



Trade Hot Topics

Enhancing Intra-Commonwealth Trade and Investment: An International Business Research Agenda

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1. Introduction

In today's world of 'permacrisis' (a term that describes 'an extended period of instability and insecurity,' and that was named the Collins Dictionary Word of the Year in 2022), and a 'VUCA' world of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity against a background of megatrends (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2018), the Commonwealth economic agenda offers a strategy to boost inclusive and sustainable intra-Commonwealth trade and build resilience. This aligns presciently and clearly with the opening words of the Commonwealth Charter a decade ago, namely that 'in an era of changing economic circumstances and uncertainty, new trade and economic patterns, unprecedented threats to peace and security, and a surge in popular demands for democracy, human rights and broadened economic opportunities, the potential of and need for the Commonwealth – as a compelling force for good and as an effective network for co-operation and for promoting development – has never been greater' (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2013).

The adoption of the Commonwealth Connectivity Agenda (CCA) at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in April 2018 aimed to enhance trade and investment links across the

Commonwealth, with the goal of raising intra-Commonwealth trade to US\$2 trillion by 2030. This objective is supported by various initiatives and organisations, including the Commonwealth Standards Network, the Commonwealth Enterprise and Investment Council, the Commonwealth Businesswomen's Network, the Intra-Commonwealth SME Association and pan-Commonwealth collaboration among professional organisations, such as lawyers and architects. Additionally, the CCA's Business-to-Business Connectivity Cluster facilitates dialogue and networking between the public and private sectors throughout the Commonwealth.

International business (IB), whether cross-border activities by multinational enterprises (MNEs) or non-equity forms of investment, and the international environment it operates in are heavily influenced by the historical legacies of countries and their international relations. In a seminal paper originally written for the 1997 Edinburgh CHOGM, which led to the establishment of the Commonwealth Business Council, Lundan and Jones (2001) argued that:

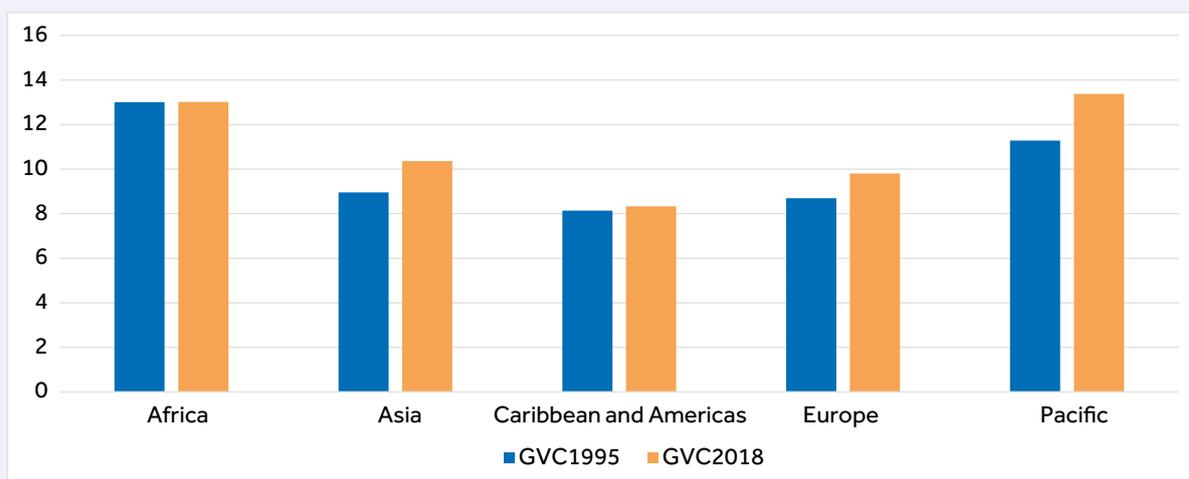
[T]he Commonwealth has played a role in enabling nations to engage in trade and investment through reducing the psychic distance between

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Box 1: Growing linkages through Commonwealth global value chains

Providing context to the Commonwealth's growing role in world trade, a study by Khorana and Escaith (2020) analysed the participation of Commonwealth member countries in global trade. The results showed that many of these nations had increased their reliance on inputs from other Commonwealth countries between 1995 and 2018. The median value for all Commonwealth countries increased by over 1 percentage point, from 4.4 per cent to 5.7 per cent. The average also increased by half a percentage point, from 6.4 per cent to 6.9 per cent.

