



Representatives from the GASEZ Founding Members gathered in Barcelona for the 2nd Annual Conference of the Alliance

Report of the 2nd Annual GASEZ Conference 9 November 2023 DFactory, Barcelona

The second GASEZ Annual Conference took place on 9 November 2023 in Barcelona, Spain, at the iconic DFactory in the Consorci Zona Franca Barcelona (ZFB). Two hundred stakeholders from the international special economic zone (SEZ) community from 26 countries across Africa, Europe and Latin America attended the event, reiterating their support for the alliance and contributing to its work agenda going forward.

The conference was opened by host Ms. Blanca Sorigué, Managing Director at ZFB who shared how the ZFB's mission of sustainability and innovation aligns with that of GASEZ. The two current Co-Chairs of GASEZ Mr. James Zhan, Director at UNCTAD, and Dr. Samir Hamrouni, CEO of World Free Zone Organization (World FZO) provided introductory remarks, highlighting the work of GASEZ during the past year since it was launched in 2022 in Montego Bay, Jamaica. Ms. Claudia Pellerano, President of AZFA that held its annual conference just one day before, spoke about the importance of GASEZ at a time when multilateralism is

undergoing many challenges and the significance of the alliance to AZFA's members across Ibero America.

All 8 GASEZ Founding Members were represented at the conference. In addition to UNCTAD and the World FZO this included, Mr. Ahmed Bennis from the African Economic Zone Organization (AEZO), Ms. Ebba Lund from the International Association of Science Parks and Areas of Innovation (IASP), Ms. Yuyan Song of the Green Partnership of Industrial Parks of China (GPIPC), Ms. Shannon Fura of the National Association of Foreign Trade Zones of the United States (NAFTZ) and Mr. Juan Torrents of the World Free and Special Economic Zones Federation (FEMOZA).

Representatives of the above mentioned SEZ associations and SEZs from from Angola, China, Lithuania, Spain, and Uruguay participated in two featured panels. The first panel, moderated by Mr. Paul Wessendorp, Chief of the Investment Promotion Section of UNCTAD, focused on the experiences and success stories of SEZs that are contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by converting from fossil fuels to clean energy, by incubating innovation, and by creating linkages with neighboring urban centres. Also emphasized was the need for good labor standards in SEZs. The second panel, moderated by Ms. Stephania Bonilla-Feret, Economist at UNCTAD, discussed current priority issues for SEZs, including the need to increase awareness about their contributions to the economy through policy advocacy, the need for SEZs to keep abreast of policy developments that affect them, and for strong ecosystem around SEZs to foster innovation and linkages with small and medium-sized enterprises.

The conference concluded with the recognition of the 2023 list of 50 SDG Model Zones that have been selected as partners on the basis of three criteria: i) attracting investment in SDG-related sectors; ii) adopting environmental, social and governance standards; and iii) building strong linkages with the local economy. The list can be found here: [gasez-50-sdg-model-zones-2023_2024_0.pdf](#)



50 SDG Model Zones were recognized as partners for sustainable development by GASEZ during the 2nd Annual Conference.

Communications and selected press clippings:

- A summary video is available [here](#).
- News articles:
 - Angola:
 - [Angola Among World 50 Most Promising Economic Zones - allAfrica.com](#)
 - [ZEE Luanda-Bengo elected one of the 50 most promising economic zones in the world - Ver Angola - Daily, the best of Angola](#)
 - Spain:
 - [CZFB - Zona Franca de Barcelona is nominated as a benchmark in sustainable development by the international alliance GASEZ AZFA \(zfbarcelona.es\)La Zona Franca de Barcelona es nominada como referente en desarrollo sostenible por la alianza internacional GASEZ \(elestrechodigital.com\)](#)
 - [La Zona Franca de Barcelona, modelo en desarrollo sostenible | El Canal Marítimo y Logístico \(diarioelcanal.com\)](#)
 - [La Zona Franca de Barcelona, referente en desarrollo sostenible para la alianza GASEZ \(elperiodico.com\)](#)
 - [Zonas francas se proyectan en objetivos sostenibles \(efe.com\)](#)
 - <https://elpais.com/espana/catalunya/2023-11-08/las-zonas-francas-iberoamericanas-se-reunen-en-barcelona.html>
 - <https://www.elperiodico.com/es/consorci-zona-franca/20231110/zona-franca-barcelona-referente-desarrollo-94454017>
 - https://epservices.eprensa.com/cgi-bin/view_digital_media.cgi?subclient_id=16449&comps_id=1066886991
 - <http://www.indisa.es/al-dia/zona-franca-barcelona-nominada-como-referente-desarrollo-alianza>
 - https://epservices.eprensa.com/cgi-bin/view_digital_media.cgi?subclient_id=16449&comps_id=1064951996
 - <https://fotos.europapress.es/fotonoticia/f5565052>
 - Colombia:
 - [Zona Franca Santander es de las zonas francas más sostenibles del mundo: estas son las razones, así se reveló en la Conferencia Anual de Zonas Francas organizada por la Asociación de Zonas Francas de Iberoamérica \(Azfa\) | Vanguardia.com](#)
 - [Zona Franca Santander es una de las zonas francas más sostenible del mundo | AmCham Colombia](#)

