



D-8 Organization for  
Economic Cooperation

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<b>Mandate</b>	Scoping Exercise to Expand the D-8 Preferential Trade Agreement (D-8 PTA) into a More Progressive Instrument	
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## ADOPTED REPORT OF THE INAUGURAL MEETING OF THE EXPERT WORKING GROUP ON SCOPING EXERCISE TO EXPAND THE D-8 PTA INTO A MORE PROGRESSIVE INSTRUMENT

VIRTUAL, 12 NOVEMBER 2025

### I. Background

1. The Expert Working Group on Scoping Exercise to Expand the D-8 PTA Into a More Progressive Instrument (EWG) held its first meeting through a virtual channel on 12 November 2025. The EWG members from all D-8 Member States attended the Meeting. The D-8 Secretary-General and his team were also in attendance. The List of Participants is enclosed as **Annex I**.
2. The EWG was formed by the Supervisory Committee of the D-8 PTA during the Committee's 8<sup>th</sup> Session, which was held in Abuja, Nigeria, on 16 June 2025.

### II. Proceeding

#### A. Agenda Item 1: Opening

3. H.E. Ambassador Isiaka Abdulqadir Imam, the Secretary-General of the Developing-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation (D-8 SG), opened the meeting. In his opening remarks, the D-8 SG highlighted the background for the D-8's endeavor to expand the D-8 PTA and underlined the way forward to achieve it. The D-8 SG's statement is enclosed as **Annex II**.

#### B. Agenda Item 2: Election of the Chairman, Vice-Chairmen, and Rapporteur of the EWG

4. The EWG elected the following esteemed delegates as the members of its bureau, namely:
  - a. **Mr. Gomaa M. Madny**, Head of the Trade Agreement Central Department, the Ministry of Investment and Foreign Trade of the Arab Republic of Egypt, as the **Chairman**.
  - b. **Dr. Syed Muntasir Mamun**, Director General, International Trade, Investment and Technology Wing, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, and **Mr. Natan Kambuno**, Director for Inter-Regional Negotiations and International Organizations, the Ministry of Trade of the Republic of Indonesia, as the **Vice-Chairmen**.

c. **Mr. Nurullah Asım Akbulut**, Trade Expert, the Ministry of Trade of the Republic of Türkiye, as the **Rapporteur**.

5. The Meeting was then presided over by the Chairman.

**C. Agenda Item 3: Adoption of Agenda**

6. The EWG adopted the agenda for its meeting. The adopted agenda and its annotation are enclosed as **Annex III** and **Annex IV**, respectively.

**D. Agenda Item 4: Way forward on the D-8 PTA Expansion**

7. The EWG deliberated on the way forward for the D-8 PTA expansion. The deliberations centered upon three identified models, namely, i) the expansion of the D-8 PTA offer list and the creation of a request list, ii) transforming the D-8 PTA into a free trade agreement to liberalize trade in goods, or iii) transforming the D-8 PTA into a comprehensive economic partnership agreement.

8. Among the salient topics discussed were Member States' reflections on the three options previously presented by the Secretariat for the Way Forward on the D-8 PTA Expansion. Bangladesh, Indonesia, Nigeria, and Türkiye expressed a clear preference for conducting the scoping study on upgrading the agreement to a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA). At the same time, the Secretariat noted that the language adopted in the 2024 Cairo Declaration also aligns closely with this direction. Türkiye recalled that the mandate of the Working Group is precisely to deliberate on these options and formulate concrete recommendations for consideration by higher bodies. Bangladesh also highlighted elements from national studies, highlighting structural challenges affecting the PTA's effectiveness, including significant physical distances among Member States, limited economic complementarity, and the growing relevance of technological capital, financial services, and equity in shaping contemporary international trade.

9. In parallel, several delegations, particularly Egypt, Iran, and Pakistan, underscored the importance of first assessing the current state of PTA implementation, before proceeding with any expansion or transformation. They stressed the need for a gap analysis or similar study to identify the obstacles that have prevented full implementation to date, arguing that an informed understanding of these shortcomings, should guide the selection of the most suitable option as we advance. The Secretariat reiterated its ongoing scoping exercise related to CEPA and invited Member States to share any relevant studies or research, noting that such inputs would significantly support evidence-based deliberations in future meetings.

