

# World Export Development Forum 2023

*Talk Trade. Do Business. Drive Development.*

*Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia*



In partnership with



**UNITED NATIONS  
MONGOLIA**



**Cover image:** Model displays traditional Mongolian dress at runway fashion show, held on International MSME Day in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. © ITC

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The International Trade Centre (ITC) is the joint agency of the World Trade Organization and the United Nations.

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## About this report

This report draws from the outcomes of the 2023 World Export Development Forum, held in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia in June 2023. Trade voices from around the globe share their insights on green, digital and inclusive paths to trade. New trade routes are emerging in response to COVID, conflict, and climate change.

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26-29 June, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

# World Export Development Forum 2023

Diversify with Green Trade  
Organic • Digital • Sustainable



H.E. Kurelsukh Ukhnaa, President of Mongolia at the Opening Ceremony of the 2023 World Export Development Forum



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*“The role, relationship, and cooperation among youth, women, start-up businesses, small and medium enterprises, the international community, and financial institutions are crucial in diversifying economies, increasing employment, fostering accessible and sustainable social and economic development, and enhancing the competitiveness of nations.”*

**H.E. Kurelsukh Ukhnaa**  
President of Mongolia



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*“We’re going to build green and digitally connected routes to trade. The global push for sustainability, coupled with the dizzying rate of technological change is transforming every aspect of global trade. It’s creating new opportunities for SMEs, and helping level the playing field with larger firms.”*

**Pamela Coke-Hamilton**  
Executive Director, ITC





**T**he World Export Development Forum is the flagship event of the International Trade Centre, the joint agency of the United Nations and the World Trade Organization.

It is unique for bringing together the voices of businesses, governments, women and youth, generating new business and development partnerships as it explores trade development trends.

## Trade: A changed context

In 2023, the World Export Development Forum returned to the global stage for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic. It came at a time of climate concern, geopolitical instability, economic shifts in the wake of the pandemic and rapid advances in artificial intelligence.

Amidst uncertainty, economies are striving for greater resilience and adaptability to shocks. Supply chains are reorienting along geopolitical lines and the climate crisis shadows many business decisions.

## New insights, old crossroads

Each year, this global event travels to a new host country where regional and local lenses shape insights, business deals and development opportunities.

This 20th edition was hosted by the Government of Mongolia, in partnership with United Nations Mongolia, in Ulaanbaatar from 26-29 June.

Long ago, Mongolia was a global crossroads for trade with goods flowing from Europe to East Asia and back through its lands. Today, Mongolia is landlocked by its two neighbours. Its trade is dominated by abundant mining resources. These provide income, but the lack of economic diversity brings insecurity, against a backdrop of climate concerns.

Thus, supporting small business, women and youth in trade through the World Export Development Forum was a conscious choice by Mongolian leaders, led by and under the auspices of its President. The government aims to build national resilience by diversifying exports through green, digital and organic trade.

Over the last year, it has launched an ambitious tree planting campaign, created new ministries for the economy and digital development and kicked off a multi-year eco-tourism campaign. The country has hosted many world leaders since the pandemic has lifted.

Its capital hosts a vibrant and close-knit international development community to support their efforts.

As such, Mongolia is a microcosm of today's challenges and opportunities that face us all. It provided an excellent context to explore the impact of climate and geopolitics on trade, understand landlocked challenges and lay out paths to diversify trade.



Mongolian television broadcast interviews with Pamela Coke-Hamilton, ITC Executive Director, on billboards in downtown Ulaanbaatar.

# In Numbers



## The Forum

20<sup>th</sup> edition of the World Export Development Forum – the only UN conference that brings the voice of business to policymakers.



## People

64 countries

600+ participants

Over 50% women



## Organizations

42%  
business

28%  
international or  
non-governmental  
organizations

15%  
government

15%  
other

## Social media engagement

24,000

international  
livestream  
views via  
English and  
Mongolian  
channels

#WEDF

topped the social media  
charts in Mongolia  
throughout the week,  
beating out pop culture,  
entertainment and  
sports topics.

270,000

impressions  
of #WEDF  
posts on ITC  
social media  
channels

55

videos, including  
interviews, session recaps,  
young entrepreneur spotlights,  
green tips for business and  
conference recaps on talking  
trade, doing business and  
driving development

## B2B meetings

Sectors:

Leather, ICT services,  
Natural fibres

130+ companies  
from 16 countries

Over \$6.5 million  
in business leads

94% of participating  
companies identified  
relevant business  
partners





# In the News

## Media coverage

**220+**  
editorial  
mentions  
across global  
media

**18**  
countries

Audience reach:  
**460+**  
million  
people

## Top-tier coverage

in media outlets from: United States,  
India, Mongolia, United Kingdom  
and Japan



# Outcomes



## Shared vision

Small businesses, green trade and digital innovation are all essential to build resilient societies. Participants from all walks of life expressed these views as they shared their experiences.



## New SheTrades hub

Mongolia joins a global network of nearly 20 national hubs to boost the participation of women in trade, through national training, networking, mentorship opportunities, and sharing of best practices.



## Business priorities of landlocked developing countries on global agenda

For the first time, businesses help shape the United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries, its third edition taking place in 2024.



## National Export Strategy for Mongolia

Launched at the World Export Development Forum, it featured consultations among national businesses, government officials and international development advisors.



## Global recognition for young ecopreneurs

Over 400 contestants from 63 countries competed for two awards: Green Business Solutions, Land Restoration Initiatives.



## Business and development partnerships

Numerous deals were reached between businesses, development banks, sector associations, governments and international organizations.



# Talking Trade



# Trade Trends for Small Business



 <b>New trade routes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Strategic re-globalization for resilience</li><li>■ Stronger trade corridors for landlocked countries</li></ul>
 <b>Green</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Emerging business models are green</li><li>■ Due diligence in sustainable value chains</li></ul>
 <b>Digital</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Digital literacy for competitive economies</li><li>■ Artificial intelligence for small business</li></ul>
 <b>Inclusive</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Collaborative ecosystems for young entrepreneurs</li><li>■ Globally connected women in business</li><li>■ Blended finance and fintech for small business</li></ul>

*"I see three emerging trends in trade today: Number one, resilient trade; number two, sustainable trade; and number three, green trade... The multilateral trading system must benefit workers... and address pressing issues such as intellectual property theft, sustainable development and the clean energy transition."*

**Jose Fernandez**

Under Secretary of State for Economic Growth, Energy, and the Environment, United States

*"AI will be even more disruptive than the industrial revolution was... As human labour is displaced, there has to be a way for the new gains in productivity, revenue and efficiency to come back to human workers. The gains from the AIs make possible new kinds of jobs. Skilling workers for these new jobs will be crucial."*

**Professor De Kai**

Hong Kong University of Science and Technology; International Computer Science Institute, University of California at Berkeley



# New Trade Routes

## Strategic re-globalization

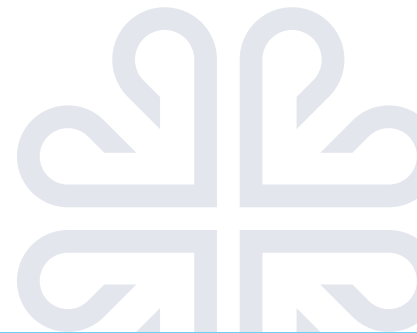
As the world responds to the economic shocks of the past four years, some talk of an end to globalization. Rather, trade flows and supply chains are reorganizing as they react to shocks from climate and conflict. The world is experiencing strategic re-globalization as nations and businesses prioritize stability and sustainability. In our globally connected marketplace, this has an impact on many small businesses.

