

Regional Organizations Cooperation Mechanism for Trade Facilitation (ROC-TF) NEWSLETTER

IN FOCUS

Over 150 participants from 30 countries attended the **28th UN/CEFACT Forum** held in Bangkok Thailand in September 2016. The Forum advanced work on several UN/CEFACT projects and recommendations. **For more information see page 4.**



UPCOMING

The **Third Meeting of the Interim Intergovernmental Steering Group on Cross-Border Paperless Trade Facilitation** will take place from 23-24 March 2017 in Bangkok, Thailand. The Group will continue preparing a roadmap for the implementation of the new regional UN treaty on the facilitation of cross-border paperless trade. **More information available [here](#).**

ADB and ESCAP will organize the **8th Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum** in the third quarter of 2017. The ROC-TF meeting will be held in conjunction with the APTFF 2017. **See page 24** for information on how your country or organization can get involved.

WCO and ESCAP will organize the **Third UNNEXT Masterclass: Digital Customs and Single Windows** from 19 - 28 April 2017 in Cheon-an, Republic of Korea. The UNNEXT Masterclass will focus on issues related to realizing a digital customs environment, as well as issues related to creating a Single Window environment. **More information will be available at: <https://unnex.unescap.org>**

PUBLICATIONS & RESOURCES

The recently published **Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report 2016** finds economies in the region remain committed to trade facilitation, with over two-thirds of the Asia-Pacific members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) ratifying the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement. Complementing these efforts, the "Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific" was adopted by ESCAP member States at the 72nd Commission Session and is expected to help maintain regional trade competitiveness. **For analysis of Trade Facilitation from the APTIR see page 11.**

Global Survey on Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade Implementation 2017 is currently underway. For more information on how your organization can be part of this initiative **[see page 8](#).**

ESCAP is undertaking a **Global Perception Survey on "Leveraging trade as a means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the new global environment"**. The results of the survey will be reflected in future publications. **You are invited to participate [here](#).**

NEWS



On 24 January 2017, Nepal became the 108th WTO member to ratify the Trade Facilitation Agreement. Only two more ratifications are needed to bring the TFA into force. **Find more trade facilitation news on [page 25](#).**

The ROC-TF newsletter is a biannual publication, which features updates, publications and forthcoming activities of regional and international organizations working on trade facilitation in the Asia-Pacific region.

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For more information:

ESCAP, Trade, Investment and Innovation Division, 4th Floor, the United Nations Building, Rajdamnern Nok Avenue Bangkok 10200, Thailand
Phone: (662) 288 2118
Fax: (662) 288 1027

Email: roc-tf@un.org

Website:

<http://www.unescap.org/our-work/trade-investment-innovation/trade-facilitation>

PROJECT/ACTIVITY UPDATE

Selected project/activity updates from ROC-TF organizations on Trade Facilitation

JOINT ACTIVITIES and PARTNERSHIPS

AFACT, ESCAP and UNCITRAL

Workshop on Advancement of Cross-border Paperless Trade and Trade Facilitation, 9 November 2016, Tokyo, Japan

As a side-event to the annual meeting of the Asia Pacific Council for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (AFACT), ESCAP, in collaboration with UNCITRAL and AFACT, held a capacity building workshop on Advancement of Cross-border Paperless Trade and Trade Facilitation. During the workshop AFACT members discussed recent legal developments and lessons learnt from regional implementation of paperless trade and e-Business. ESCAP presented its ongoing implementation of trade facilitation measures and e-Business. ESCAP also addressed the latest legal developments in the region with particular reference to the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-Border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific during the workshop. Synergies between AFACT's work and the work to be undertaken as part of the Framework Agreement implementation were highlighted. AFACT members discussed lessons learnt from regional implementation cases of paperless trade and electronic business and ways to further advance cross-border paperless trade in the region.

More information available here: <http://www.unescap.org/events/capacity-building-workshop-advancement-cross-border-paperless-trade-and-trade-facilitation>

ADB and ESCAP

ADB and ESCAP joint project on Support to Trade Facilitation in the Asia-Pacific region

ADB and ESCAP will implement a joint 3 year project on Support to Trade Facilitation in the Asia-Pacific region. This technical assistance and capacity building project will include the co-organization of the Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum. ADB and ESCAP will also collaborate on research assessing the impact of trade facilitation reforms as well trade facilitation measures in the context of sustainable development. The project will be launched during the Regional Workshop on Promoting Connectivity from 27-28 March in Seoul, Republic of Korea.

For more information see: <https://www.adb.org/projects/50276-001/main#project-overview>

Trade and Transport Facilitation Monitoring Mechanism National Validation Workshop, 3-4 August 2016, Thimphu, Bhutan



The Bhutan Department of Revenue and Customs, in collaboration with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), held a National Validation Workshop on 3-4 August 2016 in Thimphu, Bhutan, in order to present stakeholders with the preliminary study results and findings on studies conducted under the Trade and Transport Facilitation Monitoring Mechanism (TTFMM) in Bhutan. The TTFMM is an integrated monitoring

system that tracks the progress of transport and trade facilitation in Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Nepal to optimize trade and transport processes. The presentation on TTFMM sought to increase participants' understanding of TTFMM and its key methodologies, review selected trade processes and discuss results of the studies. More than 30 participants from the Government and private sector attended the Workshop.

More information available here: <http://sasec.asia/index.php?page=event&eid=215&url=bhu-ttfmm-validation>

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ADBI, ESCAP and UNCTAD

Trade in the Digital Economy, 28-29 November 2016, Bangkok, Thailand

The digital economy and the digitization of trade has changed the way that we measure and understand trade flows. However, a lack of data and a lack of harmonization in standards and regulations have fragmented analysis. The ADBI, ESCAP and UNCTAD held a workshop on Trade in the Digital Economy, which focused on how the digitization of products and processes is impacting the trade-development relationship. It sought to produce a framework for analysis and to push the frontier of knowledge forward in this area. This workshop was organized in conjunction with UNESCAP and UNCTAD. Discussions also informed UNCTAD's work on electronic commerce and development, including the *Information Economy Report 2017* and the new global eTrade for All initiative, of which UNESCAP is also a founding partner.

More information available here: <https://www.adb.org/news/events/trade-digital-economy>

GTI and ESCAP

ESCAP and GTI seminar on Trade Facilitation in North East Asia, 13 December 2016, Incheon, Republic of Korea

ESCAP and the Greater Tumen Initiative (GTI) organized the annual seminar on Trade Facilitation in North East Asia, which discussed recent developments in trade facilitation and possibilities for cooperation in this area. This year's seminar focused on recent initiatives and standards-related policies in agricultural trade. During the event the participants shared experiences on how each member was addressing sanitary and phytosanitary issues. Relevant inputs from the private sector and international organizations on how to further facilitate trade in North-East Asia were also discussed.

More information available at: <http://www.unescap.org/events/international-seminar-trade-facilitation-north-east-asia-0>

UNCTAD, ITC, WTO, WCO and World Bank

International Forum for National Trade Facilitation Committees (NTFCs), 23-27 January 2017, Geneva, Switzerland

In its continued effort to support Trade Facilitation reforms in developing and Least Developed Countries, UNCTAD organized the first International Forum for National Trade Facilitation Committees (NTFCs) in cooperation with the International Trade Centre (ITC), the World Bank Group, the World Customs Organisation (WCO) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO). The objective of the Forum was to empower the leaders of NTFCs and provide opportunities for NTFCs to access funding. The Forum also covered all aspects of establishing and sustaining NTFCs, including the sharing of best practices and coaching techniques. The Forum focused on accessing technical assistance for the NTFCs. Participants also had the opportunity to hear from donor organizations about the assistance that is available, and they will discuss the challenges faced in identifying and sourcing necessary funding. Over 300 participants from 60 countries attended the Forum.



More information available here: <http://unctad.org/en/pages/MeetingDetails.aspx?meetingid=1164>

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UNECE, ESCAP and Electronic Transactions Development Agency (ETDA)

The 28th UN/CEFACT Forum, 26-30 September 2016, Bangkok Thailand



The 28th Forum of the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) took place in Bangkok from 26-30 September 2016. Over 150 experts from across the globe attended the Forum, which was co-organized by UNECE, ESCAP and Thailand's Electronic Transactions Development Agency (ETDA). The Forum provided an opportunity to discuss further collaboration and strengthening information exchanges between UN/CEFACT, UNNExT and other relevant regional networks and expert communities. The Forum also included mini-conferences on topics such as Electronic Certification, Sustainable Fishery Management and Women in Trade Facilitation and Core Principles of the Operation of Single Windows. There was also progress on developing the UN/CEFACT Programme of Work 2017–2018. Significant progress was made in advancing current UN/CEFACT project and domain activities. In particular, the full draft of a UN/CEFACT Recommendation on Trade and Transport Facilitation Monitoring Mechanism (TTFMM) was finalized drawing on earlier work done by ADB and ESCAP in the Asia-Pacific region.

The Recommendation on TTFMM (No. 41), Recommendation N°36: Single Window Interoperability (No. 36) and Revision of Recommendation No. 1 on United Nations Layout Key for Trade Documents will be up for approval during the 23rd UN/CEFACT Plenary from 3-4 April 2017 in Geneva Switzerland. UN/CEFACT also recently approved the Recommendation on Public-Private Partnerships in Trade Facilitation (No. 41).

More information about the UN/CEFACT Forum available at: <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=42230#/>

ORGANIZATION UPDATES

Asian Development Bank (ADB)

Bhutan: National Consultation on Sanitary/ Phytosanitary and Technical Barriers to Trade Diagnostic Study

The Bhutan Agriculture and Food Regulatory Agency (BAFRA), Ministry of Agriculture and Forests, together with the Department of Trade, Ministry of Economic Affairs conducted a national consultation on sanitary/phytosanitary (SPS) and technical barriers to trade (TBT) on 12 August in Thimphu, Bhutan in preparation for launching a national SPS/TBT diagnostic study, under the trade facilitation agenda of the South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) Program. Outcomes of the meeting included agreement on adjusted terms of reference for the national SPS/TBT diagnostic study in Bhutan; Agreement on working arrangements for the Bhutan SPS/TBT Focal Point/s and Core Group with all involved stakeholders for preparation of the national diagnostic study. Discussion on the terms of reference for the national SPS/TBT diagnostic study focused on the methodology of identifying products; agreement on the overall methodology; aspects to be taken into account in the national context of Bhutan; the readiness of the Bhutan SPS/TBT National Focal Point/s and Core Group to work with the national consultant; and the role between the national and international consultant.



