

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

IN FOCUS

The Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum brings together 300 experts and practitioners to further trade facilitation efforts in the region

The 7th Annual Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum (APTFF) took place in Wuhan, China on the 20-21 October 2015 and called for countries in the region to increase efforts to simplify and automate trade procedures and move towards paperless trade. The forum was accompanied by a week-long series of side events dedicated to making it easier and cheaper for all to trade across borders.



The APTFF was organized by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), in collaboration with the Asian Development Bank and the Chinese International Electronic Commerce Center (CIECC), the forum brought together 300 participants from 50 countries to strengthen regional cooperation on trade facilitation in support of Asia-Pacific's shared development goals. **For more information see page 2.**

ROC-TF 4th Annual Meeting brought together representatives from 13 international and regional organizations in Wuhan, China on the 19 October 2015. The representatives provided updates on their organization's trade facilitation activities in the Asia-Pacific region and discussed opportunities for further cooperation and collaboration between the organizations. **For more information see page 2.**

PUBLICATION IN FOCUS

The first *United Nations Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade Implementation Survey 2015: Global Report* was launched in October 2015 during the APTFF. The report provides a forward-looking overview of the current state of trade facilitation implementation in 119 economies across 8 regions worldwide, including some of the key trade facilitation measures featured in the WTO TFA Agreement, as well as more advanced cross-border paperless trade measures. **More information about the report and its findings available on page 14.**

FEATURED ANALYSIS

Towards Seamless Supply Chains: International Connectivity

By considering the latest data from the International Supply Chain Connectivity Index (ISCCI), this analysis looks at the progress made by economies in the Asia-Pacific region towards more efficient and seamless international supply chains. This analysis can be found on **page 11** and is an excerpt from the Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report 2015, which is **available here**: <http://www.unescap.org/resources/asia-pacific-trade-and-investment-report-2015-supporting-participation-value-chains>

UPCOMING

The Interim Intergovernmental Steering Group on Cross-Border Paperless Trade Facilitation will hold its second meeting to discuss meeting to continue negotiations on the draft text of a prospective regional agreement for the facilitation of cross-border paperless trade. The meeting will take place from the 23-25 March 2016. **More information available here:** <http://www.unescap.org/events/second-meeting-interim-intergovernmental-steering-group-cross-border-paperless-trade>
For more upcoming events in 2016 see page 20.

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

JOINT ACTIVITIES and PARTNERSHIPS

ROC-TF Annual Meeting 2015, 19 October 2015, Wuhan, China

The fourth annual meeting of the Regional Organizations Cooperation Mechanism for Trade Facilitation (ROC-TF) was held in Wuhan, China as a side-event of the Asia Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum (APTFF) 2015. 16 representatives from thirteen international and regional organizations attended the meeting and provided updates on their organization's activities in trade facilitation in the Asia-Pacific region. The meeting also discussed ways to improve information sharing and collaboration within the mechanism. During the discussion the participants stated that ROC-TF is a unique and useful mechanism. Furthermore, it was agreed that coordination by regional and international organizations working on trade facilitation was beneficial to the countries in the Asia-Pacific region. The participants offered some of the following recommendations to strengthen cooperation and coordination between the organizations. The meeting agreed:

- That a study on the linkages and synergies of regional development initiatives on trade facilitation in the Asia-Pacific region would be beneficial;
- That organizations would circulate amongst each other their ongoing work and guidelines on National Trade Facilitation Committees;
- To share more information sharing on national level activities to foster collaboration and avoid duplication;
- To expand the membership of ROC-TF to include other international organizations, bilateral development partners/donors, and private sector actors in the region;
- To explore the possibility of expanding the yearly meetings to more than one day;
- To consider new mechanisms to improve coordination and exchange of information, such a group email, interactive calendar, more frequent emails and event reminders;
- To continue the dissemination of the ROC-TF annual calendar and bi-annual newsletter.

For more information, please see: <http://www.unescap.org/events/regional-organizations-cooperation-mechanism-trade-facilitation-roc-tf-annual-meeting-2015>

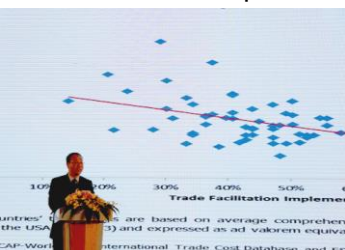
ADB and ESCAP

Asia Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum 2015

The 7th Annual Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum (APTFF) was jointly organized by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Asian Development Bank and the Chinese International Electronic Commerce Center, in collaboration with China's Ministry of Commerce, Hubei province, and Wuhan city from 20 to 21 October 2015. It brought together 300 participants from 62 countries. A week-long series of side events were also organized from 19 to 23 October.



