



Webinar report: “Investment facilitation: transparency and streamlining of administrative procedures”

The second webinar for government and IPA officials on “**Practical issues regarding transparency and streamlining of administrative procedures**”, co-organized by the International Trade Centre (ITC), the German Development Institute/ Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE), the World Association of Investment Promotion Agencies (WAIPA), and the World Economic Forum (WEF), took place on 17 March 2021, from 14:00 to 15:00 Geneva time (Central European Time). The webinar hosted about 120 participants. The webinar was held in the framework of the Investment Facilitation for Development [project](#), jointly implemented by the ITC and DIE.

This was the second webinar in a series meant to assist investment promotion agencies (IPAs) and policymakers strengthen their capacity to facilitate higher foreign direct investment (FDI) flows, especially investment flows that directly contribute to sustainable development. The second webinar focused on practical issues regarding transparency and streamlining of administrative procedures, including movement of personnel and digital tools that can assist with addressing such issues.

The webinar was opened by Quan Zhao, Trade Policy Advisor, Division for Market Development, ITC. The webinar was moderated by Matthew Stephenson, Policy and Community Lead, International Trade and Investment, WEF, and included the following speakers: Douglas Van Den Berghe, CEO NxtZones & FDI 4.0; Dushyant Thakor, Vice President, Invest India; Juliana Gómez, Director for Foreign Direct Investment, ProColombia; Marc Burrows, Global Head of Mobility Services, KPMG; and Markus Thill, President, Region Africa, Robert Bosch. Concluding remarks were made by Karl P. Sauvant, Resident Senior Fellow, Columbia University, Columbia Center on Sustainable Investment (CCSI).

The webinar’s programme is annexed to this report.

Highlights

I. Concrete investment facilitation measures that are important for transparency and streamlining of administrative procedures

Transparency of the investment regime and publication of rules and regulations: Being transparent about laws and regulations pertaining to FDI and the business climate is one of the basic means of investment promotion agencies (IPAs) and other governmental institutions seeking to facilitate FDI. It is a ‘bread-and-butter’ issue, and all IPAs provide a level of transparency, but transparency can be improved. In a survey carried out by the WEF, 90% of the investors said that

transparency is a key factor in their investment decisions. Governments should publish updated information on rules and regulations applicable to investors, including administrative requirements, timeframes, contact details of governmental institutions that should be involved in the process, eligibility criteria, fees, and contact details of IPA focal points. They should also provide clear and advanced notice of proposed regulatory changes and provide investors with time to comment on such changes. It is also important, if possible, that a specific contact person or project manager be assigned to each investor, to provide assistance in navigating through all the rules and regulations of the country, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises.

Streamlining administrative procedures: Another IPA bread-and-butter issue, concerns streamlined administrative procedures. This is important in a highly competitive global FDI market, given that there are more than 10,000 organizations seeking to attract FDI. In addition to being clear, administrative procedures need to be streamlined as much as possible consistent with achieving policy goals. This includes streamlining steps related to the approval process and other administrative requirements. The following investment facilitation measures were mentioned in this regard.

Silent consent: Silent consent administrative procedures provides that authorization is granted to investors when the competent authority fails to act within a specified time period, unless investors have been notified otherwise by authorities. Economies are increasingly adopting a silent consent approach (also known as ‘deemed approval’, for instance in India) to strengthen the investment climate. Without a silent consent measure, the risk is that administrative processes get stuck, the very opposite of facilitation.

Risk based approval system: Policymakers should consider risk-based assessment, whereby low-risk investment projects are approved with more limited, if any, need for assessment, while higher risk projects receive careful assessment. A risk-based approach is in line with widely accepted regulatory good practices, and has also been included as a provision in the Trade Facilitation Agreement.

Monitoring and tracking system: IPAs should establish a monitoring system that tracks investors’ applications and guide investors through the investment process.

“One-stop shops”: IPAs should aim to operate “one-stop shops”, to help investors interface with government departments. It was stated that many IPAs declare that they have one-stop-shop systems, but in reality, only 10%-15% of the IPAs worldwide have such programmes in operation. It was noted that, in the event that there is not an operating one-stop shop, a coordination mechanism should be enacted between governmental agencies both at the national and sub-national levels.

“Red carpet” treatment: Colombia has established a few mechanisms and initiatives to increase transparency and streamline administrative procedures. One of the main initiatives includes facilitating and expediting the establishment, operations and expansion of inventors’ operations, where such investments contribute to the growth and development of the country. Over 40 central government institutions are involved in such processes and are committed to provide red carpet services that include: responding to investor inquiries within a limited number of days, simplifying and expediting approval procedures, providing clear timeframes, providing assistance at the managerial level, and ensuring coordination among all the relevant governmental agencies to facilitate a smooth approval process.

Visas and entry permits: The entry and temporary stay of business people and investor personnel is a real challenge under restrictive practices in many countries. In this regard, the importance of clear, transparent, and also streamlined regulations with respect to the entry of people to the country is just as important as the immigration policy that is in place. It is unlikely that an investor will commit serious capital without being able to visit the investment destination, and without being able to easily visit subsequently to monitor and manage the investment.

