%	18.0%	-259	-323	12.9
Democratic Republic of the Congo	14,230	15,672	32,100	4.9%	104.8%	17.7%	7,292	4,000	114.2
Djibouti	2,785	4,608	6,090	28.6%	32.2%	16.9%	-126	-174	97.2

COUNTRY	EXPORTS (US\$ MILLION)			GROWTH PER ANNUM (%)			TRADE BALANCE (US\$ MILLION)		EXPORTS - IMPORTS RATIO
	2020	2022	2025	2020-22	2025	2020-25	2020	2025	2025
Eritrea	583	598	631	1.3%	5.5%	1.6%	234	107	120.4
Ethiopia	3,258	3,970	7,585	10.4%	91.1%	18.4%	-9,857	-15,427	33.0
Guinea	8,931	8,753	15,104	-1.0%	72.6%	11.1%	5,204	6,760	181.0
Guinea-Bissau	214	245	313	7.0%	27.8%	7.9%	-147	-176	64.0
Haiti	885	1,254	554	19.0%	-55.8%	-8.9%	-3,049	-4,074	12.0
Kiribati	9	9	20	0.0%	122.2%	17.3%	-124	-476	4.0
Lao People's Democratic Republic	6,115	8,198	12,377	15.8%	51.0%	15.1%	745	2,035	119.7
Lesotho	845	894	773	2.9%	-13.5%	-1.8%	-535	-1,102	41.2
Liberia	608	1,027	2,068	30.0%	101.4%	27.7%	-494	-426	82.9
Madagascar	2,026	3,609	2,498	33.5%	-30.8%	4.3%	-1,195	-2,742	47.7
Malawi	771	900	947	8.0%	5.2%	4.2%	-1,907	-2,714	25.9
Mali	4,794	5,376	4,855	5.9%	-9.7%	0.3%	-313	-2,122	69.6
Mauritania	2,829	3,778	4,510	15.6%	19.4%	9.8%	85	-1,175	79.3
Mozambique	3,720	8,299	8,100	49.4%	-2.4%	16.8%	-2,794	-1,110	87.9
Myanmar	16,692	17,085	15,298	1.2%	-10.5%	-1.7%	-1,255	967	106.7
Nepal	856	1,296	2,311	23.0%	78.3%	22.0%	-9,000	-12,086	16.1
Niger	1,116	1,046	1,900	-3.2%	81.6%	11.2%	-1,993	-800	70.4
Rwanda	1,408	2,111	2,450	22.4%	16.1%	11.7%	-1,965	-2,620	48.3
Senegal	3,929	5,710	10,243	20.6%	79.4%	21.1%	-3,883	-1,704	85.7
Sierra Leone	423	1,059	1,534	58.2%	44.9%	29.4%	-1,723	-359	81.0
Solomon Islands	379	340	677	-5.3%	99.1%	12.3%	-74	-113	85.7
Somalia	513	733	1,300	19.5%	77.4%	20.4%	-2,992	-2,630	33.1
South Sudan	783	907	955	7.6%	5.3%	4.1%	-200	-316	75.1
Sudan	3,803	4,357	2,800	7.0%	-35.7%	-5.9%	-6,035	-3,400	45.2
Tanzania	6,061	6,825	9,956	6.1%	45.9%	10.4%	-2,378	-4,854	67.2
The Gambia	61	52	514	-7.7%	888.5%	53.2%	-618	-380	57.5
Timor-Leste	264	472	103	33.7%	-78.2%	-17.2%	-361	-876	10.5
Togo	1,207	1,442	1,800	9.3%	24.8%	8.3%	-1,053	-1,600	52.9
Tuvalu	0	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	-34	-27	0.0
Uganda	4,149	3,577	12,500	-7.1%	249.5%	24.7%	-4,102	-5,900	67.9
Yemen	404	689	196	30.6%	-71.6%	-13.5%	-4,233	-4,453	4.2
Zambia	7,924	11,643	13,314	21.2%	14.4%	10.9%	2,638	143	101.1

Source: WTO-UNCTAD.

