

EUROPEAN UNION TRADE-RELATED ASSISTANCE

Facilitating the Process
**of Uzbekistan's
Accession to the WTO**



Project Milestones 2020-2025



Uzbekistan's negotiating team. Photo: WTO



International
Trade
Centre



Ministry of Investments,
Industry and Trade of the
Republic of Uzbekistan



Funded by
the European Union

INTRODUCTION

Uzbekistan's WTO accession has been a long time in the making. Initiated in 1994, the process was put on ice in 2005 when the country opted to pursue a self-sufficiency policy. Then, after years, the government tabled plans to modernize the economy to boost growth and development. The WTO accession process was renewed in 2018 as a way to leverage these growth plans.

The European Union decided to help Uzbekistan unlock value from its accession by funding a project – 'Facilitating the process of Uzbekistan's accession to the WTO'. As the implementing partner of the project, the ITC has assisted Uzbekistan every step of the way on the journey – from helping to shaping negotiating positions, to supporting regulatory reforms by designing and reviewing trade-related laws and policies aligned with international trade rules. And it has systematically built all the crucial skills necessary for Uzbekistan to get the most out of its WTO membership. The project has also created private sector awareness about how

business can leverage WTO membership for exports. This brochure covers the project highlights.



Azizbek Urunov, Representative of the President of Uzbekistan on WTO, Chief Negotiator with Pamela Coke-Hamilton, Executive Director of the ITC. Photo: ITC

WORD FROM THE STAKEHOLDERS



"Throughout the accession process, the project has been a tremendous source of support. From providing top-notch assistance in training officials to formulate and negotiate Uzbekistan's membership commitments, to developing complex regulatory areas and updating our legislation, the project has supported us at every step. I am confident that we are on track for a favourable accession."

Azizbek Urunov, Representative of the President of Uzbekistan on WTO, Chief Negotiator

"For Uzbekistan's WTO accession to provide maximum benefit to the country, it is essential that the government of Uzbekistan is well equipped to implement the required reforms, and that the highest number of economic actors in Uzbekistan benefits from these reforms. It is vital that Uzbekistan's enterprises understand how they can ultimately gain from new export opportunities. Through this project, our aim has been to help Uzbekistan reach these objectives, and I am pleased that so much has been achieved."

Toivo Klaar, EU Ambassador to Uzbekistan



"Uzbekistan's decision to seek accession to the WTO is one of the surest ways to build resilient small and medium-sized enterprises that can contribute to its economic growth and sustainable development priorities. This is especially urgent in today's fast-changing world, and the ITC is proud to accompany Uzbekistan on its WTO journey with the financial support of the European Union."

Pamela Coke-Hamilton, Executive Director, ITC

OUTCOME 1

STRENGTHENING UZBEKISTAN'S WTO NEGOTIATING TEAM TO ACCELERATE ACCESSION

Negotiations set the tone for WTO accession. To date, Uzbekistan has passed through [eleven multilateral rounds](#), negotiated at the Working Party Meetings. Throughout these rounds, the project helped prepare Uzbekistan's negotiators by shaping negotiating positions, drafting key documents, and giving technical support to the bilateral tracks.

The process has accelerated over the past two years. Following the appointment of the new Chief Negotiator, Mr. Azizbek Urunov, Representative of the President of Uzbekistan on WTO issues, the multilateral negotiations resulted in the [draft Working Party Report](#), which sets out the terms of Uzbekistan's accession. [Bilateral negotiations](#) on market access for goods and services have now been concluded with



Azizbek Urunov, Representative of the President of Uzbekistan on WTO, Chief Negotiator with the ITC's Jean-Sébastien Roure, Head of Trade and Investment Policies, SPTI, and Daria Karman, Trade Policy Officer, SPTI. Photo: ITC



Uzbekistan's negotiating team during one of the Working Party Meetings. Photo: WTO

[33 out of 34](#) interested partner countries, leaving only one agreement to be finalized. This puts Uzbekistan on track to formally join the WTO in 2026.

The [ITC's targeted support](#) – through fact-based analysis on key accession issues – helped negotiators navigate the complexity of the accession process. In addition, assessments of Uzbekistan's national regulations in key services sectors including financial, telecommunications and distribution services, provided critical inputs for shaping accession commitments and securing strong outcomes for opening Uzbekistan's services market to WTO Members.

