

Conference on Trade in Services for Development in Asia and the Pacific

ADB Headquarters, Manila (Philippines), 28-29 September 2026

The role of services in world trade and global value chains (GVCs) has expanded rapidly over the past two decades. Commercial services have been the most dynamic segment of global trade, expanding at a faster pace than merchandise trade as a result of digitalization.

Asia and the Pacific have been at the forefront of this trend. While services bring significant opportunities, many economies in Asia are still to tap the full development potential associated with services trade, including its contribution to diversification, digital connectivity, inclusiveness, and MSME internationalization. The Trade in Services for Development (TS4D) Initiative, launched in September 2024 by the World Trade Organization and the World Bank, offers a platform for knowledge, technical assistance and capacity building to help economies better leverage trade in services for development.

This regional conference, bringing together government officials, representatives of international organizations, the private sector, and other stakeholders, aims to bring the TS4D initiative to the Asia Pacific region. It will provide a space to discuss the role of services trade in inclusive development, exchange views on the use of the analytical tools developed under the TS4D initiative and engage in discussions with selected Asian economies on their strategies for the modernization of the services sector.

PROGRAM

Monday 28 September 2026	
09:00 – 10:00	Session I. High Level Opening Session Keynote speaker: H.E. Arsenio Balisacan, Secretary of the Department of Economy, Planning and Development, Philippines
10:20 – 11:30	Session II. Building Competitive Services Sectors What evidence, institutions and policy reforms are needed to turn services potential into tangible outcomes? This session will bring together policymakers, international organizations and private-sector representatives to discuss practical pathways for strengthening services competitiveness. Using examples drawn from country experiences and new analytical tools, including the WTO–World Bank Services Trade Competitiveness Diagnostic Dashboard, the discussion will examine how developing countries can identify reform priorities, attract investment and expand services exports.
11:30 – 12:30	Session III. Trade Restrictions in Services Trade: Scenarios for Asia and the Pacific This session will discuss the role of regulatory practices pertinent to services trade, assessing Asia's progress on services liberalization, as well as transparency and predictability of policies. The session will feature findings from the World Bank-WTO Services Trade Policy Database (STPD) and its accompanying Services Trade Restrictions Index (STRI). It will also discuss how these tools can support services trade discussions and policy reform.

14:00 – 15:15	Session IV. Best Practices in the Export Promotion of Services in Asia and the Pacific This session will explore successful practices and lessons on export promotion strategies for services trade in the region. On the basis of case studies from developing member economies, panelists will discuss how export promotion strategies for services differ from goods and explore how such initiatives can support internationalization and regional strategies, and how they can be adapted to different national contexts.
15:30 – 16:45	Session V. Good Regulatory Practices in Asia-Pacific This session will discuss the role of Good Regulatory Practices (GRPs) in services trade, and their potential to lower compliance costs, reduce uncertainty, and support market entry and contestability. This session will explore how the new WB-WTO Diagnostic & Reform Planning Tool can help developing countries to benchmark domestic regulatory frameworks against GRPs and identify reform priorities.

Tuesday | 29 September 2026

09:00 – 10:15	Session VI. Unlocking Digital Services as an Engine for Growth in Asia-Pacific This session will present recent trends in digital services trade in the region. It will take stock of successful policies that have boosted digital services trade, and the barriers and challenges that limit its expansion.
10:30 – 11:30	Session VII. Tapping the Potential of MSMEs for Services Trade and Inclusiveness This session will underscore the vital role that MSMEs play in the services industry. The presenter shall discuss recent trends in the contribution of MSMEs for developing economies in Asia, and explore policies that support MSME contribution such as trade finance and trade facilitation measures.
11:30 – 12:30	Session VIII: Advancing Services Trade Integration in Regional Development Agendas This session will discuss key challenges, priorities and needs in the further integration of services trade in regional and subregional growth and development strategies, including in the context of regional trade agreements and initiatives (e.g., RCEP, ASEAN Digital Economy Framework Agreement). The session will explore how different workstreams under the TS4D initiative can support national and regional efforts.
12:30 – 13:00	Closing

For further information on the programme and registration, please visit the ADB webpage <https://adb.eventsair.com/ts4d/> or scan the QR code

