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ASIA-PACIFIC

APEC Leaders Debate Approach to Trade Tensions, WTO Issues at Port Moresby Summit

Leaders from 21 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) economies wrapped up their annual summit this past weekend in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, tackling a host of subjects relating to regional connectivity and economic integration. However, disagreements on trade between the US and China prevented leaders from endorsing a joint communiqué by the meeting's close, in a notable first for the group.

This year's meet in Papua New Guinea had as its theme "Harnessing Inclusive Opportunities, Embracing the Digital Future," with trade and cooperation topping the agenda. Other topics for consideration included the digital economy and e-commerce, along with how to ensure that businesses of all sizes can benefit from a more open and secure online environment.

Papua New Guinea's Foreign Minister Rimbink Pato, who led the ministers' meeting prior to the leaders' level discussions, highlighted the digital economy as a valuable area for more in-depth consideration, while noting current limitations in connectivity and accessibility.

"We need to look at how reforms can be progressed to ensure that infrastructure development includes accessibility to the digital economy and e-commerce," the foreign affairs official said, according to comments reported by Xinhua.

The APEC economies account for nearly half of international trade flows, according to statistics from the coalition's secretariat, and include smaller economies such as Papua New Guinea to economic giants like China and the United States.

US, China spar on communiqué language, amid evolutions in trade arena

The APEC meeting comes at a time of heightened tensions among major players on trade, and alongside continued warnings from international organisations that economic growth is slowing down, with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) [downgrading](#) this week its global GDP forecasts for 2019.

The talks in Papua New Guinea also came on the heels of recent advances on two mega-regional accords in Asia-Pacific region that have been named as possible pathways to a Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP), and which proponents say could re-energise trade policymaking efforts and provide a valuable show of support for the rules-based trading system.

For example, leaders of the 16 countries involved in the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) have said that the negotiations are in the final stage, and could be wrapped up in the coming year. Meanwhile, the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) will take effect by the end of this year.

While the FTAAP is still several years away from formal, dedicated negotiations, and potential participants differ over the approach and scope of such an accord, the recent advances in other regional initiatives that could serve as precursors for this wider project have stoked renewed interest in these discussions. The FTAAP subject has been on the APEC agenda for several years, and APEC economies [have set](#) a 2020 deadline for analysing how existing or forthcoming regional deals could serve as "pathways" to a FTAAP.

However, as the APEC talks drew to a close, media reports emerged that US and Chinese officials were at odds over how to phrase the trade-related section of the final communiqué, particularly on WTO issues, to the point where a joint declaration from the meet proved impossible. Officials did note, however, that this does not detract from APEC economies' deep appreciation for the WTO and the potential benefits from modernising it.

"Many leaders flagged their support for WTO for a strengthened role of the organisation and of course this a general recognition that we might work together to improve its functioning on the basis of preserving the core values and basic principles of the organisation," Wang Xiaolong, Director general of China's Department of International Economic Affairs, told reporters.

The challenges, however, were in the details and approach in wording the trade section of the communiqué. For example, Washington had reportedly wished to raise concerns in the declaration over the functioning of the WTO's dispute settlement branch, as well as include a reference to some members' "unfair" trade practices.

US Vice President Mike Pence, who represented Washington in Papua New Guinea, referred specifically to trade tensions with China in his prepared remarks.

"They begin with trade practices, with tariffs and quotas, forced technology transfers, the theft of intellectual property. It goes beyond that to freedom of navigation in the seas, concerns about human rights," he said. He also cautioned that the US "will not change course until China changes course."

In turn, Chinese President Xi Jinping argued that "intellectual copyright protection should not be used to increase the technology divide," noting efforts that Beijing is making to improve the business climate for foreign companies, including by ramping up enforcement efforts involving intellectual property rights.

Other areas where Pence and Xi expressed diverging views included China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), an expansive infrastructure-building project that could span over 60 countries once completed. Pence raised concerns over what participation could mean for poorer countries' debt levels, while Xi argued that the project would not fuel "debt traps" and would be designed to serve the international community's needs.

US, China talks to be continued at G20 Summit

US President Donald Trump is due to meet with Xi in just over one week, during the annual G20 leaders' summit in Argentina. Trump has lately suggested that the US and China may

be close to reaching an accord that could de-escalate trade tensions, though assessments vary from experts and other officials over whether this objective is feasible, at least in time for the G20 meeting.

