

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

IN FOCUS

The **Sixth Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Week** under the theme 'Navigating Non-tariff Measures towards Sustainable Development' was held in Bangkok from 11-15 March. Drawing on the presence of senior policymakers from across the Asia-Pacific region, the week included several major events on trade facilitation, including the **Fifth Meeting of the Interim Intergovernmental Steering Group on Cross-Border Paperless Trade Facilitation**.



The week also included the **First Forum on Trade Digitalization for Sustainable Regional Integration**.

The **Aid for Trade Global Review 2019** took place at the WTO Headquarters in Geneva in July. During the event, the preliminary findings of the **Third UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facility 2019** were released by the five United Nations Regional Commissions, including ESCAP and ECE. The global and regional reports with detailed data analysis will be made available on the untfsurvey.org website in September ([here](#)).

For more upcoming events view our events calendar on [page 18](#)

An ESCAP Trade Insights was also issued this month on "**Implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement in Asia and the Pacific: 2 years on**" highlighting that some developing countries may lose implementation flexibilities if they fail to notify implementation dates of measures by 22 August 2019. **See Analysis section, [page 10](#).**

UPCOMING

ADB and ESCAP, together with the Government of India and support from the WTO Trade Facilitation Facility, will organize the **9th Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum** in New Delhi on the 17th and 18th September. Panel discussions, interactive and informative sessions will allow participants to share experiences and perspectives on different aspects of trade facilitation, including trade finance, cross-border ecommerce, paperless trade, and innovative application of emerging technologies, among others. The event will include Trade Facilitation Innovation Awards and joint side events with UNCTAD, ITC, UNECE and OECD. About 250 participants from 30 countries are expected.

More information is available [here](#).

PUBLICATIONS & RESOURCES

New publications on trade facilitation released since February include a WCO Study Report on Disruptive Technologies as well as updates of UNCTAD Liner Shipping Connectivity Index and the ESCAP-Worldbank International Trade Cost datasets.

For more information on publications [see page 13](#).

NEWS

According to the UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2019, measures included in the WTO TFA have been generally well implemented since entry into force of the agreement in 2017. In contrast, implementation of measures related to cross-border paperless trade remains limited compared other groups of measures, as do trade facilitation measures targeted at specific sectors and disadvantaged groups. Overall, substantial efforts are required to fully implement cross-border paperless, and to customize trade facilitation measures to better meet the needs of SMEs and women engaging in trade.

For more trade facilitation news [see page 19](#).

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.

**PROJECT/ACTIVITY
UPDATES..... 02**

ANALYSIS..... 10

**RESOURCES AND
PUBLICATIONS..... 13**

**UPCOMING
EVENTS..... 18**

**NEWS AND
COMMENTARY..... 19**

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 [Since January 2019]

JOINT ACTIVITIES and PARTNERSHIPS

ADB, ESCAP, WCO and EEC

Regional Workshop on Trade Facilitation - Promoting Inclusive Trade through Innovation and Technology: The Roles of Ecommerce, Trade Finance, and National Single Window environments, 11-15 June 2019, Yerevan, Armenia



The Workshop aimed at strengthening Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) Members and Central Asian countries' capacity to grasp the opportunities that technology and innovation offer in unlocking the gains from the seamless flow of goods across borders and towards developing a harmonized approach in implementation and interoperability of Single Window solutions. It provided participants with enhanced understanding of the current developments in e-commerce, digital trade facilitation, single window, and the essential role of trade finance in supporting international trade; and enhanced knowledge of the potential use of technology and innovation for trade facilitation, including lessons learned from country experiences, best practices, and initiatives on the use of digital technologies in facilitating cross-border trade.

More information is available at: <https://www.unescap.org/events/regional-workshop-trade-facilitation-promoting-inclusive-trade-through-innovation-and>

UNCTAD and ESCAP

UNCTAD-ESCAP Seminar on Investments and Special Economic Zones, 14 June 2019, Bangkok, Thailand

Experts and policymakers discussed global investment, investment policy trends, and SEZs as a key tool for attracting investment for development as reported in UNCTAD's recently launched WIR2019. Discussion also covered the evolution of SEZs, institutional mechanism supporting them, and policy lessons from SEZs globally.

More information is available at: <https://www.unescap.org/events/unctad-escap-seminar-investments-and-special-economic-zones>

ECE and EEC

UNECE and Eurasian Economic Commission step ahead in using harmonized standards for trade data sharing, 15 April 2019, Moscow, Russia

UNECE and the Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC) agreed on enhancing their cooperation for the use of international semantic standards for trade data exchange, thus contributing to the establishment of common basis for trade information sharing in the broader European space.

At a UNECE-EEC brainstorming meeting in Moscow on 15 April, the two organizations confirmed the relevance of the UN/CEFACT reference data model for the development of the EEC data model.

More information is available at: <http://www.unece.org/info/media/news/trade/2019/unece-and-eurasian-economic-commission-step-ahead-in-using-harmonized-standards-for-trade-data-sharing/doc.html>

PROJECT/ACTIVITY UPDATE

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

ECE and SDG Lab

UNECE and SDG Lab facilitate inter-agency UN exchange on blockchain for the SDGs, 26 March, Geneva

UNECE and the SDG Lab held a UN inter-agency discussion and experience-sharing event on blockchain for the SDGs. UN agencies shared their work on policy/regulatory review, standard setting, implementation of pilots, capacity building/technical assistance and awareness raising and information sharing. The event highlighted a diverse range of UN initiatives on the technology.

More information is available at: <https://www.unece.org/info/media/news/trade/2019/unece-and-sdg-lab-facilitate-inter-agency-un-exchange-on-blockchain-for-the-sdgs/doc.html>

ESCAP and EIF

Enhanced Integrated Framework supporting trade facilitation and paperless trade in Asian LDCs

Building on the recent work done by ADB and ESCAP on trade and transport facilitation monitoring in South Asia, four additional National Consultation on Facilitating Cross-Border Paperless Trade was planned to support trade facilitation and paperless trade in Asian LDCs. This project is envisaged as the first phase of a sustained capacity building effort on cross-border paperless trade facilitation for LDCs, with Bangladesh, Cambodia, Nepal and Timor Leste as target countries.

As of July 2019, two National Consultations on Facilitating Cross-Border Paperless Trade were carried out in Bangladesh and Nepal, and workshops in Cambodia and Timor Leste on track for September 2019.

More information for the Workshop in Bangladesh is available at: <https://www.unescap.org/events/national-consultation-facilitating-cross-border-paperless-trade-bangladesh>

More information for the Workshop in Nepal is available at: <https://www.unescap.org/events/national-consultation-facilitating-cross-border-paperless-trade-nepal>

SAARC and ADB

SAARC-ADB Fourth Special Meeting on Regional Economic Integration Study (Phase-II), 24-25 June 2019, Kathmandu, Nepal



The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) hosted the Fourth Special Meeting on Regional Economic Integration Study (Phase-II) on 24–25 June 2019 in Kathmandu, Nepal. The meeting: (i) Provided updates by member states on the status of implementation of the recommendations of the SAARC-ADB Regional Economic Integration Study (Phase-II); (ii) Provided updates for moving towards a South Asian Economic Union (SAEU), including the status of the SAARC Agreement on Trade in Services (SATIS); (iii)

Reviewed progress on the implementation of the six recommendations of the SAARC-ADB Regional Economic Integration Study (Phase-II) for moving towards the SAEU; and (iv) Discussed the future course of action.

