

ANNUAL REPORT 2024





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《全球发展报告2024》发布

Launch of the Global Development Report

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In 2024 the world has faced escalating geopolitical tensions, broader economic and financial fragmentation, widening inequalities, mounting debt vulnerabilities, and a worsening climate emergency. Developing countries have been disproportionately affected by interest rates uncertainties and unprecedented debt levels, hindering their ability to invest in vital areas like health, education, and climate action. Global economic growth was well below historical average level and not yet recovered to the pre-COVID pandemic trajectory.

Despite this, the Global South consolidated its position as a major player in the world economy and the multilateral system. The countries of the Global South, including through the Group 77+China and regional groups, played a major role in key processes in the multilateral scene, such as the negotiation of the Pact for the Future and its annexes, trade-related negotiations in the World Trade Organization, the negotiations of a ‘pandemic accord’, a new political high level declaration on antimicrobial resistance, the preparations for the United Nations Framework Convention on Tax Cooperation, the reform of the investor-state dispute system, the negotiation on a legally binding instrument on business and human rights, the adoption of a new treaty on intellectual property, genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge, among others. The concerns and interests of the Global South have gained growing attention in these processes, although the resistance from developed countries to effectively address some key issues, such as the need for a reform of the international financial architecture and effective mechanisms for technology transfer, will still require continuous collective efforts from the Global South.



The South Centre, as described in this report, followed and supported developing countries in these and other processes. It produced -in many cases with the cooperation of external experts and organizations- policy-oriented research outputs through research papers, policy briefs and other documents on a diversity of themes. It provided advice on key ongoing international negotiations (including specific issues upon request), providing analyses on the matters that are relevant to our constituency and suggesting ways of addressing them. The Centre also engaged in training and other modalities of capacity building, leveraging the opportunities offered by South-South cooperation, which continued to grow in scope and relevance. Inputs were provided to a range of reports produced within the United Nations system, and to a multiplicity of meetings organized by the UN, G-24, national governments, intergovernmental institutions, civil society and other organizations. In executing its Work Program, the Centre

addressed persisting sources of injustice, such as unilateral coercive measures, as well as new emerging areas, such as digital transformation that offers unprecedented opportunities for progress but poses at the same time significant challenges that demand urgent attention.

The Secretariat of the South Centre hopes that this report will not only be useful to inform about past activities, but also encourage our Members to participate in future activities and rely on the Centre as a source of objective analyses and support that contribute to put in place national policies and build up a multilateral system conducive to a more equitable and sustainable future.

DR. CARLOS M. CORREA

SOUTH CENTRE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



SOUTH-SOUTH AND TRIANGULAR COOPERATION

South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTrC) has continued to play an important role in fostering collaboration across sectors among developing countries. This involves ongoing collaboration through SSTrC for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and addressing global challenges such as climate change, public health, and economic inequality. South-South cooperation, in particular, is no longer a peripheral concept; it has been viewed as a powerful vehicle for promoting inclusive growth, mutual learning, and sharing development success and lessons. Together with triangular cooperation, it has been recognized as an opportunity to address both immediate and long-term global challenges and accelerate the implementation of the SDGs.

The outcome document of the United Nations (UN) Summit of the Future in September 2024 highlights South-South and triangular cooperation as a critical mechanism for advancing the digital economy, artificial intelligence governance, and science, technology, and innovation capacities in developing countries. The Fourth Conference on Financing for Development which will be held in June-July 2025 provides a unique opportunity to integrate South-South and triangular cooperation as one of the key mechanisms for the implementation of the outcomes of the conference, for the advancement of a more inclusive and sustainable financial system that works for all. As [stated by the United Nations Secretary-General](#) “South-South partnerships – along with triangular cooperation – are crucial to building a better future for all.”

South-South trade and investment have continued to grow, reinforcing its importance in the global economy. According to the United Nations Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the value of merchandise trade between developing countries reached approximately \$6 trillion, accounting for nearly 30 percent of global trade. Key sectors driving South-South trade include electronics, machinery, textiles, and agricultural products. At the same time, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) flows between developing countries have reached an estimated total of over \$459 billion originating from developing economies. The trend of South-South investment remains robust, with significant investments in sectors such as renewable energy, infrastructure, and manufacturing.

Rising geo-economic considerations and concerns about a fragmenting global economy are also leading to a reconfiguration of global supply chains, with multinational firms increasing their focus on certain economies such as Vietnam and Mexico. This is leading to a diversification of suppliers as well, with more small and medium-sized enterprises with closer geographical proximity being able to integrate and move up the value chain. In the African context for instance, the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) has significant potential for deepening economic integration on the continent, especially with the Guided Trade Initiative now expanding to countries such as Nigeria that are engaging in intra-African trade under the new rules.

The South Centre has continued to monitor and assess the trends in SSTRC and to collaborate with other institutions.

In this regard, the South Centre elaborated a [foresight paper](#) on SSTRC evolution and future trends jointly with the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), UNCTAD, and the United Nations Office on South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC).

The South Centre also actively participated at the 3rd South Summit and the 19th Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), held in Kampala, Uganda in January 2024. The role of the South Centre has been prominently acknowledged in the [outcome document](#) of the South Summit. In paragraph 87, it states:

87. We recognize the important role of the South Centre as think tank of the countries of the South and emphasize its relevance in enhancing South-South Cooperation through providing the intellectual and policy support required by developing countries for collective and individual action in the international arena, and promoting solidarity and mutual understanding among the countries and peoples of the South.

Paragraph 88 expresses the wishes of developing countries for the future work of the South Centre:

88. We call on the South Centre to examine ways and means to support more effectively developing countries in multilateral negotiations with the view to enhance the capacity of the South in addressing current and emerging challenges. In this context, we further call on the South Centre to build bridges and synergies with other institutions of the South with the purpose of using intellectual networking to reinforce the negotiating capacity of the Global South

The South Centre also participated at the NAM Summit which was held back-to-back to the South Summit. The South Centre also featured in the [outcome document](#) of the NAM summit:

934.11 [The NAM] Reaffirm the central role of the South Centre as the think tank of the countries of the South, and emphasize its importance in enhancing South-South Cooperation through promoting solidarity and mutual understanding among the countries and peoples of the South; as well as providing the intellectual and policy support required by developing countries for collective and individual

action in the international arena. In this context, the Members of the Movement are called upon to further support the South Centre, and the Centre should establish South-South networks among relevant institutions to facilitate the exchange of programmes, academia, and in supporting the Joint Coordinating Committee in the negotiating processes of major United Nations Conferences in the Economic and Social fields;

The South Centre co-organized an important side event on the occasion of the summits in collaboration with IsDB and UNCTAD on '[Leveraging the Potential of South-South and Triangular Cooperation for the Decade of Action](#)'. It highlighted the need to increase cooperation and sharing of experiences among developing and least-developed countries (LDCs) to build more resilient and sustainable societies for all. It also examined how SSTRC has been transforming in the present contexts and the directions its further evolution might take in the coming years. The discussions were based on the foresight paper referred to above.

2024 was the 60th anniversary of the establishment of the Group of 77 (G77) and China, a major alliance of developing countries for promoting the interest of the Global South and the South's most important grouping for international negotiations, in particular, in the United Nations system. The South Centre was invited, together with the United Nations Office on South-South Cooperation, to speak at the anniversary ceremony organized by the G77 New York Chapter. The Centre also spoke at the Geneva commemoration ceremony organized by the G77 Geneva Chapter. This demonstrates the recognition by the Southern countries of the South Centre's role as the think tank for these countries. To celebrate the occasion and the achievements of the G77 and China, a paper was written by the South Centre on the '[60 years of Contribution of the Group of 77 and China to Global South Coalition in International Development and Politics](#)'.

The South Centre is also part of the Advisory Board for the UNOSSC's Global Report on South-South Cooperation, and gave its comments on the outline and drafts of the report. The Advisory Board consists of 12 senior government officials, scholars and representatives from international organizations, multilateral development banks, think tanks and civil society.

In addition, the South Centre was invited to the 8th International Meeting on Triangular Cooperation in October 2024 in Lisbon and moderated one of the main plenary sessions.

The Third African SSTRC High-level Forum to be held in the first half of 2025 invited the South Centre to be a major player in its preparation during 2024. The South Centre, at the request of the Indonesian government, also provided advisory service relating to the organization of a high level SSTRC conference in Indonesia and participated in the conference as well.

Moreover, the South Centre has offered training sessions together with other international organizations as well as conducted trainings for national officials, youth and technical personnel.





DEVELOPMENT FINANCE

With the United States Federal Reserve interest rate hike cycle and the resultant negative spillover effects on developing economies, especially those with weak economic fundamentals, the rising debt servicing cost and the negative financial flow to developing countries since 2022 have become the focus of attention of the international community. The three consecutive reduction of the US federal funds rate in 2024 has reduced to some extent the cost of borrowing in developing countries. Nevertheless, the strong dollar as well as still relatively high inflation coupled with tight fiscal positions in many countries have led to widespread currency depreciation in the developing world. This situation has exacerbated the already unprecedented level of public debt. Naturally, the development finance gap has been further widened in 2024.

Expectedly, this has led to a more heated debate about the reform of the international financial architecture at the Group of Twenty (G20) and other international fora. However, there is a lack of meaningful progress owing to inertia and lack of political will. Considerable resistance has manifested from the major developed countries to inject liquidity to developing countries, especially low-income countries, via new issuance of Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) which has no cost and is non-debt creating, or via recapitalization of multilateral development banks.

Meanwhile, as developing countries have tapped massively to private financing, countries would take all risks to avoid debt default which would lock them out of the international capital market and would force them to borrow from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and

accept the IMF programs. Countries and international development partners have tried to explore innovative financial instruments like debt swaps and exchanges as well as other instruments without much success.

The preparation for the 2025 Fourth International Conference on Finance for Development (FfD4) since the latter half of 2024, however, has given renewed hope for effective, meaningful and innovative solutions and policy measures for addressing acute challenges for development finance. Whether this will be achievable in the current geopolitical context is uncertain.

The expertise of the South Centre has been much sought for at the international and national levels. Several countries in debt distress or in the process of introducing debt related legislature approached the Centre for views and advice.

In anticipation of the South African G20 Presidency in 2025, the South Centre, together with three other United Nations departments and agencies as well as a South African think tank, has started since June 2024 to assist the South African government in making preparations for assuming the G20 Presidency role. Concept notes for task forces and working groups were drafted and a visioning meeting was organized together with the South African government. South Centre contributed to the drafting of the concept notes, made presentations on development finance issues and conducted bilateral meetings with different stakeholders. This has given the South Centre an important opportunity to contribute to the work of the G20 and feature at the international negotiations.



For the G20 work on the reforming of the international debt architecture, the South Centre also produced an [external](#) and [internal](#) research piece on the role of the G20 Common Framework.

For the preparation for the 2025 FfD4, the South Centre, as a member of the United Nations Interagency Task Force for Financing for Development, has contributed to the substantive preparation for the outcome document by providing [input](#) to the Element Paper. The Centre also participated [in person](#) at the [second meeting](#) of the Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) to the 4th International Conference.

It also cooperated with international institutions like the United Nations Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to influence opinion shaping and in advocacy of some policy proposals including those relating to liquidity enhancement and debt restructuring.

The South Centre made statements to the Ministers and Governors Meeting of the Intergovernmental Group of Twenty-four (G-24) in [April](#) and [October](#) 2024.

The preparatory work for the UNCTAD 16th ministerial meeting in Vietnam in 2025 kicked off in 2024. The South Centre has offered support to the Group of 77 (G77) and China on the development finance front and will continue to contribute to the success of the conference.

As in the past years, the South Centre continued to be invited in 2024 to make presentations at various international intergovernmental and academic meetings on development finance issues to influence opinion shaping, promote the interest of developing countries and exchange views with experts and officials.

RESPONSIBLE INVESTMENT AND BUSINESS & HUMAN RIGHTS

The international investment regime is undergoing a profound transformation, moving away from an exclusive focus on investor protection towards a more balanced framework that recognises the linkages between investment, sustainable development and human rights. This shift is driven by a growing awareness of aligning international investment rules with human rights, corporate accountability and environmental protection. The South Centre actively contributes to shaping this evolving landscape by supporting developing countries in their efforts to reform and build up a more inclusive and equitable investment regime. The Centre promotes an international investment regime that prioritises developing countries' needs and interests and protects their policy space to regulate in the public interest. This includes fostering investment agreements that guarantee human rights and incorporate sustainable development objectives and provisions that allow states to regulate and protect public health, the environment, and other essential public interests.

