

Evaluation of Commonwealth Secretariat Assistance to Small States in Geneva on Multilateral Trade Issues

June 2015



The Commonwealth

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Acknowledgements

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Acronyms



ACP	African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States
ACWL	Advisory Centre on WTO Law
AU	African Union
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CFTC	Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation
CHOGM	Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting
DAC	(OECD) Development Assistance Committee
EPA	Economic Partnership Agreement
EPD	Economic Policy Division
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FIC	Forum Island Country
GI	Geographical indications
ICTSD	International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development
ITC	International Trade Centre
LDC	Least Developed Countries
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NAMA	Non-agricultural market access
NTMs	Non-tariff measures
PIF	Pacific Island Forum
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OECS	Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States
OTN	Office of Trade Negotiations
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SPREP	Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Program
TFA	Trade Facilitation Agreement
TRIPS	Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
WTO	World Trade Organization

Summary

Terms of Reference

This evaluation report presents a comprehensive review and analysis of the Commonwealth Secretariat's assistance to small states in negotiating multilateral trade issues at the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Geneva.

In December 2014, the Commonwealth Secretariat appointed Tira Greene to undertake an evaluation of the project, which was conducted through the Commonwealth Small States Office in Geneva. The evaluation assesses the project's achievements and its benefits to stakeholders, and identifies the associated opportunities and challenges.

The purpose of the evaluation was to:

- Review the relevance of the support provided to member countries between 2012 – 2015;
- Assess the effectiveness of specific support provided to determine its quality, impact and sustainability;
- Assess the 'comparative advantage' and 'added value' of the project;
- Provide an assessment of the scope and likely demand for services provided under the project in the coming years;
- Undertake an analysis of stakeholders' views on the project;
- Identify lessons learned in the design and delivery of the project and recommend any strategic and operational changes that may be required to make the future support/ arrangements more focused, relevant and sustainable, and;
- Assess and make recommendations on the most cost-effective design of future policy support to Commonwealth missions in Geneva.

Background

The Commonwealth project of assistance to small states in Geneva on multilateral trade issues commenced soon after the 2009 meeting of

Commonwealth Heads of Government in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. The meeting agreed to provide greater support to Commonwealth small states involved in multilateral trade negotiations in Geneva. The goal was to strengthen their participation, thus enabling them to fully integrate in the international trade arena. The purpose of the project was therefore to strengthen the capacity of Commonwealth countries, in particular small states, to enhance their effective participation in the multilateral trading system.

The project was financed through the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC) and activities commenced in May 2012. Although slated to end in May 2014, the project was initially extended until December 2014 as some of the activities required more than the 2-year period originally envisaged. A second extension to June 2015 allowed for continuing support to Commonwealth small states on post-Bali issues, particularly in relation to preparatory work for the conclusions of negotiations on key issues.

The projects main activities were:

- Monitoring negotiations and updating reports and briefs on WTO issues;
- Providing advisory services to Commonwealth small states on multilateral trade issues, as and when required and requested by members;
- Preparing technical papers and policy briefs for small states on issues of common interest and concern, and sharing them with other trade groups;
- Undertaking research and analysis of issues in trade negotiations and other pertinent trends;
- Reviewing and analysing emerging issues;
- Facilitating collaboration and consultations;
- Supporting the scheduling processes for small states; and,
- Reviewing proposals submitted by small states in the Doha negotiations.

The International Trade Policy Section of the Commonwealth Secretariat's Economic Policy Division (EPD), which has now developed into the Trade Division, managed the project. The Section provided administrative and technical support and backstopping services through the allocation of existing human resources to ensure efficiency.

The project's results and deliverables were expected to be in line with the key issues being negotiated in the multilateral trading arena and were expected to contribute to the intermediate outcomes of the Secretariat's 2013/14-2016/17 Strategic Plan.

The evaluation found that all the activities under the project were successfully completed to deliver the planned outputs. There was ample evidence where the project had undertaken additional activities to further outcomes.

Evaluation scope and methodology

The evaluation assessed the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact of the project among the participating Commonwealth member countries using both primary and secondary data. A questionnaire was developed to survey the responses of the project beneficiaries to the five evaluation parameters. Interviews and discussions with the Secretariat staff in London, beneficiary member countries and other stakeholders in Geneva complemented the questionnaire survey.

Findings

Small states are often unable to contend for their positions in multilateral trade negotiations when compared to larger economies. This project was designed to address this capacity gap. Specifically, the project aimed to:

- Provide support and guidance to small state missions on WTO and other multilateral trade matters;
- Co-ordinate organisational trade-related technical assistance to small state missions in Geneva;
- Facilitate and co-ordinate trainings with relevant Secretariat Divisions and provide capacity-building support for other partner initiatives such as Hub and Spokes¹.

Over the life of the project, the Secretariat put in place several activities and initiatives in an effort to positively impact the trade-enabling environment of small states, including:

- Greater representation at key multilateral forums, which enabled them to better articulate their priorities and positions on key trade issues;
- Allocation of enhanced resources, and;
- Providing technical expertise and high quality research and analysis of trade policy and related matters.

The key findings are summarised in the following sections:

Relevance

The project primarily focused on the provision of much needed technical assistance to Commonwealth small state economies to improve their representation at international forums. The project assisted in strengthening the trade negotiating capacities of small states and its structure and design ensured relevance and applicability in addressing their needs. This was achieved through the crafting of the terms of reference and delineation of the primary responsibilities for the Trade Adviser, which included:

- Research, information gathering and contextual analysis of pertinent matters at various negotiating theatres, including the multilateral trading system;
- Collaboration with Commonwealth small states and Commonwealth developing countries in determining their capacity needs, and;
- Assessing and facilitating technical assistance interventions of Commonwealth small states.

The evaluation noted that the assistance was highly relevant to the needs of member countries. The project achieved its objectives successfully and also contributed to the intermediate

to strengthen trade capacity in the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) group of states. It has been jointly initiated by the ACP Group, the European Union, the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF).

1 Hub and Spokes is an 'Aid for Trade' initiative that aims

outcome 6.2 of the Commonwealth Secretariat Strategic Plan, namely "Small states enabled to effectively participate in international decision making processes"².

Effectiveness

The effectiveness of the project was evidenced by the great extent to which beneficiary Commonwealth small states depended on its provisions to advance their interests in the multilateral trading arena, as demonstrated in the wide range of requests on various issues submitted to the Trade Adviser. This also illustrated the level of confidence member countries placed in the Trade Adviser, thus enhancing the integrity of the project. Areas for improvement include clarity on reporting lines and responsibility between the project staff in Geneva and the Secretariat headquarters in London, as well as the need for synergies with other trade-related programmes of the Secretariat.

Efficiency

The project is noted for efficiency, high quality of outputs and additional results, including the strengthening of strategic partnerships. Project beneficiaries indicated they received technical expertise on a wide range of topics, including trade facilitation, oceans' economy, and agriculture and non-agriculture market access. Had individual consultants been hired to address these areas, the associated costs would have been significantly higher.

Impact

In assessing the impact of the project in enhancing the capacity of small states to engage in multilateral trade arenas, the evaluation found the project had successfully:

- Supported the intervention of Commonwealth small states in WTO activities;
- Furthered dialogue with Commonwealth small states on key issues such as non-tariff measures and trade facilitation;
- Contributed to discussion and negotiations surrounding service trade, and;

- Assisted small states in articulating well-informed positions in negotiations and identifying key issues that can be addressed in the post-Bali environment.

Sustainability

Given the outputs delivered and the level of knowledge transfer and skills acquisition, it is believed that the level of sustainability of the project is moderate. The report discusses the extent to which greater performance can be achieved under this indicator.

Recommendations

The report sets forth various recommendations to address areas in which performance could be increased. In particular, the recommendations focus on improving sustainability and achieving greater project impact. They also discuss mechanisms that can be employed to achieve greater synergies among complementary Secretariat initiatives.

2 Commonwealth Secretariat Strategic Plan for 2013/14 – 2016/17

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The Commonwealth Secretariat's project of assistance to small states in Geneva on multilateral trade issues commenced after the 2009 meeting of Commonwealth Heads of Government in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. At that meeting, it was agreed that greater support should be provided to Commonwealth countries to strengthen their participation in multilateral trade negotiations and enable them to fully integrate in the international trade arena. The project, which was financed under the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC), supported the engagement of small developing Commonwealth member countries in multilateral trade negotiations. It did so by providing adequate representation in Geneva through the provision of technical assistance and by strengthening the capacity of Commonwealth countries to effectively participate in the multilateral trading system. The intended beneficiaries of the project were therefore the countries within the Commonwealth membership grouping of 31 small states that were also members of the WTO with representatives at the Geneva headquarters.