Buyers seek alternate routes in times of uncertainty. Climate change awareness is accelerating green consumer trends, public policies and investments. The use of digital tools during the pandemic has also accelerated change, and artificial intelligence is pushing the frontiers of what is possible for small businesses.

## Small businesses in trade

Today's paths to diversify trade require flexibility, networking and unusual partnerships. Against this backdrop, entrepreneurs are forging unconventional trade connections.

These case studies feature transformative businesses which are serving communities and driving development while exploring new organic, digital and green trade avenues.



## CASE STUDY: Organic products



### Meet consumer needs while supporting local communities

Monpellets produces and exports Mongolian organic sheep wool fertilizer. It uses waste wool, no water and no chemicals to develop the fertilizer. During the pandemic, supply routes to its traditional German markets closed, and Monpellets cast around for new ways of doing business. Monpellets contacted a New Zealand-based non-governmental organization, Share Mongolia, which was training herders to shear sheep more efficiently.

“I think it was my luckiest day,” said Paul Brough of Rabobank, who set up Share Mongolia. “We use overseas farming experts to introduce modern technology to Mongolian herders. Our aim is to make them more profitable, sustainable and efficient. One day, out of the blue, I got an email from someone who wanted to be involved. She had such good networking and organizational skills. We were really lacking someone on the ground in Mongolia to be our presence.”

“As a local producer, I was having so many problems collecting my wool,” said Delgermaa Shagdarsuren, CEO of Monpellets. “I heard about the shearing course and decided this upskilling is something I needed to explore more deeply. We’ve already trained 200 people. I never imagined it would go this far.”

The Mongolian shepherders left during their winter for training in New Zealand, where they went from shearing 20 sheep a day to 200.

“They’re incredible guys. I just really admire their courage and their determination to go. Never left the village before and going, you know, so far away from home,” said Paul. “A strange country where you don’t speak the language for three months was just a huge commitment from them. And they did so well. They quickly excelled and within three months they were doing better than others who take two or three years to get to that standard. A lot was natural ability and a lot, too, was just determination.”

“They all had a reason for coming, but one was particularly memorable because he’s the smallest guy, the most gutsy. He said he was working so hard to send his daughters to a decent school. When I met his family two weeks ago, I met his daughters and one of them at the time was only five and a half months old. So he was working for money he’s going to need in more than ten years’ time. And I thought that was incredible.”

“Without Paul, I would still be buying very expensive wool from middlemen. Now I’m connecting with the herders on the spot and they are keen to supply the wool to me. I’m going to help them build a greenhouse next year so they can give me the wool, I give the fertilizer, they grow green food and they eat the grain, which is healthy and organic.”

With greater competitiveness, the company is selling beyond Mongolia.

“We’d been exporting our product to Germany for four years. Because of COVID and the Russian-Ukraine conflict, we had not been able to send this product through to Germany. So last year we shipped for the first time to America. This year we’re sending the retail product to Home Depot and Walmart. It’s a huge market for us.”



Monpellets fertilizer products, soon on-sale at Walmart and Home Depot



Paul Brough and Delgermaa Shagdarsuren on stage at WEDF 2023

## CASE STUDY: Digital services



### Landlocked, not mindlocked: Digital brings flexibility

With a growing, ambitious population of youth with high digital literacy rates, Mongolia's technology sector is poised for a revolution. Anar Chinbaatar, Co-founder of AND Global and founder of ONDO, and Purevbazar Purevjav, Founder of FIBO Cloud, are two young Mongolians driving the change. Both looked across borders to secure the partnerships they needed to grow.

AND Global is a Mongolian fintech company that needed to scale up. Potential investors, whether at home or abroad, seemed most interested in mining. Nor did Mongolians' historic reputation as rural nomads and herders match the company's high-tech ambitions.

"Mongolia has one brand: Genghis Khan. Everyone in the world knows Genghis, but it's already over 800 years old," said Anar Chinbaatar. "We don't have a Samsung, Google or Sony. We have to forge our own reputation for quality and innovation."

Anar eventually connected with Satoshi Irie, an investment manager for the Japanese trading giant Marubeni, to secure the capital he needed. Today, Anar's company has offices in five countries across Asia.

"Technology is the biggest opportunity for Mongolia," said Anar. "It's renewable, it's also organic, and as a landlocked country, it doesn't rely on our neighbours' infrastructure."

FIBO Cloud is a Mongolian cloud computing service company that aspires to support digital transformation in Asia. Purevbazar found himself stranded in Almaty during the pandemic. At the same time, the Kazakh government was looking for a new data warehouse service provider, as trade routes with Russia were disrupted. FIBO Cloud won a public tender with Transtelecom, the Kazakh telecom giant. Today, FIBO Cloud handles all cloud computing and storage for Transtelecom and serves as a consulting partner for Amazon Web Services. Purevbazar has also been recognized as a Mongolian Forbes "30 under 30".

"There is a saying in Mongolia: we are landlocked, but not mindlocked. This came to my mind during the pandemic," remarked Purevbazar. "In the face of COVID restrictions and war, I realized that tech companies should play a very important role in diversifying the Mongolian economy."



Anar Chinbaatar and Satoshi Irie on stage at WEDF 2023



Purevbazar Purevjav of FIBO Cloud

## CASE STUDY: Green energy



### Investing in quality improves climate resilience

Thérèse Sekamana is on a mission to revolutionize clean energy use and production in Rwanda. “I was in France for more than 20 years. I was looking for something that I could take back home and be a part of those who were rebuilding my country after the genocide. Electricity was an issue. Then I discovered the LED light.”

She was inspired by the widespread use of inexpensive LED lighting across Europe. When Thérèse learned that these lights were made in China, she realized that the same global trade flows that brought them to Europe could bring them to Rwanda.

Thérèse negotiated the first export of LED lighting to the country in 2010. Her company, LED Solutions, found success through public procurement contracts with the Rwandan government. She later saw the opportunity to branch out. LED lighting was helping the country make efficient use of its energy, but Thérèse now wanted to leave her mark on how that energy was produced.

Thérèse set her sights on hydropower. She recognized that in order to be taken seriously as a woman in a technical, male-dominated field, she would need to rely on capable, expert partners.

“I didn’t know anything about energy. I had to go look for the expertise, to find the manufacturers, suppliers and engineers. The design and engineering of our plants are from Switzerland, the wiring and pipes from France. Designing things right, with the best quality equipment was important.”

“I’m not an engineer, but I am a businesswoman,” she added. “Sometimes in business we are afraid of saying ‘I am a woman’. In fact, it can be a huge advantage. They came because I was a woman, what I was asking for was clear, and I had done my homework. My story opened the door.”