Many developing countries have reassessed their approach towards international investment agreements (IIAs). This has led to a significant increase in states terminating or renegotiating outdated bilateral investment treaties (BITs). These older treaties are increasingly seen as incompatible with contemporary priorities, including sustainable development, human rights, and the right of states to regulate in the public interest, for example, to increase climate action. As of 2023, the total BIT terminations reached at least [585](#), reflecting a growing desire to replace these treaties with more balanced, development-oriented agreements.

In addition, there is a growing interest in investment facilitation agreements (IFAs) that emphasise investment cooperation, transparency, and streamlining investment procedures to create a more predictable and conducive environment for sustainable investment. The [African Continental Free Trade Area \(AfCFTA\) Protocol on Investment](#) and the [India-European Free Trade Association \(EFTA\) Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement](#) have considered facilitating foreign investments contributing to economic growth and development while respecting human rights and environmental standards ([SouthViews No. 267](#)). The negotiation of an Investment Facilitation Agreement at the World Trade Organization also points to an increased attention to policies that facilitate investment without creating a privileged status for investors as has been the case under BITs.

Likewise, investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) mechanisms in BITs have faced increasing scrutiny and criticism for their potential to constrain state regulatory autonomy and prioritise investor interests over public concerns. This has led to a growing interest in reforming or replacing ISDS. Proposals range from enhancing transparency and procedural fairness within ISDS to exploring alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, such as state-to-state dispute settlement or greater reliance on domestic courts ([Side Event co-organized by South Centre](#)). The controversial Energy Charter Treaty (ECT), which includes expansive ISDS provisions, has faced significant pushback, with European Union (EU) member states announcing their [withdrawal](#), signalling a shift away from investor-centric dispute resolution systems.



Investor Obligations in Investment Law

Geneva Graduate Institute
LL.M. Clinic
For the South Centre

10 June 2024

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The South Centre has actively supported developing countries in reforming the international investment regime through training and strategy meetings intended to strengthen their participation in multilateral and regional initiatives. The [United Nations Commission on International Trade Law \(UNCITRAL\) Working Group III](#) is undertaking negotiations to reform the ISDS system, though focusing on procedural issues, including transparency, selection and conduct of arbitrators, third-party funding, and establishing a multilateral court ([SouthViews No. 265](#)). However, there are still major concerns about how these reforms would lead to a holistic reform of the international investment regime ([South Centre Policy Brief No. 25](#)) including cross-cutting and substantive issues such as the calculation of damages. The South Centre has also engaged with the United Nations Trade and Development (UNCTAD) to foster dialogue and policy coherence in the global investment regime through initiatives like the World Investment Forum and the Multi-Stakeholder Platform for IIA Reform.

The South Centre actively participates in UNCITRAL Working Group III, emphasizing the need for increasing transparency, arbitrator accountability, and finding alternative dispute resolution mechanisms ([SouthNews No. 482](#)). The South Centre has consistently highlighted the need for ISDS reform to address concerns about the increasing threat of regulatory chill affecting the right of States to regulate; for example, looking at the effects of excessive claims and damages in the ability of states to pursue public objectives ([South Centre Research Paper No. 207](#)). Likewise, as countries increasingly adopt investment screening mechanisms to align foreign direct investment (FDI) with national priorities, the South Centre has provided guidance in designing effective investment screening mechanisms that safeguard critical

sectors, promote responsible business conduct, and ensure that foreign investments contribute to national development objectives (see [South Centre Research Paper No. 205](#)).

The ongoing negotiations on an International Legally Binding Instrument on Business and Human Rights offer an opportunity to adopt common standards on due diligence and jurisdiction to improve access to justice and remedies for victims of corporate-related abuses ([SouthViews No. 266](#)). The South Centre is also active in following the negotiations and advising developing countries on elements to be considered in the draft, as well as in engaging with the civil society organizations on the subject.

The growing integration of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles into investment frameworks and corporate reporting reflects a heightened recognition of the interplay between business operations and human rights. A South Centre [policy brief](#) examines the evolution of ESG investing, particularly its role in promoting responsible investment and embedding human rights considerations throughout business practices and supply chains.

The South Centre also co-organized a [side-event](#) to the 55th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC) on 'The new Working Group on the Rights of Peasants & Other People Working in Rural Areas: Challenges & perspectives from the field' in March 2024, and a [side-event](#) to the 57th Session of HRC on 'The Right of Peasants and Rural People to Determine Their Own Food and Agricultural Systems: Food Sovereignty to Tackle the Multidimensional Crisis' in September 2024.

INTERNATIONAL TAXATION

The South Centre Tax Initiative (SCTI), the South Centre's flagship project for South-South Cooperation (SSC) in international taxation, engaged actively in many processes to promote the interests of the South Centre's Member States and the developing countries at large. It reaffirmed its commitment to fostering international tax cooperation through actively providing support to South Centre Member States and other developing countries by enhancing their participation in global forums, conducting capacity-building initiatives and thought leadership on critical international tax issues. SCTI staff also participated in a large number of events and conferences organized by other organizations. Multiple news channels and agencies regularly solicit the SCTI's views about the concerns of developing countries in international tax negotiations.

The OECD Two Pillar Solution

The negotiations in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Inclusive Framework (IF) on the Two Pillar Solution for the digitalised economy and minimum taxation have made considerable headway. In October 2023, the Task Force of IF on the Digital Economy approved the release of a text of the OECD's solution for taxing the digital economy, the Multilateral Convention (MLC), to implement **Amount A**. However, the MLC is yet to open for signature. Many developing countries, such as India, Brazil and Colombia, continue to express concerns over some of the provisions contained therein, particularly relating to the adjustment of Withholding Taxes (WHT) and the Marketing and Distribution Safe Harbour (MDSH). This is coupled with serious apprehensions over the lack of revenue potential under Amount A for developing countries. Also, the design of the MLC is such that the convention will not enter into force till the United States agrees to sign and ratify it, which appears to be highly unlikely at this stage. In the meantime, many developed and developing countries have proceeded to implement simplified and easily administrable unilateral measures like the Digital Services Tax (DST) to tax transactions in the digitalised economy.

The SCTI recognized that it was of prime importance that South Centre Member States and other developing countries take an informed decision on whether or not to sign the Amount A MLC, and also to contrast it with feasible alternatives. Hence, in collaboration with the African Tax Administration Forum (ATAF) and West African Tax Administration Forum (WATAF), the South Centre released Research Paper No. 199 in June 2024 titled [*A Toss Up? Comparing Tax Revenues from the Amount A and Digital Service Tax Regimes for Developing Countries*](#), which provided key information for decision makers and was reported in the international media.

The Amount A MLC was not finalized by the June deadline originally set by OECD, and remains under negotiation. It is highly likely that the final version of the OECD solution will

even further reduce the revenues for developing countries owing to further carve-outs and exemptions demanded by the developed countries for their multinationals.

The OECD IF members missing the June 2024 extended deadline for providing the final text of the Amount A Multilateral Convention left a critical gap in efforts to address the taxation of the digital economy. This delay is occasioned by lack of global consensus to reach an agreement and the unlikely adoption by key states, particularly the United States. In response, the South Centre held strategic briefings to advise countries on the implications of these setbacks and emphasized the importance of immediately implementing DSTs or similar national measures for the taxation of the digital economy.

The South Centre in partnership with WATAF and ATAF held [technical briefings](#) for their members on their aforementioned [joint publication](#), showcasing the country level revenue estimates for all South Centre and African Union Members under Amount A and DSTs and available policy options for the taxation of the digital economy, in October and November 2024. The study indicates that Amount A is unlikely to result into tangible revenue gains for developing countries due to high thresholds and restrictive provisions of the rules, among others. On the other hand, DSTs can provide on average three times higher revenues from Amount A for South Centre and African Union Member States.

The SCTI participated as a panelist in a meeting organized by the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group in October 2024 to discuss the status of taxing e-commerce in the context of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Moratorium, where they presented SCTI's research on revenue estimates from the OECD vs. United Nations (UN) solutions for taxing the digital economy. SCTI also served as a panelist on the Global Digital Compact during the 32nd International Association for Feminist Economics (IAFFE) Conference and a speaker at a conference on Taxation Without Borders organized by University of Gothenburg in October 2024, where they discussed the OECD solution to taxing the digital economy and other alternatives like DSTs and revenue implications.



The OECD IF released [Additional Guidance](#) for implementation of **Amount B** of the OECD Two Pillar Solution in June 2024, and a [Pricing Automation Tool](#) in December 2024. Amount B introduces a simplified and streamlined approach for determining the arm's length return for in-country baseline marketing and distribution activities. The South Centre also organized technical briefings and trainings on Amount B to sensitize its members and other developing countries on the subject. South Centre published a policy brief in November 2024 titled "[Determining the Upper Bound of the Scoping Criteria for Amount B in the OECD/G20 Two-Pillar Solution: A Policy Guide for Developing Jurisdictions](#)". The paper provides a practical policy guide for developing jurisdictions when setting an upper bound for the quantitative scoping criterion under Amount B.

The OECD published the fourth set of [Administrative Guidance](#) of the **Global Minimum Tax** in June 2024, which clarified the application of the Global Anti-Base Erosion (GloBE) Rules for Pillar Two. Pillar Two introduces a Global Minimum Tax of 15% for multinational enterprises (MNEs) with consolidated revenue over €750 million to ensure the MNEs pay a minimum level of tax. Some jurisdictions have implemented the Global Minimum tax effective from 2025.

In July, the SCTI was invited as a panelist at Malaysia's annual National Tax Conference where it presented on tax incentives in the light of the OECD Global Minimum Tax, highlighting the harmful trend of the promotion of industrial subsidies under the garb of refundable tax credits, which made it more difficult for developing countries to attract investment compared to developed countries.

In September 2024, the [South Centre and Commonwealth Association of Tax Administrators \(CATA\)](#) jointly held a [workshop](#) to train tax officials from their Member States on the OECD Global Minimum Tax through a simulation of the application of the tax to the details of a real-life anonymous taxpayer. The simulation exercise provided a better understanding of the functioning of the GloBE Rules. South Centre also delivered critical insights and advice on Global Minimum Tax implementation for its Member States [Malaysia](#) and Vietnam's tax administrations in July and September 2024 respectively.

The **Subject to Tax Rule (STTR)** is part of OECD's Pillar Two and is intended to protect the taxing rights of developing countries. The STTR applies to interest, royalties and a defined set of other payments made between connected companies, including all intra-group service payments; it allows the source state to take back the taxing right in case the state of residence taxes that income at a rate below 9%. The OECD published the Multilateral Convention for the implementation of STTR (STTR MLC) on 3 October 2023 and held the [signing ceremony](#) on 19 September 2024, where [9 jurisdictions](#) signed and [10](#) indicated their intent to sign the STTR MLC.

Similarly, given the expected signing ceremony for the OECD STTR MLC in September 2024, the South Centre recognized the importance of making available revenue estimates so that its Member States could make informed decisions on whether or not to sign this Convention. In this pursuit, in June 2024, the Group of Twenty-four (G-24) and the South Centre had together launched a '[Call for Papers: Revenue estimates involving UN and OECD STTR](#)' inviting studies which could produce country level comparative revenue estimates of the UN and OECD STTR on the 65 combined Member States of the South Centre and the G-24. The objective was to help Member States of both intergovernmental organizations make informed decisions on adopting either the UN or the OECD STTR. The South Centre is in the process of reviewing two research papers that will provide data on the revenue implications of the OECD and UN STTR for South Centre and G-24 members. The papers are expected to be released in early 2025.

UN Framework Convention on International Tax Cooperation

2024 was a critical year for international tax cooperation that laid foundational steps for the negotiation of the United Nations Framework Convention on International Tax Cooperation (UN FCITC). The historic negotiations on adopting a UN FCITC progressed in earnest. The first step was to prepare Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Intergovernmental Committee which will actually negotiate the Convention. For this, the November 2023 resolution set up an Ad Hoc Committee to prepare the ToR. The Committee had to finalize them by August 2024 for submission to the UN General Assembly and consideration at its seventy-ninth session.