The project was undertaken for a period of 2 years and 7 months and addressed issues relating to the monitoring of trade negotiations; provision of advisory services and the delivery of technical support for drafting of policy briefs and technical papers; research and analysis of trade related issues, trends, challenges and opportunities, and; facilitating consultations and project proposal reviews.

The project deliverables were expected to be largely concerned with the main issues being discussed at the WTO and directly aligned with the trade negotiation issues most prominent at the time, especially those which would impact Commonwealth small states.

1.2 Purpose and structure of the report

1.2.1 Purpose

This evaluation assesses the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact of the Secretariat's assistance to small states in Geneva on multilateral trade through the Geneva Trade Advisor Project. Specifically, whether the assistance provided through the project met its intended objectives and how it contributed to the Secretariat's Strategic Plan intermediate outcome area 6.2, by increasing the ability of small and vulnerable states to 'effectively participate in international decision-making processes', thereby strengthening the of resilience of these States ³. The evaluation also assesses the extent to which the assistance contributed to the Secretariat's enabling outcome of providing technical assistance, referrals and partnerships.

This report therefore presents:

- An assessment of the **relevance** of the assistance provided to the small states in Geneva;
- The **effectiveness** of the assistance in strengthening the capacity of beneficiary stakeholder groupings, primarily small states;
- The level of **efficiency** in crafting, managing and delivering the Secretariat's assistance project;
- The extent to which the project has had an **impact** on policy, law, regulation or strategy, and;
- The degree of **sustainability** of the Secretariat assistance project.

3 Commonwealth Secretariat Strategic Plan for 2013/14 – 2016/17

1.2.2 Structure of evaluation report

This report presents the main findings of the evaluation with a discussion on the extent to which the Secretariat's assistance was effective, efficient, relevant and sustainable, as well as its impact on small states and other stakeholders. In so doing, the report adopts the following format:

Chapter 1 presents introductory information, highlighting background information on the project and the purpose of this evaluation. **Chapter 2** outlines the evaluation methodology while **Chapter 3** provides an overview of the project.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of this evaluation, while conclusions are drawn and recommendations are set forth in **Chapter 5**.

2. Evaluation Methodology

2.1 Overview of the evaluation criteria

This evaluation analyses the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact of the Commonwealth Secretariat's assistance to small states in Geneva on multilateral issues. Figure 1 presents a synoptic description of each criterion used under this evaluation framework⁴, followed by a discussion on how these were applied to this evaluation.

Relevance: The 'relevance' criterion assesses the extent to which the assistance provided to small states by the Secretariat best addressed their needs, priorities and policies. As such, this criterion assesses the suitability of the assistance provided, bearing in mind the agenda and needs of the beneficiary groups and stakeholders.

Effectiveness: The 'effectiveness' measure evaluates the rate of success of the project in attaining its objectives. It therefore focuses on the assessment of whether the objectives of the project were achieved and any factors inhibiting the attainment of these objectives.

Efficiency: The measure of 'efficiency' assesses the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the outputs delivered in relation to the inputs implemented under this project. It is essentially a cost-benefit assessment applied to the input/output ratio. The investigation of this criterion involved a comparison of whether alternative approaches could have been undertaken to achieve the same or better results, outputs, outcomes and deliverables.

Impact: 'Impact' assesses whether the implementation of the project has resulted in any changes, whether positive or negative, and any third party/spill over effects. As such, the evaluation considered social, economic, environmental and other development indicators.

4 Adapted from the (OECD) DAC Criteria for Evaluating Development Assistance <http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>

Figure 1: Synoptic Description of the DAC Criteria Evaluation Framework

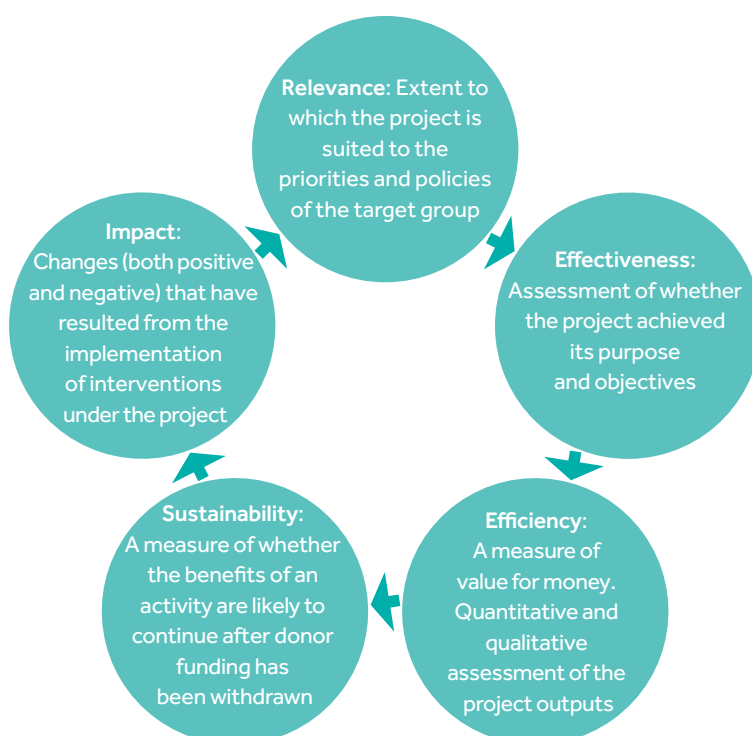


Figure 2: Methodological approach applied



Sustainability: 'Sustainability' measures whether the activities undertaken will result in benefits that will outlive the life of the project. Specific to this evaluation, the sustainability criterion measured whether the benefits of the Secretariat assistance are likely to continue after the project has ended.

2.2 Methodology

The focus of the evaluation methodology was to assess:

- Project deliverables of the Secretariat's assistance to small states in Geneva on multilateral trade issues, focusing on both quantity and quality of outputs;
- The extent to which these outputs and outcomes 'added value' to small states' capacity and multilateral trade negotiations.

In so doing, the evaluation focuses on the **inputs** of the technical assistance, taking into consideration the design of the project, the implementation of the work programme and activities under the project. In addition, the evaluation places emphasis on **outputs and outcomes**. It does this by undertaking an assessment of the extent to which the project outcomes have contributed to advancing the national priorities and development agenda of small states.

Figure 2 illustrates the relationship between project inputs, the evaluation framework discussed above and the project outputs.

2.2.1 Evaluation process

This evaluation undertook a three-step process:

1. Understanding the project design, inputs, outputs and context
2. Analysing the findings
3. Presenting recommendations based on conclusions

A review of project documents was undertaken to obtain a greater appreciation of the project, particularly its inputs, outputs and its fit within the broader Commonwealth Strategic Plan. In addition, other data gathering methods were utilised as discussed below.

Secondary data assessment: Desktop research and analysis

In applying this evaluation framework, in-depth research was conducted which included an extensive review of related literature. Data was collected utilising a systematic review of reports, presentations and other project documents.

The desktop research included a review of documents such as the Commonwealth Strategic Plan 2013/14 – 2016/17, Commonwealth reports related to the project, studies developed under the project, and WTO documents and other literature. The review of these documents provided valuable background information on the Secretariat's assistance to member countries. Many of these documents were accessed through the

Secretariat, while others were sourced externally and analysed. Annex II contains a list of documents reviewed under this evaluation.

Primary data analysis: Interviews, surveys and meetings with key stakeholders

Questionnaires were distributed to stakeholders in order to capture valuable data for this evaluation. Representatives from a wide cross-section of small states were invited to participate in this study. Representatives from the governments of The Bahamas, Maldives, Solomon Islands, Swaziland, and from the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) all completed questionnaires.

Interviews were conducted with stakeholders both in London and Geneva, and with the representatives from the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) group of states. Representatives from the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the Commonwealth Small States Office were also interviewed during the course of the evaluation.

Meetings were held with the Trade Adviser who had primary responsibility for the delivery of Secretariat assistance to small states and with other key personnel in the Secretariat involved in the delivery of trade assistance to member countries. Annex I contains a list of people consulted during the course of this evaluation.

3. Commonwealth Assistance to Small States in Geneva

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a description of the Commonwealth Secretariat's assistance to the small states in Geneva on multilateral trade issues in an effort to better understand the main tenets of the project. Background information on the genesis of the consultancy is first presented, linking it to the overarching goals, objectives and the mandate of the Secretariat. This chapter also presents the key activities undertaken as part of the project and further describes the outputs and outcomes that resulted, essentially giving an overview of the project delivery.

3.2 Genesis of the project

The Commonwealth has traditionally championed the cause of small states, particularly in relation to international trade, economic co-operation and development. Commonwealth membership comprises approximately two-thirds of all the world's small states and collectively accounts for 25 per cent of the United Nations General Assembly.

