ESCAP's facilitated course on e-commerce and digital provisions in RTAs

8 – 14 Mar 2024 (virtual)

Introduction

Countries have increasingly moved from negotiating narrow-scope preferential trade agreements to more comprehensive economic partnership agreements (CEPAs). Such agreements cover not only traditional trade in goods issues such as tariff liberalization, but also issues such as technical barriers, investment measures, services trade and e-commerce. ESCAP has previously developed a highly popular Online Course on Negotiation of Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreements[1]. This facilitated course on e-commerce and digital provisions in RTAs seeks to dive deeper into these topics.

Course format

The course is conducted as a facilitated online e-learning course. **The course consists of 3 pre-recorded modules (approximately 45 min each) and a kick-off live webinar.** Note that this course is offered for the first time on a pilot basis and participants are requested to kindly note down any feedback to the content of the course and quizzes for improvement. Interactive web space will be provided to discuss the content and ask any clarification questions are offered to participants *who will have gone through the pre-recorded sessions and attempted all quizzes.* **Upon attending the live session, providing feedback and passing the quiz, participants will get a certificate of completion for the course.**

About the course convenor

Henry Gao is Professor of Law at Singapore Management University and Senior Fellow at the Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI). His research areas include WTO, International Trade Law, Chinese Law and Law and Economics. He worked at the WTO Secretariat supporting negotiations among members in Geneva, as well as at the Faculty of Law of the University of Hong Kong (HKU), where he served as the Deputy Director of the East Asian International Economic Law and Policy (EAIEL) Program. As the Academic Coordinator of the first Asia-Pacific Regional Trade Policy Course officially sponsored by the WTO, he played an instrumental role in setting up the WTO's flagship training program for the region when it was launched 20 years ago. He is a member of Advisory Board of WTO Chairs Programme and an Advisor to the Asia-Pacific Research and Training Network on Trade (ARTNeT), an initiative by the UNESCAP. He sits on the editorial boards of the Journal of International Economic Law and Journal of Financial Regulation, both published by Oxford University Press.

Tentative programme

(as of 6 March 2024, all time are in Indochina Time (UTC+7))

8 March 2024 16:00 – 17:30	**Live session: The WTO Joint Statement Initiative on Electronic Commerce: A post-MC13 dialogue**
9 - 14 Mach	*Go through Modules 1-3, complete readings, and attempt quizzes (expected time allocation: 4-5 hours)*

[1] https://www.unescap.org/our-work/trade-investment-innovation/cepa

Annex – Course Modules and Readings

Lecture modules:

1. Evolution of e-commerce provisions in trade agreements [lecture length: 50:31]
2. E-commerce in Free Trade Agreements: Main issues [lecture length: 45:47]
3. The language of e-commerce and digital provisions [lecture length: 46:29]

Readings:

1. Henry Gao, Regulation of Digital Trade in US Free Trade Agreements:
From Trade Regulation to Digital Regulation. Legal Issues of Economic Integration 45, no. 1 (2018): 47–70., Available at SSRN:
https://ssrn.com/abstract=3070330 or
http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3070330

2. Henry Gao, Gao, Henry S., Data Sovereignty and Trade Agreements:
Three Digital Kingdoms (October 11, 2021). Available at SSRN:
https://ssrn.com/abstract=3940508 or http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3940508;

3. Yasmin Ismail, 'The Evolving Context and Dynamics of the WTO Joint Initiative on E-commerce: The fifth-year stocktake and prospects for 2023', at https://www.iisd.org/publications/report/wto-joint-initiative-e-commerce-fifth-year-stocktake.

4. Andrenelli, A. and J. Lopez Gonzalez (2023), "Understanding the potential scope, definition and impact of the WTO e-commerce Moratorium", OECD Trade Policy Papers, No. 275, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/59ceace9-en.