For more information: <http://sasec.asia/index.php?page=event&eid=214&url=bhutan-sps-tbt-consultation>

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Greater Tumen Initiative (GTI)

The 4th GTI International Trade and Investment EXPO, 13-16 October 2016, Sokcho City, Gangwon Province of Republic of Korea



633 companies from more than 20 countries took part in the 4th GTI International Trade and Investment EXPO. Furthermore, 2,500 buyers participated in the EXPO and achieved fruitful outcomes including the conclusion of 66 million USD export contracts. Since 2013, the EXPO has functioned as a platform for traders and investors to seek new business opportunities and accelerate trade and investment activities in the North East Asia. **More information available** [here](#).

The 5th GTI Trade Facilitation Capacity Building Workshop, 24-28 October 2016, Seoul, Republic of Korea

The Korea Customs Service in cooperation with the GTI Secretariat organized the 5th GTI Trade Facilitation Capacity Building Workshop. Customs officials of GTI member countries shared knowledge and experiences and sought opportunities for further cooperation in trade facilitation in the Greater Tumen Region. The Workshop mainly focused on two specific issues: 1) Standardization in Trade Facilitation and 2) Paperless Trade for Better Risk Management. Additionally, the participants shared the latest trade and trade facilitation policies from the international organizations (e.g. WCO, UNESCAP, GIZ, UNIDO, Andean Community, SAARC), local governments, and the private sector in North East Asia.



More information available here: <http://www.tumenprogramme.org/?info-660-1.html>

The 1st Meeting of GTI AEO Working Group



The General Administration of Customs of People's Republic of China in cooperation with the GTI Secretariat organized the 1st GTI AEO Working Group Meeting, which is part of the project "AEO (Authorized Economic Operator) Cooperation Scheme among Customs Administrations". The goal of the project is to establish cooperation mechanism on AEO among the GTI member states to promote regional trade. The duration of the project is from 2016 to 2017, with an expected output of concluding a Standardized AEO MRA (Mutual Recognition Arrangement) Text by the end of 2017. At the 1st GTI AEO Working Group Meeting, participants shared information on AEO systems in each GTI member state, and discussed the work plan for AEO Working Group.

More information available here: <http://www.tumenprogramme.org/?info-675-1.html>

Inaugural Meeting of GTI Customs Sub-Committee,

The inaugural GTI Customs Sub-Committee Meeting was held on 13 December 2016 in Incheon, Republic of Korea (ROK). At the 16th GTI Consultative Commission Meeting (28 APR 2016, Seoul, ROK), the GTI member countries approved the restructuring of the former GTI Trade Facilitation Committee into the Trade and Investment Committee (TIC) which will tackle broader issues on trade and investment and the Customs Sub-Committee (CSC) under TIC which will handle trade facilitation agendas in the customs domain. The Customs officials from the GTI member countries, experts from International Organizations including UNESCAP and other GTI partners took part in the GTI CSC.



More information available here: <http://www.tumenprogramme.org/?info-678-1.html>

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Inaugural Meeting of GTI Trade and Investment Committee, 14 December 2016, Incheon, Republic of Korea



Government officials from GTI member countries, experts from International Organizations, and GTI partners participated in the inaugural Meeting of GTI Trade and Investment Committee (TIC). The participants approved the new Terms of Reference for TIC, shared the results of GTI Customs Sub-Committee and GTI Local Cooperation Committee, accepted inputs from the GTI partners on developing future cooperation activities, and discussed project proposals and adopted the Work Plan for 2017.

More information available here: <http://www.tumenprogramme.org/?info-679-1.html>

International Trade Centre (ITC)

ITC and EU launch initiative to boost trade and economic growth in Afghanistan

The EU trade-related initiative – Afghanistan: trade for economic growth and regional cooperation (ATEG) – will lay the foundation for strengthening the country's trade capacities and building a business-friendly environment, with a long-term goal of Afghanistan – and its regional partners – becoming a vibrant regional economic hub. Funded by the European Union, the €4.5 million ATEG project will use trade as a lever for economic growth, job creation, poverty reduction and enhanced regional cooperation. The three-year project will be implemented by the ITC in close collaboration with the Ministry of Commerce and Industries. In its initial phase the project will build the capacity of policy makers to negotiate, formulate and implement trade policies and strategies, including ensuring private-sector participation in these processes. The launch of the project follows a detailed needs-assessment mission carried out by ITC in 2015. ITC will focus on developing and implementing a national export strategy for the Government of Afghanistan with a special focus on agricultural exports and provide training to government officers on trade policy and trade negotiations. ITC will also support the establishment of a National Trade Facilitation Committee, building the capacity of SMEs to comply with cross-border procedures and requirements, and improving mechanisms needed to ensure a constructive public-private dialogue.



More information available here: <http://www.intracen.org/news/ITC-and-EU-launch-initiative-to-boost-trade-and-economic-growth-in-Afghanistan/>

Oceania Customs Organisation (OCO)

OCO Regional Executive Seminar on Single Window, 25th -26th July 2016, Suva, Fiji



The OCO Regional Executive Seminar on Single Window was held at the WCO Regional Training and Fiji Revenue and Customs Authority. The seminar was organized and hosted by OCO. It was attended by Heads of Customs from Cook Islands, Federated State of Micronesia, Fiji, Guam, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Commonwealth of Northern Marianas, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor Leste, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. Also in-attendance were Port and Maritime official representatives from Cook Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea,

Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu. The panelists and presenters consisted of representatives from; Australian Department of Immigration & Border Protection, Fiji Revenue and Customs Authority, New Zealand Customs, OCO, International Monetary Fund, Secretariat of the Pacific Community, UNCTAD, World Bank, and WCO. The workshop benefited from the presentations by experts on various aspects of the Single Window ranging from

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conceptual frameworks to the benefits of single window and discussion was further enriched by the sharing of lessons learnt by members, which included Australia, Fiji, Kiribati, New Zealand, Niue and Tuvalu.

More information available here: <http://www.ocossec.org/>

OCO Assistance to Small Customs Administrations

The OCO provided support to Customs Officials from Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Marshall Islands and Nauru to attend Training on WTO Valuation, Rules of Origin, Post Clearance and Harmonised System held in Kiribati from 8-17 November, 2016. Whilst the Program was specifically targeted at Kiribati Customs Service and sponsored by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), the program was also extended to the three OCO members to optimize opportunity and building their respective capacity on those key trade facilitation instruments. Though not parties to the WTO, small Customs administrations are parties to regional preferential trade agreements that incorporate trade facilitation measures and will thus benefit from the simplification and harmonization of Customs procedures..

More information available here: <http://www.ocossec.org/>

Developing Revenue Administrative Capacity in Compliance Activities



The OCO in partnership with International Monetary Fund Pacific Financial Technical Assistance Centre (PFTAC) conducted a 5 day Regional Training on Risk Based Compliance Management. The Workshop was developed jointly with PFTAC to maximize the synergies that exist within Revenue authorities of OCO and Pacific Islands Tax Administrations Associations (PITAA) members. The Workshop was attended by Officials from Cook Islands, Nauru, CNMI, Niue, Palau, PNG, Kiribati, RMI, Vanuatu, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Timor Leste and Fiji. The key

theme for the workshop was finding the optimum level between facilitation of legitimate traders, taxpayers and travelers and intervention for non-compliant operators via an intelligence-led risk-based compliance management system. The Workshop was important for members to understand that effective risk management provides the means to achieve an appropriate balance between trade facilitation and regulatory control and that it can be applied by all administrations, regardless of whether they operate manual or automated systems.

More information available here: <http://www.ocossec.org/>

OCO Executive Regional Workshop on Customs Modernisation and Reforms 21-25 November 2016, Suva, Fiji

The OCO Executive Regional Workshop on Customs Modernisation and Reforms was held at the WCO Regional Training and Fiji Revenue and Customs Authority. The seminar was organized and hosted by the OCO and attended by Heads of Customs from 18 of the member administrations. The panelists and presenters consisted of representatives from WCO, New Zealand Customs, IMF, UNCTAD and World Bank. The purpose was to help Customs Executives to develop their management skills, further aiming to contribute to the organization development and modernization of their respective administrations. The 5-day workshop adopted a mixed training methodology such as presentations, group work and plenary discussions. One of the key conclusions from the discussions is that the core functions of Customs remained unchanged (revenue collection, border protection, trade facilitation), however Customs must change its approach through innovative ways vis-a-vis modernizing customs processes and application of risk management to customs control.



More information available here: <http://www.ocossec.org/>

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United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)

Trade Facilitation for SPECA Countries

UNECE, in collaboration with the OSCE Border Management Staff College in Dushanbe, organized a three-day training in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, 12-17 June 2016, on trade facilitation for SPECA countries (Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan). The objective was to raise the capacity of senior experts from these countries to achieve tangible results in 5 key areas of trade facilitation, using the UNECE Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide (TFIG). The training identified gaps and future areas of work in trade facilitation for the SPECA countries. It also included a study visit to the Tursunzade border crossing with Uzbekistan, and a comparison with the report of a similar study visit in May 2009. The participants (middle to senior level managers from ministries of economy and trade, Customs and other regulatory agencies and the business community in the countries) improved their capacity to analyze trade facilitation issues, and use the TFIG for this purpose. They learned how to identify solutions; suggest ways for improving regional cooperation in trade in the SPECA subregion and how to use trade facilitation for the development of cross-border supply chains.

More information available here: <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=44180#/>

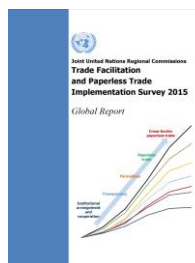
Support to Azerbaijan in WTO TFA readiness assessment

On 20 November 2016, on the margins of the SPECA 2016 Economic Forum and 11th session of the SPECA Governing Council, UNECE and the Ministry of Economy of Azerbaijan organized a seminar for various stakeholders on the challenges and benefits of implementing the WTO TFA. Azerbaijan is still in the process of accession to the WTO, and the TFA will be part of its accession negotiation package. UNECE and the Government agreed to carry out a TFA readiness assessment, on the same model as the one with Kazakhstan and Ukraine, carried out earlier.