More information is available at: <https://www.sasec.asia/index.php?page=event&eid=300&url=sarc-ADB-4th-reis-phase-II-meeting>

PROJECT/ACTIVITY UPDATE

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

ORGANIZATION's UPDATES

ADB/CAREC

National Workshop on Capacity Building for Implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, 10-11 February 2019, Dhaka, Bangladesh

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) of the Government of Bangladesh held a workshop to review activities undertaken by NBR for the implementation of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA). The Workshop reviewed the current status of activities identified in the national action plan related to WTO TFA implementation; identified areas in the national action plan that requires assistance from ADB and WCO; discussed trade facilitation-related topics, including advance ruling, test procedure, National Single Window; and presented and discussed the current status of Bangladesh's existing customs practices, and sought recommendation from workshop participants.

More information is available at: <https://www.sasec.asia/index.php?page=event&eid=296&url=ban-workshop-capacity-building-wto-tfa-feb>

10th CAREC Federation of Carrier and Forwarder Associations (CFCFA) Annual Meeting, 19 June 2019, Ashgabat, Turkmenistan

The objective of the meeting was to consider and agree on a unified work plan for 2019–2021, including areas of potential collaboration with CAREC customs administrations. During the meeting, preliminary findings of the latest CAREC Corridor Performance Measurement and Monitoring (CPMM) Annual Report were presented, emphasizing the contributions of CFCFA members, who collect shipment-level data through their network of companies and drivers. CFCFA members also deliberated on potential areas of collaboration with customs administrations, for further discussion at a joint meeting with the CAREC Customs Cooperation Committee on 21 June 2019. The CFCFA Executive Board Meeting was held after the general assembly.

More information is available at: <https://www.carecprogram.org/?event=cfcfa-annual-meeting-2019>

18th CAREC Customs Cooperation Committee (CCC) Meeting, 20–21 June 2019, Ashgabat, Turkmenistan

Key outcomes of the Customs Cooperation Committee (CCC) meeting include endorsement of (i) the CCC 2019–2021 work plan under the CAREC Integrated Trade Agenda 2030 3-year rolling strategic action plan 2019–2021; (ii) the CAREC Advanced Transit System (CATS) and Information Common Exchange (ICE) pilot project, with launching of the pilot expected in December 2019; (iii) enhanced collaboration between the CCC and the CAREC Regional Trade Group; and (iv) continued support to enhance national implementation of the World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement.

More information is available at : <https://www.carecprogram.org/?event=customs-cooperation-committee-meeting-jun-2019>

Fifth Joint Meeting of the CAREC Customs Cooperation Committee and CAREC, 21 June 2019, Ashgabat, Turkmenistan

Open dialogue between CCC and CFCFA allowed for substantial exchange on private sector recommendations and concerns with customs-related procedures, potential joint activities for 2019–2021, and possible establishment of national mechanisms for customs–private sector dialogue. CCC and CFCFA members agreed to strengthen collaboration on crosscutting issues in their work plans.

More information is available at: <https://www.carecprogram.org/?event=joint-ccc-cfcfa-meeting-jun-2019>

PROJECT/ACTIVITY UPDATE

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

Second CAREC Regional Trade Group Meeting, 26 June 2019, Ashgabat, Turkmenistan

The second CAREC Regional Trade Group (RTG) meeting reviewed the CAREC Integrated Trade Agenda 2030's implementation since its endorsement in 2018. The RTG agreed on the Rolling Strategic Action Plan 2019–2021 activities to expand and diversify trade and strengthen trade institutions.

More information is available at: <https://www.carecprogram.org/?event=carec-regional-trade-group-meeting-jun-2019>

CAREC Senior Official's Meeting, 27-28 June 2019, Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Senior officials from 11 CAREC countries and development partners discussed the progress of the CAREC 2030 strategy implementation.

They provided guidance on the formulation of the transport strategy, energy strategy, and the Food Safety Network initiative. They also discussed preparations for the 18th Ministerial Conference on CAREC to be held in November 2019. Representatives of CAREC countries commended the progress made and agreed to further strengthen collaboration.

More information is available at: <https://www.carecprogram.org/?event=carec-senior-officials-meeting-jun-2019>

APEC

Ministers Responsible for Trade Meeting, 17-18 May 2019, Viña del Mar, Chile

The Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Ministers Responsible for Trade, met to discuss the key regional and global trade issues, and to advance its work for sustainable and inclusive economic growth and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific. During the meeting, the following priorities were identified for APEC in 2019, Women, SMEs and Inclusive Growth; Digital Society; Integration 4.0; and Sustainable Growth. Other topics like deepening APEC's Regional Economic Integration Agenda and Advancing APEC's support for the WTO were also discussed during the meeting.

More information is available here: https://www.apec.org/Meeting-Papers/Sectoral-Ministerial-Meetings/Trade/2019_trade

Best Practices of TFA Implementation within APEC Economies: Opportunities and Challenges, 19-20 June 2019 in Bali, Indonesia



The following are some of the key messages that emerged from the meeting, to which ESCAP and UNCTAD participated: (i) To streamline bureaucracy, it is important to establish a Trade and Transport Facilitation Monitoring Mechanism (TTFMM) in APEC economies; (ii) For legislative frameworks, it is essential for APEC economies to engage and to build upon other existing regional, subregional, and plurilateral frameworks on trade facilitation; (iii) Maintaining National Trade Facilitation Committees (NTFC) is essential for stronger coordination among stakeholders.

PROJECT/ACTIVITY UPDATE

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

ASEAN

ASEAN symposium on Single Window looks to enhance regional trade efficiency, 24 June 2019, Bangkok, Thailand

The ASEAN Secretariat, together with ASEAN-USAID Inclusive Growth in ASEAN through Innovation, Trade and E-Commerce (ASEAN-USAID IGNITE), and the ASEAN Business Advisory Council, held the fourth symposium on the ASEAN Single Window (ASW) and National Single Windows in Bangkok. Themed 'The Way Forward,' the one-day forum highlighted future possibilities and discussed the exchange of trade-related and other kinds of documents with countries outside the region. Participants provided an update on the ASW implementation and discussed how best to expand the benefits of the ASW.

More information is available here: <https://asean.org/asean-symposium-single-window-looks-enhance-regional-trade-efficiency/>

ESCAP

Sixth Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Week, 11-15 March 2019, Bangkok, Thailand



Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Week brings together government officials and other stakeholders every two years for discussions on issues of importance to trade and investment policy making in the region. The Sixth Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Week will be held in Bangkok from 11-15 March under the theme 'Navigating Non-tariff Measures towards Sustainable Development'. The ESCAP Committee on Trade and Investment — the key platform for regional dialogue and intergovernmental collaboration on trade and investment — convened its sixth session during the Week, from 13 to 15 March 2019.

More information is available here: <https://www.unescap.org/intergovernmental-meetings/sixth-asia-pacific-trade-and-investment-week>

Fifth Meeting of the Interim Intergovernmental Steering Group on Cross-Border Paperless Trade Facilitation, 12-13 March 2019, Bangkok, Thailand

The interim intergovernmental steering group on cross-border paperless trade facilitation was established following ESCAP Commission Resolution 70/6 adopted in 2014. Following finalization of the treaty text of the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-Border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific in 2016, the steering group continued to focus on the preparation of a draft implementation roadmap of the agreement and related supporting documents. Report of the 5th meeting of the Interim Intergovernmental Steering Group on Cross-border Paperless Trade Facilitation can be viewed [here](#).

More information is available here: <https://www.unescap.org/intergovernmental-meetings/fifth-meeting-interim-intergovernmental-steering-group-cross-border>

Forum on Trade Digitalization for Sustainable Regional Integration 14-15 March 2019, Bangkok, Thailand

Asia and the Pacific countries adopted the world's first treaty dedicated to the digitalization of trade procedures entitled the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-Border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific in 2016. The Forum invited regional and global initiatives on electronic exchange of trade-related data and documents for trade digitalization, share their current progress and lessons learnt during implementation, and discuss way forward in making them better contribute to sustainable regional integration.