Thérèse’s commitment to quality paid off in 2023 when floods swept Rwanda. While other power plants were swept away, or severely damaged by raging rivers, Thérèse’s remained in operation. “You must not compromise on the quality of what you do. In international trade, you have to prioritize quality, and it’s there that we can make a difference.”

Today, Thérèse’s company operates two powerplants with 25-year Power Purchase Agreements with the Rwandan government. Thérèse is proud of her pioneering role as a woman in a male-dominated industry and supports women in business as the head of the SheTrades Rwanda Hub.



Thérèse Sekamana of LED Solutions and Green Energy Rwanda



Technicians at Green Energy Rwanda’s first operational hydro power plant



# The Future of Trade is Green

**Up to 30%** of today's carbon emissions come from global trade.

Source: World Trade Organization, 2021



## → But emerging business models are green.

Young people are committed to greener consumption and sustainable business models. Governments are changing laws and regulations encouraging green investments. Support institutions are stepping up mentorship, certification and training.

*"To move the sustainability agenda forward, first you've got to have political will at the highest level, that will drive change. Second, you've got to have strong public-private partnership and collaboration. Third, you've got to have talented, educated people."*

**Raja Badrulnizam Raja Kamalzaman**  
Senior Director for Strategic Planning, MATRADE,  
Malaysia

*"We are heading towards green and inclusive trade... Nepal has tremendous hydropower potential and there is huge demand for clean energy in the region... Nepal has also committed to net zero emissions by 2045."*

**Madhu Kumar Marasini**  
Secretary, Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supplies,  
Nepal

*"Mitigating the climate crisis is a big deal for me. Put the planet first, put people first, and profits will come naturally."*

**Mawuse Christina Gyisun**  
CEO, Sommalife, Ghana; Youth Ecopreneur Awards  
Finalist

*"There's a lot to learn from nature. It has 3.8 billion years of research and development. Keep nature in the centre of your mind, every time you reach out to your community."*

**Oyungurel Munkhbat**  
CEO, Airee, Mongolia; Youth Ecopreneur Awards Winner,  
Green Business Solutions



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Bottom left photo: A Mongolian MSME specializing in organic cosmetics made from sea-buckthorn showcasing products on International MSME Day

*"If the world goes towards slow fashion, Mongolia produces high quality, organic, biodegradable fibres, drawing on centuries of history as nomadic herders."*

**Tuulpurev Erdenebat**

CEO, Munkh Cashmere, Mongolia

*"What legacy do we leave for future generations? Only material goods? Or the atmosphere, so that they can live decently?"*

**Thérèse Sekamana**

CEO, LED Solutions; CEO, Green Energy Rwanda

*"Kenya committed to 100% renewable energy by 2030... This is bringing about innovation. Fossil fuels are being replaced with renewables for transport, and satellite-based solar power is being used more in agribusiness, health and education. We're seeing farming on rooftops through hydroponics... and lots of organic fertilizer innovations to support agriculture as well as conversion into mobile and laptop chargers..."*

**Joseph Murabula**

CEO, Kenya Climate Innovation Center

**50+ %** of small firms are very concerned about environmental risks.

Source: SME Competitiveness Outlook, International Trade Centre, 2021



## → They need resources to adapt

Small firms worry about changing temperatures, water scarcity, floods, access to supplies, air quality and rising sea levels. They seek information on climate change, shifting consumer patterns and market opportunities, new regulations, certification requirements and green financing sources to become eco-compliant.

Source: SME Competitiveness Outlook, International Trade Centre, 2021

*"Vietnam is among the top five countries to be seriously affected by climate change in the future. We have 800,000 enterprises and 90% are MSMEs. They contribute just 30% of GDP and can contribute more. We must support them, so we launched a national strategy for green development and transformation. We are focusing on the green sector and wind energy."*

**Vu Ba Phu**  
Director General, Vietrade

*"Now our economy is based on mining. Our government is putting priority on the non-mining sector, including a draft law on non-mining export support, and the introduction of a single window system improved customs check procedures and duties. We're working with ITC on a national export strategy and it includes renewable energy and ICT. We're supporting sustainable, digital and green trade trends."*

**Batkhuu Idesh**  
Director General for Trade and Economic Cooperation Policy, Ministry of Economy and Development of Mongolia



*"In Kenya, we use an ecosystem approach. Technical partnerships co-create programmes, help with product development and standards to ensure clients are market ready. Formal partnerships with universities help identify innovations through students... For quality, we go through associations to influence policy such as the Association of Manufacturers, the Kenya Private Sector Alliance Association of Small Business, the Kenya Renewable Energy Agency. For funding, the EU is one of our largest partners, mostly around agriculture."*

**Joseph Murabula**  
CEO, Kenya Climate Innovation Center

**82%** of micro and small firms are not certified to a sustainability standard.

Source: SME Competitiveness Outlook, International Trade Centre, 2021



## → Due diligence for sustainable practices is transforming value chains

The European Union is introducing ambitious sustainability certification standards in 2025 and the US is on a similar path. Small firms in developing countries need to certify that their products are sustainable to enter these markets. Certification takes time, skills and capital. They need training and resources to comply, to ensure a just transition.

*“These new regulations... support the diffusion of more clean and efficient production methods and technologies. And they create market access opportunities for green goods and services... For example, Mongolia benefits from the General Scheme of Preferences (for good labour practices), which allows Mongolia to export two-thirds of its products to the European market with zero tariff.”*

**H.E. Axelle Nicaise**

Ambassador of the European Union to Mongolia

*“If we take sustainability and inclusiveness seriously, being a donor organization, it’s about walking the talk. We have market research analysis about trends in Europe, how to go green, what kind of certification is needed and where to find buyers. We work on capacity building in Africa and Asia to overcome barriers to the European Union... We have to accept that it’s a learning process and we have to do it together.”*

**Judith Arends**

Managing Director, The Netherlands’ Centre for the Promotion of Imports from Developing Countries



From left to right: ITC alongside speakers representing Malaysia, Vietnam, the European Union, Kenya, the Netherlands and Mongolia discuss the green future of trade

# Digital Power for Local Innovation

**22%** growth in internet use occurred since the start of the pandemic.

Source: International Telecommunication Union: 2022

**\$40 billion** more in trade would result from digitalizing key shipping documents.

Source: McKinsey, 2023

## → Digital technologies make economies more resilient

Small businesses in developing countries that leverage digital tools increased sales (85%) and cut costs (81%). Digital connectivity can also increase resilience along with profitability. Access to wider customer bases and better market information maximizes reach and planning. Enabling telecommuting means a flexible and adaptable workforce, and efficient digital transactions mean lower costs.

Source: ITC Working Group Report on Connectivity for MSMEs, 2023

*"If you have a delivery system that you can use, a marketplace with a social network, and a digital payment system, with mobile money, you can do any kind of business."*

**Ibrahima Nour Eddine Diagne**  
Managing Director, Gainde 2000, Senegal

*"Digital payment is being encouraged by our central bank. There was not much trust in digital payments before, but the pandemic changed all that. Its use grew by 66%."*

**Celeste Ilagan**  
Chief Policy and Regulatory Affairs Officer, IT & Business Process Association of the Philippines

*"In China, your telephone number is more like an ID. You can do everything with your telephone number."*

**Yi Wu**  
CEO, HICOOL, China



From left to right: ITC alongside the Philippines IT & Business Process Association, Senegalese tech company GAINDE 2000, China-based startup competition HICOOL, and ICT & Digital Economy Committee of the American Chamber of Commerce in Mongolia



Left photo: Young students receive training on wiring and basic programming from ITC.