Figure 1: Participation index of Commonwealth countries in GVCs, 1995–2018 (% of exports, sum of forward and backward linkages)

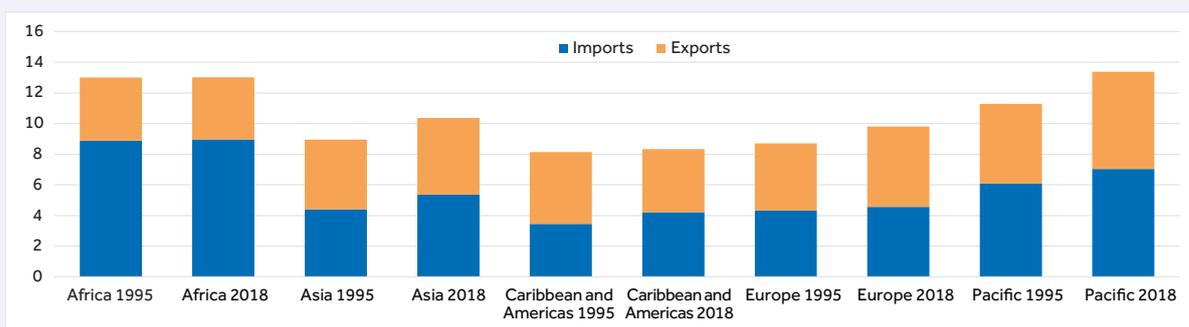


Note: Regional indicators based on a simple average of individual countries' indices.

Source: Authors using UNCTAD-Eora.

In terms of the backward (imports of inputs) and forward (export of intermediate goods) linkages for the Commonwealth countries, the Asian and Pacific countries increased their reliance on imported inputs (i.e., backward linkages) by 22 per cent and 16 per cent, respectively, and their exports of intermediate goods (i.e., forward linkages) by 10 per cent and 22 per cent, respectively, between 1995 and 2018 (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Backward (imports of inputs) and forward (exports of inputs) linkages with other Commonwealth countries, 1995–2018 (% of exports)



Source: Authors using UNCTAD-Eora.

Large economies play a vital role as hubs, but countries such as the UK and Canada source around 7 per cent of manufacturing inputs from other Commonwealth members. Considering that large, industrialised Commonwealth economies produce complex intermediate inputs, the lack of linkage with smaller Commonwealth countries is not surprising. Membership of preferential trade agreements and the depth of such agreements increase backward GVC participation. Canada's backward linkage is explained by its regional economic integration with the Canada–US–Mexico Agreement (CUSMA).

Commonwealth countries in the African region show evidence of regional interlinkages. There are two prominent regional clusters: (i) Botswana, Eswatini, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia and Zambia; and (ii) Ghana, Kenya, Mauritius, Nigeria and Tanzania.

The evidence of dependence between Commonwealth countries and industry sectors, as well as their connections to GVCs through non-Commonwealth countries, suggests the need to strengthen intra-Commonwealth linkages and promote intra-GVC linkages.

Source: Khorana and Escaith (2020)

the member countries. This is a two-pronged argument, namely that psychic distance plays a role in the internationalisation decision ... and that the Commonwealth is useful in reducing such knowledge acquisition costs ... If the (behavioural) learning model were correct, this would imply a gradual process not only from exports to investment, but also from countries that are less psychically distant to more distant markets. The processes learning model might be particularly applicable to developing country multinationals, as they are more likely to be 'naive' firms taking the first steps to internationalise.

While the Commonwealth is not a formal trading bloc, trade costs between Commonwealth countries are 21 per cent lower, on average, compared with trading with non-Commonwealth members (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2021). This is because member countries benefit from practical similarities: in language, common law, regulatory coherence, business procedures, and large and dynamic diaspora communities. All these factors reduce bilateral trade costs and contribute to the resilience of Commonwealth trade. Indeed, intra-Commonwealth exports have made a remarkable recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021, these exports reached an all-time high of US\$768 billion, up by nearly \$150 billion from the previous year (Vickers et al., 2022). It is estimated that these exports surpassed \$800 billion in 2022 and will exceed \$1 trillion by 2026.