Under the theme of 'Deepening regional integration through trade facilitation', the forum was dedicated to making it easier and cheaper for all to trade across borders. It highlighted the removal of cumbersome trade procedures as the cornerstone of strategies aimed at enhancing regional integration, connectivity and sustainable development. *The Global Report of the Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade Implementation Survey 2015* launched during the Forum provided data on 44 countries in the Asia Pacific region and suggested that most countries still had much room for improvement in this area. The High-level Panel of the Forum discussed the role of trade facilitation in regional integration for inclusive and sustainable growth. A key recommendation of the Forum was the need to prepare and tap opportunities associated with cross-border e-commerce given the potential benefits for SMEs in particular. Engagement of all countries in the development of regional and multilateral legal and technical solutions for cross-border



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paperless trade was highly relevant in this context. Other recommendations from the forum included:

- The need for countries to proceed swiftly with ratification of the WTO trade facilitation agreement and its implementation. Countries should try to fully implement the measures in the agreement rather than focus on achieving minimum compliance levels.
- Countries should develop holistic and comprehensive trade facilitation programmes covering procedures along the international supply chain, based on regular and evidence-based assessment of bottlenecks, including those related to transport, commercial, payment and other traderelated services.
- Trade policy should be designed in a way that cross-border e-commerce and paperless trade transactions can be secure and trusted among the participating parties. Harmonization and coordination of different electronic systems and platforms will be essential, keeping in mind the need to balance regulatory compliance and trade facilitation in setting the rules as well as how the systems owned by private and public operators interact.
- Implementing paperless trade measures and facilitating access to information and communication technology services was also highlighted as one of the keys to reducing trade costs, along with regional cooperation on providing a legal basis to support electronic exchange of data and documents across borders.



For more information about the APTFF visit: <http://unnex.t.unescap.org/tfforum15.asp>

APTFF Side Events

ESCAP, OECD, and ADB in collaboration with the World Bank, ITC, and WCO organize Workshop on Trade Facilitation Implementation and Performance Monitoring, 22 October 2015, Wuhan, China

This workshop was organized in order to equip the policy makers with knowledge of various trade facilitation implementation and performance monitoring measures. The workshop discussed the gaps and needs in trade facilitation implementation and performance monitoring at the national and regional level and explored opportunities to further harmonize or synergize various trade facilitation implementation and performance monitoring measures. The workshop introduced participants to the ESCAP-World Bank Trade Cost Database; the World Bank's Logistics Performance Index and Trading Across Borders Indicators; the OECD's Trade Facilitation Indicators; the WCO Time Release Study and the ADB CAREC Corridor Performance Monitoring Method. The workshop was organized with support from UNNEX, CIECC and the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

For more information, please see: <http://www.unescap.org/events/trade-facilitation-performance-and-monitoring-workshop>

APTFF Capacity Building Workshop on Implementation of Trade Facilitation Measures in the WTO TFA, 22 October 2015, Wuhan, China



This workshop brought together over 30 participants from the Asia-Pacific region to provide guidance on how to design and implement trade facilitation measures in connection with relevant provisions of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA). The capacity building workshop shared good practices and lessons learnt on the establishment of National Trade Facilitation Committees (NTFCs) and Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) programmes. Case studies from Canada, China, Japan, Malaysia, Pakistan, Lao PDR, Kyrgyzstan and Philippines were presented during the workshop.

For more information, please see: <http://www.unescap.org/events/aptff-capacity-building-workshop-implementing-trade-facilitation-measures-wto-tfa>

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ESCAP-ADB-FAO workshop on electronic exchange of SPS certificates for agricultural trade facilitation, 21-22 October 2015, Wuhan, China

The UNNEXt Workshop on Electronic Exchange of SPS Certificates for Better Control and Facilitation was organized in order to raise awareness and provide guidance to policymakers in the Asia-Pacific region of the benefits of exchanging SPS certificates electronically. The workshop shared emerging issues and presented relevant case studies from countries which have implemented or are in the process of implementing e-SPS certificates, namely Australia, China, Malaysia, the Netherlands and the Philippines. The workshop also benefited from presentations by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) Secretariat, the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) and UNECE.

For more information, please see:

<http://www.unescap.org/events/workshop-electronic-exchange-sps-certificates-better-trade-control-and-facilitation>

CAREC Trade Facilitation Opportunity: The Development Dimension of Cross-Border eCommerce: Nourishing an Emerging Opportunity in CAREC, 22-23 October 2015, Wuhan, China



Participants from the 10 CAREC member countries shared their experiences of cross-border e-commerce, including how e-commerce can contribute to economic engagement of SMEs; what legal framework needs to be put in place; logistics around cross-border e-commerce, potential benefits for women entrepreneurs, and China's experience with using e-commerce for trade growth. In particular, discussions focused on the crucial element of trust that needs to be cultivated in e-commerce and constraints to its development such as regulatory, infrastructure, and payment system issues. Institutions and businesses serving as panelists to share best practices included the ADB, CIECC, Conference of Asia Pacific Express Carriers, EEC, ESCAP, UNECE WCO and Yucheng Group. Participants also visited the East Lake Special Economic Zone in Wuhan to explore how special economic zones, particularly those adjacent to border crossing points, can facilitate cross-border e-commerce. ADBI and CIECC co-sponsored the event, supported by the CAREC Trade Facilitation team, ADB CAREC Country Resident Missions and ESCAP.

