ICC Bangladesh

NEWS BULLETIN

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Circular Economy: The Pathway to a Greener Tomorrow

About ICC Bangladesh

International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), The world business organization, founded in 1919 in the aftermath of the First World War when no world system of rules governed trade, investment, finance or commercial relations. ICC has its physical presence in more than 170 countries representing 45 million companies and more than 1 billion workers worldwide. Globally, one in every three worker depends on ICC Members for their livelihood. ICC's founders, referred to as "The Merchants of Peace", acted on their conviction that building stronger trade relations between nations would reduce the risk of war and armed conflict.

ICC works in close cooperation with national governments and multi-national institutions such as G-8/G-20, World Bank, WTO, Asian Development Bank, UNCTAD, OECD and several UN agencies for promotion, protection and development of world economy. ICC, is the only private sector non-sovereign organization, which was granted Status of a Permanent Observer at the General Assembly of the United Nations in December 2016.

Bangladesh National Committee of ICC, founded in 1994, is comprised of trade organizations, national and trans-national corporations, who represent almost 80% Bangladesh economy. The activities of ICC Bangladesh include promotion of foreign trade and investment, trade policy reviews, dialogues, seminars & workshops both at home and abroad on related policy issues, harmonization of trade law & rules, legal reforms, updating ICC rules & standards for cross border business transactions. ICC Bangladesh has so far organized following regional, international conferences & dialogue:

- **10-11 November 2000:** ICC Asia Conference on "Investment in Developing Countries: Increasing Opportunities" organized in Dhaka was inaugurated by the Prime Minister of Bangladesh and attended by a number of high profile dignitaries including the Thai Deputy Prime Minister & WTO Director General, ADB President, UN-ESCAP Executive Secretary and Ministers. More than 250 participants from 24 countries participated in this event.
- **17-18 January 2004:** International Conference on "Global Economic Governance and Challenges of Multilateralism" was held in Dhaka, coinciding with 10th Anniversary of ICC Bangladesh. The Conference was inaugurated by the Prime Minister of Bangladesh and Thai Prime Minister was the Keynote Speaker. WTO Director General, EU Commissioner for Trade, UNESCAP Executive Secretary, Governor of Japan Bank for International Cooperation, Ministers from three continents, ICC Chairman, Vice Chairman & Secretary General and more than 500 participants from 38 countries attended this event.
- **27-28 September 2005:** Regional Seminar on "Capital Market Development: Asian Experience". The Seminar held in Dhaka was inaugurated by the President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and attended by Chairmen/CEOs of securities & exchange commissions, stock exchanges, capital market operators, financial institutions and investors from 15 Asian countries.
- **13 April 2010:** Conference on "Energy for Growth" was held in Dhaka coinciding with the 15 years of ICC's presence in Bangladesh. The Conference was inaugurated by the Finance Minister of Bangladesh and attended by ICC Global Chairman, Minister for Commerce of Bangladesh and Minister for Development Cooperation of Denmark. Some 800 delegates from home and abroad including energy experts and international financiers from Australia, China, Denmark, India, Germany, Japan, Singapore, Switzerland, UK and USA attended the event.
- **25-26 October 2014:** International Conference on "Global Economic Recovery: Asian Perspective", was held in Dhaka coinciding with the 20 years of ICC's presence in Bangladesh. The Conference was inaugurated by the President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. Finance and Commerce Ministers of Bangladesh, UNCTAD Secretary General, Ministers from Myanmar and Nepal; ICC Vice Chairman and Secretary General and ICC Research Foundation Chairman and more than 500 participants attended the event.
- **8-9 February 2017:** The first ever "UNESCAP Asia Pacific Business Forum: Regional Integration to Achieve Sustainable Development" was organized by ICC Bangladesh jointly with UNESCAP under the patronage of the Ministry of Commerce of Bangladesh. The Forum was inaugurated by the President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. Ministers from Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, UNESCAP Secretary General, business leaders and some 600 delegates from home and abroad attended the Forum.
- **10-12 December 2019:** "The Asia Pacific Conference on Financing inclusive and Sustainable Development" was organized by ICC Bangladesh jointly with UNESCAP, ADB and LIBF (The London Institute of Banking & Finance) under the patronage of the Financial Institutions Division Ministry of Finance of Bangladesh to celebrate 100 years of ICC and 25 years of ICC Bangladesh. The President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh inaugurated the Conference. UN Secretary General Mr. António Guterres and 8th UN Secretary General Mr. Ban-Ki moon also addressed through video during the inauguration. Ministers from Bangladesh, Cambodia, Maldives and Sri Lanka and UN ESCAP Executive Secretary, Central Bank Governors, Business Leaders, Experts and some 800 delegates from home and 30 foreign countries attended the Conference.
- **12 September 2024:** "The First National Business Dialogue" in the Interim Government's regime was organized by ICC Bangladesh in association with 15 Major National Trade Organizations in Dhaka. Chief Advisor of the Interim Government Nobel Laureate Prof. Dr. Muhammad Yunus addressed the Dialogue as Chief Guest. Dr. Salehuddin Ahmed, Adviser In-Charge of the Ministries of Finance, Commerce, Science & Technology and Prof. Dr. Wahiduddin Mahmud, Adviser In-Charge of the Ministries of Planning and Education were Special Guests. Around 700 delegates, including top business leaders, bankers, representatives of international organizations and private- sector representatives attended the event.

As part of its activities, ICC Bangladesh has been organizing Workshops/ Seminars on International Trade Finance, mainly for bankers, within Bangladesh and in various countries. Since 2014, ICC Bangladesh, jointly with National Committees and Chambers, has organized workshops in Kuala Lumpur (April 2014); in Colombo (February 2015); in Kunming (August 2015); in Yangon (November 2015); in Hanoi (April 2016); in Bangkok (December 2017) and in Phnom Penh (April 2018).

The National Committee also arranged participation of Bankers from Bangladesh at ICC Annual Banking Commission Meetings in Singapore (April 2015), in Jakarta (April 2017) and in Beijing (April 2019); ICC Austria Global Trade Conference in Vienna (May 2017, June 2018 and May 2019); FCI Annual Meeting in Vietnam (June 2019); ICC Academy 8th Supply Chain Summit in Singapore (February 2019); International Financial Crime Forum in Kuala Lumpur (July 2019); LIBF World Conference on Banking Institutions (WCBI) in London (September 2019); ICC Global Trade Facilitation Summits in Dubai (March 2022 and April 2024) and ICC Court Centenary held virtually in March 2023.

For professional development of bankers, ICC Bangladesh also organizes Certified Documentary Credit Specialist (CDCS) and Certificate for Specialists in Demand Guarantees (CSDG) Examinations in Dhaka, conducted worldwide every year by LIBF (London Institute of Banking and Finance) and endorsed by ICC Paris.

ICC Bangladesh participates at World Chambers Congress, World Chambers Federation (WCF), ICC World Council, WTO Ministerial Meetings, Meetings of ICC Permanent Heads, ICC Banking Commission and ICC Asia Pacific Regional Consultative Group Meetings. The National Committee also organizes visits for Bangladeshi business delegations to various countries to promote trade and investment.

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ICC Bangladesh
The world business organization

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Editor's Note

From waste to wealth: the power of the Circular Economy

Asia was the world's most disaster-hit region from climate and weather hazards in 2023 with floods and storms the chief cause of casualties and economic losses. The latest World Meteorological Organization report said the impact of heat waves in Asia was becoming more severe, with melting glaciers threatening the region's future water security.

To fight against climate hazards, the just concluded COP29 in Baku has adopted to raise at least $300 billion core goal per year by 2035, with developed countries taking the lead, in the context of the broader mobilisation of $1.3 trillion per year from all actors to support climate action in developing countries.

In order to fight against plastic pollution, the 5th Session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC-5), concluded in Busan, Republic of Korea on 1 December 2024 could not decide on development of an "international legally binding instrument (ILBI) on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment". Delegates from 179 Member States concluded that time had run out to resolve all outstanding issues and that a resumed session of the Committee was necessary to afford additional time for further negotiations to develop a legally binding instrument to address plastic pollution.

In an era where environmental degradation and resource scarcity dominate global conversations, the circular economy emerges as a beacon of hope. Unlike the traditional linear economy—defined by a "take-make-dispose" model—the circular economy emphasizes sustainability, efficiency, and resourcefulness. By redefining how we produce, consume, and dispose of goods, the circular economy offers a transformative solution that turns waste into wealth, fostering economic growth while protecting the environment.

The circular economy is based on three key principles: designing out waste and pollution, keeping products and materials in use, and regenerating natural systems. These principles focus on extending the lifecycle of products, promoting the reuse and recycling of materials, and minimizing waste. The approach not only conserves resources but also reduces greenhouse gas emissions, addresses pollution, and creates new economic opportunities.

However, some developed countries have taken the initiative to showcase the circular economy's potential. The Netherlands aims to halve raw material use by 2030 through recycling and repairable goods. Sweden converts 99% of household waste into energy. Patagonia, an outdoor clothing brand, fosters sustainability by encouraging clothing repair and recycling, reducing waste and exemplifying circular practices.

As one of the world's largest textile exporters, Bangladesh has the potential to lead in sustainable fashion. By adopting circular practices, such as recycling fabric waste and promoting second-hand clothing markets, the industry can reduce its environmental footprint while enhancing profitability. In agricultural waste, including rice husks and jute byproducts, can be converted into bioenergy and organic fertilizers, supporting sustainable farming practices. Circular models can complement renewable energy goals by integrating waste-to-energy solutions, reducing dependency on fossil fuels.

Bangladesh generates approximately 3,000 tons of plastic waste daily, of which only 30% is recycled. Additionally, improper disposal of electronic waste and agricultural byproducts further exacerbates environmental degradation. By investing in recycling infrastructure and waste-to-energy projects, Bangladesh can mitigate these issues while generating economic value.

It may be mentioned here that Bangladesh's position in having the largest and highest number of green factories in RMG sector is commendable, with numerous factories recognized for sustainable practices. These achievements highlight the country's commitment to eco-friendly manufacturing, setting an example for the global textile and apparel industry.

Bangladesh is highly vulnerable to climate change and is considered one of the most climate-vulnerable countries in the world. Therefore, adopting a circular economy model is both a necessity and an opportunity. As a rapidly developing nation, Bangladesh faces significant environmental challenges, including waste management issues, pollution, and resource depletion. The transition to a circular economy could provide solutions to these problems while unlocking new avenues for economic growth.

ICC Bangladesh News

ICC Bangladesh Celebrated 30th Anniversary

ICC Bangladesh celebrated its 30th Anniversary in Dhaka on 18 December. The event brought together Ambassadors/ High Commissioners/ Heads of Trade from different missions in Dhaka, representatives of international organizations, dignitaries and ICC Bangladesh Members.

ICC Bangladesh President Mahbubur Rahman in his welcome address highlighted ICC Bangladesh's significant achievements and its commitment to advancing the interests of businesses in Bangladesh while aligning with ICC's global objectives.

General – Network, was shared on behalf of the World Chambers Federation (WCF). Mr. Kassum lauded ICC Bangladesh's efforts in strengthening global trade networks and enhancing collaboration among chambers of commerce worldwide.



ICC Bangladesh President Mahbubur Rahman delivering welcome address at the 30th Anniversary Celebration held in Dhaka on 18 December

The event started with a video presentation that highlighted the rich history and activities of ICC Headquarters as well as ICC Bangladesh. The presentation show cased ICC Bangladesh's journey since its inception in 1994, underscoring its pivotal role in fostering international trade, facilitating global business connections, and contributing to sustainable economic development.

A written congratulatory message from ICC Secretary General John Denton was presented by Immediate Past President of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industries (DCCI) Ashraf Ahmed. The message acknowledged ICC Bangladesh's invaluable contributions over the years and congratulated ICC Bangladesh on its 30th Anniversary.

A video message from Mr. Julian Kassum, ICC Deputy Secretary

The event concluded with a shared commitment to continue fostering international trade and business excellence. Attendees appreciated ICC Bangladesh's unwavering dedication to empowering the business community and promoting global economic integration. This milestone occasion not only celebrated ICC Bangladesh's accomplishments but also underscored its future aspirations to remain a key player in the global business arena.

Welcome Address by ICC Bangladesh President Mahbubur Rahman on the occasion of 30th Anniversary of ICC Bangladesh

BismillahirRahmanir Rahim



Excellencies,
My Colleagues at the ICC Executive Board,
Members, ICC Bangladesh,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Assalamu Alaikum Wa Rahmatullahi Wa Barakatuhu

A very Good evening and a warm welcome to all of you for joining us to celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) Bangladesh, the National Committee of ICC, The world business organization.

Today, we have arranged this get-together not only to celebrate the milestones that we have achieved but also to renew our commitment to fostering international trade and economic cooperation for promotion of trade, investment and sustainable development of Bangladesh.

On this momentous occasion, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the founding members of ICCB for their visionary leadership, guidance and dedication.

I would also like to especially remember our late Vice Presidents Samson H. Chowdhury, Latifur Rahman, Rokia Afzal Rahman and A. Rob Chowdhury, along with our Board Members late Rashed Maksud Khan,Waliur Rahman Bhuiyan OBE and Masih-Ul-Karim for their invaluable contributions to ICCB.

Distinguished Guests,

Allow me to begin by acknowledging the invaluable contributions of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), headquartered in Paris. Established in 1919, immediately after the First World War the ICC has been a pioneering advocate for global trade, business facilitation, and the promotion of sustainable economic growth. ICC, with physical presence in more than 130 countries plus direct membership from another almost hundred countries, represents 45 million companies and more than 1 billion workers worldwide. One in every three worker depends on ICC Members for their livelihood.

ICC is the largest and the only private sector non-sovereign organization, which was granted status of a Permanent Observer at the General Assembly of the United Nations in December 2016.

ICC has been instrumental in shaping the global trade landscape through its various initiatives and services. ICC has developed globally recognized standards such as the Incoterms, which facilitate international trade transactions. ICC Banking Commission has issued essential rules like the Uniform Customs and Practice for Documentary Credits (UCP 600), ensuring trust and efficiency in trade finance.ICC actively champions open market and opposes trade protectionism, fostering a level playing field for businesses.

Through ICC International Court of Arbitration, ICC provides a trusted platform for resolving commercial disputes, ensuring confidence in cross-border business dealings. In an average ICC court disposes over several billion of dollars worth of disputes annually.

ICC works in close cooperation with national governments and multi-national institutions such as G-7/G-20, World Bank, WTO, FAO, UNICEF, UNCTAD, OECD, Asian Development Bank and several UN agencies for promotion, protection and development of world economy and participates in global initiatives like COP29. Every year, ICC holds talks with G-7 leaders before their Summit to promote Private Sector points of view in fostering global economy.

Ladies & Gentlemen,

International Chamber of Commerce-Bangladesh (ICCB) has been a proud torchbearer of the ICC's vision since its establishment in 1994. ICCB is comprised of major trade organizations, national and trans-national corporations, who represent almost 80% of Bangladesh economy.

Now I am highlighting some of our significant activities:

ICCB in collaboration with other leading Trade Organizations has been working tirelessly to create a conducive environment for international trade by engaging with policymakers, businesses, and international organizations. The activities of ICC Bangladesh include promotion of foreign trade and investment, trade policy reviews, business dialogues, seminars & workshops both at home and abroad on related policy issues, harmonization of trade law & rules, legal reforms, updating businesses with the ICC rules & standards for cross border business transactions.

Over the past three decades, ICCB has emerged as a trusted partner in advancing trade, investment, and economic collaboration in Bangladesh and beyond.

ICCB has been playing a key role in promoting trade liberalization, modernizing customs processes, driving digital transformation, and fostering essential dialogue on trade finance mechanisms. Through various seminars, workshops, and training programs, ICCB has empowered local businesses and bankers to adopt global best financial practices and enhance their competitiveness.

For professional development of bankers, ICC Bangladesh also organizes Certified Documentary Credit Specialist (CDCS) and Certificate for Specialists in Demand Guarantees (CSDG) Examinations in Dhaka, conducted worldwide every year by LIBF (London Institute of Banking and Finance) and endorsed by ICC Paris. Approximately 1,500 candidates have successfully completed the CDCS and CSDG examinations to date.

Since its inception, ICCB has organized seven international conferences on various important topics. These conferences have been attended by Head of the state, including Prime Ministers, Vice-Ministers, Ministers, Bangladesh Cabinet Ministers, as well as ICC Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary General, ICC Research Foundation Chairman, WTO Director General, ADB President, the UN-ESCAP Executive Secretary, UNCTAD Secretary General, Central Bank Governors, along with numerous delegates from both home and abroad. UN Secretary General Ban-Ki Moon, Antonio Guterres, late Kofi Annan joined on-line.

ICC Bangladesh participates at ICC World Congress and World Chambers Federation (WCF), ICC World Council, WTO Ministerial Meetings, ICC Banking Commission and ICC Asia Pacific Regional Consultative Group Meetings. The National Committee also arranges visit by Bangladesh Business delegation to different countries for promotion of trade and investment.

ICCB also actively participates in various humanitarian initiatives. It donated Tk. 30.175 million to UNICEF in Aid of War-affected children in Gaza as well as Tk. 6 million for Nepal earthquake victims. Additionally, ICCB distributed relief materials to flood-affected individuals in Sunamganj, Cumilla, Feni, Lakshmipur, & Noakhali in 2022 and 2024. ICC Bangladesh members collectively contributed Tk. 13.25 million towards these efforts.

After the Interim Government assumed office on 8 August, ICCB organized a National Business Dialogue in collaboration with 15 major national trade organizations. Nobel Laureate Prof. Dr. Muhammad Yunus, Chief Adviser of the Interim Government was the Chief Guest and Dr. Salehuddin Ahmed, Adviser in charge of the Ministries of Finance, Commerce, and Science & Technology, and Prof. Dr. Wahiduddin Mahmud, Adviser in charge of the Ministries of Planning and Education were Special Guests. The dialogue was attended by approximately 700 delegates, including prominent business leaders, bankers, and representatives from international organizations and private-sector enterprises.

As we celebrate 30th Anniversary, we also look to the future with ambition and determination. The global economic landscape is evolving rapidly, driven by technological innovation, climate challenges, and shifting trade dynamics. In this context, ICCB's role will be more critical than ever.

We acknowledge with gratitude for the unwavering and continued support as well as guidance extended to ICC Bangladesh by ICC headquarters, our partners, sponsorsand members. We gratefully acknowledge the contribution of our distinguished Members in acquiring our permanent Secretariat at the Gulshan Avenue.

To our stakeholders, I assure you that ICCB will continue to uphold the highest standards of excellence and integrity as we strive to build a brighter economic future for Bangladesh.

As we celebrate this milestone, let us remember that the success of ICC Bangladesh is a reflection of our collective efforts. Together, we have not only contributed to the growth of Bangladesh's economy but also strengthened its voice in the global business community.

Let us move forward with renewed vigor, embracing innovation, collaboration, and sustainability as the cornerstones of our journey ahead.

Thank you all for being a part of this celebration and for your continued support.

Allah Hafez-

Congratulatory Message from ICC Secretary General John Denton on the occasion of 30th Anniversary of ICC Bangladesh



Distinguished guests, colleagues, friends,

It is a great honour to have the opportunity to address you today, albeit through these written remarks, on this very special occasion – the 30th anniversary of ICC Bangladesh. I'd like to start by thanking the President of ICC Bangladesh's Executive Board, Mahbubur Rahman, and Secretary General Ataur Rahman, along with the whole ICC Bangladesh team for all they have done to reach this significant milestone.