Annex Table 2: Commercial services exports and share in goods and services exports

COUNTRY	EXPORTS (US\$ MILLION)			GROWTH PER ANNUM (%)			SHARE IN GOODS AND SERVICES EXPORTS (%)	
	2020	2022	2025	2020-22	2025	2020-25	2020	2025
World	5,256,538	7,392,869	9,593,833	18.6%	29.8%	12.8%	22.9%	26.8%
LDCs	27,209	38,715	53,057	19.3%	37.0%	14.3%	12.7%	14.7%
Afghanistan	597	384	578	-19.8%	50.5%	-0.6%	43.5%	38.4%
Angola	67	82	116	10.6%	41.5%	11.6%	0.3%	0.4%
Bangladesh	3,079	5,659	6,965	35.6%	23.1%	17.7%	8.4%	12.6%
Benin	426	454	443	3.2%	-2.4%	0.8%	12.5%	10.0%
Burkina Faso	450	433	580	-1.9%	33.9%	5.2%	9.3%	5.0%
Burundi	31	48	77	24.4%	60.4%	20.0%	16.1%	18.8%
Cambodia	1,637	2,246	5,164	17.1%	129.9%	25.8%	8.5%	14.2%
Central African Republic	38	43	-	6.4%	-	-	22.1%	58.1%
Chad	188	112	139	-22.8%	24.1%	-5.9%	9.4%	3.4%
Comoros	42	105	125	58.1%	19.0%	24.4%	66.7%	72.3%
Democratic Republic of the Congo	115	55	529	-30.8%	861.8%	35.7%	0.8%	1.6%
Djibouti	626	753	901	9.7%	19.7%	7.6%	18.4%	12.9%
Eritrea	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ethiopia	4,318	6,821	7,755	25.7%	13.7%	12.4%	57.0%	50.5%
The Gambia	106	216	479	42.7%	121.8%	35.2%	63.5%	48.2%
Guinea	65	137	41	45.2%	-70.1%	-8.8%	0.7%	0.3%
Guinea-Bissau	18	35	55	39.4%	57.1%	25.0%	7.8%	14.9%
Haiti	125	92	61	-14.2%	-33.7%	-13.4%	12.4%	9.9%
Kiribati	1	5	6	123.6%	20.0%	43.1%	10.0%	23.1%
Lao People's Democratic Republic	346	406	1,710	8.3%	321.2%	37.7%	5.4%	12.1%
Lesotho	11	15	14	16.8%	-6.7%	4.9%	1.3%	1.8%
Liberia	9	7	18	-11.8%	157.1%	14.9%	1.5%	0.9%
Madagascar	611	1,119	1,797	35.3%	60.6%	24.1%	23.2%	41.8%
Malawi	377	326	418	-7.0%	28.2%	2.1%	32.8%	30.6%
Mali	311	384	468	11.1%	21.9%	8.5%	6.1%	8.8%
Mauritania	112	201	156	34.0%	-22.4%	6.9%	3.8%	3.3%
Mozambique	781	1,128	1,232	20.2%	9.2%	9.5%	17.4%	13.2%
Myanmar	4,091	2,291	1,295	-25.2%	-43.5%	-20.6%	19.7%	7.8%
Nepal	807	1,170	1,576	20.4%	34.7%	14.3%	48.5%	40.5%
Niger	203	303	249	22.2%	-17.8%	4.2%	15.4%	11.6%
Rwanda	277	687	941	57.5%	37.0%	27.7%	16.4%	27.8%
Senegal	677	1,220	1,562	34.2%	28.0%	18.2%	14.7%	13.2%
Sierra Leone	53	23	55	-34.1%	139.1%	0.7%	11.1%	3.5%
Solomon Islands	43	61	148	19.1%	142.6%	28.0%	10.2%	17.9%
Somalia	417	766	-	35.5%	-	-	44.8%	25.1%
South Sudan	149	678	183	113.3%	-73.0%	4.2%	16.0%	16.1%
Sudan	1,257	1,522	914	10.0%	-39.9%	-6.2%	24.8%	24.6%
Tanzania	2,180	4,748	7,274	47.6%	53.2%	27.3%	26.5%	42.2%