## → Digital literacy powers local innovation and economic growth

Investment in equipping people with digital skills is key. It keeps the workforce employable, improves government efficiency and widens access to its services, making the economy competitive.

*“For setting up a technology business, connectivity infrastructure is like nutrition. But it’s not only because technology keeps advancing faster and faster that we succeed. We need to deliver digital literacy, including to remote areas....As 60% of Mongolia’s population is under 35, people are tech savvy and adaptable to new technologies. The younger generations are moving digital transformation along.”*

### **Byambajargal Ayushjav**

Chairwoman, Faro Group, Mongolia; Director, ICT & Digital Economy Committee, American Chamber of Commerce, Mongolia

*“I represent the IT and business process outsourcing association...Now 1.6 million people are working in the industry, worth \$32.5 billion... Our industry is really contributing to the digital transformation of the country. Our employees are trained to use these technologies and are therefore able to spread the benefits of digitalization in their own families and in the workplaces.”*

### **Celeste Ilagan**

Chief Policy and Regulatory Affairs Officer, IT & Business Process Association of the Philippines

*“The single window trade facilitation platform, which I have run since 2004, made Senegal one of the first countries using digital to facilitate trade. Regional cooperation has brought improvements in payment systems with a central bank for all West African countries... In parallel, mobile applications and mobile money have increased.”*

*Startups are working in digital areas, including e-commerce, e-health, and agri-tech. Government, donors or other organizations promote an ecosystem that allows any young entrepreneur to try to do business, thanks to digital.”*

### **Ibrahima Nour Eddine Diagne**

Gainde 2000, Senegal

**\$4.4 trillion** - the value that artificial intelligence could add to the global economy each year.

McKinsey & Company, 2023



## → AI: Advocacy and reskilling

In 2023, artificial intelligence exploded into the public discourse with ChatGPT. With the release of generative tools capable of writing original text, developing code or even composing music, conversations about the impact of artificial intelligence on economies, labour and societies are everywhere.

*"We see AI developments especially in three sectors: fintech, e-commerce and healthcare... One example: nurses in the Philippines do real-time monitoring of patients who are mostly based in the U.S. With digital tools, we do more complex, higher value things, and we are projecting to grow export revenue for our country to \$60 billion over the next six years.*

*We can adjust, upskill and reskill so that the next 1.1 million jobs are not in transactional or repetitive tasks. Jobs of the future will use AI (and) a lot of other technologies such as robotic process automation, machine learning.*

*Business outsourcing was dismissed as a sunset industry by a government agency that said that AI would take over. It took a lot of lobbying to explain how our industry is adapting to improvements in technology. There is no way that we were going to allow the sun to go down on our industry. Instead, we added 600,000 jobs. The government developed a national AI and ICT strategy roadmap, launched in 2020, to maximize the transformative potential of AIs."*

### **Celeste Ilagan**

Chief Policy and Regulatory Affairs Officer, IT & Business Process Association of the Philippines

*"Realistically, we will need humans to be gradually migrating to do jobs that are further up the chain... Education is very important. How do we envision the gradual merging of human intelligence, human cognitive abilities with artificial intelligence?"*

*When we displace human labour, there has to be a way that the gains in productivity and revenue come back to the human workers. And that's a question that I think different societies, different cultures in different parts of the world will find different answers to.*

*AIs are already able to write code by themselves. You tell them in plain human language, and the AIs write the code. This is an opportunity for a lot of regions in the developing world to leapfrog expensive development costs."*

### **Professor De Kai**

Hong Kong University of Science and Technology;  
International Computer Science Institute, University of California at Berkeley

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*"For HICOOL's annual competition, AI is one of eight categories, and it was the most popular this year. We have received 5500 applications from across the world and 24% were in AI, a 45% increase compared to last year.... We see AI advancements especially in finance, retail and high tech."*

**Yi Wu**

General Director, HICOOL China



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## → Managing ethics

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As AI evolves, societies need to manage its pros and cons. With incredible potential for growth and efficiency come potential risks to labour, intellectual property, and societal health. Rules and regulations must evolve alongside a cultural mindset shift to make sustainable and inclusive use of this transformative technology.

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*"Digital technologies today are similar to natural resources such as air and water. ...As much as we are adapting our stewardship of energy and water in the climate crisis, we must collectively address the risk of digital harms and maximize the potential for common good."*

A Global Digital Compact, United Nations, 2023

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*"We will have the opportunity to create a regulatory mechanism to de-risk threats like the downsides of AI or changes in equity. How do we regulate cyberspace more effectively so that the benefits come to pass? The key is making sure we use human intellect, the human mind and human aspiration to move forward."*

**Tapan Mishra**

United Nations Resident Coordinator, Mongolia

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*"Ethics is important now. Governments, private companies, tech companies... are focusing on ethics. There has to be factchecking... Bringing us together here (at WEDF) is also one of the key points to impact this issue."*

**Byambajargal Ayushjav**

Chairwoman, Faro Group, Mongolia; Director, ICT & Digital Economy Committee, American Chamber of Commerce, Mongolia

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*"We're giving AI algorithms the power to determine what we don't see. It's what I call an algorithmic censor, and that is quite dangerous for polarization. It is very seductive, plays to our unconscious cognitive biases, and it causes us to fall into traps very easily. The population as a whole has to recognize the danger. Governments, regulators and institutions have to work with the public to form guidelines. Tech companies have to implement things to prevent this kind of tunnel vision in users of AI systems"*

Professor **De Kai**

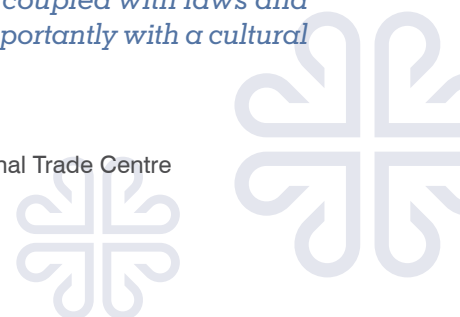
Hong Kong University of Science and Technology; International Computer Science Institute, University of California at Berkeley

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*"Rules and regulations only catch the most extreme cases. Society is not only held together by the letter of the law. It's all the unwritten rules, the unspoken social norms, the willingness to understand each other. That's what actually holds societies together. The emergence of AI in our society has to be coupled with laws and regulations, but more importantly with a cultural mindset shift."*

**Pamela Coke-Hamilton**

Executive Director, International Trade Centre





# Scale Up Youth Entrepreneurship

**55%** of the world's population is under 35.

Source: United Nations Population Division, World Population Prospects Report, 2022

## → Today's young entrepreneurs are tomorrow's employers

As more youth enter the market each year, they shape trade routes, economies and societies. We must commit to provide them with the networks and skills to grow, succeed and lead.