Australia's global talent programme, which targets such future-focused sectors as space, medtech and cyber security, was mentioned as an important programme in promoting a transparent and streamlined path for highly talented people to establish themselves not just temporarily but permanently in the country if an investment is successful. It was mentioned that it was difficult to receive visas for professionals, especially young professionals; however, such entry permits are important for the success of an investment abroad, as young professionals need to gain experience with a company's operations in different locations, including the culture and regulatory environment.

II. Using technology to enhance transparency and streamline administrative procedures

Social media and IPA websites have become increasingly important, especially in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic. IPAs should make sure that all the information included on the agency's website is accurate and updated. In addition, many times investment facilitation measures are mentioned in broader publications that are put online, such as investor guides that tend to be outdated and include hundreds of pages, which makes it hard for investors to locate information relevant for them. IPAs should publish clear and targeted information on their websites, not only in the national language but also in English or other relevant languages, depending on the home country of the targeted investors. During the meeting, the importance of technology in enhancing transparency and streamlining of administrative procedures was emphasized through the following examples of technology tools that are operating in India.

The India Investment Grid (IIG): The IIG is an initiative of the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Ministry of Commerce, the Government of India and Invest India, and the National Investment Promotion and Facilitation Agency. The IIG provides an online platform that supports investment in India by showcasing investment opportunities across India. It connects potential investors to projects and key contacts. Most projects are government projects. There is a preliminary credibility check of the projects by the IPA, but afterwards investors are responsible for performing their own due diligence.

Invest India IPA website: India established its national investment promotion platform, Invest India, that clearly lays out FDI policies and requirements and stipulates the maximum number of days before an investor receives a response for each step of the administrative process. The website also aims to follow a "three-clicks rule", which means that in three clicks the investor gets to the information sought. In addition, the platform enables online inquiry services, with responses within 72 hours. The platform also includes COVID-19 updates and relevant resources for business aid.

III. Implementing investment facilitation measures and the need for technical assistance

IPAs can benefit from international benchmarking and by sharing best practices with respect to increasing transparency and streamlining administrative procedures. A WTO Investment Facilitation Framework for Development (IFF4D) could be a useful tool in providing such benchmarks and facilitating cooperation and exchange of best practices among IPAs. However, implementing multiple transparency and streamlining measures requires technical assistance. Such assistance is particularly important for least developed countries, but also for other developing countries. Hence, it would be very important for an IFF4D to include firm commitments to provide both financial support and technical assistance for the implementation of transparency and streamlining measures.



Webinar invitation

“Investment facilitation: transparency and streamlining of administrative procedures”

17 March 2021

Dear Colleagues,

On behalf of the International Trade Centre (ITC), the German Development Institute/ Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE), the World Association of Investment Promotion Agencies (WAIPA), and the World Economic Forum (WEF), we cordially invite you to a webinar on:

“Practical issues regarding transparency and streamlining of administrative procedures”

The webinar will take place on **17 March 2021, from 14:00 to 15:00 Geneva time** (Central European Time), 09:00 to 10:00 Eastern Standard Time, and 21:00 to 22:00 China Standard Time.

Please note that due to change in daylight savings time, the meeting will start at 14:00 CET rather than at 15:00 CET as originally indicated.

The webinar is being held in the framework of the Investment Facilitation for Development [project](#), jointly implemented by the ITC and DIE.

This is the 2nd webinar in a series meant to assist investment promotion agencies (IPAs) and policymakers strengthen their capacity to facilitate higher FDI flows, especially investment flows

that directly contribute as much as possible to development; it will also provide the opportunity to exchange experiences regarding investment facilitation, including with investors.

The 2nd webinar will focus on practical issues regarding **transparency and streamlining of administrative procedures, including movement of personnel and digital tools** that can assist with addressing such issues. The discussions will be informed by [*“An Inventory of Concrete Measures to Facilitate the Flow of Sustainable FDI: What? Why? How?”*](#).

You are warmly invited to share the invite with officials or firms who might be interested.

The webinar will be conducted in an interactive manner and allow for questions by participants.

The webinar will feature the following speakers:

Opening: Quan Zhao, Trade Policy Advisor, Division for Market Development, ITC

Moderator: Matthew Stephenson, Policy and Community Lead, International Trade and Investment, World Economic Forum

Experts and practitioners:

- **Douglas Van Den Berghe**, CEO NxtZones & FDI 4.0
- **Dushyant Thakor**, Vice President, Invest India
- **Juliana Gómez**, Director for Foreign Direct Investment, ProColombia
- **Marc Burrows**, Global Head of Mobility Services, KPMG
- **Markus Thill**, President, Africa, Robert Bosch

Concluding remarks: Karl P. Sauvant, Resident Senior Fellow, Columbia University, CCSI

To register for the event and receive the meeting-link details, please [register here](#).

The webinar will be delivered through Zoom.

We are looking forward to welcoming you at the webinar!