More information available: <http://www.unece.org/>

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)

Global Survey on Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade Implementation 2017



The Second Global Survey on Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade Implementation will commence in January 2017 and will be led by ESCAP and other UN regional commissions (UNRCs). Building on the success of the First Global Survey conducted in 2015, the Second Survey will support implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement as well as emerging regional and global initiatives on paperless trade and e-trade, such as the new Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-Border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific. The scope of the Survey will remain broadly the same as in 2015, with increased focus on measures of particular importance to SMEs and the agricultural sector. Partnership was the key to success for the First Global Survey, and will be further strengthened in the Second Global Survey. The 2015 Survey was conducted by UNRCs in close collaboration with a large group of partners including UNCTAD, OECD, International Trade Centre (ITC), Oceania Customs Organization (OCO) and El Sistema Económico Latino Americano y del Caribe (SELA) in 2015.

Other interested international organizations including regional and subregional organizations, industry associations, academia, research institutes and other stakeholders are very welcome to join this initiative. **For more information contact:** Yann Duval, Chief (duvaly@un.org), and/or Tengfei Wang, Economic Affairs Officer (wangt@un.org), Trade Facilitation Unit, Trade, Investment and Innovation Division, UNESCAP.

More detailed information about survey available here:

<https://unnex.unescap.org/content/global-survey-trade-facilitation-and-paperless-trade-implementation-2017>

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Promoting Cross-border Agricultural Trade for Sustainable Development, 28 - 30 November 2016, Bangkok, Thailand



During the Sustainable Development Goals Week, ESCAP in collaboration with UNECE and the Agricultural and Food Marketing Association for Asia and the Pacific (AFMA) organized the Workshop on Promoting Cross-border Agricultural Trade for Sustainable Development. This workshop was supported by UNNExT experts as well as experts from FAO, ADB, GS1 and Kasetsart University, Thailand.

Over 40 public and private sector stakeholders from more than 10 countries in the Asia-Pacific region – mainly LDCs and LLDCs from South and Southeast Asia received training on implementing food safety and quality standards and their related control systems, particularly for fresh horticulture products. Participants received training on business process analysis tools that may be used to streamline control procedures and facilitate cross-border trade. The workshop also included a practical session on fruit and vegetable grading. In light of the workshop, participants expressed interest for follow-up regional capacity building support on agriculture trade facilitation.



More information available here: <http://www.unescap.org/events/workshop-promoting-cross-border-agricultural-trade-sustainable-development>

ESCAP Capacity Building Workshop on the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific, 24 - 25 November 2016, Bangkok, Thailand

17 country representatives from the Asia-Pacific participated in the Capacity Building Workshop on the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific. During the workshop, the ESCAP secretariat provided guidance on how to become a party to the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific, including lessons and steps undertaken by countries in the process of joining. The workshop revealed that a number of countries were already in the process of organizing inter-ministerial consultations before submitting recommendations for signature or accession to their respective Cabinets. China informed other participants that a recommendation to sign was already submitted to the State Council; the Russian Federation also made progress in securing a positive decision. Outcomes from the workshop included suggestions that ESCAP facilitate inter-agency consultations to ensure wide participation in the Framework Agreement, including the organization of a joint event with ASEAN to encourage South-East Asian countries to join.

More information is available at: <http://www.unescap.org/events/capacity-building-workshop-framework-agreement-facilitation-cross-border-paperless-trade-asia>

UNNExT Advisory Group facilitates delivery of the draft road map for implementation of the Framework Agreement, 22 - 25 November 2016, Bangkok, Thailand

A key development in the area of paperless trade in Asia-Pacific region in 2016 was the finalization of the first regional agreement to enable cross-border paperless trade. The Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific opened for signature on 1 October 2016 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York and provides a new tool for better implementation of the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation in Asia and the Pacific, ultimately supporting the development of cross-border e-commerce. In an effort to further the delivery of the roadmap for implementation of the Framework Agreement, selected members of relevant UNNExT Advisory Groups and regional experts met to work on legal and technical issues related to implementation. The outcomes from the meeting included draft legal and technical self-assessment checklists, as well as draft terms of references and rules of procedures for implementation of the Framework Agreement,

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which will be used as an input for the Legal and Technical Working Groups of the Interim Intergovernmental Steering Group on Cross-border Paperless Trade Facilitation which is set to hold its fourth meeting on 21-22 March 2017 in Bangkok.

More information available here: <http://www.unescap.org/events/meeting-extended-unnext-advisory-group-cross-border-paperless-trade-facilitation>

Workshop on the Implementation of Electronic SPS for Agricultural Trade Facilitation, 1-3 November 2016, Bangkok, Thailand



The implementation of electronic sanitary and phytosanitary certification systems requires numerous key considerations and assessments by the relevant stakeholders within ministries of agriculture and regulatory agencies. In this context, ESCAP, in cooperation partners from UNCTAD, FAO, the International Plant Protection Commission (IPPC), WTO Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) and UNECE as well as experts from China, Indonesia, the Netherlands, the Philippines and Malaysia, organized the UNNEXt Workshop on Implementation of e-SPS and Automation for

Agricultural Trade Facilitation from 1 - 3 November 2016. 30 participants representing plant protection agencies from 11 developing countries in the South and South-East Asia region benefited from training and information on the relevant standards and systems; business process optimization of SPS certificate issuance; conducting needs assessment and implementation of the paperless systems for e-SPS. This was achieved through an examination of practical case studies and best practices from practitioners and experts. Participants also visited Thailand's Department of Agriculture to learn from the Thai experience.

More information available here: <http://www.unescap.org/events/workshop-implementation-e-sps-and-automation-agriculture-trade-facilitation>

World Customs Organization (WCO)

WCO Asia/Pacific Regional Workshop on Intelligence-Led Risk Management

Twenty five representatives from 20 Customs administrations in the Asia-Pacific Region participated in the WCO Asia/Pacific Regional Workshop on Intelligence-Led Risk Management from 21 to 25 November 2016. The Workshop, held at the WCO Regional Training Centre in Faridabad-India, was organized in cooperation with India Customs and the Asia/Pacific Regional Office for Capacity Building (ROCB A/P), with the sponsorship of the Japanese Customs Cooperation Fund (CCF-Japan). Elements of intelligence support to risk management at the organizational level were covered throughout the Workshop while the main focus was given to intelligence support to operational risk management (e.g. security treats and related types of customs fraud). Main components of pre-arrival and pre-loading advance cargo information were also covered. Throughout the group works and country presentations, participants entered into in-depth discussions on how to identify high-risk cargo by utilizing advance cargo information and the methodology explained in the WCO Customs Risk Management Compendium.

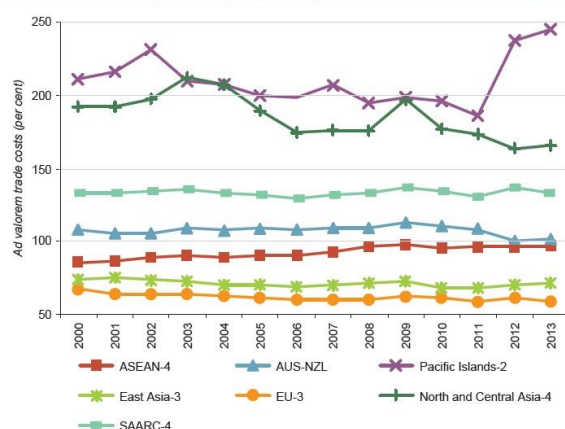


More information available here: <http://www.wcoomd.org/en/media/newsroom/2016/november/wco-asia-pacific-regional-workshop-on-intelligence-led-risk-management.aspx>

Trade Facilitation in the Asia-Pacific Region – An Update

PROGRESS IN TRADE COST REDUCTION

Figure 4.1 Trade costs of Asia-Pacific subregions with large developed economies, 2000-2013



Sources: ESCAP-World Bank Trade Costs Database (accessed June 2016).

Note: ASEAN-4 – Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand; AUS-NZL – Australia and New Zealand; East Asia-3 – China, Japan and the Republic of Korea; EU-3 – Germany, France and the United Kingdom; Pacific Islands-2 – Fiji and Papua New Guinea; North and Central Asia-4 – Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and the Russian Federation; and SAARC-4 – Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Trade costs shown are tariff equivalents, calculated as trade-weighted average trade costs of countries in each subregion with the three largest developed economies (Germany, Japan and the United States).

After the significant reduction – and, in many cases, elimination – of import tariffs during the past two decades, further reductions in trade costs will have to be achieved by tackling the non-tariff sources of trade costs, which now account for more than 90% of overall international trade costs. Figure 4.1 shows the evolution of trade costs of the Asia-Pacific subregions in trading with the three largest developed economies from 2000 to 2013. With the exception of the Pacific island developing economies (PIDEs), the trade cost levels in the Asia-Pacific region have typically remained similar

across time. Although trade costs in North and Central Asia remain excessively high, this subregion appears to have made relatively more progress in reducing trade costs with the selected developed markets during the period. No such trend is found in the case of South or South-East Asia. In contrast, the regional group of EU-3 (considered the global benchmark) continues to reduce its trade costs over time, implying that there are possibilities for further trade cost improvement, even among the best performers.

As table 4.1 shows, the subregional grouping that exhibits the lowest intraregional trade costs (closest to EU-3) is East Asia-3 (51%) for 2009-2014, followed by AUS-NZL (52%). In addition, the intraregional trade costs of East Asia-3 show a 3% decrease during 2009-2014 when compared with the 2003-2008 average; at the same time, the extraregional trade costs of East Asia-3 with all the regional groups also fell. The PIDEs have the highest intraregional trade costs (132%) followed by North and Central Asia-4 (121%); both subregions have intraregional trade costs that are more than double those of the regional benchmark, East Asia-3. The two subregions also have the highest extraregional trade costs (369%).