As you come together to celebrate, I hope you can reflect on all that has been achieved, along with the immense potential that lies ahead.

As you know, we – ICC – are a global institution founded over 100 years ago with a mandate to promote peace and prosperity through cross-border trade. A century later and we are the institutional representative of more than 45 million businesses in 170 countries, 70% of which are in the global south – with a common mission to make business work for everyone, every day and everywhere.

Here in Bangladesh, and throughout its rich history, ICC Bangladesh has remained a steadfast member of the ICC network. The hard work of the team has seen Bangladeshi members participate in the proactive Banking Commission, leading the way on implementing and updating ICC rules and standards, attending conferences across the globe, and engaging with other national committees in the development of workshops in Malaysia, Vietnam, and Thailand, amongst others. This spirit of connection across our network is something we cherish as an organisation.

We have particularly valued the team's approach to innovative opportunities, demonstrated through their work with the ICC Digital Standards Initiative and the recent workshops for Female Entrepreneurs. These two areas, digital trade and economic inclusion, have been fundamental in Bangladesh's impressive development over recent decades, and will continue to be so as we look forwards. The IMF estimates that the country could gain almost 40% of GDP by closing gender gaps in labour force participation, while the UN calculates that Bangladesh could gain an additional $600 million in export revenue by embracing digital trade processes. To see ICC Bangladesh at the forefront of these efforts brings me – us – great pride, and we stand ready to continue supporting the Bangladeshi private sector as a force for good for society.

Over the last 30 years, ICC Bangladesh has witnessed changes both within the country and globally, while supporting businesses of all sizes to respond to challenges and access opportunities. Not least this year, as Bangladesh has lived through a moment of great uncertainty, it is notable that the team at ICC Bangladesh has managed to look after themselves and their members. This dedication and commitment have enabled Bangladeshi companies to continue operating and engaging in the global economy, bringing opportunities for growth, stability and prosperity to the country.

There is unfortunately no shortage of complex problems that the world is facing. As we look towards this uncertainty, we will continue to ensure that the voice of the real economy is at the centre of the discussions around development and that companies of all size have the tools, support, and systems to grow and thrive. In this context, we know that ICC Bangladesh will continue to have a very important role for all of you, and for all of us.

On that note, I wish ICC Bangladesh my heartfelt congratulations as you celebrate this wonderful milestone of 30 years. I invite you all to give them a strong round of applause as you enjoy the celebrations.

Business leaders held meeting with Army Chief

A Business Delegation led by Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) Mahbubul Alam called on Army Chief General Waker-uz-Zaman at the Army Headquarters on 22 August .

The business leaders sought support of the Bangladesh Army for ensuring business-friendly environment, keeping operative the production at mills and factories and keeping intact the supply chain, beefing up security at factories and business establishments, and curbing extortion.

Army centering the security issue of the industries. Mr. Alam also expressed his interest to work with the Army in strengthening security in the industries alongside restoring confidence among the businessmen.

In response, Army Chief of Staff General Waker-uz-Zaman assured the business delegation that they would discharge their duties bestowed upon them properly in ensuring security of the business community and all citizens of the country. He informed that the Bangladesh Army has always

The Army Chief also urged the business community to support the law enforcement agencies through providing information if any industry is subjected to any threat.

ICC Bangladesh President Mahbubur Rahman, former FBCCI Presidents Abdul Awal Mintoo and Md Jashim Uddin; ICC Bangladesh Vice Presidents AK Azad and Naser Ezaaz Bijoy; ICC Bangladesh Executive Board Members Mir Nasir Hossain, Tapan Chowdhury, DCCI President



A business delegation held discussions with Army Chief General Waker-uz-Zaman (4th from right) at the Army Headquarters on 22 August. The discussion were attended by ICCB President Mahbubur Rahman (3rd from right); FBCCI President Mahbubul Alam (centre);ICCB Vice Presidents A.K. Azad (far right) and Naser Ezaz Bijoy (3rd from right, back row); ICCB Executive Board Members Mir Nasir Hossain (4th from left), Tapan Chowdhury (2nd from right, back row); Former FBCCI President Abdul Awal Mintoo (2nd from right) & Md. Jashim Uddin (3rd from left); DCCI President Ashraf Ahmed (3rd from left, back row) and Acting President of BGMEA Mr. Khandakar Rafikul Islam (far left) among others.

In this connection, the FBCCI President thanked the Army Chief for conducting various operations and patrolling in the industrial belt and areas by Bangladesh remained vigil so that the local and foreign investors could conduct their operations uninterruptedly side by side ensuring security to the mills and factories, supply chain and ports.

Ashraf Ahmed and BGMEA Acting President Khandaker Rafiqul Islam were present, among others, at the Meeting.

Meeting with Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation and SwissContact held at ICC Bangladesh

Mr. Philippe Isler, Executive Director of the Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation (GATF) and Director of the World Economic Forum(WEF) visited ICC Bangladesh along with officials of SwissContact and attended a meeting at ICC Bangladesh on 9 October. The meeting Chaired by ICC Bangladesh Vice President A.K. Azad was also attended by, SwissContact Bangladesh Country Director Mujibul Hasan Cezanne, Head of Programmes Fazle Razik and Head of Acquisition & Portfolio Support, South & Southeast Asia Helal Hussain; ICC Bangladesh Executive Board Members Ashraf Ahmed, Kamran T. Rahman, Mir Nasir Hossain, Md. Fazlul Hoque and Simeen Rahman; Syed Nasim Manzur, President, LFMEAB; ICC Bangladesh Banking Commission Chairman Muhammad A (Rumee) Ali & ICC Bangladesh Secretary General Ataur Rahman.



Meeting with Mr. Philippe Isler, Executive Director, Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation (GATF) of WEF, presided over by ICC Bangladesh Vice President A.K.Azad is in progress.

Mr. Philippe Isler mentioned that ICC is one of the partner of the Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation (GATF). The Alliance is led by the Center for International Private Enterprise, ICC and the World Economic Forum, in cooperation with Gesellschaftfür Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). It is funded by the governments of the United States, Canada, Germany and Denmark.

ICC has been working with GATF and WEF for global trade facilitation. Through the Alliance, SwissContact supports the co-creation and implementation of trade facilitation projects in Bangladesh, Cambodia and Uganda. He said that by emphasizing digitization and delivering other best practices, the projects enable businesses to trade more easily. Governments save time and resources by modernizing trade procedures while still safeguarding their borders. Ultimately, the projects boost trade competitiveness and business conditions, which are key drivers of inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction.

SwissContact Bangladesh Country Director Mujibul Hasan Cezanne mentioned about a project on Digitalizing services to reduce delays and congestion at Bhomra Land Port. He thanked ICC Bangladesh for cooperating wiith SwissContact in implementing the project.

The meeting addressed various issues concerning trade facilitation in Bangladesh. Challenges faced by both importers and exporters at the country's airports and seaports were highlighted. It was agreed, in principle, to organize a joint program with the Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation (GATF) of the World Economic Forum (WEF) and SwissContact. This program, planned for the first quarter of 2025, aims to share experiences on trade facilitation in Bangladesh and the region. The seminar/conference will focus on discussing regional best practices and implementing reforms to enhance trade facilitation in Bangladesh.

High Commissioner of Maldives called on ICC Bangladesh President



ICC Bangladesh President, Mahbubur Rahman (centre) is seen during a meeting with the High Commissioner of the Maldives, Ms. Shiuneen Rashed (2nd from righ). The meeting underscores a diplomatic engagement, fostering ties between ICC Bangladesh and the Maldives.

H.E. Ms. Shiuneen Rashed, High Commissioner of Maldives to Bangladesh, called on ICC Bangladesh President Mahbubur Rahman at ICC Bangladesh Secretariat on 18 November. President Mahbubur Rahman underscored ICC's commitment to supporting cross-border trade and investment, emphasizing its role in promoting a conducive business environment. High Commissioner Shiuneen Rashed expressed her appreciation for ICC Bangladesh's efforts in fostering international collaboration and reiterated about Maldives' interest in strengthening economic partnerships with Bangladesh. Both of them agreed to strengthen bilateral trade and promote investment between the two countries.

The Meeting was also attended by ICCB Secretary General Ataur Rahman, Second Secretary of the High Commission of Maldives Ahmed Maishaan, ICC Bangladesh General Manager Ajay Bihari Saha and Deputy General Manager Syeda Shahnewaz Lotika.

ICC Workshops on Trade Finance Legal Challenges and International Sanctions held in Dhaka and Chatttogram

ICC Bangladesh organized two workshops on Trade Finance Legal Challenges and International Sanctions Regime & Requirements in Dhaka on 23 and Chattohgram on 24 November. The workshop was designed to address the pressing challenges faced by businesses and financial institutions in navigating today's volatile global trade environment.



Group picture of participants with ICC Bangladesh President Mahbubur Rahman (3rd from left), ICC Bangladesh Secretary General Ataur Rahman (2nd from right) Resource parsons Mr. Mohamed Daoud (3rd from right) and Mr. Vincent O'Brien (2nd from left), Mr. Masood Hussain (extreme right) from China System and ICC Bangladesh General Manager Ajay Bihari Saha (extreme left).

The workshops were conducted by Mr. Mohamed Daoud , Director and Industry Practice Lead for Moody's Financial Crime Compliance across the Middle East and India and Mr. O'Brien, Director of ICC UAE.

ICC Bangladesh President Mahbubur Rahman attened as Chief Guest the closing and certificate ward ceremony of the Workshop held in Dhaka on 23 November. He extended his heartfelt thanks to Moody's and ICC UAE for organizing the two workshops jointly with ICC Bangladesh. He expressed his hope for continued collaboration in the future, acknowledging the tremendous value that such partnership bring to the business community in Bangladesh. The deliberations by the experts from Moody's and ICC UAE added tremendous value to the sessions. This partnership underscores ICC Bangladesh's commitment to leveraging global expertise to address complex issues in trade finance.

President Rahman emphasized the need for such workshops in light of the current volatile global trade scenario. The interplay between geopolitical tensions, economic sanctions, and evolving regulatory frameworks has created unprecedented challenges for businesses engaged in international trade. He reiterated ICC Bangladesh's commitment to fostering dialogue and knowledge-sharing to help businesses adapt and thrive in this environment.

To address these challenges, financial institutions must implement robust policies and procedures, stay updated on evolving sanctions laws, and train employees on compliance obligations. For Bangladesh, where international trade is vital for its post-LDC graduation trajectory, navigating sanctions and regulatory complexities is crucial, ICCB President noted.



Group picture of participants of the Chattogram workshop with ICC Bangladesh Secretary General Ataur Rahman (4th from left) and resource persons Mr. Vincent O'Brien (5th from left) and Mr. Mohamed Daoud (6th from left).

Recognizing these pressing issues, ICC Bangladesh organized workshops led by renowned experts to provide participants with practical knowledge on managing sanctions compliance, mitigating trade-based money laundering risks, and addressing export/import legal disputes. These initiatives aim to empower stakeholders to navigate the challenges of global trade effectively and ensure sustainable growth, Mr. Rahman said.

The Dhaka workshop witnessed an impressive turnout, with 106 participants from various sectors, including banks, trade bodies, and multinational corporations. The Chattogram session also saw significant engagement, with 49 participants actively contributing to the discussions.

ICC Bangladesh Secretary General Ataur Rahman thanked the sponsoring banks and corporate houses for nominating theirs officials to attend the workshops. He mentioned that ICC Bangladesh will continue to organize more such programs to address emerging challenges and opportunities in international trade. The organization remains committed to its mission of equipping professionals with the tools they need to excel in a rapidly changing global trade landscape, he said.

ICC Workshop on Risk Management in Trade Financing held in Dhaka

ICC Bangladesh organized a day-long workshop on Risk Management in Trade Financing in Dhaka on 19 October .The event brought together stakeholders from various sectors to enhance their understanding of the complexities of cross-border trade and equip them with strategies for effective trade finance risk management.

The workshop underscored the growing need for robust risk management practices in trade financing, particularly in light of the increasingly complex landscape of international trade. It provided participants with a platform to gain a deeper understanding of



Group picture of participants with ICC Bangladesh Banking Commission Chairman Muhammad A. (Rumee) Ali (2nd from left), ICC Bangladesh Secretary General Ataur Rahman (extreme left), Workshop Resource person Prof. Dr. Shah Md. Ahsan Habib (2nd from right) and ICCB General Manager Ajay Bihari Saha (extreme right).

the potential risks inherent in cross-border transactions and the measures required to mitigate them effectively. Topics covered included the identification of risks, the implementation of preventive measures, and the development of strategies to handle unforeseen trade challenges.

Dr. Shah Md. Ahsan Habib, Professor of Bangladesh Institute of Bank Management (BIBM), conducted the workshop. The workshop concluded with a certificate distribution ceremony, where ICC Bangladesh Banking Commission Chairman Muhammad A. Rumee Ali was the Chief Guest.

Mr. Ali in his address as Chief Guest emphasized the importance of such initiatives in building capacity and fostering collaboration among stakeholders involved in international trade. He also highlighted ICC Bangladesh's commitment to providing a platform for knowledge sharing and professional development in the field of trade finance.

He said that the ICC workshop comes at a time when the global trade environment is facing unprecedented challenges due to geopolitical tensions, regulatory changes, and the ongoing impact of economic uncertainties. For Bangladesh, a country with a growing presence in international trade, managing trade finance risks is crucial to ensuring sustainable growth and competitiveness.

By bringing together key stakeholders and providing them with the tools to navigate these challenges, ICC Bangladesh continues to play a pivotal role in supporting the country's trade and financial sectors. The workshop reinforced the importance of collaboration and knowledge-sharing in addressing the multifaceted risks associated with cross-border trade, said Mr. Ali.

ICCB Secretary General Ataur Rahman thanked the organizations for nominating their officials to attend the Workshop. A total of 109 participants attended the workshop, representing a diverse mix of professionals from banks and corporate houses.

ICC Bangladesh Executive Board Meeting reviewed activities

The 96th ICC Bangladesh Executive Board Meeting was held on 22 December at ICC Bangladesh Secretariat. The Executive Board unanimously elected Mahbubur Rahman as the President and A.K.Azad and Naser Ezaz Bijoy as Vice Presidents for the present two-year term of the Executive Board ending on 31 March 2026.

The Executive Board reviewed the activities of the National Secretariat, approved budget for the year 2025, approved ICC Bangladesh Membership of Leather Goods And Footwear Manufacturers & Exporters Association of Bangladesh (LFMEAB) as an Organization Member and Aamra Networks & Karnafully Insurance Company as Corporate Members

The Executive Board also endorsed the proposal for organizing a joint program in Dhaka sometime during the end of April 2025 in collaboration with the Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation (GATF) of the World Economic Forum and SwissContact to share experiences and best practices on trade facilitation in Bangladesh and the region.



ICC Bangladesh 96th Executive Board Meeting is in progress.

The Meeting, chaired by President Mahbubur Rrahman was attended by Vice Presidnet Naser Ezaz Bijoy, Board Members Abdul Hai Sarker, Kutubuddin Ahmed, Mir Nasir Hossain, Md. Fazlul Hoque, Nasir Uddin Ahmed, Secretary General Ataur Rahman. Immediate Past DCCI President Ashraf Ahmed and ICCB Banking Commission Chairman Muhammad A. (Rumee) Ali. Other Members were unable to join due to prior commitments.

ICC Bangladesh Executive Board elected President and Vice Presidents

ICC Bangladesh Executive Board during its 96th Meeting held on 22 December unanimously elected Mr. Mahbubur Rahman, Chairman & CEO of ETBL Holdings as President and Mr. A.K. Azad, Managing Director of Ha-Meem Group, and Immediate Past President of FICCI & CEO of Standard Chartered Bank Mr. Naser Ezaz Bijoy as Vice Presidents for two-year term ending on 31 March 2026.



Mahbubur Rahman



A.K. Azad



Naser Ezaz Bijoy

New Members

The Executive Board of ICC Bangladesh during its 96th Meeting held on 22 December approved the ICC Bangladesh following Membership	
LFMEAB	Leather Goods And Footwear Manufacturers & Exporters Association of Bangladesh (LFMEAB) to be represented by President Syed Nasim Manzur under Organisation Category.
aamra the power of WE	Aamra Networks Limited to be represented by Syed Farhad Ahmed, Managing Director & CEO Under Corporate Category.
	Karnafully Insurance Company Limited to be represented by Mr. ANM Fazlul Karim, CEO under Corporate Category.

From the Album

Celebration of 30th Anniversary of ICC Bangladesh held in Dhaka on 18 December 2024



Maldives High Commissioner H.E.Ms. Shiuneen Rasheed, Sri Lankan High Commissioner H.E. Mr. Dharmapala Weerakkody; Ambassador of Vietnam H.E. Mr. Nguyen Manh Cuong; Director General, Regional Organizations Wing, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dhaka Mr. Md. Rais Hasan Sarower, ndc; Director of Trade & Investment, British High Commission, Mr. Dan Pasha, High Commissioner of Malaysia H.E. Mohd Shuhada bin Othman; Acting High Commissioner of Brunei Darussalam H.E. Mr. Rozaimee Abdullah.



Partial view of the Guests.



ICC Bangladesh President Mahbubur Rahman (3rd from right) is seen with Ms. Shahamin S. Zaman (2nd from right), Executive Director, Global Compact Network Bangladesh; Dr. Rubina Husain (2nd from left), President, Bangladesh Federation of Women Entrepreneurs (BFWE); Ms. Khadija Afzal (3rd from left), Senior Vice President, BFWE; ICC Bangladesh Secretary General Ataur Rahman (extreme left); Md. Zahidul Hassan (extreme right), Chief Executive Officer, CSR & Sustainability, Shanta Holdings Ltd.

ICC Academy & LIBF Online Professional Qualification Courses

ICC Academy offering the following categories professional certification programmes:

Trade finance
- Global Trade Certificate (GTC)
- Certified Trade Finance Professional (CTFP)
- Certificate in Digital Trade Strategy

International business
- Export/Import Certificate (EIC)
- Incoterms® 2020 Certificate (INCO)
- Free Trade Agreement Certificate (FTAC)
- E-Invoicing Solutions Certificate (ESC)
- Microfinance Associate Certificate (MAC)

Regulation and compliance
- Certificate on the Common Reporting Standard (CCRS)
- IMB NVOCC Bill of Lading Certificate (NBL)
- Ethical Marketing and Advertising (EMA)

LIBF offering the following professional qualification certificate courses:

- Certificate for Documentary Credit Specialists (CDCS)
- Certificate for Specialists in Demand Guarantees (CSDG)
- Certificate in International Trade and Finance (CITF)
- Certificate in Trade Finance Compliance (CTFC)
- Certificate in Supply Chain Finance (CSCF)
- Certificate in Principles of Payments (CertPAY)
- Certificate in International Trade Risk (CITR)
- Diploma for Qualified Trade Finance Specialists (QTFS)
- Certified Practitioner in Specialist Property Finance (CPSP)
- Diploma for Financial Advisers (DipFA)
- Financial Services, Regulation and Ethics (FSRE)

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ICC HQs News

ICC reaction to COP29 outcome

Speaking on behalf of business in over 170 countries in an initial reaction to the COP29 outcome, Secretary General of the International Chamber of Commerce, John Denton, said: "The deal reached in Baku is far from perfect but represents, nevertheless, an important step towards mobilising the investments needed to decarbonise the global economy and build resilience to a changing climate.