More information is available here: <https://www.unescap.org/events/forum-trade-digitalization-sustainable-regional-integration>

PROJECT/ACTIVITY UPDATE

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

3rd Meeting of UNNExT Task Force on Cross-border Electronic Data Exchange and Subregional Capacity Building Workshop on Development of Electronic Message for Trade Facilitation

The UNNExT Task Force on Cross-border Electronic Data Exchange intends to improve readiness in exchange of trade-related data electronically across borders for better regulatory compliance and improved trade facilitation between China, Mongolia, Republic of Korea and Russian Federation. The third meeting discussed how to harmonize data requirements of key trade documents and the implications of emerging technologies in facilitating cross-border paperless trade.

More information is available here: <https://www.unescap.org/events/3rd-meeting-unnex-task-force-cross-border-electronic-data-exchange-and-subregional-capacity>

Legal and Technical Readiness Assessments for Cross-Border Paperless Trade on-going in 8 countries

With support from China and the WTO Enhanced Integrated Framework, legal and technical constraints pertaining to cross-border electronic exchange of trade-related data and drafting of action plans to overcome such constraints are on-going in Armenia, Mongolia, Myanmar and Uzbekistan, as well as Cambodia, Bangladesh, Nepal and Timor Leste. National consultations to review the assessments have been held in 6 of the countries as of July 2019. Results and follow-up will be discussed at a regional workshop organized as part of the 9th Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum.

Click on the link for more information on the respective Workshops: [Armenia](#), [Mongolia](#), [Myanmar](#), [Uzbekistan](#)

OCO

Rules of Origin (ROO) Workshop, 5-6 February 2019, Suva, Fiji

The Workshop was co-facilitated by local pre-accredited ROO Trainer and the Oceania Customs Organisation. The pre-accredited ROO Trainer had participated in a three-month ROO Train the Trainers Program run by Centre for Customs and Excise Studies, Charles Sturt University (CCES).

27 Customs Officials attended the Workshop from Suva and the Regional Offices. During the workshop, the participants were apprised the Concept of ROO, the methods of determining origin of goods, verification of origin procedures and the ROO under the different Free Trade Agreement which Fiji is a party to. The participants worked on a series of basic and practical exercises deepening their knowledge on the application of ROO. The Workshop concluded successfully with positive feedback from the participants and highlighting the need for private sector outreach on ROO.

More information is available at: <https://www.ocossec.org/rules-of-origin-roo-workshop-in-fiji-5-6-february-2019/>

OCO 21st Annual Conference, 13-15 May 2019, Saipan, Northern Mariana Island



The 21st Oceania Customs Organisation (OCO) annual conference commenced on 13th May 2019 in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas (CNMI), hosted by the CNMI Customs division with the theme “A united Pacific working towards a common solution”. The Conference brought together over 90 delegates from 21 member customs administration and key partners including the WCO, ROCB Asia Pacific, Korea Customs, IMF Pacific Financial and Technical Assistance Center, Pacific Immigration Development Community, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Pacific Transnational Crime Coordination Centre, Pacific Islands Chief of Police,

Pacific Community, UNCTAD, United Nations International Narcotics Control Board, United Nations office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), United States Patent Office, World Bank group, World Health Organisation, United States Coast Guard, United States Secret Service and JIATF West and CNMI agencies and private sector

PROJECT/ACTIVITY UPDATE

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

stakeholders. Over the three days, the Conference delegates discussed a broad range of topics including Trade Facilitation, Revenue Mobilisation, Border Security and Digital Capacity.

More information is available here: <https://www.ocosec.org/21st-oco-annual-conference/>

UNCTAD

UNCTAD, 66th Trade Development Board, 24-28 June 2019, Geneva

The Trade and Development Board focused on inequality as a drag on reducing poverty in developing countries through the lens of the mandate of UNCTAD, as the focal point in the United Nations for the integrated treatment of trade and development and the interrelated issues of finance, investment, technology and sustainable development. The discussions addressed multidimensional challenge such as, Means to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 10; Trade policies and their impact on inequalities; Digital development: Opportunities and challenges; and South–South cooperation for trade, investment and structural transformation.

UNECE

33rd UN/CEFACT Forum, 1-5 April 2019, Geneva



The 33rd United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and E-business (UN/CEFACT) Forum was organized by the UN Economic Commission for Europe in Geneva in early April 2019.

Multiple conference and projects discussions focused on: blockchain; the Internet of Things; eIdentity; eInvoicing; ensuring better quality data from its source with data pipeline communication; sectoral-specific Reference Data Models; traceability of agriculture products; textile products and transport, etc. The forum

consisted of various conference as follows:

- *Conference on Expanding the Horizon for MSMEs in International Trade Role of e-Services*
More information is available here: <http://www.unece.org/uncefact/33rdcfforum-conf-msmes.html>
- *Conference on Latest technology trends impacting eBusiness, internet trading and trade facilitation: Anticipating the fourth industrial revolution*
More information is available here: <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=51232>
- *Conference on "Impact of new technologies on Accounting and Audit: Harmonizing Interoperability of Standards and Specifications"*
- More information is available here: <http://www.unece.org/33rdcfforum-conf-newtechaccountaudit.html>

Detailed list of the projects and conferences are available at: <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=50612>

WCO ROCB A/P

14th Global Meeting of the Heads of the ROCBs, RTCs and Vice Chairs' Offices, 4-5 April 2019, Brussels, Belgium

The meeting elected Mr. Igarashi as the chair of the Meeting and facilitated a set of important agenda items, including the role and responsibilities of the regional structures in the promotion and implementation of the new WCO Strategic Plan, and the proliferation of the RTCs. Mr. Igarashi also made a presentation on the findings from the latest ROCB A/P's Workshop Follow-Up Survey under the agenda item on the evaluation of the WCO capacity building programs, which was followed by lively questions and answers session. Delegates from the A/P region also had a short meeting among themselves and discussed follow-up work undertaken by the ROCB A/P in the wake of the recent RTC Heads Meeting

More information is available here: <http://www.rocb-ap.org/article-detail/476/>

PROJECT/ACTIVITY UPDATE

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

10th Session of the WCO Capacity Building Committee, 8-10 April 2019, Brussels, Belgium

The meeting discussed a set of important topics, including the WCO Capacity Building Strategy, Mercator Program for the implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, business process management, performance measurement, Customs professionalism and gender equality and diversity. In the course of the Session, Mr. Igarashi reported the conclusions and the recommendations from the 14th Global Meeting of the Heads of the ROCBs, RTCs and Vice Chairs' Offices, including the gist of the ROCB A/P's Workshop Follow-Up Survey.

More information is available here: <http://www.rocb-ap.org/article-detail/478/>

2019 WCO IT/TI Conference & Exhibition, 12-14 June 2019, Baku, Azerbaijan

With the fast-evolving changes taking place in the field of technologies, where clear boundaries between hardware and software solutions are rapidly fading away, the WCO offered an opportunity to explore the innovations that bring together the best of both worlds.

For the first time, the WCO has merged its two major public-private sector events that contribute to the shaping of Customs technology-related initiatives, namely the Information Technology (IT) Conference & Exhibition and the Technology & Innovation (TI) Forum, into one major event - the WCO IT/TI Conference and Exhibition.

This year's theme, "*New technologies for SMART borders – New opportunities for Trade, Travel and Transport*", leverages on the WCO theme for 2019, by exploring the role of Customs and border agencies in exploiting the most recent, as well as some well-established technological solutions, to support not only trade, but also travel and transport, ensuring that all movements across borders are seamless, but secure.

More information is available here: <http://www.wcoomd.org/en/events/event-history/2019/itti-conference-2019.aspx>

WTO

Committee on Trade Facilitation, 25 June 2019

WTO members discussed the implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) at the meeting of the Committee on Trade Facilitation on 25 June. Members analyzed the progress made and highlighted remaining work to be done, with some drawing attention to upcoming notification deadlines, related challenges and available support.