COUNTRY	EXPORTS (US\$ MILLION)			GROWTH PER ANNUM (%)			SHARE IN GOODS AND SERVICES EXPORTS (%)	
	2020	2022	2025	2020-22	2025	2020-25	2020	2025
Timor-Leste	27	48	133	33.3%	177.1%	37.6%	9.3%	56.4%
Togo	479	668	844	18.1%	26.3%	12.0%	28.4%	31.9%
Tuvalu	3	2	12	-18.4%	500.0%	32.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Uganda	1,021	1,623	2,486	26.1%	53.2%	19.5%	19.8%	16.6%
Yemen	224	-	-	-	-	-	35.7%	-
Zambia	556	939	1,388	30.0%	47.8%	20.1%	0.1%	0.1%

Source: WTO-UNCTAD.

Annex Table 3. List of LDCs

LDC	REGION	WTO STATUS	GRADUATING LDC
Afghanistan	Asia	Member	
Angola	Africa	Member	
Bangladesh	Asia	Member	Yes
Benin	Africa	Member	
Burkina Faso	Africa	Member	
Burundi	Africa	Member	
Cambodia	Asia	Member	Yes
Central African Republic	Africa	Member	
Chad	Africa	Member	
Comoros	Africa	Member	Yes
D.R. of the Congo	Africa	Member	
Djibouti	Africa	Member	Yes
Guinea	Africa	Member	
Guinea-Bissau	Africa	Member	
Haiti	Caribbean	Member	
Lao PDR	Asia	Member	Yes
Lesotho	Africa	Member	
Liberia, Republic of	Africa	Member	
Madagascar	Africa	Member	
Malawi	Africa	Member	
Mali	Africa	Member	
Mauritania	Africa	Member	
Mozambique	Africa	Member	
Myanmar	Asia	Member	Yes
Nepal	Asia Pacific	Member	Yes
Niger	Africa	Member	
Rwanda	Africa	Member	Yes
Senegal	Africa	Member	Yes
Sierra Leone	Africa	Member	
Solomon Islands	Pacific	Member	Yes
Tanzania	Africa	Member	Yes
The Gambia	Africa	Member	
Timor-Leste	Asia Pacific	Member	Yes
Togo	Africa	Member	
Uganda	Africa	Member	Yes
Yemen	Africa	Member	
Zambia	Africa	Member	
Ethiopia	Africa	Observer	
Somalia	Africa	Observer	
South Sudan	Africa	Observer	
Sudan	Africa	Observer	
Eritrea	Africa	No status	
Kiribati	Pacific	No status	Yes
Tuvalu	Pacific	No status	Yes

44 LDCs: 14 graduating LDCs (12 members, two with no status)

Source: UN and WTO.

Annex Table 4. Aid for Trade disbursements to LDCs - 2018–2024

(US\$ million)