*"We have a new generation of MSMEs coming into global trade that understands that the future is more inclusive, more connected and more sustainable. Rest assured: The future of global trade is in good hands with today's youth."*

**Pamela Coke-Hamilton**  
Executive Director, International Trade Centre

**600+ million** new jobs are needed by 2030 to absorb the growing workforce.

Source: World Bank Group 2022



## → Betting on young entrepreneurs is a path to prosperity

To keep pace with rising youth population numbers, developing economies need to scale up employment opportunities. With over 90% of new jobs coming from small businesses in low-income countries, betting on entrepreneurship is the only path to prosperity.

**70+ %** of youth view climate action as vital.

Source: PWC Global Youth Outlook, 2022

## → Empower youth to invest in humanity's future

Young people are driving the push for a more sustainable world, including where they work, what they produce and what they consume. The success of young entrepreneurs is integral to the sustainability of our planet.

*"Being a startup and young entrepreneur, I come with ideas. I want to save the planet. I want to work with individuals or companies who understand that we need to give back to society and be sustainable for future generations."*

**Divej Mehta**

Managing Director, Inmate, India



Top left photo: ITC alongside the Ye! Community advisor for Botswana, a former Young Ecopreneur Awards winner, and the CEO of Zimbabwe's Zimtrade

Bottom left photo: A young entrepreneur discusses with the head of ITC's Tech Sector Development Team at WEDF 2023

Top right photo: Young entrepreneurs discuss the power of digital media at WEDF 2019

Bottom right photo: Young entrepreneurs receive training on business development from Ye! Community Advisors

## → Adjust business ecosystems

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Supporting entrepreneurs takes an ecosystem. They take many forms, from early-stage incubators, accelerators, co-working spaces and universities to traditional business institutions like chambers of commerce and banks. Good business environments bring together a wide range of organizations, institutions and mentors to help entrepreneurs thrive.

The challenge to established institutions: reach out to young people, engage with universities to tap into entrepreneur communities and adapt existing practices.

The challenge to early-stage organizations steeped in disruptive entrepreneurial culture: reach out to legacy institutions and formal business networks.

If it takes a village to raise a child, it takes a wider community to support young entrepreneurs at scale.

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*“Collaboration is everything, agility is everything to ensure young entrepreneurs are able to scale. Let’s all mentor each other. There’s value and knowledge that everyone has, and collectively, we can grow ecosystems.”*

**Neo Mosimane**

Founder, Lebone Enterprise Development Agency; Ye! Community Advisor, Botswana



## → Creative listening, tailored solutions

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Listen to business using surveys, interviews and networking events. Supporting entrepreneurs must begin with understanding their needs.

Every enterprise is different and the unique contexts of their market, products and leadership all play a role. If there were a clear recipe for success, every business would be on its way to the Fortune 500.

When it comes to understanding business success, and where pitfalls can spell failure, there is no replacement for experience. As much can be learned from failure as from success. Peers are an overlooked well of learning. As different entrepreneurs explore their own paths to success, they build a library of different experiences from which other entrepreneurs can learn.

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*“Youth need to be engaged and they are disruptive. Networks are critical and must be very much connected to what’s happening in reality. Let’s make it profitable for them so that they enjoy doing business.”*

**Allan Majuru**

CEO, Zimtrade, Zimbabwe

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*“I encourage successful businesspeople to mentor young entrepreneurs around the world, and for countries to prioritize creating startup ecosystems that bring opportunities to young entrepreneurs to scale up.”*

**Vedant Gandhi**

Founder, RecycleX, India; Previous Youth Ecopreneur Awards winner



## → Global competitions scale up youth entrepreneurship

Young entrepreneurs at the World Export Development Forum cited pitch competitions as a powerful way to scale up youth entrepreneurship. The impact of such competitions goes far beyond prize awards. Competitions help entrepreneurs refine their business models, perfect their messaging and connect to investors and mentors.

Such events are also a perfect crucible for budding entrepreneurs to engage in direct competition, as they will inevitably have to on the open market. By simulating real market competition, entrepreneurs are able to test themselves and their business models, learn from the experience, and improve accordingly even before launching their products to the public.



*“Winning the 2022 Youth Ecopreneur Awards really helped us a lot. Preparing for our pitch really helped us refine our business model and actually build the venture into a competitive proposition. It also gave us a very good spotlight in the social impact sector in India. Third, that visibility helped us make partnerships. Me and my co-founder were able to build an ecosystem of like-minded entrepreneurs. For example, we were able to partner with a social entrepreneur who is building sustainable, low-income housing. Our company’s eco-bricks were a great sustainable material for constructing their buildings.”*

**Vedant Gandhi**

Founder, RecycleX, India; Previous Youth Ecopreneur Awards winner



From left to right: Youth Ecopreneur Awards jurors from the World Intellectual Property Organization, the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, Sidley Austin, Zimtrade, and RecycleX evaluate a young ecopreneur’s pitch at WEDF 2023

# Women in Trade: Connect Communities, Open Doors

**30%** of MSMEs are owned by women.

Source: International Trade Centre, Women and Trade programme

**1%** of public procurement goes to women-owned businesses.

Source: International Trade Centre, Women and Trade programme

## → Build a roadmap to empower women to trade

Improve data on women in business, bring gender into trade policy, provide public procurement opportunities, tackle the business environment, extend access to financial services and strengthen ownership rights.

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*"Push for governments to denote a percentage of every public procurement contract to women entrepreneurs. Government support is critical. Get integrated into that ecosystem."*

**Xoliswa Daku**

Small Enterprise Development Agency; SheTrades Hub, South Africa

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*"In the Mongolian national export strategy, for example, has there been consideration on what translates into economic empowerment for women? Conduct gender impact assessments before policy is implemented. Sometimes these are done after a policy is in place, and by then you are looking to mitigate some of the impacts that would already have taken place."*

**Opeyemi Abebe**

Head, Trade Competitiveness, Commonwealth Secretariat; SheTrades Commonwealth Programme

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*"In Mongolia, we did a gender assessment of the financial sector and provided financial institutions with the ability to target their financial instruments to female entrepreneurs."*

**Elaine Conkievich**

UNDP Resident Representative, Mongolia

## → Tech is the next frontier for women's empowerment

E-commerce has become a mainstay in the global economy. For women-led businesses, benefits include lower initial entry costs, better access to buyers and suppliers, greater time flexibility, more knowledge and skills. Yet women still face challenges such as gender-blind e-commerce policies and agreements, online harassment and algorithmic bias to poor infrastructure and digital literacy.

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*"The world is going digital, so it's much easier to access training to trade internationally. We then can assist them to get different licenses or certification to meet different market requirements. We also bring banks to explain how women can access money – which is available."*

**Thérèse Sekamana**

CEO, LED Solutions; CEO, Green Energy Rwanda; SheTrades Hub, Rwanda

**127 countries** are part of the WTO Buenos Aires Declaration on Trade and Women's Empowerment.



## → Gender-sensitive trade policies accelerate change

Many countries are now bringing a gender lens to WTO work. ITC has supported with analysis and recommendations in the areas of trade facilitation, public procurement, e-commerce and investment. These can help women gain a greater foothold in international business. Similarly, there is much that can be done in bilateral trade agreements.