This issue of *Trade Hot Topics* considers IB and the Commonwealth and international business policy. Ahead of the Commonwealth Trade Ministers Meeting on 5-6 June 2023 and building on 12 years of panel discussions at international fora convened by the Commonwealth Research Network on International Business at the Academy of International Business, it proposes three emerging research agendas and areas for greater collaboration between the academic, policy and business communities – namely, trade and gender,

small states and the sustainable blue economy, and strengthening government–business partnerships to achieve sustainable and inclusive growth.

2. International business and the Commonwealth

At the two previous CHOGMs, held in London in 2018 and Kigali in 2022, the Heads of Government recognised the role the Commonwealth could play in supporting global growth, creating employment and sharing best practices to promote development among its members. They stressed the importance of resisting all forms of protectionism and reaffirmed their commitment to free trade in a transparent, inclusive, fair and open rules-based multilateral trading system, with the World Trade Organization at its core. This aligns perfectly with the Commonwealth's superordinate goals. It is arguable that the business of the Commonwealth is IB.

Networks of trade and investment are manifested through global value chains (GVCs) linking suppliers and customers of intermediate products across the globe to deliver value to customers. The Commonwealth, with its diverse nations endowed with differential resources and factors of production, creates conditions for the construction and development of effective, low-risk international value delivery (Box 1). This becomes particularly relevant in the current context of global market turmoil. Given their heavy reliance on international trade, many Commonwealth countries have a significant interest in ensuring the seamless operation of supply chains. This aligns with their goal of promoting inclusive and sustainable trade and investment, which can address the major challenges facing the least developed countries, small states and other vulnerable countries.

Many firms today seek to have a purpose that goes beyond profitability, aiming to contribute positively to society and the environment while also making a profit. The United Nations' 2030 Agenda and the

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) offer a guide for Commonwealth policy-makers and businesses towards a more inclusive, sustainable and resilient recovery from the exigencies of COVID-19, especially through digital trade and technologies. The Commonwealth Businesswomen's Network supports the empowerment of women across the Commonwealth by providing a common platform to build businesses and advance women's entrepreneurial activities in all member countries.

IB is conducted not only through international firms but also through networks. Networks of trust underpin international trade and investment. The Commonwealth has an advantage in this regard thanks to trust-based links formed by diasporas and shared cultural values (Chand and Tung, 2011). These links help reduce transaction costs in trade and investment, forming the basis of the Commonwealth Advantage. Recent studies have highlighted the potential of the diaspora in IB (Elo and Minto-Coy, 2018) including the creative industries (Madichie and Hinson, 2022). The potential of the diaspora is most evident in what has been called 'parallel potential' (Zaman, 2018), whereby second- and third-generation diaspora in Australia, Canada and the UK are increasingly occupying senior positions in business and politics, while many countries in Africa, the Caribbean, the Pacific and South Asia are implementing third- or later-stage economic reforms. These reforms began to take root, to varying degrees, from the second or third decade after independence, following a period of more closed economic management and/or military control. Acknowledging parallel potential becomes more evident as governments, intergovernmental organisations, non-governmental organisations and corporations engage diasporas as transnational agents of intervention and change (Kennedy, 2022).

3. International business policy and the Commonwealth

Institutions shape behaviour but it is policy that changes behaviour. When public policy is applied, governments effect institutional change. There are two essential elements of IB policy: intent by policy-makers; and suitable institutions to implement change in firm behaviour. A general principle of IB policy is that policy changes often follow the advantages of international commerce that are already in place and have been demonstrated to be present.

The Commonwealth offers the possibility to re-examine how we define IB policy and whether

our current view is limited. The recent addition of new members to the Commonwealth can provide insight into this new perspective on IB policy. Joining the Commonwealth is the most compelling demonstration of the benefits for the member country and the Commonwealth as a whole, as new members must be approved by the organisation. This leads to the question: what are these benefits?

One potential benefit of joining the Commonwealth is the lower costs of conducting IB. However, these gains should be viewed as dynamic rather than static. New member countries cannot acquire a shared history or legal heritage retrospectively. Instead, both new and existing members benefit from a greater shared purpose with like-minded economies. The Commonwealth is not only a formal institution but also a nurturing ground for informal relationships, with the goal of continually seeking opportunities wherever they may arise.