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	TOTAL
LDCs, total	14,681.90	15,036.90	14,527.40	13,443.00	14,597.10	15,076.30	15,734.20	103,096.80
Afghanistan	807.4	885.2	848.5	467.6	386.3	371.7	174	3,940.70
Angola	43.7	32.9	20.9	26.4	22.9	19	66.2	232
Bangladesh	2,032.40	1,863.90	2,215.50	2,124.40	3,003.80	2,698.20	2,654.90	16,593.10
Benin	183.4	247.5	389.2	387.4	312.6	297.1	238.7	2,056.10
Burkina Faso	394.8	281	370.3	421.9	405.2	412	494.9	2,780.10
Burundi	115.3	215.9	135.7	134	190.2	182.1	186.9	1,160.10
Cambodia	330.3	387.6	400.5	405.6	662.9	704.8	683.4	3,575.10
Central African Republic	80.5	66	64.5	42	71.4	66.9	78.3	469.6
Chad	95	61.8	169.3	61.7	59.3	115.2	166.1	728.4
Comoros	43.5	40.1	33.8	33.8	51.1	55.8	56.1	314.3
Democratic Republic of the Congo	496	360.7	270.3	330.2	364.9	680	450.5	2,952.50
Djibouti	53.7	100.8	42	60	45.7	60.7	51.8	414.7
Eritrea	15.2	20	13.4	4.1	11	16.7	21.5	101.9
Ethiopia	1,892.30	1,505.10	1,779.70	793.3	957.4	1,067.30	2,100.20	10,095.30
The Gambia	103.9	110.5	84.8	64.9	115.9	136.9	130.9	747.8
Guinea	172.2	224.8	150.3	228.3	215.1	196.4	249.4	1,436.40
Guinea-Bissau	70.7	32.8	46.5	58.4	49.9	57.5	45.8	361.6
Haiti	251.5	177.7	126.5	234	166.4	163.2	170.8	1,290.20
Kiribati	34.7	23.6	9.9	14.1	35.1	34.9	23.2	175.7
Lao People's Democratic Republic	243.2	191.5	197.4	180	234.5	155	168.5	1,370.00
Lesotho	19.5	29.1	17.8	26.3	21.5	31.5	40.4	186.1
Liberia	236.6	294	236.9	215.4	177.6	160.4	162.1	1,482.90
Madagascar	224.5	291	273.5	282.8	398.8	550.7	549.6	2,570.90
Malawi	455.5	248.8	186.7	258.4	272	493.2	423.1	2,337.60
Mali	395.1	450.3	297.2	301.8	248.9	261.2	282.9	2,237.40
Mauritania	246.1	273.6	214.6	169.3	137.6	159.4	179.4	1,380.00
Mozambique	506.7	466.2	495.5	558.9	662	917	642.2	4,248.60
Myanmar	638.4	775.2	918.7	416.3	338.3	445	369.1	3,901.00
Nepal	497	510.4	516	542.7	519.2	471.4	646.9	3,703.50
Niger	387.2	413	422.2	483.1	682.7	326.9	318.2	3,033.40
Rwanda	549	571.3	507.6	353.6	284.9	434.4	469.9	3,170.70
Senegal	368.7	885.1	606	595.1	573.8	564.4	548.3	4,141.40
Sierra Leone	160.2	233.7	239.7	220.9	145.7	148.8	147.4	1,296.40
Solomon Islands	74.2	106.9	50.4	62.2	80.2	99.2	104.8	577.9
Somalia	79.6	156.2	484.1	100.1	188.5	205.6	217.2	1,431.30
South Sudan	88.6	128.2	93.4	68.5	111.2	125	106.6	721.5
Sudan	36.6	124.3	61.2	822.2	25.6	75	84	1,228.90
Tanzania	924.4	699.5	435.7	465.5	868.1	908.2	813.9	5,115.30
Timor-Leste	59.2	77.1	66.2	49.3	61.7	50.1	46.3	409.9
Togo	94.5	161.8	129.4	124.6	138.5	160.6	169.7	979.2

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	TOTAL
Tuvalu	6.1	11.5	11.9	13.6	15.3	13.9	37.4	109.6
Uganda	458.1	474.7	541.9	454.6	491.7	472.3	628.7	3,522.10
Yemen	498.2	547.2	153.6	576.6	324	207.9	199.5	2,507.20
Zambia	218	278.4	198.2	209.2	467.5	302.8	334.6	2,008.70

Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System, 2026.

Abbreviations

CRO	Committee on Rules of Origin
DFQF	Duty-free and quota-free
DPoA	Doha Programme of Action
ECA	Agreement on Electronic Commerce
EIF	Enhanced Integrated Framework
GATS	General Agreement on Trade in Services
ICT	information communication technology
IFD Agreement	Investment Facilitation for Development Agreement
JIs	joint initiatives
LDC	least developed country
MSME	micro, small and medium-sized enterprise
S&DT	special and differential treatment
STDF	Standards and Trade Development Facility
SPS	sanitary and phytosanitary
TBT	technical barriers to trade
TFA	Trade Facilitation Agreement
TRIPS Agreement	Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights
UN	United Nations
UNCTAD	United Nations Trade and Development
UNOHRLLS	United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States