10. In continuation of the discussion, Bangladesh presented a comprehensive set of proposals aimed at ensuring that the PTA expansion and any eventual transition toward a CEPA proceed on a sound technical and institutional basis. It called for clearer governance arrangements within the Working Group, including defined quorum and voting rules, and advocated the use of a more robust analytical framework, such as TCI, RCA, and CGE modelling, to guide negotiations. Bangladesh proposed extending the work plan to 18 months to allow for deeper analysis and recommended incorporating development-oriented elements, including Special and Differential Treatment, LDC-graduation support, and asymmetric liberalization. It emphasized the need for a credible dispute settlement mechanism with binding arbitration, enforceable procedures, and expanded coverage of investor–state issues and safeguards. Additionally, Bangladesh highlighted the importance of protocols on guarantees, currency-risk mitigation, technology transfer, and security instruments, and encouraged enhanced intersessional coordination and the placement of PTA Expansion/FTA/CEPA on forthcoming ministerial agendas.
11. Malaysia, aligning with several of the earlier points raised, and reiterated its support for the Terms of Reference, as a practical and balanced framework for guiding the scoping exercise. Malaysia emphasized the importance of first identifying specific operational bottlenecks in the implementation of the current PTA, particularly in areas such as Rules of Origin (ROO), customs procedures, and broader trade facilitation measures. Malaysia noted that these foundational issues must be addressed to ensure that any future expansion is built on a viable and functional basis. Malaysia also shared the view that the initially proposed 12-month timeframe for the CEPA scoping exercise may be insufficient, recommending instead a two-year duration that would allow for more comprehensive analyses, consultations, and coordination among national agencies.
12. Malaysia further highlighted the need to ensure strategic alignment between the prospective D-8 CEPA and other ongoing regional processes, particularly the expansion of the Trade Preferential System among OIC Member States (TPS-OIC). Given the similarities in thematic coverage, especially with regard to services, investment, and digital trade, Malaysia cautioned that pursuing both initiatives simultaneously, without coordination, could dilute institutional focus and resources. To avoid this, Malaysia recommended exploring synergies or harmonization between the two processes. They also encouraged the Working Group to prioritize high-potential and value-added sectors in its initial analytical work, including Halal trade, the digital economy, agro-industries, MSME development, and related areas, where Member States could derive early and tangible benefits.

13. The EWG decided that it will work on the scoping exercise for the expansion of the D-8 PTA, aiming at providing recommendations to the principal organ of the D-8 organization, ultimately the Summit, about the feasibility of the D-8 Organization to establish a comprehensive economic partnership agreement (CEPA).
- E. Agenda Item 5: Discussion on the Terms of Reference of the Expert Working Group**
14. The EWG deliberated on the draft Terms of Reference (TOR), which the D-8 Secretariat prepared. The EWG decided to adopt the “**Expert Working Group on Scoping Exercise to Expand the D-8 PTA Into a More Progressive Instrument**” as its nomenclature. After thorough deliberation, the EWG adopted its TOR, which is enclosed as **Annex V**.
- F. Agenda Item 6: Any Other Business**
15. The EWG received an update on the forthcoming 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the D-8 Trade Ministers (4<sup>th</sup> D-8 TMC), which Egypt will host in Cairo on 2 December 2025. The 4<sup>th</sup> D-8 TMC will be preceded by a Senior Officials’ Meeting on Trade (D-8 SOM Trade), to prepare for the ministerial meeting.
  16. The EWG requested Egypt and the D-8 Secretariat to circulate the provisional agenda and tentative program of work as well as other relevant working documents, for both the TMC and SOM to enable them to prepare their respective participation.
  17. The EWG also received an update that Nigeria is ready to host the 9<sup>th</sup> Session of the D-8 PTA at a venue and date to be communicated soon.
- G. Agenda Item 7: Adoption of Report**
18. The EWG decided, in the interest of time, to request the Rapporteur, assisted by the D-8 Secretariat, to prepare the draft Report and circulate it to the EWG members for the latter’s consideration and comments. The report will be adopted through the silent procedure.
- H. Agenda Item 8: Closing**
19. The D-8 SG delivered closing remarks and thanked the esteemed delegates and experts for their valuable contribution in charting the roadmap for the D-8 PTA expansion. He congratulated the Chairman for his effective leadership, resulting in tangible results of the meeting. He also reiterated Secretariat’s readiness to support the work of the EWG.