For more information available here: <http://www.carecprogram.org/index.php?page=3rd-carec-tf-learning-opportunity>

ADB and WCO

WCO and ADB Implements Joint Train-the-Trainer Workshops on Customs Valuation through Post Clearance Audit, May-December 2015, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Sri Lanka

The World Customs Organization (WCO) Asia Pacific Regional Office for Capacity Building (ROCB-AP), together with the ADB worked with Customs administrations of the six SASEC countries (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka) from May-December 2015, to conduct national workshops in the area of Customs valuation. The initiative supports participating countries' efforts to strengthen efficient management of Customs valuation control through the use of post-clearance audit. The workshops, which were held in Bangladesh (14-18 December), Bhutan (22-26 June), India (28 September-1 October), Maldives (18-22 May), Nepal (19-21 August) and Sri Lanka (26-30 October), developed variously model training courses and training materials to be used in delivering effective and sustainable in-house training to improve Customs valuation control, or standard operating procedures for Customs valuation.

For more information see: <http://www.sasec.asia/>

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Bhutan Customs Holds National Workshop on Coordinated Border Management and Single Window, 23-27 November 2015, Paro, Bhutan

Bhutan's Department of Revenue and Customs, in collaboration with the WCO and ADB, held a workshop on the National Single Window (NSW) concept, including coordinated border management, single window, and the WCO data model. The Workshop provided detailed theory and practical hands-on sessions on coordinated border management, developing and operating an NSW in the context of coordinated border management, business process analysis, an introduction to the WCO data model, and other aspects of NSW systems. WCO resource persons also shared international best practice in these areas. A one-day seminar was also conducted on 27 November for members of the National Transport and Trade Facilitation Committee of Bhutan, the principal coordinating mechanism of government agencies involved in cross-border trade. The seminar deliberated on policy-level implications and actions required for development and implementation of an NSW.



For more information see:

<http://www.sasec.asia/index.php?page=event&eid=174&url=bhutan-national-workshop-on-nsw>

ESCAP and ECO

ESCAP and ECO train officials from Central and South-West Asia to implement paperless systems for regional connectivity and cooperation, 16-17 December 2015, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

ESCAP, in cooperation with the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), the Asia Pacific Council for Trade Facilitation and e-Business (AFACT), the Iran Center for e-Commerce Development (ICeCD) and the United Nations Network of Experts for Paperless Trade and Transport in Asia and the Pacific (UNNEXt), organized the Capacity Building Workshop on Paperless Trade for Regional Connectivity. Over 30 government officials and private sector stakeholders from eight member countries of the ECO region participated in the workshop, which provided an opportunity for them to share and better understand their current status of paperless trade implementation and learn about key regional initiatives for cross-border paperless trade facilitation. The workshop also discussed the future direction of ECO-level cooperation on paperless trade, including the need for more capacity building activities.

For more information see: <http://www.unescap.org/events/capacity-building-workshop-paperless-trade-regional-connectivity>

ESCAP and GTI

International Seminar on Trade Facilitation in North-East Asia, 2 September 2015, Changchun, China



The 5th International Seminar on Trade Facilitation in North-East Asia co-organized by ESCAP and the GTI Secretariat brought together around 80 participants from the central and local governments, international organizations, and private enterprises. The annual International Seminar was organized back-to-back with the GTI Trade Facilitation Committee meeting to provide a platform for dialogue and cooperation on trade facilitation issues among relevant stakeholders in the Greater Tumen Region (GTR). The seminar reviewed the latest trends in trade facilitation activities, implications of implementing the WTO Bali Agreement; strengthening cooperation among relevant stakeholders in trade to cope with new development initiatives such as "Belt and Road Initiative" from China, and introducing paperless trade systems in the region.

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ESCAP and UNECE

ESCAP and UNECE organize UNNExT Workshop to promote uptake of electronic business standards in agricultural supply chains, 21 December 2015, Bangkok, Thailand



The UNNExT Workshop on Implementing UN/CEFACT e-Business Standards in Agricultural Trade was designed to introduce participants to the latest UN/CEFACT e-Business standards in agricultural trade. 25 participants from 10 countries in the Asia-Pacific region were introduced to four e-Business standards for agricultural trade, namely e-CERT for electronic management and exchange of sanitary and phytosanitary certificates; FLUX for electronic management and exchange of fishery information; e-LAB for electronic management and exchange of laboratory analysis information and e-CITES for electronic management and exchange of CITES permits and certificates. The workshop also presented and discussed the forthcoming *UNNExT Handbook on Implementing UN/CEFACT e-Business Standards in Agricultural Trade*. Adoption on electronic Business messages and standards for agricultural trade can help to address the inefficiencies in the agricultural supply chains.

More information available here: <http://www.unescap.org/events/unnext-workshop-implementing-uncefact-e-business-standards-agricultural-trade>

Single Window Workshop in China on Creating the Environment for Collaboration in Cross-border Trade, 23-24 October 2015, Shanghai, China

At the request of China Customs, a workshop and study tour was organized by ESCAP and UNECE to introduce international developments and standards in designing architectures for a Single Window Environment to officials from the different agencies involved in trade procedures in China. The workshop introduced structured approaches for better planning Single Window Architectures using Enterprise Architecture Models and provided an opportunity to discuss the relevance of the topics for the future development of collaborative systems in China - as well as between China and other countries as part of the One Belt One Road Initiative. The workshop was followed by a study tour of Shanghai Port on 24 October. The workshop and study tour were sponsored by the General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China (GACC) with support from UNNExT.