Developed countries wanted a Convention which would be 'complementary' to the ongoing work of the OECD while developing countries wanted a Convention which could address any issue of international taxation, regardless of whether other forums like the OECD were working on those issues.

The referred to Ad Hoc Committee concluded its work [by developing the ToR for the Framework Convention in August 2024](#), which were adopted by the UN General Assembly on [24 December 2024](#), following the [approval of the ToR by the UN Second Committee on 27 November 2024](#). The ToRs will guide the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee in drafting the UN FCITC. It



outlines, among others, the objectives, principles, structure, list of priority areas, and timelines, and provides for the simultaneous development of the UN FCITC and two early protocols, one of which focuses on the taxation of cross-border services in a highly digitalized economy. The negotiations are set to take place from February 2025 to September 2027. The goal is to finalize and submit the final text of the Framework Convention and two protocols for consideration during the first quarter of the 82nd Session of the General Assembly which starts in September 2027.

The SCTI actively engaged in efforts to support and prepare developing countries for the negotiations of the ToRs and the Framework Convention.

In January 2024, the SCTI made a Statement on the topic '[Leveraging human rights in the fight against illicit financial flows and corruption through greater international tax cooperation and fiscal transparency](#)' during the sixth intersessional seminar at the UN Human Rights Council. It highlighted out how the OECD's international tax rules and inequitable institutional architecture prevented developing countries from stopping illicit financial flows and collecting the revenues needed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and how this showed the pressing need for a UN FCITC.

In March 2024, the Platform for the Taxation in Latin America and the Caribbean (PTLAC) and the South Centre [co-organized a webinar on Illicit Financial Flows](#) (IFFs) and its relevance in the context of the UN Framework Convention on International Tax Cooperation. In the same month, the PTLAC, African Union and South Centre co-organized a coordination meeting for the Global South Bureau Members of the Ad Hoc Committee. The meeting was held ahead of a Call for Inputs by the Ad Hoc Committee from UN Member States and other actors on what should go into the ToR. These inputs also formed the basis of the South Centre's [own written submission to the Ad Hoc Committee](#). In March, the South Centre also participated in the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Special Meeting on International Tax Cooperation, [issuing a Statement](#) where it reiterated its position based on the written submission to the Ad Hoc Committee.

The SCTI also published a SouthNews No. 487 titled "[Conference on South-South Cooperation in International Tax Matters: Don't Cede Your Taxing Rights By Signing A Blank Cheque](#)". The SouthNews detailed the deliberations on the UN FCITC that had taken place at the international conference co-organized by the South Centre in November 2023.

In April 2024, the South Centre, African Union and PTLAC again co-organized a coordination meeting among the Southern Bureau Members. This time the objective was to analyze the inputs given by developed and developing countries. The meeting generated pertinent ideas on the architecture of the ToR and there was plenty of common ground. These discussions were circulated to the participants through a summary document as a basis for a coordinated Global South position ahead of the first Substantive Session in April.

The South Centre also participated in the first Substantive Session in April and made [a Statement](#) during the dialogue with International Organizations supporting the demands of developing countries for voting-based decision making, open-ended scope of the Convention rather than restricting it to "complementarity" with OECD's work and the importance of Objectives and Principles.

In May, the SCTI published a Tax Cooperation Policy Brief No. 38 titled "[The Design of a UN Framework Convention on International Tax Cooperation](#)". The Brief went into the details of how a UN FCITC could be structured, and its inputs directly fed into the ongoing negotiations.

After a successful first session which ended in May, a Zero Draft of the ToR for the Framework Convention was released by the Bureau with a Call for Inputs by UN Member States and other actors. The South Centre partnered with the African Union and co-organized a briefing in June to make suggestions on what inputs could be provided by developing countries in their written comments. However, unlike previous briefings this was opened to all South Centre and African Union Member States. The discussion generated plenty of common ground, which was captured in a summary document, shared with Member States and formed [the basis of the South Centre's submission](#) on the subject. The points contained in the South Centre's submission were reflected in several submissions by its Member States and other developing countries.

The South Centre and the African Union Commission (AUC) co-organized a technical briefing in July 2024 for their combined Member States to analyse the content of the revised Zero Draft ToR, before the Second Session of the Ad-hoc Committee. The South Centre followed closely the negotiations for the Zero Draft ToRs held at the UN's New York Offices from 29 July to 16 August 2024 and prepared a detailed report which was shared with tax officials from South Centre and Group of 77 (G-77) + China Member States in September 2024.



The South Centre participated as a panelist and a speaker in various events at the UN Human Rights Council to discuss the intersection of the Framework Convention and human rights and development. The South Centre made a statement during the 57th Session of the Human Rights Council in September 2024 on [‘Realizing the right to development: The case for a United Nations Framework Convention On International Tax Cooperation’](#), highlighting the possible content of protocols to the United Nations Tax Convention for taxing Illicit Financial Flows and Digital Services. In a side event at the Human Rights Council co-organized by Honduras and Bahamas in October 2024, SCTI delivered a statement on Opportunities and Risks Relating to International Tax Cooperation and Human Rights. The statement highlighted the risks involved in integrating human rights into the UN Tax Convention, especially when applied to MNEs, whereby right to privacy has been used to curtail international tax reforms on transparency. The South Centre was a panelist at the UN Human Rights Council’s Social Forum [and presented international tax reform proposals](#) that could be submitted by the Human Rights Council to the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4).

SCTI organized meetings with other stakeholders and participated in various forums to advance the interests of developing countries in the international tax cooperation agenda. The South Centre, Tax Justice Network and UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Development jointly organized an event to discuss how the Framework Convention could provide much needed revenues to realize the Right to Development in November 2024. The South Centre advised developing countries’ delegates to focus on the governance aspects of the Convention, democratic decision making and open-ended scope. The South Centre was invited by the Economic, Social, and Cultural Council of the African Union in November 2024, to speak to Africa’s Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) on the ToRs and the negotiations of the UN FCITC and the role of the broader CSOs in shaping the framework convention and protocols.

The SCTI published reports on how the two early protocols for the UN FCITC could be structured and the potential areas of priority. The South Centre published a policy brief in December 2024, titled, [“Towards a UN Protocol for Taxing Cross-Border Services in a Digitalized Economy”](#), which was first published in November 2024 as a Think20 [\(T20\) Brasil Road map](#). The brief provides a way forward on one of the early Protocols for Taxing Cross-Border Services in a Digitalized Economy. The South Centre also prepared a T20 Brasil Commentary, [‘The Way Forward for a UN Protocol for Taxing High Net Worth Individuals’](#), on the potential area for the second protocol being wealth taxation, and how it could be structured.

UN Tax Committee

At the 28th session of the UN Tax Committee, the UN Fast Track Instrument (FTI) was finalized. This was a momentous achievement for the developing world, as the FTI can transmit the UN’s international tax standards into multiple treaties simultaneously. Further, it can enable bloc negotiations so that developing countries can negotiate as groups instead of individually as is presently the case.

Negotiations continued on other issues of importance to developing countries, namely taxation of wealth, income from international transport, insurance, services and activities related to natural resources.

In February 2024, the South Centre and the PTLAC organized a joint briefing on the negotiations in the UN Tax Committee for reforming source taxation of shipping and aircraft. The briefing was attended by a large number of countries, most of whom did not currently tax international transport at source in their treaties. The briefing led to a call for action for developing countries to actively participate in the next session of the UN Tax Committee and support the reforms to Article 8 of the UN Model Tax Convention. It acted as a mass mobilisation event.

The SCTI participated in the 28th Session of the UN Tax Committee in March, in New York, where it mobilized the developing country members through peer exchanges and briefings and also participated in the negotiations to promote the interests of the South Centre’s Member States and other developing countries. At the 28th Session, [the UN Handbook on Wealth and Solidarity Taxes](#) was approved, providing detailed guidance to countries on how to design wealth taxes. The South Centre is represented on the UN Subcommittee on Wealth Taxes and its contributions to the development of the Handbook were acknowledged in the Handbook itself.

The SCTI also supported the developing countries in their efforts to promote UN Model Wealth Tax legislation. The mobilization efforts contributed to the governments of Brazil and Colombia openly supporting the UN’s work in this regard, and approval being granted by the Committee in the face of strong opposition by developed countries. The SCTI is also on the drafting group which is preparing the text of the UN Model Wealth Tax law, and work actively continues in this direction.

Discussions on the taxation of insurance and natural resources progressed without much controversy though without finalisation. However, on the issues of taxing international transport and services, there was major pushback from developed countries.

Somewhat unusually, the UN Tax Committee session was preceded by the ECOSOC Special Meeting on International Tax Matters (normally it is held after the Committee session ends). The South Centre participated in the ECOSOC meeting, and gave two Statements on the two topics of discussion: 1) [Promoting Inclusive And Effective Tax Cooperation At The UN](#) (see also previous section) and 2) [Net Wealth Taxes](#).





A comprehensive article of the South Centre's interventions at the ECOSOC and UN Tax Committee Session were published as SouthNews titled "[South Centre supports developing countries at the 28th Session of the UN Tax Committee and the ECOSOC Special Meeting on International Cooperation in Tax Matters](#)".

The South Centre then participated in the 29th Session of the UN Tax Committee, held in Geneva, Switzerland, from 15 to 18 October 2024. The SCTI team actively mobilized developing countries to achieve historic wins at the session. In preparation for the session, the South Centre organized pre-meeting sessions with the developing country Tax Committee members to strategize and build support for agenda items aligned with the interests of developing countries. Based on the common positions arrived at during the coordination meetings, the South Centre developed Position Papers, which were shared with the members.

This approach led to significant successes, with committee members from developing countries successfully promoting and securing the approval of key articles during the session. A key victory was the adoption of Article XX on Fees for Services which provides broader source taxation rights for all services. The South Centre, in partnership with the Independent Commission for Reform of International Corporate Taxation (ICRICT), showcased the results of a [Research Paper](#) at the session that showed the impact of treaty restrictions on taxing services. The paper provided data on how developing countries are net importers of services and developed countries enjoy an enormous trade surplus in services exports.

The paper examined the cases of Kenya and four South Centre Member States – Argentina, Brazil, Colombia and Nigeria- and showed that all these countries suffered revenue losses, some in billions, due to their tax treaties with developed countries which restricted their ability to tax service payments. The paper was presented to the developing country Committee Members and its results were shared during the Committee session. The evidence boosted the efforts of developing countries and finally resulted in the Article's approval.

Other achievements were the adoption of a revised version of Article 8 on International Shipping and Air Transport which has stronger provisions for source taxation of international shipping and introduced for the first time provisions for source taxation of air transport; Article 5A on Income from Exploration and Exploitation of Natural Resources which essentially reduces the time limit for the establishment of a taxable presence for income from exploration and exploitation of natural resources to 30 days; and Article 12C on Insurance Premiums which allows for source taxation on a gross basis of income from insurance premiums, replacing Article 5(6).

Other international tax developments included the draft of the [UN Template Wealth Tax Law](#) which was shared for a first reading. The draft was well received and is slated to be finalized in March 2025. The South Centre also provided inputs on the Committee guidance on the negotiation of bilateral advanced pricing agreements (APAs), assessment of tax risks from crypto assets and mining product valuation. The inputs were well received by the Committee Members. Some of the interventions on APAs led to a further discussion with members of the UN Subcommittee on transfer pricing.

Capacity Building on International Taxation

Capacity building of tax administrations of developing countries by the SCTI team has emerged as an area of great demand. Following on the success of such programmes organised by the SCTI in association with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 2023 in Sri Lanka, Eswatini, Bhutan and Colombia, in March 2024, the SCTI organised a virtual [workshop to train officials of Maldives Inland Revenue Authority](#) on the design features and key operational elements of each policy option in the OECD Two Pillar Solution. In August 2024, the Centre together with UNDP co-organized a [workshop for Angola on Taxation of the Digitalized Economy](#).

In January 2024, the SCTI published a Tax Cooperation Policy Brief No. 37 titled "[A Decade of the Indian Advance Pricing Agreement Programme: Achievements and Challenges](#)". The Policy Brief showcased India's experience in the area of Advance Pricing Agreements

(APAs), which are agreements between the tax administration and the taxpayer (in some cases with another governments' tax administrations as well) to increase tax certainty and prevent disputes. There is high interest in APAs from across the developing world and India's experience provided valuable insights to other developing countries.

