



**ADB–WORLD BANK
TRADE FORUM 2026**

**Trade Policy in a Fragmented World: Accessions,
Industrial Policy, and the New Multilateralism**

12–14 May 2026 | Siam Kempinski Hotel | Bangkok, Thailand

Organized by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and World Bank Group

*In collaboration with the IMD Business School, and
Paris School of Economics (i-MIP)*

BACKGROUND

The global trading system is undergoing its most profound transformation since the founding of the GATT. Trade has not shrunk - it has reorganized into geopolitical blocs, with rising fragmentation driven by the restructuring of value chains, the proliferation of industrial policies, and systemic trade policy uncertainty. For Asia and the Pacific, which accounts for more than 40 percent of world trade, the stakes are high. Both the path and the cost of inaction are significant.



The Trade Forum—co-organized by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the World Bank Group, with support from IMD Business School, and the Institute for Macroeconomic and International Policies (i-MIP) at the Paris School of Economics—brings together trade ministers and senior officials from across Asia-Pacific, leading academic economists, and international trade experts to discuss the new geopolitics of multilateral trade and their implications for value chain integration and economic resilience.

The Forum focuses on the strategic link between trade policies and industrial policies and their role in supporting sustainable development and integration into global value chains. Trade policy alone is often insufficient to capture emerging opportunities in global and regional markets. At the same time, industrial policies that are not well aligned with trade frameworks risk inefficiencies, protectionist bias, or limited scalability.

Specific sessions will focus on (i) enhancing market access through WTO and regional agreement accessions, by improving trade regulatory infrastructures and trade facilitation supportive of green trade; and (ii) leveraging market access by designing effective industrial policies, including by developing special economic zones, and maximizing the benefit of critical minerals for economic development.

The Forum provides a platform for knowledge exchange, policy dialogue, and the presentation of new analytical tools including the ADB Trade and Climate Portal and the SNOW model.

PROGRAMME

DAY 1: TUESDAY, 12 MAY	
08:45–09:00	REGISTRATION
09:00–10:30	OPENING PLENARY SESSION
	<p>Session Lead: Mr. Julian Clarke Senior Regional Cooperation Specialist, ADB</p> <p>Welcome Remarks Mr. Yevgeniy Zhukov Director General, ADB</p> <p>Ms. Melinda Good Division Director, Thailand and Myanmar, World Bank Group</p> <p>Opening Words Mr. Richard Baldwin Professor of International Economics, IMD Business School</p> <p>Keynote Address H.E. Filipus Nino Pereira Minister, Ministry of Commerce and Industry Timor Leste</p> <p>Special Statement Dr. Parnpree Bahiddha-nukara Head Advisor and Former Minister Ministry of Foreign Affairs</p> <p>Mr. Allan Gepty Undersecretary, Department of Trade and Industry Republic of the Philippines</p> <p>Mr. Aziz Nazar Deputy Minister Ministry of Industry and New Technologies, Tajikistan</p>
10:30–10:45	 GROUP PHOTOGRAPH Main Foyer
10:45–11:00	 MORNING COFFEE BREAK
11:00–12:30	SESSION 1: BUILDING RESILIENCE IN AN ERA OF STRUCTURAL TRADE UNCERTAINTY
	The global trading system has faced unprecedented levels of trade policy uncertainty in recent years, affecting investment, trade flows and supply chains. High trade policy uncertainty has been associated with weaker trade growth,

	<p>delayed investment, and the gradual reconfiguration of global supply chains. This session will discuss strategic implications of this new environment and explore practical strategies to build resilience.</p> <p>Session Lead: Mr. Richard Baldwin IMD Business School</p> <p>Keynote: Mr. Denis Medvedev, Global Director for Trade, Competition and Business, World Bank</p> <p>Presenter: Mr. Bernard Hoekman Professor of International Economics, European University</p> <p>Panelists: Mr. Lionel Fontagne, Director Paris School of Economics (i-MIP)</p> <p>Mr. Jong Woo Kang, Director, Economic Research and Development Impact Department</p> <p><i>Digital Q&A, followed by plenary discussion</i></p>
12:30–14:00	 LUNCH
14.00–15:30	<p>SESSION 2: THREE FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR GLOBAL TRADE Vice-Ministerial Plenary</p>
	<p>In a world where the multilateral trading system is under stress, what pathways lie ahead? This session explores three potential futures for global trade: (i) a 'porous blocs' model where regional groupings trade between themselves through managed access; (ii) rival geopolitical hegemonies forcing countries to align; and (iii) a 'light multilateralism' among like-minded groupings outside the WTO framework.</p> <p>Session Lead: Mr. Bernard Hoekman, Professor of International Economics, European University</p> <p>Presenter: Mr. Simon Evenett Professor of Geopolitics and Strategy, IMD Business School</p> <p>Panelists: Mr. Allan Gepty Undersecretary, Department of Trade and Industry Republic of the Philippines</p> <p>Mr. K.A. Vimalenthirarajah Secretary, Ministry of Trade, Commerce, Food Security and Co-operative Development, Sri Lanka</p>

