

CHAPTER 15
SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES

Article 15.1: General Principles

1. The Parties, recognizing the fundamental role of small and medium-sized enterprises (“SMEs”) in maintaining dynamism and enhancing competitiveness of their respective economies, shall foster close cooperation among SMEs of the Parties and cooperate in promoting jobs and growth of SMEs.
2. The Parties recognize the important role of the private sector in the cooperation on SMEs to be implemented under this Chapter.

Article 15.2: Cooperation to Increase Trade and Investment Opportunities for SMEs

With a view to more robust cooperation between the Parties to enhance commercial opportunities for SMEs, each Party shall seek to increase trade and investment opportunities for SMEs, and in particular shall:

- (a) promote cooperation between the Parties’ small business support infrastructure, including dedicated SME centers, incubators and accelerators, export assistance centers, and other centers as appropriate, to create an international network for sharing best practices, exchanging market research, and promoting SME participation in international trade, as well as business growth in local markets;
- (b) strengthen its collaboration with the other Party on activities to promote SMEs owned by women and youth, as well as start-ups, and promote partnerships among these SMEs and their participation in international trade;
- (c) enhance cooperation with the other Party to exchange information and best practices in areas including improving the access of SMEs to capital and credit, the participation of SMEs in covered government procurement opportunities under this Agreement, and helping SMEs adapt to changing market conditions, and
- (d) encourage participation in purpose-built mobile or web-based platforms for business entrepreneurs and counsellors to share information and best practices to help SMEs link with international suppliers, buyers, and other potential business partners.

Article 15.3: Information Sharing

1. Each Party shall establish or maintain its own free and publicly accessible website containing information regarding this Agreement, including:

- (a) the text of this Agreement;
- (b) a summary of this Agreement, and
- (c) information designed for SMEs that contains:
 - (i) a description of the provisions in this Agreement that the Party considers to be relevant to SMEs, and
 - (ii) any additional information that the Party considers useful for SMEs interested in benefitting from the opportunities provided by this Agreement.

2. Each Party shall include in its website links or information through automated electronic transfer to:

- (a) the equivalent websites of the other Party, and
- (b) the websites of its own government agencies and other appropriate entities that provide information the Party considers useful to any person interested in trading, investing, or doing business in that Party's territory.

3. Subject to each Party's laws and regulations, the information described in paragraph 2(b) may include:

- (a) customs regulations, procedures, or enquiry points;
- (b) regulations or procedures concerning intellectual property rights, including patent protection rights;
- (c) technical regulations, standards, quality or conformity assessment procedures;
- (d) sanitary or phytosanitary measures relating to importation or exportation;
- (e) foreign investment regulations;
- (f) business registration;

- (g) trade promotion programmes;
- (h) competitiveness programmes;
- (i) SME investment and financing programmes;
- (j) taxation and accounting;
- (k) government procurement regulations and procedures, and
- (l) other information which the Party considers to be useful for SMEs.

4. Each Party shall regularly review the information and links on the website referred to in paragraphs 1 and 2 to ensure the information and links are up-to-date and accurate.

5. To the extent practicable, each Party shall make the information referred to in this Article available in English. If this information is available in Spanish or Arabic language, the Party shall endeavour to make this information available, as appropriate.

Article 15.4: Subcommittee on SME Issues

1. The Parties hereby establish a Subcommittee on SME Issues (“SME Subcommittee”), comprising government institutions responsible for trade and SMEs and national and local government representatives of each Party.

2. The SME Subcommittee shall:

- (a) identify ways to assist SMEs in the Parties’ territories to take advantage of the commercial opportunities resulting from this Agreement and to strengthen SME competitiveness;
- (b) identify and recommend ways for further cooperation between the Parties to develop and enhance partnerships between SMEs of the Parties;
- (c) exchange and discuss each Party’s experiences and best practices in supporting and assisting SME exporters with respect to, among other things, training programs, trade education, trade finance, trade missions, trade facilitation, digital trade, identifying commercial partners in the territories of the Parties, and establishing good business credentials;

- (d) promote seminars, workshops, webinars, mentorship sessions, or other activities to inform SMEs of the benefits available to them under this Agreement;
- (e) explore opportunities for capacity building to facilitate each Party's work in developing and enhancing SME export counselling, assistance, and training programmes;
- (f) recommend additional information that a Party may include on the website referred to in Article 15.3;
- (g) review and coordinate its work program with the work of other subcommittees, working groups, and other subsidiary bodies established under this Agreement, as well as of other relevant international bodies, to avoid duplication of work programs and to identify appropriate opportunities for cooperation to improve the ability of SMEs to engage in trade and investment opportunities resulting from this Agreement;
- (h) collaborate with and encourage subcommittees, working groups and other subsidiary bodies established under this Agreement to consider SME-related commitments and activities into their work;
- (i) review the implementation and operation of this Chapter and SME-related provisions within this Agreement, and report findings and make recommendations to the Joint Committee that can be included in future work and SME assistance programs, as appropriate;
- (j) facilitate the development of programmes to assist SMEs to participate and integrate effectively into the Parties' regional and global supply chains;
- (k) promote the participation of SMEs in digital trade in order to take advantage of the opportunities resulting from this Agreement and rapidly access new markets;
- (l) facilitate the exchange of information on entrepreneurship education and awareness programs for youth and women to promote the entrepreneurial environment in the territories of the Parties;
- (m) submit on an annual basis, unless the Parties decide otherwise, a report of its activities and make appropriate recommendations to the Joint Committee, and

- (n) consider any other matter pertaining to SMEs as the SME Subcommittee may decide, including issues raised by SMEs regarding their ability to benefit from this Agreement.
3. The SME Subcommittee shall maintain a fluid communication and convene within one year after the date of entry into force of this Agreement and thereafter meet annually, unless the Parties agree otherwise, in person or by any other technological means available.
 4. The SME Subcommittee may seek to collaborate with appropriate experts and international donor organizations in carrying out its programmes and activities.
 5. The SME Subcommittee may exchange information and coordinate activities by email, videoconference, or other means of communication.

Article 15.5: Non-Application of Dispute Settlement

Neither Party shall have recourse to dispute settlement under Chapter 18 (Dispute Settlement) for any matter arising under this Chapter.