For more information, please see:

<http://www.unescap.org/events/workshop-single-window-creating-environment-collaboration-cross-border-trade>

EEC, UNECE and ESCAP train officials from Eurasian Economic Union Member States on Business Process Analysis in Foreign Trade, 23-25 September 2015, Moscow, Russian Federation

The Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC), UNECE and ESCAP, with support from UNNExT, organized a workshop on Business Process Analysis in Foreign Trade, which trained over 40 representatives of government agencies, trade and freight forwarding organizations from the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) Member States. The workshop provided an opportunity for the participants to gain theoretical knowledge and practical skills on how to conduct business processes analysis and assess the prospects of National "Single Window" development. Furthermore, the workshop considered solutions to the bottlenecks in the transition from paper to electronic documents.



For more information, please see: <http://www.unescap.org/events/training-workshop-business-process-analysis-foreign-trade>

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ORGANIZATION UPDATES

Asian Development Bank (ADB)

Nepal Department of Customs Hosts Subregional Workshop on ASYCUDA World, 8-11 September 2015, Pokhara, Nepal

The Nepal Department of Customs (DOC) hosted a Subregional Workshop on ASYCUDA World with representatives from four SASEC countries using this system: Bangladesh, the Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. The workshop aimed at sharing experiences and mitigating challenges in implementing ASYCUDA World. It adopted a report of proceedings and formulated action points on the functional, technical and managerial aspects for implementing ASYCUDA World. A detailed presentation on the functional side of ASYCUDA World was delivered by UNCTAD representatives.

For more information see: <http://sasec.asia/index.php?page=event&eid=159&url=asycuda-world-subregional-workshop>

SASEC Customs Subgroup Holds Fourth Meeting, 27-28 October 2015, Cebu, Philippines

The SASEC Customs Subgroup (SCS) held its fourth meeting to review the implementation status of subregional and national projects in the SCS Work Plan 2014-2016, and discuss subregional capacity building activities. The Meeting noted considerable progress made in SCS projects, including finalization of arrangements for the exchange of export-related data and implementation of national projects on Customs modernization. The meeting also identified new initiatives such as ASYCUDA World Implementation and training on international conventions. A Learning Event on Customs Operations in Special Economic Zones preceded the SCS meeting, which focused on the needed coordination between customs and SEZ authorities in facilitating export and import clearances.



For more information see: <http://www.sasec.asia/index.php?page=event&eid=169&url=scs-4-meeting>

SASEC Trade Facilitation and Transport Working Group Meets, 25-26 November 2015, Tokyo, Japan

The annual SASEC Trade Facilitation and Transport Working Group Meeting on 26 November reviewed progress of ongoing SASEC transport cooperation, and agreed on future priority projects. The Meeting agreed to prioritize implementation of projects under the SASEC Customs Subgroup as well as other priority areas of the SASEC Trade Facilitation Strategic Framework. Delegations also affirmed commitment to SASEC 2025, the 10-year strategy and road map for the SASEC program. A SASEC Learning Event 'Developing Multimodal Transport and Economic Corridors' was held on 25 November, familiarizing delegations with the latest developments in logistics as practiced and applied in Japan, South Asia, and other parts of Asia, to facilitate multimodal transport and promote the development of economic corridors.

For more information see: <http://www.sasec.asia/index.php?page=event&eid=172&url=sasec-tftwg-2015>

Greater Tumen Initiative (GTI)

4th International Capacity Building Program on Trade Facilitation, 16-20 November 2015 Daejeon, Republic of Korea



The Korea Customs Service organized this Capacity Building Programme to promote trade facilitation in the North East Asia through sharing knowledge and experience among the government officials from the GTI member countries and specialists from international organizations, academia, etc. This year's Capacity Building Program focused on two specific trade facilitation measures, in particular Paperless Trade and AEO (Authorized Economic Operator), and three-day workshop sessions and two-day study trips were organized to deal with these two topics. Around 30 participants including the customs officials and relevant government officials from the GTI member countries, experts from international organizations such as ITC, ESCAP and WCO, and the GTI

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Secretariat shared their insights and provided policy recommendations on the two topics for the GTI member countries.

The 5th GTI Trade Facilitation Committee meeting, 2 September 2015 in Changchun, China

The 5th GTI Trade Facilitation Committee (TFC) brought together 25 participants from the GTI member countries, international organizations and other stakeholders. The participants welcomed the progress and achievements made by the TFC members and GTI Secretariat in implementing the decisions made at the 4th TFC meeting on 19 November 2014 in Vladivostok, Russian Federation, and decided to put their efforts into removing trade bottle-necks in the Greater Tumen Region. The meeting also had in depth on projects and policy proposals such as, AEO Cooperation Scheme among GTI Customs Administrations and the Regional Seminar on GTI Cross-border Trade Facilitation and Single Window Implementation. The participants agreed that they will establish "Trade and Investment Committee (TIC)" to tackle not only trade facilitation issues but also comprehensive agendas on trade and investment, and "Customs Sub-committee" to create tangible outcomes by having in-depth discussions on specific agendas in trade facilitation.

The 3rd GTI International Trade and Investment EXPO, 22-25 October 2015, Sokcho City, Gangwon Province of Republic of Korea



650 companies from 15 countries took part in the EXPO and concluded export contracts amounting to around 26 million USD. The GTI International Trade and Investment EXPO provides exporters, importers and investors a platform where they can conclude trade and investment contracts and accelerate trade and investment activities in the Greater Tumen Region. With active engagement and cooperation among the GTI member countries, the EXPO attracted a huge number of private enterprises from both GTR and non-GTR region.

