

TRADE IN SERVICES FOR DEVELOPMENT IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

28 September - 1 October 2026

The role of services in global trade and global value chains (GVCs) has expanded rapidly over the past two decades. Commercial services have been the most dynamic segment of global trade, expanding at a faster pace than merchandise trade as a result of digitalization, the falling cost of communications, and the expansion of regional and international production networks. In value-added terms, services account for over 50% of world trade, highlighting their increasing importance as critical inputs for other economic sectors.

Asia and the Pacific have been at the forefront of this trend, with the region's commercial services exports expanding faster than the global average, and now accounting for nearly 25% of world commercial services exports. While services bring significant opportunities, many economies in Asia are still to tap the full development potential associated with services trade, including its contribution to diversification, digital connectivity, inclusiveness, and MSME internationalization. The Trade in Services for Development (TS4D) Initiative, launched in September 2024 by the World Trade Organization and the World Bank, offers a platform for knowledge, technical assistance and capacity building to help economies better leverage trade in services for development.

Building on the inaugural conference held in Geneva in December 2025, this regional conference aims to bring the TS4D initiative to the Asia Pacific region. It will provide a space to discuss the role of services trade in inclusive development, exchange views on the use of the analytical tools developed under the TS4D initiative and engage in discussions with selected Asian economies on their strategies for the modernization of the services sector.

The Conference will bring together government officials, representatives of international organizations, the private sector, and other stakeholders to share knowledge on advances and emerging best practices in the area of services trade. The objective is threefold:

- To explore recent developments in services trade in Asia Pacific;
- To share best practices and policy approaches for supporting services trade in the region; and
- To support policies that can help shape an enabling environment for services trade in Asia.

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

28–29 September 2026

Monday | 28 September 2026

Session I. High-Level Opening Session

09:00 – 09:05

Opening Remarks:

- Wempi Saputra, Vice-President for Sectors and Themes, Asian Development Bank (ADB)

09:05 – 09:10

Welcome Remarks:

- Johanna Hill, Deputy Director General, World Trade Organization

09:10 – 09:20

Keynote Address:

- Arsenio Balisacan, Secretary of the Department of Economy, Planning, and Development of the Philippines

09:20 – 09:25

Photo Session

09:25 – 10:10

Moderator:

- Albert Park, Chief Economist and Director General, Economic Research and Development Impact Department, ADB

Panel Discussion:

- Johanna Hill, Deputy Director General, World Trade Organization
- Çiğdem Akin, Director, Public Sector Management and Governance, Sectors Department 3, ADB
- Pr. Tham Siew Yean, Board of Trustees, Khazanah Research Institute, Malaysia
- Gonzalo Varela, Practice Manager for Trade Policy and Facilitation, World Bank Group
- Arsenio Balisacan, Secretary of the Department of Economy, Planning, and Development of the Philippines

10:10 – 10:25

Coffee Break

10:25 – 11:35

Session II. Building Competitive Services Sectors

What evidence, institutions and policy reforms are needed to turn services potential into tangible outcomes? This session will bring together policymakers, international organizations and private-sector representatives to discuss practical pathways for strengthening services competitiveness. Using examples drawn from country experiences and new analytical tools, including the WTO–World Bank Services Trade Competitiveness Diagnostic

	Dashboard, the discussion will examine how developing countries can identify reform priorities, attract investment and expand services exports. <u>Moderator:</u> • José Signoret, Senior Economist, Trade and Regional Integration Unit, World Bank <u>Presentation:</u> • Martin Roy, Counsellor, Trade in Services and Investment Division, WTO <u>Panel Discussion:</u> • Hanna Bucher, Senior Public Sector Specialist (Trade and Industry), PSMG, Sectors Department 3, ADB • Jiali Gong, Deputy Director, Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM), People's Republic of China • Tan Tai Hiong, Head of Services and Investment Division, ASEAN Secretariat • Jan Redmond Dela Vega, Chief Trade-Industry Development Specialist at the Department of Trade and Industry's Bureau of International Trade Relations (BITR)
11:35 – 12:35	Session III. Trade Restrictions in Services Trade: Scenarios for Asia and the Pacific This session will discuss the role of regulatory practices pertinent to services trade, assessing Asia's progress on services liberalization, as well as transparency and predictability of policies. The session will feature findings from the World Bank-WTO Services Trade Policy Database (STPD) and its accompanying Services Trade Restrictions Index (STRI). It will also discuss how these tools can support services trade discussions and policy reform. <u>Moderator:</u> • Katariina Nilsson Hakkala, Senior Economist, Economic Research and Development Impact Department, ADB <u>Presentation:</u> • Jose Signoret, Senior Economist, World Bank <u>Panel Discussion:</u> • Humbet Mansirli, Head of Division on Foreign Investment Policy Department on Trade and Foreign Investment Policy, Ministry of Economy, Azerbaijan • Narantuya Dashbaljir, Senior Specialist, Ministry of Economy and Development, Mongolia