20. The Delegates congratulated the Chairman, Vice Chairmen, and the Rapporteur for their respective elections and for leading the meeting to fruition. They also thanked the D-8 Secretariat for preparing the inaugural meeting and for preparing the relevant documents.
21. The EWG welcomed the proposal of Türkiye to have its next meeting on 12 January 2026, through the virtual channel.
22. The Chairman delivered his closing remarks and officially declared the meeting closed.

*[End of the Report]*

<b>List of Accompanying Documents</b>	
1.	Terms of Reference of EWG
2.	Annex I – List of Participants
3.	Annex II – Opening Remarks of D-8 Secretary-General
4.	Annex III – Agenda
5.	Annex IV – Annotated Agenda

## **List of Participants**

### **The Inaugural Meeting of the Expert Working Group on Scoping Exercise to Expand the D-8 PTA into a More Progressive Instrument**

**Virtual, 12 November 2025**

#### **Azerbaijan**

**Mr. Kenan AGHAZADA**, Ministry of Economy

#### **Bangladesh**

**Dr. Syed Muntasir MAMUN**, Director General, International Trade, Investment and Technology Wing, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

**Mr. HASIB**, Ministry of Commerce

**Mr. SHAHADAT**, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

**Mr. Ruhul AMIN**, Ministry of Commerce

#### **Egypt**

**Mr. Gomaa M. MADNY**, Head of Trade Agreement Central Dept., Ministry of Investment and Foreign Trade

**Ms. Nesreen Safwat ABDELATAH**, General Manager of the Regional Agreements Central Dep., Ministry of Investment and Foreign Trade

**Ms. Nasreen MOHAMED**, Ministry of Investment and Foreign Trade

**Mr. Amr RADWAN**, Ministry of Investment and Foreign Trade

#### **Indonesia**

**Mr. Gangsar KURNIAWAN**, Senior Trade Negotiator, Ministry of Trade

**Mr. Nanang ANDRIAN**, Trade Negotiator, Ministry of Trade

#### **Iran**

**Ms. Elham HAJI**, Director of Commercial Contracts, Trade Promotion Office

**Ms. Nasrin MEHRARA**, Expert of the Department of Commercial Contracts

## **Malaysia**

**Mr. FARHAN**, Ministry of Investment, Trade and Industry

## **Nigeria**

**Ms. Patience OKALA**, Special Assistant, Office of the Minister, Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment

**Mr. Thomas AYO**, Ministry of Industry, Trade, and Investment

## **Pakistan**

**Mr. Khadim ALI**, Ministry of Commerce

**Dr. Muhammad IRFAN**, Ministry of Commerce

## **Türkiye**

**Ms. Ayşegül DEMİR**, Trade Expert, Ministry of Trade

**Mr. Nurullah Asım AKBULUT**, Trade Expert, Ministry of Trade

## **D-8 Secretariat**

**Ambassador Isiaka Abdulkadir IMAM**, D-8 Secretary General

**Mr. Punjul S. NUGRAHA**, Director II

**Ms. Zahra SETAREH**, Executive Assistant

**Dr. Ismail BELLO**, Executive Assistant

**Remarks by H.E., Ambassador Isiaka Abdulqadir Imam, D-8 Secretary-General, at the Virtual Meeting of the Experts Working Group for the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), on 12 November 2025**

**Distinguished Experts, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Greetings from the D-8 Secretariat in Istanbul.

I am pleased to address this **Experts Working Group**, on the **expansion of our flagship trade instrument, the current D-8 Preferential Trade Agreement (D-8PTA), into a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)**.

You will all recall that, in 2006 we signed the D-8 Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA), which later entered into force in 2011, aiming to reduce tariffs, on selected goods. However, we have discovered that the trade instrument is no longer sufficient, to realize our full ambitions, hence the need for today's meeting.

Today's meeting was, however, convened for the following reasons: Firstly, it is evident that our intra-D-8 trade, remains well below our potential, and stood at around 140 billion US Dollars, in 2024. Truly, this was far below our expected target- set of 500 billion US Dollars, by 2030.