The Commonwealth provides an interesting case study in understanding how we may need to rethink our conception of IB policy. We must consider identifying 'meta-benefits' that extend beyond the routine reduction of artificial trade and investment barriers that are characteristic of regional trade agreements. Artificial barriers created specifically to impede international commerce are a central concern of IB policy. However, willingness to participate in an agenda of opportunities is perhaps the most critical aspect of the Commonwealth Advantage. If this perspective is accurate, increasing interaction between Commonwealth member countries may lead to new opportunities that cannot always be predicted. In this sense, IB policy is a journey, not a prescription of known policy measures.

4. Three emerging research agendas for international business and the Commonwealth

4.1 Trade and gender equality (SDG 5)

The economic opportunities trade creates can be a powerful tool in addressing gender inequality across countries. However, despite the significant growth experienced in global trade, the benefits for women are not distributed evenly across countries. While new economic opportunities generated are expected to benefit women, this is not always the case. Moreover, the growth in services trade, along with the interlinkages between countries and sectors through GVCs and the digital economy, has yet to bring full benefits to women.

Women make up 50 per cent of the global population but only 47.7 per cent of the workforce (ILO, 2022). Additionally, of the women employed, only 27 per cent hold managerial positions, and a mere 18 per cent are in top management roles (WEF, 2020). The gender wage gap is also significant, with women earning on average around 20 per cent less than men worldwide (ILO, 2022).

Deeper analysis reveals that women make up 33 per cent of the workforce in exporting firms, with 80 per cent of women occupying medium- and low-skilled jobs. In Commonwealth countries that specialise in clothing and textile exports, women are more likely to be employed in these sectors. Moreover, the majority of jobs generated by trade are in the informal economy, which offers limited opportunities for economic independence and social status elevation. While evidence suggests that global trade has provided women with paid employment, economic independence and elevated social status, this has been primarily in the informal economy (Korinek, 2005). Women in these nations are also employed to a significant extent in the informal sector, including subsistence agriculture and low-skilled services. This highlights the diversity in female labour force participation and pay across various geographical regions and industries.

Commonwealth countries have recognised the importance of addressing SDG 5 and are taking significant steps to achieve this goal, both individually and collectively. During the 2022 Commonwealth Women's Forum (CWF), delegates discussed solutions to address urgent challenges affecting women and girls across the Commonwealth and to ensure that member countries had robust policies and programmes to achieve gender equality targets by 2030. The 2030 Agenda recognises that achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls will significantly contribute to progress across all SDGs and targets. Additionally, the Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting serves as a valuable platform for member countries to exchange best practices and co-ordinate action on gender issues.

Despite these initiatives, women in trade continue to face challenges such as lack of visibility, insufficient access to digital portals and finance, and inadequate signposting to relevant networks. Specific barriers include lack of timely access to finance, markets and attendance at trade fairs. Additionally, a lack of training to develop the

requisite skills to expand female-led businesses and differences in the level of education and digital literacy competency of women hinder their participation in international trade. Women's preference for part-time employment to manage their household and familial responsibilities, as well as country-specific factors such as economic, social and institutional constraints, also result in lower participation in international trade. While some Commonwealth countries are adopting digitalisation, and it is expected that the use of digital tools will create opportunities for women (Ingabire, 2022), the global digital gender divide, in terms of internet usage, between developed and developing countries has increased. It is reported that women in developing countries are less likely to use the internet (Broadband Commission, 2013; Grazi and Vergara, 2014; Alozie and Akpan-Obong, 2017). Latest industry data show that, while more women across low- and middle-income countries are using mobile internet than ever before, the rate of mobile internet adoption has further slowed for women over the past year, with women now 19 per cent less likely than men to use mobile internet across these countries (Sibthorpe, 2023). This means there is still a stark digital divide between men and women.

During the 2018 CHOGM in London, the Heads resolved to address systemic barriers to women's full and equal participation in the economy by taking a gender-responsive approach to the development of trade policy, and to promote women's economic empowerment to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth. At the 2022 CHOGM in Kigali, the Heads recognised the importance of complementary trade and domestic policies to ensure that women, as workers, business owners and consumers, could participate in and benefit from trade. They further committed to enhancing their efforts to promote gender equality and equity in bilateral and multilateral settings.