"China wants to make a deal. They sent a list of things they are willing to do, which is a large list and it is just not acceptable to me yet. But at some point I think that, we are doing extremely well with respect to China," he told reporters last week.

ICTSD reporting; "APEC ministerial meeting highlights "inclusiveness" as priority to boost prosperity," XINHUA, 15 November 2018; "VP Mike Pence and Chinese President Xi Jinping threw verbal jabs at each other in dueling speeches at Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit," BUSINESS INSIDER, 17 November 2018; "There are no winners in a trade war, Xi Jinping tells Apec summit as he urges leaders to defend globalisation," SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST, 17 November 2018; "Apec summit fails to agree on statement amid US-China spat," THE GUARDIAN, 18 November 2018; "Donald Trump says US is 'doing extremely well' with China but that he still can't accept trade war deal yet," SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST, 17 November 2018, "APEC 2018: Regional meeting ends in disarray as leaders fail to reach consensus on communique," ABC, 18 November 2018.

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

WTO Members Weigh Options for Addressing Farm Export Restrictions, Food Aid

WTO members are debating how to resolve long-standing disagreements over agricultural export restrictions and their impact on humanitarian food aid, sources told Bridges, with the issue taking centre stage during an informal meeting convened on 15 November by the chair of the organisation's agriculture negotiations.

Two new submissions from food-importing countries were discussed at the session, which was called by Guyana's Ambassador John "Deep" Ford. At the same meeting, negotiators also discussed unresolved agricultural export competition issues, which involve measures seen as analogous to export subsidies at the WTO.

A [paper](#) by Singapore highlighted the impact of export restrictions on food bought by the UN's World Food Programme (WFP) for humanitarian aid, while another [paper](#) by Japan and five other co-sponsors examined the use of export restrictions more broadly, drawing on governments' notifications to the World Trade Organization. The US also tabled a [submission](#) on tariffs, although sources said this was not discussed in great depth by participants.

Ford has held a series of meetings this year over different issues under the wider umbrella of the WTO agriculture negotiations. Previous discussions have covered domestic support, public food stockholding, market access, and a proposed new safeguard for developing countries. (See Bridges Weekly, [27 September 2018](#))

Members examine WFP challenges in tackling hunger

Singapore's paper drew on examples from East Africa and the Middle East to show that export prohibitions or restrictions on non-commercial humanitarian food aid have affected the ability of WFP to deliver foodstuffs to people facing hunger in neighbouring countries.

In one case, a maize export ban imposed in East Africa meant WFP had to buy food from outside the region, raising transport and procurement costs and tripling the time required to deliver food to the people who needed it. "At least 3.9 million meals" were lost as a result, the submission says.

Similarly, a rice export ban in one country in the Middle East forced WFP to buy food from South Asia instead, costing an additional US\$600,000 per month to the agency as a result. "Water damage and infestation during transit" also meant that WFP could feed fewer beneficiaries than would have otherwise been the case.

Singapore's paper underscores that export bans and other restrictions on the procurement of humanitarian food aid could hamper countries' abilities to meet the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which world leaders adopted in New York three years ago, and in particular the "zero hunger" commitment set out under SDG 2.

"While the WFP is working to deliver food assistance in emergency situations, export prohibitions or restrictions on foodstuffs purchased for non-commercial humanitarian purposes by the WFP affects their work and the attainment of Sustainable Development Goal 2 of ending hunger, achieving food security and improved nutrition and promoting sustainable agriculture," the submission says.

Supporting vulnerable populations

While countries at the meeting seemed to agree in principle on the importance of providing humanitarian food aid, there were differences of opinion on how best to address the impact of export restrictions on vulnerable populations.

Countries such as India emphasised the importance of other trade and food security issues on the WTO agenda, such as the issue of public stockholding for food security purposes. While New Delhi has joined with Beijing and other members of the G-33 coalition to argue that developing countries should be granted more leeway under WTO farm subsidy rules to buy food at government-set prices, efforts to agree on a "permanent solution" in this area have struggled to advance after countries agreed in 2013 to refrain from initiating legal disputes in this area. (See Bridges Daily Update, [7 December 2013](#))

More recently, the WTO's Buenos Aires ministerial conference last December ended without any consensus outcomes or a roadmap for future work, when deep-seated differences between countries on the issue contributed to a breakdown in the high-level talks. (See Bridges Daily Update, [14 December 2017](#))

Proposals for increased transparency on export restrictions, as well as an exemption for humanitarian food aid, were also among the topics on the negotiating agenda for the Buenos Aires conference.