In 1977, at their meeting in Barbados, Commonwealth Finance Ministers expressly stated the traits that directly result in the high susceptibility of small states to exogenous shocks. They called on international partners to approve a regime that provided greater flexibility to these countries and to adopt favourable measures in recognition of their vulnerability.

In 1983, a Commonwealth Consultative Group was appointed to review the existing situation and special needs of small states in an effort to address their vulnerabilities. The 1985 published report, *Vulnerability: Small States in the Global Society*, highlighted the innate vulnerability of small states to external interference. Further featured in the report were the measures and mechanisms that could be employed in an effort to reduce vulnerability. This report provided greater visibility to small states at international forums

and can be attributed to the establishment of the Commonwealth Ministerial Group on Small States (MGSS).

In 2000, the Commonwealth Secretariat partnered with the World Bank in a Joint Task Force and developed a seminal report which presented an overview of small states and identified challenges confronting them in the global economy. From the report it was concluded that small states must employ and implement appropriate policies at the national level and must endeavour towards regional co-operation. It was further determined that small states should solicit assistance from international donor agencies and multilateral and bilateral development agencies.

In 2004, the Secretariat, in collaboration with the University of Malta, undertook an initiative in examining and developing a resilience index. The Secretariat further assisted in the delineation of strategies that can be adopted by small states in order to address their vulnerabilities and associated issues. This collaboration provided a platform for discussions on issues of economic resilience and practical solutions for small states.

The 2013/14 – 2016/17 Strategic Plan of the Commonwealth Secretariat prominently featured the needs of small and vulnerable states. The Strategic Plan is further disaggregated into work programmes of the various divisions of the Secretariat, which also feature issues specific to small states. The Strategic Plan clearly highlights the following:

- International policies, measures and rules are more responsive to small states' development strategies and resilience needs;
- Small states must be enabled to effectively participate in the international decision-making processes, and;
- Improved climate financing frameworks are needed.

In 2011, the Commonwealth Small States Office was established in Geneva. The framework for such an institution was based upon the Commonwealth Joint Office for Small States in New York. They provide small states with the inimitable opportunity to secure representation at core international forums. The profile and visibility of these small states has been elevated as a result of greater participation in meetings convened by international organisations, and improved access to in-house technocrats.

The presence of representatives of regional organisations of economic groupings comprising small states augurs well for the positioning of these developing nations in their engagement with the external trading regime. The Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) and the Organisation of East Caribbean States (OECS) are represented in the Geneva Office.

3.3 Project design

3.3.1 Goals and objectives

The project design document on the Secretariat assistance to small states in Geneva on multilateral trade issues notes that this undertaking was developed in an effort to strengthen small states' capacity to negotiate trade agreements. The project therefore sought to assist these Commonwealth small states to monitor and assess the developments in the international trade arena, particularly in relation to multilateral issues that impact on their national interests and development agenda.

In an effort to achieve the results envisioned under the project, the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC) Trade Adviser was appointed by the Secretariat to provide direct assistance to address development issues relating to the Doha Development Agenda and trade negotiations being discussed in the multilateral trade system and in other negotiating theatres. As such, the project aimed to address the challenges confronting small states given the dynamism of trade negotiations and their limited capacity. The demands of trade negotiations specific to expertise and analytical competencies are very rigorous and many small states are therefore not

able to dedicate the adequate time and skills-set needed to ensure that their interests are advanced and concerns properly articulated.

The main goal of the project was therefore to facilitate greater participation and integration of Commonwealth small states into the international trading system.

3.3.2 Expected project outputs

While identifying plausible risks associated with the project (such as an impasse in trade negotiations), a series of outputs were planned in the project design document. These outputs include:

- Commonwealth small states kept informed of relevant developments in the multilateral trading system;
- Provision of responses to other WTO countries that request information from Commonwealth small states;
- Strengthening of small states relationship with other non-Commonwealth small states groupings;
- Facilitation of collaboration between Commonwealth small states and other WTO member countries;
- Scheduling process in the WTO in Commonwealth small states and other vulnerable states strengthened;
- Development and concerns of Commonwealth small states not yet addressed, reviewed and prioritised, and;
- Identification of minimum demands to be met for small states to secure development friendly trade agreements.

3.3.3 Resource inputs

The evaluation noted that the overall expenditure associated with the Secretariat project of assistance to small states in Geneva on multilateral trade issues was £559,403 over its entire duration (2011/12 – 2014/15). The project was solely funded by the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation (CFTC).

3.3.4 Project activities undertaken

Under the project, the Geneva-based Trade Adviser co-ordinated and delivered various activities, which directly and indirectly impacted small states across the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific regions. These activities include:

- Establishment of a dialogue with Commonwealth small states on non-tariff measures (NTMs) with a view to determining whether NTMs can become part of the post-Bali agenda;
- Convening of a discussion with Commonwealth small states on services negotiations;
- Implementation of a study on the Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) negotiations, in particular the implications of the GI Register and GI extension for small states;
- Circulation of the findings of analytical work on TRIPS, Services and Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs);
- Engagement with small states on areas of possible engagement in the post-Bali environment;
- Co-ordination of various studies on key issues impacting international trade of small states, and;
- Development of various position papers and technical briefs on trade and related matters

Meeting participation

During the life of this project, the Geneva Trade Adviser participated in over 50 meetings, including those of the Trade Negotiating Committee and subsidiary negotiating bodies.

Through the project, the Trade Adviser also participated in meetings with representatives from various governments of beneficiary states and also with representatives from partner agencies such as UNCTAD and UNECE.

Workshops, meetings, trainings and presentations

Over 28 workshops, meetings and training sessions were hosted with various representatives and groups of Commonwealth small states. In

addition, presentations were made to enhance the knowledge and technical capacities of Commonwealth small states.

Reconnaissance and introductory meetings were held with small states delegations comprising representatives from Barbados, Canada, Jamaica, Maldives, Mauritius, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands and the UK, as well as with representatives from ACP (Geneva Office), the Advisory Centre on WTO Law (ACWL), CARICOM, the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development (ICTSD), International Trade Centre (ITC), the Least Developed Country (LDC) Group, the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), PIFs, UNCTAD, South Centre and the WTO.

In addition, over 25 meetings were organised with developing countries, development partners, international organisations and some representatives from developed Commonwealth countries. These meetings were hosted to identify the needs of member countries and possible areas for collaboration.

A Secretariat outreach meeting was convened in an effort to provide an opportunity for the Trade Adviser attached to the project to present to delegations the tools and capacity-building options available to small states. This activity initiated a partnership with the WTO and assisted in partnership-building and the provision of technical co-operation and support, as well as highlighting the permanent presence of the Commonwealth Secretariat in Geneva.

Two meetings were held with UNECE to discuss the Trade Facilitation Agreement Implementation Guide and possible areas of collaboration, including facilitating participation of small states at the March 2015 Consultative Meeting on Multilateral Trade Issues for Commonwealth Small States. The Trade Adviser provided additional support for the participation of representatives from Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago at this meeting.

The collaboration with UNECE extended to a meeting of a group of Commonwealth developing countries and a Commonwealth workshop on trade facilitation implementation. Presentations were also made to various groupings of Commonwealth small states, including at a meeting with CARICOM senior officials on matters

pertaining to trade facilitation negotiations, which was held in the preparatory phase of the Ninth WTO Ministerial Conference (December 2013, Bali).

A workshop on fisheries subsidies for least developed countries (LDCs) was conducted, as were presentations on crisis and opportunity in the Caribbean and on small states and their participation in WTO ministerial conferences.

Other presentations were made and technical expertise was shared that facilitated the participation of Commonwealth small states in WTO meetings and meetings of the ACP.

These workshops, meetings and trainings aimed to augment the capacity of Commonwealth small states to navigate the multilateral trade labyrinth.

Reports, papers, studies

The project commissioned nearly 25 studies, papers and reports to support Commonwealth member countries with their trade negotiations.

In 2013, Solomon Islands requested a study on fisheries subsidies for LDCs on behalf of the LDCs Group in Geneva. This paper was broadly circulated in Geneva and in country capitals and provided useful inputs for small state LDCs engaged in negotiations on fisheries subsidies. The paper served as a briefing document for the incoming LDCs co-ordinator (Solomon Islands) and assisted the group in exploring new approaches in the fisheries subsidies negotiations.

The paper highlighted the importance of the fishing industry to WTO LDC small states and the implications of the chairperson's proposed draft text on LDC fisheries as related to fisheries subsidies negotiations. The document also featured key issues promoted by important interest groups at the WTO in an effort to illuminate matters of concern, whether controversial or otherwise. The paper further noted that addressing the challenges of sustainable fisheries in WTO LDC states was imperative should these states wish to pursue the goal of economic growth and development.

