

ADB-ESCAP-WTO Conference: Promoting Connectivity for an inclusive Asia and the Pacific

27- 28 June

Miran Hotel, Tashkent, Uzbekistan

International trade is a key driving force behind economic growth that since 1990 has lifted more than a billion people out of poverty in Asia and Pacific. However, in the years since the global financial crisis, trade growth has fallen behind GDP growth, after outpacing it for many decades. Despite early signs of a recovery in the growth of world trade, the global economic environment is still uncertain, and much remains to be done to realize potential trade outcomes for inclusive growth.

Towards this end, emerging digital technologies, such as e-commerce, offer a new set of modern trade facilitating solutions and opportunities to achieve inclusive trade-driven growth. However, realizing the full potential of cross-border e-commerce calls for coordinated regional and global efforts. Moreover, official development assistance targeted at tradable sectors, or aid for trade, and other regional trade facilitation initiatives are important modalities for multilateral development banks and other donors to help maximize the benefits of trade liberalization.

Asian economies and stake-holders must work together to reinvigorate trade growth—through measures that reduce trade costs and improve the business climate, as well as cooperation to lower trade barriers to better leverage the potential of intra-regional trade and investment linkages. Landlocked nations face especially unique logistical challenges to their engagement in international trade having no territorial access to the seas, limited border crossings and transit dependence on neighboring countries, and hence suffer from high transaction costs to trade. Given the challenge of geography, it is especially important for these nations to undertake reforms to improve the business environment, minimize barriers to trade and pursue closer regional cooperation.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is the largest international development finance institution in Asia and the Pacific dedicated to reducing poverty in the region. Promoting trade and investment is one of the pillars of ADB's regional cooperation and integration strategy. In this regard, Aid for Trade and trade facilitation forms an integral part of ADB's efforts to boost connectivity for inclusive growth, including through loans, grants, technical assistance and research.

In collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Trade, Uzbekistan, ADB will bring together stakeholders from Central Asia, including policy makers, representatives from international organizations, the donor community, and academia to discuss the unique challenges of connectivity facing the landlocked economies of Central Asia, and facilitate trade for inclusive growth.

The conference will showcase key findings from three recent ADB research reports – produced in collaboration with key development partners, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and World Trade Organization (WTO) – through a combination of presentations and high-level round-table discussions spanning three sessions. (i) ADB-ESCAP study on E-commerce Development in Asia and the Pacific 2018 (ii) ADB-ESCAP biennial 2017 report entitled 'Trade Facilitation and better connectivity for an inclusive Asia and the Pacific' (iii) ADB-WTO's biennial 2017 Aid for Trade in Asia and the Pacific report entitled 'Promoting Connectivity for Inclusive Development'. In addition, ESCAP and WTO will also lead sessions to discuss topical issues relating to digital trade facilitation and WTO accessions respectively.

Tentative Agenda

Day 1, 27 June 2018	
8:00–9:00	Registration
Opening Ceremony	
9:00– 9:05	Welcome Remarks Takeo Konishi, Country Director, Asian Development Bank (ADB)
9:05– 9:10	Opening Remarks Mr. Shishir Priyadarshi, Director Development Division, World Trade Organization (WTO)
9:10– 9:15	Opening Remarks Ms. Mia Mikic, Director, Trade, Investment and Innovation Division, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)
9:15–9:30	Keynote Speech 1 Mr. Bambang Susantano, Vice President for Knowledge Management and Sustainable Development, ADB
9:30–9:45	Keynote Speech 2 Mr. Jamshed Khodjaev, Minister of Foreign Trade; Government of Uzbekistan – TBC
9:45–10:00	Photo Session and Coffee Break
Session 1: Harnessing the Potential of E-commerce Chair: Bambang Susantano, Vice President, ADB	
10:00–10:40	<i>Leveraging Growing Opportunities Provided by E-Commerce in Asia and the Pacific</i> Jong Woo Kang, Principal Economist, ADB Q&A
10:40–12:00	Round Table Discussion Format: Three or four rounds of questions will follow an opening 5 minute statement by the participants.
Lunch Break, 12:00 – 2:00	
Session 2: Progress Towards Digital Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade Chair: Yann Duval, Chief, Trade Policy and Facilitation Section, Investment and Innovation Division, ESCAP	
2:00 – 2:30 pm	Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade Implementation: Global Report 2017 Yann Duval
2:30–4:00	Roundtable Discussion

Day 2, 28 June 2018

Session 3: Aid for Trade and Trade Facilitation for Inclusive Development

Chair: Shishir Priyadarshi, Director Development Division, WTO

9:00–9:20 am	<i>Aid for Trade and Trade Facilitation in Asia and the Pacific: Promoting Connectivity for Inclusive Development</i> Cyn-Young Park, Director of Regional Cooperation and Integration, ADB Q&A
9:20-10:30	RoundTable Discussion
10:30–10:45	Coffee Break

Session 4: Progress and Challenges in WTO Accession

Chair: Takeo Konishi, Country Director, ADB

10:45–12:30 pm	<i>Progress and Challenges in WTO Accessions</i> Michael Roberts, Development Division, WTO – TBC Q&A
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Lunch Break, 12:30-2:00 pm

Session 5: The Future of Inclusive Trade-Driven Growth

Chair: Representative, Government of Uzbekistan – TBD

2:00–3:00 pm	RoundTable Discussion
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Closing Remarks: Takeo Konishi, Country Director, ADB