"From a business perspective there is no time to lose in putting this agreement into action. The analysis we published on the opening day of the conference shows that extreme weather events cost the global economy $2 trillion over the past decade — acutely impacting more than 1.6 billion people. There is, simply put, a major price tag associated with any delay in taking decisive action to combat climate change.

"We estimate that around two thirds of the one trillion investment goal agreed by governments is earmarked to come from the private sector. This level of financing will not be mobilised by fine words and political aspirations alone.

"Coming out of this COP, there is an urgent effort needed to remove established barriers to investments in climate solutions by the business community — a challenge that, we believe, will require genuine leadership from the G20 in the months ahead. This must also form an integral part of preparations for COP30 next year in Brazil."

Voluntary carbon markets key to global net-zero ambitions, says ICC

ICC is calling for stronger governance and transparency in voluntary carbon markets (VCMs), highlighting their critical role in reaching net-zero emissions by 2050. In a new report launched on 15 November, ICC emphasises the urgent need to scale VCMs as essential tools for emissions reduction and for channelling financial resources into climate action, particularly in vulnerable regions.

The report comes during the UN Climate Talks in Baku, Azerbaijan, where climate finance was top of the agenda. With only 24% of global emissions currently priced according to the World Bank, ICC underscores that VCMs can help bridge the financing gap critical to keeping the Paris Agreement goals within reach.

VCMs enable companies, governments, and individuals to offset greenhouse gas emissions by purchasing voluntary carbon credits. These markets not only support emissions reductions but also channel significant financial resources to sustainability projects in regions where climate adaptation, resilience, and financing needs are GREATEST.



ICC Head of Sustainability, Raelene Martin said: "As the private sector increases its efforts to meet net-zero targets, voluntary carbon markets offer a valuable means to mobilise the financing required to drive meaningful climate action." "To make these markets effective, it's essential that we create governance frameworks that foster trust and enable companies to confidently leverage carbon credits as part of their emissions reduction strategies."

The report also addresses the ongoing need for trust-building measures to strengthen VCMs and argues that clear governance frameworks

are essential to increase private sector participation and confidence in VCMs. It outlines the essential components required to mobilise private sector investment in carbon credits, emphasising the need for clear, effective rules on corporate mitigation targets and international cooperation to harmonise standards across borders.

Robust governance frameworks that foster trust and economic incentives for companies to engage with VCMs confidently. Clear rules and guidance for corporate climate targets, ensuring voluntary carbon credits remain credible and impactful tools for achieving net-zero emissions. International cooperation to harmonize standards across borders, making VCMs accessible and effective on a global scale.

The report highlights the importance of engaging in and scaling voluntary carbon markets as a complement to achieve global net-zero emissions and mobilise critical financial resources to support climate action.

New report: extreme weather events cost economy $2 trillion over the last decade

A new report, commissioned by the International Chamber of Commerce, estimates that climate-related extreme weather events have cost the global economy more than $2 trillion over the past decade. The research – conducted by the specialist economics consultancy Oxera – pinpoints almost 4,000 events which impacted a total 1.6 billion people between 2014 and 2023.

In the last two full years alone, global economic damages reached $451 billion – representing a 19% increase compared to the previous eight years of the decade. The analysis by Oxera also highlights the acute impact on many developing economies –with single extreme weather events often imposing economic costs more than a country's annual GDP.



John W.H. Denton AO, ICC Secretary General said : The data from the past decade shows definitively that climate change is not a future problem: major productivity losses from extreme weather events are being felt in the here and now by the real economy.

Robert Catherall, Co-Head of Impact Assessment and Public Policy at Oxera said : Our latest analysis underscores the substantial economic toll of climate-related extreme weather events, with an estimated $2 trillion in global losses from nearly 4,000 events—a figure that likely underestimates the true scale of the impact. These events are not only reshaping economies but are deepening inequalities worldwide, placing a significant strain on both public resources and private assets.

The new report was published at the start of COP29 in Baku, with the global business organisation pointing to the findings of the study as evidence of the need for greater urgency from governments in taking action to stem climate change.

ICC announces Wave 3 of the principles for Sustainable Trade to drive global trade sustainability across all sectors



The International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) introduces the third wave of the Principles for Sustainable Trade, incorporating feedback from over 30 leading banks and corporates. The updated principles build on previous versions, offering greater flexibility alongside actionable guidance for assessing trade sustainability across all sectors.

Wave 3 includes the enhanced guidelines for trade finance through the newly released Principles for Sustainable Trade Finance. These provide industry-tailored guidance on the use of proceeds that fits within the wider Principles for Sustainable Trade, with a strong focus on aligning trade transactions with both environmental and socioeconomic sustainability goals.

The Principles for Sustainable Trade cover four key components: Use of proceeds; Buyer; Seller; Distribution. This allows for comprehensive sustainability assessments in line with established frameworks such as the Loan Market Association Green Loan Principles.

Now sector-agnostic, the Principles for Sustainable Trade offer simplified, high-level principles that banks and corporates can easily integrate, with optional granular guidance on how to operationalise the principles. Significant updates, such as improved assessments for use of proceeds and distribution, reflect feedback from the Wave 2 Pilot.

The Principles for Sustainable Trade aim to support global efforts to meet the Paris Agreement targets, decarbonising trade activities, and advancing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Pilot and survey engagement

ICC will run a pilot following the launch of Wave 3 of the Principles for Sustainable Trade where it will be tested on real transactions and for leading trade practitioners to provide their feedback. This collaborative approach will ensure that the principles remain practical, scalable, and reflective of industry needs.

In addition, ICC is launching a survey designed to gather further insights and feedback from industry professionals.

ICC and World Governments Summit announce knowledge partnership



ICC has announced a knowledge partnership with the World Governments Summit (WGS) aimed at forging economic models of the future. The agreement was formalised in a signing ceremony between ICC Secretary-General John W.H. Denton AO and Omar bin Sultan Al Olama, United Arab Emirates (UAE) Minister of State for Artificial Intelligence, Digital Economy, and Remote Work Applications and Director of the WGS.

Under the partnership, ICC and WGS will work closely to exchange insights and best practices to support the design of resilient economic models and international standards conducive to sustainable development, at both regional and global levels. Mr Al Olama underscored the WGS's commitment to improving governance models, enhancing community quality of life, and creating better opportunities for future generations. "Enhancing international partnerships to define future pathways and proactively tackle challenges is central to the vision and mission of the World Governments Summit," he said.

Mr Al Olama said the partnership would add depth to WGS's knowledge resources and strengthen its capacity to support decision-makers with innovative, yet practical, solutions. "Economic, trade, and business sectors hold a prominent position on the summit's agenda, as they are crucial drivers of development and prosperity," he added, highlighting the need for cooperation to design future-oriented economic models.

Recognising WGS's role in fostering dialogue on global issues, ICC Secretary General John W.H. Denton AO said:

"The World Governments Summit is increasingly recognised as a critical platform for discussing and influencing the future of global governance. As the world's largest business organisation, ICC firmly believes that no global challenge can be effectively addressed without the involvement of the private sector. Through our partnership with WGS, we look forward to leveraging the expertise and resources of our vast network, representing over 45 million companies across 170 countries, including 70% from the Global South, to foster innovative approaches to international cooperation."

Mr Denton stressed ICC's commitment to collaborative solutions that are not only innovative but also inclusive, ensuring developing economies have a voice in shaping the global economic landscape.

The World Governments Summit is a global platform that brings together leaders from government, business, and civil society to address pressing global challenges and explore future trends. Through collaborative efforts and knowledge-sharing, the Summit aims to shape the future of governance, foster innovation, and develop sustainable solutions that improve quality of life for communities worldwide.

How the B20 is turning policy into action for a sustainable future

Under the presidency of Brazil, this year's Business 20 (B20) Summit took place in São Paulo on the 24th and 25th of October, bringing together over 1,000 business representatives for discussions under the theme "Inclusive Growth for a Sustainable Future".

As a B20 Network Partner, ICC supported the Brazilian National Confederation of Industry (CNI) in the fulfilment of the theme – contributing to the development of impactful policy recommendations, leveraging the participation of 11 ICC Executive Board members across a range of Task Forces, and ICC and World Chambers Federation leadership in the B20 International Business Advisory Caucus.

The B20 is a global platform for the international business community to support the work of the G20 process. Here's how ICC is working to help the B20 turn policy into action.

As a partner institution of a new B20 initiative to help increase the representation of women in B20 membership and leadership, ICC pledged to support B20 presidencies by proposing women candidates eligible to chair B20 task forces and encouraging women to become B20 members through the mobilisation of the global ICC network in over 170 countries. The SheLeads B20 initiative aims to achieve 50% female representation by 2030. ICC Secretary General John W.H. Denton AO, who co-chaired a B20 Task Force on Finance and Infrastructure, signed the pledge on behalf of ICC, together with representatives from the OECD, Business at OECD, and International Organisation



of Employers (IOE). Prominent women leaders, ICC Honorary Chair Maria Fernanda Garza, ICC Board Member Lama Al-Sulaiman and ICC World Chambers Federation First Vice-Chair Marie Christine Oghly co-chaired B20 Brazil Task Forces on Integrity and Compliance, Employment and Education, and Women, Diversity and Inclusion in Business respectively. Five additional female ICC Board Members (Candace Johnson, Rebecca Enonchong, Marienne Coutinho, Marjorie Yang, and Patricia Nzolantima) were also Members of B20 Task Forces this year.

ICC is also a proud supporter of B20 Brazil's Women in Trade legacy initiative. Working in collaboration with the International Trade Centre (ITC) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the initiative saw the G20 and B20 partner to share knowledge and best practices for inclusive trade policy designed to increase women's participation in international trade.

The Summit also saw the launch of an ICC-B20 Global Challenge against Food Loss and Waste to address food insecurity. The Initiative aims to identify, through a global challenge, private sector projects that can contribute to tackle the most critical issues related to food loss and waste.

Following a consultation phase, businesses worldwide will be invited to submit proposals aimed at addressing the five biggest challenges related to food loss and waste. The highest-ranking projects will be presented at the FAO World Food Forum in October 2025, providing an opportunity for further visibility and engagement with key stakeholders. A founding member of the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty, one of the Brazilian G20 Presidency's key initiatives, ICC is committed to leveraging the unique expertise and network of the private sector to support and scale integrated solutions to sustainably and equitably feed the world.

Addressing B20 participants on a panel looking at how B20 Brazil legacy initiatives are turning policy into action, ICC Secretary General John W.H. Denton AO said:

"Through the ICC-B20 Global Challenge against Food Loss and Waste, we aim to act as a bridge between the B20 and G20, ensuring public-private collaboration to achieve lasting solutions to poverty and hunger worldwide."

ICC and Palestine emerging team up to foster sustainable prosperity in the Middle East

ICC has announced a partnership with Palestine Emerging, a cooperative private-sector initiative, focused on the economic reconstruction and development of Gaza and the West Bank. In line with ICC's commitment to promote peace and prosperity through trade, the partnership aims to support broader efforts to develop strong private sectors and help secure economic stability across the Middle East.

In addition to causing devastating human losses in the region, the ongoing conflict in the Middle East has led to substantial negative economic consequences. Prior to the war, Palestine already had one of the lowest GDP per capita in the region. Under the Palestine Emerging growth scenario, GDP can more than double to potentially reach US$36 billion by 2050, compared to US$19 billion for the base case. Palestine Emerging develops and validates ideas, turning them into detailed plans and investable projects.



Formalising the partnership, ICC and Palestine Emerging committed to a set of joint initiatives aimed at growing the Palestinian economy, to the benefit of the Middle East region at large. These include training for Palestinian SMEs, building export capacity and promoting investment opportunities in Palestine. ICC and Palestine Emerging will also work together to identify opportunities to reduce trade barriers, accelerate dispute resolution and increase cross-border trade.

Three takeaways from ICC WCF Europe and Asia Summit



The first ICC World Chambers Federation (WCF) Regional Summit for Europe and Asia was held in Istanbul from 15 to 16 October bringing together over 800 delegates for discussions focused on advancing collaborative climate action solutions.

Accelerating the transition to a net-zero economy

Co-hosted by the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Türkiye (TOBB), the Summit featured opening speeches by ICC Chair, Philippe Varin, ICC Secretary General John W.H Denton AO and WCF Chair Rifat Hisarciklioglu with a clear message on the role of business to lead the charge on climate action in the final stretch ahead of the United Nations climate conference (COP29) in Baku from 11 to 22 November.

"Our collective response to the challenge of climate change will shape the world for generations to come. We are at a pivotal moment in history, where what we choose to do – or not do – will, most certainly, echo far into the future" ICC Chair, Philippe Varin.

Boosting cross border business for SMEs

ICC's new ICC One Click platform was unveiled by ICC Chair Philippe Varin. Designed to help small businesses grow through international trade, ICC One Click is a one-stop gateway to ICC's extensive and practical range of tools and services for every step of the trade journey. Available in several languages, the platform features trusted ICC solutions including ICC Model Contracts, Incoterms® Rules, ATA Carnets and Dispute Resolution – as well as specialised services made available by ICC institutional partners – such as the Global Trade Helpdesk.

Insights from the global real economy

Findings of the first! ICC World Chambers Federation Global Economic Survey were presented at the Summit during a panel discussion led by ICC Lead Economist Melanie Laloum. The "Chamber Pulse" survey captures insights from over 200 chambers of commerce from businesses on key economic and sustainability issues across economies that collectively account for 90% of global GDP.

Building on the resounding success of the ICC WCF World Chambers Congress, WCF regional summits are aimed at tackling global challenges through a regional perspective. They are co-hosted with local chambers further extending ICC's impact and global reach.

The next regional summit will be the first WCF Africa Summit, hosted by Kenya. "Africa's Global Future: Integrated, Innovative, and Sustainable" will take place from 9 to 11 April 2025 in Nairobi.

ICC reaches arbitration milestone with 29,000th case

The Secretariat of the ICC International Court of Arbitration has registered the 29,000th case under the ICC Rules of Arbitration. This new milestone showcases ICC's impact in Brazil, where the case was registered, and beyond, highlighting ICC's role in facilitating global trade and resolving disputes for businesses.

The milestone case involves Brazilian parties from the power and energy sector, governed by Brazilian law, with a tribunal to be seated in Rio de Janeiro. The parties had initially agreed to ad hoc arbitration under the UNCITRAL Rules, with ICC as the appointing authority. They then modified that agreement in favour of arbitration under the ICC Rules of Arbitration.

Alexander G. Fessas, Secretary General of the ICC Court and Director of ICC Dispute Resolution Services, said: "When the Secretariat's São Paolo's office opened seven years ago, we pledged to provide long-term support to the ever-developing disputes landscape in Brazil and Latin America. We now celebrate the success of that pledge with the registration of our 29,000th case, and the trust parties place in ICC Arbitration."

In 2023, ICC Arbitration involved 80 Brazilian parties (including 12 state-owned entities) in newly registered cases, and the ICC Court confirmed or appointed 60 arbitrators coming



from Brazil. Brazil ranks sixth globally in terms of the nationality of parties and arbitrators.

Parties from Latin America and the Caribbean account for approximately 15% of all parties in arbitrations registered with ICC. Brazil has traditionally been the leading jurisdiction in Latin America and is the fifth most used seat of arbitration worldwide. In terms of applicable laws in newly registered cases in Latin America, Brazil came second (29 cases), just behind Mexico (35 cases).

Same-nationality party disputes represented 29% of the ICC Court's new caseload in 2023, with 21 cases involving only parties coming from Brazil. This makes Brazil the second top jurisdiction resorting to ICC Arbitration for domestic disputes in 2023.

The energy sector traditionally generates the second largest number of ICC cases, slightly behind the construction and engineering sector, accounting for over 20.6% of all new cases registered in 2023.

Ana Serra e Moura, Deputy Secretary General of ICC International Court of Arbitration, said: "The registration of the 29,000th case involving Brazilian parties highlights ICC's consistent growth in Brazil and beyond, in one of the most important industry sectors. It is now time to pause and celebrate the trust of our users and the relentless work of our teams on ensuring that ICC Dispute Resolution Services meet the needs of global business."

Efforts to expand ICC Dispute Resolution Services in Latin America began with the establishment of a dedicated case management team in São Paulo in 2017, following the inauguration of ICC Brazil in 2014. Since then, the ICC Secretariat's case management team in Brazil has administered over 650 cases, in recent years surpassing 100 cases annually, further solidifying Brazil's importance in ICC operations.

As ICC continues to strengthen its presence in Latin America, key regional developments will be discussed at the upcoming 22nd ICC Miami Conference on International Arbitration from 1 to 3 December 2024, including significant updates from Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, and Ecuador.

Regulatory barriers threaten transition towards circular economy: ICC report warns

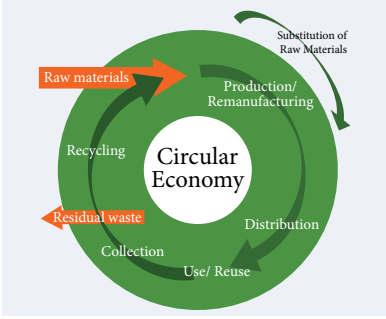
Political pledges to scale the adoption of circular economy solutions will ultimately be worthless without a fundamental reengineering of legacy regulatory frameworks, according to a new report by the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC).

Published in partnership with EY, the report – "Putting the circular economy into motion: From barriers to opportunities" – highlights the significant obstacles companies encounter when transitioning to circular business models that could otherwise deliver significant environmental, reputational and financial gains.

The circular economy is intended to maximise resource efficiency and minimise environmental impact by promoting continuous use, reuse and recycling of materials and products. But the study concludes that existing regulatory systems are not fit for purpose in enabling such approaches at scale – largely as a result of significant inconsistencies in national environmental laws and regulations that remain based on linear models of production and consumption.

Regulatory barriers highlighted by the report include: Complex and fragmented import and export processes for secondary materials which create significant compliance and operational costs; Lack of a common international standard for "remanufactured" products; Customs systems that do not accommodate reverse logistics and No recognition of circular approaches under the 1989 Basel Convention on hazardous waste.

Based on an extensive series of interviews with businesses across a range of industries, the study also highlights a range of challenges companies face when looking to deploy circular approaches – from



infrastructure gaps through to high upfront investment needs. It also pinpoints the need for a concerted effort to shift consumer perceptions and behaviour – including prevailing misconceptions about the quality of remanufactured, refurbished or recycled goods and materials.

The report concludes with a number of broad recommendations to incentivize the uptake of circular business models – starting with the facilitation of cross-border trade in secondary materials.

ICC joins Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty



ICC has become a founding member of the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty, established under Brazil's G20 presidency. Through evidence-based policies, the Alliance aims to boost public-private collaboration to achieve lasting solutions to poverty and hunger worldwide.

Committing to the Alliance's mission, objectives and principles, ICC is amplifying the urgent need to end poverty and hunger globally, and fully implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set out in the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Despite significant efforts, the world is not on track to attain SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 2 (Zero Hunger). As a member of the Alliance, ICC has committed to support and scale integrated approaches and the implementation of policy instruments and programmes to eradicate hunger and poverty globally.

A purpose-led institution, working to enable business to secure peace, prosperity and opportunity for all, ICC acknowledges that hunger and malnutrition are direct consequences of poverty and inequality. ICC will support the Alliance by leveraging its unique expertise and network created with the ICC Agri-Food Initiative.