*"Participation matters – let women be involved in the conversation from the get-go, and we will see outcomes that are better for women entrepreneurs."*

**Opeyemi Abebe**

Head, Trade Competitiveness, Commonwealth Secretariat;  
SheTrades Commonwealth Programme

## → Connect women to networks to unlock doors to trade

Within countries, opportunities and initiatives abound. Linking and managing those networks helps women build skills, find mentors, make contacts and access finance. Internationally, women can share practices to access market opportunities and grow their businesses.

*"The inauguration of the SheTrades Mongolia Hub today signifies a significant milestone in advancing the opportunities of women in business in Mongolia."*

**H.E. Bulgantuya Khurelbaatar**

Minister of Labour and Social Protection, Mongolia

ITC's network of SheTrades Hubs catalyses a community of partners in each country to accelerate women's economic empowerment. It encourages a trade ecosystem that supports women in business, including development partners, government institutions, women-led businesses, banks and other partners.

*"We are ready to collaborate and learn from sister hubs. That's the most important lesson for me."*

**Baigali Ochkhuu**

Vice President, Mongolian National Chamber of Commerce and Industry



From left to right: ITC alongside the Mongolian National Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the South Africa SME Development Agency, Green Energy Rwanda, UNDP Mongolia, and the Commonwealth Secretariat



# Blended Finance for Small Firms

**\$5.2 trillion** – the unmet financing need of SMEs every year.

Source: International Finance Corporation, 2022



## → SMEs need tailored support

Post pandemic, SMEs have fewer reserves, the perceived risk of emerging markets is greater, interest rates are at levels not seen for decades and many government budgets are under strain. SME financing needs are more acute than ever.



*"SMEs are the most vulnerable sector of the global economy... The EBRD supports SMEs by providing them with the know-how and experience to grow organically, financing provided mostly by commercial entities, and trade facilitation mechanisms which allow them to trade internationally."*

**Claudio Viezzoli**

Managing Director, SME Finance & Development,  
European Bank for Reconstruction and Development

## → Blended models: Trust and communication

Combine funding from development finance institutions, commercial banks, government, or private investment with instruments like guarantees or direct financing to reduce risk and increase access. Trust and better exchange of information are needed. The key to unlocking funding potential is coordination, communication and cooperation to develop and deploy blended models.

*"Korea has had great success with government stepping up to improve access (to finance for SMEs). The public sector has introduced mechanisms to raise money from banks or even provide 10-year loans directly at low interest rates."*

**Dr. Moon-Hwan Kim**

Vice President, Korea SMEs and Startups Agency

## → Access, not just finance

Banks have options to develop SMEs as a key client segment, rather than see them as a high-risk liability. To de-risk SME lending, and reduce burdens on small business owners, banks can consider collective borrowing, rotating savings-and-loans associations, or group-guaranteed lending.

*"SMEs used to be a part of our retail banking division. In 2021 we opened a dedicated SME division and re-trained our credit analyst section to adapt to SME contexts. We have since significantly increased the number and size of loans going to SMEs – and also improved the performance of those loans."*

**Erdenedelger Bavlai**

First Deputy CEO, Khan Bank



ITC alongside Trade Finance Global



From left to right: the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, with the Korea SME and Startups Agency, Mongolia's Khan Bank, and the African Fintech Network

## → Fintech improves access

Agile fintech solutions have demonstrated how mobile, accessible models of finance can transform access to finance for small businesses. With increasing mobile penetration across developing regions and rising rates of global literacy, fintech is revolutionizing small-scale banking. Combining banking services with mobile technology democratizes saving, borrowing and financial planning.

*"We have a burgeoning, digitally literate youth population, we have expanding infrastructure, and the cost of mobile technology is coming down."*

### **Hohete-Berhan Arefeaine**

Co-Founder and Executive Board Member, African Fintech Network

## → Match local and regional needs

Funding needs are guided by local conditions. Realities surrounding business policy, trade and shipping logistics, and even cultural conceptions of money and value shape the borrowing and lending landscape. Solutions must match the conditions and needs of those they serve.

*"What works in one country may not work in another. Looking at each country independently and looking at the situation regionally is important. Solutions that might struggle in West Africa might succeed in East Africa and vice versa."*

### **Hohete-Berhan Arefeaine**

Co-Founder and Executive Board Member, African Fintech Network



# Spotlight: Trade Corridors for Landlocked Developing Countries



**32 of 44** landlocked countries are classified as developing.

Source: International Finance Corporation, 2022

**1%** of trade belongs to landlocked developing countries.

Source: International Finance Corporation, 2022

*"LLDCs are marginalized in global trade. Their share of merchandise trade decreased from 1.2% in 2014 to 0.98% in 2021, and they continue to face excessive trade costs."*

**H.E. Rabab Fatima**

Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS; Secretary General, Third United Nations Conference for LLDCs, United Nations

*"We spend 6.2% of our entire GDP on transportation of goods from our capital to the nearest seaport. Then from that port, you still have to pay the sea transport and be competitive at the third country market. It's very difficult."*

**Odbayar Erdenetsogt**

Foreign Policy Advisor to the President of Mongolia

**1,000 km** – their average distance from the nearest seaport.

They are dependent on their neighbours to reach these ports, rely on their infrastructure and go through their administrative processes to transport their imports and exports.

*"Hard infrastructure must be supported by appropriate international and domestic legal environments which together will facilitate trade."*

**H.E. Battsetseg Batmunkh**

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mongolia

*"On average, landlocked developing countries need to build over 200,000 kilometres of paved roads, and nearly 50,000 kilometres of railway in order to catch up to global averages of infrastructure density per capita."*

**Gladys Mutangadura**

Head of LLDC Unit, UN-OHRLLS



Rail freight is one of the viable shipping alternatives for landlocked countries

Border crossings, customs checkpoints and immigration posts are some of the key choke-points for landlocked trade

## → Priorities: trade corridor reforms, regional trade connectivity

LLDCs must rely on their regional neighbours. By aligning trade agreements, policies, regulations and procedures, they can lower costs, speed up border crossings and get better access to markets. Trade for landlocked countries relies on regional infrastructure. They should focus on transport and logistics sectors as well as climate resilience.

Partnerships should include governments, businesses, development partners and international organizations.

*“Our strategy is to develop (Lao PDR) from landlocked to land-linked... In recognizing the need to reduce transportation and trade costs, the country sees trade facilitation as an important element of our policy to help the private sector. Efforts are made to introduce automated information systems for customs clearance, adoption of ASYCUDA system along with more modern risk management techniques. We also institutionalize public-private partnership to discuss how to improve business environment in the country.”*

**H.E. Bountheung Douangsavanh**

Vice Minister of Industry and Commerce, Lao PDR

*“The customs-free trade corridor between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan has greatly increased the flow of goods and reduced the cost of trade between the two countries.”*

**Holger Wiefel**

Regional Head, Central Asia & Mongolia, SME Finance & Development, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development



## → Improve cross-border operations

Borders slow the passage of goods and incur costs. Integrated border management and joint customs control reduces duplicate inspections.

