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WTO MODEL ECUADOR 2024

COMMITTEE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

UNIVERSIDAD ANDINA SIMÓN BOLÍVAR, SEDE ECUADOR

ACADEMIC GUIDE (HANDBOOK)

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Cover Letter

Distinguished delegations:

We are pleased to be able to accompany you in your decision to be part of such an enriching academic and professional experience in this first edition of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Model - Ecuador.

The Committee on Trade and Development (CTD) is a WTO body that focuses on supporting developing and least developed countries in their integration into international trade, addressing issues such as the implementation of the 'Enabling Clause', technical cooperation, market access and assistance in trade preference programs. In addition, the CTD conducts annual reviews of measures taken by countries to facilitate duty-free and quota-free access for products from Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

The participation of delegates in such models as the WTO is of vital importance in terms of gaining practical experience in diplomacy and international trade negotiations. Indeed, this allows delegates to better understand the complexities of global trade, develop critical analysis, conflict resolution and public speaking skills. At the same time it fosters an in-depth understanding of trade policies and their impact on different regions and countries of the world.

We have absolute confidence in your research skills, valid argumentation, moderate participatory performance, informative analysis, knowledge and leadership within this historic simulation.

We cordially invite you to inform yourselves fully on both official topics pertaining to this committee for high-level academic-professional appearances in order to foster an enriching environment with a greater focus on international relations, economics, international law and related issues.

Sincerely,

Alexis Durán
Chair

Sophia Chérrez
Chair

Aníbal Yucailla
Chair Assistant





Development of topic 1

Global landscape analysis on the implementation of *Aid for trade*, mainstreaming trade into development strategies



A) Historical context

The Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) is the only multilateral partnership aimed exclusively at helping Least Developed Countries (LDCs) to make trade an engine for growth, sustainable development and poverty reduction. The EIF comprises 51 countries, 24 donors and 8 partner agencies, including the WTO. LDCs can use the EIF as a tool to coordinate donor support and leverage additional Aid for Trade resources. In turn, donors can use the EIF as a tool to deliver on their Aid for Trade commitments, facilitating the channeling of assistance to trade projects in LDCs, promoting sustainable development. (OMC, s.f.)

The Aid for Trade Initiative, formally launched in 2006 under the WTO framework, emerged as a strategic response to the challenges faced by developing economies and least developed countries in integrating effectively into world trade. This joint effort grew out of the recognition that trade liberalization alone was not sufficient for all countries to benefit equitably from the global trading system. To address these disparities, Aid for Trade focused on overcoming key structural constraints, such as lack of adequate infrastructure and insufficient trade capacity, to enable these countries to take better advantage of the opportunities offered by international trade. (OMC, s.f.)

Throughout its evolution, Aid for Trade has broadened its initial focus to respond to the growing needs of developing countries. While in its early stages the initiative focused on mobilizing resources for infrastructure projects and productive capacity building, over time it has incorporated sustainability and inclusion as essential pillars. This shift reflects a deeper understanding that development is not just about economic growth, but also about ensuring that the benefits of trade are distributed equitably and sustainably. A notable example is Bhutan, where the EIF supported export diversification with the 'Brand Bhutan' initiative. It has also modernized trade infrastructure, such as the national single window 'Bhutan Trade Fin Net', to facilitate trade and improve macroeconomic management

Another relevant case is The Gambia, where the modernization of the air cargo complex at Banjul International Airport, supported by the EIF, improved infrastructure and increased efficiency by 40%, generating \$54,000 annually in customs duties. In addition, Lesotho has benefited from the adoption of greenhouse cultivation technology, fostering markets for fresh fruits and vegetables, with a positive impact on poverty alleviation and employment, especially for women.



