



Commonwealth Secretariat

Briefing Note – International Trade

The challenge

The Commonwealth Secretariat works through advocacy, consensus-building, and international and direct support for governments that do not have the means to be effective within the international trade system on their own. We seek to ensure international trade benefits weaker member states and landlocked developing countries (LLDCs).

We also work with partners to raise awareness regarding the impact of the economic crisis on LLDCs and small vulnerable economies, and to also understand the impact of measures taken by developed countries on them.

The Commonwealth strategy

- We endeavour to strengthen the capacity of member countries to deal with multilateral and regional trade negotiations.
- We produce analytical studies, policy briefs and facilitate consultations and organise workshops and seminars that increase the understanding of the changes in the international trade environment.
- We contribute to the processes involving multilateral and bilateral trade regimes that advance beneficial participation of Commonwealth developing countries, particularly small states and least developed countries (LDCs).
- We assist member countries to develop regional integration strategies.

Key principles

The Secretariat aims to quickly respond to emerging issues in the international trade environment that have an impact particularly on the LDCs and small states.

The practical response

- In the last two years, we have supported member countries, especially small states, to participate in trade negotiations with the aim of concluding the Doha Development Agenda.
- The Secretariat has also supported the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP) in the second global review of Aid for Trade, which they found beneficial.
- We are working towards supporting finalising the development-friendly negotiations between Europe and the ACP.
- The Secretariat is the host of the ‘Hub and Spokes’ project and it is helping ACP countries to participate effectively in multilateral trade negotiations. In

collaboration with the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie, the European Commission and ACP Secretariat, six regional trade advisers have been placed to work in regional integration organisations. Also, 25 policy analysts have been placed in ministries responsible for trade.

- In partnership with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, we are empowering and assisting parliamentarians in small developing countries to understand the complexities of international financial arrangements and trade negotiations. The Commonwealth Secretariat organised a two-day seminar in Dhaka, Bangladesh, in May 2009 for parliamentarians to provide them with a basic understanding of trade issues.
- We have provided support to ACP countries for the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) and Aid for Trade negotiations by creating awareness about these issues on the global agenda.
- We are focusing on supporting development of the private sector so that it becomes a source for growth in member countries.

Other Commonwealth players and their work

The Secretariat and the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation work in partnership with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

Relations/co-operation with other bodies involved in the sector

We work with the European Union, the ACP, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Pacific Islands Forum, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the World Trade Organization (WTO).