There is increasing awareness of the gender dimension of trade, and policy-makers are recognising the need to adopt a gender lens when formulating trade policy. Enhancing our understanding of the gender dimension of trade will contribute to improved policy-making and ensure that both sexes can benefit from trade liberalisation. Inclusive policies and initiatives have been discussed at national and international levels, and awareness of trade and gender is increasing globally. However, further efforts are needed to mainstream gender perspectives in trade

policy dialogues. Policy-makers need feedback mechanisms from female entrepreneurs affected by gender disparities in trade, allowing them to understand the impact of their policies and initiatives.

The increasing focus on gender provisions in free trade agreements (FTAs), such as those in post-Brexit agreements between the UK, Australia and New Zealand, as well as ongoing discussions with Canada, is encouraging. Nevertheless, questions remain regarding effective parliamentary scrutiny, monitoring mechanisms and engagement with women entrepreneurs. It is also essential to follow up on the recommendations put forth by the 2022 CWF, such as utilising gender impact assessments in trade decision-making processes to mainstream gender, and prioritising and leveraging government and private procurement to increase contracts awarded to women-owned businesses, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises. Furthermore, targeting Aid for Trade to enhance women's economic empowerment and adopting the International Trade Centre's 10 policy recommendations for mainstreaming gender in FTAs, with model clauses and a focus on trade-related capacity-building, could further advance gender equality in trade (ITC, 2020).

4.2 Small states and the sustainable blue economy

Of the world's 42 small states, 33 are Commonwealth members.² They face a unique set of challenges, including their geographic positioning, heavy dependence on international trade, limited access to development finance and a disproportionate impact of climate change and natural disasters. Small states experience severe economic shocks from 'Black Swan' events like the COVID-19 pandemic owing to heavy reliance on tourism and trade, coupled with a lack of developed domestic industries. Moreover, they are more trade-dependent than other developing states, with narrow economies often reliant on a single source of export income such as tourism or remittances (FCDO, 2023).

As the World Bank's Global Economic Prospects (January 2023) highlighted, small states have overlapping crises and multiple challenges. During the pandemic, tourism collapsed primarily, with many of these economies contracting by about

11 per cent in 2020 – seven times more than what happened in a typical emerging market developing economy. Small states often experience disaster-related losses that average roughly 5 per cent of gross domestic product per year, which creates severe obstacles to economic development. New shocks have emerged since the pandemic. For example, the conflict in Ukraine has created turmoil in food and energy markets, which has translated into another negative shock for small states.

Improving growth and resilience in small states relies on several factors. First, enabling diversification through digitalisation, reducing trade costs and supporting the emergence of new industries, such as eco-tourism, is essential. Second, investments in climate adaptation and domestic renewable energy sources are crucial for long-term sustainability. Third, ensuring disciplined financial management of state-owned enterprises is necessary to maintain stability. Fourth, establishing fiscal mechanisms like fiscal rules and disaster stabilisation funds can enhance disaster risk management. Economic and export diversification is associated with lower growth volatility and higher long-term average growth in small states. However, diversification efforts need to be carefully calibrated, taking into account the realistic advantages small states can develop and considering the limitations posed by their small economic size and government capacity. To facilitate effective diversification, it is important to explore opportunities in the blue economy, such as aquaculture, carbon sequestration, renewable energy generation and commercially oriented research (OECD, 2021). Differentiation within important sectors, like the development of high value-added ecotourism and cultural tourism, can contribute to the diversification process.

In addition, there are niche markets where small states, owing to institutional or geographic factors, possess distinct advantages. For instance, certain Caribbean islands host internationally oriented medical schools. Agricultural producers could also benefit from diversifying their production into higher-value products or moving towards agro-processing, thereby advancing their position along the agricultural value chain. Belize serves as an example of a country that has achieved some success in this regard. Furthermore, Mauritius stands out as a small state that has experienced

2 The Commonwealth defines small states as countries with a population of 1.5 million people or fewer, and countries with a bigger population but that share many of the same characteristics (e.g. Botswana, Jamaica, Lesotho, Malta, Maldives, Namibia and Papua New Guinea).