The WTO has played a central role in promoting the integration of trade into development strategies, as evidenced by the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, which recognize trade as a key driver of sustainable development. The EIF has been instrumental in countries such as the Solomon Islands, where its investments in the tourism sector have increased visitor arrivals and empowered local communities, especially women. Similarly, the honey sector in Zambia experienced significant growth, increasing export earnings from \$684,000 in 2011 to \$6,090,000 in 2022, demonstrating the impact of Aid for Trade's structural support. These examples demonstrate that Aid for Trade has had a tangible impact on a range of countries and sectors, reinforcing its role as a tool for promoting sustainable development. (WTO, OECD, 2024)

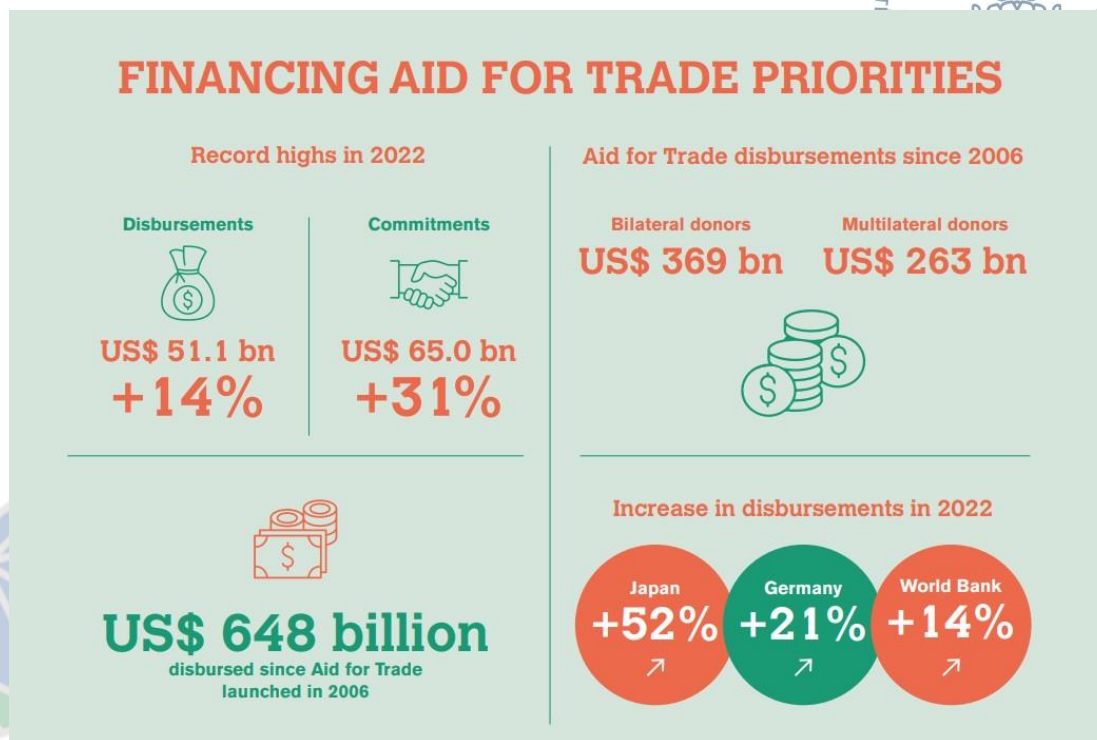
Integrating trade into development strategies has been a historical challenge for LDCs, where trade and development policies have often been treated as separate domains. This disconnect has limited the potential of trade to drive sustainable economic development. Aid for Trade has been instrumental in changing this dynamic, promoting a cross-sectoral approach that aligns trade policies with national development objectives. A significant step forward in this integration was the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, which recognize trade as a key driver of sustainable development.

B) Current situation

The joint OECD-WTO Aid for Trade 2024 monitoring and evaluation exercise reveals that a total of US\$648 billion has been disbursed since the launch of Aid for Trade 2024 in 2006. In 2022, disbursements reached an all-time high of \$51.1 billion, a year-on-year increase of 14% in real terms, while commitments increased by 31% that year, reaching a total of \$65 billion.

Figure 1

Financing Aid for Trade Priorities



Source: (WTO, OECD, 2024)