Best regards,

Rajesh Aggarwal, ITC; Axel Berger, DIE, Karl P. Sauvant, Columbia University/CCSI; Bostjan Skalar, WAIPA; Matthew Stephenson, WEF

Background material

Karl P. Sauvant, Matthew Stephenson, Khalil Hamdani, and Yardenne Kagan, “*An Inventory of Concrete Measures to Facilitate the Flow of Sustainable FDI: What? Why? How?*” (Geneva and Bonn: International Trade Centre and German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik), [available here](#).

Bios:

Marc Burrows

Marc Burrows is Head of Global Mobility Services, KPMG International and Partner KPMG in the UK. He started his career in Global Mobility Services for KPMG in Australia followed by 8 years with KPMG in Switzerland. He relocated to London to lead the UK Global Mobility Services practice in 2011 before becoming the Head of Global Mobility Services in 2016. He has spent his career working with clients to address the challenges of increasingly mobile employee populations. He advises companies and senior individuals across a range of issues from business traveler risk, incentive compensation management, global mobility policy and cross border taxation. He is a member of KPMG’s Global Tax and Legal Management Team.

Juliana Gómez

Juliana Gómez has been Director for Foreign Direct Investment at ProColombia since 2010. ProColombia is the government agency responsible for the commercial promotion of Colombia as direct foreign investment destination, foreign tourism and as a vendor of non-traditional goods and services. Over 400 projects with estimated investments of US\$7 billion have been supported by ProColombia between 2009 and 2020. She earned her bachelor’s degree in Business Administration from the Universidad Eafit in Medellin, and then went on to receive a master’s degree from the same university. Her career has long been linked to ProColombia, where she began to work in 2004 as an Exports Specialist to help Colombian SMEs become international players.

Karl P. Sauvant

Karl P. Sauvant introduced the idea of an International Support Program for Sustainable Investment Facilitation in the E15 Task Force on Investment Policy in 2015. From there, the proposal was taken forward in the WTO. He has written extensively on this subject (see <https://ssrn.com/author=2461782>), participated in various events relating to it and currently assists the ITC and DIE on a project on Investment Facilitation for Development. He retired in 2005 as Director of UNCTAD’s Investment Division and established, in 2006, what is now the Columbia Center on Sustainable Investment (CCSI). He stepped down as the Center’s Executive Director in 2012, to focus his work, as a CCSI Resident Senior Fellow, on teaching, research and writing.

Matthew Stephenson

Matthew Stephenson is Policy and Community Lead for International Trade and Investment at the World Economic Forum, where he manages the [Global Investment Policy and Practice](#) initiative. Previously, he worked at the IFC, where he led the workstream on outward FDI. He has also worked at the OECD on Africa and investment and served as a diplomat for the U.S. Department

of State, leading the economic team on Afghanistan and managing economic programs in the Middle East. He is a member of the T20 Task Force on Trade and Investment. He has a PhD from the Graduate Institute in Geneva, a master's from the Harvard Kennedy School and a bachelor's from Oxford University.

Dushyant Thakor

Dushyant Thakor is Vice President of Invest India, the country's national investment promotion agency, with which he has been involved since its inception. At Invest India he currently leads the following initiatives: (a) States division; (b) Investment Clearance Cell (National Single Window System) (c) North East Initiatives; (d) Partnerships; (e) Projects in sustainability space. He is also a mentor for the National Land Bank initiative. With a total of 23 years of experience, Dushyant has previously worked with an apex chamber of commerce (Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry), and international standards organization (GS1) and IT companies.

Markus Thill

Markus Thill is President of Africa for Robert Bosch since 2014, reporting directly to Bosch Group management. Prior to co-founding Bosch's global venture arm as managing director in 2007, he worked as Vice President of Bosch's global corporate strategy department. Before joining Bosch, he was a senior manager in leading strategy consulting firms, heading and implementing projects on strategic and operational issues as well as M&As around the globe. He holds university degrees in mathematics and physics, including a doctorate ("summa cum laude") from Université de Paris (France). He is fluent in English, German and French, and has a good working knowledge of several other languages.

Douglas Van Den Berghe

Douglas van den Berghe is a global speaker and expert on FDI, SEZs, corporate international strategy and innovation. He was the founder and CEO of a FDI advisory firm and a JV technology company both which were acquired over the past couple of years. He previously held positions at UNCTAD and EY. As a management consultant, he has assisted many corporate clients in successfully implementing their global investment strategies, optimizing their global supply chains and has created more than 30,000 jobs and generated more than US\$ 0,5 billion in FDI across the world. He has been an advisor to many governments in successfully developing FDI policies for economic development increasing the competitiveness of countries.

Quan Zhao

Quan Zhao is trade policy advisor in the Division of Market Development, International Trade Centre (ITC). He leads ITC's trade in services projects which cover policy research and technical assistance in services trade, e-commerce, digital economy and cross-border investment. Prior to ITC, he served as a trade negotiator at Permanent Mission of China to the World Trade Organization and Ministry of Commerce of China. He served as the Chair of WTO's Committee on Trade in Financial Services, and services negotiator in China's FTA negotiations.