MEASURING THE IMPACT

What will be the impact of WTO accession on Uzbekistan? This is a crucial question for planning purposes. The project conducted a study [to assess the economic and trade effects](#). Using partial and general equilibrium models it quantified the effect tariff liberalization will have on GDP, trade flows, jobs and different sectors. Now Uzbekistan knows where export opportunities exist but also which producers might need adjustment assistance.



OUTCOME 2

MODERNIZING NATIONAL LEGISLATION TO MEET WTO STANDARDS

To join the WTO, Uzbekistan needs new laws or bringing existing ones in line with global rules. The project helped review the relevant regulation and, where needed, developed new laws aligned with the WTO framework.



SPOTLIGHT: TRAINING PARLIAMENTARIANS FOR THEIR WORK AHEAD



Parliamentarians at the dedicated training on WTO law. Photo: Oliy Majlis

Once the negotiations are wrapped up, the next most important step is to enact new legislation that is aligned with the WTO agreements. [Parliamentarians](#), through their regulatory and oversight role, have a central role to play in this regard. The [Oliy Majlis](#) – Uzbekistan’s parliament – will evaluate policies and laws drafted or amended in line with WTO requirements. They are also responsible for the eventual [enactment of the legislation](#). The project extensively trained parliamentarians to ground their

knowledge on WTO issues for their work ahead.

As nexus between government and citizens, parliamentarians will also assess how WTO membership affects their constituents. They will help shape public opinion by explaining risks and opportunities and coming up with solutions to their constituents’ concerns. To do all of this effectively, they need nuanced understanding of WTO issues. The ITC therefore designed a course tailored to their needs.



Parliamentarians attending the training. Photos: Oliy Majlis



Rakhim Khakimov, Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Chamber.

OUTCOME 3

EMPOWERING POLICYMAKERS TO SHAPE A WTO-READY TRADE ENVIRONMENT



Uzbekistan's negotiators attending training on the WTO's trade remedies. Photo: ITC

Expertise and technical skills are key to successful WTO accession. Building top skills of policymakers was therefore a central pillar of the project's activities. Over the five years of the project, more than 1,200 officials were trained in all WTO disciplines.

A milestone delivered by the project was the skills accelerator designed to equip Uzbekistan's negotiators for the WTO negotiations. Top experts delivered the modules, covering all major WTO topics, building the skills of senior officials (some took multiple courses).

THE KEY FACTS

Overall:

- More than 1,200 officials trained
- 62 workshops delivered on all WTO disciplines

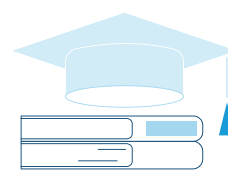
Skills Accelerator:

- Chief negotiator's inter-governmental task force upskilled
- 11 modules delivered in 2024-25



The topics covered most WTO issues:

- Basic principles on non-discrimination
- Negotiating skills
- Trade in goods
- Trade in services
- Agricultural trade
- Intellectual property
- Investment
- Trade remedies & subsidies
- State aid & competition
- TBT & SPS
- Customs valuation, rules of origin & trade facilitation



What the beneficiaries say:

"The courses were incredibly useful for providing valuable information. It significantly assisted the [WTO] negotiating process."

Khushnuda Raupova, WTO accession negotiator, Chief Specialist of the State Assets Management Company



EXPERIENCE-SHARING DIALOGUE

Peer exchanges also helped prepare the negotiators. Technical exchange and **experience sharing** with countries that successfully acceded to the WTO, including Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Ukraine, helped to prepare Uzbekistan's team for accession and post-accession.



Kazakhstan's Deputy Minister of Trade and Integration Zhanel Kushukova with Azizbek Urunov, Representative of the President of Uzbekistan on WTO, Chief Negotiator. Photo: ITC



Ahead of Working Party Meeting 8, a mission was undertaken to Astana, where the chief negotiator & 9 officials met with Kazakhstan's Deputy Minister of Trade and Integration Zhanel Kushukova, QazTrade, and Kazakh WTO negotiators, who shared their WTO experience. Photo: ITC

SPOTLIGHT: TRAINING FUTURE TRADE EXPERTS

A milestone deliverable was to set up a [WTO Law and Practice course](#) at the Tashkent-based [University of World Economy and Diplomacy](#) (UWED). The course is set to train future trade policymakers and negotiators. In this way, specialist trade knowledge will continue to evolve, prolonging impact long after the project's completion.