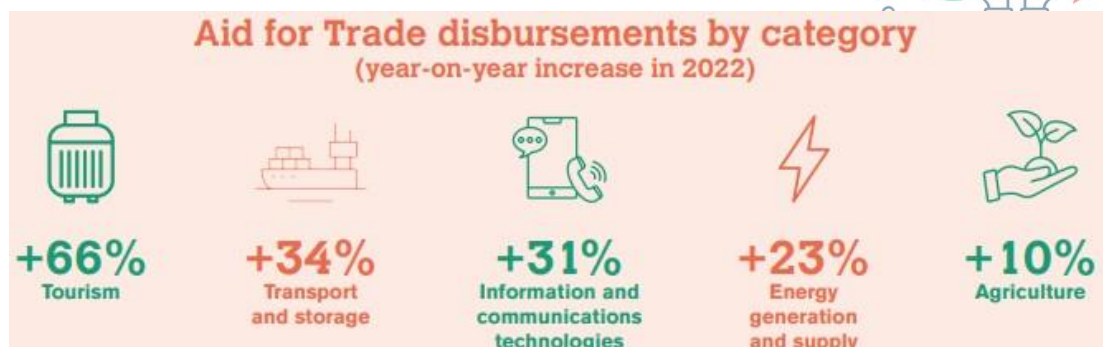
The main beneficiaries of disbursements between 2021 and 2022 were Asia, Africa, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Oceania respectively, with LDCs (Least Developed Countries) being the largest beneficiaries to whom Aid for Trade support has been committed to double by 2031.

The year-on-year increase in 2022 of AfT disbursements by category is distributed as follows:

- Tourism: +66%
- Transport and storage: +34%
- Information and IT: +31%
- Energy and supply generation: +23%
- Agriculture: +10%

Figure 2

Aid for Trade disbursements by category



Source: (WTO, OECD, 2024)

In 2022, disbursements were distributed across several key areas: infrastructure development received USD 27.9 billion; renewable energy investment reached USD 4.5 billion; the rail transport sector was supported with USD 6.2 billion; and small and medium enterprise development received USD 1.7 billion. Since 2006, the agriculture sector has received \$125 billion, representing 18 per cent of all Aid for Trade funding. In addition, \$20 billion was allocated to climate change mitigation.

Responses from partners and donors in the Aid for Trade 2024 monitoring and evaluation exercise indicate that the programme has had a significant impact in areas such as trade facilitation, trade policy and regulation, agriculture, regional trade agreements, education and vocational training, multilateral trade negotiations, digital connectivity, e-commerce and industry, among others.

Figure 3

Top areas where Aid for Trade has an impact



Source: (WTO, OECD, 2024)

C) Challenges and opportunities for the committee

In a keynote speech at the Ninth Global Review of Aid for Trade in June 2024, WTO Director-General Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala highlighted current trade challenges such as rising protectionism, the return of more interventionist industrial policies and increasing fragmentation, as countries with similar interests tend to trade more with each other to the exclusion of those with whom they have less common ground.

In addition, Aid for Trade faces several major challenges, such as the difficulty of adapting to changing global situations, the lack of synchronisation between project duration and funding cycles, limitations in institutional capacity, the limited number of financial tools available, and discrepancies in understanding beneficiaries' needs. Digital transformation, climate change and evolving geopolitical dynamics are also shaping new opportunities and challenges for developing economies.

- In response to rising protectionism and trade fragmentation, the CTD could facilitate the creation of platforms for multilateral dialogue and the promotion of inclusive trade agreements. Such an approach would

be in line with the Committee's mandate to review and coordinate work on development and trade, helping to reduce barriers and foster greater cooperation between countries with diverse interests.

- To overcome the difficulty of adapting to changing global situations, the CCD could recommend the implementation of dynamic monitoring and evaluation systems. Such systems would allow projects and strategies to be adjusted in line with emerging changes, ensuring a more agile and effective response. Collaboration with international experts and agencies would also facilitate better management of global trends.
- The lack of synchronization between project duration and funding cycles suggests the need for more flexible funding mechanisms. Promoting funding arrangements that allow for real-time adjustments and coordinating efforts between funders could significantly improve project effectiveness, aligning with the CCD's objective of coordinating technical assistance and development finance.
- To address discrepancies in the understanding of beneficiaries' needs, the CCD could push for the implementation of participatory mechanisms. Involving beneficiaries in the identification and prioritization of their needs through regular consultations would allow interventions to be more aligned with real and specific needs.

Despite these challenges, the WTO has made significant progress in supporting Least Developed Countries (LDCs). Notable achievements include:

- More than 75% of world merchandise trade is conducted under the basic tariff conditions of most-favoured-nation treatment.
- Trade in goods is expected to grow by 2.6% this year and 3.3% next year.
- Trade in services, especially digital services, is growing at an annual rate of 8%.
- Green trade shows sustained growth.