A second part of the meeting was dedicated to experience sharing where members compared notes on ongoing work to fulfil certain transparency obligations and to set up National Trade Facilitation Committees. The Committee also elected its new chair, Ambassador Mohammad Qurban Haqjo, (Afghanistan), and agreed on rules of procedure for the Committee based on a proposal by Argentina, Japan, Norway and Paraguay.

More information is available here: https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news19_e/fac_25jun19_e.htm

Aid for Trade Global Review 2019: "Supporting Economic Diversification and Empowerment"



The Aid for Trade Global Review 2019 took place from 3 to 5 July at the WTO under the theme "Supporting Economic Diversification and Empowerment for Inclusive, Sustainable Development through Aid for Trade". By addressing the supply-side capacity and trade-related infrastructure constraints of developing, and in particular least developed countries, Aid for Trade can help advance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Aid for Trade aims to make trade more inclusive and ensure that its benefits are spread further and wider. The focus in 2019 will be how

trade can further contribute to economic diversification and empowerment.

More information is available here:

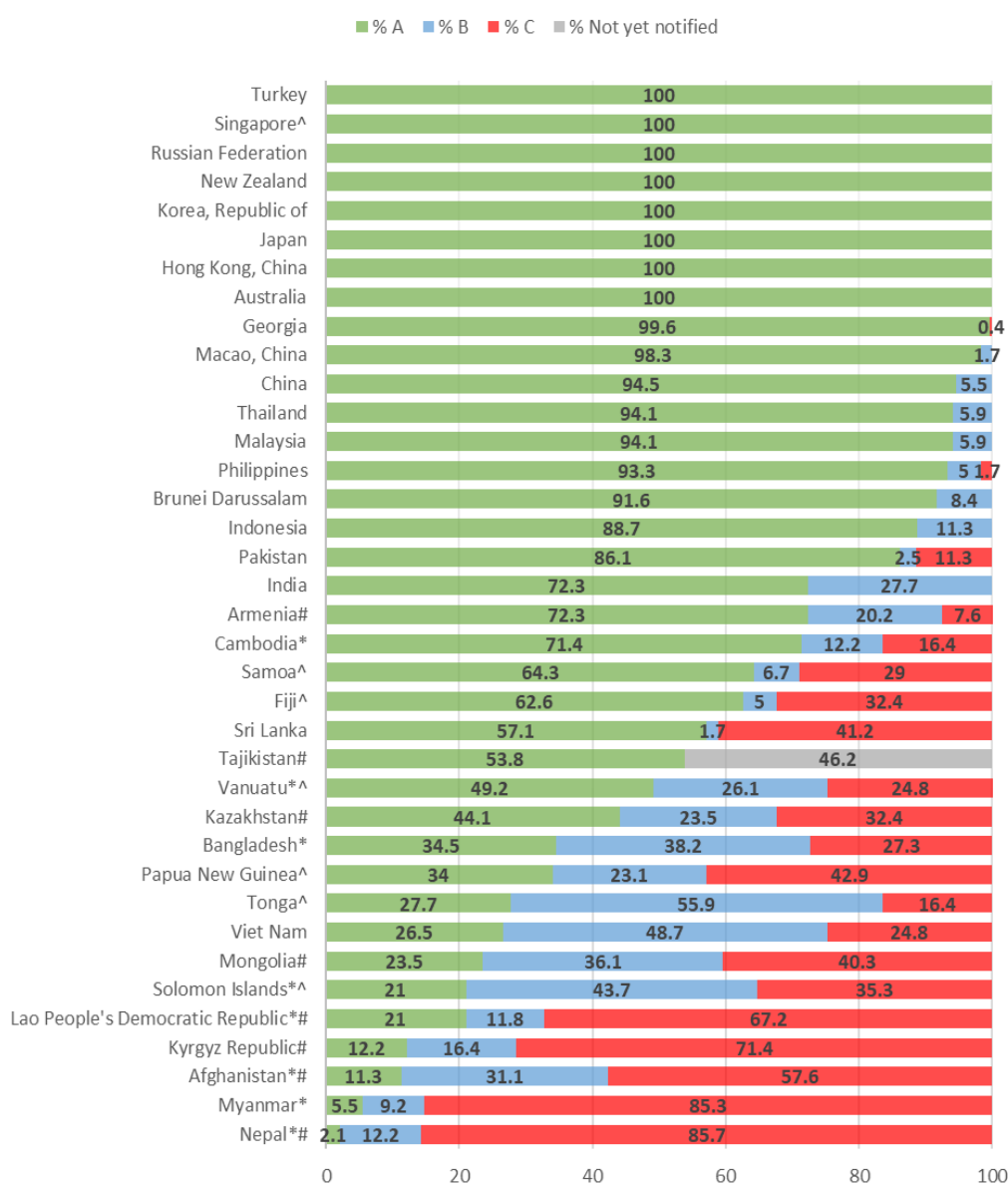
https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/devel_e/a4t_e/gr19_e/gr19programme_e.htm

Implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement in Asia and the Pacific: 2 years on

(Extract from ESCAP Trade Insights: Issue No. 26)

Two years after the entry into force of the agreement, all 37 economies from the region that have already submitted TFA implementation notifications to the WTO have submitted at least one article or sub-article in category A, as shown in figure 1. Notification of a provision under category A is an indication that it has already been implemented. The figure also reveals that provisions notified in category B (delayed implementation) and C (capacity building needed) still represent a large part of notifications. At the date of writing, the percentage of measures implemented for the 37 economies is 65%. The percentage of notifications in category B and C is 13.4% and 20.3%, respectively. Only Tajikistan has yet to submit its category B and C.

Figure 1: WTO TFA Notifications by Asia-Pacific Economies



Source: WTO TFA Database. Out of 36 main sub-articles.

Notes: * LDCs, # Landlocked economies, ^ Small Island Developing States (SIDS). When the indicative date of implementation has already passed, the measure is considered implemented. Developed economies were not required to submit notifications as they were all bound to have implemented all WTO TFA provisions (i.e., 100% of the WTO TFA provisions are assumed to be in Category A).

Several developing countries, including Singapore and Republic of Korea, have already notified 100% of TFA provisions under category A. Several others, including China, Malaysia and Thailand have notified over 94% of measures under category A and are expected to achieve full implementation before 2021.

LDCs show a very low rate of implementation as 5 out of 8 LDCs of the region (that are also members of the WTO) have implemented less than one quarter of the measures contained in the agreement, namely: Afghanistan, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Nepal and Solomon Islands. The average rate of implementation for LDCs reaches only 27%, when the ESCAP average is 65%.

Some countries show a high rate of category B notifications (e.g., Tonga and Viet Nam), indicating that many provisions will be implemented without further need of capacity building. Among these countries we can find similarities in terms of category B notifications, for instance Article 4 “Procedures for appeal and review”, Article 7.6 “Establishment and Publication of Average Release Times” or Article 1.3 “Enquiry points”. Based on the date of implementation provided by countries under category B, an additional 11.14% of measures should be implemented by 22 February 2024, which should bring the regional TFA implementation average above 76% by then.¹

However, more than one-fifth of the TFA measures are notified in category C, on average. Implementation of the TFA may therefore not be implemented without significant technical assistance and capacity building, especially in Afghanistan, Kyrgyz Republic, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Nepal, as per their current notifications. Papua New Guinea, Mongolia and Sri Lanka also have indicated need for capacity building and technical assistance for more than 40% of TFA measures.

Implementation rates in the Asia-Pacific show a lot of disparity across sub-regions. South and South-West Asia sub-region, the Pacific sub-region and the North and Central Asia sub-region are well below the ESCAP average rate of implementation. These three sub-regions gather 6 Small Islands Developing States (SIDS) and 5 landlocked developing countries (LLDCs), which partly explains their low average rate of implementation. Indeed, nine of the 15 SIDS and LLDCs have notified more than 50% of the provisions in either category B or C, with Nepal specifying that it will need more time and capacity building to implement nearly 97.9% of the substantive articles in the WTO TFA.

