



Q&A: MEET ITFA'S NEW CHIEF OF STAFF, April 2025

By Rebecca Spong, Editorial Consultant

ITFA has welcomed Dr Tedd George as its new Chief of Staff this month. The newly created role will see Tedd working closely with the board and helping to coordinate all the different functions, committees and working groups within the ever-growing global organisation. Tedd spoke with editorial consultant Rebecca Spong about his ambitions and goals.

Q) Congratulations on your new role – what motivated you to take on this newly created position?

A) I'm delighted to be taking on this newly created role – which is part of the professionalisation of ITFA as it continues to grow incredibly fast. In this new role I will work with the dedicated Board members and the highly effective but small Secretariat to help coordinate the organisation's wide range of working groups, committees, advocacy work and events. As the organisation grows and expands its reach globally – it now has more than 350 members – it becomes more challenging to know what everyone else is doing and I want to make sure that our work is aligned and effective. Over time I hope to become the lightning rod for the organisation – helping manage and disseminate information that comes in and ensure the right people are talking to each other and that our work is effective and impactful.

ITFA is a fascinating organisation to work for, particularly given that apart from the Secretariat, everyone is working on a voluntary basis and contributing in different ways to find solutions for the common good of the trade finance community. Trade finance is poorly understood by the financial community, even though trade underlines all economic activity, and at ITFA we have a body of true trade finance practitioners that really understand their stuff. Who wouldn't want to be Chief of Staff of such an association?

Q) Can you elaborate a little on your previous experience with ITFA and your wider experience in the trade finance market?

A) My background is in African markets and commodity finance, having worked at the pan-African bank Ecobank where I was Head of Group Research. I also previously worked as a Senior Economist in the Africa and Commodities Departments of the Economist Intelligence Unit. Since 2019, I have worked as Chief Narrative Officer of Kleos Advisory Ltd, providing strategic advisory, thought leadership and professional training on African markets, trade finance, fintech and ESG.

My first contact with ITFA was back in 2016 when I wrote a piece for the newsletter about the trade finance gap in Africa. But my involvement with the association took a major step up in 2022 when I was invited by George Wilson, Chair of the Africa Regional Committee (ARC), to co-author a [White Paper on sustainable trade finance standards](#). The following year I joined the ARC as Secretariat, and for the past two years I have been running workshops, chairing panels and producing a series of educational webinars and podcasts focused on African markets. I plan to draw on what I have been doing in miniature for the ARC at a much larger scale for the whole of ITFA as the Chief of Staff.

Q) What are you hoping to achieve in your new role? Can you outline your priorities and main areas of interest?

A) The most important thing about the role is to get a vision of the 'big picture' of what the entire organisation is doing. ITFA has numerous committees, functions and workstreams, producing a huge amount of material such as whitepapers or market guidance notes. All the regions are also running their own events as well, so I would like to improve the coordination of all these activities and where possible find synergies between them.



One of the great things about ITFA is that it can be a conduit for innovation from its members. Take the work of the Market Practice Committee (MPC) which has adapted templates developed by large financial institutions and rolled them out to the wider market. These templates can be especially useful for the smaller banks and businesses, helping reduce the complexity, cost and time of securing trade finance. I very much intend to continue driving such innovation and establish ITFA as the natural home for new entrants in the trade finance tech space.

Another major focus will be tackling the trade finance gap, which has long been a passion of mine (and of ITFA). The real challenge is finding ways to direct financing to Tier 2 and Tier 3 banks and their SME clients – if you can unlock and deploy trade finance to them, the impact can be huge, boosting employment, providing livelihoods and driving economic activity. From my experience in Africa, helping SMEs secure financing directly improves the financial position of women, as an estimated 90% of African SMEs are owned and run by women.

I have already worked closely with ITFA and board member Duarte Pedreira on the Trade Finance Conference of Parties (TF COP) meeting which took place in Washington DC [last October](#). This event was run in conjunction with the IFC and aimed to define the root causes of the trade finance gap and develop practical solutions to tackle the problem. This culminated in the “[Washington Declaration](#)”, which was a call to action to ask the UN to formally recognise the trade finance gap as a barrier to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We are now in the process of creating a Task Force to drive the ambitions of TF COP and plan to hold a second TF COP later this year. Watch this space.

ITFA is also involved with intense advocacy efforts and directly engages with regulators, for example on the evolving Basel 4 regulations and the Loss Given Default (LGD) ratios that will be applicable when credit insurance is used. This underlines ITFA's role as the global trade finance body, and I want to be part of this advocacy and help drive its progress forward.

My other main focus will be on boosting membership to ensure that ITFA is truly representative of the trade finance and forfaiting community across all markets. ITFA has a broad reach – it is not just about the DFIs and banks – and we are keen to embrace the entire ecosystem of trade and all parties that can facilitate trade finance. With other members of the ITFA team, I hope we can ramp up engagement with our membership so there is a constant flow of new ideas, discussions and initiatives.

Q) What is your vision for ITFA over the next year? What kind of organisation will ITFA be in 12 to 18 months' time?

A) My priority is to ensure that the strong growth in membership continues. There are a number of institutions and companies that really should be members of ITFA but, for whatever reason, they are not, and we are prioritising them for onboarding. But we are also keen to widen our reach and encourage more fintechs, alternative lenders and companies involved in the logistical side of the supply chain to join. We are also looking at how to bring in the smaller players in as well – the Tier 2 and 3 banks and the smaller local insurers. These players often lack the training and expertise that many ITFA members are in a prime position to provide them with. We aim to remove the barriers that prevent access to this training and encourage more inclusivity – and in turn those smaller players will help deepen everyone's knowledge of the market as well.

Q) What's next on your to-do list? And what's your key message to ITFA members?

A) My key message is to encourage all members to keep coming forward with new ideas, whether for initiatives to address challenges in trade finance, or for events aimed at the trade finance community, such as webinars, workshops and networking evenings. You can channel these ideas through the Market Practice Committee (MPC) or your regional committees. Please do get involved.



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In the immediate future, I will be running more cross-regional events which are a great way to bring experts from different regions together to learn from each other. Last year we ran a joint webinar between the ARC and the Southern European Regional Committee (SERC), and we have two more planned this year, with the Middle Eastern Regional Committee (MERC) and the South East Asia Regional Committee (SEARC). And I'm encouraging all of ITFA's regional committees to develop their own cross-regional events.

ITFA members will see me at a number of forthcoming conferences – I'll be chairing GTR's West Africa conference in April and involved in GTR's Commodities conference in September and GTR Africa held in London in November. I will also be closely involved in ITFA's flagship annual conference in Singapore in September (more details to follow).

And I will be ramping up the number of podcasts ITFA is producing on our new podcast channel which will be launched in the coming weeks, alongside more thought leadership pieces, webinars and workshops. So, it's going to be a busy year ahead.

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