The study on fisheries subsidies further proposed that key actions should be taken by small state LDCs in order to ensure that the goal of economic growth and development can be achieved through the fisheries industry. Some of these recommendations included fully supporting

the Doha and Hong Kong agendas in order to strengthen disciplines on fisheries subsidies and supporting the introduction of new disciplines as proposed by the 2007 chair's draft text. It was further recommended that technical assistance should be sought to assist small state LDCs in key initiatives.

The evaluation noted that the paper was instrumental in charting a path for LDCs. It is still being used by small states and LDCs engaged in negotiations on fisheries subsidies.

Documents were developed and submitted for a study on the green economy. This activity was undertaken because small states had not engaged in the plurilateral negotiations that yielded an agreement on environmental goods. As such, this paper sought to assist small states by enhancing their understanding and context for these negotiations and offered further options to respond to them. The document can be viewed as a tool through which a contextual background was provided to small states in order for them to determine the best position they should adopt on this issue.

Project documents were developed for a study on the Trade Facilitation Agreement. These documents were circulated broadly to relevant Commonwealth small states and other stakeholders. The paper provided a clear description of pertinent issues and provisions relating to the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement. In addition, it provided guidance to small states on how best they were able to harness their negotiating leverage in the context of the multilateral negotiations on trade facilitation.

This paper proved to be a highly successful output, which was used by Commonwealth and non-Commonwealth developing countries as well as the project's small state beneficiaries.

A concept note on the systemic issues for small states was developed, which provided the tools for small states to look beyond narrow tactical concerns to broader systemic realities that would inform the positions assumed in issue-specific negotiations.

Several other papers covering various topics were also developed. Titles included: *Defining the Interests of CARICOM States on Trade Facilitation*; *Revitalisation of the Trade and Transfer of Technology Debate at the WTO (Trade and Transfer*

of Technology), and; *Defining the Interest of Small States in the Negotiations on Development in the Committee on Trade and Development*.

A guidance paper on improving transparency of the impacts of non-tariff measures (NTMs) affecting small states with possible solutions and a 'Think Piece' on strategic options for Commonwealth small states negotiating services modalities under the Doha Round with considerations for the Post-Bali Agenda were also developed. The think piece sparked debate on the options available to small states as it relates to future negotiations on services. The paper has offered small states the clearest understanding yet of the possible implications of plurilateral approaches on services and the extent to which a services plurilateral agreement will impact or impinge on the multilateral services negotiations.

The Trade Adviser partnered with the International Trade Centre (ITC) on the development of an approach for the deployment of a national export strategy for Saint Lucia. This was undertaken in September/October 2013. The Trade Adviser further provided advice to the ITC on the development of a national export development strategy. This advice assisted the ITC in the implementation of a national consultation.

In addition to the above initiatives, the project also commissioned some key papers using external expertise. These are briefly discussed below.

Paper on the Bali package

A paper was developed that assessed the Bali package with a particular focus on trade facilitation. This paper noted that the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) was the most significant component of the Bali package and further highlighted that successful implementation of trade facilitation would increase trade flows and reduce trade costs among other results, as it promotes border agency co-ordination, institutional strengthening and reforms in governance that limit the scope for corruption and graft. The paper recommended that member countries undertake the necessary legislative amendments and changes to their institutional arrangements in order to implement the agreement.

Paper on small and vulnerable states: Increasing SIDS Resilience and Development Through International Trade

This paper notes that decisions made at the Ninth WTO Ministerial Conference held in Bali include trade facilitation, food security for developing countries and LDC issues. It further determines that there has been no significant movement on issues relevant to Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and that the WTO is mandated to establish a work programme that would guide the negotiating process beyond 2014.

Paper for 'BIORES' Magazine

This paper focuses on the new approach to tackling illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. The document states that fisheries have an important role to play in supporting food security and nutrition, income generation, employment and development. It is essential that new trade opportunities be structured to promote sustainability of trade activities. It further states that WTO rules eliminate destructive fisheries subsidies. In 2001, members of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) adopted the *International Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing* (IPOA-IUU). This formed the framework of the *Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries* (the Code).

Paper on the Ninth Session of the WTO Ministerial Conference

A paper on the Ninth Session of the WTO Ministerial Conference was also developed.

The paper notes that at the WTO's Eighth Ministerial Conference, WTO members agreed on the following:

1. To continue their current practice of not imposing customs duties on electronic transmissions until the Ninth Ministerial Conference;
2. To continue the work programme on electronic commerce, covering all issues related to trade arising from global e-commerce, including; enhancing internet connectivity and access to information and telecommunications technologies and public internet sites; the growth of mobile commerce, electronically delivered

software, cloud computing; and the protection of confidential data, privacy and consumer protection;

3. Members will not initiate complaints under the TRIPS Agreement, and;
4. Members may provide preferential treatment to services and service suppliers of least developed countries.

3.4 Collaborative endeavours

While evaluating the Commonwealth Secretariat's assistance to small states in Geneva on multilateral trade issues, the evaluation noted a number of other Secretariat endeavours where collaboration can further enhance the project outcomes. Some of these are briefly listed below.

3.4.1 Hub and Spokes programme

The Hub and Spokes programme, currently in its second phase, is one of several Aid for Trade initiatives. The European Union (EU) represents the lead donor of this initiative and the Commonwealth Secretariat is one of the co-funders and executing agencies, while the ACP Group Secretariat is the global partner.

The European Commission, Commonwealth Secretariat and Agence Intergouvernementale de la Francophonie (AIF) represent the main co-sponsors of the Hub and Spokes programme⁵. The Commonwealth Secretariat is responsible for implementation of initiatives of ACP members in Eastern and Southern Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific, and in the African Union (AU), while AIF focuses on West and Central Africa.

The Hub and Spokes programme seeks to address the challenge of limited resources, particularly human and institutional. The project further endeavours to equip ACP countries with the requisite tools to exploit opportunities presented by international trade. It does so by strengthening the capacities of key ACP stakeholders in order to ensure that ACP countries are positioned to effectively participate in international trade negotiations and successfully implement regional and international trade agreements. To this extent,

the goals and objectives of the Hub and Spokes programme and the support provided through Geneva Trade project are similar. Co-ordination and collaboration between the two should bring about greater results.

3.4.2 Enhancing accessibility to climate financing

A Commonwealth Expert Group on Climate Finance developed recommendations on accessing climate finance for small states and climate vulnerable countries. These recommendations were considered at the 23rd Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in 2013. This resulted in greater emphasis placed on climate financing and sustainable management of resources of small states as they seek to respond to the challenges posed by climate change.

The recommendations were widely endorsed and Commonwealth Heads of Government agreed to utilise them to simplify access to existing climate financing by developing nations. They further agreed to consider the recommendation for the establishment of a Commonwealth Climate Finance Skills Hub at the 2015 CHOGM. Mauritius has volunteered to host and provide secretariat services for this hub.

3.4.3 Climate change and sustainable development

The Commonwealth Secretariat has supported the establishment of a partnership between the regional organisations of SIDS in the Caribbean and the Indian Ocean and Pacific regions, with a focus on climate financing and sustainable development concerns. In pursuit of developing climate resilient low-carbon economies, Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) were signed among the Indian Ocean Commission, the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) and the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (5Cs). These MOUs seek to achieve:

- Improvement in the exchange of information on climate change adaptation and mitigation in the various SIDS regions;
- Knowledge sharing;
- Strengthened institutional capacities for the adaptation and mitigation of climate change;

⁵ The EC is the principal funding source of the Hub and Spokes Project, contributing just over €10 million. The Commonwealth Secretariat has contributed over €4 million and the AIF approximately €3 million.

- Improvement in the availability of information on the impacts of, and responses to, climate change and sea level rise;
- Exchange of professional staff between institutions, and;
- Crafting of joint activities programmes and projects among institutional partners.

These issues of climate financing and sustainable development concerns are also of particular importance to small states. A strong synergy can be built between climate change financing and aid for trade programmes.

3.4.4 Commonwealth Expert Group on Trade

The newly-established Commonwealth Expert Group on Trade met for the first time in Malta from 25 to 26 March 2015, to consider the trade challenges confronting the Commonwealth's LDCs and small states, with particular emphasis placed on developing states. Based on an assessment of the recent developments in international trade and policy issues for Commonwealth countries, the meeting underscored the importance of active engagement in the multilateral trading system, particularly for small developing economies.

Findings suggest that small developing states will not accrue benefits resulting from the engagement of the multilateral trading system in the absence of robust complementary policy formulation. In addition, small states were urged to actively engage in the multilateral trading system and undertake actions to honour their obligations under various agreements, particularly those that trigger technical assistance and aid for trade.

The meeting also highlighted the thrust towards regionalism as an economic growth imperative. This was noted to be both necessary and relevant, particularly in relation to participation in various negotiating theatres given the resource constraints of small states. Small developing economies are confronted with various challenges due to their limited capacities and small size. Their average cost of doing business is high and they are generally uncompetitive. This is further compounded by their inability to attract investment in core sectoral areas due to a plethora of issues.