Secondly, in the Cairo Declaration, adopted in December 2024, the Heads of State *“noted with keen interest the discourse on the need to upgrade the D-8 PTA, to a more progressive instrument, such as comprehensive economic partnership agreement”*.

Thirdly, our Decennial Roadmap 2020-2030, also mandated us to diversify our economic cooperation, beyond goods, and to include services, investment, digital trade, MSMEs, energy, and connectivity. Thus, transforming from PTA, into CEPA, will be better aligned with those goals.

Also, our Member States have shown significant interest in transforming from PTA to CEPA, which is a source of encouragement, in organizing this meeting. The 2024 Trade Ministers' meetings, both in Dhaka and Istanbul, urged member states, to expedite action on the completion of PTA ratification, and proposed exploring an expansion into CEPA.

**Distinguished Experts,**

Allow me to state that a shift from PTA to CEPA provides the following benefits: Firstly, CEPA would broaden our market access, by opening services and investment flows between our economies, enabling capital, technology, and know-how to flow, more freely.

Secondly, CEPA will also deepen **our value-chain integration** by reducing tariffs, harmonizing rules, and lowering transaction costs, thereby strengthening intra-D-8 supply chains in crucial sectors and promoting more substantive SME participation.

While trade in services will enable us to capture the growing services economy, including the digital, tourism, and financing sectors, the investment chapter will enable us to liberalize, protect, and facilitate cross-border investment, among members.

### **Distinguished Experts,**

We must acknowledge that transiting from PTA to CEPA will require careful management. This is because D-8 has divergent economic structures. For a smooth transition to CEPA, therefore, allow me to propose a six-step approach, for your kind deliberation and consideration.

- **Firstly, Stock-taking and gap analysis.** We must examine the PTA's performance, up to date, and map out key gaps: services, investment, digital trade, and trade facilitation.
- **Secondly, define scope and architecture.** The Working Group must deliberate and agree on the substantive chapters of the CEPA: goods, services, investment, e-commerce, digital trade, MSMEs, trade facilitation, regulatory cooperation, and dispute settlement.
- **Thirdly, identify phased implementation and capacity-building.** We need to recognize the varied capacities of Member States, and propose differential timelines or technical assistance mechanisms.
- **Fourthly, develop core legal text and annexes.** This step is crucial, as we embark on drafting model legal text, rules of origin, schedules of liberalization for goods, services modes, investment commitments, and e-commerce rules.
- **Fifthly, Stakeholder consultations.** We must engage the private sector, to ensure ownership and realistic commitments.
- **Sixthly, ratification and monitoring mechanism.** We must ensure a transparent and predictable mechanism for implementation, including transparency portals, monitoring committees and review clauses.

To conclude, **Distinguished Experts**, I wish to state that CEPA is more than an extension of the PTA: it is a transformation of our integration architecture, to elevate D-8 economic cooperation agenda.

The world, around us, is shifting to digital trade, supply chains, green economy, and services growth. These innovations are defining 21<sup>st</sup> century trade, and we must not be left behind. Therefore, let us bring into our discussion, at this working group, rigorous analysis, and practical realism, so that we can present, to our Leaders, a credible and actionable CEPA instrument.

I look forward to our robust deliberations, and your recommendations, towards a D-8 Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement.

Thank you.

# MEETING OF THE EXPERTS WORKING GROUP ON THE D-8 PTA EXPANSION

Virtual, 12 November 2025

## Agenda

**Agenda Item 1: Opening**

**Agenda Item 2: Election of the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and Rapporteur of the EWG**

**Agenda Item 2: Adoption of Agenda**

**Agenda Item 3: Remarks by the D-8 Secretary-General**

**Agenda Item 4: Way forward on the D-8 PTA Expansion**

**Agenda Item 5: Discussion on the Terms of Reference of the Experts Working Group in the D-8 PTA Expansion**

**Agenda Item 6: Any Other Business**

**Agenda Item 7: Adoption of Report**

**Agenda Item 8: Closing**

# MEETING OF THE EXPERTS WORKING GROUP ON THE D-8 PTA EXPANSION

Virtual, 12 November 2025

## Annotated Agenda

### Agenda Item 1: Opening

The D-8 Secretary-General will open the Meeting.