Table 4.1 Intra- and extraregional comprehensive non-tariff trade costs in the Asia-Pacific region

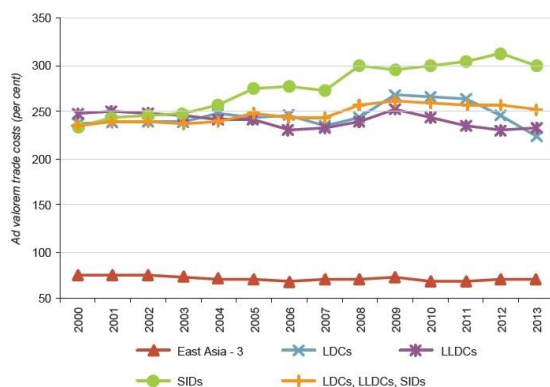
(Percentage)							
Region	ASEAN-4	East Asia-3	North and Central Asia - 4	Pacific Islands Developing Economies	SAARC-4	AUS-NZL	EU-3
ASEAN-4	76 (8)						
East Asia-3	75 (5)	51 (-3)					
North and Central Asia - 4	354 (11)	175 (-6)	121 (7)				
Pacific Islands developing economies	172 (-10)	175 (-3)	369 (29)	132 (-10)			
SAARC-4	128 (1)	124 (-1)	285 (2)	318 (2)	116 (11)		
AUS-NZL	101 (4)	88 (-5)	336 (-7)	83 (-8)	138 (-5)	52 (-4)	
EU-3	106 (-1)	85 (-3)	152 (-8)	209 (-4)	115 (2)	108 (-1)	43 (-5)
United States of America	86 (10)	63 (0)	177 (-1)	163 (-6)	110 (6)	100 (4)	67 (1)

Source: ESCAP-World Bank Trade Costs Database (accessed June 2016).

Note: Trade costs shown are average trade costs during 2009-2014 and may be interpreted as tariff equivalents. Changes in average trade costs between 2003-2008 and 2009-2014 are in parenthesis. Refer to the note in figure 4.1 for details of country groupings.

Overall, trade costs in the Asia-Pacific region remain heterogeneous across subregions. There is no strong trend towards convergence in trade costs between subregions that experience higher intra- and extraregional trade costs and those for which trade costs are relatively lower. Furthering regional integration agendas and ensuring that international trade continues to be an engine for growth will require addressing the disparities in trade costs.

Figure 4.2 Trade costs of Asia-Pacific countries with special needs and large developed economies, 2000-2013



Sources: ESCAP-World Bank Trade Cost Database (accessed June 2016)

Note: The trade costs shown are tariff equivalents, calculated as trade-weighted average trade costs of countries in each group with the three largest developed economies (Germany, Japan and the United States). LDCs – least developed countries; LLDCs – landlocked developing countries; SIDS – small island developing States.

seen a declining trend. Landlocked developing countries appear to have fared better and exhibit a gradually declining trend over time. Asia-Pacific least developed countries, as a group, also have experienced declining trade costs in recent years (since 2009).

The costs shown in table 4.1 are broadly consistent with data published by UNCTAD on international transport costs, which show a long-term trend towards cost reductions, albeit with stark differences among regions (UNCTAD, 2015). They are also consistent with the outcomes of the 2015 Global Survey on Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade Implementation (ESCAP, 2015a), which found disparities between the subregions in their trade facilitation implementation levels. Given the strong correlation between trade facilitation and paperless trade implementation levels found in the survey and international trade costs, as explored in APTIR 2015, there is a strong case for policymakers to pursue further reform in these areas in order to reduce trade costs, and ultimately enhance trade competitiveness and promote regional integration.

TRADE FACILITATION TOWARDS SEAMLESS SUPPLY CHAINS

In order to gain greater insight into the progress made and the remaining challenges towards trade facilitation and seamless supply chains, regional performance is analysed based on the latest data from the three metrics – the World Bank Logistics Performance Index (LPI) and Trading Across Borders (TAB) indicators as well as the UNCTAD Liner Shipping Connectivity Index (LSCI). While the three sets of indicators are interrelated, there are also differences – LPI covers both “soft” and “hard” infrastructure aspects associated with moving goods across borders, while TAB focuses mainly on regulatory and procedural aspects at the border in terms of documentation. In turn, LSCI provides insights specifically into maritime connectivity and port efficiency, which remain an essential aspect of reducing international trade costs.

According to LPI 2016, the top trade logistics performers in the Asia-Pacific region are Singapore, which is ranked the highest, followed by Hong Kong, China in second place and Japan in third position. The LPI, through its six components captures “hard” and “soft” infrastructure elements of trade facilitation measures.

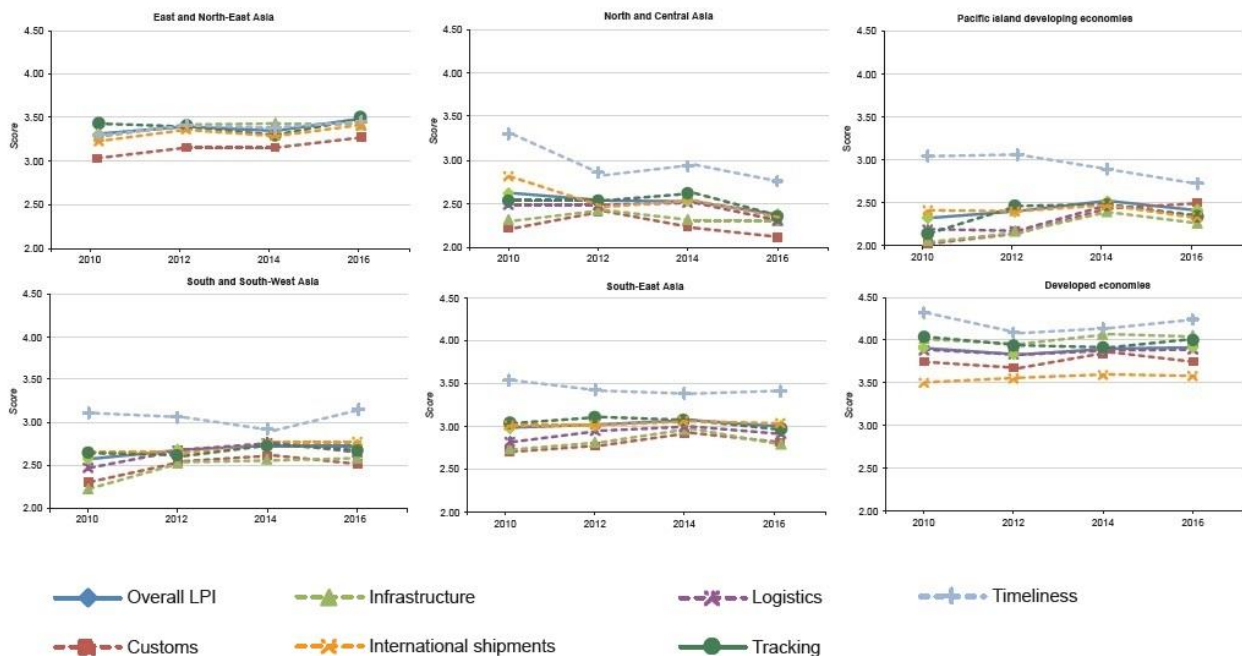
Figure 4.3 shows the relative performance of Asia Pacific subregions for six components of LPI, i.e. efficiency of customs and border management clearance (customs); quality of trade and transport infrastructure (infrastructure); ease of arranging competitively priced shipments (international shipments); competence and quality of logistics services – trucking, forwarding, and customs brokerage (logistics quality and competence); ability to track and trace consignments (tracking and tracing); and frequency with

Figure 4.2 shows the trade costs evolution of countries with special needs (CSNs) with the three largest developed economies. Trade costs of CSNs are found to be two to three times higher than those experienced by East Asia-3 (the regional benchmark). The small island developing States (SIDS) experience the highest trade costs. Of greatest concern is the fact that trade costs for this set of countries appear to have increased over time – although more detailed analysis reveals that trade costs of the larger SIDS, such as Fiji and Papua New Guinea have

which shipments reach consignees within scheduled or expected delivery times (timeliness). The performance of ESCAP developed economies is also shown for reference purposes.

Overall, figure 4.3 shows that trade logistics performance varies greatly across the Asia-Pacific subregions. East and North-East Asia, the best performing Asia-Pacific subregion, is continuing to make progress across all components of LPI over time. The other Asia-Pacific subregions, with the exception North and Central Asia, have shown only incremental improvement between 2010 and 2016.

Figure 4.3 Evolution of the Logistics Performance Index, by Asia-Pacific subregion, 2010-2016



Sources: World Bank Logistics Performance Index (accessed August 2016).

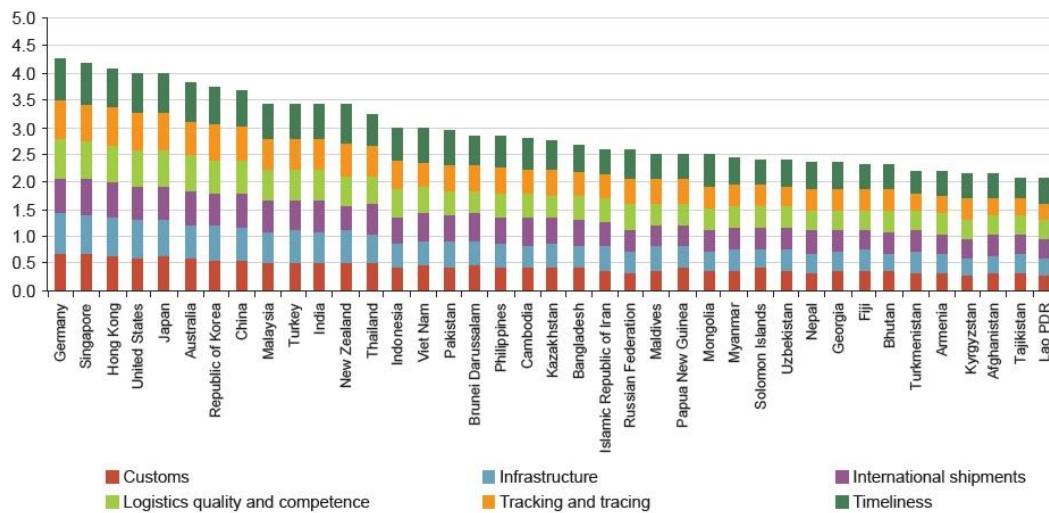
Note: East and North-East Asia – China, Hong Kong, China, Republic of Korea, Mongolia; South-East Asia – Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam; South and South-West Asia – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Islamic Republic of Iran, Nepal, Pakistan and Turkey; Pacific island developing economies – Fiji and Papua New Guinea; North and Central Asia – Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan; developed economies – Australia, France, Germany, Japan, New Zealand, United Kingdom and the United States.