The meeting noted that the focus of small states should be on policies that address and seek to enhance trade facilitation mechanisms and augment border control infrastructures and port facilities. However, many small states do not possess the technical capacity to identify this as a trade imperative and further lack the requisite expertise to articulate these positions.

Given the similarities and cross cutting issues in their goals and objectives, the Commonwealth project of assistance to small states in Geneva and the Commonwealth Expert Group on Trade would benefit from working closely together. Specifically, the Geneva Trade Advisor and the Trade Group could collaborate on providing the technical capacity to identify trade facilitation mechanisms and the requisite expertise and capacity building to articulate these positions. This is especially important if the mandate of the project is expanded as recommended.

4. Evaluation Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of this evaluation. It is based on research involving interviews, questionnaires, consultations and discussions with personnel from the Commonwealth Secretariat, UNCTAD and UNECE, and beneficiaries of the assistance project. The findings are presented within the framework of the (OECD) Development Assistance Committee criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. Project highlights include:

4.2 Relevance of the project

4.2.1 Alignment with CHOGM mandates

The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), held every two years, is the Commonwealth's highest policy and decision-making platform. Within this forum, Commonwealth Heads of Government have an opportunity to engage their peers and discuss issues that affect both Commonwealth states and the wider global community in an effort to achieve consensus in implementing decisive action.

The mandate to provide assistance to small states in Geneva on multilateral trade issues originated at the 2009 CHOGM. The meeting identified the need to support small states on issues involving engagement in the international trading arena. This was later reaffirmed at the 2011 CHOGM. The CHOGM mandate provided support for Commonwealth countries' participation in multilateral trade negotiations. It affirmed the commitment of Heads of Government to actively participate in multilateral trade negotiations, recognising that a development-oriented and balanced conclusion to the Doha Round would contribute to the advancement of the national and collective interests of Commonwealth states and their economic development.

Through the mandate, Heads of Government reaffirmed their commitment to supporting developing nations in their efforts to enlarge their economies through international trade. They recognised this would necessitate that various

issues relating to trade facilitation be addressed, including but not limited to market access and the removal of protectionist measures. Heads of Government further noted that the impact of trade for developing countries is more significant than for developed countries, underscored the importance of regional integration efforts that are WTO-compatible and highlighted the integral role of the Aid for Trade initiative in strengthening the economies of small states. Heads of Government resolved to increase the participation of small states in multilateral trade negotiations in order to reap the resulting benefits.

In 2011, the Heads of Government further committed to supporting regional economic integration and enhanced participation of small and vulnerable economies in the international trade arena to enable them to capitalise on the benefits to be accrued. The 2013 CHOGM echoed these sentiments and highlighted the need for technical assistance to ensure enhanced engagement of Commonwealth member countries in the international arena and advancement of their development agendas.

A clear connection can therefore be made between CHOGM mandates and the objectives of the Secretariat project of assistance to small states in Geneva. The project has sought to implement many of the recommendations made at CHOGM. The activities undertaken as part of the project individually and collectively sought to contribute to enhance participation in the multilateral trading community in an effort to ensure the Commonwealth small states were able to achieve economic expansion and development.

4.2.2 Alignment with Commonwealth Secretariat strategic plans

Within the Commonwealth Secretariat Strategic Plan 2008/09 - 2011/12, the establishment of a Geneva small states office was highlighted as one of the expected results to be achieved. Further, the provision of technical assistance was noted as one of the areas in which the Secretariat has a comparative advantage. Within Programme 6, which addresses economic development, the main objective is to strengthen policies and systems

that build resilience and support inclusive and sustainable economic growth in member states. Particular reference is made to the provision of in-house technical support and advisory services in an effort to build capacity in areas of trade facilitation and export competitiveness through the Secretariat's work on international trade and regional co-operation. This shows a direct alignment of activities undertaken in the assistance project with the Commonwealth Strategic Plan 2008/09 – 2011/12.

The Secretariat Strategic Plan 2013/14 – 2016/17 highlights the advancement of the global development agenda. Particular focus is placed on the provision of technical assistance to contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and to further support international trade negotiations as a key priority for the Secretariat. Further, under the theme of Pan-Commonwealth Development, specific mention is made of the Secretariat engaging in burgeoning issues in trade integration. Some of this work is to be undertaken in collaboration with other donor agencies, hence alluding to strategic collaborative partnerships.

The review of the design and implementation of the project clearly shows the alignment and contribution of the project to the priorities of the Commonwealth strategic plans (2008/09 – 2011/12 and 2013/14 – 2016/17).

4.2.3 Alignment with needs of beneficiary member countries

The project focused on the delivery of services to Commonwealth small states that strengthened their ability in relation to trade negotiation among other issues. Particular emphasis was placed on issues in the negotiating arena that would either directly impact small states and/or contribute to their economic advancement and development. As such, much work was done in relation to the Bali package. Matters relating to trade facilitation, agriculture and other issues impacting developing countries were also addressed in the Ninth WTO Ministerial held in Bali, Indonesia in 2013.

From this perspective, Secretariat's assistance can indeed be deemed relevant given that support was provided within the trade negotiation context of both the multilateral trading system and other negotiation theatres.

From responses obtained in the various interviews conducted and questionnaire survey (responses of some participants are highlighted in previous chapters), it was found that the level of assistance provided to small states addressed the needs of the member countries. Many of the activities undertaken under the programme were in response to requests for assistance from Commonwealth small states. This illustrates that these states, as well as groupings of nations such as CARICOM, were aware of the project and further saw the benefit in engaging the Trade Adviser in order to obtain assistance on various trade-related issues. All of the questionnaire respondents were aware of the Secretariat project of assistance to small states in Geneva.

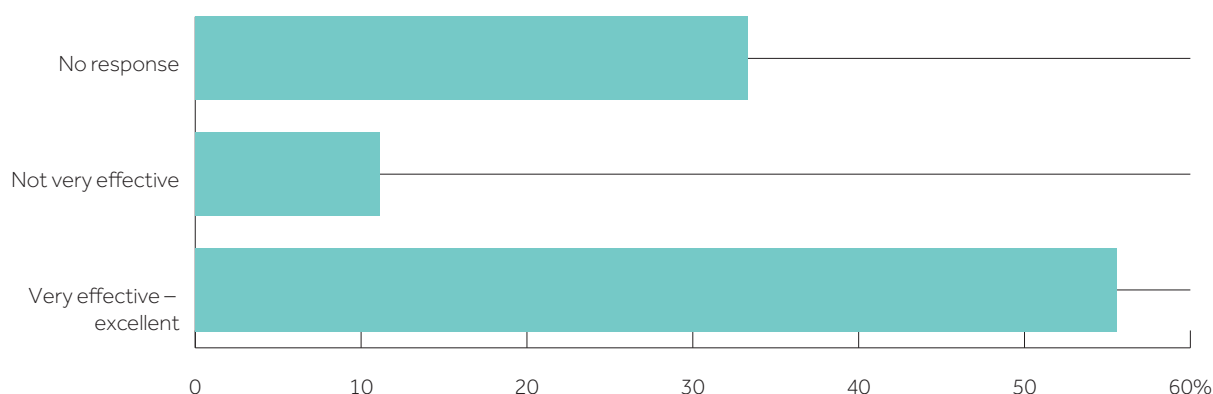
In addition, all of the respondents said they benefitted from the project when requested. All respondents further expressed their appreciation for the level of support given. All respondents stated that the Trade Adviser's level of service and professionalism was impeccable. The Adviser was credited for his broad knowledge, pleasant demeanour and willingness to serve. These are qualities that positively impacted the ease of implementation of the project.

When directly asked about the relevance of the Secretariat assistance project to their economies, 56 per cent of respondents indicated that the project was very effective and/or excellent and as such quite relevant, 33 per cent of the respondents chose not to answer this question, while 11 per cent indicated that the project was not effective (Figure 3). Collating the various responses, it can be concluded that overall, the project was relevant to its intended beneficiaries.

4.3 Effectiveness and efficiency of the project

This section assesses the extent to which the project was effective. In so doing, it looks at the extent to which objectives were aligned with outcomes, the delivery of project, the degree to which the project achieved its objectives and the level of dependence of these countries on the project.

Figure 3: Evaluation of respondents' perspectives on the relevance of the Commonwealth project of assistance to their respective economies



4.3.1 Extent to which project objectives align with the outcomes

The project was designed with the primary objective of enhancing the capacity and ability of small states to further their participation in the multilateral trading forums. The project highlighted the dynamism of the trading arena as one of the primary challenges confronting Commonwealth small states, particularly given their resource limitations. The project was designed to contribute to the intermediate outcome relating to support to Commonwealth countries to strengthen their ability to navigate international decision making processes.⁶

The project was envisioned and its terms of reference drafted at a time when discussions on the Doha Development Agenda had already commenced and the benefits presented for developing nations like those of the Commonwealth seemed vast. The main impediment was the inability of these states to fully participate in discussions for various reasons. As a result, all activities of the project sought to enhance the capacity of small states to engage external parties in relation to trade. For example, the workshops delivered were relevant and effective for most member states given the similarities in the shortcomings and trade related issues.