The Aid for Trade initiative within its remit and scope generates opportunities for partner countries in areas such as: technical assistance to develop trade policies and regulations, construction of essential infrastructure such as roads and ports to connect markets, support in developing the productive capacity of the private sector, management of costs associated with trade liberalization, and other priority needs identified in development strategies.

To integrate examples that illustrate how Least Developed Countries (LDCs) have taken advantage of or can make better use of the opportunities offered by the Aid for Trade initiative, cases such as Vietnam can be highlighted. Vietnam has made significant progress in export diversification and trade integration. For example,



Whereas before 2000 Vietnam exported less than 3,000 products, by 2022 it was able to export more than 4,000 different products to a wider range of destinations. This success coincided with the period when Vietnam was a major recipient of Aid for Trade, receiving a total of US\$29 billion between 2006 and 2021. Of this amount, approximately 25% went to improving productive capacity, enabling the country to increase business productivity and its ability to diversify exports.

To overcome challenges and seize business opportunities, it is essential to look for innovative ways of financing. Traditional methodologies are under pressure and new ideas and approaches need to be adopted. This means engaging a wider range of actors, including the private sectors, and taking advantage of alternatives such as sustainable financing and blended finance mechanisms. By implementing these innovative approaches, it is possible to complement traditional public financing and improve support for trade integration and development efforts.

D) Guiding questions for the committee

1. Is Aid for Trade a key and efficient element for the development of LDCs?
2. What strategies can Aid for Trade generate to address global changes, such as digitalization, climate change and geopolitics?
3. How is trade being integrated into the development strategies of developing countries, and how is Aid for Trade contributing to this process?
4. Which sectors should be prioritized in Aid for Trade disbursements and why?
5. Does the digital transformation create opportunities or challenges for developing economies?
6. Do donor countries benefit in any way from providing Aid for Trade?
7. How is the effectiveness of Aid for Trade in promoting sustainable development and economic growth in developing countries measured?
8. What successful Aid for Trade projects have been implemented?
9. What innovative financing mechanisms are being explored to complement traditional Aid for Trade methods?
10. What are the future expectations for Aid for Trade in terms of its impact on sustainable development and the integration of developing countries into global trade?



E) Recommendations for research

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Development of topic 2

Technical Assistance Facility for Developing Countries and Emerging Economies: Challenges and Opportunities



A) Historical context

To begin with, it is worth recognizing the role of technical assistance as a fundamental pillar of international cooperation for strengthening the capacities of developing countries and emerging economies. To better understand the functioning of these mechanisms and their impact on global development, we must delve deeper into their history.

The origins of modern technical assistance can be traced back to the post-war period following World War II. During this time, the focus was predominantly on rebuilding infrastructure and governance structures in war-affected regions, with technical assistance largely bilateral, with developed countries providing expertise and resources to former colonies and newly independent nations.

However, since the 1960s and 1970s, there was a shift towards multilateralism with a strong need for coordinated efforts to address development challenges. As a result, following the establishment of the WTO in 1995, its technical assistance efforts were designed around the purpose of facilitating the integration of developing countries into the new trading system established by the Uruguay Round. (ALADI, 2019).

One of the first mechanisms was the WTO's Technical Assistance and Capacity Building Programme, an instrument to help countries understand and implement the agreements resulting from the Uruguay Round by conducting initial training sessions and workshops aimed at demystifying WTO rules and regulations for less experienced members, according to the World Trade Organization. (2024).

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the WTO significantly expanded its technical assistance efforts with the creation of the Institute for Training and Technical Cooperation (ITTC) in 1999, which became a central element for seminars, workshops and training courses tailored to the needs of government officials and trade negotiators. For example, on topics such as Trade Policy Reviews and Technical Barriers to Trade according to ECLAC. (2006).

In the mid-2000s, the WTO's approach to technical assistance saw the introduction of the WTO's Trade Facilitation Agreement Capacity Building programme, which assisted countries in introducing it into their trading systems as an agreement aimed at reducing trade barriers and simplifying customs procedures, according to the WTO. (2022).

Similarly, the WTO collaborated with other international organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to provide combined support for trade-related reforms along with structural adjustment programs. In the context of



mounting debt crises in developing countries, the IMF and the World Bank introduced adjustment programs that required countries to implement economic reforms in exchange for financial support.