	<p>Mr. Aziz Nazar Deputy Minister, Ministry of Industry and New Technologies Tajikistan</p> <p>Mr. Riley Mesepitu Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Commerce, Industries, Labour, and Immigration, Solomon Islands</p> <p>This session will be followed by a 30-minute Guided Group Brainstorming designed to identify the main challenges faced by countries in the region and their main needs.</p> <p><i>Final Q&A</i></p>
16:00	NETWORKING RECEPTION (venue TBC)
DAY 2: WEDNESDAY, 13 MAY	
09:00–10:30	SESSION 3: AI AND TRADE — TECHNOLOGY, PRODUCTIVITY, AND THE FUTURE OF TRADE POLICY
	<p>This session will examine the transformative impact of artificial intelligence on trade patterns, productivity, and growth, with a focus on Asia and the Pacific. Drawing on new research including the World Bank’s 2026 World Development Report on AI, the World Trade Organization’s 2025 World Trade Report on AI and the World Bank’s East Asia and the Pacific Economic Update, the session will explore AI’s implications for productivity, global value chains and industrial policy.</p> <p>Session Lead: Ms. Katherine Stapleton Senior Economist, World Bank Group</p> <p>Presenters: Mr. Eddy Bekkers Research Economist, World Trade Organization</p> <p>Mr. Alessandro Barattieri Senior Economist, World Bank Group</p> <p>Panelists: Mr. Gonzalo Varela Lead Economist, World Bank Group</p>
10:30–10:45	 MORNING COFFEE BREAK
10:45–12:30	SESSION 4: TRADE AGREEMENT ACCESSIONS IN ASIA-PACIFIC — WTO ACCESSION, CPTPP AND RCEP
	<p>This session combines ADB’s WTO, CPTPP, and RCEP accession work into a comprehensive overview of the trade agreement accession landscape in Asia-Pacific. The session opens with a keynote on Uzbekistan’s WTO accession</p>

process, followed by country presentations and structured discussion covering CPTPP (Cambodia, Philippines), RCEP (Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Thailand), and WTO accession priorities. Key legal, regulatory, and capacity issues are explored with a view to strengthening ADB's TA program.

Session Lead: Mr. Paolo Vergano
Trade Legal Advisor (ADB Consultant); and Partner, Fratini Vergano – European Lawyers, Brussels

Presenter: Mr. Azizbek A. Urunov, Representative of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan on WTO Issues, Chief Negotiator

Panelists: Mr. Buavanh Vilavong
Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Industry and Commerce, Lao PDR

Mr. K.A. Vimalenthirarajah
Secretary, Ministry of Trade, Commerce, Food Security and Co-operative Development, Sri Lanka

Digital brainstorming on national needs and challenges to join trade agreements, followed by roundtable discussion.

12:30–13:30

 LUNCH

13:30–15:00

SESSION 5: INDUSTRIAL POLICY IN A FRAGMENTED TRADE LANDSCAPE

Industrial policy has returned to center stage globally. This session examines the compatibility of industrial policy instruments with WTO rules and regional trade commitments; the role of special economic zones and eco-industrial parks; and practical experience from Central Asia. The session draws on ongoing ADB technical assistance programs in Uzbekistan *and* Tajikistan.


Session Lead: Mr. James Villafuerte
Regional Lead Economist, ADB

Presenters: Mr. Simon Evenett, IMD Business School
Mr. Tristan Reed, Principal Economist, World Bank

Panelists: Mr. Aziz Nazar
Deputy Minister, Ministry of Industry and New Technologies
Tajikistan