Established in 2022, the ICC Agri-Food Initiative serves as a platform to share knowledge and lessons learnt between public and private sector players in the agri-food space. Building on ICC's Permanent Observer Status to the United Nations General Assembly, the ICC Agri-Food Initiative has developed a strong partnership with the UN Rome-based agencies specialised in food and agriculture – namely the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), World Food Programme (WFP), and International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

As a founding member of the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty, ICC endorses a mission to support and accelerate efforts to eradicate hunger and poverty (SDGs 1 and 2) while reducing inequalities (SDG 10). The Alliance also aims to revitalise global partnerships for sustainable development (SDG 17) and achieve other interlinked SDGs, championing sustainable, inclusive, and just transitions.

Bangladesh Economy

Bangladesh faces challenges of the Middle-Income Trap: White Paper

The white paper on Bangladesh's economy said the country has already fallen into the middle-income trap as employment and productivity data conflict with the past years' higher-growth narratives. Bangladesh started falling into the trap in the fiscal year 2013-14 and is now already trapped, according to Dr Zahid Hussain, a member of the white paper committee.

Referring to World Bank (WB) surveys, the white paper said other countries fell into the trap upon reaching the per capita income threshold of $8,000, but Bangladesh is still below that.

"An inverse relationship between the shares of industry in employment and production in quarterly data, stagnating or declining productivity in industry, the gross domestic product (GDP) intensity of exports, stagnating private investment, public expenditures on health and education, and governance indicators together signal entrapment, if not entropy," the white paper said.



The white paper, submitted to Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus on 1 December, also said the inflated growth data crowded out attention to the low-frequency data on "structural stagnation". The country sleepwalked into a downward sloping growth path emblematic of the family of middle-income traps, it noted.

Drawing lessons from the experience of 100 countries in the past 50 years, the WB has found that countries usually hit a trap upon reaching about 10 per cent of the annual US GDP per capita or the equivalent of $8,000 in 2024, according to the white paper.Bangladesh is not even close to these levels of per capita income of $8,000, it added. Meanwhile, the country graduated to the low middle-income status in 2015.

The middle-income trap is a situation where a country experiences rapid economic growth and moves from low-income to middle-income status, but then struggles to become a high-income economy.

The unreal growth narratives especially since 2010, the failure to transform the dividend population into human capital, and institutional fragility are the key reasons behind Bangladesh's fall into the trap.

According to the WB, 108 countries are currently in the middle-income trap, including major economies like China, Brazil, Turkey, and India. Some factors that make it difficult for countries to escape the trap include high debt, ageing populations, and growing protectionism in advanced economies.

Bangladesh recognized as Country of the Year: The Economist

The Economist

Bangladesh has earned the title of The Economist's Country of the Year, surpassing Syria, Argentina, South Africa, and Poland for its remarkable progress. Every year, The Economist chooses one country that has shown the most remarkable improvement over the past year and this year Bangladesh was given the honour.

Previous winners include Colombia (for ending a civil war), Ukraine (for resisting an unprovoked invasion) and Malawi (for democratising). In 2023 the prize was given to Greece for dragging itself out of a long financial crisis and re-electing a sensible centrist government.

The Economist clarified in its report that the winner is not the richest, happiest or most virtuous place, but the one that has improved the most in the previous 12 months. The report said Bangladesh has overthrown an autocrat. In August, student-led street protests forced out Sheikh Hasina, who had ruled the country of 175 million for 15 years. A daughter of an independence hero, she once presided over swift economic growth. But she became repressive, rigging elections, jailing opponents and ordering the security forces to shoot protesters. Huge sums of money were stolen on her watch.

"Bangladesh has a history of vengeful violence when power changes hands. The main opposition party, the BNP, is venal. Islamic extremism is a threat. Yet the transition has so far been encouraging," read the report. The report further said a temporary

technocratic government, led by Muhammad Yunus, a Nobel peace prize winner, is backed by students, the army, business and civil society and "has restored order and stabilised the economy".

"In 2025 it will need to repair ties with India and decide when to hold elections – first ensuring that the courts are neutral and the opposition has time to organise. None of this will be easy. But for toppling a despot and taking strides towards a more liberal government, Bangladesh is our country of the year," the report further stated.

According to The Economist report, Syria was the runner-up and a late entrant in the race. The ousting of Bashar al-Assad on 8 December ended half a century of depraved dynastic dictatorship. In just the past 13 years civil war and state violence have killed perhaps 600,000 people.

Mastercard lists Bangladesh among top 8 countries for population migration

Bangladesh is among the top eight countries with the highest population outflows, driven by the pursuit of better opportunities abroad and concerns over security at home, according to a Mastercard report.

"Bangladesh is one of the markets with the largest outflows of population, alongside India, Mexico, Russia, Syria, the Chinese Mainland, Pakistan and Ukraine, driven by various factors, including the search for better opportunities and security concerns," said Mastercard in the report.

However, the outflow of population from Bangladesh helps the country's economy with the inflow of remittances, accounting for 5% of its GDP. The Mastercard Economics Institute (MEI) released its annual economic outlook for 2025, forecasting continued growth for Asia Pacific aligned with 2024 levels, while lower inflation and easing interest rates are set to provide relief to consumers and households.

This is largely in line with broader economic trends, as the global economy is expected to see 3.2% growth following a pace of 3.1% in 2024, it projected.

Bangladesh diverts textile exports through Maldives, bypassing India

Bangladesh, the world's second largest garment producer, has opted to bypass India to ship its textile exports through the Maldives for onward distribution to global markets, affecting the cargo revenue prospects of India's airports and seaports amid strained bilateral ties, Indian media outlet Mint reported quoting three people aware of the development.

The MSC (Mediterranean Shipping Company) is a leading global container shipping company.The three people said Bangladesh is rerouting its textile exports to the Maldives by sea and then dispatching cargoes by air to its global customers including H&M and Zara.

According to the report, the redirection of textile exports could weaken trade relations between India and Bangladesh and reduce the collaborative opportunities in logistics and infrastructure projects. It could also potentially threaten India's revenue from port and transit fees, alongside business generated from Bangladesh's exports that pass through Indian borders, it added.

The Indian government is now exploring a balanced solution to ensure that Bangladesh's textile exports –significant in volume and linked to Indian manufacturing hubs in Bangladesh – remain beneficial to Indian interests, one person said."A significant portion of these Bangladeshi textile exports are being produced in facilities or factories owned or operated by Indian companies based in Bangladesh," he said.

According to the Mind report, Bangladesh's textile industry contributes 80 percent to its exports and 13 percent to its GDP."The issue



is under the government's attention. We are currently reviewing its impact on India," the second person said.

Industry experts suggested that Bangladesh took this step to gain greater control over its supply chain and meet its shipment deadlines by avoiding delays caused at India's airports."This new route offers Bangladesh a strategic advantage along with improved reliability, which is crucial for meeting tight deadlines in the international clothing market," said Arun Kumar, president of the Association of Multimodal Transport Operators of India, an industry body advocating seamless, efficient transportation solutions across sea, rail and road networks in India.

"Furthermore, by avoiding reliance on Indian ports, Bangladesh is ensuring greater control over its supply chain."Kumar explained that textiles are also treated as perishable goods and that failure to deliver them on time results in the rejection of consignments. Garments meant for a specific season lose their value if they are delivered late.

According to the report, Indian textile exporters had a different perspective on the rerouting of exports by Bangladesh."There's nothing to read into this. Indian airports are already congested, and we had also requested the government to restrict Bangladeshi textiles from passing through Indian airports," Anil Buchasia, Executive Member Apparel Export Promotion Council for the eastern region, told Mint.

The third person aware of the developments dismissed suggestions that the move was linked to the ouster in August of former Bangladesh prime minister Sheikh Hasina, who is currently said to be staying in India. The International Crimes Tribunal (Bangladesh) had issued a warrant for her arrest in October."The government does not see this as a reaction to Sheikh Hasina's asylum. Textiles are the backbone of Bangladesh's economy, so they must have made this decision to promote their textile exports," the third person said.

Queries emailed to the secretary and spokesperson of the ministry of commerce and industry and the High Commissions of Bangladesh and Maldives in India remained unanswered until publication time.

Maldives Airports Company Ltd offers a sea-to-air cargo transshipment service, which allows goods to be transported to the Maldives by sea and then flown to global destinations. Started in March 2024, the inaugural shipment consisted of garments from Bangladesh, which arrived in the Maldives by sea and were flown to Germany via Turkish Airlines in May, according to a media report.

Seven airlines – Qatar Airways, Emirates, Turkish Airlines, Aeroflot, Gulf Air, Neos Airlines, and Etihad Airways – were part of the transshipment network, the report said.

Nepal starts supplying power to Bangladesh via India



Electricity supply from Nepal through Indian grid began on 15 November, marking the first-ever trilateral power transaction among the three countries.The initiative, which sees Bangladesh initially receiving up to 40 MW of electricity from Nepal, underscores a new chapter in sub-regional energy connectivity, according to a press release.

The development follows a tripartite agreement signed on 3 October, 2024, between the Nepal Electricity Authority, Bangladesh Power Development Board and NTPC Vidyut Vyapar Nigam of India.Officials highlighted that the transaction will bolster energy security, enhance cooperation, and increase the share of renewable energy in Bangladesh's power mix.

Power, energy and mineral resources adviser Muhammad Fouzul Kabir Khan, Haryana chief minister and Indian minister for power Manohar Lal Khattar and Nepal minister of energy, water resources and irrigation, Dipak Khadka attended the inaugural ceremony held virtually on 15 November.

Chief adviser Dr. Muhammad Yunus recently called for the creation of a South Asian electricity grid, enabling seamless power exchange within the region. The launching of this new circuit of power supply from Nepal marks a critical step toward that goal, fostering stronger economic and energy linkages between South Asian nations.

Bangladesh-Pakistan establish first direct Maritime link

The first-ever direct maritime link between Bangladesh and Pakistan has started. A cargo vessel from Pakistan's Karachi has arrived at Chittagong Port carrying a diverse array of goods with an estimated 2,300 TEUs of capacity, the vessel's voyage highlights growing demand for direct trade between the two countries, according to a press release issued on 13 November.

Pakistan High Commissioner to Bangladesh Syed Ahmed Maroof termed the direct shipping route a major step forward in enhancing bilateral trade and business ties between Pakistan and Bangladesh besides boosting a more integrated and trade network across the region.

He said the initiative will not only accelerate the existing trade flows but also promote new opportunities for businesses on both sides. According to Chattogram Port Authority Panama-flagged vessel Yuan Xiang Fa Zhan arrived at Chattogram port from Dubai via Karachi on 11 November. The vessel carried 370 TEU containers, which were unloaded. Ot departed Chattogram on 12 November.



There is currently no fixed route for direct shipping between Chattogram and Pakistan. The Yuan Xiang Fa Zhan arrived at Chattogram Port through the Dubai-Karachi- Chattogram route.

Bangladesh lost $21 billion to heatwave impacts last year

Heat exposure had severe economic consequences for Bangladesh last year, leading to an estimated income loss of $21 billion due to reduced labour capacity, according to the latest Lancet Countdown report.The previous year, the figure stood at $19 billion.

Agricultural workers were particularly affected, experiencing 63.5 percent of the potential hours lost and 54 percent of the associated income losses, said the 2024 report titled "Lancet Countdown on Health and Climate Change: Facing Record-breaking Threats from Delayed Action".

The study released on 31 October said nearly 26.5 billion potential labour hours were lost due to heat exposure in 2023.Individuals faced moderate or higher heat stress risks for approximately 2,800 hours a year from 2014 to 2023, which is equivalent to one-third of the year during light outdoor activities, it added.

Exposure to high temperatures threatens people's lives, health, and wellbeing, leading to death and heat-related disease, and increasing healthcare demand during heatwave episodes, the report said.

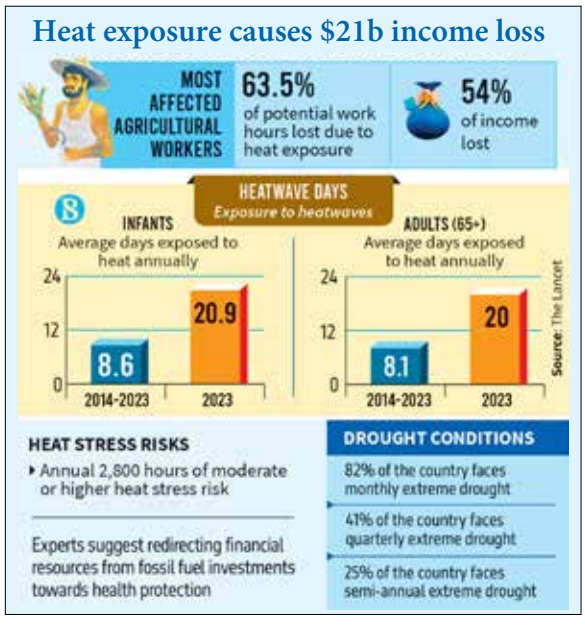
People above 65, socio economically deprived communities, very young children, pregnant women, and those with underlying health problems are particularly at risk to exposure to high temperatures, found the study.

From 2014 to 2023, infants and adults over 65, who mainly stay indoors during heatwaves, experienced 8.6 and 8.1 heatwave days per year on average."In 2023 alone, the same groups were exposed to record highs of 20.9 and 20 heatwave days per year," the report said.

Besides the heatwave, continued use of fossil fuels and biomass lead to high levels of air pollution, which increases the risk of respiratory and cardiovascular disease, lung cancer, diabetes, neurological disorders, and adverse pregnancy outcomes, it added.

Air pollution is believed to have caused more than 2.12 lakh deaths in Bangladesh in 2021, the report said, adding that around 40 percent of these deaths were caused by fossil fuel usage. The Lancet Countdown has calculated the monetised value of the premature deaths at $52.6 billion.

According to Lancet Countdown's 2020 report, air pollution caused



deaths of around 1 lakh people in the country.The shift in temperature and precipitation associated with climate change is also causing many infectious diseases, including vector-borne, food-borne, and water-borne ones, the study found."Each year from 2019-2023, an average 82 percent of Bangladesh's land area experienced at least one month of extreme drought," it added.

Global findings from the 8th annual indicator report by a total of 122 researchers from UN agencies and academic institutions worldwide revealed the alarming new records in health risks associated with climate change. It emphasised the urgent need to redirect financial resources from fossil fuel investments towards health protection.

Marina Romanello, executive director of the Lancet Countdown, stressed the urgent need for action, stating that the ongoing expansion of the fossil fuel use exacerbates health impacts linked to climate change, threatening to undo the limited progress achieved thus far.

The report recommended a transformative approach to global financial systems that prioritises health and reallocates resources from a fossil fuel-dependent economy to a zero-emissions future. This transition will promote public health and wellbeing through cleaner air, better diets, and sustainable job opportunities.

Public Services pose major challenges for Businesses in Bangladesh: World Bank

The World Bank on 3 October launched its new business and investment climate survey of 50 economies where Bangladesh has performed poorly in the effectiveness of public services such as electricity and tax administration.The inaugural 2024 report "Business Ready (B-READY)" covers three key measures of a country's business climate – the quality of regulations, effectiveness of public services and operational efficiencies.

WB said, "Nearly all 50 economies assessed this year perform better on their regulatory framework than they do on the public services they provide to ease compliance by businesses. Such implementation gaps keep businesses, workers, and society as a whole from reaping the full benefits of a healthy business climate."

Among the three pillars, Bangladesh performed worst in public services, followed by the regulatory framework, while performing the best in operational efficiency.Bangladesh scored 41.64 out of 100 in the public services pillar which spanned the facilities that governments provide to support compliance with regulations and the institutions and infrastructure that enable business activities. Estonia scored highest in public services, at 73.31 followed by Singapore, Croatia and Portugal.

In the regulatory framework, Bangladesh scored 56.99. The pillar assessed the rules and regulations that firms must follow as they open, operate, and close a business. Hungary had the highest regulatory framework score at 78.23, followed by Portugal, Georgia and the Slovak Republic.



However, Bangladesh performed better in the operational efficiency pillar, which captured the ease of compliance with the regulatory framework and the effective use of public services directly relevant to firms. It posted a score of 70.49.

Singapore, which often led the defunct Doing Business rankings, scored highest in operational efficiency at 87.33 followed by Georgia, Rwanda and Estonia.B-READY focuses on ten topics that are organised following the life cycle of the firm and its participation in

the market while opening, operating (or expanding), and closing (or reorganising) a business.

The main topics include business entry, business location, utility services, labour, financial services, international trade, taxation, dispute resolution, market competition, and business insolvency.

Bangladesh scored lowest in business insolvency, dispute resolution, and market competition. Within these areas, there are no digital services regarding liquidation and reorganisation proceedings, the economy lags in the organisational structure of courts, and lacks digitisation of intellectual property services.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh scored highest in business entry, business location, and labour. Within these areas, domestic firms do not encounter business-entry restrictions, domestic firms do not face restrictions on owning and leasing a property, and the economy implements good practices in terms of labour-dispute-resolution mechanisms.

Across all topics and pillars, B-READY analyses more than 1,200 indicators.For the B-READY, the World Bank surveyed more than 2,500 experts and 29,000 firms across 50 economies, after scrapping the "Doing Business" rankings in 2021. Moreover, the coverage will increase over the next three years to reach about 180 economies in 2026, providing a full global benchmark.

Western Marine plans to export eight ships to UAE by 2025

After a pause of five years, shipbuilder Western Marine Shipyard Ltd is planning to export eight ships to a buyer of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) by 2025. It was in January 2020 that the shipbuilder last exported two large bulk carriers to Indian Jindal Steel Works. It has faced a financial crunch since 2014 for a fall in the global market for shipbuilding and shipping business.



The situation had worsened for the company due to conflicts among its directors and a massive amount of debt accruing with banks and financial institutions following the Covid pandemic. The shipbuilder is now hoping to make a comeback. The company signed a deal worth $7.3 million in 2023 with the UAE-based buyer, Marwan Shipping Ltd, for the construction of four landing craft vessels, two tugboats and two oil tankers. Out of the eight vessels, the shipbuilder has completed building a 69-metre-long landing craft, named Rayan, said Western Marine Managing Director Captain Sohail Hasan.

It will be handed over to the buyer by January, he told a press briefing on the Western Cruise ship anchored at Chattogram Boat Club on 28 December. Of the rest, two high-powered tugboats named Khalid and Ghaya would be exported by April, said Hasan, adding that the remaining five vessels would be delivered gradually within 2025. "The UAE firm is supplying all the raw materials for building these ships and only paying us the making charges," said Captain Hasan. "It means the whole of this $7.3 million of foreign currency can be retained within the country as we don't need to purchase anything from abroad," he added.

The MD said in 2017, Western Marine exported a similar landing craft vessel to the same UAE-based buyer. The return of this buyer in search of a new vessel is a testament to the fact that it is satisfied with ships built in Bangladesh, he said. Western Marine entered into shipbuilding in 2000 and earned good reputation internationally. But the situation started to turn bad since 2014 following cancellation of several orders from foreign buyers.

In 2008, the shipbuilder signed a €94 million contract with German company Grona Shipping to build 12 ice class cargo vessels. Only four out of these 12 ships were delivered smoothly at its original price. Western Marine had to deliver four other ships at a discount, while the German buyer cancelled the order for the remaining four ships, citing global inflation and the eurozone crisis in 2012-2013.

An official of Western Marine said, "During that period shipping freight dropped drastically worldwide and global shipping and shipbuilding business faced a huge crisis which had led our European

buyer towards insolvency and order cancellations."