In contemporary times, the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 emphasized a holistic approach to development and technical assistance focused on capacity building, knowledge sharing and fostering partnerships between governments, international organizations and the private sector. As Professor Gregory Shaffer (2005) explains, the focus has shifted from simply providing financial assistance to empowering countries to achieve self-sustainable development through strengthening institutional and human capacities.

B) Current situation

The World Trade Organization's 2023 Annual Report on Technical Assistance highlights a significant recovery in technical assistance and capacity building efforts after a three-year period of interruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2023, more than 16,000 people participated in over 300 technical assistance events, representing a 32% increase in the number of participants and a 24% increase in activities compared to the previous year. Similarly, participation from least developed countries (LDCs) increased by 40 per cent compared to 2022, and requests for country-level activities increased by 60 per cent after a period of historically low requests between 2020 and 2022.

However, the number of participants has not yet fully reached pre-pandemic levels. According to Xiangchen Zhang, Deputy Director-General of the WTO (2024), 2023 was not only a year of recovery, but also marked the beginning of remarkable and sustainable changes in the way technical assistance is delivered in its practices and training programs.

From this perspective, it is necessary to mention the introduction of WTO e-learning platforms and digital resources such as the WTO E-Learning Platform, which now includes a variety of modules on topics such as trade policy, WTO agreements and trade facilitation to make knowledge remotely accessible to participants in developing countries. Over the past two years, online learning and course planning has seen a surge in participation with a 30% increase in participation compared to pre-pandemic levels.

Clearly, the WTO's technical assistance mechanisms have evolved significantly in response to the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the success of the transition to a digital environment depends to a large extent on other societal challenges, such as the growing digital divide between developed and developing countries. Therefore, the current technical assistance scenario requires coordinated efforts with a holistic and interdisciplinary approach to international business practices.



The main challenges faced by developing and least developed countries include problems of connectivity, affordability and the absence of adequate infrastructure for digital payments. In addition, the lack of digital skills and digital literacy severely limits the exploitation of the opportunities offered by e-commerce. Furthermore, the lack of robust consumer protection mechanisms exacerbates these deficiencies, preventing effective integration into the global digital economy as discussed by Members under the WTO's 2023 Work Programme on e-commerce.

In response to these challenges, the World Trade Organization (WTO) is implementing several strategies to mitigate the digital divide. During a series of discussions in the Work Programme on E-Commerce, it was discussed how the WTO can facilitate digital inclusion. In particular, India presented a proposal highlighting the importance of public digital infrastructure in promoting e-commerce, underlining that robust infrastructure is critical for inclusive digital transaction and service delivery. In addition, the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) proposed how the Work Programme can assist developing and least developed countries in improving their e-commerce. Emphasis was placed on the role of the WTO Aid for Trade initiative in providing technical assistance to strengthen digital capacities.

Finally, it was agreed to use the convening power of the WTO to invite international organizations and experts to share knowledge and collaborate on improving the necessary digital infrastructure and capacity building. The next discussion, scheduled for 22 March, will focus on the relevant legal and regulatory frameworks.

While the expansion of digital learning and continued support for trade facilitation and LDCs reflect the WTO's adaptability and commitment to improving global trade capacity, the fact that 'since 2007, voluntary contributions for technical assistance have been declining. In 2023, unspecified voluntary contributions reached their lowest level in 25 years' represents a serious obstacle to progress on assistance actions (WTO, 2023).

It should be noted that 'WHO technical assistance programs are financed by the regular budget of the WHO Secretariat, supplemented by extra-budgetary funds' (WTO, 2024). In this sense, international development cooperation relies heavily on voluntary contributions from WTO members, who may sometimes earmark their contributions for a specific technical assistance programme, limiting funding possibilities in other areas. In addition, member states are in the process of strengthening their economies in the aftermath of the pandemic, which adds to the list of current global challenges such as the lack of financial surpluses for voluntary contributions.