Mr. Adam Jakubik
Economist
International Monetary Fund

	<p>Ms. Anabel Marin Senior Research Fellow, Institute of Development Studies</p> <p>Mr. Giulio Zanetti ADB Consultant, Intellectual Property and Trade Lawyer</p> <p><i>Digital brainstorming on main challenges and needs relating to the establishment of national industrial policies, followed by plenary discussion.</i></p>
15:00–15:15	☉ AFTERNOON COFFEE BREAK
15:15–16:30	SESSION 6: NON-TARIFF MEASURES AND ENVIRONMENTAL GOODS — MEASUREMENT, POLICY, AND THE ADB TRADE AND CLIMATE PORTAL
	<p>Non-tariff measures (NTMs) have become the dominant source of effective trade costs in Asia. This session presents new methodological advances in quantifying NTMs, with a demonstration of the ADB Trade and Climate Portal— a new tool for tariff simulation, NTM analysis, and trade-climate linkage modeling.</p> <p>Session Lead: Mr. Lionel Fontagne, Paris School of Economics (i-MIP)</p> <p>Presenter: Mr. Julian Clarke Senior Regional Cooperation Specialist, ADB</p> <p>Panelists: Mr. Fabio Artuso ADB Consultant (NTM Quantification and Trade-Climate Linkages)</p> <p>Ms. Elena Antoni Climate Change Specialist, Climate Change, Resilience and Environment Cluster, CCSD, ADB</p> <p>Mr. Gianluca Santoni Research Economist, Paris School of Economics (i-MIP)</p> <p><i>Digital Q&A, followed by plenary discussion</i></p>
DAY 3: THURSDAY, 14 MAY	
09:00–10:30	SESSION 7: HOW TO MAKE THE LEAP TO HIGH INCOME: USING COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGE TO BECOME AN OECD MEMBER
	CASE STUDY: BUILDING THAILAND’S FUTURE TODAY — ADB/WORLD BANK RESEARCH SOFT LAUNCH
	The World Bank and ADB present new collaborative research on Thailand's trade and GVC transformation for the World Bank flagship report <i>Building Thailand's Future Today</i> . This research examines Thailand's path from upper-

	<p>middle to high-income status, with a focus on the automotive/EV sector, electronics, and advanced manufacturing. The session draws on new quantitative models (SNOW) and innovation-export analysis, with implications for Thailand's CPTPP accession and industrial upgrading strategy.</p> <p>Session Lead: Ms. Daria Taglioni Lead Economist, World Bank Group (virtual)</p> <p>Presenters: Ms. Katherine Stapleton Senior Economist, World Bank Group</p> <p>Ms. Csilla Lakatos Senior Economist, World Bank Group</p> <p>Panelists: Mr. Darnp Sukontasap Advisor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Thailand</p> <p>Mr. Neil Foster-McGregor Principal Economist, Asian Development Bank</p> <p>Mr. Gianluca Santoni Paris School of Economics (i-MIP)</p> <p>Mr. Julian Clarke ADB</p> <p><i>Digital brainstorming on identifying the comparative advantage that could lift countries to high income status, followed by plenary discussion.</i></p>
10:30–10:45	 MORNING COFFEE BREAK
10:45–12:15	<p>SESSION 8: VALUE CHAIN UPGRADING FOR ASIA PACIFIC'S RESOURCE-RICH COUNTRIES</p>
	<p>This session examines the strategic importance of critical minerals for Asia-Pacific economies, the emerging regulatory landscape, and the opportunities for resource-rich ADB member countries to move up the value chain. The session will also introduce the broader critical minerals work program being developed collaboratively between ADB and World Bank.</p> <p>Session Lead: Mr. Edimon Ginting Senior Advisor, Office of the Director General and Officer-in-Charge, Regional Cooperation and Integration, and Trade, CCSD, ADB</p> <p>Presenter: Ms. Anabel Marin, Institute of Development Studies</p>

	<p>Panelists:</p> <p>Mr. Farrukh Yusufzoda First Deputy Chairman State Committee on Investments and State Property Management, Tajikistan</p> <p>Ms. Rose Marie Mendoza Chief Investments Specialist Resource-Based Industries Service-Energy Division Board of Investments, Philippines</p> <p>Mr. Kwang Jo (KJ) Jeong Senior Regional Cooperation Specialist CCRC, CCSD, ADB</p> <p><i>Digital brainstorming on countries' needs, followed by plenary discussion.</i></p>
12:15–13:30	🕒 LUNCH
13:30–14:30	SESSION 9: INTERACTIVE SYNTHESIS, POLICY MESSAGES, AND WAY FORWARD
	<p>Breakout groups to discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key findings and policy messages from the three-day Forum for the reform agenda • Specific areas where ADB and WBG could provide technical and financial assistance to support domestic reform processes. <p>Group work and plenary discussion moderated by ADB Team.</p>
14:30–15:35	<p>WRAP-UP AND CLOSING</p> <p>Session Lead: Mr. Yevgeniy Zhukov, Director General, ADB</p> <p>Presenter: Mr. Simon Evenett, IMD Business School</p> <p>Synthesis Remarks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Alessandro Barattieri, Senior Economist, World Bank Group • Ms. Katherine Stapleton, Senior Economist, World Bank Group • Mr. Edimon Ginting, Senior Advisor, ADB
15:35–16:00	☕ AFTERNOON COFFEE BREAK