A Danish buyer also cancelled an order for two vessels when those were already half built, he said, adding that they later managed to sell one of those two ships to a company of Equador at a discount. These order cancellations as well as global market fall in shipping and shipbuilding business led the company to face a financial crunch since 2014.

"Moreover, we built some fishing vessels and inland utility vessels for government bodies of Bangladesh and some individuals worth around Tk 500 crore during the same time period," he said.

He said Bangladesh Bank in 2022 formed a Tk 2,000 crore refinance scheme to ensure sustainable development of the shipping industry, but no company could get money from that fund due to different complications.

He urged the government to create such a fund and to provide loans from that fund at low interest rates to help the sector in staying afloat.

Source : The Daily Star

PRAN-RFL group to revitalize two State-Owned close textile mills

The PRAN-RFL Group has formally agreed to reopen two state-owned textile mills that had been shut down for almost thirty years, which is a major step forward for Bangladesh's textile sector. A public-private partnership aimed at revitalising these facilities was launched on 27 October with the agreement between PRAN and the Bangladesh Textile Mills Corporation (BTMC).

The Rajshahi Textile Mill and the RR Textile Mill in Sitakunda, Chittagong, will be rebranded as BarendraRajshahi Textiles Limited and Chittagong RR Textiles Limited, respectively, under a 30-year contract. "With seven mills approaching reopening and aspirations to build 17 more through comparable leasing and PPP arrangements, this agreement is a part of a larger endeavour," said Brigadier General Sakhawat Hossain, the chief guest at the ceremony and the Jute and Textile Adviser.

The head of the PRAN-RFL Group, Ahsan Khan Chowdhury, was upbeat about the mills' prospects, saying they want to start up again in a month and provide a large number of jobs for the community. Chowdhury declared, "We want to build a green factory," highlighting the dedication to sustainability and the utilisation of solar panels to maximise the area surrounding the mills.

The RR Textile Mill was in operation from its founding in 1963 until its closing in 1997. Following a competitive tender process, the government authorised its reopening in December 2017 under the PPP model, choosing PRAN Consortium as the private partner. After a three-year grace period, the group would pay BTMC an annual charge of Taka 3.22 crore after making a one-time payment of Taka 10 crore for land use.

In a same vein, PRAN's affiliate Charuka Textile will reopen the Rajshahi Textile Mill, which was established in 1975 and shut down in 1997. A one-time payment of Taka 6 crore and an annual charge of Taka 1.715 crore beyond the grace period are required for this mill.

The BTMC now manages 24 closed textile mills, 16 of which are scheduled to be operated under PPP agreements. Nevertheless, despite several tenders, attempts to revive Feni's Dost Textile and Magura Textile have failed to attract any bidders. While property for Kaderia Textile Mills in Gazipur has already been given to Orion-Kaderia Textiles Limited, negotiations are still underway to transfer Ahmed Bawany Textile Mills in Dhaka to a private partner.

Furthermore, the government has authorised lease-based operations for a number of additional mills, such as Sylhet Textile Mills and Valika Woollen Mills in Chittagong. Ten more textile mills have been nominated by BTMC for possible PPP agreements as part of its future objectives.

After 74 textile mills were nationalised after Bangladesh gained its independence, the BTMC was founded on 1st July 1972, and it remains a vital part of the nation's textile industry.

USAID allocates $121 million to support WFP's Rohingya relief efforts in Bangladesh

The UN World Food Programme (WFP) has received new contribution of US$121 million from USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance to support ongoing humanitarian efforts in the Rohingya crisis in Bangladesh.

This latest contribution from the US includes both in-kind and financial support aimed at addressing the urgent needs of more than one million Rohingyas, along with the host communities, accorting to a press release on 24 October. The assistance package is intended to provide lifesaving food and nutrition aid while also supporting resilience-building and disaster risk reduction measures within the refugee camps.

"The United States continues to lead the way in funding this crucial humanitarian response for the Rohingya. Their (Rohingyas) needs, as well as those of their generous host communities, must remain a priority for the international community," said Reed Aeschliman, USAID Mission Director in Bangladesh.

The funds will be channelled into various critical areas, including food and nutritional support, particularly for children and pregnant or breastfeeding women in host communities. WFP will focus on preventing and treating malnutrition, which remains a pressing issue in the camps.Dom Scalpelli, WFP Country Director in Bangladesh, expressed gratitude for the support.

"We hope other humanitarian and development partners will follow this example. Only through collective efforts can we meet the basic needs of Rohingya families until they can safely return to Myanmar," he said. In addition to food security, the funding will help WFP meet emergency food needs during sudden crises, such as cyclones, floods, landslides, and fires.

Immediate assistance, such as hot meals and fortified biscuits, will be made available to Rohingya families affected by these disasters.Despite these efforts, WFP urgently requires an additional US$80 million in funding to sustain the full ration and continue operations into next year.

Japanese Mitsui buys 18.5% stake in ACI Motors for $22.75 million

Japanese Mitsui & Company, through its Singaporean subsidiary, has acquired some 18.5% stake from two existing investors of ACI Motors for $22.75 million, equivalent to approximately Tk270 crore.

Mitsui, in a public statement on 29 November, had announced the investment without disclosing any numbers. However, it expressed its interest to provide "integrated mobility and mechanisation solutions for agri-businesses, transportation, and infrastructure through the strategic partnership with ACI."

Meanwhile, having the deal closed, ACI Motors now eyes leveraging the strategic partnership with the top-tier multinational Japanese



conglomerate. The company plans to fuel its growth through expanding in areas such as passenger vehicle, electric vehicle, rice processing, and exploring export markets for its locally made agro machineries. ACI Motors will get two top level executives from Mitsui who will add value to the company's strategic decision-making.

Mitsui, having offices in 61 countries and over $100 billion annual turnover, operates in the areas ranging from trading, logistics and financing, infrastructure, energy, mobility, chemicals, iron and steel products, food and retail management, wellness, IT and communication and corporate development businesses. In its statement, Mitsui expressed interest in retail and logistics, citing the rapid growth of the consumer market in Bangladesh.

ACI Motors, the mechanical and automobile arm of ACI Limited – one of the country's largest conglomerates – is a top growing company specialising in agro machineries, construction equipment, generators, two-

wheelers, and commercial vehicles, with partnerships with leading global brands.

During the pandemic, ACI Motors attracted several foreign investors, including Dutch development financier FMO, British International Investment, Norwegian government's Norfund, and Singapore-based SDI. A key promoter sold nearly 14% ACI Motors shares to Mitsui while the rest was sold by the foreign investors' private equity vehicle. Foreign investors' shares issued in 2021 are convertible preference shares that the investor may convert into common shares at their will.

Chinese company JIDALAI to invest US$ 5.85 million in Adamjee EPZ

JIDALAI Co. Ltd. is going to invest US$ 5.85 million to set up a Pullers of Zipper manufacturing industry in Adamjee Export Processing Zone (AEPZ). This Chinese company will produce annually 70 million pieces of pullers of zipper where 189 Bangladeshi nationals will get employment opportunity. Mentionable, JIDALAI Co. is a strategic business partner of world renowned zipper brand 'YKK'.

BEPZA signed an agreement with JIDALAI Co. Ltd. to this effect at BEPZA Complex, Dhaka on 16 October. Member (Investment Promotion) of BEPZA Mr. Md. Ashraful Kabir and Managing Director of JIDALAI Co. Ltd Mr. Hsu, Hsueh-Min signed the agreement on behalf of their respective organizations. The Executive Chairman of BEPZA Major General Abul Kalam Mohammad Ziaur Rahman, BSP, ndc, psc witnessed the signing ceremony.

BEPZA Executive Chairman thanked JIDALAI Co. for choosing BEPZA as their investment destination. He said that BEPZA is one of the most successful organizations of Bangladesh in terms of attracting investment through providing services to the investors for over 44 years. He assured the JIDALAI Co. to provide all sorts of support for running their business smoothly.

Member (Engineering) Mohammad Faruque Alam, Member (Finance) A N M Foyzul Haque, Executive Director (Admin) A.S.M.



ZamshedKhondaker, Executive Director (Investment Promotion) Md. Tanvir Hossain, Executive Director (Enterprise Services) Md. Khorshid Alam and Executive Director (Public Relations) A.S.M Anwar Parvez along with representatives of the enterprise and Managing Director of YKK Bangladesh Pte Ltd. Mr. Jin Deguchi were present during the signing ceremony.

Chinese firm commits $19.53 million investment in Mongla EPZ

Bangladesh BaoRui Textile Co. Ltd., a Chinese company, is set to invest US$ 19.53 million in Mongla Export Processing Zone (Mongla EPZ) to establish a composite textile manufacturing industry. The Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (BEPZA) signed an agreement with the company on December 2at the BEPZA Complex in Dhaka. BEPZA Executive Chairman Major General Abul Kalam Mohammad Ziaur Rahman witnessed the signing ceremony, where member (Investment Promotion) of BEPZA Md. Ashraful Kabir and Managing Director of Bangladesh BaoRui Textile Co. Ltd. Huang Hua signed the agreement on behalf of their respective organizations.

The Chinese company plans to produce 10 million lbs of raw yarn, six million lbs of knitted fabric, and 1 million pieces of garments annually, creating employment opportunities for 1,505 Bangladeshi nationals.

BEPZA Executive Chairman thanked Bangladesh BaoRui Textile for choosing Mongla EPZ



as their investment destination, highlighting BEPZA's commitment to providing a secure and supportive environment for investors. He encouraged the company and other Chinese investors to consider further investments in diverse sectors, including pharmaceuticals, solar panels, man-made fibers, etc.

The signing ceremony was attended by BEPZA officials, including Executive Director (Investment Promotion) Md. Tanvir Hossain, Executive Director (Enterprise Services) Md. Khorshid Alam, Executive Director (Admin) A.S.M. ZamshedKhondaker and Executive Director (Public Relations) A.S.M Anwar Parvez, among others.

Singapore-China joint venture to invest $18 million in BEPZA Economic Zone

Chic Wings (BD) Lingerie Co. Limited, a Singapore-China owned company, is set to invest $18 million to establish a garments manufacturing industry in the BEPZA Economic Zone (BEPZA EZ).The Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (BEPZA) signed an agreement with the company to this effect at the BEPZA Complex in the capital today.

In presence of BEPZA Executive Chairman Major General Abul Kalam Mohammad Ziaur Rahman, Member (Investment Promotion) of BEPZA Md. Ashraful Kabir and Managing Director of Chic Wings (BD) Lingerie Co. Limited Lijuan Chen signed the agreement on behalf of their respective organizations.

This foreign company will produce annually 30 million pieces of brief, undergarments, slip, boxer, short, camisole, bra and vest. The company will create employment opportunities for 3000 Bangladeshi nationals. BEPZA Executive Chairman thanked Chic Wings (BD) for investing in Bangladesh, particularly in the BEPZA EZ, and assured the company of providing all necessary support for smooth business operations.

The signing ceremony was attended by Member (Engineering) Mohammad Faruque Alam, Member (Finance) A N M Foyzul Haque, Executive Director (Investment Promotion) Md. Tanvir Hossain, Executive Director (Enterprise Services) Md. Khorshid Alam, Executive Director (Admin) A.S.M. ZamshedKhondaker, and Executive Director (Public Relations) A.S.M Anwar Parvez, along with representatives of the enterprise.

BEPZA EZ, located in Mirsharai, Chattogram, is the largest venture of BEPZA. Some 36 companies, including Chic Wings (BD), have signed agreements to set up industries in this zone, with a total proposed investment of US$ 868.5 million. Among them, three have already commenced commercial operations.

ADB, WB approved $1.1b budget support to Bangladesh

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the World Bank (WB) have approved a total of US$1.1 billion budget support for Bangladesh. Of the US$1.1 billion budget support, the WB approved $500 million while the ADB $600 million to accelerate the reforms and development activities of the interim government, according to finance ministry press release on 22 December.

The budget support of a total of $1.1 billion is expected to be available by December 2024. In addition to the budget support, the World Bank

has also approved $379 million for the country's health and nutrition sector and $280 million for the development of the water supply system in Chattogram.

On 18 December 2024, a loan agreement of $600 million was signed between the government of Bangladesh and the ADB for the programme titled 'Strengthening Economic Management and Governance Programme, Subprogramme 1'. This programme was formulated at the initiative of the finance division.

The WB has approved a budget support of $500 million for Bangladesh on 19 December 2024. The WB is providing this budget support under the 'Second Bangladesh Green and Climate Resilient Development Credit' for the successful implementation of green and climate-resilient development reform programmes.

$50 million IFC investment in the City Bank to boost SME Sector

IFC, a member of the World Bank Group, is investing $50 million in City Bank PLC to help SMEs grow, create jobs, and boost economic recovery. On this occasion, an agreement signing ceremony was recently held at the head office of City Bank.

The investment from IFC will help close the gap in SME financing, as the City Bank will use the funds to extend new loans to SMEs, particularly those involved in import and export.This partnership comes at a critical time for the financial sector when inflation and currency challenges have made it harder for businesses to access affordable credit. Strengthening SME financing will sustain operations, maintain jobs, and support key sectors in the economy.

City Bank's Managing Director & CEO Mashrur Arefin said, "We are grateful for IFC's support. This investment will help small businesses overcome challenges and play a bigger role in Bangladesh's future."Allen Forlemu, IFC Regional Industry Director of Financial Institutions Group for Asia & Pacific, said, "Small businesses are essential to Bangladesh's economy. By supporting them, we aim to improve access to finance and promote inclusive growth."

Aziz Al Kaiser, Chairman of City Bank PLC, and Martin Holtmann, Country Manager, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal of IFC, were present at the signing ceremony. Building on a decade-long commitment to strengthening Bangladesh's private sector, IFC has invested $765 million in local banks since 2014 to enhance SME financing.

Germany pledges €180 million for Development initiative

Germany will provide 180 million euros (Tk 22.65 billion) for various development projects in Bangladesh.A number of financial and technical agreements on development cooperation were signed between the two countries on 28 November.

Out of the total amount, EUR 45.8 million will be used for Technical Cooperation and up to EUR 135 million for Financial Cooperation. Md Shahriar Kader Siddiky, Secretary of the Economic Relations Division (ERD) at the Ministry of Finance of Bangladesh, and HE Achim Tröster, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to Bangladesh, signed the agreement on behalf of the two governments.

The signing ceremony was attended by officials from the Bangladesh government, the German Embassy in Dhaka, the German Development Bank KfW, and the German technical cooperation agencies GIZ and BGR.

The cooperation under these agreements will take place in the areas of renewable energy and energy efficiency, sustainable urban development, technical and vocational education and training (TVET), socially and environmentally sound supply chains, trade and infrastructure, protection of biodiversity, and a project on combating domestic violence against women and children.

Germany has provided over 3.5 billion euros in financial and technical assistance for the development of the country since 1972.A spokesperson from the German embassy stated that German-Bangladesh Development

Cooperation has a long-standing history in supporting infrastructure, health, poverty alleviation, good governance and human rights, energy efficiency and renewable energy, and climate change adaptation.

The present agreements mark the continuation of successful bilateral cooperation that contributes to the sustainable development goals of Bangladesh. "We are glad to continue our support for the Bangladeshi success story," said the German ambassador during the agreement signing ceremony. "Bangladesh and Germany have embarked on a journey of cooperation that spans various sectors, from economic



development and trade to education, health, and beyond. At its core, this partnership is rooted in the shared values of democracy, inclusivity, and sustainable development," said ERD Secretary Shahriar Kader Siddiky in his opening remarks.He also mentioned that one of the hallmarks of Bangladesh-Germany bilateral cooperation is the commitment to fostering economic growth and prosperity.

Germany has been a crucial partner in supporting Bangladesh's efforts to strengthen its infrastructure, expand its industrial base, and enhance its competitiveness in the global market.

Through initiatives such as technical assistance, capacity building, and investment promotion, Germany has played a pivotal role in empowering Bangladesh to realize its economic potential and improve the livelihoods of its people.The Secretary of ERD thanked the German government for their ongoing support to Bangladesh.

Germany allocates €9.5 million to Bangladesh for biodiversity and climate-smart urban Development

Germany will provide €9.5 million to Bangladesh through two major technical cooperation agreements aimed at enhancing biodiversity conservation and promoting climate-smart urban development. The agreements, signed on 10 December, will fund initiatives focused on strengthening local governance, biodiversity conservation, and the restoration of coastal ecosystems in Bangladesh.

The two projects are: 1. Strengthening Regional Cooperation and Financing for Sustainable Management of the Sundarbans and Restoration of Coastal Ecosystems in the Bay of Bengal (SUNDAR-BAY) 2. Innovations for Climate-smart Urban Development (INCLUDE).

The agreements were signed by Md. Shahriar Kader Siddiky, Secretary of the Economic Relations Division (ERD), Ministry of Finance, and Andreas Kuck, Country Director of GIZ, on behalf of the Federal Republic of Germany in Bangladesh.

The SUNDAR-BAY project, with a funding of €2.5 million, will be implemented by the Bangladesh Forest Department (BFD) under the Ministry of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change. This project focuses on fostering stronger cross-border collaboration between Bangladesh and India for biodiversity conservation and ecosystem restoration in the Sundarbans and surrounding coastal areas.

Key measures include capacity-building for forest authorities, joint workshops for frontline rangers, women-led businesses, and youth councils, along with gender-smart financing and risk-transfer mechanisms to ensure the sustainability of the project.

The INCLUDE project, with a funding of €7 million, will be implemented by the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) under the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development, and Cooperatives. The project aims to enhance climate-resilient urban development in several districts, including Sirajganj, Gaibandha, Charghat (Rajshahi), and Chapainawabganj.

It focuses on driving local, innovative solutions to improve urban infrastructure and climate adaptation efforts, helping these communities better address the impacts of climate change. These initiatives reflect the strong partnership between Bangladesh and Germany in advancing sustainable development goals and addressing climate challenges in the region.

Both projects are expected to have a significant impact on local communities, strengthening governance systems, conserving critical ecosystems, and enhancing climate resilience at the grassroots level.

Over 2.2 million Bangladeshis faced severe food insecurity in 2023: Oxfam Reports

Over 2.2 million Bangladeshis faced "emergency levels" of hunger in 2023, said a recent report by UK-based charity organisation Oxfam.Titled "Food Wars: Conflict, Hunger, and Globalization 2023", the report mentioned that Bangladesh, along with countries like Sudan, Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and South Sudan, accounts for over 58 percent of the global population facing IPC 4 (emergency) conditions.

These five nations collectively have more than 20.9 million people suffering from acute food insecurity. The report, published on 16 October on the occasion of World Food Day, analyses 54 active conflict, refugee-hosting, and conflict legacy countries with populations facing "crisis-level" acute food insecurity -- at Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) 3 (crisis) or higher.

In total, nearly 278 million people in these countries faced crisis-level hunger in 2023, accounting for 99 percent of the global population at IPC 3+ (281.6 million people).As many as 11.8 million Bangladeshis suffer from crisis levels of hunger, according to the report.

Between 7,000 and 21,000 people are likely dying worldwide each day from hunger in countries affected by conflict, the Oxfam report said.Bangladesh's situation is particularly concerning due to its vulnerability to climate-related disasters, refugee-hosting, and economic shocks, which continue to worsen food insecurity across the country, the report said. The Oxfam report stressed that immediate action is required to address the crisis and prevent further deterioration, as millions of people struggle to meet their basic food needs.