Endnotes

- 1 WTO official document: WT/MIN(26)/12
- 2 WTO official document: WT/MIN(26)/12
- 3 International Monetary Fund (IMF) (2013), Balance of Payments and International Investment Position Manual, sixth edition (BOP/BPM6), Washington, D.C.: IMF.
- 4 WTO official documents: WT/MIN(13)/44 and WT/L/919
- 5 WTO official document: WT/COMTD/N/15/Add.4
- 6 WTO official document: WT/COMTD/N/39/Add.3
- 7 WTO official document: WT/L/1172
- 8 WTO official documents: WT/COMTD/N/2/Add.20, WT/COMTD/PTA3/N/1/Add.2 and WT/COMTD/PTA1/N/1/Add.2
- 9 WTO official documents: WT/MIN(05)/DEC; WT/MIN(13)/42, WT/L/917; and WT/MIN(15)/47, WT/L/917/Add.1
- 10 Notifications and information about applicable rules of origin and preferential origin requirements can be accessed through the [Rules of Origin Facilitator](#) website.
- 11 WTO official document: G/RO/95
- 12 WTO official documents: G/RO/W/236 and G/RO/W/240
- 13 WTO official documents: G/RO/99, G/RO/102 and G/RO/106
- 14 Two dedicated information sessions in the CRO explored the linkages of rules of origin and utilization of trade preferences: on 19 May 2021, [What drives the utilization of trade preferences?](#); and on 7 April 2022, [What drives the utilization of trade preferences?](#)
- 15 WTO official document: WT/L/847
- 16 WTO official document: WT/MIN(13)/43, WT/L/918
- 17 WTO official document: S/C/W/356 and Corrigendum
- 18 WTO official document: WT/MIN(15)/48, WT/L/982
- 19 The dedicated website of the workshop can be accessed [here](#), while the dedicated website of the webinar can be accessed [here](#).
- 20 WTO official document: S/C/W/478
- 21 WTO official document: IP/C/88
- 22 WTO official document: IP/C/73
- 23 WTO official document: IP/N/9/RWA/1
- 24 The [e-TRIPS Gateway](#) provides a catalogue of the reports submitted by developed members.
- 25 Bangladesh, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Madagascar, Malawi and Rwanda
- 26 [Grants Tracker | TFAF](#)
- 27 WTO official documents: G/TFA/TFAF/15 and G/TFA/TFAF/12
- 28 WTO official documents: WT/L/508 and WT/L/508/Add.1
- 29 Cambodia (2004), Nepal (2004), Cabo Verde (2008), Samoa (2012), Vanuatu (2012), Lao PDR (2013), Yemen (2014), Afghanistan (2016), Liberia (2016), Comoros (2024) and Timor-Leste (2024)
- 30 WTO official documents: WT/GC/W/980 and WT/GC/W/979/Rev.1
- 31 WTO official document: WT/MIN(22)/29
- 32 WTO official document: WT/MIN(22)/28
- 33 WTO official document: RD/TN/RL/195, RD/TN/RL/195/Rev.1
- 34 WTO official document: WT/MIN(26)/38
- 35 WTO official document: WT/MIN(26)/W/13/Rev.1
- 36 WTO official document: WT/MIN(26)/W/4/Rev.1
- 37 WTO official document: WT/L/1245
- 38 WTO official document: WT/MIN(26)/12
- 39 WTO official document: WT/MIN(26)/W/15/Rev.1
- 40 WTO official documents: WT/GC/W/223, WT/GC/W/223/Rev.1 and WT/GC/W/991/Rev.1

41 WTO official document: WT/GC/W/991/Rev.1

42 WTO official document: WT/MIN(26)/W/26

43 WTO official document: WT/MIN(26)/32

44 WTO official document: WT/COMTD/W/299

45 WTO official document: WT/L/1246

46 Over 2022–2025, the share of STDF resources allocated to new projects and project preparation grants benefiting LDCs was 53% (2022), 55% (2023), 63% (2024) and 64% (2025), consistently exceeding the STDF target of 40%.

47 For further information on the STDF's work on environmental sustainability, biodiversity and climate resilience, see the [External Learning Assessment on Environment, Biodiversity and Climate Change \(2024\)](#).

48 WTO official document: JOB/COMTD/LDC/7

49 WTO official document: WT/COMTD/LDC/32

50 WTO official document: WT/MIN(26)/W/7

51 WTO official documents: WT/COMTD/LDC/W/74



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