In February 2024, the SCTI team provided its comments/observations on the draft guidance note under preparation by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) on "Beneficial Ownership Registries" that will help countries increase transparency and address illicit financial flows challenges being faced by them.

Taxation of crypto-assets is an area of concern for developing countries. The SCTI team has finalised a chapter for a book organized by GIZ (Germany) titled 'Taxing Crypto-Assets to fund the Sustainable Development Goals: Improving Evaluation of Crypto Functional Substitute Risks' which highlights how the adoption of blockchain technology is continuously evolving, resulting in the formation of Decentralized Autonomous Organizations (DAOs) and Decentralized Finance (DeFi). The chapter discusses at length the features of these mechanisms and suggests a survey to evaluate their risks as well as measures that tax administrations may consider to tackle the tax challenges arising from crypto-assets, DAOs and DeFi.

Additional Research

The South Centre published SouthViews No. 270, 26 July 2024 on "[Honduras' Tax Justice Law: Increasing tax collection to achieve the SDGs without increasing tax rates](#)" discussing the revenue potential of the tax reform bill called the 'Tax Justice Law' introduced by the country in April 2023. SCTI staff also wrote a review on the volume "[Taxation and Inequality in Latin America: New Perspectives on Political Economy and Tax Regimes](#)" in August 2024, which offers insights into inequality patterns, tax avoidance, and reform efforts in Latin America, providing lessons and considerations for future tax reforms.

In September 2024, South Centre held an event at the Graduate Institute in Geneva to present the findings from

the report [Analysis of Imbalanced Tax Treaties of Developing Countries: Insights from Tax Treaties Explorer Database](#), prepared through a collaboration with the Geneva Graduate Institute. The research identifies restrictive and imbalanced tax treaties between South Centre's Member States and OECD countries, and the specific provisions that make these treaties imbalanced. The findings were presented to representatives of South Centre Member States from the Missions in Geneva.

Partnerships and Collaborations

In October 2024, the South Centre as a supporting organization of the Addis Tax Initiative (ATI) contributed to the ATI's inputs to the FfD4 elements paper. Several of the South Centre's inputs were included, such as on the need for public country-by-country reporting and on making transfer pricing comparable data a global public good. These were also separately submitted through the [South Centre's own submission](#). The recommendation on strengthening country-by-country reporting of multinationals and extending similar reporting obligations to high-net-worth individuals was incorporated into the FfD4 Elements Paper.

The South Centre through the SCTI also promoted the interests of developing countries in international tax developments through media engagement, including participating in interviews, authoring articles, and shaping public discourse to amplify the perspectives and priorities of developing nations in global tax conversations. An [article](#) by Corporate Disclosure published in August 2024 highlighted SCTI's views on the international tax negotiations in support of the UN, which represents the needs of developing countries and functions on the democratic principle of majority voting. In a [news article](#) published in November 2024 by Bloomberg, SCTI noted there is increased risk of retaliation but encouraged countries not to waste time waiting for an agreement on the Amount A treaty and to adopt DSTs. In the same month, Bloomberg covered SCTI's [views](#) on the outcomes of the 29th Session of the UN Tax Committee in Geneva. SCTI also shared their [views](#) with Bloomberg in August 2024 on OECD negotiations especially on Amount B, whereby they encourage developing countries to evaluate the revenue implications from local distributors before adopting the framework.



CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Plastics Pollution

The South Centre provided detailed analysis and recommendations on the trade-related elements of the third draft of the Plastics Pollution Treaty. Key contributions included commentary on the scope of trade provisions in the treaty, emphasizing the need to ensure alignment with multilateral trade rules while safeguarding the flexibility of developing countries to adopt robust environmental measures. Notably, the Centre addressed the implications of export restrictions and transparency requirements for plastic waste management, including the classification of second-hand synthetic clothing as plastic waste, a move that could have significant environmental and trade implications, especially for African countries.

The Centre also proposed language refinements to ensure the treaty remains supportive of existing multilateral frameworks like the World Trade Organization (WTO) and Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal, without limiting the treaty's environmental ambitions. These suggestions aimed to address compliance challenges for developing countries while enhancing their capacity to manage plastic waste trade effectively. Additionally, recommendations were made to ensure that treaty evaluations consider relevant multilateral reports, improving coherence between environmental and trade objectives. These inputs illustrate the South Centre's commitment to advancing environmentally sound trade practices that align with the developmental priorities of the Global South.

Crisis Management Frameworks

The interconnected challenges of climate change and international trade are gaining prominence in global policy fora, reflecting their increasing relevance in shaping sustainable development pathways and equitable global cooperation. The South Centre is actively supporting developing countries in addressing this critical nexus of climate change and trade policy, a growing component of the Trade for Development Programme (TDP)'s work. By providing research, policy advice, and capacity-building support, the Centre helps member states integrate climate considerations into trade frameworks. Following from the WTO Thirteenth Ministerial Conference (MC13), the South Centre has supported its member states in operationalizing Paragraph 21 of the WTO [Abu Dhabi Ministerial Declaration](#) by providing technical advice and fostering Member-driven discussions within relevant WTO bodies on enhancing resilience and disaster preparedness facing developing and least developed countries. This has included developing proposals for submission to the WTO to promote policy coherence and ensure that trade policies contribute to reducing risks, preventing new vulnerabilities, and strengthening crisis management frameworks, with the goal to advance outcomes by the next ministerial conference (MC14).

COP 29

Through its participation in prominent forums, the South Centre amplified its impact. Notably, it [presented](#) at the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF) event at the



United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) 29th Conference of the Parties (COP29) on Investment in Natural Gas for a Just, Orderly, and Equitable Energy Transitions. The presentation highlighted the multifaceted challenges faced by natural gas investments, including climate policy uncertainties, regulatory disparities across borders, and the implications of the European Union (EU)'s Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM). It also addressed the financial pressures and geopolitical shifts reshaping the global energy market. The South Centre emphasized solutions such as fostering open, non-discriminatory natural gas markets, advocating for long-term contracts to ensure revenue stability, and adopting cleaner production technologies to align with global climate goals. The presentation further underscored the importance of policy dialogues, international cooperation, and investment in decarbonization strategies like carbon capture and methane abatement to facilitate a fair and sustainable energy transition for gas-exporting countries.

Critical Raw Materials

Similarly, its [presentation](#) at the WTO Public Forum on Boosting Trade In Critical Minerals: Formulating Inclusive Trade Policies highlighted actionable strategies for integrating climate resilience into trade policies. The South Centre delved into the trade policies employed by many resource-rich economies, particularly in Africa, to attract investment in green minerals and climb up the value chain. These include efforts to leverage regional trade agreements, strengthen local content requirements, and promote value addition through beneficiation and processing within their borders. The presentation also noted the lack of transparency in bilateral agreements and Memorandums of Understanding with African countries regarding critical raw materials, cautioning against the risk of locking in regulatory frameworks that could perpetuate extractive practices by external actors. This concern underscores the need to safeguard regulatory autonomy and ensure these agreements support long-term sustainable development.

EU CBAM

The South Centre has been actively engaged in providing technical support to its member states on trade and environment issues, particularly concerning the CBAM of the EU and broader trade-environment intersections. The Centre's efforts aimed at ensuring that the concerns of developing countries are addressed in international discussions and that these countries are equipped to navigate the complexities of emerging environmental regulations. An important contribution by the South Centre focused on a comparison between the legal texts of the EU CBAM and the EU Emissions Trading System (ETS) in Policy Brief No. 124 [“How the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism discriminates against foreign producers”](#).

The South Centre played a role in advancing the understanding and implications of the CBAM, particularly its discriminatory impacts on developing countries. The

Centre was also involved in securing resources and support for ongoing analysis and advocacy on how CBAM regulations, such as those proposed by the EU, could impact developing economies. Additionally, the Centre participated in a workshop on the Carbon Footprint Policy Accelerator, which focused on international equity and collaboration, further contributing to global discussions on fair and equitable environmental policies.

The Centre also provided targeted technical support through bilateral engagements, including offering detailed comments on the United Kingdom CBAM consultative process based on requests by member states. Furthermore, the Centre engaged in bilateral discussions on broader trade and environment issues, reflecting its commitment to supporting members in understanding and influencing international environmental policy. To complement these efforts, the South Centre convened a brainstorming meeting with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and a member state to discuss waste management initiatives. This meeting was part of a broader strategy to address environmental challenges that intersect with trade, ensuring that developing countries are not left behind in the global shift towards sustainable practices.

Complementing its policy engagements, the South Centre conducted in-depth research analyzing the impacts of the EU CBAM on key sectors such as aluminium, iron and steel, and electricity in major gas-exporting countries. This research, which is nearing completion, has provided critical insights and actionable policy recommendations. These findings aim to support affected countries in mitigating the potential adverse effects of the CBAM, such as increased export costs and competitiveness challenges, while identifying opportunities to foster sustainable development and enhance resilience within these sectors.

New Trade and Sustainable Development Rules

Collaboration with external stakeholders is central to the South Centre's efforts to advance a multilateral trade and environmental cooperation framework, which has drawn growing interest from member states and global actors for its potential to bridge trade and climate goals. In addition, the Centre's research on the Trade and Sustainable Development (TSD) chapter of the EU Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA) group—comprising Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles, and Zimbabwe—was especially critical, as this agreement is expected to shape the EU's approach to sustainable development in African trade deals. While the chapter's comprehensive scope addresses labour, environmental governance, and climate change, the research highlighted challenges, including disproportionate implementation burdens on ESA countries, misalignment with African priorities under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), and insufficient financial and technical support. This analysis, set to be published soon, underscores the need for the chapter to align with Africa's development goals, protect regulatory autonomy, and ensure support for compliance, paving the way for fairer trade agreements that promote inclusive and sustainable development.



Loss & Damage and Human Rights

The adverse impacts of climate related loss & damage on human rights in the Global South require concrete actions. A just and fair green transition also requires protecting human rights while prioritizing the needs of developing countries, especially by providing climate finance, access to green technology and integrating human rights in climate actions. In respect of climate change, the South Centre provided [inputs](#) to an upcoming study by the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General on the impact of loss and damage from the adverse effects of climate change on the full enjoyment of human rights, pursuant to Human Rights Council Resolution 53/6 on human rights and climate change. The study was presented to the Human Rights Council in September 2024.

The South Centre participated in the Global South Climate Network in the framework of which several reports, including on [loss and damage finance](#) and [renewable energy technologies](#) and [partnerships](#) for the Global South, have been prepared.

Climate Change in Least Developed Countries

The Centre also continued with the implementation of a project with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), Vienna, to provide Least Developed Countries (LDCs) technical support to strengthen the engagement and action by the LDC Group on climate change and to identify and address its needs.

UNILATERAL COERCIVE MEASURES AND RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT

Unilateral Coercive Measures (UCMs) have become more and more a central tool of foreign policy for the developed countries and sanctions have also grown more complex and multi-layered, from freezing assets, trade curbs, and targeting key sectors like the oil industry, high tech and banking sector, to imposing restrictions on banking operations and singling out influential individuals and businesses.

UCMs have significant negative impacts on human rights in many developing countries, including on the Right to Development (RtD). The efficacy of UCMs has been growingly questioned, particularly regarding their ability to achieve political objectives and not just causing widespread harm to the people in the targeted countries.

The use of UCMs by advanced economies like the United States has increased, despite the clear evidence of their illegality under international law, as well as their inability to achieve their own stated objectives. The US Department of State maintained Cuba on a list that designates states that supposedly “sponsor” terrorism, and has kept it under sanctions for more than 60 years now. The South Centre notes with concern the continued inclusion of the Republic of Cuba on such a list, which identifies governments that actively support violent non-state actors involved in terrorist activities.

The RtD remains an important issue on the agenda of the Human Rights Council, with actions to promote its effective realization being undertaken by the Special Rapporteur, Prof. Surya Deva, the Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development and the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Right to Development. The session of the Intergovernmental Working Group took place in

May 2024 and showcased some of the complementarities that could be found between the three human rights mechanisms. More effort is needed to increase awareness among countries and local stakeholders on how the RtD can be used to make progress on the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Pact of the Future may also help provide renewed impetus to the RtD and its mainstreaming throughout the United Nations system and in the national development plans of the Global South countries.