Box 2: Circularity and the blue economy

The success of small states and blue economy nations is anchored in the adoption of circular economy systems, contrasting with the prevailing linear economic systems. Circular economy principles advocate for sustainability throughout the entire value chain, emphasising reuse, recycling and repairs within the value chain rather than treating secondary outputs and products as waste at the end of their life cycle. An exceptional illustration of this approach is observed in Vanuatu, which has shifted away from linear thinking and embraced collaborative strategies across both domestic and international value chains (UNDP, 2021). As a result, Vanuatu's economy has demonstrated a remarkable circularity level of 59 per cent, far surpassing the global average of 8.6 per cent. This exemplifies the relevance of circular economy principles from an SDG perspective.

significant growth through sustained policy efforts in developing new types of services and manufacturing activities over several decades.

There is scope to focus on small states and the sustainable blue economy as part of an emerging research agenda for IB and the Commonwealth, including the contribution of circular economy principles (Box 2). The 'blue economy' refers to 'sustainable exploitation, innovation and stewardship of our ocean and its life-giving "blue" resources' (World Bank, 2022). The significance of the blue economy extends beyond small island developing states and least developed countries. It is now a high priority among African countries in general, as demonstrated by the launch of the African Union's Africa Blue Economy Strategy in 2020 and the Blue Economy for Resilient Africa Programme announced by World Bank at the 26th Conference of the Parties in 2022. Furthermore, it is increasingly on the agenda of countries in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations region.

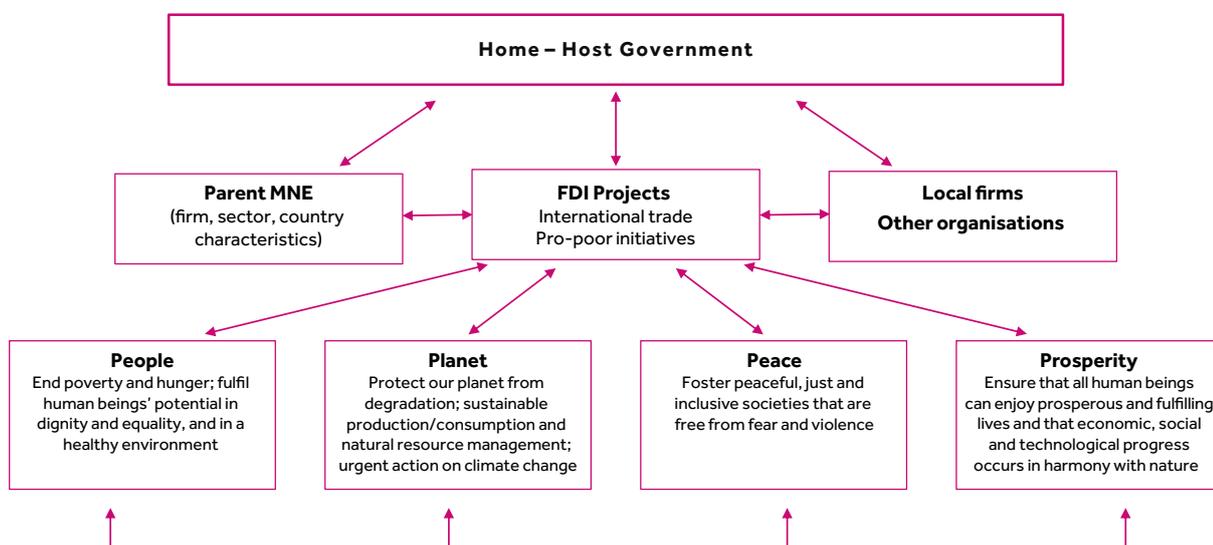
Developed economies like Canada and Malta are also in the process of developing blue economy strategies.

4.3 Government–business partnerships to achieve inclusive and sustainable growth

Progress on inclusive and sustainable growth in Commonwealth countries can have a big impact on the UN's efforts to achieve the SDGs. This will require strong collaboration and partnerships among governments, business and civil society. While SDG 17 calls for multi-stakeholder partnerships, it does not explicitly recognise the contribution of involving MNEs through their corporate social responsibility actions.