However, the rate of improvement and performance across indicators is mixed. A number of subregions – i.e. South-East Asia, South and South-West Asia, PIDEs and North and Central Asia – show uneven and, in some cases, declining performance in relation to the “timeliness” indicator.

The “timeliness” indicator, which provides some insights into the reliability and predictability of the supply chain, is particularly important for traders and producers. Hence, sustained improvement in this area would be beneficial to achieving overall competitiveness. The Asia-Pacific subregions show the widest range of performance in relation to the LPI “customs” and “tracking and tracing” components. Overall, “tracking and tracing” can be considered as one of the most challenging components, particularly for developing countries, due to the investments required for the technical infrastructure and solutions (World Bank, 2016a).

Figure 4.4

Performance across six dimensions of trade logistics, 2016



Sources: World Bank Logistics Performance Index (accessed July 2016).

The seven worst logistics performers shown in figure 4.4 are all landlocked developing countries. This is unsurprising, as access to an efficient port is an important component of logistics performance. Furthermore, the requirements for transit and the frequent changes in modes of transport required by goods from the landlocked countries can adversely affect trade logistics in those countries. A new methodology for the Trading Across Borders (TAB) of the World Bank Doing Business Indicators was introduced for the 2016 indicators. While this makes comparisons across time more problematic, the new methodology seeks to reflect the actual directions and volumes of international trade and differing regulatory burdens faced by traders (World Bank, 2016b). The indicator looks at three components of the procedures required for importing and exporting, i.e. documentary compliance, border compliance and domestic transport. The time and costs of domestic transport are measured under the new methodology; however, they do not count towards the overall TAB rankings. Hence, it can be seen that landlocked countries fare much better under the new TAB methodology. In fact, in terms of overall TAB rankings (table 4.2), the top two performers in the Asia-Pacific region are landlocked Bhutan and Armenia, as they both have relatively lower times for importing and exporting, and cost of trade. The lowest ranking countries are in South and South-West Asia, i.e. Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan. Figure 4.5 presents the subregional averages of time and cost to trade in terms of border and documentary compliance. The leading performers in the Asia-Pacific region are still in East and North-East Asia with trading time associated with border and documentary compliance of 33 hours, and average cost of trade associated with border and documentary compliance of \$309 and \$66, respectively. While border and documentary compliance costs in South-East Asia are only slightly higher than those of North-East Asia, compliance times are much higher. In particular,

Table 4.2 Performance rankings according to LPI, TAB and LSCI, 2016

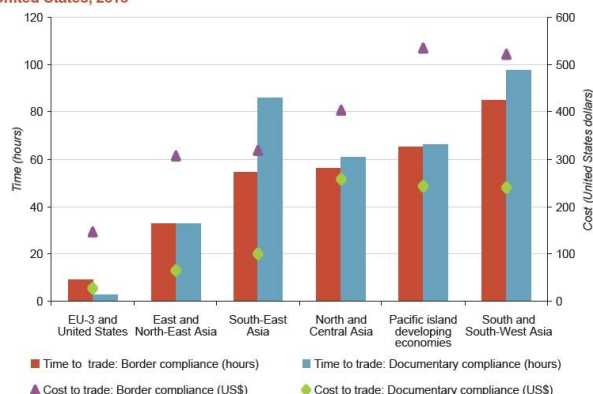
Economy	LPI rank 2016	TAB rank 2016	LSCI rank 2016	Economy	LPI rank 2016	TAB rank 2016	LSCI rank 2016
Germany	1	35	8	Bangladesh	87	172	113
Singapore	5	41	3	Islamic Republic of Iran	96	167	88*
Hong Kong, China	9	47	6	Russian Federation	99	170	49
United States	10	34	7	Maldives	104	137	138
Japan	12	52	18	Papua New Guinea	105	163	139
Australia	19	89	76	Mongolia	108	74	1*
Republic of Korea	24	31	4	Myanmar	113	140	142
China	27	96	1	Solomon Islands	116	141	140
Malaysia	32	49	5	Uzbekistan	118	159	49*
Turkey	34	62	36	Nepal	124	60	43*
India	35	133	43	Georgia	130	78	154
New Zealand	37	55	92	Bhutan	135	21	43*
Thailand	45	56	46	Fiji	136	73	131
Indonesia	63	105	86	Armenia	141	29	36*
Viet Nam	64	99	25	Kyrgyzstan	146	83	49*
Pakistan	68	169	63	Afghanistan	150	174	63*
Philippines	71	95	101	Lao People's Democratic Republic	152	108	46*
Cambodia	73	98	155	Tajikistan	153	132	63*
Kazakhstan	77	122	49*	Guam	N/A	47	133
Azerbaijan	87	94	36*	Sri Lanka	N/A	90	24

Note: LPI rankings are based on the World Bank Logistics Performance Index Report 2016; TAB rankings are based on the World Bank Doing Business Report 2016; and UNCTAD LSCI rankings are based on data in 2016.

* The LSCI ranking of each landlocked country is based on the ranking of its main transit country.

documentary compliance times in South-East Asia are found to exceed those in North and Central Asia as well as the PIDEs.

Figure 4.5 Border and trade documentary compliance, by Asia-Pacific subregion, compared with EU-3 and the United States, 2016



Sources: Calculation based on World Bank Doing Business Report 2016 (accessed July 2016).

Note: EU-3 and the United States – France, Germany, United Kingdom and United States; East and North-East Asia – China, Hong Kong, China, Japan, Republic of Korea and Mongolia; South-East Asia – Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam; North and Central Asia – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan; Pacific island developing economies – Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa and Solomon Islands; South and South-West Asia – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Islamic Republic of Iran, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Turkey.

border policy with India, the trading time associated with border and documentary compliance is two hours for both measures, while the average cost of trade associated with border and documentary compliance is \$84 and \$50, respectively. For Afghanistan (the lowest ranking subregional and the Asia-Pacific region performer), the time associated with border and documentary compliance is 72 hours and 290 hours, respectively, while the average cost associated with border and documentary compliance is \$681 and \$622, respectively.

PROGRESS IN MULTILATERAL AND REGIONAL COOPERATION FOR TRADE FACILITATION

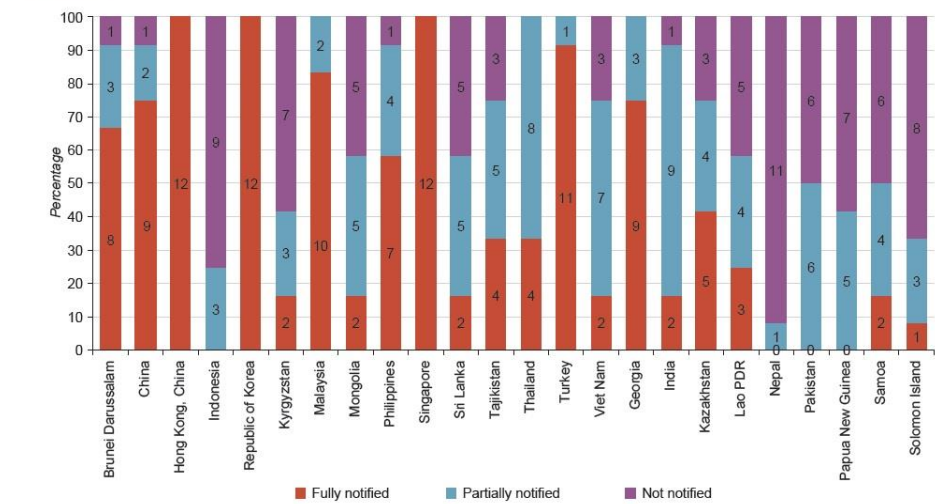
Cooperation at the regional and multilateral levels is required in order to effectively facilitate trade and reduce trade costs, given the cross-border nature of global production networks and value chains. In recent years a number of significant international, regional and bilateral initiatives have been put in place to enhance cooperation in trade facilitation and paperless trade. Almost all regional trade agreements (RTAs) negotiated since 2010 by economies in the region include trade facilitation provisions. Moreover, the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), which was finalized at the Ministerial Conference in December 2013 as part the “Bali Package”, is now in the process of ratification by WTO members. At the regional level, the seventy-second Commission session of ESCAP adopted the Framework Agreement of the Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific, highlighting the fact that cooperation on progressive trade facilitation measures is an increasing priority in the Asia-Pacific region in the era of digital economy.

WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement

The objective of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) is to facilitate the movement, clearance and release of goods through more efficient customs and border procedures. The TFA will enter into force once two thirds of the WTO members have completed their domestic ratification processes (or 110 members, given the current WTO membership). As of 10 November 2016, 96 WTO members – of which 26 are ESCAP regional member States and associate members – had ratified the TFA. As members prepare for the implementation of the TFA, 24 developing economies in the Asia-Pacific region have already submitted notifications of relevant provisions of the TFA under Category A (figure 4.6). Category A notifications indicate the provisions that the WTO members intend to have implemented by the time the TFA enters into force (or within a year of entry into force in the case of least developed countries). An analysis of these notifications also provides some indication of the level of trade facilitation implementation and policy

priorities among the members. On average, the 24 Asia-Pacific economies have fully notified nearly 60% of all substantive provisions in the TFA. This sample includes six landlocked developing countries and four least developed countries; the results indicate that most developing countries have already made good progress in implementing many of the measures included in the TFA.

Figure 4.6 Category A notifications of 24 Asia-Pacific economies (article level)



Sources: Updated from Duval and Bayona (2015).