### Agenda Item 2: Election of the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and Rapporteur of the EWG

The EWG will elect its Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and Rapporteur.

Each member of the EWG may nominate him/herself or other members of the EWG for each of the positions to be elected.

In accordance with the Rules of Procedure of the D-8 Organization, the election will be conducted by consensus. If a consensus cannot be reached, a two-thirds vote will be taken.

The elected Chair will then preside over the Meeting.

### Agenda Item 2: Adoption of Agenda

The EWG will consider and adopt the Agenda for its meeting.

### Agenda Item 3: Remarks by the D-8 Secretary-General

The D-8 Secretary-General will deliver a presentation, highlighting the rationale and background for the proposed expansion of the D-8 PTA.

### Agenda Item 4: Way forward on the D-8 PTA Expansion

In previous meetings of the D-8 Trade Ministers Council (TMC) and the Supervisory Committee of the D-8 Preferential Trade Agreement (SC PTA), the discourse has focused on the need to expand the D-8 PTA into a more aggressive and deeper trade arrangement.

There are currently three models of the D-8 PTA expansion that are put forward for consideration, namely:

- The expansion of the D-8 PTA's offer list and the creation of a request list.

- The expansion of the D-8 PTA into a free trade agreement.
- The expansion of the D-8 PTA into a comprehensive economic partnership agreement, which will cover, among others, trade in goods and services, investment, digital trade, and sustainable trade.

Several Contracting Members viewed that, before embarking on expansion, the D-8 PTA must be fully and effectively implemented. While the expansion proposal can be discussed as a discourse, it can also be used to assess the D-8 Organization's readiness in the event that the effective implementation of the D-8 PTA has been achieved.

To guide the discussion, the Secretariat is currently developing a zero draft for a scoping paper for the expansion of the D-8 PTA.

#### **Agenda Item 5: Discussion on the Terms of Reference of the Experts Working Group in the D-8 PTA Expansion**

The Supervisory Committee of the D-8 PTA (SC PTA), in its 8<sup>th</sup> Session, held in Abuja, Nigeria, on 16 June 2025, tasked the D-8 Secretariat to liaise with the Member States to establish the proposed experts working group to lay a foundation for the scoping exercise and comparative studies on various trade liberalization instruments across different organizations.

To date, several Member States have submitted their experts to serve as members of the Experts Working Group. Subsequently, the Secretariat has also prepared a draft of reference for the EWG.

The EWG will consider the draft Terms of Reference and, if possible, adopt them, which will then be submitted to the D-8 Trade Ministers Council for its endorsement.

#### **Agenda Item 6: Any Other Business**

EWG will discuss any other matters emerging from the discussion.

#### **Agenda Item 7: Adoption of Report**

The EWG will adopt the Report of its Meeting.

#### **Agenda Item 8: Closing**

The D-8 Secretary-General will deliver short closing remarks.

The Chair of the EWG will deliver closing remarks and close the meeting.



## Terms of Reference

# Expert Working Group on Scoping Exercise to Expand the D-8 PTA Into a More Progressive Instrument

### Executive Summary

*During the 11<sup>th</sup> D-8 Summit, hosted by Egypt in Cairo on 19 December 2024, the Heads of State and Government of the D-8 Member States provided the much-needed political guidance, by noting with keen interest the discourse on the need to upgrade the D-8 PTA to a more progressive instrument, such as a comprehensive economic partnership agreement, and tasked the D-8 Trade Ministers Council to conduct a study, scoping exercise, and comparative analysis to identify the modalities and way forward for the expansion of the D-8 PTA. This Terms of Reference (TOR) offers the rationale, modalities, and technical aspects for the establishment of an expert working group (EWG), to conduct the scoping exercise for a comprehensive economic partnership agreement (CEPA,) among the D-8 Member States.*