*“We must promote paperless border procedures, leveraging ICT to reduce costs and increase efficiency.”*

**Irene Tembo**

Chief Planner, Ministry of Transport and Logistics of Zambia

## → Digitize

Artificial intelligence and new technologies can help streamline border crossings, reduce waste and carbon impact and shrink costs. Early investment will put landlocked countries on a more competitive footing and expand market reach.

*"We must improve the digital trade infrastructure for LLDCs. This includes cargo trade infrastructure, single-window portals for customs and paperwork, trade hubs and development of smart overseas warehouses."*

**Dorothea Lazaro**

Regional Cooperation Specialist, Asian Development Bank

## → Make trade facilitation inclusive

Focus on small firms, women in trade, indigenous communities and youth to facilitate inclusive trade. Access to financing, training and mentorship programmes, policy reform and public-private dialogue contributes to inclusive growth and poverty reduction.

*"When designing inclusive reforms, we need data, people and strong leadership who understand specific gender constraints. We need women's business associations to be part of national and regional participation committees, so that women-owned business can speak with one voice."*

**Alina Fetisova**

Trade Facilitation Officer, International Trade Centre

## → Mobilize resources collectively

Use dedicated public-private sector partnerships and champion regional trade initiatives. Committees that share knowledge and resources can help consolidate funding and planning for resources.

*"Private sector consultations foster partnerships between governments, development partners and businesses... They can leverage additional resources and expertise through active engagement in the development process."*

*"At present, interest rates are too high. There are government initiatives which have been deployed to subsidize lending rates, but those are unfortunately not reaching all, and in particular, not reaching SMEs."*

**Holger Wiefel**

Regional Head, Central Asia & Mongolia, SME Finance & Development, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development

**Dulguun Damdin-Od**

Executive Director, International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries



From left to right: The Foreign Policy Advisor to the President of Mongolia with panelists from BBC Africa, the Asian Development Bank, UN-OHRLS, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and ITC



# Doing Business, Driving Development





## Impact Across Borders

### Deals, partnerships, investments

Business-to-business meetings in natural fibres, leather, and ICT services with over 130 companies from 16 countries generated \$6.5 million in business leads.

Partnerships were also forged in the context of the forum. Here are a few examples.

- The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the International Trade Centre signed a Letter of Intent to develop the private sector in Mongolia, focusing on women in business.
- Following the success of this year's Global Youth Ecopreneur Awards, the G20 Initiative of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification pledged a major contribution that will expand the 2024 edition, giving wider visibility to land restoration initiatives and green business solutions developed by young entrepreneurs in developing countries.
- Mongolia's Research and Development Institution of Light Industry signed an agreement with the Nepal Pashmina Industries Association to collaborate on quality testing and analysis of wool fibres and to exchange knowledge and research.

### Youth Ecopreneur Awards at the World Export Development Forum

Youth entrepreneur competitions have been a key feature of the World Export Development since 2017, focusing on startups with positive social or environmental impact.

Putting young entrepreneurs to pitch their business models in a UN conference setting brought fresh ideas to policymakers. In addition to boosting young entrepreneurs, these

competitions give development practitioners the practical insights into trade policies, networks and programmes needed to support them.

Pitch competitions are also a flexible framework to bring together a diverse range of partners. Collaboration with banks, business, government and international organizations brought training and visibility for finalists. Women's associations, diplomatic communities, youth programmes outside of trade, and big businesses are further examples where partnerships improve scale.

For many of the finalists, WEDF was their first truly global stage. The entrepreneurs rapidly improved their ability to pitch, present and communicate, and many have gone on to win subsequent pitch competitions. The winner of the first edition went on to win a global Seedstars competition, and the second winner won an all-Africa competition sponsored by the African Union.

The 2023 competition put a sharper focus on environmental solutions with the Youth Ecopreneur Awards, building on a new awards programme developed by ITC's Youth and Trade team. Applicants were drawn from ITC's Ye! Community, an online network of over 42,000 young entrepreneurs around the world.

Partners old and new supported the initiative with their expertise: Sidley Austin with legal services, the World Intellectual Property Organization with tailored advice, Google for Start Ups with access to their acceleration programme. Zimbabwe's Zimtrade was brought on board for their award-winning expertise in pitch competitions through their nationally televised Eagle's Nest initiative.

Timely social media promotion attracted the attention of the UN Youth Envoy, as well as the G20 Global Land Initiative under the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, who sponsored the creation of a new award category: Land Restoration Initiatives.

## Impact of the 2023 Youth Ecopreneur Awards

**400+ startups, 63 countries, 7 finalists**

Outreach via: Ye! Community global network (42 000 members) and ITC social media

### Winners

- Green Business Solutions: Airee, Mongolia
- Land Restoration Initiatives: iPage, Bangladesh
- People's Choice: Sunbird Straws, India

### Judges

- World Intellectual Property Organization, sponsor
- UN Convention to Combat Desertification, sponsor
- Sidley Austin, sponsor
- Zimtrade, World Trade Organizations Award winner 2022 (youth entrepreneurship)
- Recycle X, Ecopreneur Award winner 2022

### Prizes

- Seed funding (ITC)
- Start-up training (Google for Startups Accelerator programme)
- Pitch training (ITC, Google)
- Video training to support pitch competitions (ITC)
- Intellectual protection training (World Intellectual Property Organization)
- Pro bono legal services (Sidley Austin)
- Travel to the World Export Development Forum (UN Convention to Combat Desertification, World Intellectual Property Organization)
- International visibility (UN Secretary-General's Envoy for Youth, ITC)

## Impact of the 2023 Youth Ecopreneur Awards

Multiple winners and finalists have enjoyed global recognition and visibility since participating at the awards. Organizations such as the World Intellectual Property Organization, the G20 Global Land Initiative, the Business Council for International Understanding (BCIU), and ITC have sponsored finalists and winners to participate at international conferences, conventions and summits.

These include speaking on panels at the SDG Summit and the Good Trade Summit held at United Nations Headquarters in New York, featuring in a video presented at the opening of the United Nations General Assembly, engaging in fireside chats alongside the United States Department of State, presenting at the Global Landscapes Forum in Nairobi, representing young entrepreneurs at COP28, and presenting at the ASEAN Youth Digital Forum 2023 in Malaysia. This global recognition and visibility has since helped the ecopreneurs find mentors, approach investors and secure partnerships.

Mashrur Shurid of iPage and Oyungere Munkhbat of Airee collect their prizes from ITC's Executive Director and the Chief of Staff of the President of Mongolia



## Businesses shape United Nations ministerial gathering for landlocked countries

The World Export Development Forum hosted a preparatory session for the Third United Nations Conference on LLDCs, to be held in Kigali, Rwanda in 2024. It was the first time that business voices were formally included in the process to shape the ministerial conference, which occurs every decade. The discussions focused on challenges and viable solutions regarding trade corridors and infrastructure, affordable finance, and inclusive trade facilitation.

These conversations provided the opportunity for business representatives from LLDCs to voice their challenges and

brainstorm solutions. The outcomes are captured in a document that was formally submitted to the UN Office of the High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.