The South Centre made a [contribution](#) to the Report of the Secretary-General of the UN on the implementation of General Assembly Resolution A/RES/78/7 on the “Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States of America against Cuba”.

The South Centre also made a [statement to the 25th Session of the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Right to Development](#) in May 2024. The South Centre also had meetings with the Chair of the Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development, attended the 10th Session of the Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development and made a [statement to the 10th Session of the Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development](#).

In November 2024, the South Centre organized a Consultation on Unilateral Coercive Measures with the participation of the UN Special Rapporteur on UCMs Alena Douhan, an academic expert and senior officials of some Member Countries suffering from UCMs. A [report](#) was produced on the consultation.





HEALTH

World Health Organization

The draft Global Plan of Work (14th GPW) for the World Health Organization (WHO) was one of the main topics addressed at the Executive Board of WHO held in January. Another important topic continues to be the sustainable funding of the WHO, given that member State contributions represent only a small part of the budget (less than 20 % of the total) which is mainly financed through earmarked, private/public donor contributions, which risk skewing the priorities of the WHO towards donor priorities as opposed to the core programme areas as approved by member States. The WHO is working on an investment round for ensuring new financing, based on the recommendations of a member State body. The Executive Board also discussed various draft resolutions for the World Health Assembly (WHA).

The WHA met in its seventy seventh session in May. Two key topics expected for decision by the WHA were the adoption of amendments of the International Health Regulations (IHR) of 2005, and the conclusion of negotiations for an instrument on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response ('the pandemic accord'). The Working Group on the amendments to the IHR met in various sessions, and at the WHA the amendments to the IHR were adopted. These amendments are important, introducing the principles of equity and solidarity in response to health emergencies, increasing the speed at which information about outbreaks and other health emergencies is shared among member States, providing for the delivery and technical support to developing

countries, resource mobilization, and inclusion of access to medicines, vaccines and diagnostics as well as other medical technologies as key elements of core capacities of countries towards addressing health emergencies. The IHR as amended will become operational in 2025. There are, however, a number of remaining gaps in the IHR that the pandemic accord is expected to cover as many of the amendments to the IHR lack clear enforcement mechanisms and risk not constituting a real response to future pandemics if concrete actions are not taken. Such gaps could be addressed in the negotiations on the 'pandemic accord'.

The WHA also approved the 14th Global Program of Work for the WHO, and several resolutions, including on health and climate change. The WHO held an investment round in the second semester of 2024 with a view to ensure sustainable financing for WHO.

Following the adoption of Decision WHA77(20) in May 2024, the mandate of the WHO Intergovernmental Body (INB) to draft and negotiate a WHO Convention, agreement or other international instrument on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response was extended till the Seventy-Eighth session of the Health Assembly in 2025. At the same time, the Decision established an ambitious target to endeavor to consider the outcome of the INB negotiations in a special session of the WHA in 2024. Pursuant to this mandate, four sessions of the INB were held from July to December 2024 - INB10 (16-17 July), INB11 (9-20 September), INB12 (4-15 November) and INB12 resumed session (2-6 December).

However, these rounds of negotiations could not bring about consensus among WHO member States with continued deep divergences between countries on the most contentious provisions in the text. These rounds were marked by a rushed process led by the INB Bureau, which took a hands-on approach engaging directly with member States, questioning text proposals, and inviting comments from the WHO secretariat. This approach sidelined substantive proposals, particularly from developing countries, and prioritized a “streamlined” framework approach that effectively diluted commitments to equity, which are the primary demands of developing countries in these negotiations.

Critical issues for developing countries in the INB negotiations include provisions on equitable access to vaccines, therapeutics, and diagnostics, which are being weakened under the streamlined text, especially in Articles 9-13. For instance, in Article 12 on Pathogen Access and Benefit Sharing (PABS), developing countries, led by the Africa Group, have called for detailed and enforceable benefit-sharing provisions, but these have been replaced by a more diluted text. Similarly, Article 9 on Research and Development lacks clear commitments to ensure post-trial access to health products for communities involved in clinical trials. The use of vague language, such as “may” instead of enforceable obligations, undermines the inclusion of equity-based provisions in publicly funded research and development agreements.

Furthermore, while Article 10 on local production is lauded for its “green” (agreed) text, it contains loopholes such as provisions being “subject to national and/or domestic law,” allowing developed countries to bypass commitments. WHO support for production diversification is contingent on requests from the Conference of Parties, which are uncertain in scope and effectiveness if finally agreed upon.

The negotiations reveal deeper fault lines, with developed countries, particularly the European Union (EU), favouring a framework treaty without or a few concrete commitments. Developing countries, on the other hand, are pushing for a comprehensive treaty with enforceable measures to address inequities. Key unresolved issues include:

1. **Pathogen Access and Benefit Sharing (PABS, Article 12):** Calls for enforceable benefit-sharing mechanisms remain unmet, with developed countries resisting proposals to ensure transparency and accountability.
2. **Equitable Access Provisions (Articles 9-13):** Lack of binding commitments on access to vaccines, medicines, and diagnostics undermines the goal of addressing inequities in pandemic response.
3. **Local Production (Article 10):** Conditional language and procedural barriers hinder the establishment of sustainable, geographically diversified production facilities in developing countries.
4. **Rushed Negotiation Timeline:** The accelerated timeline risks sidelining developing countries’ priorities and diluting critical equity-focused provisions.

The South Centre participated in the meetings concerning the IHR review and the INB. Briefings were held prior to the meetings, with presentations and background notes being provided to the delegations, including textual suggestions for the negotiating texts. Statements were also delivered at the meetings, including the [Statement to the 7th meeting of the WHO Working Group on Amendments to the International Health Regulations \(2005\)](#) in February 2024, [Statement to the WHO INB 8th session](#) in February 2024 and [Statement to the WHO INB 9th session](#) in March 2024, [Statement on the agreed amendments to the IHR](#) in May 2024, the [Statement of the South Centre to the 77th WHA](#) in May 2024, and the [Statement to the 11th meeting of the WHO Intergovernmental Negotiating Body to draft and negotiate a WHO convention, agreement or other international instrument on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response](#) in September 2024. The Executive Director of the Centre also participated in and [made a statement](#) at the Meeting of the Ministers of Health of the Member States and Observer States of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) at the sides of the 77th WHA. A [research paper](#) analyzing the role of multiple actors (public, private and philanthropic) in global health and seeking to outline possible future scenarios, in particular the role of WHO, was also published. South Centre staff also participated as an expert speaker in the WHO interactive dialogue on Article 12 (Pathogen Access and Benefit-Sharing System) held on 3 September 2024 and also provided written responses to guiding questions posed by the INB Bureau for the interactive dialogue. In November 2024, the South Centre provided comments to developing countries on the WHO draft Pandemic Instrument prepared for the 12th session of the INB by the INB Bureau.

The South Centre also produced a number of publications relating to the INB negotiations. These include the publication of a book in French and Spanish by the Special Advisor on Health and Development Dr. Germán Velásquez – [Les défis des futures pandémies: Enjeux politiques et négociations internationales](#), [Los retos de futuras pandemias: Entre la política y la ciencia ¿Hacia dónde va la salud mundial?](#), a Research Paper on [Equity and pandemic preparedness: Navigating the 2024 Amendments to the International Health Regulations](#), a Policy Brief analysing the [WHO Intergovernmental Negotiating Body process and the revised draft of the WHO pandemic agreement](#), a





SouthViews on the [negotiations on the pandemic treaty](#), on [how should the WHO pandemic treaty negotiations tackle intellectual property](#), and on a proposal for an [article in the WHO pandemic treaty for effective technology transfer](#) and two SouthNews articles – “[The WHO Pandemic Treaty Negotiations Resume This Week: The Group of Equity highlights priorities](#)” (SouthNews No. 510), and “[The Africa Group emphasizes that a new WHO pandemic agreement must be founded on equity](#)” (SouthNews No. 511).

The South Centre also participated in the Group of 20 (G20) Working Group on Health in Brasilia, Brazil, in April, and organised a [side event](#) on “Building resilience to health

emergencies, pandemics and One Health” that brought together high level officials of Ministries of Health of India and Indonesia and key organisations including Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative (DNDi), Foundation for Innovative New Diagnostics (FIND) and Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), with over 200 participants.

The Centre also participated in various events, including a workshop on the Making of the Pathogen Access and Benefit Sharing System, organized by the Geneva Graduate Institute, in February, and the EU-Latin American and the Caribbean High-Level Event on Inclusive Human Development and Equitable Access to Health Products in May.



Antimicrobial Resistance

In 2024, antimicrobial resistance (AMR) was a priority issue in the global health agenda – though it is not a subject of negotiations to establish new norms. This year was, however, important for advancing new global commitments to reduce the burden of drug-resistant infections, with actions across human health, animal health, agriculture and the environment sectors.

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) had agreed to hold a High-Level Meeting (HLM) on AMR in September 2024, the second since 2016. Preparations were made for the High-Level Meeting, including conclusion of negotiations on the modalities for the meeting and the final declaration. The expectation was that the declaration of the High-Level Meeting on AMR could include more specific commitments and targets for action across sectors.

On 25 September 2024, the United Nations General Assembly held the High-Level Meeting on Antimicrobial Resistance, at which the South Centre made [a statement](#) and provided [analysis of the declaration](#). The South Centre further provided support to the Group of 77 (G77) plus China and to individual countries in the run up to the UNGA High-Level Meeting on AMR and the textual

negotiation of the draft [political declaration](#), the outcome document of the High-Level Meeting. The group position of the G77 and China was crafted with support of the South Centre, including through holding a preparatory [joint meeting with the mission of Uganda as Chair of the G77](#), on 24 September. The meeting was instrumental in the deliberations at the UNGA High Level Meeting on 25 September. In addition, a research paper was published on [Catalyzing Policy Action to Address Antimicrobial Resistance: Next Steps for Global Governance](#), and a SouthNews on the agreed [modalities for the High-Level Meeting on Antimicrobial Resistance](#).

Tackling antimicrobial resistance has also been the subject of discussion in the WHO pandemic accord negotiations in the context of One Health, but there has been no consensus on the wording. The WHO has also prepared a new framework for tackling drug-resistant bacterial infections in human health; and a new draft resolution on AMR led by Thailand was adopted by the WHA in May. Several side events were also held on AMR during the WHA. The WHA also adopted WHO strategic and operational priorities to address drug-resistant bacterial infections in the human health sector, 2025-2035. The WHO also published an updated list of bacterial priority pathogens of public health importance to guide research and development for new antibiotics and public health interventions.



Significant contributions were made by the Centre to the understanding of the problem and solutions for the misuse of antibiotics and other antimicrobials in food production. A research paper was published on [optimizing antimicrobial use in food-producing animals, on constraints to and prospects for sustainable livestock sector practices with emphasis on antimicrobial usage](#) (a case study of Argentina), and on [enhancing Indian shrimp exports through sustainable practices and reduced antimicrobial usage](#).

One of the landmark activities on AMR each year is the convening of the largest conference on AMR in the African continent. This year the meeting was organized in Zambia in July, with the theme of global accountability for AMR response: investing in priorities for Africa. For the last ten years, the [South Centre and ReAct Africa annual conference](#) has immensely contributed to building and strengthening capacities of numerous African countries in the development and implementation of AMR National Action Plans (NAPs) as it has provided a platform for cross-learning and cross-fertilization at the same time, catalyzing action in the region. The conference brought together policy makers, academic and civil society experts from the region and international organizations, with the participation of 38 countries. The summary of the conference is available [here](#).

The South Centre also engaged actively in the 4th Ministerial Conference on AMR in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia held from 14-15 November 2024 that agreed to the [Jeddah commitments](#). The South Centre also participated by invitation in events as experts, including the CleanMed Europe Conference on farming's impact on antibiotic efficacy and the role of healthcare.

The South Centre has built extensive capacity and a broad network on the issue of containing AMR. Despite the significant threat that AMR poses to global health, in particular, for developing countries, there is still lack of awareness in many countries. Therefore, the activities of the Centre are supportive of more collaborative global action, particularly to mobilize technical and financial resources towards developing countries, and to build and implement national action plans on AMR. There has been a direct impact in the increasing participation of developing countries in the agenda on AMR as a result of the support provided by this program. Through the vast network of collaborations, and the landmark regional conference organized every year in Africa, the Centre is recognized as a leading organization in this field.