In addition, the project effectively enhanced small states' participation in international trade forums through the provision of assistance in devising negotiating strategies and trade policies.

Based on the interviews conducted and the discussions held with representatives from beneficiary small states, it was evident that they fully comprehended the scope and objectives of the project and as such were appreciative that the outputs delivered closely aligned with the expected deliverables.

4.3.2 Extent to which the project was delivered as designed

As highlighted in Chapter 3, a series of activities were delivered under this project. The main outputs of the project are consistent with those envisioned as being appropriate activities that served to achieve the overarching objective of the project and the delivery of its outputs.

The project commenced later than originally intended and was extended seven months beyond its initial expected life. The progress of the project was regularly reported through five six-monthly progress reports produced from November 2012 to May 2014. The activities undertaken within each period, along with outputs delivered and achievements attained were all detailed in these reports. In this manner, the progress as it related to project implementation was monitored and the extent to which the project was achieving its intended purpose and being delivered as designed was also assessed periodically.

6 Commonwealth Secretariat Strategic Plan for 2013/14 – 2016/17

The reports reflected concerns and challenges, as well as achievements and successes of the project. This monitoring mechanism yielded significant benefits as it not only facilitated the review of activities bi-annually and thus, the identification of measures that were not being successfully applied, but also gave an indication of those initiatives that were significant to achieving the goals of the project.

4.3.3 Extent to which the project has enhanced the capacity of beneficiary member countries

In reviewing the responses of the questionnaires and information gathered through interviews, most informants (67 per cent) indicated that the project was very effective in building the capacity of member countries on multilateral trade issues. A majority of respondents who provided additional information stated that Secretariat support was invaluable.

As illustrated in Chapter 3, the project undertook a wide variety of initiatives including; the convening of national meetings, regional workshops and training seminars; presentations; development of reports, opinions and technical briefs; and the creation and strengthening of strategic partnerships. The following section provides a brief discussion on some key interventions.

Defining trade negotiating positions and advancing interests of member countries:

The project assisted member countries in drafting negotiating briefs, confidential opinions and other opinions on a wide range of trade negotiating issues, including trade facilitation, trade in services, the overarching Doha Development Agenda and other areas.

Strategic partnerships, collaborations and networking: Through collaborative engagements and various networking activities resulting from hosting the various training and capacity building initiatives, the project established strategic alliances with the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE).

Providing advisory services and drafting of negotiating positions: Through the expertise provided by the Trade Adviser under the project, small states including The Bahamas, Maldives and Solomon Islands as well as CARICOM member

countries and others were able to benefit from advice provided. In so doing, they were better positioned in articulating their positions on a number of trade related issues. The Bahamas stated that the papers developed and technical notes drafted under the project were 'extremely useful' as they presented a holistic view of the negotiations, particularly after the Ninth WTO Ministerial Conference in Bali. Solomon Islands indicated that the papers developed and circulated were instrumental in directing their negotiating position.

Sensitising and awareness on emerging issues through research and the undertaking of studies:

The project commissioned several studies and undertook research on matters relating to ocean economy, development issues to be discussed at the Ninth WTO Ministerial Conference, the Bali package, trade facilitation and a wide range of other issues. These papers and reports were broadly circulated to various member countries. Beneficiary countries indicated that they found these documents extremely useful and many still use them as a reference, despite the passage of time as the issues raised are still quite relevant, especially in context of small states.

4.3.4 Extent to which Commonwealth member countries depended on the project assistance

As was noted in previous chapters, Commonwealth small states are among the world's most vulnerable economies and are severely limited in areas of technical expertise, particularly in the field of trade. As a result, for some small states the project served as the primary mechanism through which they were able to engage with the multilateral trading system. For others, the project provided great support and served to enhance their capacity given their limited human resource base and expertise. Member countries were therefore dependent on the project, some being more dependent than others.

4.4 Overall impact

As previously discussed, beneficiary small states expressed how appreciative they were of the support provided under the project, given the impact this had on enhancing their ability to engage in multilateral trade dialogue. Respondents noted that the relevance and timeliness of many of

the issues discussed under the project positively impacted the ability of their respective states to effectively participate in trade and related arenas, particularly at the level of the WTO.

In analysing the impact of the Secretariat assistance to small states within the trade negotiation context, the evaluation also looked at the importance of Secretariat's assistance to the two regional economic blocs, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Forum Island Countries (FICs) of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF). These economic alliances, though within different hemispheric strata, have been confronted with similar challenges within the geo-political, international, commercial and economic arenas.

Both the FICs and CARICOM have recognised the importance of engaging external partners in widening the scope of their trade relations. These economic associations have therefore endeavoured to engage their external partners. Through the WTO, they have made strides towards trade liberalisation and the removal of discriminatory fees and formalities, and members of these multilateral trading organisations have sought to implement and/or remove the relevant institutional, legal and regulatory structures necessary to achieve WTO congruence.⁷ However, these efforts by both CARICOM countries and FIC have been met with various challenges of a similar nature.

Countries in both these groups possess relatively low technical capacities and expertise in new areas of trade such as investment, labour relations, intellectual property, anti-dumping and countervailing duties and competition policy. Their pool of experts is very limited. As a result, CARICOM member countries, whether individually or through the Office of Trade Negotiations (OTN), are often unable to adequately articulate their positions on these matters and hence cannot negotiate with the authority that is required. As such, the Secretariat assistance provided to small states like those of CARICOM and FICs was of great importance and positively impacted some beneficiaries.

Countries like The Bahamas that have only recently obtained membership to the WTO require additional support in relation to navigating the

multilateral trading system. Through Secretariat assistance, support was provided to The Bahamas in an effort to assist it to advance its interests in the WTO. In the information-gathering phase of the evaluation, a representative from the Government of the Bahamas indicated that the assistance directly obtained through the project had proved to be useful, effective and invaluable.

The representative further noted that The Bahamas benefitted tremendously from various interventions implemented under the project, especially those leading up to the WTO Ninth Ministerial Conference in Bali. Under the project, guidance was provided in the form of technical papers, which greatly advanced The Bahamas' understanding of issues such as tariff-rate quota, food security and matters pertaining to trade in services.

PIF, facing similar challenges, was also positive about the assistance provided. In evaluating the Secretariat project, a representative from this regional group expressed deep appreciation for the assistance to the Pacific Islands in various areas including trade facilitation, fisheries subsidies as well as in formulating statements and presentations delivered at various WTO and WTO-related meetings.

In addition, a representative of the Pacific Mission in Geneva pointed to some key outputs that were vital in advancing the interests of FICs countries in the WTO. Highly regarded among these were analytical papers, briefs and articles produced by the project on a host of technical issues including trade in services, trade facilitation, NTMs, oceans economy/fisheries subsidies, and agriculture and non-agricultural market access (NAMA). Other outputs received by the Pacific Islands, such as advice on strategic approaches on various trade matters, were hailed as both effective and essential.

Other countries such as Maldives, Swaziland and the Solomon Islands all echoed similar sentiments.

The impact of the project was greater for some small states as compared to others, given their development agenda and national priorities. As such, the level of impact varied across respondents from moderate to high.

The visibility of the project was also heightened as a result of the level of support provided to small states and the strategic partnerships created.

⁷ It should be noted that not all member countries of CARICOM or FICs possess membership in the WTO.

This therefore augmented the impact of the project with many positive spillover benefits that are often immeasurable but add great value to the projects impact.

4.5 Sustainability

Given the nature of assistance provided and the response from interviews and consultations, it can be concluded that the project was sustainable to a certain extent given the longevity of some of the project outputs and its perpetual impact. The knowledge transfer from interactions with the Trade Adviser and exposure to senior level trade officials at various capacity-building initiatives and trade meetings will benefit small states both in the short and long run. The extent to which the sustainability of this assistance can be expanded will result from the further transfer of knowledge within respective member countries.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This section presents concluding remarks based on the findings of the evaluation within the OECD/DAC assessment framework of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the project. Recommendations are also made with the intention of guiding future policy and planning decisions by providing feedback on the performance of the project.

5.1 Relevance

The project was designed and contextualised in keeping with the mandates of the 2009, 2011 and 2013 CHOGMs to further address the needs of Commonwealth small states. It is also aligned with the Secretariat strategic plans for 2008/09 – 2011/12 and 2013/14 – 2016/17.