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## I. Background

1. The Developing-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation (D-8) is an intergovernmental organization established in 1997 to enhance the position of its Member States in the global economy, diversify and create new opportunities in trade relations, increase participation in international decision-making, and improve the standards of living of its members. The D-8 comprises prominent emerging economies, spanning three continents, namely, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Türkiye.
2. Trade and economic cooperation have consistently remained at the heart of D-8's mandate. The Organization recognizes intra-group trade as a key driver of inclusive and sustainable economic growth. Since its inception, the D-8 has undertaken several initiatives to facilitate and deepen economic integration among its members, including the adoption of the Preferential Trade Agreement Among D-8 Member States (D-8 PTA), which was signed in 2006 and entered into force in 2011. The D-8 PTA aims to foster intra-D-8 trade through mutually agreed-upon tariff concessions, thereby reducing barriers to trade in goods.
3. In addition to its PTA, the D-8 has also adopted key instruments and frameworks to facilitate trade and business interactions among its Member States, such as the Multilateral Agreement Among D-8 Member Countries on Administrative Assistance in Customs Matters (D-8 Customs Agreement), 2006 and the Agreement on "Simplification of Visa Procedures for the Businessmen of the D-8 Member States" (D-8 Visa Agreement), 2001. The D-8 PTA itself is also equipped with supporting instruments, namely the Dispute Settlement Mechanism (DSM) Protocol, 2024, the Trade Facilitation Strategy, 2024, and the Rules of Origin operational manual.
4. The D-8 has also initiated relevant cooperation programs, particularly in the development of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), youth empowerment, industrial cooperation, agriculture and food security, the digital economy, and the blue economy.
5. Despite those critical achievements, the volume of intra-D-8 trade remains below its potential. As of 2024, intra-group trade is valued at US\$146 billion, far below the target of US\$500 billion set by the Leaders. Structural and infrastructure constraints continue to hamper deeper integration.
6. Recognizing the need for a more ambitious, liberalized, and comprehensive framework that goes beyond tariff preferences, the D-8 is now poised to explore the development of a comprehensive economic partnership agreement (CEPA). This initiative aims to evolve the PTA into a more comprehensive trade and economic agreement that encompasses not only goods but also services,

investment, digital trade, intellectual property, competition policy, and other contemporary trade-related disciplines.

7. The discussion to expand the D-8 PTA into a deeper and more liberalized instrument gained traction after the initial deliberation during the 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the D-8 Trade Ministers' Council (3<sup>rd</sup> TMC), which Bangladesh hosted in Dhaka on 5 March 2024. The subsequent Informal Meeting of the D-8 Trade and Commerce Ministers, held in Istanbul on 10 June 2024, further solidified the discourse on the need for a more comprehensive agreement. Furthermore, during the 11<sup>th</sup> D-8 Summit, hosted by Egypt in Cairo on 19 December 2024, the Heads of State and Government of the D-8 Member States provided the much-needed political guidance, by noting with keen interest the discourse on the need to upgrade the D-8 PTA to a more progressive instrument, such as a comprehensive economic partnership agreement, and tasked the D-8 Trade Ministers Council to conduct a study, scoping exercise, and comparative analysis to identify the modalities and way forward for the expansion of the D-8 PTA.
8. Subsequently, during its 8<sup>th</sup> Session held in Abuja on 16 June 2025, the Supervisory Committee of the D-8 PTA (SC PTA) agreed to establish an expert working group to lay a foundation for the scoping exercise and comparative studies to expand the D-8 PTA into a more comprehensive instrument.
9. The CEPA is envisioned to serve as a strategic platform to deepen economic integration among D-8 Member States, build resilient value chains, enhance the D-8's competitiveness in the global economy, facilitate intra-D-8 investment, and position the D-8 as a leading economic bloc of the Global South.
10. To begin this process, a scoping exercise is required to assess the feasibility, scope, and potential modalities of the CEPA. This will lay the groundwork for structured negotiations. To that end, the Secretariat proposes the establishment of an ad hoc Expert Working Group (EWG), to undertake this technical and analytical work and provide informed recommendations to the Supervisory Committee of the D-8 PTA. The EWG will be dissolved upon the decision by the Supervisory Committee.

## II. Purpose

11. The purpose of the Expert Working Group is to conduct a comprehensive scoping exercise that will:
  - a. Assess the readiness of the D-8 Member States to engage in a deeper and more liberalized economic partnership.

- b. Identify key areas and sectors for economic cooperation and trade liberalization.
- c. Recommend the scope, structure, and guiding principles to expand the D-8 PTA into a more progressive instrument, such as CEPA.
- d. Propose a roadmap for the expansion of the D-8 PTA into a more progressive instrument, including its potential negotiation process.