The Asia-Pacific region is home both to the most and the least efficient economies in terms of trade facilitation. In fact, the only three economies, among all WTO members, to have fully notified all 12 articles of the TFA under Category A, are: the Republic of Korea; Singapore and Hong Kong, China. These economies are also recognized global leaders in trade facilitation. Figure 4.6 also shows that landlocked developing countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the

Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Mongolia, Nepal and Tajikistan) have fully notified a lower percentage of the TFA than other economies (Duval and Bayona, 2015). The ability to implement trade facilitation measures is closely related to different aspects of human and institutional development, as may be captured by income, the human development index, internet access, or the corruption perception index (UNCTAD, 2016).

The TFA provides a unique and valuable tool and policy instrument for Governments in developing countries to revitalize or accelerate ongoing trade facilitation reforms aimed at reducing trade costs and enabling greater participation in global value chains (GVCs). Furthermore, the TFA can provide greater impetus for economies to adopt increasingly advanced trade facilitation reform, such as paperless trade initiatives.

Table 4.3 Changes in international trade costs of the Asia-Pacific region as a result of WTO TFA implementation (Percentage)

	WTO TFA (Binding only)		WTO TFA (Binding + non-binding)		WTO TFA+ (Binding + non-binding + other paperless trade)	
	Partially implemented	Fully implemented	Partially implemented	Fully implemented	Partially implemented	Fully implemented
Model 1						
Overall TF	-3.15	-6.77	-5.38	-11.11	-6.71	-13.16
Model 3						
Transparency	-0.79	-1.67	-1.13	-3.09	-1.13	-3.09
Formalities	-2.25	-3.17	-2.66	-3.95	-2.66	-3.95
Institution	-0.10	-0.35	-0.10	-0.35	-0.10	-0.35
Paperless trade	-	-	-1.45	-2.34	-2.91	-4.83

Source: ESCAP (2015a).

Implementation both of the binding and non-binding TFA measures is expected to result in a 5% reduction in trade costs, on average, under a partial implementation scenario, and an 11% reduction under the more ambitious full implementation scenario (ESCAP, 2015c). In contrast, implementation of the binding TFA measures alone results, at best, in a 6.8% decrease in trade costs on average in the AsiaPacific region. Under a WTO TFA+ scenario, where paperless trade measures not included in the TFA are also implemented, the average trade cost reduction across countries increases to more than 13%.

Both the partial and the full implementation scenarios suggest that TFA measures, which will have the highest impact, on average, on trade costs are those related to “formalities”, both in the case of binding and non-binding measures. However, analysis of the Category A notifications suggests that the provisions

related to “formalities” and the “release and clearance of goods” (TFA Articles 10 and 7), including Single Window implementation, are those which will require more time and technical assistance for implementation in the Asia-Pacific region (Duval and Bayona, 2015). Beyond the TFA measures, the WTO+ scenario analysis suggests that the largest reduction of trade costs is achieved through partial or full implementation of paperless trade measures not specified in that Agreement (table 4.3).

The Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific

The recently adopted Framework Agreement is a regional United Nations treaty wholly dedicated to facilitation of paperless trade, and in particular the electronic exchange of trade-related data and documents between Governments, and between businesses and Governments, across borders. It opened for signature by ESCAP member States on 1 October 2016 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York and will enter into force 90 days after five United Nations Member States have ratified it. The new regional agreement is complementary to the TFA, which focuses on more conventional trade facilitation measures. For example, while the TFA includes a provision on developing a Single Window at the national level, either paper-based or electronic, it does not address the issue of interoperability of Single Windows or cross-border paperless trade. Taking part in the implementation of the Framework Agreement is therefore expected to enable ESCAP members to more fully implement the Single Window provision of the TFA given that “[WTO] members shall, to the extent possible and practical, use information technology to support the single window”

More broadly, the implementation of progressive and innovative cross-border paperless trade measures under, or related to, the Framework Agreement can be expected to bring about significant benefits in terms of new export potential and reduced trade transactions costs. However, taking into account the very different readiness levels of Asia-Pacific countries in trade facilitation, capacity-building and technical assistance will need to be provided to less-advanced ESCAP member States, as highlighted in the Framework Agreement itself.

CONCLUSION

While economies in Asia and the Pacific continue to make improvements in trade facilitation, gaps among subregional economies remain. The heterogeneity in trade facilitation performance and trade cost reduction is a hindrance to full regional integration and efficient value chains. Given these disparities in development levels, access to legal and technical assistance as well as capacity-building may be required by countries with special needs in order to implement more advanced trade facilitation and paperless trade measures. In this regard the significant progress in multilateral and regional levels on trade facilitation – i.e. the WTO TFA and the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific – is encouraging, as these developments benefit both the trade facilitation high performers as well as economies that are lagging behind by providing platforms for technology transfer, capacity-building and harmonization of international standards and tools.

Looking to the future, although regional or multilateral cooperation on trade facilitation will become increasingly important in harmonizing and simplifying trade processes and accelerating reform, policymakers will still need to work hard on enabling interagency and public-private sector cooperation domestically. This includes developing the consultation and monitoring systems necessary for identifying key bottlenecks and prioritizing trade facilitation reform accordingly.

This analysis is an excerpt from Chapter 4 of from the Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report 2016. For full report, references and footnotes please see APTIR 2016. <http://www.unescap.org/resources/asia-pacific-trade-and-investment-report-2016-recent-trends-and-developments>

PUBLICATION IN FOCUS: The Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report 2016



The Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report (APTIR) is a major annual publication of the Trade, Investment and Innovation Division of United Nations ESCAP. It aims to deepen understanding of trends and developments in trade and investment in the Asia-Pacific region; emerging issues in trade, investment and trade facilitation policies, and impacts of these policies on countries' abilities to meet the challenges of achieving inclusive and sustainable development. It offers innovative policy options to meet the challenges of achieving sustainable trade and investment.

APTIR 2016 shows that 2015-2016 has been a worrying period for trade and investment in the Asia-Pacific region and worldwide, and there are few signs that the current economic and trade slowdown is simply a temporary phenomenon. Instead, this pattern may be the result of a change in the fundamental structure of world trade, which might lead to persistent trade stagnation. On the other hand, good progress was made, especially at the regional level, with furthering cross-border paperless trade as one of the approaches to deal with the upward pressure on the trade costs. Accepting the rising importance of e-commerce as a new trade platform, there is opening for the possible changes in the focus of trade and investment policies in order to leverage the potential of e-commerce to support intraregional trade.

The Report is aimed at policymakers as well as practitioners, experts, academia, business, international agencies and non-governmental organizations working or interested in these issues in the Asia-Pacific region.

Read the full report here: <http://www.unescap.org/resources/asia-pacific-trade-and-investment-report-2016-recent-trends-and-developments>

ADB

Trade in Health Products: Reducing Trade Barriers for Better Health, January 2017



Lowering trade barriers on health products can improve health systems. Trade in health products has been flourishing in recent years as the demand for better health has been growing throughout the world. At the same time, trade in health products is hampered by substantive trade barriers. In this paper, we present evidence that countries around the world still apply tariffs and nontariff measures that increase prices and limit the availability of health-related products such as pharmaceuticals, vaccines, and medical equipment. The case for liberalizing trade in these products is therefore strong. In addition, we show that improving trade facilitation performance, using the World Trade Organization's Trade Facilitation Agreement as a starting point, can be linked to improved handling of health-related products such as vaccines which, in turn, would boost usage.

Available here: <http://www.unescap.org/resources/paperless-trade-regional-trade-agreements>

ESCAP

Value Added Trade Costs in Goods and Services, October 2016



This study introduces a new dataset of bilateral value added trade costs for the goods and services sectors, based on a measure derived from the micro-founded gravity model and using data from the OECD-WTO TiVA database. This is the first study to calculate value added trade costs for a set of developed and developing economies, both for the goods and services sectors. Integration into global supply chains and production networks is found to be clearly associated with lower value added trade costs.

Available here: <http://www.unescap.org/resources/value-added-trade-costs-goods-and-services>

RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS

Paperless Trade in Regional Trade Agreements, November 2016



In this working paper we develop a comprehensive list of paperless trade measures and provisions in regional trade agreements (RTAs) and examine the extent to which they are featured in various RTAs, including in the TPP and ASEAN agreements. The number of paperless trade measures in RTAs is found to have doubled between 2005-8 and 2013-16 at the global level. Most recent RTAs contain more and deeper provisions than those featured in the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement. A more detailed analysis of paperless trade measures included in selected Asia-Pacific RTAs confirms that the coverage of RTAs of paperless trade issues has become extensive, covering increasingly specific areas such as electronic certificates of origins and sanitary and phytosanitary certificates. In that context, the new UN treaty and Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-Border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific can be expected to provide a useful tool for harmonized implementation of many of these provisions.

Available here: <http://www.unescap.org/resources/paperless-trade-regional-trade-agreements>

The Role of ICT in Implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement: some preliminary reflections, November 2016



This policy brief aims to highlight some of the ways that information and communications technologies (ICT) will almost inevitably play a role in helping WTO Members implement their commitments under the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA). Indeed, the important role that the Internet will play is explicitly recognized in the text of the TFA, as well as in some of what are the assumptions clearly underlying many of the Agreement's provisions. But there are other ways that ICT can be leveraged to enhance and facilitate WTO Members in realizing the objectives inherent to the TFA, which this brief also aims to discuss.

Available here: <http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/polibrief49.pdf>

Do trade facilitation provisions in regional trade agreements matter? Impact on trade costs and multilateral spillovers, November 2016



The scope and depth of bilateral and regional preferential trade agreements (RTAs) negotiated over the past 15 years has expanded beyond traditional market access and preferential tariffs to include provisions on a wide range of issues, including trade facilitation. This study is a first attempt to measure the extent to which RTA provisions related to those featured in the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) contribute to reducing trade costs.