The project addressed concerns and sought to achieve objectives that contribute to the achievement of strategic outcomes of the Commonwealth Strategic Plans. In addition, the development of papers, opinions and briefs for Commonwealth small states on issues such as trade facilitation, services trade and the Bali package were undoubtedly useful in assisting small states to better appreciate the implications of these trade and related issues. This addressed a key need of beneficiary small states, given the challenges they were being confronted with.

While assisting in general areas of multilateral trade, the project specifically focused on issues impacting the small states, and retained this focus to be relevant to its intended beneficiaries. Studies undertaken within the scope of the project addressed issues that small states were dealing with such as fisheries negotiations, the ocean economy and the Ninth WTO Ministerial Session. These studies and the reports generated directed beneficiary states to possible approaches that could be adopted to best ensure they achieve their development goals.

More specifically, project beneficiaries noted that given their limited human resources, coupled with the great time demands necessitated in addressing international trade issues, particularly

in the WTO arena, the project was of great benefit and relevance to them. Solomon Islands indicated that the high level of expertise provided through the project proved very beneficial, particularly as it related to matters regarding fisheries as it serves as the focal point for LDCs on fisheries. Given the highly technical issues surrounding fisheries negotiations, the technical assistance provided to Solomon Islands was noted to be very relevant and applicable to the needs and interests of this Commonwealth small island state.

The feedback indicated that the Trade Adviser provided substantial input on trade facilitation, both to technical staff and to government representatives from beneficiary countries to ensure that all persons involved would speak with a united voice. The Trade Adviser was also praised for the development and distribution of timely and reader-friendly documents on the Bali package and other areas of trade.

5.2 Effectiveness

Effectiveness was evaluated on the extent to which the project achieved its key objective of enhancing the capacity of member states to better engage the multilateral arena and formulate trade negotiating positions and policies.

A large percentage of respondents noted the immense benefits derived from this project. They explained that through the project, their ability to both understand trade agreements and engage external partners were enhanced tremendously. This in turn contributed to the strengthening of Commonwealth small states' participation in international trade and better positioning them in negotiating theatres.

Solomon Islands specifically noted that the project was highly effective as it disaggregated and addressed specific issues within the context of the Commonwealth small states, unlike technical assistance received from other donor agencies.

In order to further improve the effectiveness of Secretariat support, the evaluation identified two areas for improvement. The first is to improve the clarity on reporting lines and responsibility in the contract. This will ensure the smooth and timely implementation of project activities and decision-making processes.

The second area identified for improvement is building synergies and co-ordination within the different trade related programmes of the Secretariat. The most significant of these are the Hub and Spokes programme, the international trade policy work of the Secretariat and the assistance on trade provided through this project from the Geneva office. This will prevent any lost opportunities for collaboration, harmonise efforts, optimise resources and further enhance the effectiveness of the Secretariat's assistance on trade.

5.3 Efficiency

The project was primarily delivered through the provision of technical expertise by a contracted Trade Adviser. In addition, monies were expended on the hosting of workshops and meetings that brought together small state beneficiaries from across the Commonwealth membership. Monies were also expended for outsourced consultants to prepare various studies and technical assistance. The Trade Adviser was based in Geneva and essentially worked under the terms and conditions of a CFTC contract. In assessing the efficiency of the project in this regard, one must consider whether the same or higher quality and an increased quantity of outputs could have been delivered should a different business model have been applied.

If the Secretariat procured individual experts on specific thematic areas of trade to address the concerns and issues of Commonwealth small states, this undoubtedly would have been a more costly endeavour that would have yielded similar results. In addition, given that there are many cross-cutting themes across trade and related issues, there would have been an absence of the vital cohesive component to this project. This therefore, would not have been a more cost efficient option.

The Trade Adviser was hired on a long-term basis, which is often a cheaper alternative to short-term consultants. If the technical assistance was provided from the Secretariat's London office, including the hiring of out-sourced consultants, this may have been less costly. However, the impact would undoubtedly be far less, as the beneficiaries have noted the value of having the Adviser on site in Geneva to be able to consult on an immediate basis. Further, the relationship of members of the missions with the Trade Adviser and the Commonwealth Secretariat and thus, the confidence-building and trust that resulted, could only have materialised if the Trade Adviser was located in Geneva.

Regarding the quantity and quality of the outputs delivered under the project, given the reporting mechanisms associated with the project design, the quantity of outputs was easy to monitor and assess, while quality can be measured by an assessment of the outputs themselves and feedback from beneficiary small states. Applying this to the evaluation of efficiency, the project can be classified as 'very efficient' given the feedback from beneficiaries. Representatives of PIF and others hailed the high quality of the project deliverables. Samoa and Vanuatu also indicated that through the project, they were provided the opportunity to obtain a greater appreciation of WTO agreements and the dynamics as such. The Adviser was lauded for assisting in developing high quality, timely and valuable briefs and papers for Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados and Mauritius. One beneficiary noted that the assistance provided under the project was of far greater benefit at the national level than that provided by the Hub and Spokes programme in the Pacific. The inability of Hub and Spokes to provide assistance at national level to Pacific member states may have resulted from the programmes involvement in a suite of agreement negotiations at the regional level.

The Secretariat's assistance to small states in Geneva not only delivered the expected outputs but also went a step further and ensured that high quality outputs were produced and expert professional advice and service provided. In addition, the project led to greater collaboration with key international organisations and the strengthening of strategic partnerships with key

trade organisations, the value of which is difficult to quantify. Giving consideration to the above, it is concluded that the project was very efficient.

5.4 Impact

The project appears to have had a significant high impact on the Commonwealth small states beneficiaries, as indicated in the positive reviews. Many beneficiary states noted that their participation in the project has significantly enhanced their understanding of the WTO and complex trade. The project has also enabled small states to attract greater visibility to their economies through activities and engagement in the international trade arena; the benefit of such recognition is immeasurable.

Based on feedback from participants, incremental changes have been realised in relation to the manner in which small states have been able to engage the multilateral trading system. Small states' representatives have stated that these changes have better enabled them to take informed positions on trade and related issues in international forums and in the WTO.

5.5 Sustainability

In assessing sustainability, the evaluation analysed how member countries are able to maintain the gains achieved from the project. Many small states indicated they are still using the papers developed under the project as reference documents on key trade issues. Many spoke of being better informed and better able to articulate their position when negotiating bilaterally, plurilaterally or multilaterally as a result of the skills they acquired through workshops, seminars, trainings and through the drafting of statements and briefs. This will likely have a long-term impact on individuals and the institutions that they represent. The impact is therefore very great in this regard and highly sustainable.

5.6 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions, the evaluation makes the following recommendations in order to further add value to the Secretariat's project of assistance to small states in Geneva on multilateral trade issues.

Recommendation 1: Continue the project and expand its scope. Commonwealth small states have expressed appreciation for this initiative and for the benefits they have derived from it. They point out that there are no other funded programmes that support small states by providing of technical assistance in a disaggregated manner to address their specific needs on multilateral trade issues.

It is also recommended that while the focus of the project should be on trade issues within the perimeters of the expanding trade agenda, the Secretariat should explore its synergy with the national and regional trade integration processes.

Recommendation 2: Ensure the project is accorded greater visibility. There is a wide range of instruments through which to circulate news, views and lessons learned, from newsletters to websites to public forums. Beyond raising the visibility of the achievements of the project, the technical issues can be packaged to share with other small state where the issues, concerns and developments may also have a significant impact.

Additionally, the regular hosting of round table discussions on key thematic trade areas can also serve to attract greater visibility and publicity of the Secretariat's work and support on trade.

Recommendation 3: Incorporate complementarity of efforts and more synergised approaches to addressing concerns and challenges confronting small states to further contribute to the effectiveness and impact of the project. This is proposed within the context of advancing efforts beyond negotiating positions. The project focused on issues within the international trading arena, the WTO primarily, but little attention was placed on implementation of provisions emanating from these negotiations and conclusion of international trade agreements. The project was not designed to take into consideration elements for implementation and as such it may need to align itself with another initiative that would be able to address implementation elements. This was noted to be of particular benefit and interest to Commonwealth small states, especially in addressing areas of trade facilitation, such as the implementation of paperless customs management systems under UNCTAD's ASYCUDA programme and electronic single windows. The harmonisation of customs systems and revenue sharing are other areas of trade where assistance

is needed. These critical mechanisms serve to increase trade across borders for small states that could translate to a higher ranking on the World Bank index, *Doing Business*, which measures business regulations in 133 countries.

Recommendation 4: Improve collaboration and co-ordination, and build synergy within the different trade related programmes of the Commonwealth Secretariat, especially the Hub and Spokes Programme, the International Trade Policy Work of the Secretariat and the assistance on trade to small states provided through the Geneva office. Harmonising efforts and optimising resources and opportunities for collaboration could further enhance the effectiveness of Secretariat assistance on trade. The evaluation notes that the Secretariat has a strong programme on trade but little synergy across its different trade initiatives.