12:35 – 14:00	• Wickramage Thiloka Sulochani Perera, Assistant Director of Commerce, Department of Commerce, Sri Lanka Q&A Lunch Break
14:00 – 15:15	Session IV. Best Practices in the Export Promotion of Services in Asia and the Pacific This session will explore successful practices and lessons on export promotion strategies for services trade in the region. On the basis of case studies from developing member economies, panellists will discuss how export promotion strategies for services differ from goods and explore how such initiatives can support internationalization and regional strategies, and how they can be adapted to different national contexts. <u>Moderator:</u> • Martin Roy, Counsellor, Trade in Services and Investment Division, WTO <u>Presentation:</u> • Dong Il Choi, Director of the Service Industry Policy Division, Ministry of Economy and Finance, Republic of Korea <u>Panel Discussion:</u> • Andrew Kam Jia, Professor of International Trade, National University of Malaysia • Gloria Pasadilla, ADB Consultant, Philippines • Sumanta Chaudhuri, Principal Adviser, International Trade Policy, Confederation of Indian Industry Q&A
15:15 – 15:30	Coffee Break
15:30 – 16:45	Session V. Good Regulatory Practices in Asia and the Pacific This session will discuss the role of Good Regulatory Practices (GRPs) in services trade, and their potential to lower compliance costs, reduce uncertainty, and support market entry and contestability. This session will explore how the new WB-WTO Diagnostic & Reform Planning Tool can help developing countries to benchmark domestic regulatory frameworks against GRPs and identify reform priorities.

16:45 – 17:00	<u>Moderator:</u> • Aminur Rahman, Advisor, Economic Research and Development Impact Department, Asian Development Bank <u>Presentation:</u> • Markus Jelitto, Counsellor, Trade in Services and Investment Division, WTO <u>Panel Discussion:</u> • Jaime Coghi Arias, Deputy Permanent Representative, Mission of Costa Rica to the WTO • Sokheng Kong, Director, Ministry of Commerce, Cambodia • Devi Ariyani, Executive Director, Indonesia Services Dialogue Council (ISD) • Andre Wirjo, Senior Analyst, Policy Support Unit, APEC Secretariat <u>Wrap-up</u> • Jong Woo Kang, Director, Regional Cooperation and Integration Division, Economic Research and Development Impact Department, ADB
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Tuesday | 29 September 2026

09:00 – 10:15	Session VI. Unlocking Digital Services as an Engine for Growth in Asia and the Pacific This session will present recent trends in digital services trade in the region. It will take stock of successful policies that have boosted digital services trade, and the barriers and challenges that limit its expansion. <u>Moderator:</u> • Tahani Iqbal, Senior Digital Transformation Specialist, Digital Sector Office, Sectors Department 2, ADB <u>Presentation:</u> • Javier Lopez-Gonzalez, Head of Digital Trade Unit, OECD (virtual) <u>Panel discussion:</u> • Karina Turekhanova, Chief Expert, Foreign Trade Department, Kazakhstan • Kazushi Uzawa, Deputy Director for Digital Trade Rules, Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI), Japan • Rolando Avendano, Senior Economist, Economic Research and Development Impact Department, ADB
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10:15 – 10:30	Q&A Coffee Break
10:30 – 11:30	Session VII. Tapping the Potential of MSMEs for Services Trade and Inclusiveness This session will underscore the vital role that MSMEs play in the services industry. The presenter shall discuss recent trends in the contribution of MSMEs for developing economies in Asia and explore policies that support MSME contribution such as trade finance and trade facilitation measures. <u>Moderator:</u> - Çiğdem Akin, Director, Public Sector Management and Governance, Sectors Department 3, ADB <u>Presentation:</u> - Shigehiro Shinozaki, Senior Economist, Economic Research and Development Impact Department, ADB <u>Panel Discussion:</u> - Muhammad Ashraf, Executive Director General, Ministry of Commerce, Pakistan - Ohanna Gargaloyan, Head of Customs Cooperation Division, State Revenue Committee, Armenia - Akhror Kholmurzaev, Head of Division, Ministry of Investment, Industry and Trade, Uzbekistan
11:30 – 12:30	Session VIII. Advancing Services Trade in Regional Development Agendas This session will discuss key challenges, priorities and needs in the further integration of services trade in regional and subregional growth and development strategies, including in the context of regional trade agreements and initiatives (e.g., RCEP, ASEAN Digital Economy Framework Agreement). It will explore how regional initiatives and work streams under the TS4D initiative can support better services trade systems. <u>Moderator:</u> - Julian Clarke, Senior Regional Cooperation Specialist, Climate Change and Sustainable Development Department, ADB <u>Panelists:</u> - Deepika Singh, Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade, Fiji

12:30 – 12:40	• Jan Redmond Dela Vega, Chief Trade-Industry Development Specialist at the Department of Trade and Industry's Bureau of International Trade Relations (BITR) • Tan Tai Hiong, Head of Services and Investment Division, ASEAN Secretariat <u>Wrap-Up and Closing</u> • World Bank • WTO • ADB
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This regional conference will be followed by a regional course on Trade in Services for Development for selected economies from Asia and the Pacific on 29 September to 1 October 2026.