Notifications by article and sub-article: identifying capacity building needs

Figure 2 identifies sub-articles by category of notification and rank measures by the most notified in category C.² Sub-article 10.4 relating to the implementation of the Single Window (SW), a system that allows traders to submit all required documents for trade in a single-entry point, Sub-article 7.7 “Trade Facilitation measures for Authorized Operators” and Sub-article 7.4, “Risk management”, are the 3 articles most notified in C, indicating that they might be the most complicated if not the most costly measures to implement (ADB-ESCAP, 2013). So far, only 13 countries have fully implemented the SW provision and 16 have special trade facilitation measures in place for Authorized Operators.

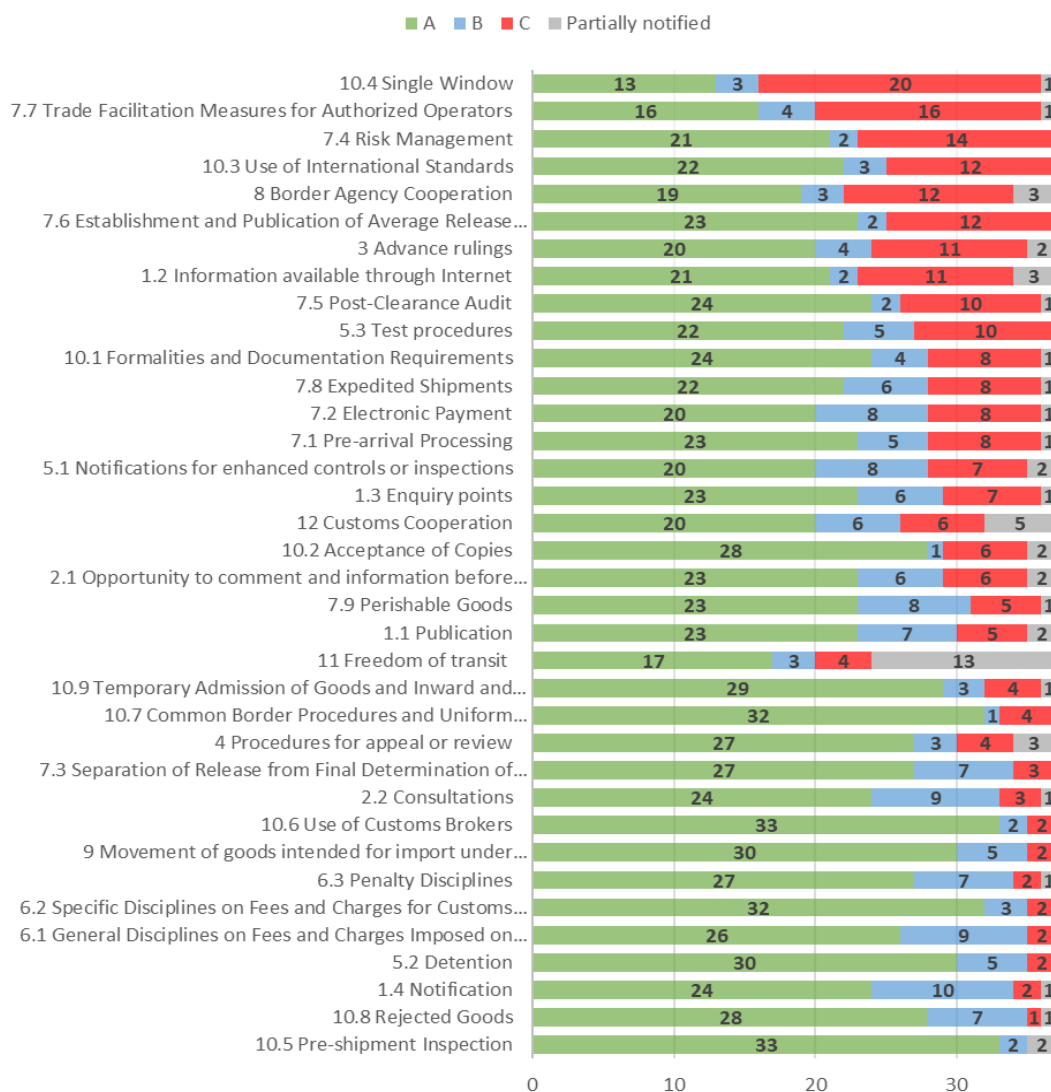
Article 11 “Transit” shows most significant divergence in notifications across countries, with many countries choosing to only partially notify it, i.e., notifying parts of the Article in difference categories. Sub-article 11.5 and Sub-article 11.9 are more notified in category C compared to other components of that Article. They refer to the need of better infrastructures for traffic in transit (11.5) and the allowance for advance filing and processing of transit documentation and data prior to the arrival of goods (11.9), respectively. Capacity building and technical assistance for these two specific measures may be prioritized, given the importance of Article 11 for landlocked countries in particular.

¹ Some measures notified in category B do not have any determined date of implementation. Indicative dates have been used when no definitive dates were available.

² We use the article and sub-article notification data from the WTO TFA database, as of 5 July 2019. It is available at tfafacility.org and maintained by the WTO Secretariat. Main WTO TFA articles often relate to multiple trade facilitation measures, while sub-articles or even paragraphs refer to one specific measure.

Taking a closer look at notifications by LDCs, we find that none of them have implemented Sub-article 7.2 “Electronic payment” or Sub-article 10.4 “Single Window”. All of them have notified SW under category C. This is not surprising since these particular provisions need substantive investment and financial support in procuring ICT, such as the set-up and installation of equipment to put in place an electronic payment system.

Figure 2: WTO TFA Notifications by (Sub) Articles in Asia-Pacific



Source: WTO TFA Database Notes: Based on notifications from 37 Asia-Pacific economies. “Partially notified” means that some measures included within the designated sub-article have been notified in different categories, either A, B or C.

The capacity building needs of LDCs however extend beyond these measures. and, as can be seen inferred from Figure 4, category C notifications can clarify needs of a specific country. For example, Lao PDR is the only country in the region that notified Sub-article 10.8 in Category C, a measure aiming to regulate the re-export of imported goods in case of non-compliance with national regulations. Based on the category C notifications already submitted by LDCs and developing Asia-Pacific economies, the most requested type of technical assistance regards the “legislative and regulatory framework” (33%), followed by “human resources and training” (32%) and “information and communication technology” (27%).

For more details and highlights, please refer to “*Implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement in Asia and the Pacific: 2 years on (ESCAP Trade Insights: Issue No. 26)*”

<https://www.unescap.org/resources/implementation-wto-trade-facilitation-agreement-asia-and-pacific-2-years-escap-trade>

World Customs Organization: Study Report on Disruptive Technologies

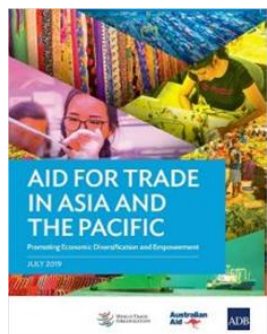


According to the WTO World Trade Report 2018, we are entering a new era in which a series of innovations that leverage the Internet could have a major impact on trade costs and international trade. The Internet of Things (IoT), artificial intelligence (AI), 3D printing and blockchain have the potential to profoundly transform the way we trade, who trades and what is traded. What needs to be taken into consideration are the capacity building programmes that can support a more balanced spread of adoption across the globe. Having direct frontline interaction with trade, Customs must be aware of and adapt to the way trade innovates and develops. This can be observed through the development of supply chains and the way information is created and stored, which can be seen through the emergence of blockchain technology and the way it has caught the imagination of many. There is a myriad of technologies on the horizon that have the potential to revolutionize not only the consumer markets in which they will operate, but also, for

Customs, the way its work is done.