INNOVATION, INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY AND TRANSFER OF TECHNOLOGY

WTO Council for TRIPS and the 13th Ministerial Conference

The first six months of 2024 witnessed important developments in the realm of intellectual property (IP), particularly within the frameworks of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). The ongoing discussions and negotiations have highlighted the global tensions over issues such as equitable access to health products, transfer of technology, and the protection of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge from undue appropriation through the intellectual property system.

The year 2024 marked thirty years since the adoption of the WTO Agreement on Trade Related Aspects on Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), which has largely benefitted developed countries' companies and entities that have used strong intellectual property rights to protect intellectual assets and consolidate their technological lead. Developing countries have experienced large outflows of resources to developed countries because of intellectual property related rents, while promises of increased foreign direct investment and technology transfer have not materialized to the extent expected.

The WTO's Council for TRIPS discussions have been dominated by debates over the extension of the TRIPS Agreement's limited waiver for COVID-19 vaccines to therapeutics and diagnostics. Despite 18 months of deliberations since the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC12) adopted the 'TRIPS Decision' in 2022, consensus was not reached by the time of the 13th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC13) held in February 2024 in Abu

Dhabi. This impasse reflected the deep-seated divide between developing countries advocating for a broader waiver and developed countries, which have sought to preserve the status quo and block a decision on extension.

Additionally, MC13 adopted a decision to continue examining the scope of non-violation and situation complaints under the TRIPS Agreement and extended the moratorium on such complaints, highlighting ongoing challenges in reaching a consensus on this complex issue. Hence, the topic of examination of the scope and modalities of non-violation and situation complaints under that Agreement will continue to remain on the agenda of the Council for TRIPS.

The Working Group on Trade and Transfer of Technology (WGTTT) remained largely inactive, with proposals from developing countries for reinvigorating discussions around technology transfer being stalled due to lack of consensus.

During MC13, Bangladesh, Colombia, Egypt, and India submitted a proposal calling for a comprehensive review of the TRIPS Agreement, as mandated under Article 71. This review, which was supposed to be a regular exercise, has been delayed for years. The proposal also emphasized the need to assess how the TRIPS Agreement has impacted the transfer of technology to developing countries, the relationship with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and the implementation of public health flexibilities. Although the proposal was not adopted during MC13, it has sparked renewed discussions within the Council for TRIPS and underscores the ongoing concerns of developing countries regarding the fairness and effectiveness of the TRIPS framework.

The South Centre supported developing country delegations in preparation for formal and informal meetings of the Council for TRIPS and the MC13 negotiations through briefings, background documents analyzing the issues on the agenda of the Council and advancing strategic recommendations. It also provided advice upon request on specific issues to individual delegations.

A preparatory briefing was organized in January 2024 on TRIPS and technology transfer related issues for the 13th WTO Ministerial Conference and a [policy brief](#) was published on issues concerning trade, intellectual property, and technology transfer that were most relevant for consideration at MC13. Technical assistance was provided upon request to specific delegations in the WTO MC13 through inputs on the proposed declaration on IP and development, and extension of the moratorium on TRIPS non-violation complaints. The South Centre also supported developing countries in proposing textual language in the WTO General Council report, linking para. 8 decision to the follow-up to MC12 decision on pandemic preparedness and response.

A [research paper](#) was published on the state of play in the negotiations on the extension of the MC12 TRIPS Decision and pointed to the need to immediately and unconditionally extend the Decision to COVID-19 diagnostics and therapeutics.

Several other research papers were published, including on [implementing the Doha Declaration in OAPI \(*Organisation Africaine de la Propriété Intellectuelle* \(OAPI\) Legislation\)](#), a research paper on [implementation of TRIPS flexibilities and injunctions in India](#), a research paper on [compulsory licensing as a remedy against excessive pricing of life-saving medicines](#), a research paper on [compulsory licenses for export](#), a research paper on the [compulsory license regime in Argentina](#), and a research paper on what [Cambodia can learn from Thailand and India on TRIPS implementation](#) as it prepares to graduate from Least Developed Country status.

The South Centre has also advanced work on developing recommendations for the examination of patents on monoclonal antibodies, and published a [research paper on guidelines](#) in January 2024. The South Centre also published an analysis of the recent policy in the United States to [exercise rights to curb high drug prices](#).

As part of the thirty years of the TRIPS Agreement, the Executive Director participated in a symposium organized by the WTO. An Academic Dialogue was also held by the Centre on [‘The Political Economy of Pharmaceutical Patent Examination—Argentina in Comparative Perspective’](#).

In the 2nd semester of 2024 five sessions of the WTO TRIPS Council were held, including two informal sessions. In addition to the standing agenda items in the TRIPS Council, much of the discussions during this period were focused on conducting a review of the TRIPS Agreement in accordance with article 71 of TRIPS. Article 71 of TRIPS mandates the TRIPS Council to review the implementation of the TRIPS Agreement periodically. The TRIPS Council could also undertake a review of the agreement in the light of any relevant new developments which might warrant the modification or amendment of the agreement. However, the mandated review under article 71 has never taken place. Colombia had submitted a proposal to the TRIPS Council for carrying out a review under Article 71 of the agreement. This was followed by a joint proposal by Bangladesh, Colombia, Egypt and India in March 2024 which called upon the TRIPS Council to undertake and finalize its first review under article 71 on the implementation of the TRIPS Agreement.

The TRIPS Council discussions have focused on the process to be followed in conducting the proposed review. There has been substantive difference of views between developed and developing countries in this regard. The Chair of the TRIPS Council, Ambassador Sofia Boza of Chile, had proposed a process guided by the structure of the Agreement, following the sections on individual IP rights in Part II of the Agreement, while also considering the provisions in Parts I, III and IV related to the individual IP right under review. After a first trial period, members would then evaluate the modalities for the rest of the review and agree any necessary changes before moving forward. The review would mainly involve input from members, who would provide information on their implementation of the sections under review, including their experiences, challenges and best practices.

However, some developing country members have been concerned that a review focused on “implementation of the TRIPS Agreement” may be interpreted as just meaning how the Agreement’s obligations have been incorporated into national laws. Such an exercise may end up in a review of compliance by Members with the TRIPS obligations (which may eventually lead to claims by developed countries of non-compliance if situations of this kind were identified). Such a review will be narrower in scope than a review focused on evaluating the impact of the TRIPS Agreement. At the end of the TRIPS Council meeting in December 2024, there was no consensus regarding the process and scope of the review. Discussions were expected to continue in 2025.

Support was provided to develop the proposal in the Council for the TRIPS for review under article 71.1 to identify and produce relevant analytical metrics and data to assess the implementation of the TRIPS Agreement and guide the discussions on the review.



The South Centre also assisted developing country delegations in preparation for formal and informal meetings of the TRIPS Council through briefings and background documents analyzing issues on the agenda of the Council and advancing strategic recommendations. It also provided advice upon request on specific issues to individual delegations. The South Centre published a SouthNews article on the TRIPS review ("[WTO members head towards a global review of the TRIPS Agreement](#)") in November 2024. The Centre also produced an analytical note for developing country delegations to the WTO TRIPS Council on the scope and process of the TRIPS review under article 71, in preparation for the TRIPS Council discussions in December 2024.

The South Centre published Research Paper 213 – [Navigating the WTO's Working Group on Trade and Transfer of Technology: A Critical Analysis from the Perspective of Developing Countries](#).

Through its support and preparatory briefings for developing country delegations, the South Centre contributed to shaping discussions at key forums such as the TRIPS Council and the MC13. By providing background documents, policy briefs, and advisory responses, it ensured that the perspectives and needs of developing countries were featured in debates over critical issues like the extension of the TRIPS waiver and technology transfer. This advocacy was essential in highlighting the ongoing challenges developing countries face within the global IP system.

WIPO Negotiations

WIPO continues to serve as the main multilateral forum for negotiations on intellectual property. A significant achievement was the adoption of the new **WIPO Treaty on Intellectual Property, Genetic Resources and Associated Traditional Knowledge** in May 2024. This treaty requires patent applicants to disclose the origin of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge, aiming to prevent misappropriation of genetic resources through greater transparency. The adoption of the treaty marks a positive step towards protecting the rights of indigenous communities and ensuring that the benefits of using genetic resources are fairly shared. However, the treaty's success will largely depend on its rapid implementation and the willingness of member States to expand its scope to address emerging challenges in IP.

An annual strategy meeting was organized in February 2024 for delegates from developing country missions in Geneva on WIPO issues for 2024. A background note on key issues in WIPO for 2024 was prepared to guide the discussions. In April 2024 a preparatory briefing was organized for delegates in preparation for the 45th session of the WIPO Standing Committee on Copyright and Related Rights, co-organized with the Program on Information Justice and Intellectual Property, American University. The Centre's support for proposals and its active participation in discussions on advancing copyright limitations and exceptions and avoiding expansion of broadcasting rights

underscored its commitment to addressing the disparities in the current IP system and to advance broader access to knowledge. The South Centre program also organized in April 2024 an informal strategy meeting with ambassadors and delegates from developing countries in preparation for the WIPO Diplomatic Conference to Conclude an International Legal Instrument Relating to Intellectual Property, Genetic Resources and Traditional Knowledge Associated with Genetic Resources.

A Policy Brief was published on the negotiation of the WIPO Diplomatic Conference for a [Treaty on Intellectual Property, Genetic Resources and Associated Traditional Knowledge](#) in May 2024, providing an overview of the rationale for the treaty and of the process and substantive issues to be negotiated, and recommendations towards ensuring a successful conclusion of the Diplomatic Conference.

The South Centre was invited as a main expert for the Like-Minded Countries Ambassadorial coordination meeting for the WIPO Diplomatic Conference on IP, Genetic Resources and Associated Traditional Knowledge organized by Indonesia in May 2024. Delegations took up the Centre's inputs in the negotiations. The South Centre also participated as an observer and delivered a [statement](#) at the WIPO Diplomatic Conference. It organized at the sides of the WIPO Diplomatic Conference on Intellectual Property, Genetic Resources and Associated Traditional Knowledge an event examining [how can international law promote innovation on genetic resources and benefit sharing while recognizing the rights of traditional knowledge holders](#). A [Policy Brief](#) was published after the Diplomatic Conference, analyzing the final treaty text adopted.

Other publications examined patent rights and misappropriation of traditional knowledge: [the case of the Amazonian Mirantã](#) and the protection of traditional knowledge, traditional cultural expressions, expressions of folklore and genetic resources within the [African Continental Free Trade Area](#).

Following the adoption of the new WIPO Treaty on Intellectual Property, Genetic Resources and Traditional Knowledge at a Diplomatic Conference held in Geneva in May 2024, a major normative outcome in the second semester of 2024 was the adoption of the new **WIPO Design Law Treaty (DLT)** at a Diplomatic Conference held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in November 2024.

In the context of a great diversity of procedures for registration of industrial designs among WIPO member States, the DLT ambitiously aims to harmonize and simplify global procedural rules for registering industrial designs. The treaty advances harmonization in key areas such as filing requirements and mandatory representation, and also incorporates optional provisions allowing member States to maintain policy space to address issues relevant in the local context, such as designs that are based on the use of traditional knowledge and cultural expressions.



The DLT is a particularly welcome development for countries where design-intensive industries play a crucial role in the economy. However, while the DLT may make it more affordable, speedy and predictable for designers, including smaller scale local designers and small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) to register their designs in multiple jurisdictions, only a few countries can effectively reap its benefits currently. This is because very few developing countries have design-intensive economies.

Though the DLT was promoted as a formalities and procedures treaty, the basic proposal of the treaty contained some provisions addressing substantive matters viz. grace period and term of protection. While the provision on term of protection was not adopted in the final text, the DLT made significant changes to the international regime on grace period. The DLT establishes a 12-month full grace period that is not limited to disclosures made only in international exhibitions. This provision fundamentally alters the international design regime by extending the period during which designs can remain unregistered yet still enjoy legal protection. However, this is subject to a reservation that a contracting State could make at the time of signing the DLT, a major achievement of developing countries in the negotiations.