Repatriation of Airline blocked funds reduced in six months

Over the last six months, there has been a significant reduction of USD 124 million in airline funds blocked from repatriation in Bangladesh, said the International Air Transport Association in a notice on December 9. As of October 2024 end, Bangladesh has seen the amount of airline blocked funds reduce to USD 196 million, from USD 320 million in April 2024, marking a decrease of USD 124 million, according to IATA.



However, the nation still stands among the top three countries blocking majority of the total blocked airline funds globally.Hence, the Central Bank of the country-Bangladesh Bank-needs to continue prioritising airlines' access to foreign exchange in line with international treated obligations, stressed the trade body.

Globally, only a small improvement has been witnessed in the last six months, sighed the association.It may be mentioned here, IATA reported that USD 1.8 billion in airline funds were blocked from repatriation by governments worldwide in April 2024 end.In its latest update, the trade body mentioned, USD 1.7 billion in airline funds are still blocked as of October 2024 end.

"Over the last six months, we have seen significant reductions in blocked funds in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Algeria and Ethiopia. At the same time, amounts are rising in XAF/XOF zones and Mozambique," said Willie Walsh, Director General, IATA.

Over the last six months, there were significant reductions in blocked funds in Algeria (USD 193 million from USD 286 million April) and Ethiopia (USD 43 million from USD 149 million in April). At the same time, XAF Zone (+USD 84 million), Mozambique (+USD 84 million) and XOF Zone (+USD 73 million) contributed to the largest increases.

Bolivia is new to the list of blocked fund countries. A further deterioration in the availability of foreign exchange, particular the US dollar, has resulted in an estimated USD 42 million in airline funds being blocked in the country.

Global/Regional News

Developing nations blast $300 billion COP29 climate deal as insufficient

Countries at the COP29 summit in Baku adopted a $300 billion a year global finance target on 24 November to help poorer nations cope with impacts of climate change, a deal its intended recipients criticised as woefully insufficient.

The agreement, clinched in overtime at the two-week conference in Azerbaijan's capital, was meant to provide momentum for international efforts to curb global warming in a year destined to be the hottest on record. Some delegates gave the deal a standing ovation in the COP29 plenary hall. Others lambasted wealthy nations for not doing more and criticised the Azerbaijan host for hurriedly gavelling through the contentious plan.

"I regret to say that this document is nothing more than an optical illusion," Indian delegation representative Chandni Raina told the closing session of the summit, minutes after the deal was gavelled in. "This, in our opinion, will not address the enormity of the challenge we all face. Therefore, we oppose the adoption of this document."

United Nations climate chief Simon Stiell acknowledged the difficult negotiations that led to the agreement but hailed the outcome as an insurance policy for humanity against global warming.

"It has been a difficult journey, but we've delivered a deal," Stiell said. "This deal will keep the clean energy boom growing and protect billions of lives. "But like any insurance policy, it only works if the premiums are paid in full, and on time."

The agreement would provide $300 billion annually by 2035, boosting rich countries' previous



commitment to provide $100 billion per year in climate finance by 2020. That earlier goal was met two years late, in 2022, and expires in 2025.

The deal also lays the groundwork for next year's climate summit, to be held in the Amazon rainforest of Brazil, where countries are meant to map out the next decade of climate action. The summit cut to the heart of the debate over financial responsibility of industrialised countries - whose historic use of fossil fuels has caused the bulk of greenhouse gas emissions - to compensate others for worsening damage from climate change.

It also laid bare divisions between wealthy governments constrained by tight domestic budgets and developing nations reeling from costs of storms, floods and droughts. Negotiations had been due to finish on 22 November but ran into overtime as representatives from nearly 200 countries struggled to reach consensus. Talks were interrupted on 23 November as some developing countries and island nations walked away in frustration.

"We are leaving with a small portion of the funding climate-vulnerable countries urgently need. It isn't nearly enough, but it's a start," said Tina Stege, Marshall Islands climate envoy. Nations have been seeking financing to deliver on the Paris Agreement goal of limiting global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) above pre-industrial levels - beyond which catastrophic climate impacts could occur.

The world is currently on track for as much as 3.1 C (5.6 F) of warming by the end of this century, according to the 2024 U.N. Emissions Gap report, with global greenhouse gas emissions and fossil fuels use continuing to rise.

On 24 November deal failed to set out detailed steps for how countries will act on last year's U.N. climate summit pledge to transition away from fossil fuels and triple renewable energy capacity this decade. Some negotiators said Saudi Arabia had attempted to block such a plan during the talks.

The roster of countries required to contribute - about two dozen industrialised countries, including the U.S., European nations and Canada - dates back to a list decided during U.N. climate talks in 1992. European governments have demanded others pay in, including China, the world's second-biggest economy, and oil-rich Gulf states. The deal encourages developing countries to make contributions but does not require them.

The agreement includes a broader goal of raising $1.3 trillion in climate finance annually by 2035 - which would include funding from all public and private sources

and which economists say matches the sum needed to address global warming. Countries also agreed on rules for a global market to buy and sell carbon credits that proponents say could mobilise billions more dollars into new projects to fight global warming, from reforestation to deployment of clean energy technologies. Securing the climate finance deal was a challenge from the start.

Donald Trump's U.S. presidential election victory has raised doubts among some negotiators that the world's largest economy would pay into any climate finance goal agreed in Baku. Trump, a Republican who takes office in January, has called climate change a hoax and promised to again remove the U.S. from international climate cooperation. President Joe Biden congratulated the COP29 participants for reaching what he called an historic agreement that would help mobilise needed funds, but said more work was needed.

Western governments have seen global warming slip down the list of national priorities amid surging geopolitical tensions, including Russia's war in Ukraine and expanding conflict in the Middle East, and rising inflation. The showdown over financing for developing countries comes in a year scientists predict will be the hottest on record. Climate woes are stacking up, with widespread flooding killing thousands across Africa, deadly landslides burying villages in Asia, and drought in South America shrinking rivers.

Developed countries have not been spared. Torrential rain triggered floods in Valencia, Spain, last month that left more than 200 dead, and the U.S. so far this year has registered 24 billion-dollar disasters - just four fewer than last year.

Damage to Gaza critical infrastructure estimated at $18.5 bn : WB

Poorer nations are increasingly struggling to navigate the sluggish global economy, the UN has warned, calling for a fundamental rethinking of development strategies. A report from the United Nations' trade and development agency UNCTAD highlighted how slow growth, soaring debt burdens, and weak investment and trade, were holding back developing countries.

The report, entitled "Rethinking development in the age of discontent", called for new policies and multilateral support to help developing countries overcome their challenges. "Developing countries are taking a big impact after the pandemic and the cascading crisis that followed," UNCTAD chief Rebeca Grynspan told reporters.

The agency emphasised the emergence of a new "low normal" in global economic growth, with global GDP expected to rise just 2.7 percent this year and in 2025, down from an annual average of 3.0 percent between 2011 and 2019. This stands in "stark contrast" to the 4.4 percent average growth seen between 2004 and 2007 ahead of the global financial crisis, it said. And for developing countries, the slowdown is more dramatic, the report showed.

After growing 6.6 percent on average annually between 2003 and 2013, their average growth has fallen to just 4.1 percent in the past decade, it said. At the same time, developing countries saw their debt burdens balloon by 70 percent between 2010 and 2023.

The report also cautioned that post-pandemic inflation, driven by supply chain disruptions and concentrated market power in key sectors like agriculture and energy, had significantly eroded purchasing power in developing countries especially.

1.1 billion people in acute poverty: UN

More than one billion people are living in acute poverty across the globe, a UN Development Program report said on 17 October, with children accounting for over half of those affected.

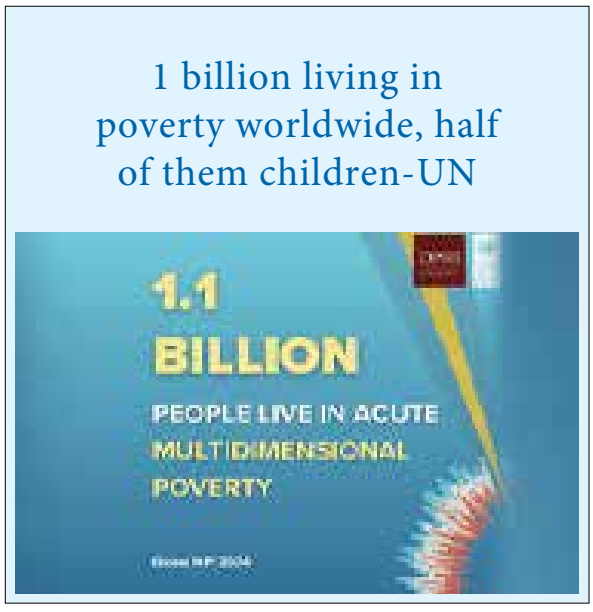
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The paper published with the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) highlighted that poverty rates were three times higher in countries at war, as 2023 saw the most conflicts around the world since the Second World War.

The UNDP and the OPHI have published their Multidimensional Poverty Index annually since 2010, harvesting data from 112 countries with a combined population of 6.3 billion people. It uses indicators such as a lack of adequate housing, sanitation, electricity, cooking fuel, nutrition and school attendance.

The report echoed last year's findings that 1.1 billion out of 6.1 billion people across 110 countries were facing extreme multidimensional poverty. The paper showed that some 584 million people under 18 were experiencing extreme poverty, accounting for 27.9 percent of children worldwide, compared with 13.5 percent of adults. It also showed that 83.2 percent of the world's poorest people live in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

India was the country with the largest number of people in extreme poverty, which impacts 234 million of its 1.4 billion population. It was followed by Pakistan, Ethiopia, Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The five countries accounted for nearly half of the 1.1 billion poor people.



Global poverty and climate goals will remain out of reach: WB

The World Bank's new vision to create a world free of poverty on a livable planet recognizes that the concepts of poverty and a livable planet are deeply intertwined. For example, two-thirds of people globally living in extreme poverty—that is, those living below the International Poverty Line of $2.15 a day in 2017 PPPs—work in the agricultural sector and are more likely to rely on other forms of natural capital for income generation and food security. As such they are more vulnerable to extreme weather events, rising temperatures, and environmental degradation.



The UN's Sustainable Development Goal 1.1 calls for eradicating poverty for all people everywhere. Similarly, the World Bank has a goal to reduce extreme poverty to less than 3% of the global population by 2030. The Poverty, Prosperity, and Planet Report 2024 highlights that, at current rates of progress, the world is far from meeting these goals. In fact under current growth forecasts and using historical growth patterns across countries, extreme poverty is expected to remain well above 3% even by 2050.

At the same time, if growth rates remain as they are today, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions will continue to increase global temperatures to levels with devastating and irreversible consequences.

Therefore, business-as-usual policies will not bring us closer to achieving the goals of eradicating poverty and addressing climate change.

Poorest economies face toughest conditions in two decades

The world's 26 poorest economies—home to about 40 percent of all people who live on less than $2.15 a day—are deeper in debt than at any time since 2006 and increasingly vulnerable to natural disasters and other shocks, according to a new analysis of World Bank. Yet international aid as a share of their GDP has dwindled to a two-decade low, forcing many to obtain financing on punishing terms.

The analysis constitutes the first systematic assessment of the causes of chronic fiscal weakness in the very poorest economies—those with annual per capita incomes of less than $1,145 a year. It finds that these economies are poorer today on average than they were on the eve of COVID-19, even though the rest of the world has largely recovered. Government debt, on average, now stands at 72 percent of GDP, an 18-year high. Nearly half of these economies—twice the number in 2015—are either in debt distress or

at high risk of it. Not one of them is at low risk.

Low-income economies' ability to attract low-cost financing, meanwhile, has largely dried up: net official development assistance as a share of GDP fell to a 21-year low of 7 percent in 2022, the latest year for which data are available. That has left the World Bank's International Development Association (IDA) as their single-largest source of low-cost financing from abroad. IDA provides grants and near-zero-interest-rate loans to 77 of the world's most vulnerable economies, and it is crucial to the 26 poorest among them: in 2022, IDA alone provided nearly half of all the development aid that these low-income economies received from multilateral organizations.



The COVID-19 pandemic sharply increased spending needs in low-income economies, causing primary deficits to triple to 3.4 percent of GDP in 2020. Since then, low-income economies have been unable to fully unwind these deficits—which stood at 2.4 percent of GDP in 2023, nearly three times the average of other developing economies. Government spending has shifted away from crucial longer-term priorities, such as health and education, toward immediate needs: the wages of government workers, interest payments on debt, and subsidies.

The 26 low-income economies today enjoy significant potential to boost growth at home and contribute to broader prosperity and peace as well: their natural resources are ample, and their working-age populations are growing. Yet they also face a cluster of challenges that are more severe than anywhere else. Two-thirds of them are either in conflict or have difficulty maintaining order because of institutional and social fragility. Nearly all are commodity-exporting countries, subject to repeated boom-and-bust cycles driven by the whims of commodity markets.

Those two elements alone intersect in ways that constitute a trap of sorts for low-income economies. Wars do lasting harm to government budgets: on average, fiscal balances worsen by up to 1.5 percentage points of GDP. Commodity-price slumps associated with global recessions, meanwhile, tend to increase the poorest countries' debt by as much as two percentage points of GDP. The effect of such shocks on government budgets tends to last for at least two years.

In addition, the analysis shows that low-income economies are far more vulnerable to natural disasters than other developing economies. Between 2011-2023, natural disasters were associated with average annual losses of 2 percent of GDP—five times the average losses in lower-middle-income countries. The costs of adapting to climate change are also higher for low-income economies than for other developing economies—the equivalent of 3.5 percent of GDP per year, five times the rate for lower-middle-income countries. These constraints mean that low-income economies will need to ramp up investment at a history-making pace and deliver dramatically higher performance on every level of economic management if they are to meet development goals by 2030, the analysis indicates.

Children's wellbeing 'Under threat' in 2050: UNICEF

The future of childhood hangs in the balance if urgent action is not taken to safeguard children's rights in a changing world, UNICEF warned in its flagship report released on World Children's Day on 20 November.

The State of the World's Children 2024: The Future of Childhood in a Changing World, projects how three major global forces – or megatrends – will impact children's lives by 2050 and beyond. The megatrends – demographic change, climate and environmental crises, and breakthrough technologies – provide key indications of the challenges and opportunities children may face in the future.

"Children are experiencing a myriad of crises, from climate shocks to online dangers, and these are set to intensify in the years to come," said UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell. "The projections in this report demonstrate that the decisions world leaders make today – or fail to make – define the world children will inherit. Creating a better future in 2050 requires more than just imagination, it requires action. Decades of progress, particularly for girls, are under threat."

The climate crisis is already dire, with 2023 being the hottest year on record. According to the report, in the decade of 2050-2059, climate and environmental crises are expected to become even more widespread, with eight times as many children exposed to extreme heatwaves, three times as many exposed to extreme river floods, and nearly twice as many exposed to extreme wildfires, compared to the 2000s.

How these climate hazards impact children will be determined by their age, health, socioeconomic setting, and access to resources. For example, a child with access to climate-resilient shelter, cooling infrastructure, health care, education, and clean water has a greater chance of surviving climatic shocks compared to a child without access. The report underscores the urgent need for targeted environmental action to protect all children and mitigate the risks they face.

Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia are projected to have the largest child populations in the 2050s. They also indicate an aging population, with the share of children expected to decrease in every region of the world. While still high, the child population drops below 40 per cent in Africa – down from 50 per cent in the 2000s. It falls below 17 per cent in East Asia and Western Europe – where children made up 29 per cent and 20 per cent of the populations, respectively, in the 2000s.



These demographic shifts create challenges, with some countries under pressure to expand services for large child populations, while others balance the needs of a growing elderly population.

Meanwhile, the report acknowledges that frontier technologies – like Artificial Intelligence (AI) – offer both promise and peril for children, who are already interacting with AI embedded in apps, toys, virtual assistants, games, and learning software. But the digital divide remains stark. In 2024, over 95 per cent of people in high-income countries are connected to the internet, compared to nearly 26 per cent in low-income countries.

The report notes that a large percentage of youth in low-and middle-income countries have difficulty accessing digital skills, and this will impact their ability to effectively and responsibly use digital tools in education and future workplaces. These barriers are often linked to socio-economic settings, gender, linguistics, and accessibility.

The report contains some good news. Life expectancy at birth is projected to increase. Gains in children's access to education over the last 100 years are also projected to continue, with nearly 96 per cent of children globally expected to have at least a primary education in the 2050s, up from 80 per cent in the 2000s. Likewise, with increased investment in education and public health, and more stringent environmental protection, the report states that outcomes for children could improve significantly. For example, the gender gap in educational attainment would narrow, and exposure to environmental hazards would be reduced.

The State of the World's Children 2024 underscores the importance of centering child rights, as outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, in all strategies, policies and actions.

UK announces new investment in green energy projects

The UK government on 10 October announced that it had secured more than GBP 24 billion ($31.3 billion) of private investment in green energy projects, as it gears up for an international investment summit. Prime Minister Keir Starmer called the investments "a huge vote of confidence" in his Labour government and its long-term growth plans, despite a stuttering start in power since the party's election win in July.

Labour, in opposition for 14 years, has vowed to revitalise the UK economy, which it claims faltered badly during successive Conservative administrations since 2010. Central to its plans is green energy, to transition the country away from polluting fossil fuels towards renewables such as wind, wave and solar, to meet net-zero targets.

But Starmer and his finance minister Rachel Reeves have been accused of scaring off investors by relentless talk of a dire economic inheritance from the Tories and warnings about tough remedial measures to come.

Spain's Iberdrola, which owns UK energy provider Scottish Power, said it was doubling its investment in the UK over the next four years to GBP 24 billion. Denmark's Orsted is investing GBP 8 billion and Portugal's Greenvolt GBP 2.5 billion, Downing Street said in a statement.



The announcements come after a record 131 new green infrastructure projects were awarded at auction last month, including plans for Europe's two biggest offshore windfarms. Starmer said creating the right conditions was key to boosting growth.

The UK premier and Reeves are both slated to speak at the meeting in central London. Labour announced its green energy strategy in July, including Great British Energy, a public-owned body that intends to spur investment in domestic renewable projects. Great British Energy will receive GBP 8.3 billion over the next five years.

The UK government announced nearly GBP 22 billion of investment over 25 years to support three carbon capture projects in northeast and northwest England. It has also lifted a ban on onshore wind projects in England, introduced after opposition from local residents.

Vietnam-China signed 10 trade agreements

Vietnam and China signed 10 agreements ranging from agriculture cooperation to cross-border QR code payments on 13 October during Chinese Premier Li Qiang's three-day visit to Hanoi, as the two neighbours seek to boost ties. China is Vietnam's largest trading partner and a vital source of imports for its manufacturing sector, with bilateral trade jumping 21% for the first three quarters from the same period last year to $148 billion.

The signing ceremony followed Li's meeting with Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh. Li and Vietnam's Communist Party chief, President To Lam, agreed on 12 October to boost economic ties, farm produce cooperation. The Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh asked China to boost agricultural trade with Vietnam, open doors to Vietnamese farm produce and enhance customs clearance at borders.



Vietnam and China also signed a document on updating progress on cross-border railway links related to site survey. The two Asian neighbours have repeatedly showed interest in boosting rail links but have not announced concrete plans or the estimated costs to upgrade connections.