Recommendation 5: In order to further the impact of the Secretariat's assistance to member countries on trade, it is recommended that the Secretariat proactively engage with the member countries at the early stages of the negotiation process. This will enhance the ability of small states to better articulate their interests and concerns upfront.

Appendix I

List of people interviewed

1. Sunil Boodhoo, Deputy Director of Trade, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mauritius
2. Anandrao Hurree, Deputy Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Mauritius to the United Nations, Geneva
3. Poul Hansen, Economic Affairs Officer, Trade Facilitation Section, Trade Logistics Branch Division on Technology and Logistics, UNCTAD, Geneva
4. Pamela Ugaz, Trade Facilitation and International Trade Consultant, Trade Facilitation Section, UNCTAD, Geneva
5. David Vivas Eugui, Legal Officer, Trade, Environment, Climate Change and Sustainable Development Branch, DITC, UNCTAD, Geneva
6. Hadil Hijazi, Director, WTI Advisors, Geneva
7. Jennifer Neves, Chargé d'Affaires, Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Swaziland, Geneva
8. Barrett Salato, Director of Trade(Ag), Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade, Solomon Islands, Geneva
9. Rhoda M Jackson, Permanent Representative of the Bahamas to the United Nations Office at Geneva, Geneva
10. Tom Butterfly, Deputy Director, Economic Cooperation, Trade and Land Management Division, UNECE, Geneva
11. Junior Lodge, International Trade Expert, Independent Consultant, Geneva
12. Mere Falemaka, Permanent Representative of the Pacific Islands Forum to the WTO in Geneva, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Geneva
13. Kofi Addo, Executive Director, BESD Consulting Ghana, Geneva
14. Merlana Henry, Second Secretary, Permanent Mission of Trinidad and Tobago in Geneva, Geneva
15. Anuja De Silva, Office Manager, Office of the Secretary-General, Commonwealth Secretariat, London
16. Mohammad Razzaque, Adviser and Head, International Trade Policy, Commonwealth Secretariat, London
17. Janet Strachan, Head of Small States, Environment and Economic Management, Commonwealth Secretariat, London
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Appendix II

Terms of reference

Evaluation of the Geneva Trade Adviser Project

1. Background

The Commonwealth Secretariat is undertaking an evaluation of the support provided under the project, Trade Adviser, Commonwealth Small States Office in Geneva PBCWG0451.

The project was initiated following the 2009 CHOGM mandate to provide support for Commonwealth Countries in multilateral trade negotiations with the objective of their fuller and more beneficial integration in global trade. The initiative came up for consideration, as against, amongst others, the backdrop that many of the smallest Commonwealth developing countries lacked capacity to ensure their regular and effective participation in the processes underlying the multilateral trade negotiations led by the World Trade Organization (WTO). To that end, a Trade Adviser, provided under the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC), based in the Commonwealth Small States Office in Geneva, was instituted as part of the project.

The CFTC Trade Adviser project, which started on 25 May 2012, had an initial duration of two years but was subsequently extended until the end of December 2014. Activities envisaged to be carried out under the project were inter-alia: (i) monitoring negotiations and updating reports and briefs on WTO issues; (ii) providing advisory services to Commonwealth small states on multilateral trade issues as and when required and requested by members; (iii) providing technical support by way of preparing and sharing technical papers/policy briefs to small states on issues of common interest and concerns with other trade groups; (iv) undertaking research and analysis of issues in trade negotiations and other pertinent trends; (v) reviewing and analysing emerging issues; (vi) facilitating collaboration and consultations; (vii) supporting the scheduling processes for small states, and; (viii) reviewing proposals submitted by small states in the Doha negotiations. The purpose of the project was to strengthen the capacity of Commonwealth countries for better and effective participation in the multilateral trading system.

The deliverables of the project were to a large extent conditioned on the orientation and pace of work of the WTO and the Doha Development Agenda (DDA) trade negotiations, which have been affected by a persistent deadlock in the DDA negotiations despite a breakthrough in the form of a Trade Facilitation Agreement reached at the Ministerial Meeting held in December 2014 in Bali (member states have not been able to agree on the coming into force of the Agreement within the stipulated deadline). Notwithstanding, the work is being pursued in various negotiating forums and regular bodies of the WTO. There are also a host of implementation issues arising from WTO covered agreements as well as emerging new challenges and their linkages with international trade. The International Trade Agenda remains buoyant for member states.

In May 2013, the Commonwealth Secretariat Board of Governors approved a new Strategic Plan for the period 2013/14 - 2016/17. The Plan includes Intermediate outcomes (IO) relating to 'Effective policy mechanisms for integration and participation in the global trading system' (IO 5.1) and 'Small States enabled to effectively participate in international decision-making processes' (IO 6.2). The small states Adviser's role is expected to contribute to both the IOs. The new Secretariat staff structure has proposed the Small States' Adviser's post, as a projectised role, under the International Trade Policy Section of the Economic Policy Division. The development of the job description for that role, modalities for implementation and the recruitment will take place after the evaluation of the on-going project.

2. Purpose

The overall purpose of this evaluation is to assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact of the support provided by the Commonwealth Secretariat through the Geneva Trade Adviser project. The aim is to better define the focus and form that future assistance should take, and to recommend strategic and operational changes that may be required by the Secretariat to make support more impactful in accordance with the Strategic Plan 2013/14 – 2016/17.

Specifically, the evaluation will:

1. Review the relevance of the support provided to member countries under this project over the period under consideration;
2. Assess the effectiveness of specific support provided to determine its quality, impact and sustainability;
3. Assess the 'comparative advantage' and 'added value' of the Secretariat's work in Geneva through the Trade Adviser project;
4. Provide an assessment of the likely demand for and scope of the kind of services provided under the project over the coming years;
5. Undertake an analysis of stakeholders' views on the project;
6. Identify any lessons that need to be learned in the design and delivery of the project and recommend any strategic and operational changes that may be required to make the future support/arrangements more focused, relevant and sustainable. This should include the pros and cons of the same support being provided with the concerned Trade Adviser being based in London;
7. Provide any assessment of and recommendations on the most cost effective design of future policy support to Commonwealth missions in Geneva.

3. Scope and Focus

The evaluation period will cover the Secretariat's support to member countries during the period 2012 - 2014, though references may be required to other relevant projects implemented particularly with regard to the lessons that could be usefully applied in determining the future direction of the programme. Based on the evaluation findings, the study is expected to propose recommendations on strategic and operational aspects that would enable the Secretariat to better deliver its mandate in Geneva.

4. Suggested Methodology

While working in close collaboration with the Secretariat (EPD/SPED), the consultant is expected to consider the following, amongst others, in the conduct of this evaluation exercise:

- Review all pertinent records and information related to the project.
- Interview relevant Secretariat staff (including but not limited to such Divisions as Economic Policy, Trade and Debt, SGO, SPED, HR-CFTC and Geneva Office,) engaged in the delivery of activities of the project or similar projects.
- Interview selected stakeholders, for example, Geneva-based diplomats (from small states as well as others Commonwealth developing countries), governments officials, programme partners, collaborating institutions, and project beneficiaries (mainly based in Geneva) either face-to-face through the consultant's visit to Geneva, or electronically/telephonically.
- Conduct an opinion survey of beneficiaries (perhaps through emails/telephone interviews) and in-depth discussions with a selected few.
- Any additional activities that may be agreed with the Secretariat in order to enable the proper execution of the evaluation exercise.

5. Deliverables

The evaluation study will provide the following deliverables to the Secretariat:

1. Inception report with the evaluation framework, work plan and methodology;
2. Draft evaluation report (following the interviews, survey and field work);
3. A presentation on the evaluation findings and recommendations, and;
4. Final evaluation report, incorporating all feedback/ comments.

The deliverables must be submitted to the Secretariat electronically as a Microsoft Word document. The inception report is due within two weeks after the initial meetings with the Secretariat and the review of literature. The draft Evaluation Report is to be submitted within two weeks of completion of the survey and field visits. Following a receipt of feedback comments from the Secretariat and other stakeholders on the draft report, the evaluator is expected to submit a revised final Evaluation Report. The draft (and final) Evaluation Reports must be no more than 50 pages, excluding all annexes.

6. Schedule and Level of Effort

It is estimated that up to 30 person days will be appropriate to complete the evaluation, including any visits to Geneva and London if the consultant is not already based in one of these cities. The fees for the consultancy will be £12,000. It is estimated that a maximum of 7 working days may be spent in London and Geneva as part of the consultancy assignment. In addition to the consultancy fees, the selected consultant will be provided with the relevant city DSA for a maximum of the number of days mentioned above and economy-class air tickets using the most direct and economical routes.

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