Capacity Building Program for the Mongolian Customs Officials to Implement Authorised Economic Operators (AEO) in Mongolia, 14-18 September 2015, Cheonan, Republic of Korea (ROK)

The Capacity Building Program, organized by Korea Customs, was aimed at expediting the implementation of AEO in Mongolia by sharing knowledge and experience of ROK and discussing measures to develop AEO in Mongolia. The Capacity Building Program was supported by ADB and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH and also by in-kind contributions from the Korea Customs Service and the Mongolian Customs. 12 officials from the Mongolian Customs studied the ROK's AEO program including related regulations, audit process and effect of AEO on businesses, and had discussions on developing Mongolia's own AEO Program. The participants were satisfied by the custom-made Capacity Building Program, and wanted to have a pilot test in cooperation with export-import enterprises in Mongolia later.



For more information about the GTI programme and events visit: <http://www.tumenprogramme.org/>

Oceania Customs Organisation

OCO undertakes Tuvalu Mission, 28 October – 4 November 2015

OCO provided in-country technical support to Tuvalu with the implementation of its Customs legislation that was enacted in 2014 with a particular focus on the WTO Valuation principles. Technical Customs experts were sourced from New Zealand Customs Service and travelled to Tuvalu and assisted the Customs administration to hold discussions both internally within Tuvalu Customs and with the trade community on the newly enacted Tuvalu Customs Act as well as the implementation of the WTO valuation principles. A key outcome was the review of existing valuation legal provisions, identification of deficiencies with the newly enacted legislation in regards to valuation and the development of a proposed approach to allow Tuvalu Customs to remedy the identified issues.

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OCO provides assistance to Federated States of Micronesia, 23-27 November 2015

OCO provided assistance to the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) for the development of streamlined Customs frameworks, processes and procedures aligned to international standards and best practices through the provision of an in-country technical support mission. A Technical Customs expert from Australia Customs and Border Protection Service travelled to FSM and assisted the Customs administration in identifying specific areas of work to be undertaken for the development of standard operating procedures in a number of areas. The technical expert determined that a number of standard operating procedures required a significant investment of time from FSM officials to ensure that the developed procedures were standardised and would reflect the FSM trade and regulatory environment and the capacity of FSM Customs. OCO will now work with FSM to consider further support phases to assist in developing the required standard operating procedures.

OCO hosts Post Clearance Audit Workshop, 23-27 November 2015, Suva, Fiji

OCO hosted a Pacific regional Post Clearance Audit Workshop which was attended by eleven Pacific African Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP) Customs Agencies with an additional participant from an OCO non-Pacific ACP country. To support the workshop, four technical experts were provided by the New Zealand Customs Services and the Fiji Revenue and Customs Authority. Over the five days, the workshop participants were introduced to international standards and best practices and worked through a number of practical exercises to illustrate various PCA challenges. At the conclusion of the workshop, the technical experts agreed to continue to provide support where possible to the proposed PCA activities that had been developed by participants. The participants agreed to report on the implementation of the PCA projects and capacity building activities at the OCO Annual Conference in June 2016.

OCO conducts Rules of Origin Workshop, 30 November – 4 December, Suva, Fiji

OCO hosted a Pacific regional Rules of Origin (ROO) Workshop, which was attended by eleven Pacific Customs Agencies of the ACP with an additional participant from an OCO non-Pacific ACP country. To support the workshop, technical experts were provided by the Fiji Revenue and Customs Authority and from the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. The workshop participants were introduced to a number of relevant trade related principles, international standards and best practices on ROO; examined a number of trade agreements that affected the Pacific Islands region and undertook a number of exercises to determine the origin of various goods under the various trade agreements in effect in the Pacific Islands. At the conclusion of the workshop, it was agreed to establish a network of ROO experts and focal points made up primarily of the workshop participants to facilitate the sharing of information and knowledge amongst Pacific ACP Customs Members.

For more information about OCO visit: <http://www.ocosec.org/>

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

Fourth Asia-Pacific Trade & Investment Week, 1-6 November 2015, Bangkok, Thailand



ASIA-PACIFIC
TRADE & INVESTMENT WEEK
1-6 NOV 2015

Senior government representatives from more than 30 Asia-Pacific countries took part in the 4th Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Week and called for strengthened regional cooperation in trade and investment with a special focus on achieving the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Trade and Investment Committee, a regional policymakers' forum, called for continued work in trade facilitation and paperless trade, a renewed focus on potential regional barriers to trade and investment and the ongoing need to integrate the region. The Week also featured the 12th Session of the Asia-Pacific Business Forum which bringing together over 300 business leaders, policymakers, and civil society and development agencies to highlight the role of public-private partnerships in sustainable development. The Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report 2015 was also launched at the beginning of the week.

For more information, please visit this page: <http://www.unescap.org/events/tiweek4>

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Second Meeting of Legal and Technical Working Groups on Cross-border Paperless Trade Facilitation, 5-6 November 2015, Bangkok, Thailand

ESCAP convened the Second Meeting of Legal and Technical Working Groups on Cross-border Paperless Trade Facilitation. Both the Legal and Technical Working Groups made good progress towards a prospective regional agreement on cross-border paperless trade facilitation. The regional agreement looks to provide a framework to enable the exchange and mutual recognition of trade-related data and documents in electronic form and facilitate the interoperability of paperless trade systems.

