



PRESS RELEASE

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

France contributes CHF 6.1 million to help developing countries deepen trade expertise

France is donating approximately EUR 6 million to finance WTO technical assistance programmes for developing countries and least-developed countries (LDCs) from 2021 to 2023 aimed at improving participants' understanding of global trade rules and standards. French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire and Minister Delegate for Foreign Trade Franck Riester confirmed the contribution at a signing ceremony with WTO Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala held on 1 April at the WTO. In a meeting with the DG, they discussed a number of issues including the role of the WTO in supporting a post-COVID-19 economic recovery, WTO reform, climate change and sustainability issues, gender and e-commerce.

France's contribution will be distributed to three funds.

- The [internship programme sponsored by France and Ireland](#) will receive an annual contribution of EUR 900,000 to finance internships for government officials at the permanent missions of developing countries and LDCs in Geneva.
- A yearly amount of EUR 550,000 will be targeted to support the new phase of the WTO's [Chairs Programme](#) aimed at helping academic institutions in developing countries and LDCs build their expertise in trade policy, international trade economics, international relations and international economic law. Since the launch of the Programme, which has been part of the Global Trust Fund for ten years and is covered by the technical assistance plans, the WTO has provided financial support to 19 institutions in countries across Africa, Asia and South and Central America.
- The [Standards and Trade Development Facility](#) will receive annually EUR 400,000 to help developing countries and LDCs implement food safety, animal health and plant health standards required for international trade and to improve their sanitary and phytosanitary capacity.

DG Okonjo-Iweala said: "The technical assistance activities which France is supporting will provide developing countries and LDCs with essential skills and knowledge so that they may more effectively participate in multilateral trade, including trade negotiations, and achieve meaningful outcomes for the people they serve. I welcome France's continued generosity."

France's Minister of the Economy, Finance and Recovery, Bruno Le Maire, said: "France is convinced that the WTO has a major role to play in the wake of the economic crisis. We need to

move forward on a number of reforms so that the WTO can play its role again in easing trade tensions and settling disputes, so that every country can reap the benefits that international trade offers, including developing countries. Our discussions with the Director-General focused on transforming and improving the WTO's Appellate Body, on clarifying and respecting multilateral trade rules, and on strengthening the WTO's role in the fight against global warming. Trade must serve sustainable development. France is committed to limiting the impact of global warming on a global scale, and to supporting developing countries in this effort, through the strengthening of their industrial and commercial capacities."

France's Minister Delegate for Foreign Trade and Economic Attractiveness, Franck Riester, said: "This is a crucial moment for the WTO. We are experiencing an unprecedented paralysis. At the same time, this period offers exceptional opportunities to reform the Organization so that it can build dynamic, fair, just and sustainable international trade. We support reforms that will revitalize the multilateral trading system and level the playing field, especially for developing countries. The WTO has a crucial role to play in preserving global common goods, including in regards to the environment and health. France supports Dr Ngozi's ambition to create a third way to ensure that access to vaccines is universal. Citizens around the world are waiting for us regarding these issues."

France has contributed approximately EUR 28 million to WTO trust funds in 20 years.

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