However, to achieve the desired outcome of inclusive and sustainable growth, a framework of partnership between MNEs and governments is needed. The decisions MNEs make regarding foreign direct investment (FDI) are driven by the objective of wealth maximisation, and they tend to invest

Figure 3: Framework for government–MNE partnership on the SDGs



Source: Authors adapted from Kolk et al. (2017).

in countries where there is a presence of skilled human capital. This can result in a biased location choice decision and, consequently, an uneven distribution of global income. Policy adjustments are needed to align the financial interests of investors with the broader goal of maximising social welfare for the state. Governments can incentivise FDI that promotes entrepreneurship and new business models capable of generating income and employment opportunities for various segments of society. Building on the work of Kolk et al. (2017), we propose a framework to strengthen the partnership between governments and MNEs (Figure 3). This framework covers all five Ps of the SDGs – People, Planet, Peace, Prosperity and Partnership.

5. Way forward

The Commonwealth and the SDGs have created numerous new research opportunities. These include:

- Upgrading capabilities of small state firms through participation in GVCs;
- Exploring the presence and expansion of sustainability initiatives by Commonwealth Emerging Economy Multinational Enterprises (EMNEs) in small states;
- Investigating the sustainability strategies of Hospitality and Tourism MNEs and EMNEs targeted towards the Base of the Pyramid;
- Analysing how networks can facilitate the adoption of sustainability measures by entrepreneurial firms in small states;
- Understanding the challenges and opportunities for women entrepreneurs in the Commonwealth, specifically in (i) small states and (ii) emerging technology spaces like fintech, agritech, createtech, healthtech, cleantech and edtech, as digital innovations, data infrastructure and business development services evolve in enabling digitalisation environments (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2021 and 2022);
- Exploring diaspora networks and entrepreneurial ecosystems against a background of 'parallel potential' in countries of origin and countries of residence;
- Strengthening linkages between formal and informal firms to address sustainability needs in small states;

- Examining the role of national, international and supranational institutions in developing and rejuvenating factor and product markets in small states;
- Investigating the participation of Commonwealth firms in the emerging circular economy; and
- Exploring the potential of Local Economic Development as a driver of trade in the Commonwealth and the role of localisation at the community level and a place-based response to economic development, including through the growth of innovation hubs and districts (BEIS, 2018; CLGF, 2020).

At the same time, IB scholars still face several challenges. They must assess whether current theories are sufficient for understanding SDGs and grand challenges and determine if new theories are necessary. They grapple with the question of whether MNEs should balance trade-offs or integrate financial goals with the SDGs. Additionally, scholars explore how firms can effectively engage with policy to support SDG objectives. They must determine the relevant unit of analysis when studying grand challenges and consider employing a multi-method approach. Challenges also arise in creating a uniform operationalisation of the SDGs for measuring progress at the firm level. Lastly, scholars face the challenge of obtaining access to the necessary data and considering the nature of these in their research.

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International Trade Policy Section at the Commonwealth Secretariat

This *Trade Hot Topic* is brought out by the International Trade Policy (ITP) Section of the Trade Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat, which is the main intergovernmental agency of the Commonwealth – an association of 56 independent countries, comprising large and small, developed and developing, landlocked and island economies – facilitating consultation and co-operation among member governments and countries in the common interest of their peoples and in the promotion of international consensus-building.

ITP is entrusted with the responsibilities of undertaking policy-oriented research and advocacy on trade and development issues and providing informed inputs into the related discourses involving Commonwealth members. The ITP approach is to scan the trade and development landscape for areas where orthodox approaches are ineffective or where there are public policy failures or gaps, and to seek heterodox approaches to address those. Its work plan is flexible to enable quick response to emerging issues in the international trading environment that impact particularly on highly vulnerable Commonwealth constituencies – least developed countries (LDCs), small states and sub-Saharan Africa.

Scope of ITP Work

ITP undertakes activities principally in three broad areas:

- It supports Commonwealth developing members in their negotiation of multilateral and regional trade agreements that promote development friendly outcomes, notably their economic growth through expanded trade.
- It conducts policy research, consultations and advocacy to increase understanding of the changing international trading environment and of policy options for successful adaptation.
- It contributes to the processes involving the multilateral and bilateral trade regimes that advance more beneficial participation of Commonwealth developing country members, particularly, small states and LDCs and sub-Saharan Africa.