Available here: <http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/AWP%20No.%20164.pdf>

ITC

SME Competitiveness Outlook 2016, October 2016



This annual flagship report of ITC focuses on the role of standards and regulations in increasing the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The report combines data analysis, academic insights, thought leader opinions and case studies to provide guidance for policymakers, SME managers and standard setters. It discusses standards as different as food safety standards, environmental standards, container size standards, security technology standards for encrypted communication, labour standards, accounting standards and medical and wellness tourism standards; provides both general insights into the impact of standards and regulations on SME competitiveness, and targeted insights into specific channels through which individual standards and regulations affect SMEs.

Available here: <http://www.intracen.org/uploadedFiles/SMECO2016.pdf>

UNCTAD

Trade Facilitation and Development: Driving trade competitiveness, border agency effectiveness and strengthened governance, September 2016



Trade facilitation reforms improve a country's trade competitiveness and the effectiveness of border agencies. In addition, they can directly help advance development goals such as strengthening governance and formalizing the informal sector. The present study identifies policies to help reap the full development-related benefits from trade facilitation reforms. UNCTAD research and experience

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with technical assistance programmes has shown that such reforms should be comprehensive and ambitious and advance the trade and development objectives of countries. Trade facilitation should be linked to investments in transport infrastructure, information and communications technologies and broader trade-supporting services. Since many trade facilitation challenges and solutions are regional, their implementation should be included in regional integration schemes. Given the linkages between trade facilitation reforms and implementation capacities, development partners need to ensure that their support does not leave out the most vulnerable economies, and should make full use of the promises and possibilities for technical and financial assistance provided for by the Agreement on Trade Facilitation of the World Trade Organization (WTO), reached in Bali, Indonesia in 2013.

Available here: http://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/dtltlb2016d1_en.pdf

Technical Note: Next steps upon the entry into force of the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation, January 2017



This technical note provides guidelines to countries for actions to be taken following the entry into force of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement.

Available here: http://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/TN24_NextSteps.pdf

UNECE

Traceability for Sustainable Trade: A Framework to design Traceability Systems for Cross Border Trade, September 2016



Traceability systems are often private sector driven as producers seek to promote certain claims about their products, however, government agencies may also have a significant role. Government intervention increases the complexity of traceability systems as it introduces new elements such as data-sharing, confidentiality of information, governance and regulatory compliance. This has the potential to impact on trade, especially when governments seek to protect consumers by requiring certain documents or data from traders in order to ensure the veracity of policy claims. The United Nations Economic Commission

for Europe has developed a framework for designing traceability systems in order to ensure that traceability is efficiently dealt with in cross-border trade so that it can better contribute to the sustainable development goals. This framework should be useful for government officials and private sector actors involved in designing and implementing traceability systems.

Available here:

www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trade/Publications/ECE_TRADE_429E_TraceabilityForSustainableTrade.pdf

World Bank

Doing Business 2017: Equal Opportunity for All, October 2016



This World Bank Group flagship publication, is the 14th in a series of annual reports measuring the regulations that enhance business activity and those that constrain it. *Doing Business* presents quantitative indicators on business regulations and the protection of property rights that can be compared across 190 economies—from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe—and over time. *Doing Business* measures regulations affecting 11 areas of the life of a business. Ten of these areas are included in this year's ranking on the ease of doing business: starting a business, dealing with

construction permits, getting electricity, registering property, getting credit, protecting minority investors, paying taxes, trading across borders, enforcing contracts and resolving insolvency. *Doing Business* also measures labor market regulation, which is not included in this year's ranking. Data in *Doing Business 2017* are current as of June 1, 2016. The indicators are used to analyze economic outcomes and identify what reforms of business regulation have worked, where and why.

Available here: <http://www.doingbusiness.org/reports/global-reports/doing-business-2017>

RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS

World Economic Forum and Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation

The Global Enabling Trade Report 2016, November 2016

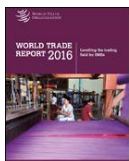


The Global Enabling Trade Report 2016 is launched at a time of uncertainty for global trade. The year started with the signing of the Trans-Pacific-Partnership, bright hopes for the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, signs of progress in the WTO and a positive mood among leaders round the world. By November, anti-trade rhetoric in the US election, the UK's vote to leave the European Union and stark divides among WTO members had brought progress on these fronts close to a halt. However, liberalization efforts did continue in other regions, via Asia's Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, Africa's Continental Free Trade Area and other negotiations

Available here: http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GETR_2016_report.pdf

WTO

World Trade Report: Levelling the Trading Field for SMEs, September 2016



Participation in international trade, once exclusive, can progressively become more inclusive. But while new opportunities are opening up for small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), old barriers to international trade remain. This report highlights national and international policy actions that would enhance the ability of SMEs to participate in world markets more effectively. It says that for open trade and global integration to fully benefit everyone, it is crucial to ensure that all firms—not just large corporations—can succeed in today's global marketplace.

Available here: https://www.wto.org/english/res_e/booksp_e/world_trade_report16_e.pdf

Trade costs and inclusive growth: Case studies presented by WTO chair-holders, November 2016



This publication compiles insightful research on the avenues that open up for developing countries when they reduce trade costs, including by ratifying and implementing the TFA. The contributions have been authored by academics affiliated with the WTO Chairs Programme (WCP). The programme was launched in 2010 to enhance knowledge and understanding of the trading system among academics and policy-makers in developing countries. Now in its second phase, the WCP has helped to promote teaching, research and public debate on trade issues.

Available here: https://www.wto.org/english/res_e/booksp_e/trade-costs-incl-growth_full_e.pdf

REGIONAL EVENTS

Event	Date	Venue	Organizer
Information Working Group	February 2017	Brisbane, Australia	OCO
OCO & OCTA Workshop on HS and PACER+	February 2017	-	OCO
Maldives: National Consultation on Sanitary/Phytosanitary and Technical Barriers to Trade Diagnostic Study	2 February 2017	Male, Maldives	ADB
SASEC Trade Facilitation and Transport Working Group Meeting	7-8 February 2017	Colombo, Sri Lanka	ADB
Sri Lanka: National Consultation on Sanitary/Phytosanitary and Technical Barriers to Trade Diagnostic Study	9 February 2017	Colombo, Sri Lanka	ADB
Workshop on Cross-border Paperless Trade Facilitation and Single Window Systems in Southern and Central Asia,	14-17 February 2017	Bangkok, Thailand	ESCAP
Sub-Committee on Customs Procedures (SCCP)	21-23 February 2017	Nha Trang, Viet Nam	APEC
Committee on Trade and Investment (CTI) – Workshop on Promoting Trade in Products Which Contribute to Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Through Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation	22 February	Nha Trang, Viet Nam	APEC
APEC Workshop on Promoting Trade in Products which Contribute to Sustainable and Inclusive Growth through Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation	22-23 February 2017	Nha Trang, Viet Nam	APEC
Bangladesh: Workshop on Authorized Economic Operator	TBD	Dhaka, Bangladesh	ADB
National Transport Facilitation Commission Transport Subcommittee meeting on Protocol 1 expansion	1 March 2017	Viet Nam	ADB
OCO HS Working Group - Pacific Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System (PACHS)	March 2017	-	OCO
1st Pre-meeting of Trade and Investment Committee	March 2017	Russian Federation	GTI
Cross-Border Transport Agreement Joint Committee Retreat	17 March 2017	Viet Nam	ADB
Fourth Meeting of Legal and Technical Working Groups on Cross-border Paperless Trade Facilitation	21-22 Mar 2017	Bangkok, Thailand	ESCAP
Third Meeting of the Interim Intergovernmental Steering Group on Cross-Border Paperless Trade Facilitation	23-24 Mar 2017	Bangkok, Thailand	ESCAP
Capacity Building Workshop on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific	24 Mar 2017	Bangkok, Thailand	ESCAP
Regional Workshop on Promoting Connectivity	27-28 March 2017	Seoul, Republic of Korea	ADB
29th UN/CEFACT Forum. Online registration here: https://www.unece.org/index.php?id=44084#/	27-31 March 2017	Geneva, Switzerland	UNECE
Conference on Supply Chain Reference Data Model	27 March 2017	Geneva, Switzerland	UNECE
Conference on Agricultural Standards	28 March 2017	Geneva, Switzerland	UNECE
Joint UNECE - UNCITRAL Conference on Transboundary Trusted Environment	29 March 2017	Geneva, Switzerland	UNECE - UNCITRAL
Conference on UN/LOCODE	30 March 2017	Geneva, Switzerland	UNECE
Conference on Single Window	31 March 2017	Geneva, Switzerland	UNECE
Joint PFTAC/OCO Tax Compliance Workshop	April 2017	-	OCO
GTI/ESCAP Workshop on Cross-border Trade Facilitation and Single Window Implementation in Northeast Asia	April 2017	Vladivostok, Russian Federation	GTI-ESCAP

23rd UN/CEFACT Plenary	3-4 April 2017	Geneva, Switzerland	UNECE
11th session of the SPECA WG on Trade and Trade Policy Forum,	4-5 April 2017	Almaty, Kazakhstan.	UNECE
Subregional Workshop on Finding of Mongolia Business Process Analysis	18 April 2017	Incheon, Republic of Korea	ESCAP
3rd UNNExT Masterclass: Digital Customs and Single Windows	19-28 Apr 2017	Cheon-an, Republic of Korea	ESCAP
OCO Annual Conference	May 2017	Guam	OCO
2nd meeting of GTI AEO Working Group	May 2017	Vladivostok, Russian Federation	GTI
Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade Workshop	25-26 May 2017	Bangkok, Thailand	ITD
6th GTI Trade Facilitation Capacity Building Workshop	June 2017	Cheonan, ROK	GTI
39th Meeting of the GMS Tourism Working Group, back to back with 2017 Mekong Tourism Forum	6-8 June 2017	Luang Prabang, Lao PDR	ADB
23rd Annual Meeting of the GMS Working Group on Environment	June 2017	Cambodia (TBC)	ADB
14th Annual Meeting of the GMS Working Group on Agriculture	June 2017	Cambodia (TBC)	ADB
22nd Meeting of the Regional Power Trade Coordination Committee	June 2017	PRC (TBC)	ADB
OCO Trade Facilitation Workshop	July 2017	Seoul, ROK	OCO
5th GTI International Trade and Investment EXPO	21-24 Sept 2017	Donghae, ROK	GTI
2nd Pre-meeting of GTI Trade and Investment Committee	September 2017	Donghae, ROK	GTI
3rd meeting of GTI AEO Working Group	September 2017	Ulaanbaata, Mongolia	GTI
8th Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum (APTFF)	September/ October 2017	TBC	ESCAP-ADB
ROC-TF annual meeting	September/ October 2017	TBC	ROC-TF
Regional workshop on Single Window Interoperability	September 2017	Moscow, Russian Federation	ESCAP
Regional workshop on Agricultural Trade Facilitation	Sept/ Oct 2017	TBC	ESCAP
30th UN/CEFACT Forum	October 2017	Rome, Italy	UNECE
Committee on Trade and Investment	31 October-2 November 2017	Bangkok, Thailand	ESCAP
7th International Seminar on Trade Facilitation in Northeast Asia	November 2017	Ulaanbaata, Mongolia	GTI
2nd meeting of GTI Customs Sub-Committee	November 2017	Ulaanbaata, Mongolia	GTI
2nd meeting of GTI Trade and Investment Committee	November 2017	Ulaanbaata, Mongolia	GTI
4th meeting of GTI AEO Working Group	December 2017	Seoul, ROK	GTI



CALL TO HOST ASIA PACIFIC TRADE FACILITATION FORUM 2017

ESCAP and ADB will organize the 8th Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum to be held in September/October 2017.