### **III. Objectives**

12. The specific objectives of the Expert Working Group are to:
  - a. Conduct a comprehensive feasibility study for the modalities and way forward for the possibility of a CEPA.
  - b. Review the legal, institutional, and operational status of the D-8 PTA, and related trade frameworks.
  - c. Assess trade flows, investment trends, tariff and non-tariff measures, and trade complementarities among the D-8 Member States.
  - d. Identify strategic sectors and policy areas for deepened cooperation, such as services, investment, digital trade, intellectual property, competition policy, and sectoral cooperation.
  - e. Propose the conceptual and operational framework of the CEPA, including potential coverage, negotiation modalities, and institutional mechanisms.
  - f. Recommend a structured roadmap and preparatory steps for formal negotiations.

### **IV. Composition**

13. The Expert Working Group will be composed of:
  - a. Two experts from each D-8 Member State, nominated by their respective ministries responsible for trade or commerce affairs.
  - b. Technical staff from the D-8 Secretariat, who will act as facilitators and serve as the secretariat of the EWG.
  - c. Resource persons from relevant international organizations, if applicable, and subject to the Member States' consensus.
  - d. The EWG will elect its Chair from among its members.

## V. Working Modalities

14. The EWG will operate under the guidance of the Supervisory Committee of the D-8 PTA and report to the Supervisory Committee through the Secretariat.
15. Meetings will be conducted physically or virtually, based on feasibility and consensus.
16. The EWG will elect its chairman, two vice-chairmen, and rapporteur at its inaugural meeting.
17. The decisions of the EWG shall be made by consensus where possible. In case a consensus is not reached, the EWG shall decide by a two-thirds majority of total votes<sup>1</sup>.
18. The Secretariat will provide secretarial support for the preparation and organization of the meetings by the host country.

## VI. Deliverables

19. The Expert Working Group will produce the following key outputs:
  - a. Initial Report to outline methodology, elements of the study, the implementation status of the D-8 PTA, data sources, stakeholder engagement plan, and work schedule.
  - b. Interim Technical Report, to present preliminary findings, trade diagnostics, and sectoral mapping.
  - c. Final Scoping Report, to present the detailed recommended scope, structure, and negotiation roadmap, including legal, economic, and institutional policy recommendations for the D-8 Member States.

## VII. Timeline

20. The EWG is expected to complete its work within a year from the date of its formal establishment, which may be extended to another year.
21. In addition to intersessional work, research, and studies, the EWG is expected to meet regularly, at least once every two months. In order to maintain momentum, at its every meeting, the EWG shall decide the date and venue/mode of its next meeting.

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<sup>1</sup> Article 27, paragraph 3 of the D-8 PTA.

22. The EWG will conduct progress reviews at least every four months and present the report to the Supervisory Committee of the D-8 PTA.
23. The following timetable will serve as a guide for the initial work of the EWG:

Month*	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI	XII
EWG Inaugural Meeting	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>											
Initial Report	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>								
EWG Bimonthly Meeting				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Quarterly Progress Report				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Interim Technical Report								<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
Final Scoping Report												<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

\*Does not denote the name of the month of the calendar.

## VIII. Funding

24. The EWG is designed to operate cost-effectively in carrying out its activities such as performing studies, engaging with stakeholders, and hosting meetings, particularly through optimum utilization of digital technologies. The Member States are invited to provide initial voluntary funding support outside the regular assessed contribution to enable the EWG to conduct its initial tasks. Whereas a portion of the relevant sub-heading from the D-8 Secretariat's budget may be drawn to support the EWG as necessary.
25. Further financial implications that may emanate from the participation of the EWG members in meetings are to be borne by the sending Member States, unless specified otherwise in the corresponding administrative arrangements for any meeting or activities.
26. Contributions from third parties are also welcome.

## IX. Final Outcome

27. The EWG will produce a Final Report (Scoping Paper), to present the detailed recommended scope, structure, and negotiation roadmap, including legal, economic, and institutional policy recommendations for the D-8 Member States, which will be submitted to the Supervisory Committee of the D-8 PTA



for the Committee's consideration and subsequent recommendation by the D-8 Trade Ministers Council and the final adoption of the Summit.

*[End of Terms of Reference]*