For more information, please visit this page: <http://www.unescap.org/events/second-meeting-legal-and-technical-working-groups-cross-border-paperless-trade-facilitation>

Capacity Building Workshop on Cross-border Paperless Trade Facilitation, 4 November 2015, Bangkok, Thailand

ESCAP organized a Capacity Building Workshop on Cross-border Paperless Trade Facilitation on 4 November 2015. The workshop brought together experts from the Asia-Pacific region and beyond to share and review lesson learnt from implementing major initiatives on cross-border paperless trade data exchange in the region and beyond. The workshop featured insightful presentations on topics such as 'Facilitating logistics information exchange among China, Japan and the Republic of Korea - Northeast Asia Logistics Information Service Network', 'Legal Protocol of the ASEAN Single Window', and 'Facilitating the transition from paper-based to paperless cross-border data exchange environment.

More information about the workshop can be found here: <http://www.unescap.org/events/capacity-building-workshop-cross-border-paperless-trade-facilitation-lessons-going>

UNNExT Workshop on Agriculture Trade Facilitation and Business Process Analysis in Bangladesh, 27-29 October 2015, Dhaka, Bangladesh

ESCAP in collaboration with the Bangladesh Foreign Trade Institute and Hortex Foundation, Ministry of Agriculture Bangladesh organized a national workshop in order to promote the export of fruits and vegetables from Bangladesh. The workshop was attended by more than 20 participants from the full range of public and private stakeholders involved in agricultural trade in Bangladesh. The capacity-building workshop provided an overview of trade facilitation measures for the agricultural sector and considered various methods to improve the trade processes for agrifood products in Bangladesh. The workshop introduced participants to Business Process Analysis as a tool for identifying and addressing procedural bottlenecks along the agricultural supply chain.

More information available here: <http://www.unescap.org/events/unnnext-national-workshop-agriculture-trade-facilitation-and-business-process-analysis>

World Customs Organisation (WCO)

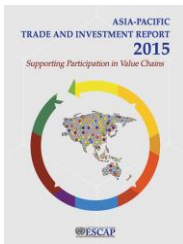
Regional Workshop on Coordinated Border Management, 15-17 December 2015, Kashiwa, Japan



WCO, ROCB A/P and Japan Customs, organized the WCO Asia/Pacific Regional Workshop on Coordinated Border Management (CBM) at the Japan Customs Training Institute. It was the first CBM workshop in the Asia-Pacific region and was attended by 24 participants from 21 Customs administrations along with some observers from host administration, Japan Customs. Two experts explained on the concept of CBM and how to utilize the WCO Conventions, tools and instruments to attain the ultimate goal of CBM - increase the effectiveness and efficiency in border control and facilitate trade by adopting a coordinated approach with other stakeholders.

More information is available here: <http://www.rocb-ap.org/article-detail/202/>

Towards Seamless Supply Chains: International Connectivity¹



Moving towards seamless supply chains not only involves the seamless exchange of data and documents; it also requires efficient movement of physical goods themselves along the supply chain and across borders. Maritime connectivity has long been identified as a critical component of efficient and seamless supply chains. In terms of volume, approximately 80% of traded goods are transported through seaports (UNCTAD, 2014). In addition, research by ESCAP has found that maritime connectivity and services can account for 16-18% of policy-related, non-tariff trade costs (ESCAP, 2012). Addressing logistics performance is also cited as an important policy measure for reducing trade costs (OECD, 2015). This analysis reviews the progress made by economies in the Asia-Pacific region in efficiently moving goods along international supply chains using the ESCAP International Supply Chain Connectivity Index (ISCCI)². The index, constructed using trade across border (TAB) indicators of the World Bank Doing Business Report and the UNCTAD Liner Shipping Connectivity Index (LSCI),³ measures countries' performance along international supply chains. Equal weighting is given to import procedures, export procedures (from TAB indicators) and liner shipping performance (from LSCI) in ISCCI. Taken together, these indicators provide information on how well countries are connected to international supply chains and, hence, shed light on potential barriers and obstacles to trade.

Data from ISCCI shows that the top global performers in terms of international supply chain connectivity continue to be in the Asia-Pacific region, i.e.: Singapore; Hong Kong, China; the Republic of Korea, Malaysia and China (table 1). The ISCCI 2015 top five performers remain largely unchanged compared with the ISCCI 2012 rankings (ESCAP, 2013). Singapore ranks first globally for international supply chain connectivity and for trading across borders (i.e. efficiency of import and export procedures). While China remains the global leader in liner shipping connectivity (first place ranking in LSCI), it has fallen from sixty-eighth in 2012 to ninety-eighth place in 2015 in the TAB indicators, placing it behind Malaysia in terms of overall supply chain connectivity. A comparison of China and Singapore suggests that port efficiency and connectivity is an essential component of overall international supply chain connectivity. However, it is also evident that improving the efficiency of import and export procedures can greatly benefit economies that may be lagging in liner shipping connectivity because of their size, inconvenient geographic location or lack of funds to upgrade port infrastructure.