- The module was jointly developed with the the University of Berne, World Trade Institution (WTI), Switzerland.
- 4 UWED professors were upskilled to deliver the courses.
- The module is now part of UWED's mandatory curriculum.
- By 2025, 594 students had already taken the course

What the beneficiaries say:

"Our university is making a vital contribution by offering this course. It has been a long-term endeavour, and the unique thing is that the project gave us a foothold in the field of trade law. With continued help, the university will be able to reinforce the project's objectives."

Umid Yakubkhodjaev, Member of the Legislative Chamber, Oliy Majlis and former Dean, Faculty of Law, University of World Economy and Diplomacy



UWED students attending a trade law lecture. Photos: ITC

OUTCOME 4

STRENGTHENING NATIONAL SYSTEMS FOR PRODUCT STANDARDS AND MARKET COMPLIANCE

Rules and standards to assure the quality and safety of traded goods comprise a large, complex area of WTO law – [technical barriers to trade \(TBT\)](#) & [sanitary and phytosanitary \(SPS\) measures](#). Building capacity to deal with these non-tariff barriers is not only crucial for WTO membership, it can also boost local firms' competitiveness, enhancing their export potential and ability to explore new markets. The project helped revamp Uzbekistan's approach to these non-tariff barriers by evolving technical rules to

global standards and developing quality expertise linked with modern techniques. We also strengthened conformity assessment bodies on product testing, inspection and certification.

- 1,500 officials, lab technicians, and business operators trained
- 18 expert TBT seminars held
- 15 specialist SPS workshops delivered



Laboratory personnel receive training in the lab. Photos: ITC



Officials learn about risk assessment in the area of SPS.

SPOTLIGHT: FOOD SAFETY REFORM – OPTIMIZING LABORATORY TESTING

- Uzbekistan's food safety system was in need of modernization.
- As a first step, the project surveyed 26 laboratories across the country.
- Key laboratories were identified for upgrading to comply with ISO standards.
- 37 laboratory technicians were then trained, supporting the alignment of laboratory practices with international standards.



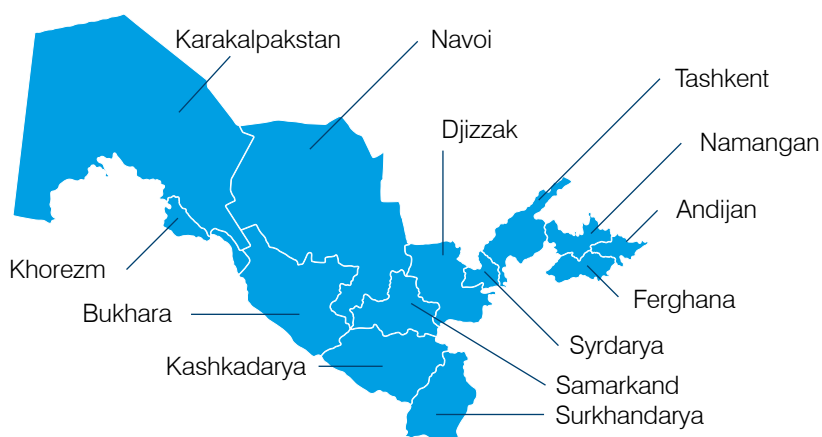
OUTCOME 5

EMPOWERING BUSINESSES TO BENEFIT FROM TRADE REFORMS AND MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

Joining the WTO will benefit everyone in Uzbekistan by making goods more affordable and increasing consumer choice through imports. However, the private sector stands to gain the most: Competitive businesses will have opportunities to expand their exports both regionally and globally. The project therefore put efforts to raising private sector awareness about the benefits of WTO accession. To achieve this, the project organized a series of awareness-raising seminars, including dedicated sessions for women's associations.

Participants learned about the WTO's objectives and principles, as well as new business opportunities that will emerge once Uzbekistan joins the organization. These workshops were delivered both in the capital—where women entrepreneurs received targeted training—and across all regions of Uzbekistan. Given the importance of agriculture to the national economy, a specialized training programme on WTO rules governing agricultural trade was also delivered nationwide.

Workshops held across Uzbekistan



Key figures:

- 809 private sector stakeholders were trained
- Of these, 109 were women

3 Explanatory Guides were handed out covering

- Export promotion (in Russian)
- WTO Legal framework (in Russian)
- WTO accession and WTO legal framework (in 3 languages).



Business operators at training on how WTO accession will affect them. Photos: ITC



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