Sources told Bridges that some low-income countries reiterated concerns at last week's meetings that they could find it difficult to comply with more onerous transparency obligations. They also said even that advance warning of policy changes could lead traders to stockpile food at times of shortages, potentially exacerbating supply shortfalls.

Some countries indicated that they saw export restrictions as a useful policy tool for improving food availability on domestic markets at times of food shortages, or for lowering the cost of farm inputs that were used to add value in other domestic industries.

Transitioning to a new negotiating phase

In the negotiating body, Ford reportedly told trade officials that farm trade talks would soon need to move away from situational analysis and information provision and towards a phase in which members begin exploring options and solving problems.

The chair was expected to convene a follow-up meeting on 7 December, reviewing progress to date and looking forward to the next phase of talks in 2019.

Trade officials told Bridges that, by next summer, members would need to establish clarity on the negotiating agenda for the next ministerial conference, which is due to be held in Astana, Kazakhstan, in June 2020.

Delegates told Bridges that various contentious agricultural trade issues were also likely to come up in discussions next week at the regular Committee on Agriculture, which reviews the implementation of existing commitments and does not deal directly with negotiating new trade rules.

Among other things, the US has [submitted](#) a "counter-notification" on India's market price support for cotton, providing alternative figures to those which New Delhi has provided to the World Trade Organization. Similarly, Australia has submitted a counter-notification on India's market price support for sugarcane.

ICTSD reporting.

BREXIT

EU Leaders Prepare for Brexit Summit, UK Officials Debate Deal Text

European leaders are preparing for a landmark summit on Sunday 25 November, where they are expected to sign off on a draft Brexit deal reached by EU and UK negotiators last week. Meanwhile, debate continues among UK political officials over the accord's final terms and whether it will gain the necessary approval from domestic lawmakers.

Since the [withdrawal](#) text was released last week, EU negotiators have now published an [outline](#) for the political declaration on the future EU-UK relationship, the basis for ongoing talks in Brussels on the subject.

The political declaration aims to set the scope of the economic and security partnership between the UK and the 27 remaining EU member states, which would be turned into legally binding agreements following the UK's withdrawal in March 2019.

The conclusion of the Brexit deal last week sparked domestic challenges for UK Prime Minister Theresa May, who is campaigning for political support behind the accord. In the days since, several cabinet ministers and other officials have stepped down, including Dominic Raab, the UK's Secretary of State for Exiting the EU. (See Bridges Weekly, [15 November 2018](#))

The European Commission has touted the package as ensuring that the "withdrawal will happen in an orderly manner," and offering legal certainty once EU law ceases to apply to the UK, according to a [press release](#) from the bloc's executive arm. They also stressed that having this accord in place is preferable to defaulting to a "no deal" scenario at the March deadline.

Should the deal be endorsed officially by the European Council in an exceptional meeting scheduled for this coming Sunday, it will then need the sign off from the European Parliament. Domestic procedures in the UK require the House of Commons to vote to approve the package and a "take note" motion in the Lords. For implementation of the withdrawal agreement in the UK, domestic legislation will need to be passed before the March deadline.

"I expect us to hammer out the full and final details of the framework that will underpin our future relationship and I am confident that we can strike a deal at the Council that I can take back to the House of Commons," said May on 19 November in a [speech](#) to the Confederation of British Industry (CBI).

Main ingredients

The agreement provides for a transition period up to the last day of 2020, reserving the possibility of extension if mutually agreed to by both parties. During that timeframe the UK will continue to be treated as an EU member state, though it will not be able to participate in EU decision-making. The 31 December deadline coincides with the end of the multi-year EU budget spanning 2014-2020.

"This will allow citizens, administrations and businesses, in particular SMEs, to prepare and adapt – but only once – to this change before the future relationship is in place," [said](#) Michel

Barnier, chief European negotiator for Brexit, following the publication of the agreement text last week. The term SMEs refers to small and medium-sized enterprises.

The deal contains provisions aimed at safeguarding the rights of the 1.2 million UK nationals residing in EU jurisdictions, as well as the 3.2 million EU citizens settled in the UK, once the transition period draws to a close. The agreement would allow citizens to continue to live, work, and study under the same conditions as under EU law, protecting the recognition of professional qualifications, access to public services, and the rights of family members to join them in the future.