The South Centre provided technical assistance to developing countries in the preparatory process leading to the Diplomatic Conference on the DLT in Riyadh. The Centre also provided technical support to developing countries during the negotiations at the Diplomatic Conference. Such support was provided through informal briefings for delegations in Geneva and Riyadh, as well as individual support to specific requests from delegations. The Centre also published Policy Brief 132 in November 2024 – [“Towards a Balanced WIPO Design Law Treaty \(DLT\) for Developing Countries”](#) - articulating key issues for developing countries in the DLT negotiations before the Diplomatic Conference. The assistance of the South Centre was instrumental in enabling developing countries to successfully ensure key issues of interest to developing countries being included in the DLT: a provision enabling disclosure of source or origin of traditional knowledge or traditional cultural expressions in design applications, a provision on technical assistance, as well as reservations to obligations on

grace period and deferral of publication of design applications.

Besides the DLT, the South Centre also provided support to developing countries in the discussions in the WIPO Intergovernmental Committee on Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore (IGC). Despite the adoption of the new WIPO Treaty on Intellectual Property, Genetic Resources and Traditional Knowledge, the IGC needs to address identified gaps in existing legal mechanisms for protection of traditional knowledge (TK) and traditional cultural expressions (TCEs). The South Centre organized preparatory briefings for developing countries prior to the 49th session of the IGC in December 2024 and also delivered a [statement](#) supporting the work of the IGC to advance the elements that may form part of a distinct *sui generis* legal system of intellectual property protection defined specifically to protect TK including TCEs, with broad application internationally.

The Centre also continued to support delegations through preparatory briefings for other WIPO Standing Committees, including the Standing Committee on the Law of Patents (SCP), the Standing Committee on Copyright and Related Rights (SCCR) and the Committee on Development and Intellectual Property (CDIP). The Centre also produced a [SouthNews](#) article on the discussions on Patents and Health in the 36th session of the SCP in October 2024.

In summary, the Centre's involvement in WIPO-related activities aimed at advancing negotiations on important treaties, such as the newly adopted WIPO Treaty on IP, Genetic Resources and Associated Traditional Knowledge. It contributed to raising awareness about the implications of this treaty for developing nations. This engagement was important in ensuring those countries' interests were safeguarded in the final treaty text. The Centre's efforts also extended to broader IP norm-setting activities, where it continued to advocate for a more equitable global IP framework. By providing technical assistance and strategic guidance, the Centre helped maintain momentum on key issues, despite the challenges of achieving consensus among WIPO members. These activities have had a lasting impact on the global IP landscape, showing the Centre's role as an advocate for developing countries in international IP negotiations.

BIODIVERSITY

The Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ treaty) entered into force in June 2023, and is open for signature up to 20 September 2025. By keeping close collaboration with the Group of 77 (G77) and China negotiators in New York on the BBNJ treaty, the Centre had been able to provide developing countries elements for the adopted treaty, including with respect to access and benefit sharing and intellectual property.

A preparatory commission was established and met for the first time in June 2024 for the convening of the first meeting of the BBNJ Conference of the Parties (COP). Capacity-building and technical assistance for the implementation of the Agreement, and the establishment and funding of subsidiary bodies, in particular the Access and Benefit-Sharing Committee and the Capacity-Building and Transfer of Marine Technology Committee, are currently priority issues for developing countries that the South Centre is monitoring.

Advisory support was provided to developing countries regarding the acceptance or ratification of the BBNJ treaty. The South Centre published a note to recommend countries to make [statements concerning intellectual property rights \(IPRs\)](#) at the time of signature and/or on ratification of the BBNJ, for a correct interpretation of how the issue of IPRs should be dealt with in the context of the BBNJ implementation.

Concerning the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Nagoya Protocol, the main development in the first half of 2024 was the meetings of subsidiary bodies, namely the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA 26) and the Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI 4). These bodies worked to advance texts for decision by the COP in November, though there were still significant divergence on various issues, including on advancing the monitoring framework for the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), and financing.

The key issues that were on the agenda of the COP concern progress on the preparation of targets and updating of national biodiversity strategies and action plans by Parties in line with the GBF, capacity-building, technical and scientific cooperation, how to ensure that benefit sharing is derived from the use of digital sequence information on genetic resources, resource mobilization and financial mechanisms, the implementation of Article 8(j) and related provisions, regulating synthetic biology, and the linkage of biodiversity and health and of biodiversity and climate change. The South Centre monitored and participated remotely in meetings addressing these issues during this period.

In the context of the negotiations concerning the development of a multilateral access and benefit sharing system for pathogens of pandemic potential, the South Centre also organized briefings and made textual suggestions to developing country delegations to ensure alignment in the World Health Organization (WHO) negotiations with the existing framework on access and benefit sharing of genetic resources in the CBD/the Nagoya Protocol.

Several publications during this period provide in depth analysis of the various issues, including an analysis of the [new Global Biodiversity Framework](#) under the CBD, and research on the interconnected threats to global sustainability, with a focus on [deforestation, traditional knowledge, and biopiracy](#). A report was published on an expert workshop on identifying [legal challenges for farmers' innovation](#) that was organized at the Centre for Private and Economic Law, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, in collaboration with the South Centre and Université Catholique de Louvain.

The South Centre has also provided negotiators in New York and in Geneva advice, briefings and analyses on biodiversity issues that cut across various multilateral fora, including UNCLOS, the CBD and its Nagoya Protocol, the WHO, the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), among others.



Photo credit: UN Biodiversity

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

The South Centre has remained steadfast in its efforts to advance the interests of developing countries in international trade, providing extensive Member-driven technical support and strategic guidance. The Centre engaged in a broad array of activities that spanned agriculture, fisheries subsidies, digital trade, World Trade Organization (WTO) reform, and climate-related trade policies. These efforts aimed at empowering countries of the Global South to navigate complex trade negotiations and advocate for equitable outcomes that align with their developmental priorities.

World Trade Organization and the Thirteenth Ministerial Conference

The 13th Ministerial Conference (MC13) of the WTO, held in Abu Dhabi in February 2024, represented a pivotal moment for global trade governance. The conference underscored the ongoing divide between developed and developing countries, highlighting the pressing need for more equitable trade rules. It also shed light on the diverse and sometimes conflicting interests within the Global South, while emphasizing the increasing challenges of achieving consensus to reach meaningful outcomes. The South Centre actively supported member states during the conference. Its online presence also amplified its impact, offering real-time updates and expert insights during the meetings.

The South Centre conducted preparatory meetings with negotiators, delivered timely legal text and in-depth analyses on critical negotiation texts circulating. The South Centre also prepared comprehensive analytical notes and key messages for trade ministers, ensuring that they were well-equipped with the necessary information to advocate for their national interests during MC13.

The South Centre actively contributed to the negotiations surrounding the WTO MC13 Outcome Document by

providing detailed comments and legal texts on critical areas such as Technology Transfer, Environment, Sustainable Development, Crisis Response, Development and the reaffirmation of WTO principles. These contributions contributed to shape the document to better align with the developmental goals and concerns of developing countries. Additionally, the Centre provided specific analyses and text proposals on the Group of 90 (G90) Special and Differential Treatment (S&DT) proposals and the draft Development Declaration on Technical Barriers to Trade and Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures.

Recognizing the importance of environmental issues, the South Centre also advised member states on the Trade and Environment Declaration, providing guidance to ensure that their perspectives were well-represented in this important area.

The South Centre has been deeply engaged in providing technical support to its member states on a range of issues related to trade and development. The Centre engaged, *inter alia*, in a critical discussion on Dispute Settlement (DS) Reform, a key area of concern for many developing countries. By offering strategic insights and technical recommendations, the Centre supported its members in navigating the complexities of DS reform, advocating for a system that is fair, accessible, and responsive to the needs of developing countries.

During the reporting period, the South Centre provided substantial technical support and strategic guidance to developing countries for the negotiations at the WTO on various issues:

- Agriculture and Food Security
- Fisheries Subsidies
- E-commerce and Digital Trade
- General WTO Negotiations and Governance





Photo credit: WTO/Prime Vision

The South Centre had provided detailed comparisons of relevant texts and proposals, offering critical insights that helped developing countries assess the implications and refine their negotiation positions. It convened and facilitated multiple brainstorming meetings aimed at advancing negotiations. The South Centre engaged in bilateral discussions with Members, providing tailored recommendations to strengthen their positions in the negotiations. In response to the pressing need for a commitment to Agriculture negotiations, the Centre crafted a draft WTO Declaration on Agriculture, which served as a foundation for further discussions and negotiations. It also organized and participated in State of Play meetings that reviewed the status of Agriculture and Fisheries negotiations. These meetings were vital in assessing progress and adjusting strategies in real-time to maximize the effectiveness of developing countries' participation.

The South Centre provided technical support by preparing draft negotiating texts on the Work Programme on E-commerce and the moratorium on electronic transmissions at MC13. Our comprehensive commentary on the MC13 Decision (Policy Brief No. 130 "[Unpacking the WTO MC13 Decision on the Work Programme on Electronic Commerce](#)") further assisted developing countries in understanding the implications of the decisions and refining their negotiation strategies.

Moreover, the Centre contributed to broader WTO governance discussions by providing comments on the Retreat on WTO Decision Making and the Way Forward, preparing crucial documents that shaped the dialogue on institutional reforms.

Agriculture

One of the Centre's major areas of focus has been agriculture, a cornerstone of many developing economies. The South Centre provided comprehensive technical assistance to countries engaged in WTO agricultural negotiations, offering detailed analysis on

key issues such as the Facilitator-led process to reinvigorate the negotiations, farm subsidies, public stockholding for food security purposes, emerging issues on sustainable agriculture, and export restrictions. In preparation for the upcoming Ministerial Conference (MC14), the Centre supported delegations in crafting cohesive strategies and submissions that addressed their concerns regarding food security and climate resilience. This included preparing responses to major proposals, drafting key messages for workshops, and providing advisory services during bilateral and multilateral meetings. The Centre's capacity-building efforts also extended to training sessions for trade officials, equipping them with the tools needed to engage effectively in negotiations and advocate for their national and regional interests.

The South Centre actively collaborated with regional stakeholders to strengthen South-South cooperation on food security, leveraging partnerships with the [Global Network of Export-Import Banks and Development Finance Institutions](#) (G-NEXID) to advance shared objectives. Through the G-NEXID-South Centre established Working Group on Food Security, the Centre contributed to building frameworks for collective action. At a G-NEXID workshop focused on agriculture value-chain financing, the Centre outlined a forward-looking roadmap. These contributions emphasized the importance of regional coordination and innovative financing mechanisms in addressing food security challenges across the Global South.

WTO Fisheries Subsidies Negotiations

During the reporting period, the South Centre intensified its efforts to support developing countries in the complex negotiations on fisheries subsidies at the WTO. These negotiations are critical, as they aim to eliminate harmful subsidies that contribute to overfishing while ensuring that the livelihoods of small-scale and artisanal fishers in developing countries are protected. The Centre's work focused on providing technical and legal support, building coalitions among developing countries, and crafting solutions to bring the negotiations to fruition. The Centre also provided legal and procedural guidance during the negotiations.

A key aspect of the Centre's engagement was the organization of a dedicated meeting to discuss developing country proposals, with the objective of bridging divergences and fostering a unified approach. This meeting brought together stakeholders from across the Global South to align their positions and strengthen their negotiating capacity. Recognizing the diversity of interests among developing countries, the Centre facilitated discussions that helped clarify priorities, identify commonalities, and craft cohesive strategies for advancing their collective interests.

The Centre also played a role in contributing to the African Group's proposals on fisheries subsidies, ensuring that the unique challenges faced by African coastal countries were prominently reflected. By providing detailed inputs on issues such as exemptions for artisanal fishers and the treatment of subsidies for developing countries, the Centre helped bolster the African Group's negotiating position. These contributions were complemented by the Centre's [presentation](#) at the WTO Public Forum on 'Landing the Catch - Fulfilling the UN SDG 14.6. mandate on overfishing and overcapacity', where it emphasized the importance of arriving at equitable outcomes in the negotiations. It highlighted the importance of balancing sustainability goals with the developmental needs of the Global South, particularly for small-scale and artisanal fishers. The Centre critically examined whether the proposed text met the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14.6 mandate, addressing harmful subsidies while safeguarding the livelihoods of vulnerable communities. This engagement reinforced the Centre's commitment to promoting fair and inclusive trade rules in global fisheries.

