

**EIF side event at Asia-Pacific Regional Review of UNLDC 5 – August/September 2021**

**Harnessing the Power of Aid for Trade in the Asia Pacific LDCs**

**Draft Programme**

***Date: Wednesday, 1 September 2021***

***Time: 8:00 a.m.-9:00 a.m. (CEST time)***

[Zoom registration link](#)

Aid for Trade (AfT) has played an important role not only in promoting trade opportunities but also in transforming the economies of a number of least developed countries (LDCs) in the Asia and Pacific region, particularly those on the pathway of graduation. While each country is different, experiences on the ground, empirical evidence and lessons learnt are key to increasing the effectiveness of AfT and making it fit for purpose in the rapidly evolving trade landscape.

This is particularly important in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although AfT flows to the LDCs have grown annually since 2006, reaching USD 16.6 billion in 2019, the pandemic threatens to slow or reverse this trend. Official Development Assistance (ODA) from members of the OECD's Development Assistance Committee rose to an all-time high of USD 161.2 billion in 2020, up 3.5% in real terms from 2019 to help developing countries that grapple with the COVID-19 crisis. However, the LDCs face challenges due to their high dependence on ODA and difficulties in mobilizing domestic resources and private finance.

Now more than ever, the LDCs need the assurance that AfT opportunities will remain to enable them to build back better. AfT resources are still an integral source of funding for institutional strengthening, productive capacity-building and a smooth graduation transition for the LDCs. For the proposed Doha Programme of Action to achieve its objectives and targets, the mobilization of AfT resources is paramount. By demonstrating the impactful benefits, experiences on the ground and lessons, the international community can better appreciate the approaches taken by different countries to maximize the use of AfT resources for institutional and productive capacity development contributing to job creation, increased incomes and exports. This could provide the momentum for the mobilization of AfT resources and other investments for the next decade.

The EIF session on "**Harnessing the power of AfT in Asia-Pacific LDCs**" will focus on demonstrating how selected countries have optimized AfT resources to build trade capacity and infrastructure needed to promote sustainable and inclusive economic development and helped them contribute towards the Sustainable Development Goals. Specifically, the session will discuss and exchange experiences on:

- How Bhutan has used AfT to build e-Infrastructure for Trade and Services and leverage digital technologies to reduce trade costs in commodities exports.
- What are the mechanisms to channel AfT funding to support export expansion and diversification of cash crops in Cambodia.

- How Lao PDR has created an institutional environment conducive for the mobilization of resources and AfT coordination.
- How the Pacific Islands Forum has leveraged AfT resources to support trade development and structural transformation in the Pacific LDCs.

**Moderator: Dr Ratnakar Adhikari, Executive Director, Executive Secretariat for the EIF at the WTO.**

**High-level panel speakers (to be confirmed):**

- H.E Mr. Loknath Sharma, Minister, Ministry of Economic Affairs, Royal Government of Bhutan
- H.E. Mrs Terek Kamrang, Secretary of State, Ministry of Commerce, Royal Government of Cambodia.
- Vice-Minister of Ministry of Industry and Commerce, Lao PDR.
- H.E. Mrs Mere Falemaka, Ambassador, Permanent Representative, Permanent Delegation of the Pacific Islands Forum in Geneva.

**Tentative programme:**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Topics</b>
8:00-8:05	Introduction by the session moderator
8:05-8:40	Panel discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Bhutan:</b> Building e-Infrastructure for Trade and Services and leverage digital technologies to reduce trade costs in commodities exports</li> <li>• <b>Cambodia:</b> Catalysing AfT funding for export expansion and diversification of cash crops</li> <li>• <b>Lao PDR:</b> Creating an institutional environment conducive for mobilization of resources and AfT coordination</li> <li>• <b>Pacific Islands Forum:</b> Leveraging AfT resources to support trade development and structural transformation in the Pacific</li> </ul>
8:40-9:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Q&amp;A</li> <li>• Wrap-up and closing remarks</li> </ul>

**For registration,** please using the following link [https://wto-eif-org.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_-W79aGN5QjeLI-lyQpYByw](https://wto-eif-org.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_-W79aGN5QjeLI-lyQpYByw)

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