Table 1: Performance rankings according to ISCCI, TAB and LSCI, 2015

Economy	ISCC rank 2015	TAB rank 2015	LSCI rank 2015	Economy	ISCC rank 2015	TAB rank 2015	LSCI rank 2015
Singapore	1	1	3	Pakistan	73	108	69
Hong Kong, China	2	2	4	Philippines	74	65	98
Republic of Korea	3	3	5	Myanmar	94	103	144
Malaysia	4	11	6	Azerbaijan	98	166	32
China	5	98	1	Lao People's Democratic Republic	100	156	45
United States	7	16	10	Russian Federation	104	155	46
Germany	10	18	7	Bhutan	114	165	40
Japan	20	20	20	Nepal	119	171	41
Thailand	31	36	44	Cambodia	130	124	141
Sri Lanka	34	69	28	Kyrgyzstan	138	183	47 ^a
Viet Nam	39	75	38	Kazakhstan	142	185	48 ^a
New Zealand		27	94	Bangladesh	147	140	124
Australia		49	72	Uzbekistan	148	189	49 ^a
Mongolia		173	2 ^a	Islamic Republic of Iran		148	108
India		126	39	Tajikistan		188	71 ^a

Notes: TAB rankings are based on the World Bank Doing Business Report 2015 and UNCTAD LSCI 2015.

^aThe LSCI ranking of landlocked countries is based on the ranking of the main transit country. ISCCI rankings are based on ESCAP calculations.

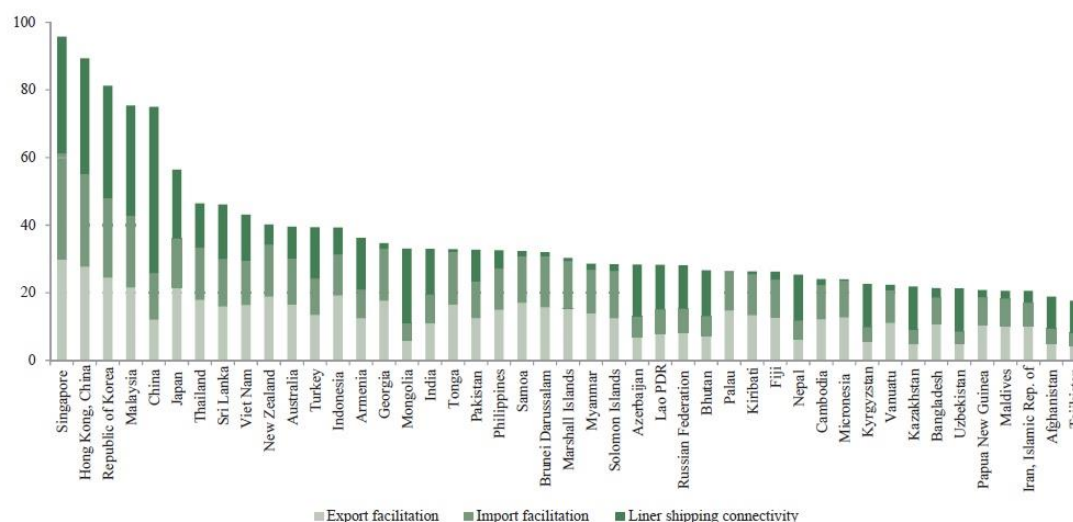
¹ This analysis is an excerpt from ESCAP's *Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report 2015: Supporting Participation in Value Chains*. The full report and references are available here: <http://www.unescap.org/resources/asia-pacific-trade-and-investment-report-2015-supporting-participation-value-chains>

² ESCAP's International Supply Chain Connectivity Database can be accessed here: <http://artnet.unescap.org/databases.html#fourth>

³ LSCI comprises five components: fleet deployment – number of ships; container carrying-capacity; number of companies that deploy their container ships from a country's ports; number of liner services; and maximum vessel size.

Figure 1 shows the relative contribution of import procedures, export procedures and liner shipping connectivity performance to international supply chain connectivity performance. The generally observed trend in the Asia-Pacific region is consistent with the findings of the Global Survey and the ESCAP-World Bank Trade Costs Database – performance across the Asia-Pacific is heterogeneous, with the region being home to both some of the world's best and worst performers. Countries of East and North-East Asia are among the global leaders in international supply chain connectivity, whereas the performance of Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States lags behind. It can be inferred that, for the top performing economies, the contributions of import and export facilitation procedures and shipping liner connectivity are relatively equal. The notable exception is China, whose liner shipping connectivity performance is the largest contribution to its overall international supply chain connectivity. In part, due to sheer scale effects, maritime connectivity in China is maximal⁴, suggesting that increased attention is required for improving the efficiency of the import and export procedures as well as logistics performance (Bang, Greve and Westergaard-Kabelmann, 2014).

Figure 1: Contribution of export, import and liner shipping connectivity performance to international supply chain connectivity, 2015



Source: ESCAP International Supply Chain Connectivity Index (accessed June 2015).