To further strengthen its technical foundation, the Centre conducted detailed analyses of the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) statistics on marine fish capture production and compiled relevant data on fisheries to support developing countries in making evidence-based arguments. This data-driven approach enabled member states to articulate their concerns and substantiate their proposals. It prepared elements for responses to the Chair's communication during "Fish Week" and offered comments on draft templates for notifications to the Committee on Fisheries Subsidies. These technical inputs were essential to help developing countries navigate the procedural complexities of the negotiations and ensure that their compliance obligations remained manageable.

Comments on a developed country proposal and an overview of member proposals on the Chair's text further supported member states in refining their negotiating positions. A commentary on the legal implications of the proposed agreement aimed at providing additional clarity on the subject to members.

Development

The South Centre reinforced its commitment to advancing the development priorities of the Global South through strategic engagements, capacity-building initiatives, and research-driven engagement. The Centre's focus on *WTO and Development* issues was evident in its efforts to amplify the role of the WTO Committee on Trade and Development (CTD). Through the preparation of key messages for members' consultations and targeted proposals, the Centre championed the inclusion of development-oriented policies within WTO frameworks. Additionally, our review and commentary on the Group of Twenty (G20) Principles on Trade and Sustainable Development contributed to integrate the priorities of developing countries into global discussions, positioning trade as a tool for achieving the SDGs.

Capacity building remained a cornerstone of our work, with significant efforts directed at strengthening the negotiation capacities of member states. The Centre delivered training sessions for MOFCOM (Ministry of Commerce, People's Republic of China) officials on development strategies in the WTO, and for Indian Trade Services officers on the state of play in the WTO. In an example of tailored support, the Centre prepared a narrative note to safeguard one African country's interests in the European Union (EU)-Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA) Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), reflecting our commitment to protecting national interests within broader trade agreements (see also below). Furthermore, a concept note on bolstering the African Group's trade negotiation capacities highlighted our strategic vision to empower African countries in advancing collective development goals.

The South Centre also engaged in important dialogues, including the [Civil Society Forum](#) on Aligning Investment Policy Frameworks to Climate and Sustainable Development Goals. In these discussions, the Centre contributed to aligning investment policy frameworks with climate and development objectives, highlighting



the importance of equitable and sustainable investment practices. Additionally, we delved into the policy implications of the WTO Investment Facilitation for Development Agreement, offering insights on how it could impact, in particular, African countries. The Centre also examined the EU-Angola Sustainable Development Agreement, assessing its potential to influence investment flows and development trajectories in the region. These engagements reinforced our commitment to ensuring that trade and investment policies support inclusive growth and sustainable development across the Global South.

The South Centre participated as a speaker in the United Nations Trade and Development (UNCTAD)'s online course on trade policy frameworks, addressing emerging trade policy issues beyond tariffs with a particular focus on the role of industrial policy in fostering development. The Centre emphasized how industrial policy can drive structural transformation, enhance productive capacities, and promote technological advancements in developing countries. Drawing on UNCTAD's Trade Preferences Outlook 2024, the discussion also explored how non-reciprocal trade preferences and strategic market access cooperation can complement industrial policy, enabling countries to diversify exports, integrate into global value chains, and achieve sustainable development goals.

WTO Reform

The South Centre provided targeted advice on procedural reforms and member-driven proposals to address accessibility challenges in the WTO dispute settlement system. It emphasized simplifying procedures, reducing costs, and enhancing transparency to ensure developing countries can participate effectively. The Centre also supported capacity-building efforts and analyzed reform proposals to safeguard the interests of the Global South, advocating for a fairer and more inclusive dispute settlement mechanism.

In addition, on promoting technology transfer, the Centre prepared a proposal for the establishment of a Technology Transfer Review Mechanism. This initiative aims to enhance the capacity of developing countries to access and utilize advanced technologies critical for industrialization and digital transformation. Additionally, the Centre prepared a comprehensive note to support work in the WTO Working Group on Trade and Transfer of Technology, emphasizing the importance of equitable technology-sharing mechanisms in bridging global inequalities.

Trade-related Illicit Financial Flows

The South Centre advanced proposals on addressing trade-related illicit financial flows (IFFs) within the WTO framework. Recognizing the detrimental impact of IFFs on developing countries' fiscal resources and economic stability, the Centre proposed the establishment of a dedicated work programme to tackle these issues comprehensively. This initiative aims to provide a platform for member states to collaboratively address systemic gaps in global trade systems that facilitate financial leakages, including trade misinvoicing, tax evasion, and money laundering.

In addition, the Centre developed a detailed text for a decision to establish a Working Group on Trade-Related Illicit

Financial Flows. This working group would focus on identifying best practices, strengthening regulatory frameworks, and promoting transparency in trade transactions. The Centre's efforts reflect its commitment to ensuring that the global trading system supports sustainable development by curbing financial losses that disproportionately affect developing economies.

The European Union-Eastern and Southern Africa Economic Partnership Agreement

The European Union-Eastern and Southern Africa Economic Partnership Agreement (EU-ESA EPA) sets rules for trade between the European Union and a coalition of five Eastern and Southern African countries: Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles, Zimbabwe, and Comoros. Initially signed in 2009 and provisionally applied since May 2012, the EU-ESA EPA is part of a broader initiative under the Cotonou Agreement, which guides the EU's trade negotiations with African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) countries. The agreement seeks to deepen economic ties by granting preferential access to EU markets for ESA countries, while simultaneously lowering tariffs on EU exports to the region. In recent years, the scope of the EPA has evolved to encompass "new issues," including trade and sustainable development, as well as digital trade—areas expected to set precedents for future EPAs across Africa.

In response to these developments, the South Centre has undertaken a comprehensive analysis of four critical chapters within the ESA-EPAs: Intellectual Property, Digital Trade, Subsidies, and Trade and Sustainable Development. This work aims at equipping member states with the insights and strategic recommendations needed to navigate complex negotiations, ensuring that the agreements are aligned with their developmental priorities. By providing this expert analysis, the South Centre contributed to empowering ESA countries to negotiate more effectively and to implement the EPA in ways that promote sustainable and inclusive growth.

South-South Cooperation in Bilateral and Multilateral Engagements

Through strategic bilateral and multilateral engagements on the trade work, the South Centre has actively fostered South-South cooperation, working closely with member states and key stakeholders to advance common interests. These efforts include bilateral meetings with various ambassadors and missions, where critical issues such as agricultural policy, dispute settlement reform, and collaborative initiatives were discussed. The South Centre provided tailored recommendations based on member requests.

Strategic Initiatives and Contributions to Global Negotiations

The South Centre addressed other issues central to the interests of developing countries. This included the development of a strategic framework on enhancing trade and climate engagement; and a template for a work programme on cross-border remittances. Additionally, the Centre developed ideas for the revitalization of work in the Working Group on Trade, Debt, and Finance; as well as spearheading the establishment of a Working Group on Food Security among Development Finance Institutions and Export-Import Banks in the Global South.

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT

For developing countries, a priority continues to be the bridging of the digital divide and strengthening capacities to harness new technologies and connectivity through upgrading of infrastructure, skills and education. Policies and regulatory frameworks must be context specific, such as on data privacy and data flows, and adaptable in light of the rapid pace of technological change including generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its effects. At the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), there is continued discussion on the future of governance of Artificial Intelligence, with one resolution being adopted in May on AI safety led by the United States, and another resolution was under negotiation, on international cooperation on AI, led by China (later adopted in July). The South Centre provided analysis on the [first resolution of the UNGA on Artificial Intelligence](#) as well as of the second resolution of the UNGA on Artificial Intelligence focused on enhancing [international cooperation for capacity-building on AI](#).

The South Centre continued to monitor discussions and new regulatory developments at country level, undertake research and participate in multiple fora on digital governance including the negotiations of the United Nations (UN) Global Digital Compact (GDC) adopted by the UNGA in September (the Centre gave [inputs on the third revised draft of the GDC](#)), the discussions in the United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD), on digital health in the Group of Twenty (G20) Working Group on Health, World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) Conversations on intellectual property and frontier technologies, AI resolutions in the UNGA, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) AI Ethics work, digital regulation and governance issues in the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the AI for Good Summit held in Geneva in May 2024. On the sides to these meetings, the Centre discussed areas for cooperation with Ministries of member countries.

The Centre engaged in collaborations to further its digital development agenda. At the IT for Change side event during CSTD Working Group on Data Governance and AI, the Centre contributed insights into how governance structures can address the digital divide, supporting inclusive and equitable development across the Global South. Complementing these initiatives, the South Centre began work on a policy brief analyzing the European Union (EU)-Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA) Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) Digital Trade Chapter, assessing its alignment with development priorities. This research aims to provide actionable recommendations to member states, ensuring that regional trade agreements reflect the interests of developing countries and promote sustainable growth. Through these efforts, the Centre continues to drive inclusive digital development and foster equitable participation in the global digital economy.

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) marks a historic achievement in Africa's quest for economic integration, with the ambitious goal of establishing the world's largest free trade area by uniting 54 African countries. As digital trade emerges as a critical engine of economic growth, the formulation of the AfCFTA Digital Trade Protocol has become a cornerstone of this broader framework. The Digital Trade Protocol aims to harmonize regulations across member states, streamline cross-border digital transactions, and position African countries to compete effectively in the global digital economy. However, the diversity in digital infrastructure and regulatory environments across the continent presents significant challenges, making the negotiations both intricate and sensitive. Ensuring that the protocol fosters inclusive growth while respecting national digital sovereignty is paramount. The South Centre has had an active role in this process by providing technical expertise and drafting negotiating texts to support African delegates to advocate for their countries' interests. The analyses and contributions to the



development of the Digital Trade Protocol, along with comments on its annexes, have contributed to shaping a framework that balances regional cooperation with national priorities. Additionally, the South Centre has convened strategic meetings with some African delegates, facilitating collaboration and building consensus on key issues.

The South Centre actively engaged in discussions on the World Trade Organization (WTO) e-commerce moratorium on customs duties for electronic transmissions, a critical issue for developing countries facing revenue losses and diminished policy space in the digital economy. The Centre prepared detailed commentary on the WTO's mapping of quantitative studies related to the moratorium, highlighting the fiscal implications and addressing gaps in existing analyses, particularly the unequal impact on developing economies. This work aimed to equip member states with insights to advocate for evidence-based decisions that preserve their ability to implement national policies in the digital era.

During a WTO Information Session on the moratorium, the Centre also responded to member inquiries, clarifying technical issues and offering strategies to mitigate long-term trade and policy challenges. The Centre emphasized the importance of balancing global trade objectives with the need to safeguard the fiscal stability and policy autonomy of developing countries. These contributions underscore the South Centre's dedication to ensuring that the evolving digital trade framework is equitable and inclusive for the Global South.

The South Centre has continued to collaborate with a network of academic research institutions from the North and South, led by American University, Washington School of Law, and participated in the annual meeting of the global network of experts on the right to research and copyright in June in Washington DC that dealt, *inter alia*, with the intersection of AI, copyright and information law.

The discussions leading up to the GDC have highlighted the digital divide and the need for an inclusive and equitable digital future. Developing countries' access to digital technologies for education, health, agriculture and other activities is crucial for their development. A robust national policy space is needed to regulate the digital economy (see also the section on taxation in this Report).

As part of the preparations for the adoption of the Global Digital Compact and the Summit of the Future, the South Centre has underscored the importance of addressing the digital divide and ensuring that the benefits of digital transformation are shared equitably. The Centre has strongly warned about the implications of a multi-stakeholder approach to digital governance as it may not sufficiently recognise developing countries' diverse needs and interests. It continues to favour developing countries' access to digital technologies and data, and robust policy space to regulate the digital economy.

The South Centre published an [article](#) that considered some of the shortcomings of the Zero draft of the GDC, particularly in attaining equitable international data governance and democratic participation in a digital multistakeholder scenario to avoid data monopolies and ensure inclusive policy-making processes, while recentering the objectives of Internet governance for inclusive and development-oriented information societies. The Centre also published a [research paper](#) on the Pact for the Future and organized a [dialogue](#) with the Group of 77 (G77) and China on the Summit of the Future, to analyse and share ideas on the risks and opportunities for developing countries.

The South Centre also provided inputs to the First Meeting of the open consultations on the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS)+20 High-Level Event 2025 held on 18 November 2024.



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