Full Issue available at: http://www.wcoomd.org/-/media/wco/public/global/pdf/topics/facilitation/instruments-and-tools/tools/disruptive-technologies/wco_disruptive_technologies_en.pdf

ADB



Aid for Trade in Asia and the Pacific: Promoting Economic Diversification and Empowerment, July 2019

This publication explores how international trade is promoting economic empowerment through the increased participation of women and micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises.

It highlights the roles of services and digital connectivity in facilitating diversification and inclusive economic transformation. The report examines recent trends in aid for trade in Asia and the Pacific and how it can do more to boost inclusive growth.

Available here: <https://www.adb.org/publications/aid-trade-asia-pacific-economic-diversification-empowerment>

APEC



APEC Workshop on Harnessing Digital Trade for SMEs, June 2019

This summary report presents the outcomes of the APEC Workshop on Harnessing Digital Trade for SMEs, held in Ha Noi, Viet Nam in January 2019. The workshop was conducted with the following objectives: (i) to identify and share global trends in digital trade; data sources and methods as well as opportunities and challenges to enable SMEs to harness and benefit from digital trade; (ii) to identify policy issues that affect the expansion of digital trade as well as sharing experiences in enable favorable regulatory environment for SMEs to harness digital trade; (iii) to share experiences, practices in using digital technologies; and (iv) to make recommendations to APEC economies on how to facilitate SMEs to take advantages of opportunities brought about by digital trade.

Available here: <https://www.apec.org/Publications/2018/12/Promoting-Cross-border-E-Trade-under-the-Framework-of-RTAs-FTAs---Best-Practices-in-the-APEC-Region>

RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS

ASEAN



ASEAN ECONOMIC INTEGRATION BRIEF

The fifth issue of the ASEAN Economic Integration Brief (AEIB), and the first for this year, will feature an overview of the global and regional economic outlook, a summary of latest updates and progress of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), and the latest statistics. Highlighting one of the emerging issues facing the AEC, this issue of the AEIB presents a short article on ASEAN's work in the area of Good Regulatory Practice (GRP). The article makes an argument for ASEAN Member States (AMS) to observe GRP and the overall vision of ASEAN integration agenda in designing or reviewing existing national and/or sectoral regulations, rules, or initiatives.

Available here: https://asean.org/storage/2019/06/AEIB_5th_Issue_Released.pdf

CAREC – ADB



CAREC Integrated Trade Agenda 2030 Issues Papers, February 2019

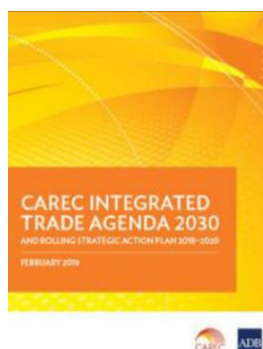
This publication provides briefings on key trade issues in Central Asia: (i) addressing technical barriers to trade, (ii) expanding trade in services, (iii) engaging in regional trade agreements, and (iv) establishing special economic zones.

These issues are priorities under the CAREC Integrated Trade Agenda 2030. This set of short papers aims to support policy deliberations and implementation at the regional and national levels.

This publication is supported by TA 9712: Implementing the Integrated Trade Agenda in the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Program, co-funded by the Regional Cooperation and Integration Fund and People's Republic of China Poverty Reduction and

Regional Cooperation Fund.

Available here: <https://www.carecprogram.org/?publication=carec-trade-agenda-2030-issues-papers>



CAREC Integrated Trade Agenda 2030 and Rolling Strategic Action Plan 2018–2020, February 2019

This document discusses how the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) Program can enhance trade by addressing key challenges, including poor market access, limited economic diversification, and weak institutions for trade.

This publication is supported by TA 9712: Implementing the Integrated Trade Agenda in the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Program, co-funded by the Regional Cooperation and Integration Fund and People's Republic of China Poverty Reduction and Regional Cooperation Fund.

Available here: <https://www.carecprogram.org/?publication=carec-trade-agenda-2030-strategic-action-plan>

RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS

UNCTAD



UNCTAD Rapid eTrade Readiness Assessments of Least Developed Countries: Policy Impact and Way Forward, April 2019

The digitalization of economic activities is a reality in today's world economy. All countries face, though at different levels, challenges to adapt to this fast-evolving technological environment and adopt smart, forward-looking policies to fully participate in e-commerce, moving from offline to online commerce (O2O). Discussions related to e-commerce development are ongoing at the national, regional and international levels, without clear understanding of policies that should be devised to regulate its expansion and make sure that digital inequalities do not increase.

Yet, there is a growing interest from developing countries—especially from Least Developed Countries (LDCs)—to assess their readiness to engage in e-commerce. The UNCTAD Programme on Rapid eTrade Readiness Assessment (also known as eT Ready) has been designed to respond to this need and provide a thorough overview of the current e-commerce situation in the countries.

Available here: <https://unctad.org/en/pages/PublicationWebflyer.aspx?publicationid=2434>

UNCTAD Linear Shipping Connectivity Index (LSCI) 2019

UNCTAD's liner shipping connectivity index (LSCI) for 2019 is out, showing countries that have improved or worsened their positions in maritime transport networks.

China has retained its lead as the country best connected to others by sea, the index shows. The country's LSCI has increased by 51% since 2006.

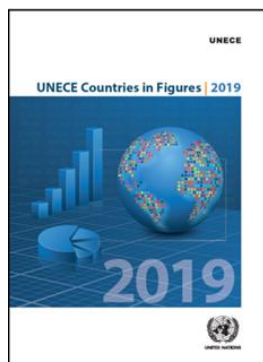
Five of the top 10 best connected economies in 2019 are in Asia, with Singapore, Korea, Hong Kong (China), and Malaysia rounding out the top-five list, according to the index's metrics.

At the other end of the table, small islands developing states (SIDS) have hardly seen any improvement, meaning trade in shipped goods remains problematic in those countries, with knock-on economic effects.

The LSCI covers 178 countries and shows maritime connectivity trends from 2006 to 2019. It is calculated from data on the world's container ship deployment and released annually.

Complete index available here: <https://unctadstat.unctad.org/wds/TableViewer/tableView.aspx>

UNECE



UNECE Countries in Figures 2019, April 2019

UNECE Countries in Figures presents a profile of social and economic indicators for each of the 56 UNECE member countries.

These profiles, prepared by the UNECE Statistical Division, are intended to be of interest to readers not necessarily familiar with statistical terminology or with interpreting statistical tables. A glossary of terms and list of references is available at the back of the publication.

The manual is available at: <https://www.unece.org/index.php?id=51260>

UN/CEFACT recommendation to help scale up private sector successes in streamlining international trade, May 2019

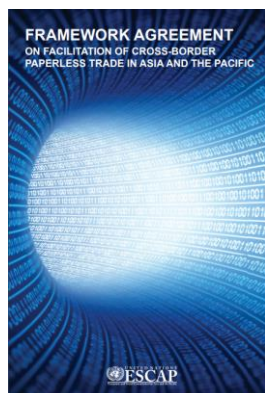
The United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) has recently published a recommendation on Single Submission Portals (SSP) to describe their functioning and how governments can capitalize on these initiatives. From Port Community Systems to Customs Clearance Systems and Cargo Community Systems and Freight Forwarder Systems, multiple possibilities exist already on the market and provide facilitation benefits promised by Single Window implementation. There are even specific eCommerce platforms specifically targeting MSMEs to improve access to international trading markets. These SSPs can offer

RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS

the declarative information and help streamline border crossing; they can also propose information exchange between economic operators creating a seamless use of information along the entire supply chain.