The main route relies on tracks connecting Kunming in the southern Chinese province of Yunnan to Hanoi and the Vietnamese port city of Haiphong. That railway was built by the French during their colonisation of Vietnam more than a century ago and is still in use in Vietnam. China has replaced its route with high-speed connections. On 12 October, the National Payment Corp of Vietnam and China's UnionPay International signed an agreement to deploy cross-border payment between the two countries.

Tata Power-Bhutan's Druk Green Power Corp to develop 5,000 MW clean energy projects

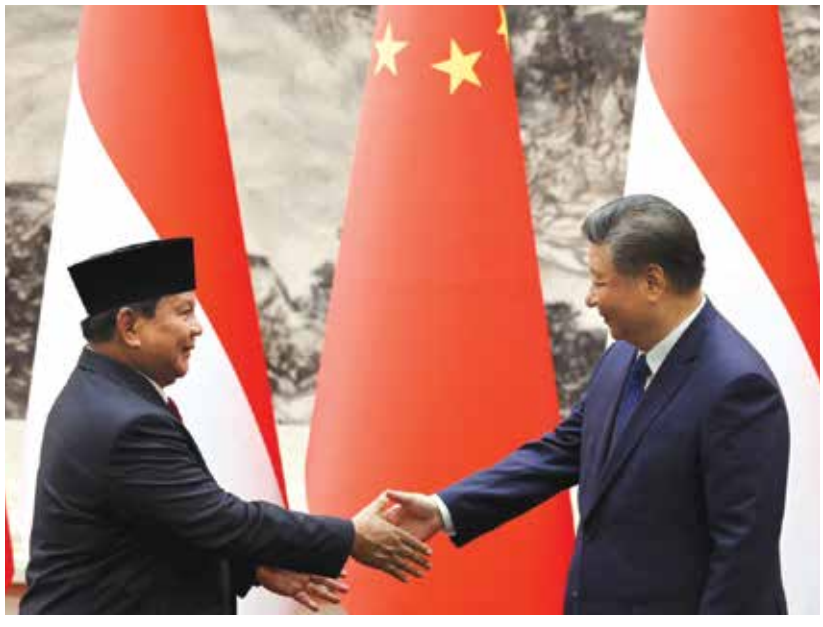
Tata Power and Bhutan's Druk Green Power Corporation have partnered to develop 5,000 MW of clean energy projects in Bhutan. The projects, including hydropower and solar, represent the largest collaboration in Asia's clean energy sector between the two nations. This partnership builds upon their existing relationship, which includes the Dagachhu Hydropower Plant and the Tala transmission line.

Through the collaboration, at least 5,000 MW of renewable energy projects; including 4,500 MW of hydropower comprising the 1,125 MW Dorjilung HEP (hydro-electric project); 740 MW Gongri Reservoir; 1,800 MW Jeri Pumped Storage; and 364 MW Chamkharchhu IV will be developed in phases, the statement said.

"Tata Power's partnership with Druk Green Power Corporation reinforces our credentials as the most preferred clean energy partner in the region. Together, we are building 5000 MW of clean energy capacity that will help harness Bhutan's hydropower potential and support both countries' growing energy demands with reliable and round-the-clock clean energy supply. Together we are shaping a new energy era," Praveer Sinha, CEO & MD, Tata Power, said.



China-Indonesia signed $10b deals for energy and technology



China and Indonesia signed deals worth $10 billion at the Indonesia-China Business Forum in Beijing, spanning sectors including food, new energy, technology, and biotechnology. The forum followed a meeting on 9 November between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto.

President Prabowo, who won Indonesia's presidential election in February, also chose China for his first visit as president elect, underscoring Jakarta's commitment to stronger strategic ties with Beijing. In a joint statement after the leaders' meeting, the countries agreed to enhance collaboration in sectors such as new energy vehicles, lithium batteries, photovoltaics, and the digital economy.

They also pledged to strengthen partnership on the global energy transition and jointly ensure the security of global mineral supply and industrial chains, the statement said. Prabowo in a separate statement said he was optimistic close cooperation between the two countries would improve regional stability.

Asia: the world's economic engine, prepares for Trump shock

Some Asian countries stand to gain if US president Donald Trump pushes ahead with his promised massive tariffs on China and triggers a new wave of factory relocations to the rest of the region. But a trade war between the world's biggest economies would also destabilize markets everywhere, with Asia -- which contributes the largest share of global growth -- the most affected.

Trump vowed during his campaign to slap 60 percent tariffs on all Chinese goods entering the United States in an attempt to balance trade between the two nations. Analysts however question whether the new president will stick to such a high figure, and dispute the blow such tariffs could inflict on the Chinese economy, estimating GDP could be lowered by between 0.7 percent and 1.6 percent.

The cooling effect would also make waves throughout Southeast Asia, where production chains are closely linked to China and enjoy significant investment from Beijing. "Lower US demand for Chinese goods due to higher tariffs on China will translate into lower demand for ASEAN exports, even if there aren't US tariffs levied directly onto those economies," said Adam Ahmad Samdin, of Oxford Economics.

Indonesia is particularly exposed through its strong exports of nickel and minerals, but China is also the top trading partner of Japan, Taiwan and South Korea. In addition to China, Donald Trump has also warned of an increase of 10 to 20 percent on duties for all imports, as part of his protectionist policies and fixation that other countries take advantage of the US.

"The extent of these effects likely depends on the direct exposure of each economy to the US," said Samdin, who added that America accounts for a 39.1 percent share of Cambodian exports, 27.4 percent from Vietnam, 17 percent from Thailand and 15.4 percent from the Philippines.

Trump first slapped China with heavy tariffs in 2018 during his first administration, leading to



the emergence of "connector countries", through which Chinese companies passed their products to avoid American taxes. Those countries could be in the line of fire now. "Vietnam's electronics exports to the US could also be targeted by Trump, in a bid to halt the diversion of Chinese electronic products to the US via Vietnam since 2018," said Lloyd Chan, a senior analyst at MUFG, Japan's largest bank.

"This is not inconceivable. Trade rewiring has notably gained traction in the region's electronics value chain." "India could itself become a target of protectionist measures by the US due to the large share of Chinese components in Indian products," added Alexandra Hermann, an economist with Oxford Economics.

Trump could also impose higher tariffs on Indian goods in sectors such as "automobiles, textiles, pharmaceuticals and wines, which could make Indian exports less competitive in the US", said Ajay Srivastava of the New Delhi-based Global Trade Research Initiative. A trade war would be dangerous for India, said Ajay Sahai, director of the Federation of Indian Export Organisations.

In the medium term, these negative effects could be counterbalanced by establishing factories outside China to escape the fallout. The "China+1" strategy initiated during Donald Trump's first term saw production shifts to India, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam.

With its geographical position and cheap skilled labor, Vietnam

has already been one of the main beneficiaries. The country has notably received investments from Taiwanese Apple subcontractors Foxconn and Pegatron and South Korea's Samsung, becoming the second-largest exporter of smartphones in the world behind China.

"The likelihood increases that even more businesses will want to... have a second, or third, production base outside China," said Bruno Jaspaert, chairman of the European Chamber of Commerce in Vietnam. Chinese firms themselves are investing massively from Vietnam to Indonesia in sectors including solar, batteries, electric vehicles and minerals.

"American companies and investors are very interested in opportunities in Vietnam and this will continue under Trump Administration," said Adam Sitkoff, executive director of the American Chamber of Commerce in Hanoi. But whether it is low-end or high-tech production, China's competitive advantage in terms of price, scale and quality is difficult to reproduce, warns Nomura bank.

Asian countries could therefore gain export market share but ultimately see their situation deteriorate amid weakening global demand.

China expected to hit peak coal consumption in 2025

China's coal consumption could peak by 2025 as the world's top consumer of the fossil fuel ramps up its push for clean energy, a report published on 27 November said. The country -- the largest greenhouse gas emitter -- remains heavily reliant on coal despite installing renewable energy capacity at record speed.

But while coal remains king in China's energy mix, there are signs the world's second-biggest economy may be weaning itself off the fossil fuel. Coal power permits fell 83 percent in the first half of this year, and no new coal-based steelmaking projects were approved in the same period.

And 52 percent of experts surveyed for a report by think tanks Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA), based in Finland, and the International Society for Energy Transition Studies (ISETS), based in Australia, expect China's coal consumption to peak next year.

The percentage of experts surveyed this year who believe that China's coal consumption has already hit its maximum have also more than doubled this year from last year. Significantly more experts also think that carbon dioxide emissions in the country have already peaked or will top out by 2025, according to the study.



Experts have become increasingly optimistic that China will be able to wean itself of polluting greenhouse gases in recent years, with breakneck installation helping Beijing hit its wind and solar energy capacity targets six years ahead of schedule. Despite this, there is still "little clarity on China's emissions pathway", Lauri Myllyvirta, lead analyst at CREA said.

This leaves open the possibility of emissions increasing until 2030 and "very slow" reductions after that, he added. China's demand for coal also still jumped last year, driving a global increase. Coal-fired power generation is projected to grow again this year in China, albeit at the lowest rate in almost a decade, according to the International Energy Agency.

Energy consumption growth is also continuing to outpace GDP growth and is "faster than in the transition pathways aligned with the Paris Agreement", said the CREA report. China aims to peak its planet-warming emissions by 2030 and reach net zero three decades later.

The 2015 Paris Agreement requires countries to submit increasingly deep emission cutting plans every five years, known as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). China is due to submit its updated NDC by February next year. According to an earlier CREA report, China must set a "strong but achievable target of reducing emissions by at least 30 percent" by 2035.

WTO News

WTO General Council reappoints Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala as Director-General for second term

The General Council of the World Trade Organization (WTO) agreed on 29 November by consensus to reappoint Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala as Director-General for a second four-year term, set to begin on 1 September 2025. This decision reflects broad recognition of her exceptional leadership and strategic vision for the future of the WTO.

The reappointment process, initiated on 8 October 2024, was overseen by Ambassador Petter Ølberg of Norway, Chair of the General Council. With no additional nominations submitted by the 8 November deadline, Dr. Okonjo-Iweala stood as the sole candidate. The process was conducted in a fully open and transparent manner,



adhering to the WTO's "Procedures for the Appointment of Directors-General" (WT/L/509).

During a special General Council meeting on 28-29 November 2024, Dr. Okonjo-Iweala outlined her forward-looking vision for the WTO. Following her presentation and a Q&A session with members, the Council formally endorsed her reappointment by consensus.

Ambassador Ølberg praised her achievements, stating:

"The General Council commends Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala for her outstanding leadership during her first term. Amid significant global economic challenges, she strengthened the WTO's ability to support its members and set a forward-looking agenda for the organization. Her leadership was instrumental in securing meaningful outcomes at pivotal moments, including the 12th and 13th Ministerial Conferences (MC12 and MC13), where major milestones were achieved."

He continued:

"As we look ahead, the Council fully supports Dr. Okonjo-Iweala's commitment to ensuring that the WTO remains responsive, inclusive, and results-driven. Her leadership will be critical as the organization continues to advance a resilient, rules-based, and equitable global trading system."

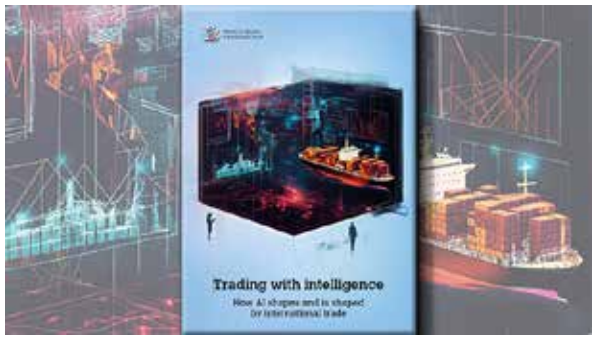
WTO report on impact of AI in international trade

A new report published on 21 November by the WTO Secretariat discusses the potential impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on world trade. The report examines key trade-related policy considerations raised by this technology and discusses the critical role of the WTO in facilitating AI-related trade, ensuring trustworthy AI, and promoting global regulatory convergence. The report was launched at an event at the WTO attended by representatives from government, academia and the private sector.

The report, entitled "Trading with Intelligence: How AI Shapes and is Shaped by International Trade", discusses how AI can reduce trade costs, reshape trade in services, increase trade in AI-related goods and services, and redefine economies' comparative advantages. The report also highlights the increasing fragmentation of approaches to AI regulation, which may have a particular impact on trade opportunities for micro, small and medium-sized businesses. The report provides an overview of government initiatives taken at the

domestic, regional and international levels both to promote and to regulate AI.

WTO Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala says in the report's foreword: "This report aims to stimulate a discussion on how the WTO can promote the development and deployment of AI and help mitigate its associated risks and looming concerns about regulatory fragmentation. In this respect, two guiding questions the report tries to address are: how can the WTO help ensure that the benefits of AI are broadly shared? How can the challenges that AI presents be addressed in a globally coordinated manner?"



The report argues that AI could help to overcome trade costs associated with trade logistics, supply chain management and regulatory compliance. For instance, AI can assist in automating and streamlining customs clearance processes and border controls, navigating complex trade regulations and compliance requirements, and predicting risks.

By lowering trade costs, AI can help level the playing field for developing economies and small businesses, helping them to overcome trade barriers, enter global markets and participate in international trade, the report said.

The report estimates that, under an optimistic scenario of universal AI adoption and high productivity growth up until 2040, global real trade growth could increase by almost 14 percentage points. In contrast, a cautious scenario, with uneven AI adoption and low productivity growth, projects trade growth of just under 7 percentage points. While high-income economies are expected to see the largest productivity gains, lower-income economies have better potential to reduce trade costs.

The report notes that AI can transform patterns of trade in services, particularly digitally delivered services, which are projected to see cumulative growth of nearly 18 percentage points in an optimistic scenario of universal AI adoption and high productivity growth.

However, the report warns that the risk of a growing AI divide between economies and between large and small firms is significant, as are data governance challenges and the need to ensure that AI is trustworthy. There is also a need to clarify how AI relates to intellectual property (IP) rights.

The report emphasizes that a lack of coordination could cause increasing regulatory fragmentation with regard to AI. It also notes that addressing the risk of a growing AI divide is essential to leverage the opportunities offered by this technology.

The report addresses the role the WTO can play in this area as a forum for negotiation, discussion and rule-making, helping to promote the benefits of AI and limiting its risks. The report underlines that the WTO provides a multilateral framework that can help to promote policy coherence and address the trade-related aspects of AI governance.

WTO members consider five regional trade agreements

At the 111th session of the Committee on Regional Trade Agreements (CRTA) on 18 November, WTO members reviewed five RTAs involving Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Chile, Malaysia, Montenegro, New Zealand, Türkiye, Ukraine and the United Kingdom.

The Committee considered the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the United Kingdom and Australia, goods and services, which entered into force on 31 May 2023. Under the Agreement, all imports of goods from the UK into Australia will be duty-free by 2028, and 98.9% of the UK's tariff lines will be duty-free by 2033 for its imports from Australia. On trade in services, the Agreement follows a negative list approach, meaning all sectors other than those listed are open to foreign service suppliers under the same conditions as for domestic service suppliers. This builds on the parties' General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) commitments to grant more preferential treatment for services suppliers and investments. The Agreement includes, among other things, provisions on environment, labour, and small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). It also addresses topics such as innovation and gender equality.

The Committee also considered the Free Trade Agreement between

the United Kingdom and New Zealand, goods and services, which entered into force on 31 May 2023. Under the Agreement, New Zealand liberalized all tariffs on UK imports at entry into force while the UK will liberalize all tariffs by 2038. On trade in services, the Agreement follows a negative list approach and builds on the parties' GATS commitments to grant more preferential treatment for services and investments.

For the Strategic Partnership Agreement between the United Kingdom and Ukraine, goods and services, which entered into force on 1 January 2021, each party will liberalize more than 96% of its respective tariffs by the end of implementation, providing a continuation of the preferential trade relationship between the UK and Ukraine. It preserves most of the commitments between the parties established under the Association Agreement between the European Union and Ukraine. The parties also built on their GATS commitments to grant preferential treatment for their respective services and investments.



The Committee also considered the entry into force of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) for Brunei Darussalam, Chile and Malaysia, goods and services. The CPTPP entered into force for Malaysia on 29 November 2022, for Chile on 21 February 2023, and for Brunei Darussalam on 12 July 2023. Thus, as of 12 July 2023, the CPTPP has been in force for all its original 11 signatories — which also includes Australia, Canada, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Viet Nam.

Under the CPTPP's catch-up mechanism, the three parties implemented at entry into force all tariff reductions initially foreseen under the Agreement, while the end of implementation of tariff commitments differs amongst them — 2025 for Chile, 2028 for Brunei Darussalam and 2033 for Malaysia. Once fully implemented, all of Brunei Darussalam's tariff lines will be duty-free for other CPTPP parties. Chile will do so for 99.9% of its tariff lines, and Malaysia will do so for 99.8% of its tariff lines. On trade in services, the parties committed to expand on the sectors under liberalization beyond their commitments under the GATS.

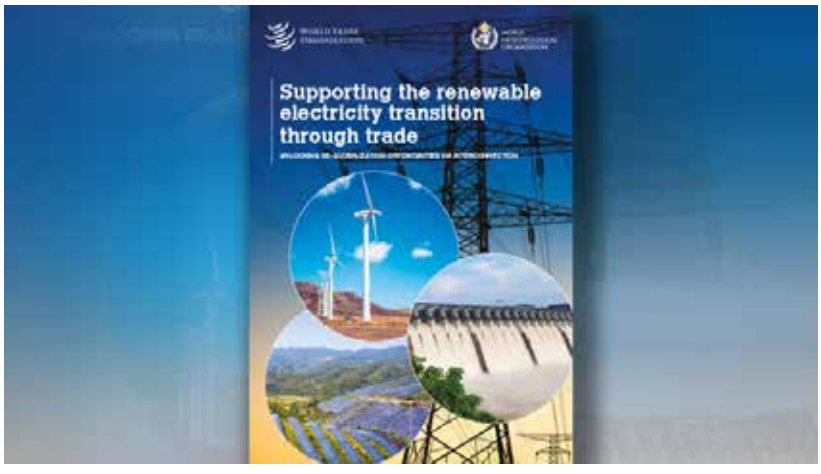
The Committee considered the trade in services aspects of the Free Trade Agreement between Türkiye and Montenegro. Originally covering only trade in goods, the FTA was amended to include services liberalization through Protocol III, signed on 17 July 2019 and effective from 1 July 2022. The Agreement marks Türkiye's sixth RTA with a services component notified to the WTO and Montenegro's third. It applies to all measures affecting trade in services and, following a positive list approach, expands the parties' specific commitments under the GATS. The Agreement also includes, among other things, provisions on intellectual property rights and e-commerce.

The Committee also took note of six notifications of regional trade agreements since its last session in July 2024, and of two notifications of changes to already notified RTAs. Members were also informed that the WTO Secretariat circulated a list of 56 RTAs currently in force that had not been notified to the WTO. The Secretariat is in contact with relevant parties to provide notifications. The Secretariat also reported on technical cooperation activities conducted in 2024 and planned for 2025.

The Committee agreed to reduce the number of meetings per year and their duration for a trial period of two years. The Secretariat provided an update on progress reached in adopting new online tools to better serve members, such as the use of the e-Agenda and the development of an RTAs and Integrated Database data submissions portal. The Committee also adopted the Report of the CRTA for 2024, to be submitted to the General Council.