In the UK, EU citizens and family members will be required to apply for new residence status through an EU Settlement Scheme. EU host states will be able to choose whether to instate obligatory registration for beneficiaries of the agreement. Both parties have underlined as priority simple administrative procedures in order to provide evidence of lawful residence.

It also includes arrangements intended to guarantee a smooth transition, minimise disruption, and ensure stability, for example the continued protection throughout transition period of intellectual property rights, and the over 3000 geographical indications protected under EU law. The term geographical indications refers to a type of intellectual property rights protection used for drink and foodstuffs, linking the good to the name of their region of origin, and thus connoting reputational and quality-related characteristics. Common examples include Parma ham or Champagne.

In addition, the agreement guarantees the continued circulation of goods placed on the market prior to the end of the transition period until they reach their destination, without needing to conform to additional product requirements.

The deal also ensures the protection of data exchanged throughout the transition period, as well as the completion of public procurement procedures pending before end of transition period under the same conditions they were initiated in.

The UK will be bound through the transition period by the obligations in all EU international agreements, including the EU single market, which will continue to govern the UK relationship with non-EU countries. The transition period also extends the applicability of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) to the UK, keeping access to waters and catch shares the same up until a future framework is reached, and providing for consultation with the United Kingdom in the interim.

The agreement includes enforcement mechanisms, including dispute settlement provisions, and "common provisions" for consistent interpretation of the agreement, underpinned by the principle of "direct effect" to ensure the provisions have the same legal applications in the UK and in EU jurisdictions.

Finally, London and Brussels have agreed to core principles to compute the UK's financial exit obligations, including the UK's delivery of its share of the commitments undertaken during EU membership. This would not exceed the amount due if the UK had remained a member state. The final settlement could potentially be as high as US\$50 billion, with potential future costs.

Border backstop solution

Negotiators agreed to a contingency plan for the border between the Republic of Ireland, an EU member state, and Northern Ireland, which is part of the United Kingdom. The backstop would apply in a scenario where no agreement on the future relationship has been reached by the conclusion of the transition period.

The “backstop” solution reached in a Protocol to the withdrawal agreement would create a single EU-UK customs territory effective from 2021, entailing no tariffs, quotas, or rules of origin checks between the two, with the exception of fishery and aquaculture products.

In order to ensure a “level playing field” for business in the customs territory, the EU has pushed for the inclusion of provisions for harmonisation regarding competition, taxation, state aid, and labour and environmental standards.

Raab criticised the outcome as the UK being held to a blend between EU customs union and single market obligations. Critics warn that the backstop, if enacted, would preclude the UK from signing its own free trade agreements with non-EU countries, even after leaving the bloc.

May, however, defended the agreement in remarks at the Confederation of British Industry this week. “It fulfils the wishes of the British people as expressed in the 2016 referendum,” she [said](#), citing increased control over borders, discretion over budgeting and channelling resources, restored UK sovereignty, and the removal of ties with EU programmes that she argued run counter to the interests of the UK, including the Common Agricultural Policy and Common Fisheries Policy.

“Let me repeat that this backstop is not meant to be used. Our objective remains to reach a new agreement between the EU and the UK before the end of the transition,” underlined Barnier, pledging the use of “best endeavours” to conclude a future agreement by summer 2020. Provisions have been made for a joint review mechanism to assess the backstop’s continued necessity.

The Protocol also contains commitments not to breach the rights and equality of opportunity set out in the 1998 Good Friday (Belfast) Agreement. This would aim to protect cooperation between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, ensure the continuation of common travel area arrangements between the Republic of Ireland and the UK, and allow for the maintenance of a Single Electricity Market on the Irish isle.

ICTSD reporting; “Here’s What You Need To Know About Brexit After A Tumultuous Week In The U.K.,” NPR, 17 November 2018; “At long last, there’s a draft Brexit ‘deal’ – here’s what we know so far,” CNBC, 14 November 2018; “Theresa May’s Brexit deal: everything you need to know,” THE GUARDIAN, 15 November 2018; “Brexit weekly briefing: May digs in after week of turmoil,” THE GUARDIAN, 20 November 2018; “What happens next if Theresa May’s Brexit deal passes?” THE GUARDIAN, 15 November 2018.

GLOBAL ECONOMY

EU, South Africa Discuss Options for Closer Economic Ties at Presidential Summit

South African leaders met with their European counterparts in Brussels for a presidential summit on 15 November to discuss future opportunities for cooperation, including on economic issues. Discussions between the two sides included a wide array of topics such as trade and market access, Brexit, migration, and sustainability, among others.