### Roundtables: Regional connectivity, trade facilitation, infrastructure, finance

- 160 businesses
- 59 government representatives
- 23 landlocked developing countries



Top left photo: ITC-led roundtable discussion with businesses from Landlocked Developing Countries

Bottom left photo: The International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries served as rapporteur for the consultations



Top right photo: H.E. Rabab Fatima, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS; Secretary General, Third UN Conference on LLDCs

Bottom right photo: The Asian Development Bank leads roundtable discussions with businesses from Landlocked Developing Countries



ITC's Executive Director meets with the President of Mongolia and his Minister of Foreign Affairs to discuss the country's National Export Strategy

## Impact across Mongolia

### National Export Strategy

The National Export Strategy, funded by the World Bank and guided by ITC, helps Mongolia to diversify its trade from traditional mining sectors. Some 150 Mongolian businesses and public sector representatives attended a public-private workshop to kick off the development of Mongolia's National Export Strategy within the context of the World Export Development Forum.

Thanks to this linkage, the second consultation was accompanied by a donor roundtable. The strategy is slated for completion in 2023.

The strategy explores: meat and meat products; leather and leather goods; textiles and garments; berries, nuts and biodiverse plants; tech services; eco-community-based tourism. It is underpinned by developing these trade support services: access to finance; trade facilitation; trade and investment promotion; quality compliance.

### SheTrades Mongolia launch

At the World Export Development Forum, Mongolia became the 14th country to join a global network of national SheTrades hubs. The hubs expand trade opportunities for women, through business training, networking and advocacy at the national level, and exchange of good practices between national hubs.

Hosted by the Mongolian National Chamber of Commerce and Industry, SheTrades Mongolia brings together existing initiatives to open doors to trade and looks to customize offerings to boost the number of women in trade. It is working in tandem with the United Nations Development Programme and other development partners as well as banks and associations in Mongolia. The launch brought representatives of other SheTrades hubs to share their experiences.

While Mongolian women have higher literacy rates than many of their neighbours, employment is a challenge. During the last decade, 10% of Mongolian women lost their jobs, and during the pandemic, women in rural areas were among the first to lose their livelihoods.



*"We welcome the launch of SheTrades Mongolia. Gender equality is a fundamental right and a foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world... Inclusive and equitable trade policies and practices – together with access to finance, technology and capacity building – create business opportunities for women entrepreneurs, connect female producers to markets and ensure more sustainable livelihoods."*

**Amina Mohammed**

Deputy Secretary-General, United Nations





Top left photo: Traditional and contemporary musicians performed at the WEDF Gala Dinner

Bottom left photo: WEDF Participants experience the SME fair held in Sukhbaatar Square on International MSME Day

Top right photo: WEDF participants had the opportunity to experience a cultural excursion the day after the conference closed, featuring traditional food, performances and wrestling

Bottom right photo: The Mongolian Ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva with ITC's Executive Director announce the partnership to host the 2023 World Export Development Forum

## Media training workshop

Jointly organized by the International Trade Centre and United Nations Mongolia, in partnership with Trade Finance Global, the workshop left a lasting impact on local journalists. They learned how to gather useful trade statistics for reporting and put them in context and to better understand why trade matters for the average Mongolian. They also learned about common challenges with other landlocked countries.

- Forty local journalists trained on trade and business issues
- Special preview of ITC's new multimedia report on business in landlocked countries (<https://digital.intracen.org/sme-connected-services-en/closeup>)
- Briefing on trade finance
- Access and training on ITC's trade and market intelligence tools

## National branding through the World Export Development Forum

The World Export Development Forum offers an opportunity for the host country to showcase unique cultural and touristic offerings, as well as provide business field visits that lead to longer-term partnerships. Each country host has used it to boost their own national trade and development goals.

This year, Mongolia offered a forward-looking fashion show on the International Day for MSMEs in downtown Ulaanbaatar, along with an expo for Mongolian small businesses to showcase their unique fashions and biodiverse foods. From the launch event in Geneva with world-class Mongolian musicians, to contemporary performances from acrobats, singers and dancers, and a full-day eco-tourism excursion, Mongolia offered a rich cultural experience to complement its trade policy and international business development at this global forum.

26-29 June, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

# World Export Development Forum 2023

*Diversify with Green Trade*  
*Organic ▪ Digital ▪ Sustainable*

## World Export Development Forum Taskforce

### International Trade Centre

#### Chair

Dorothy Tembo, Deputy Executive Director

#### Members

Govind Venuprasad, WEDF Coordinator

Natalie Domeisen, Head, ITC Publications and Events; WEDF Programme Lead

Sibylle Neuhaus, Senior Events Coordinator

Sylvie Betemps Cochin, Chief, Office for Asia and the Pacific

Alexander Riveros, former Advisor, Office of the Executive Director

Mixtli De La Pena Gimenez, Budget Officer

Mihaela Bou, Senior Administrative Assistant



ITC staff and Mongolian government officials at the close of the World Export Development Forum

## Government of Mongolia

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### Chair

G. Tuvdendorj, Deputy Minister of Economy and Development

### Vice-Chair

B. Davaadalai, Economic Advisor to the President of Mongolia

### Secretaries

Kh. Enkh-Orshih, Director General, Policy Implementation Department, Office of the President

I. Batkhuu, Director General, Trade and Economic Cooperation Policy Department, Ministry of Economy and Development

G. Ulzisaikhan, Director General, Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation Policy Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

### Members

E. Odbayar, Foreign Policy Advisor to the President of Mongolia

N. Batkhuu, Environment and Green Development Policy Advisor to the President of Mongolia

H.E. D. Gerelmaa, Ambassador of Mongolia to the Swiss Confederation

D. Irmuun, Economy and Foreign Investment Policy Advisor to the Prime Minister of Mongolia

D. Gan-Ochir, Chief Economist, Central Bank of Mongolia

N. Ankhbayar, State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

J. Ganbat, State Secretary, Ministry of Finance

T. Jambaltseren, State Secretary, Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Light Industry

Ch. Enkh-Amgalan, State Secretary, Ministry of Culture

B. Battsetseg, State Secretary, Ministry of Digital Development and Communication

Ya. Erdenesaikhan, Director, Government Implementing Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises

B. Anar, Director General, Investment Policy Department, Ministry of Economy and Development

D. Bulgan, Director General, Public Diplomacy and Cultural Cooperation Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

D. Tungalag, Director General, Food Production Policy Implementation and Coordination Department, Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Light Industry

J. Bold, Colonel, General Police Agency of Mongolia

Kh. Lkhagvadorj, Director General, General Authority for Border Protection of Mongolia

N. Uuganbayar, Director General, Immigration Agency of Mongolia

Ts. Ariunbold, Director, Transportation Police Unit of Mongolia

T. Duuren, CEO, Mongolian National Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Kh. Ganbaatar, Vice President, Mongolian Employers' Federation

D. Gantumur, President, Mongolian Travel Association

D. Dulguun, Executive Director, International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries

### Conference service management

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M. Angarag, Event manager, Blackbox LLC

S. Sainjargal Video, livestreaming and photo manager, Mindwind LLC

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Traditional horseback archer demonstrates his skill for WEDF participants

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