Global Alliance of Special Economic Zones Programme

9 November 2023

9:30 – 10:00	<p><u>Opening Summit</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Welcome remarks by <i>Ms. Claudia Pellerano</i>, President of AZFA ➤ Opening words by GASEZ Co-Chairs <i>Mr. James Zhan</i>, Director of Investment and Enterprise Division, UNCTAD and <i>Dr. Samir Hamrouni</i>, CEO of World FZO ➤ Official opening of the GASEZ Conference by the host, <i>Ms. Blanca Sorigué</i>, Managing Director, Zona Franca Barcelona
10:00-11:30	<p>Panel 1: GASEZ SDG Model Zones initiative</p> <div style="border: 1px solid #ADD8E6; padding: 10px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p>The panel will present the ongoing process and results of the GASEZ initiative to identify SDG model zones with the objective to initiate, mobilize and recognize efforts by the Special Economic Zones (SEZs) community to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). On 18 October 2023, GASEZ announced at the 8th World Investment Forum a list of 50 nominees for SDG Model Zones. Panellists will have an opportunity to present SDG related best practices and propose activities and projects for the GASEZ SDG model zones initiative.</p> </div> <p>Moderator: Mr. Paul Wessendorp, Chief, Investment Promotion Section, UNCTAD</p> <p>Introduction: Mr. James Zhan, Director of Investment and Enterprise Division, UNCTAD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Mr. Ahmed Bennis, Secretary General, African Economic Zones Organization (AEZO) ➤ Ms. Yuyan Song, Director General, Secretariat of Green Partnership of Industrial Parks of China (GPIPC) ➤ Mr. Juan Torrents, President, FEMOZA ➤ Mr. Martin Dovat, General Manager, Zonamérica, Uruguay ➤ Mr. Tadas Kubilius, Deputy CEO Sustainability, Klaipeda Free Economic Zones, Lithuania ➤ Ms. Cristina Andrés Urarte, Head of Marketing and Innovation, Basque Country Technology Park, Spain ➤ Ms. Rie Vejs-Kjeldgaard, Director of Sustainable Enterprises, Productivity and Just Transition Department, International Labour Organization
11:30-12:00	Coffee break

12:00-13:30	<p>Panel 2: Emerging global issues affecting the SEZ community</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p>Key priority issues for the SEZ community will be discussed with experts and practitioners. Insights will feed into the GASEZ workplan.</p> </div> <p>Moderator: Ms. Stephania Bonilla-Feret, UNCTAD Introduction: Mr. James Zhan, Director of Investment and Enterprise Division, UNCTAD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ms. Ebba Lund, CEO, International Association of Science Parks and Areas of Innovation (IASP) ➤ Ms. Shannon Fura, Partner, PAGE FURA, P.C. & Chair, National Association of Foreign-Trade Zones (NAFTZ), USA ➤ Ms. Hong Qu, Director of Statistics Centre of Economic Development Bureau, Hefei Economic and Technological Development Area, China ➤ Mr. Manuel Francisco Pedro, Chairman of the Board of Directors, Luanda Free Zone, Angola ➤ Mr. Martin Ibarra, CEO, Araujo Ibarra & Asociados S.A., Colombia
13:30 – 14:00	Closing Remarks and Announcement of GASEZ 50 SDG Model Zones
14:00 – 15:00	Networking lunch
15:00 – 17:00	AZFA General Assembly (For AZFA members only - buses to hotel for non AZFA participants)
20:30 – 23:00	Gala dinner (by invitation only)