The meeting between European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, European Council President Donald Tusk, and South African President Cyril Ramaphosa comes after the EU's new proposal of an Africa-Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs, as part of its broader strategy of developing deeper ties between the two regions.

Notably, it also comes two years since the signing of the landmark [Economic Partnership Agreement](#) between the EU and members of the South African Development Community. The SADC EPA group includes Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, and Swaziland, with Angola potentially joining further down the road.

This agreement was signed in 2016 and aims to promote development and integration in the African region, support diversification of trade, promote sustainable development, and provide better access to each other's markets. (See Bridges Weekly, [13 October 2016](#))

"We underline the benefits of the full and effective implementation of the EU-SADC EPA, including with regard to expanded and enhanced protection of Geographical Indications (GIs) as provided for in the EU-SADC EPA. The implementation of the EU-SADC-EPA in line with the development-oriented focus of the Agreement can make a significant contribution to reinforcing mutually beneficial and inclusive trade and to enhancing regional integration," leaders said.

EU, South Africa affirm commitment to rules-based trade system

The two sides also highlighted the importance of taking steps to support the rules-based multilateral trading system, particularly by finding a solution to the impasse on Appellate Body appointments, which have put the WTO's highest court under profound strain.

In the [joint statement](#) following the meeting, leaders declared their determination in promoting "free, fair, and inclusive trade and the rules-based multilateral trading system with the World Trade Organization," while also expressing concern over trade tensions worldwide and the growing use of multilateral measures.

Investment was also raised during the leaders' level talks, with both sides committing to further discussing changes to the investor-state dispute settlement system, with those talks taking place in the context of the UN Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL). They made particular reference to the importance of sustainable development in this context.

"Today, we had a productive discussion on how to address common challenges and how to strengthen our ties," said Tusk in his [remarks](#) after the Summit.

"South Africa is a key player, both regionally and globally, and we will step up our cooperation accordingly, to defend our shared values and interests. These include support

for multilateral solutions, including trading system, and the rules-based global order, which will be discussed in two weeks' time at the G20 in Argentina," he said.

Officials also discussed the EU's proposal of the [Africa-EU Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs](#), which was released in September by Juncker and covers topics such as labour skills development and energy access.

Climate change, natural resources

In addition to trade, European and South African officials discussed various issues related to climate change and natural resources governance, such as how to end the exploitation and illegal trade of precious resources such as minerals and wildlife. Also on the docket was the improvement of ocean governance, and leaders pledged to bring back the [South Africa-EU Forum on Environment, Climate Change, Sustainable Development and Water](#) following the meeting.

This Forum was created in 2007 to enhance bilateral dialogue on issues of shared interest, covering topics such as climate change, waste management, sustainable consumption and production, biodiversity, and environmental governance. However, the Forum has not met in this capacity since 2012. More broadly, the leaders discussed ongoing progress in achieving the goals outlined in the UN's Paris Agreement on climate change and the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The EU also showed a growing interest in South African markets in the statement, particularly in an increasingly digital economy.

"We support the digital transformation of the [South African] economy in an inclusive manner by supporting digital innovation, digital infrastructure, the information society, and by fostering digital skills for all, in order to boost overall productivity, social inclusion, living standards and an efficient use of natural resources," leaders said in the joint statement.

Concurrently, South African leaders expressed concerns over EU market access with the upcoming Brexit as the international community remains uncertain over the effects of the draft withdrawal arrangement, as well as the final shape of the EU-UK trading arrangements post-Brexit. (See Bridges Weekly, [15 November 2018](#) and related story, this edition)

"South Africa, like all our international partners, is concerned by Brexit," stated Tusk in his remarks post-Summit. "We updated President Ramaphosa on the state of play of negotiations, and assured him that the EU will do its utmost to keep partner countries informed and to reduce the negative impact of the Brexit process."

ICTSD reporting; "Lift Zim sanctions, Ramaphosa urges EU," THE HERALD, 17 November 2018.

GENDER

UN Commission Calls for Gender Responsive Standards

Standards bodies have an important role to play in achieving gender equality, according to a recommendation adopted by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) on 15 November. The recommendation, which builds on two years of consideration on how standards bodies could contribute to Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development, was adopted by the UNECE Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies (WP6) at its 28th session in Geneva, Switzerland.