More information is available at: <http://www.unescap.org/?id=51753>

UNESCAP



Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific [including explanatory note], March 2019

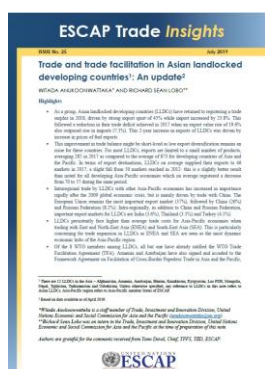
A treaty booklet on the most recent UN treaty in the area of trade and development was issued in March 2019. It features the text and an explanatory note of the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific, adopted in 2016. The adoption was a result of dedicated and progressive efforts of a diverse group of more than 25 Asia-Pacific economies, who were engaged in four years of intensive consultations and negotiations. It is now open for accession to 53 members of the UNESCAP.

The Framework Agreement is fully dedicated to the digitalization of trade processes, aiming to enable the exchange and mutual recognition of trade-related data and documents in electronic form among national and subregional paperless trade systems. Trade digitalization, or the simplification and digitalization of international trade procedures, will help the Asia-Pacific region harness international trade for sustainable development. Indeed, moving from paper to electronic data and information exchange is expected to make international trade easier, more transparent, more efficient and, hence, more inclusive and less taxing on the environment.

Available here: <https://www.unescap.org/resources/framework-agreement-facilitation-cross-border-paperless-trade-asia-and-pacific-0>

To complement the booklet, video materials were also released. A first [video](#) provides an introduction to cross-border paperless trade and the Framework Agreement. A second [video](#) then explains in more details some of the key substantive provisions of the Framework as well as how to join it.

Available here: <https://www.unescap.org/resources/framework-agreement-facilitation-cross-border-paperless-trade-asia-and-pacific>



Trade and trade facilitation in Asian landlocked developing countries: An update (ESCAP Trade Insights: Issue No. 25), July 2019

As a group, Asian landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) have returned to registering a trade surplus in 2018, driven by strong export spurt of 45% while import increased by 23.8%. This followed a reduction in their trade deficit achieved in 2017 when an export value rise of 19.6% also outpaced rise in imports (7.1%). This 2-year increase in exports of LLDCs was driven by increase in prices of fuel exports. This improvement in trade balance might be short-lived as low export diversification remains an issue for these countries.

As of April 2019, there are 63 signed Preferential Trade Agreements (PTAs) engaging LLDCs in the Asia-Pacific region. These LLDCs may have a higher dependence on PTAs for their exports than the average of Asia-Pacific economies.

Available here:

<https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Trade%20Insights%20LLDC%2022%20July%20%28formatted%29.pdf>

RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS

Implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement in Asia and the Pacific: 2 years on (ESCAP Trade Insights: Issue No. 26), August 2019

The WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) entered into force in 2017. The full implementation of the agreement would reduce trade costs by 14.3% and increase global trade by \$1 trillion per year.

The analysis of official notifications submitted to the WTO by ESCAP members and associate members reveals that significant progress has been made by Asia-Pacific developing economies in implementing the agreement.

However, some developing countries are at risk of losing access to implementation flexibilities and technical assistance, as they have yet to notify definitive dates of implementation of some provisions.

Available here: <https://www.unescap.org/resources/implementation-wto-trade-facilitation-agreement-asia-and-pacific-2-years-escap-trade>

ESCAP – World Bank

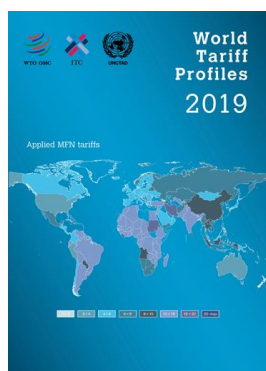
ESCAP-World Bank Trade Cost Database

Data for the year 2017 was added in July 2019. The ESCAP Trade, Investment and Innovation Division, in support to the ARTNeT research programme on trade facilitation, initiated development of a bilateral trade cost database in 2010 to increase understanding of the cost of trading between countries in Asia and the Pacific and beyond. The trade cost measure is a comprehensive all-inclusive measure based on micro-theory and calculated using macro-economic data, providing an alternative measure of trade facilitation performance.

In late 2011, United Nations ESCAP and the World Bank (WB) joined hands to develop a common standard methodology for calculating comprehensive international trade costs

and provide the research and policy community with a global reference. The current version includes data from 1995 to 2017 for over 180 countries is available here: <https://www.unescap.org/resources/escap-world-bank-trade-cost-database>

WTO



WTO issues new edition of World Tariff Profiles, July 2019

The WTO issued the latest edition of World Tariff Profiles, an annual publication jointly produced with the International Trade Centre and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. The new edition provides comprehensive information on the tariffs and non-tariff measures imposed by over 170 countries and customs territories, with a special feature on trade and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Tariff data are presented in comparative tables and in one-page profiles for each economy. Statistics on non-tariff measures by country and by product group complement the data on tariffs. A new table containing import and export profiles indicates the value of imports and exports for each country and customs territory and the average tariffs applied to these products.

Available here: https://www.wto.org/english/res_e/booksp_e/tariff_profiles19_e.pdf

RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS

Event	Date	Venue	Organizer
Workshop on Integrating SMEs in AEO Programs in the Asia Pacific Region	16 August 2019	Puerto Varas, Chile	APEC
Sub-Committee on Customs Procedures Plenary Meeting	18-19 August 2019	Puerto Varas, Chile	APEC
APEC Alliance for Supply Chain Connectivity	22 August 2019	Puerto Varas, Chile	APEC
Committee on Trade and Investment Plenary Meeting	26-27 August 2019	Puerto Varas, Chile	APEC
Fourth CAREC Think Tank Forum	27-28 August 2019	Xian, Shanxi, China	CAREC-ADB
Workshop on Single Window Systems	29-30 August 2019	Puerto Varas, Chile	APEC-ADB
First Capital Market Regulators' Forum	29-30 August 2019	Islamabad, Pakistan	CAREC-ADB
Special Intensive Module 2 of UNCTAD Empowerment Programme for National Trade Facilitation Committees	02 - 06 September 2019	Georgetown, Guyana	UNCTAD
Regional Organizations Cooperation Mechanism for Trade Facilitation (ROC-TF) Meeting	16 September 2019	New Delhi, India	ESCAP
6th Meeting of the UNNExT Task Force on Cross-border Electronic Data Exchange: Northeast Asia	16 September 2019	New Delhi, India	ESCAP
Joint Workshop on National Trade Facilitation Committees	17-18 September 2019	New Delhi, India	UNECE-UNCTAD-ITC
Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum 2019	17-18 September 2019	New Delhi, India	ESCAP
UNNExT Advisory Committee Meeting	18 September 2019	New Delhi, India	ESCAP
SASEC Workshop on Performance Measurement for Trade Facilitation	19 September 2019	New Delhi, India	ESCAP
APTFF Capacity Building Workshop on Cross-border Paperless Trade Facilitation	19 September 2019	New Delhi, India	ESCAP
ESCAP-ARTNET-ITD Trade Facilitation for Sustainable Development Workshop 2019	23-26 September 2019	Bangkok, Thailand	ESCAP-ARTNET-ITD
First WCO Global Communication Strategies Conference	8-9 October 2019	Brussels, Belgium	WCO
Inter-Subregional Workshop on Enhanced Implementation of the WTO TFA	15-17 October 2019	Tbilisi, Georgia	CAREC-ADB
34th UN/CEFACT Forum	28 October - 01 November 2019	London, UK	UNECE
18th Ministerial Conference on CAREC	14 November 2019	Tashkent, Uzbekistan	CAREC-ADB
AFACT Plenary Meetings	19-20 November 2019	Bangkok, Thailand	AFACT
WCO Global Origin Conference	19-20 November 2019	Iquique, Chile	WCO
eAsia Award Ceremony	21 November 2019	Bangkok, Thailand	AFACT
14th Annual PICARD Conference	22-24 October 2019	Skopje, North Macedonia	WCO
Standards to Build up a Digital Corridor for Cross-border eCommerce	26 November 2019	Xiamen, China	UN/CEFACT
UN/LOCODE Advisory Group Meeting	28-28 November 2019	Xiamen, China	UN/LOCODE
4th ASEAN Economic Integration Forum 2019	9-10 December 2019	Bangkok, Thailand	ESCAP

Highlight

Countries advancing towards more digital and sustainable trade

The key preliminary findings of the Third UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2019 were released by UNECE and its sister United Nations Regional Commissions at the WTO Headquarters on 4 July during the World Trade Organization (WTO) Aid for Trade Global Review 2019.