Hosting the Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum (APTFF) is a unique opportunity for a country to contribute to regional progress in trade facilitation as well as to build capacity of national stakeholders.

Expression of Interest (Eoi) for hosting the APTFF can be made by government agencies or organization(s) representing businesses or trading community (in the case of private sector associations/federations expressing the interest, such expression should be made in close consultation with and agreement of the responsible government agencies).

Government and/or other agencies interested in hosting the event in their country may express interest to ADB & ESCAP. More information is available in this [guideline](#).

Since its launch in 2009, the APTFF has become the region's leading forum for exchange information, experiences and best practice on trade facilitation in the Asia-Pacific region. This open regional event provides an opportunity for stakeholder to identify priority areas for regional cooperation and integration; to learn about new tools that enhance efficiency of cross-border transactions; and to consider measures that improve the competitiveness of firms in the region.

Participants to the Forum include government officials, traders and public and private service providers from Central Asia, South, Southeast and East Asia as well as the South Pacific. Previous Forums have seen nearly 300 participants from over 40 countries in attendance.

Eols may kindly be submitted as soon as possible and no later than **1 March 2017**. Please see the [guidelines](#) for information on the hosting the APTFF.

Should you have any question about the APTFF, you are welcome to contact Dr. Yann Duval, Chief, Trade facilitation Unit, Trade, Investment and Innovation Division, United Nations ESCAP at duvaly@un.org with a copy to agyeben@un.org, or Mr. Dongxiang Li, Lead Regional Cooperation and Integration Specialist, Economic Research and Regional Cooperation Department, ADB at dongxiangli@adb.org with a copy to arosario@adb.org.

More information on the APTFF is available here: <https://unnex.unescap.org/content/asia-pacific-trade-facilitation-forum-aptff>



GLOBAL

New UN treaty to facilitate paperless trade in Asia and the Pacific to support Trade Facilitation Agreement implementation, 1 October 2016

A new UN treaty, entitled Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific, opened for signature on 1 October 2016. It is expected to provide countries of Asia and the Pacific with a new tool and "digital" complement for better implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) and the development of cross-border e-commerce. Grounded on a common set of general principles and a dedicated intergovernmental platform, the regional treaty will provide Parties with enhanced opportunities to exchange and harmonize practices, build each other's capacity, and multilaterally develop, adopt and implement more specific and detailed technical and/or legal protocols needed to achieve safe and secure cross-border paperless trade. Implementation will build upon existing international standards as well as on-going bilateral and subregional initiatives, such as the ASEAN Single Window.

<http://www.tfafacility.org/new-un-treaty-facilitate-paperless-trade-asia-and-pacific-support-trade-facilitation-agreement>

Officials meet at the first UNCTAD-hosted forum to prepare for new global trade facilitation agreement, 24 January 2017

The Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), brokered by the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in 2013, will require almost the entire world to "streamline, standardize and simplify" passage of goods across borders, adding \$1 trillion to global trade output and helping end the sixth straight year of sluggish trade growth. The week-long meeting allowed leaders to share good practices and provide opportunities to access funding for the implementation of the TFA. A central element of the TFA is the obligatory establishment in each country of a national trade facilitation committee (NTFC) with both public and private sector stakeholders "to facilitate both domestic coordination and implementation of the provisions of this agreement".

<http://unctad.org/en/pages/newsdetails.aspx?OriginalVersionID=1431>

New Multilingual Online Repository for National Trade Facilitation Committees Launched, 17 January 2017

The Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), which was incidentally the first WTO multilateral trade agreement to be concluded since the organization's creation, was first proposed in December 2013 as part of the Bali negotiations, and subsequently revised and signed by all WTO members in November 2014. It will enter into

force as soon as two-thirds its signatories have submitted their ratification instrument to the WTO, and with almost 100 instruments already in place and 30 on the verge of ratification, its entry into force is imminent. This is a very exciting time for all stakeholders in international trade as the agreement will standardize and expedite global supply chains. It is expected to reduce trade costs by 14.5% and expand global trade by one to three trillion dollars annually, with two thirds of gains made by developing countries. Included in the Agreement is Article 23.2, where signing members committed to the creation of a National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC) which would be responsible for facilitating both domestic coordination and implementation of the provisions of the agreement.

<http://unctad.org/en/pages/newsdetails.aspx?OriginalVersionID=1420>

WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement entry into force – What next?, 23 January 2017

As of 23 January 2017, 107 WTO members have deposited their instruments of acceptance with the WTO Secretariat. Only three additional ratifications are needed to bring the Trade Facilitation Agreement into imminent effect within the next month(s).

Upon the entry into force of the Agreement, WTO Members that have ratified it, whether developed, developing countries or least developed countries, are supposed to have in place a national trade facilitation committee responsible for the coordination and implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement.

<http://unctad.org/en/pages/newsdetails.aspx?OriginalVersionID=1420>

REGIONAL

CAMBODIA

Cross-border paperless trade, 20 January 2017

Cambodia is looking to implement cross-border paperless trade once the country's e-commerce law is fully adopted and implemented, the Commerce Ministry said. During a workshop jointly organized by the ministry and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia-Pacific (UNESCAP), the ministry's under-secretary of state Sok Sopheak said that implementing the framework for cross-border paperless trade will have long-term benefits for both Cambodia and the region. "Cross-border transactions, at the moment, have to go through cumbersome procedures which places a heavy burden on exporters and importers. Therefore, in order to reduce this burden, the government has simplified customs and other border procedures for international trade and reduced transaction costs through the application of trade facilitation measures," said Mr. Sopheak.

<http://www.khmertimeskh.com/news/34530/cross-border-paperless-trade/>

INDIA

India to focus on Trade Facilitation pact for services at WTO meet, 10 January 2017

India will be focusing on the Trade Facilitation Agreement for services at the World Trade Organization (WTO), Commerce minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Tuesday. Talking about a concept note introduced by India at the WTO last year, Sitharaman said India's position reflected that of other major nations with a strength on trade in services. The ministry has worked on this and has also taken a legal vetting, she added. Major member economies of the WTO, such as India and the US, are expected to talk on trade-related issues on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum meeting in Davos later this month.

http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/india-to-focus-on-trade-facilitation-pact-for-services-at-wto-meet-117011001306_1.html

WTO panel discusses India's paper on trade facilitation agreement, gets good response, 7 October 2016

India's concept note for a trade facilitation agreement (TFA) in services evoked good response during a meeting of a WTO members' panel in Geneva earlier this week. On the lines of TFA in goods, India is pitching for a similar pact in services with a view to reduce transaction costs by doing away with unnecessary regulatory and administrative burden on trade in services. "WTO members debated new proposals to ease global flow of services. Brazil described the proposal as interesting and thought-provoking while Chinese Taipei said it was very interesting and creative," a Geneva-based trade official said. WTO members discussed the Indian proposal for an agreement to ease global services trade aiming at reducing bottlenecks that services suppliers face abroad.

<http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/wto-panel-discusses-indias-paper-on-trade-facilitation-agreement-gets-good-response-3071214/>

MONGOLIA

Dominica and Mongolia ratify the Trade Facilitation Agreement - final countdown launched, 29 November 2016

Dominica's and Mongolia's instruments of acceptance were submitted to the WTO on 28 November. The total number of ratifications now stands at 100, which means that just 10 more ratifications are needed to bring the TFA into force. The TFA will enter into force once two-thirds of Members have domestically ratified a Protocol of Amendment and notified the WTO of their acceptance of this Protocol. One immediate impact from entry into force of the TFA is that all developed country Members of the WTO will start applying all of the substantive provisions of the Agreement from the

date it takes effect. Developing countries and least developed countries (LDCs) will also begin applying those substantive provisions of the TFA they have indicated they are in a position to do so from the date of entry into force; these commitments are set out in the Category A notifications which 90 members have submitted to date.

<http://www.tfafacility.org/dominica-and-mongolia-ratify-trade-facilitation-agreement-final-countdown-launched>

NEPAL

Nepal ratifies the Trade Facilitation Agreement, 24 January 2017

Nepal has ratified the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), making it the 108th WTO Member to do so. Only two more ratifications from members are needed to bring the TFA into force. Nepal's WTO Ambassador Deepak Dhital submitted his country's instrument of acceptance to WTO Director-General Roberto Azevêdo on 24 January. Nepal is the 14th least developed country (LDC) to do so. The TFA will enter into force once two-thirds of the WTO membership has formally accepted the Agreement. One immediate impact from entry into force of the TFA is that all developed country Members of the WTO will start applying all of the substantive provisions of the Agreement from the date it takes effect. Developing countries and least developed countries (LDCs) will also begin applying those substantive provisions of the TFA they have indicated they are in a position to do so from the date of entry into force; these commitments are set out in the Category A notifications which 90 members have submitted to date.

<http://www.tfafacility.org/nepal-ratifies-trade-facilitation-agreement>