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 within Agenda 2030 is dedicated to "achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls," with targets dedicated to ending discrimination and that ensuring women have equal opportunities in economic, political, and public decision-making, as well as the same rights to economic resources as men.

The recommendation adopted last week calls on UNECE member states to consult with their national standardisation bodies and encourage them to sign the "Declaration for Gender Responsive Standards and Standards Development" included in the recommendation.

There are 56 member states of UNECE, spanning beyond Europe to also include North America and Asia. All UN member states have the option of taking part in any regional commission's work, however. Including UNECE, the United Nations has five regional commissions, with the others devoted to Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Western Asia.

Opportunities for women's empowerment

The declaration notes that despite the pervasiveness of standards in society and trade, the representation of women in standards development is almost always below parity. It also says that the gender-differentiated outcomes of standards are rarely considered during the standards development process.

In light of these findings, private standards organisations, such as the British Standards Institute or the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO), could choose to sign up to the declaration. By doing so, they would recognise that the content of standards and engaging in the standards development process are opportunities for women's empowerment, and commit to working towards gender inclusive standards development organisations and gender responsive standards.

Such processes have, for example, revised standards for seat belts to ensure they take into account women's body shape and thus protect their safety. In another case, standards organisations have used technical assistance for standards implementation that are more women-friendly: train the trainers programmes, for example, build on women's assets and minimise time, travel, and inter-gender dynamics that could otherwise block their access to information. To promote such gender-responsive standardisation, the declaration encourages standard bodies to develop a gender action plan and gather data to track its effectiveness.

Interventions at the UNECE meeting largely supported the initiative, noting how it could help ensure that standards and trade support gender equality. Some questioned the

relevance of gender to standard-setting bodies, however, arguing that these agencies should focus only on technical matters and expressing concern that gender-related analysis could inhibit that focus.

In its decision adopting the initiative, WP6 asked for resources for capacity-building projects to assist member states in its implementation. This could include, for example, the establishment of a roster of gender and standards experts who could be included in the standards development process and the development of a tool to assess which standards are most in need of a gender perspective. Next steps include the formal opening of the Declaration for signature: at press time, several standards bodies had already indicated their interest.

ICTSD reporting.

BIODIVERSITY

UN Biodiversity Conference Begins, Looking to Set the Stage for Crafting a Post-2020 Strategy

The UN's Biodiversity Conference is underway in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, with participants spending the coming week discussing how to finish implementing an existing set of biodiversity targets for 2011-2020 and begin setting the stage for developing a comprehensive post-2020 strategy, in a bid to avert continued biodiversity losses and ensure the provision of essential ecosystem services.

The event marks the 25th anniversary since the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) took effect in December 1993, just over one year after its adoption at the landmark Rio Earth Summit. The UN Biodiversity Conference has as its theme this year "Investing in biodiversity for people and planet."

The CBD's main objectives, according to the convention's website, involve "the conservation of biological diversity; the sustainable use of the components of biological diversity; and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilisation of genetic resources."

In the years since, the CBD's [work](#) has been structured around various thematic areas, such as biodiversity in relation to forests, marine resources, mountains, and agriculture, along with cross-cutting issues that range from climate change and biodiversity to economics and trade.

Eyeing past progress, future needs

More specifically over the past decade, the CBD parties have been working to meet the Aichi Biodiversity Targets set out five "strategic goals" that focus on both tackling biodiversity loss and pressures, while also seeking to ensure that biodiversity and ecosystem services can provide valuable benefits for health and livelihoods. There are 20 related targets spread out across those five goals, with delivery dates of either 2015 or 2020. The bulk of the targets have 2020 as their deadline.

Meeting those targets, however, has proved challenging, with experts noting that the lack of enforcement mechanisms and more detailed obligations have made it harder to put these objectives into practice. (See Bridges Trade Biores, [30 September 2014](#))

For example, the chair of one of the COP working groups has submitted a [draft decision](#) on progress made in meeting the Aichi targets, which notes that "for most of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, there has been limited progress, and, for some targets, no overall progress." Concerns raised in that draft decision include the fact that many parties have not yet put in place national biodiversity strategies and action plans, and those that have often fail to include key elements such as resource mobilisation and capacity development strategies.

The draft decision also calls on parties "to strengthen collaboration with indigenous peoples and local communities, civil society organisations and women's groups, youth, and other relevant stakeholders to implement the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 effectively."

The same document also refers to specific steps that CBD parties and others should take in relation to individual Aichi targets.