In conclusion, the WTO's 2023 Annual Report on Technical Assistance highlights a remarkable recovery in capacity building efforts following the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Significant increases in both participation and number of activities reflect a positive shift towards rebuilding and strengthening global trade knowledge. As the incorporation of digital learning platforms has demonstrated, the adaptability of the WTO will allow for greater outreach and continued education despite



physical limitations. However, the continuing challenge of a declining trend in voluntary contributions coupled with the digital divide between developed and developing countries presents significant obstacles to the sustainability of these advances in technical assistance. As WTO members navigate their post-pandemic economic recovery, it is crucial to foster international cooperation and ensure robust funding to support effective technical assistance programs.

C) Challenges and opportunities for the committee

Challenges:

One of the main challenges in WTO technical assistance today is the significant digital divide between developed and developing countries. While the WTO has increasingly relied on digital platforms to provide training and support, many developing countries face constraints such as inadequate internet access, outdated technology and limited digital literacy. This technology gap can hinder the effectiveness of e-learning initiatives and other digital resources. As a result, some countries may find it difficult to fully benefit from WTO technical assistance programs, undermining the goal of equitable global participation.

To mitigate this problem, the Committee on Trade and Development could propose the implementation of digital infrastructure initiatives, such as partnerships to expand connectivity and upgrade technological equipment, as well as the development of local digital skills training programs tailored to country-specific constraints as part of a declaration or working document issued to the Ministerial Conference for its consideration; as such the Committee on Trade and Development cannot issue binding provisions to all members with the character of international trade law as the Ministerial Conference.

Another pressing issue is the decline in voluntary contributions for technical assistance programs. Since 2007, there has been a marked decline in unspecified voluntary contributions, reaching a historic low in 2023. This reduction in financial support may limit the scope and impact of WTO initiatives, particularly for Least Developed Countries (LDCs) that rely heavily on such assistance. In this context, it would be beneficial to adapt digital resources for use in low connectivity environments. The decline in voluntary contributions since 2007 has reduced the reach of WTO initiatives, and the Committee could recommend awareness-raising campaigns to attract funds, diversification of funding sources through innovative mechanisms, and strategies to increase the engagement of existing donors.

Finally, the complexity of global trade issues is constantly evolving with new challenges such as digital trade, climate change and health-related trade policies rapidly emerging. Adapting technical assistance programs to address these multifaceted and dynamic issues requires constant updating and refinement of training materials and



methods. The WTO must ensure that its technical assistance keeps pace with rapidly evolving trade rules and technologies, which can be resource intensive.

In response to constantly evolving global trade issues, such as digital trade, climate change and health policies, mechanisms could be put in place for the continuous updating of training content and methods, the formation of expert teams to monitor emerging trends, and investment in research and development to anticipate and adapt to new challenges.

Opportunities:

Clearly, the expansion of digital tools and e-learning presents a significant opportunity for the WTO to enhance its technical assistance programs. The integration of online platforms allows the WTO to reach a wider audience and offer more flexible training. For example, this shift to digital solutions can democratize access to knowledge and support, overcoming gaps created by geographic and logistical barriers.

In addition, the need for effective technical assistance creates opportunities for the WTO to strengthen partnerships with other international organizations, development agencies and private sector actors. It is clear that collaborative efforts can enhance the impact of technical assistance programs by pooling resources, expertise and networks.

Finally, the decline in voluntary contributions opens the door to exploring innovative financing models for technical assistance, which could include diversification of funding sources, involvement of private sector donors, and public-private partnerships to address funding gaps and ensure the sustainability of technical assistance programs.

D) Guiding questions for the committee

1. How can WTO technical assistance programs be optimized to address the digital divide and ensure equitable access to training in developing countries?
2. How can WTO improve its collaboration with other international organizations, governments and private sector partners to maximize the impact of its technical assistance in developing countries?
3. What are the most pressing threats to the sustainability of WTO technical assistance programs, and how can these challenges be mitigated to ensure continued support to developing countries?
4. What role should innovation and technology play in shaping WTO technical assistance?
5. What innovative strategies could the WTO and its partners implement to increase voluntary contributions and explore new alternative sources of funding to sustain and expand technical assistance programs to developing and least developed countries?
6. How can the WTO ensure that technical assistance is inclusive and accessible to all developing countries, paying special attention to the most vulnerable, such as the least developed countries (LDCs), to ensure that the latter can fully benefit

from the opportunities offered?

E) Recommendations for research

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<https://media.law.wisc.edu/m/hfdq9/wtotechnicalassistanceandcapacitybuilding.pdf>

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