ITP Recent Activities

ITP's most recent activities focus on assisting member countries in their negotiations in the World Trade Organization and various regional trading arrangements, undertaking analytical research on a range of trade policy, emerging trade-related development issues, and supporting workshops/dialogues for facilitating exchange of ideas, disseminating informed inputs, and consensus-building on issues of interest to Commonwealth members.

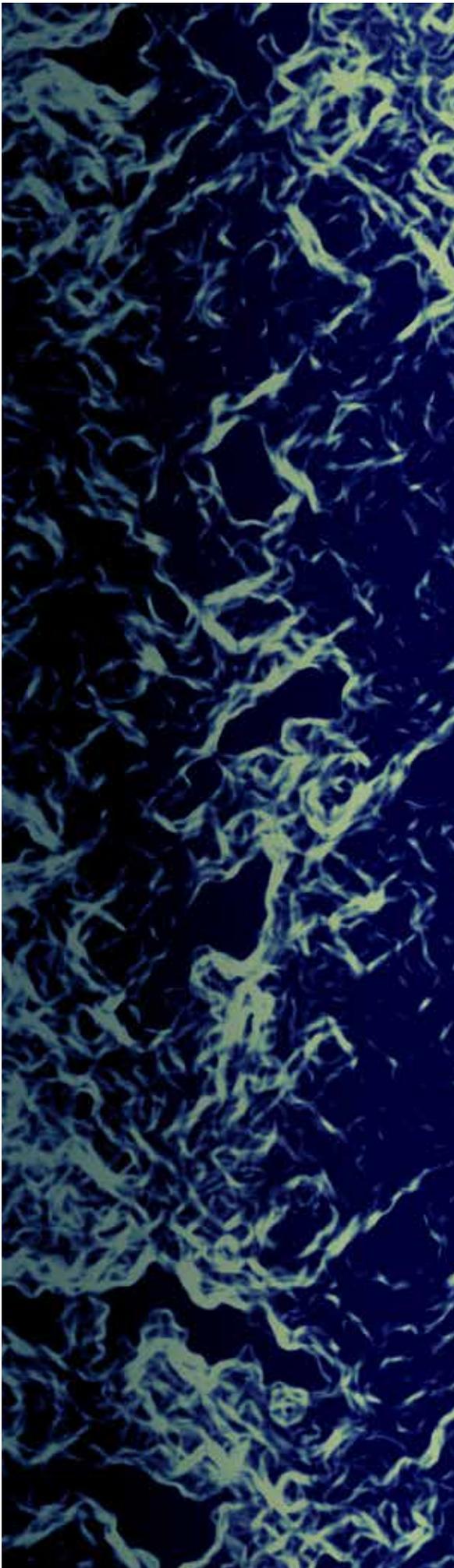
Selected Recent Meetings/Workshops Supported by ITP

21 March 2023: Public event on Assessing the Business and Trade Dimensions of the 2022 Birmingham Commonwealth Games, in partnership with the UK's Department for Business and Trade. The event reflected on the legacy of the Commonwealth Games and explored how businesses can capitalise on the trade and investment relationships established during the Games.

16 November 2022: Public event on Enabling Climate Smart Trade and Investment: From Policies to Actions, organised for the ICC's Make Climate Action Everyone's Business Forum. The event examined how trade and trade policies can support climate action and how countries can integrate environmental and social considerations into trade agreements to achieve the SDGs.

2 November 2022: Public event on Maximising the Gains from Digital Trade: Solutions and Priorities for Developing Countries and LDCs, organised jointly with the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) and hosted at the WTO in Geneva. The event reflected on lessons from country experiences and EIF projects, explored the concept of Aid for Digital Trade and identified innovative new ways to support LDCs, and particularly their MSMEs, to build capacity for digital trade.

31 October 2022: Joint Commonwealth Secretariat-UNCTAD workshop on Understanding the IPR-related Landscape for Graduating LDCs: Issues and Challenges. The workshop, hosted at the United Nations in Geneva, was attended by technical experts from the Centre for Policy Dialogue, United Nations Committee for Development Policy, ODI, South Centre, UNCTAD, WIPO and WTO, who discussed issues, challenges and opportunities related to intellectual property rights for graduating LDCs.



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