"As many of you have heard me say: as a species, we now face a stark choice. We can stay on the path we are currently on: the continued and accelerated destruction of nature," [warned](#) Cristiana Paşca Palmer, Executive Secretary of the CBD, in opening the meeting, while heralding the many accomplishments in slowing down forest losses and increasing the number and size of global protected areas on land and water.

She also outlined a set of milestones that parties should aim for to avoid hitting "tipping points that may cause irreversible destruction to nature and ultimately humankind." By the end of this decade, she said that meeting the "Aichi Targets" and endorsing a framework for the coming years would be essential. By the year 2030, parties must aim to "bend the curve of biological diversity loss," while by mid-century parties will have to "achieve our vision of living in harmony with nature."

The CBD also has two "supplementary" accords, namely the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilisation. The latter of these has been in effect for the past four years. Parties to these protocols will also be meeting during the course of the Sharm El Sheikh sessions, discussing topics ranging from the nexus between technology, synthetic biology, and genetic resource use, as well as different facets of equitable access and benefit sharing, including a possible global mechanism that would support this objective, according to the IP-Watch news service.

ICTSD reporting; "Convention On Biological Diversity Biennial Meeting Looks At How New Technologies Will Affect Its Objectives," INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY WATCH, 20 November 2018.

EVENTS & RESOURCES

Events

Coming Soon

26 November, London, United Kingdom. A SUSTAINABLE FOOD FUTURE 2018: WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY? This Chatham House event, which is held every year, will focus on policy options for making food systems more resilient and sustainability, focusing on specific aspects such as trade policy, agricultural strategies for managing resource use, and opportunities for public-private cooperation. To learn more, visit the Chatham House event [website](#).

26-28 November, Nairobi, Kenya. SUSTAINABLE BLUE ECONOMY CONFERENCE. This event, co-hosted by Kenya, Canada, and Japan, will aim to bring stakeholders from government, international organisations, academia, civil society, and the private sector to harness the energy from multiple international efforts, including the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to learn more about the vast potential of the blue economy and the importance of safeguarding marine resources to support current and future livelihoods. To learn more, visit the conference [website](#).

27 November, Geneva, Switzerland. INVESTMENT FACILITATION INDEX. This event is being organised by the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development (ICTSD) and the German Development Institute (DIE). This event will focus on how an investment facilitation "index" can make it easier for countries to evaluate and measure the use of investment facilitation provisions in international accords. Discussants will also look at the nexus between investment, trade, and sustainable development. To learn more, visit the ICTSD [website](#).

29 November, Astana, Kazakhstan. ADBI-ADB-CI FINAL CONFERENCE: LEVERAGING SME FINANCE THROUGH VALUE CHAINS IN THE CAREC LANDLOCKED ECONOMIES. This event will focus on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in landlocked countries within the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) group. The conference, organised by the Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI) and the CAREC Institute, will look at issues such as access to finance, regulatory barriers, and related topics. Please note that event attendance is by invitation only. To learn more, visit the ADBI [website](#).

WTO Events

An updated list of forthcoming WTO meetings is posted [here](#). Please bear in mind that dates and times of WTO meetings are often changed, and that the WTO does not always announce the important informal meetings of the different bodies. Unless otherwise indicated, all meetings are held at the WTO, Centre William Rappard, rue de Lausanne 154, 1211 Geneva, Switzerland, and are open to WTO members and accredited observers only.

26 November: ERSD – Trade in Ideas Pilot Study: Next Steps

26 November: Informal Committee on Agriculture

26 + 28 November: Trade Policy Review Body – Hong Kong, China

26-27 November: Committee on Agriculture

27 November: Informal Open-ended Meeting on the Work Programme on Electronic Commerce

27 November: Informal Committee on Government Procurement

27 November: Committee on Government Procurement

28 November: Dedicated Discussion of the Relevant Trade-Related Developments on Cotton

29 November: 30th Round of the Director General's Consultative Framework Mechanism on Cotton – Cotton Development Assistance

Other Upcoming Events

30 November, Washington, US. YTP TRADE TALKS LIVE! WITH CHAD BOWN & SOUMAYA KEYNES. This event is being organised by the Washington International Trade Association (WITA), specifically under its Young Trade Professionals (YTP) programme. It will feature Chad Bown of the Peterson Institute for International Economics (PIIE) and Soumaya Keynes of The Economist, who are the co-hosts of the "Trade Talks" podcast, for a brownbag lunch discussion on current events in trade and their experience hosting the weekly podcast. To learn more, visit the WITA event [website](#).