New report on opportunities to unlock trade in renewable electricity

A new report published on 15 November by the World Meteorological Organization and the World Trade Organization points to the role that trade can play to help supply meet demand for electricity from renewable sources. Launched at the 29th UN Climate Change Conference (COP29) in Baku, this first joint WMO-WTO report underscores how interconnection projects can tap into supplies of hydro—, solar— and wind-generated energy from regions with comparative advantage in renewable electricity generation and help to bring down the cost of the transition to low-carbon energy.



The publication, "Supporting the Renewable Electricity Transition through Trade: Unlocking Re-Globalization Opportunities via Interconnection," notes that cross-border electricity trade is well below its potential for providing the renewable energy needed to help countries meet Paris Agreement climate targets. Less than 3% of electricity generated worldwide is traded across borders, with a relatively low value of some US$ 132 billion in 2023 according to UN Comtrade statistics. There is tremendous scope for growth as cross-border renewable electricity trade can reduce the overall cost of the net zero energy transition, the report states.

Just as shipping lanes, air corridors, highways and internet cable networks facilitate the movement of goods and services in the global economy, cross-border electricity interconnector cables offer a mechanism to get renewable electricity from where it is abundant to where it is needed.

However, new interconnection projects can take 10 to 15 years to plan, obtain permissions and complete. Unlocking opportunities in cross-border renewable electricity trade requires action to ensure better access to finance, to address delays in the delivery of critical components through supply chains, and to improve the transparency of project approval processes.

The joint report examines the rationale behind trading electricity across borders by looking at how solar, wind and water endowments differ between various regions. By tapping into the comparative advantage of some countries in electricity generation, trade can help bring down the overall costs of the transition to low-carbon energy and create opportunities for developing economies to participate more fully in global trade.

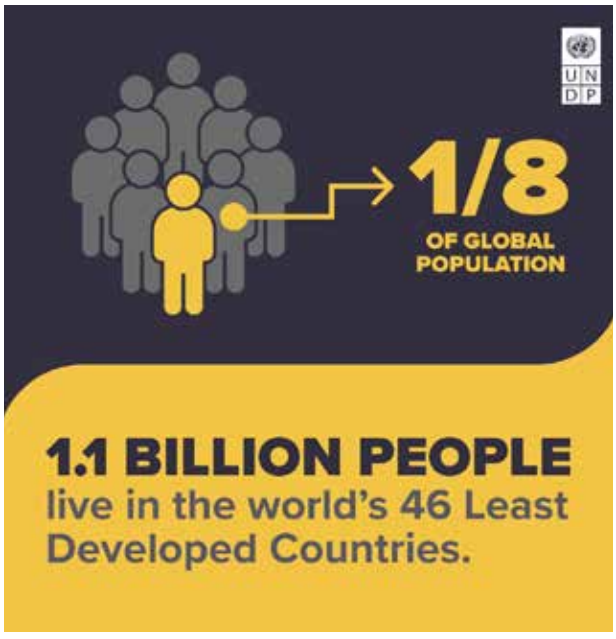
Several least-developed countries are already exporters of renewable electricity, the report notes. Expanding the network of overland and undersea cables that connect national electricity grids would offer new trade opportunities and thus contribute to re-globalization opportunities.

The report points to the network of more than 1.4 million kilometres of submarine telecommunications cables that currently underpin the internet as a point of comparison for what could be achievable in terms of building a global electricity grid infrastructure.

WTO members review 30 years of trade development in LDCs

To mark its 100th session, the Sub-Committee on Least-Developed Countries (LDCs) on 11 November looked at the progress made over the past 30 years in advancing LDCs' integration into global trade. LDCs' share in world exports of goods and commercial services has nearly doubled during this period, but it is still only around 1 per cent, speakers stressed. The meeting brought together ministers and senior representatives of WTO members to discuss the challenges and opportunities facing LDCs.

The event was opened by Mohamed Warsama Dirieh, Minister of Trade and Tourism of Djibouti, the coordinator of the WTO's LDC Group. The other high-level speakers were Sok Sopheak, Cambodia's Secretary of State of the Ministry of Commerce,



Li Fei, China's Vice-Minister of Commerce, Senthil Pandian C, India's WTO Ambassador, João Aguiar Machado, WTO Ambassador to the European Union and Paul Fekete, senior representative from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

LDCs underscored how the WTO acts as an enabler of economic transformation. Preferential market access and flexibilities in WTO agreements and decisions help open up economic opportunities for LDCs, they stressed. Non-tariff barriers, supply-side constraints, digital disparities across countries, climate change and graduation from the LDC category were cited as challenges that LDCs face. LDCs stressed the need for continued support in their efforts to diversify exports and enhance productive capacity.

The discussions highlighted the steps WTO members have taken to help LDCs become more active players in global trade. These include duty-free market access and targeted technical assistance.

China indicated that it has recently announced duty-free treatment for all goods and services from LDCs with whom it maintains diplomatic relations, and a three year transition period for graduated LDCs. The meeting also featured examples of initiatives from key partners, including the European Union's Global Gateway and the Team Europe Initiative on African Economic Integration towards the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

India indicated that over 250,000 professionals, mostly from LDCs, have benefited from the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation programme. Several partnerships in tele-education and telemedicine have helped to improve access to education and healthcare services in LDCs, speakers emphasized. USAID drew attention to "Hello Tractor!", the Alliance for eTrade Development and the "Feed the Future Innovation Labs". These initiatives aim to support farmers and micro, small, and mid-size enterprises in LDCs in engaging in trade, including in agriculture and e-commerce, and to promote food security.

Members reaffirmed their continued commitment to addressing the challenges faced by LDCs, including in the LDCs Sub-Committee. They welcomed the recent progress, such as the WTO Ministerial Decision on LDC Graduation adopted at the 13th Ministerial Conference earlier 2024. The important role the Aid for Trade Initiative and the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) play in addressing LDCs' capacity constraints was highlighted, with examples ranging from projects in Cambodia to The Gambia. Several graduating LDCs, including Bangladesh and Lao PDR, stressed the importance of advancing LDC graduation discussions in the Sub-Committee.

There are currently 45 LDCs, of which 37 are WTO members. Five are in the process of joining the WTO. These are: Ethiopia, São Tomé and Principe, Somalia, South Sudan, and Sudan.

Joint report for coordinated approaches on climate

Five international organizations released on 23 October a landmark report that outlines pathways for coordinated approaches on climate action, carbon pricing, and the cross-border effects of climate change mitigation policies with a view to achieving global climate goals.

The report was presented on the 23rd of October by the Joint Task Force on Climate Action, Carbon Pricing, and Policy Spillovers, convened by the World Trade Organization and joined by the International Monetary Fund, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, United Nations Trade and Development (UNCTAD), and the World Bank.

Entitled "Working Together for Better Climate Action: Carbon Pricing, Policy Spillovers, and Global Climate Goals," the report

arrives at a time when countries around the world are scaling up actions to curb climate change. Mitigation policies are on the rise, including carbon pricing policies, with 75 carbon taxes and emission trading schemes currently in effect worldwide, covering approximately 24 per cent of global emissions.

The report stresses that climate action needs to be stepped up to meet global emission reduction targets, while contributing to broader development goals. It also makes four important contributions to that end:

- The report provides a common understanding of carbon pricing metrics to improve transparency on how countries are shifting incentives for decarbonization.
- The report examines the composition of climate change mitigation policies, emphasizing the important role of carbon pricing as a cost-effective instrument that also raises revenues.
- It outlines how international organizations can support the coordination of policies to foster positive and limit negative cross-border spillovers from climate change mitigation policies. The report also analyses the advantages and disadvantages of carbon border adjustment policies, including their impact on developing countries.
- It shows how such coordination can help to scale up climate action by closing the transparency, implementation and ambition gaps.

The report also makes clear that international organizations' future work can help fill important knowledge gaps. These include a need for more granular and better data on embedded carbon prices and embedded emissions, the design of border adjustment policies and their interoperability, and other approaches to enhance cooperation to increase ambition and ensure a just transition for all.

WTO Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala said: "Trade-related climate policies are on the rise, with over 5,500 measures linked to climate objectives notified to the WTO from 2009-2022. Such policies lead to cross-border spillovers



which can increase trade tensions and retaliatory trade actions. Future work by international organizations should focus on concrete ways to come to the coordination of more ambitious carbon pricing policies which help to close the climate action gap and address their cross-border spillovers. This may require a framework to ensure interoperability between carbon pricing and other climate mitigation policies."

IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said: "This joint report of the five institutions highlights why carbon pricing and equivalent policies are important to scale up climate action. Global emissions need to be cut urgently to put the world on track to achieve the Paris goals and global ambition needs to be doubled to quadrupled. Carbon pricing should be an integral part of a well-designed policy mix, complemented with public investment support and sectoral policies, and international coordination on mitigation action could unlock progress."

OECD Secretary-General Mathias Cormann said: "Countries currently take different approaches to reduce emissions, but achieving net zero requires us to align these efforts for a truly global impact. The OECD's Inclusive Forum on Carbon Mitigation Approaches, now with 59 members, is bringing together national perspectives and building a common understanding of climate policies and their effects. More coherent and better-coordinated global mitigation policies can help prevent negative cross-border impacts such as carbon leakage or trade distortions, while maximizing opportunities for innovation, cost savings and shared benefits from the climate transition."

UNCTAD Secretary-General Rebeca Grynspan stated: "To ensure a just and green transition, UNCTAD encourages and supports developing countries in crafting the right policy mix to advance climate mitigation. We are strengthening our research and providing a safe space for dialogue to ensure that climate-related measures, including Border Carbon Adjustments mechanisms (BCAs) are evidence based and minimize negative spillovers on developing countries and other sustainable development goals. This is especially critical for less advanced economies, which often have limited productive capacity,

infrastructure for monitoring, verification, reporting, and fiscal space. We are committed to helping developing countries decarbonize and diversify their economies by seizing environmental-related export opportunities and working with our member states to reduce the compliance and trade costs associated with these transitions."

Axel van Trotsenburg, World Bank's Senior Managing Director (SMD), said: "Through its technical assistance and financing, the World Bank helps countries make sure climate policies are tailored to each country's context, capacities, political constraints, and development priorities. We think carbon pricing can play a central role in these policies, because it provides the right incentive for the private sector and creates public revenues to support broad development progress and help vulnerable populations manage the green energy transition. But with every country introducing their own climate policies, there is also a growing need for more cooperation and coordination. The product of in-depth exchanges across five international organizations, this report provides concrete ideas to make sure climate policies are designed in ways that benefit lower-income economies and help them accelerate their development, create jobs, and participate in global value chains."

DG Okonjo-Iweala at World Food Forum: Trade is vital for ensuring food security

Speaking at the opening plenary of the World Food Forum on 14 October in Rome, hosted by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala underscored the crucial role of trade and the WTO in addressing the challenges of farming and food security. "A free, fair, open, and predictable multilateral trading system and modernized trade rules [provided by the WTO], is critical to building an agrifood system that can deliver good food to the world's people today and in the future," she emphasized.

The Director-General recalled the strengthened partnership between the WTO and the FAO in the areas of food and agriculture. She highlighted the WTO's ongoing efforts to update trade rules, stressing that the multilateral trading system must be complemented by domestic policies that reduce distortions and enhance competition. She pointed to the importance of "policies that provide essential public goods to farmers such as research, pest and disease control, efficient water management, and extension services that are needed to improve productivity and sustainability."

The FAO's latest figures show around 733 million people are facing hunger — most of them in Africa and South Asia. At our current pace, we won't meet Sustainable Development Goal to end hunger and malnutrition by 2030. Climate change is a growing threat to food security, affecting every aspect of food systems, and exacerbating the sector's problems with water and land management, biodiversity loss, and deforestation. 55% of the world's food production occurs in areas experiencing water insecurity.



In 54 countries analysed by the OECD, support provided to individual producers averaged USD 630 billion per year from 2020 to 2022. This support often has environmentally harmful effects, encouraging the overuse of fossil fuels, energy and water.

The distance between business as usual, and truly sustainable food systems is considerable. The FAO has estimated that our current agri-food systems impose "hidden" health, environmental, and social costs equivalent to at least USD 10 trillion per year. Turning now to trade, the case for how it can help is straightforward: about one in four calories consumed worldwide is traded.

Between 2000 and 2022, agricultural trade grew five-fold, rising across all world regions. The average applied tariff on agricultural goods has fallen from 13 percent in 2005 to just about 5.8 percent in 2022, helping make food more affordable and available, whilst incentivizing exporters to ramp up production in response to international demand.

Trade has contributed to food security and resilience. For example, when the war in Ukraine cut off Ethiopia from its traditional sources of wheat imports, the existence of deep and diversified global markets meant it could source from Argentina and the United States instead.

Beyond trade's contribution to ensuring that food is available, trade-led growth and income gains have contributed mightily to bringing down hunger in countries including China, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam, to name a few. We look forward to continuing this collaboration whose aim is to assist FAO and WTO members. Collaboration between multilateral organizations brings coherence and congruence to helping members and the people they represent.

Global goods trade on track for gradual recovery despite lingering downside risks

Merchandise trade volume and GDP growth, 2020-2025[a]

Annual % change

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
World merchandise trade volume[b]	-5.3	9	2.2	-1.1	2.7	3
Exports						
North America	-9.2	6.4	3.9	3.7	2.1	2.9
South America[c]	-5	6.7	3	2.3	4.6	-0.1
Europe	-8.5	6.9	1.8	-2.6	-1.4	1.8
CIS[d]	-1.1	-0.8	-1.9	-4.5	4.5	1.7
Africa	-7.2	3.8	-2.5	4.3	2.5	2.2
Middle East	-6.4	-1.6	3.8	1.1	4.7	1
Asia	0.6	13.1	0.2	0.3	7.4	4.7
Imports						
North America	-5.2	11.9	5.7	-2	3.3	2
South America[c]	-9.9	24.9	4.1	-4.5	5.6	1.7
Europe	-8.2	7.5	4.4	-5	-2.3	2.2
CIS^d	-5.2	9.4	-5.7	17.9	1.1	1.7
Africa	-13.9	5.8	6.5	0.1	1	1.1
Middle East	-8.7	12.9	10.5	8.5	9	-1.1
Asia	-1	10.3	-1	-0.7	4.3	5.1
World GDP at market exchange rates	-2.9	6.3	3.1	2.7	2.7	2.7
North America	-2.8	5.7	2.1	2.4	2.4	1.6
South America[c]	-6.3	7.7	4.1	1.8	1.8	2.9
Europe	-5.8	6.6	3.5	0.7	1.1	1.6
CIS[d]	-2.4	5.7	0.1	3.9	3.8	1.9
Africa	-2.4	4.7	3.8	3.1	3.3	3.9
Middle East	-3.5	4.4	6.1	1.4	1.9	3.7
Asia	-0.7	6.7	3.3	4.3	4	4
Memo: Least Developed Countries (LDCs)						
Volume of merchandise exports	-1.5	-2.2	-0.6	4.6	1.8	3.7
Volume of merchandise imports	-8.4	6.5	0.2	-4.8	5.9	5.6
Real GDP at market exchange rates	0.1	3.3	4.2	3.3	4.3	4.7

a Figures for 2023 and 2024 are projections.
b Average of exports and imports.
C Refers to South and Central America and the Caribbean.
d Refers to Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), including certain associate and former member states.

Note: These projections incorporate mixed-data sampling (MIDAS) techniques for selected countries to take advantage of higher-frequency data such as container throughput and financial risk indices.

Sources: WTO for trade, consensus estimates for GDP.

Global goods trade is projected to post a 2.7% increase in 2024, up slightly from the previous estimate of 2.6%, WTO economists said in an updated forecast on 10 October.

The volume of world merchandise trade is likely to increase by 3.0% in 2025; however, rising geopolitical tensions and increased economic policy uncertainty continue to pose substantial downside risks to the forecast. Services trade has a more favourable outlook compared to goods according to leading indicators.

In the October 2024 update of "Global Trade Outlook and Statistics," WTO economists note that global merchandise trade turned upwards in the first half of 2024 with a 2.3% year-on-year increase, which should be followed by further moderate expansion in the rest of the year and in 2025. The rebound comes on the heels of a -1.1% slump in 2023 driven by high inflation and rising interest rates. World real GDP growth at market exchange rates is expected to remain steady at 2.7% in 2024 and 2025.

Inflation by the middle of 2024 had fallen sufficiently to allow central banks to cut interest rates. Lower inflation should raise real household incomes and boost consumer spending, while lower interest rates should raise investment spending by firms.

Diverging monetary policies among major economies could lead to financial volatility and shifts in capital flows as central banks bring down interest rates. This might make debt servicing more challenging, particularly for poorer economies. There is also some limited upside potential to the forecast if interest rate cuts in advanced economies stimulate stronger than expected growth without reigniting inflation.

"The latest forecasts for world trade in 2024 and 2025 only show modest revisions since the last Global Trade Outlook and Statistics report in April, but these projections do not capture some important changes in the regional composition of trade. Historical trade volume data have been revised substantially, including downward revisions to European exports and imports back to 2020. There have also been notable changes in GDP forecasts by region, including a 0.4 percentage point upgrade to North America's growth, which could influence trade flows in other regions as well," WTO Chief Economist Ralph Ossa said.

Europe is now expected to post a decline of 1.4% in export volumes in 2024; imports will meanwhile decrease by 2.3%. Germany's economy contracted by 0.3% in the second quarter, with manufacturing indicators hitting 12-month lows in September. European exports have been dragged down by the region's automotive and chemicals sectors. A slump in EU exports of automotive products is worrying due to the potential impact on the sector's extensive supply chains. Meanwhile, organic chemical exports — some associated with medicines — are returning to normal trends following a surge during the COVID-19 pandemic. EU machinery imports also plummeted, particularly from China. This trend extends beyond geopolitical tensions, affecting imports from the United States, the Republic of Korea and Japan. Meanwhile, rising imports from India and Viet Nam suggest their growing roles in global supply chains.

Asia's export volumes will grow faster than those of any other region this year, rising by as much as 7.4% in 2024. The region saw a strong export rebound in the first half of the year driven by key manufacturing economies such as China, Singapore and the Republic of Korea. Asian imports show divergent trends: while China's growth remains modest, other economies such as Singapore, Malaysia, India and Viet Nam are surging. This shift suggests their emerging role as "connecting" economies, trading across geopolitical blocs, thereby potentially mitigating the risk of fragmentation.

South America is rebounding in 2024, recovering from weaknesses in both exports and imports experienced in 2023. North American trade is largely driven by the United States although Mexico stands out with stronger import growth compared to the region as a whole. Mexican imports are rebounding after a contraction in 2023, underscoring the country's growing role as a "connecting" economy in trade.

Africa's export growth is in line with the global trend. It has been revised downward from the April forecast, driven by an overall revision of Africa's trade statistics, and a greater-than-expected weakening in Europe's imports, Africa's main trade partner. In April, WTO economists forecasted a contraction in the CIS region's (2) imports for 2024, but now it is projected to post 1.1% growth, driven by stronger-than-expected GDP expansion. The Middle East had a major revision in its data, explaining the discrepancy between the April forecast and the current projections.

Merchandise exports of least-developed countries (LDCs) are projected to increase by 1.8% in 2024, marking a slowdown from the 4.6% growth recorded in 2023. Export growth is expected to pick up in 2025, reaching 3.7%. Meanwhile, LDC imports are forecast to grow 5.9% in 2024 and 5.6% in 2025, following a 4.8% decline in 2023. These projections are underpinned by GDP growth estimates for LDCs of 3.3% in 2023, 4.3% in 2024 and 4.7% in 2025.

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