The Survey, covering 126 countries, shows an increase of 6 percentage points from an average of 57% to 63% in global average implementation rate of trade facilitation and paperless trade measures since the last Survey in 2017. Developed economies, most of which are in the UNECE region, have the highest implementation rate (around 80%), while Pacific Islands have the lowest (around 36%).

According to the Survey, the measures included in the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement have been generally well implemented by countries surveyed since their implementation in 2017. However, measures related to cross-border paperless trade implementation remains low compared other groups of measures, as do measures related to specific sectors and disadvantaged groups such as SMEs and women. Substantial effort is required to fully implement cross-border paperless, and to customize trade facilitation measures for SMEs and women.

<https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2019/07/12/countries-advancing-towards-more-digital-and-sustainable-trade/>

Global

Trade-restrictive measures continue at historically high level

Trade flows hit by new restrictions implemented by WTO members continued at a historically high level between mid-October 2018 and mid-May 2019, according to the Director-General's latest mid-year report on trade-related developments presented to members on 22 July. The report, which was reviewed at a meeting of the WTO's Trade Policy Review Body, notes that trade tensions continued to dominate the headlines and add to the uncertainty surrounding international trade and the world economy, with G20 economies accounting for the overwhelming share of the trade coverage of import-restrictive measures during the review period. It also provides evidence that this turbulence is continuing after the previous period (between mid-October 2017 and mid-October 2018) saw a record level of new restrictive measures

introduced (USD 588.3 billion). The report further shows that WTO members applied 38 new trade-restrictive measures during the review period mainly through tariff increases, import bans, special safeguards, import taxes and export duties. WTO members also implemented 47 new measures aimed at facilitating trade during the review period, including eliminating or reducing import tariffs, eliminating or simplifying customs procedures for exports and reducing import taxes.

https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news19_e/trdev_22jul19_e.htm

Cambodia

Cambodia's new trade strategy, 15 July 2019

Trade sector reform has gained new momentum after a reform agenda announced by Prime Minister Hun Sen at the Government-Private Sector Forum in March this year- including the withdrawal of the inspection of the Cambodia Import-Export and Fraud Repression Directorate General at the international gateways and the abolishment of the state-owned Kampuchea Shipping Agency and Brokers.

The ongoing trade war between the US and China has forced Cambodian policy makers to accelerate trade and investment policy reforms in order to maintain the competitiveness of the country's economy.

The current bottlenecks of Cambodia's trade strategy are the narrow export market, complex regulations and informal fees, and high trade logistics cost. According to the Cambodia Trade Integration Strategy 2019-2023 by the Ministry of Commerce, around 80% of Cambodia's exports are sold to just 8 partner countries, mostly to the EU and US.

<https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50623772/cambodias-new-trade-strategy/>

China

Sustained policy support to beef up foreign trade growth, 11 July 2019

Amid mounting external uncertainties, China has rolled out an array of policies to stabilize expansion of foreign trade with new measures unveiled by the State Council on Wednesday expected to inject new impetus into the sector.

China will improve its fiscal and tax policies to further lower the country's overall import tariff level, refine export tax rebate policies and speed up the tax rebate process, a State Council executive meeting chaired by Premier Li Keqiang decided Wednesday.

Li also called for efforts to strengthen financial support for foreign trade firms.

http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-07/11/c_138218667.htm

Time for China to build cross-border yuan settlements with neighboring countries, 24 July 2019

As China's economy gets bigger and more competitive, the country will play a greater role in the international financial system. The yuan's internationalization is an inevitable trend despite hardships along the way.

Countries like the US have been pursuing protectionism and unilateralism in recent years. The China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), on the contrary, enhances trade facilitation and boosts development of the financial industry along the BRI route.

<http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1159059.shtml>

Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan rolls out a single window to boost trade, 17 April 2019

Kazakhstan has rolled out a new single window portal to enhance how goods and services are imported into and exported out of the country, the world's largest landlocked nation.

The portal, unveiled at an event during the fifth edition of UNCTAD's eCommerce Week held 1–5 April 2019 in Geneva, Switzerland, is being implemented with the organization's assistance in the context of Kazakhstan's national digitalization strategy.

<https://unctad.org/en/pages/newsdetails.aspx?OriginalVersionID=2060>

Oman

New programme introduced to facilitate Oman's border trade, 24 July 2019

Muscat: The Royal Oman Police, represented by the Directorate General of Customs, has announced the introduction of a new advance rulings programme to facilitate international trade through the Sultanate's points of entry.

The programme is one of several initiatives planned to further empower the trade sector in Oman and will allow businesses to obtain advance rulings to import and export before starting the actual importing and exporting process. The programme also seeks to guide businesses on how best to manage goods during the import and export process.

<https://timesofoman.com/article/1660081/Oman/New-programme-introduced-to-facilitate-border-trade>

Philippines

Customs steps up drive vs 'trade mis-invoicing', 21 July 2019

MANILA, Philippines — The Bureau of Customs is tapping the so-called Big Data Analytics and information communications technology to combat "trade mis-invoicing" or smuggling.

Through its Import Assessment Service (IAS), BOC has successfully designed and set up the web-based National Value Verification System (NVVS) platform to

set average valuations of products and commodities that are imported into the country, and help appraisers and examiners set the correct tariff on inbound shipments.

Yasser Abbas, BOC-IAS director, said the NVVS was designed "in-house" by the BOC's own ICT-savvy officers as it seeks to combat smuggling or what the World Customs Organization terms as trade mis-invoicing.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2019/07/21/1936365/customs-steps-drive-vs-trade-mis-invoicing#w226QZpAAL1PJ5mL.99>

Thailand

ASEAN-BAC's non-tariff bid gains traction, 16 July 2019

The ASEAN Business Advisory Council (ASEAN-BAC) was satisfied with negotiations over ASEAN trade facilitation procedures, in which all members agreed to form and implement guidelines on non-tariff measures, says the Trade Negotiations Department.

Thailand is the ASEAN chair for 2019. The ASEAN Trade Facilitation Joint Consultative Committee was held last week.

Director-general Auramon Supthaweethum said ASEAN members agreed to implement the guidelines on non-tariff measures.

<https://www.bangkokpost.com/business/1713192/asean-bacs-non-tariff-bid-gains-traction>

Viet Nam

USAID-funded trade facilitation project launched, 10 July 2019

A trade facilitation programme worth over 21.7 million USD funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) was launched in Hanoi on July 10.

The project will be performed in five years, aiming to reform, standardize, harmonize and simplify administrative procedures in terms of import and export, in accordance with international standards, towards implementing the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) of the World Trade Organization.

The implementation strategy of the project will be at the central to the provincial level, focusing on strengthening coordination among ministries; supporting policy reforms on trade facilitation and implementation of TFA; cutting specialized inspection procedures; and promoting partnership with the private sector.

<https://en.vietnamplus.vn/usaidfunded-trade-facilitation-project-launched/155872.vnp>