2-14 December, Katowice, Poland. KATOWICE CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE. The annual Conference of the Parties (COP) of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) will bring together stakeholders from across the climate community for negotiating a series of issues related to international climate change governance, including among others the finalisation of the "rulebook" for implementing the UN's Paris Agreement on climate change. To learn more, visit the UNFCCC conference [website](#).

5 December, London, United Kingdom. US TARIFFS AND SANCTIONS: CAN EUROPE STEER THE TRANSATLANTIC SHIP WITH SHIFTING WINDS? This Chatham House research event will examine recent trends and decisions within US international trade policy, looking at what Washington's approach to economic and foreign policy mean for the US-EU relationship. Please note that event attendance is by invitation only. To learn more, visit the Chatham House [website](#).

10-11 December, Marrakech, Morocco. INTERGOVERNMENTAL CONFERENCE TO ADOPT THE GLOBAL COMPACT FOR SAFE, ORDERLY, AND REGULAR MIGRATION. This high-level event, convened by the UN General Assembly, will adopt the first global compact on migration. It will feature a plenary debate, two dialogues, and a series of related side events. To learn more and to register, visit the conference [website](#).

14-15 February 2019, New Delhi, India. CARBON PRICING LEADERSHIP COALITION (CPLC) RESEARCH CONFERENCE. This event will be the first international research conference on carbon pricing, hosted by CPLC. It will bring together researchers, policymakers, and practitioners in this field, aiming for an exchange of ideas and information that can help resolve the gaps that exist between theory and existing practice. CPLC seeks to foster leadership across the public and private sectors, academia, and NGO communities in order to implement carbon pricing policies more effectively and reduce global emissions. To learn more, visit the CPLC [website](#).

Resources

THE EU'S COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY POST 2020: DIRECTIONS OF CHANGE AND POTENTIAL TRADE AND MARKET EFFECTS. By Alan Matthews for the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development (ICTSD) (November 2018). This new paper examines the potential implications of the EU's approach to domestic agricultural support and policy initiatives in the post-2020 context, looking at what this could mean for global food and agriculture trade and markets. To learn more and to download the publication, visit the ICTSD [website](#).

US AGRICULTURAL POLICY BEYOND 2018: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION. By Vincent H. Smith for the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development (ICTSD) (November 2018). This new paper examines the implications that Washington's approach to agricultural policy from this year onward will have on its international partners. The author aims to provide insights from the ongoing process to negotiate a new US Farm Bill, looking at what this may mean both for agricultural markets as well as for international trade negotiations. The paper is available for download at the ICTSD [website](#).

WTO DATA PORTAL. Published by the World Trade Organization (WTO) (November 2018). This online database was launched last week, bringing together annual, quarterly, and monthly statistics on goods and services trade, along with data involving tariffs and non-tariff measures. The data portal also comes with supporting documents, such as a user guide and technical notes. To learn more and to access the portal, visit the WTO [website](#).

STRENGTHENING GOVERNANCE AND REDUCING CORRUPTION RISKS TO TACKLE ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRADE: LESSONS FROM EAST AND SOUTHERN AFRICA. Published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (November 2018). This study examines illegal wildlife trade in select countries in East and Southern Africa, looking at institutional capacities and limitations for addressing the problem, with a specific focus on how governance frameworks can be improved to address this illicit commerce. To read the report, visit the OECD's [iLibrary](#).

DEVELOPING ROBUST PROJECT PIPELINES FOR LOW-CARBON INFRASTRUCTURE. Published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (November 2018). This new publication examines "project pipelines" from various angles, including how to mobilise the necessary finance and how to develop the necessary policy frameworks for facilitating the development and construction of low-carbon and carbon-resilient infrastructure. To read the report, visit the OECD's [iLibrary](#).

TRUMP'S STEEL TARIFFS HAVE HIT SMALLER AND POORER COUNTRIES THE HARDEST. By Chad Bown, Euijin Jung, and Eva (Yiwen) Zhang for the Peterson Institute for International Economic (PIIE) (November 2018). This edition of PIIE's "Trade & Investment Policy Watch" examines the implications of Washington's tariffs on imported steel, looking specifically at its effects on smaller producers. They find that smaller, lower-income countries have been the ones hardest hit by the steel tariffs since the US put these in place. To read the publication, visit the PIIE [website](#).

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