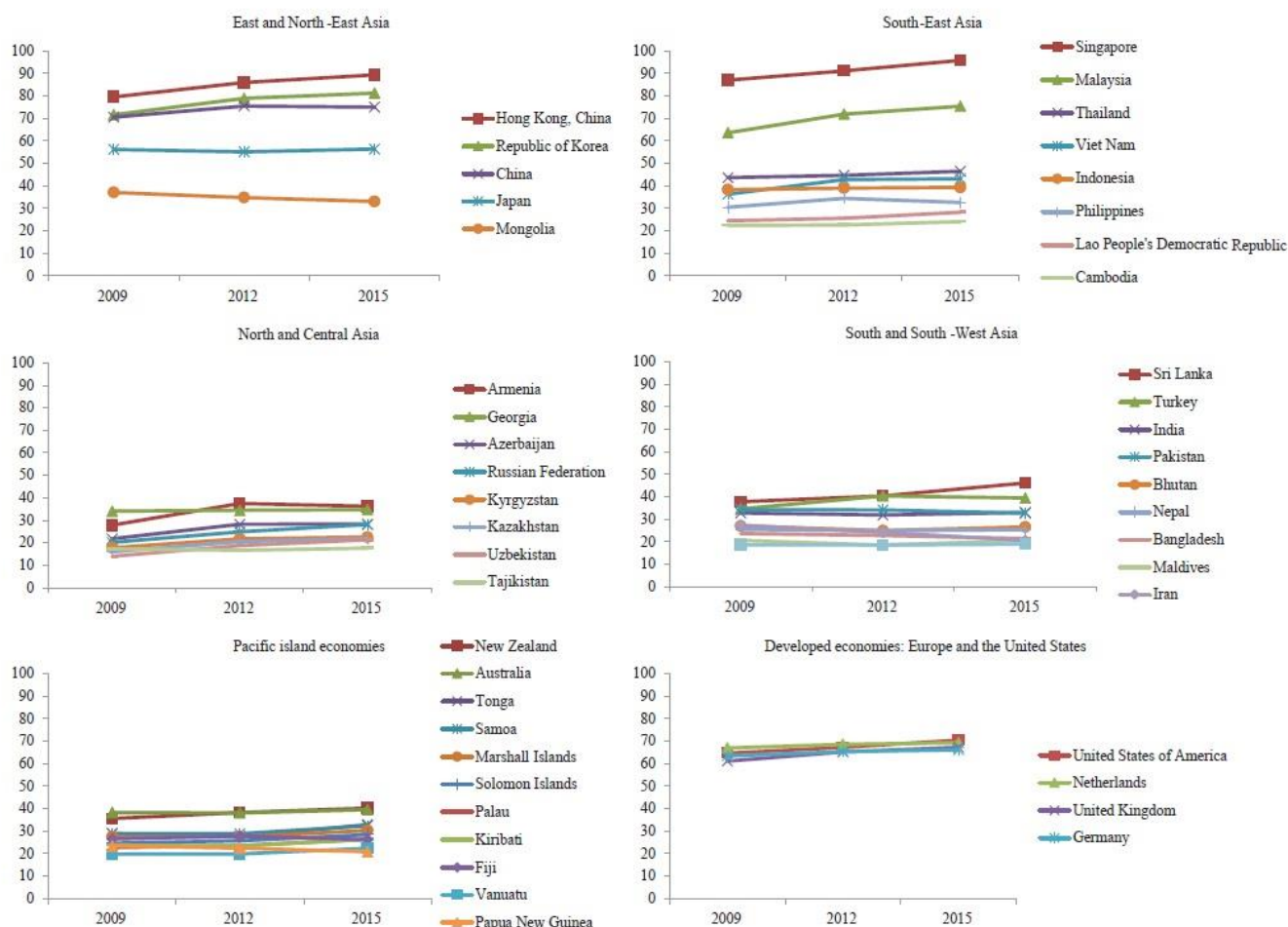
In the case of landlocked countries, especially as they do not have control over port operations in their transit countries, improvement of their international supply chain connectivity performance could be achieved through the simplification of trade procedures, documentation requirements and automation of procedures, where possible. Furthermore, since landlocked countries are dependent on the seaport of the transit countries, it is particularly important for them to connect to the most efficient and connected port. A case in point would be Mongolia, whose liner shipping connectivity performance and, hence, overall ISCCI score was boosted by utilizing the port connectivity of its main transit country, China. However, for other landlocked countries that must rely on the ports of transit countries with lower levels of liner shipping connectivity, improving trade procedures should be the focus of policymaking attention.

Overall, economies in the Asia-Pacific region have been making progress in international supply chain connectivity in recent years (figure 2)⁵. Most countries of East, North-East and South-East Asia continue to make steady progress, and remain the regional and global frontrunners. However, these subregional groupings also have the widest gap between the top and bottom performers. For example, in contrast to the rest of the East and North-East Asia subregional grouping, Mongolia is the lowest performing country and exhibits a downwards trend in terms of international supply chain connectivity while Hong Kong, China – the top performer in East and North-East Asia – shows an upwards trajectory and is one of best performers, globally. For the South and South-West Asia subregion, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Bangladesh and Pakistan have demonstrated stagnant or downwards trends in international supply chain connectivity performance between 2009 and 2015. Sri Lanka stands out as top performer in the South and South-West Asia subregion, with the subregion's highest international supply chain connectivity scores as well as showing steady and significant progress in recent years.

⁴ China controls a fifth of the world's container fleet, and many of the world's largest container ports are in China (*Economist*, 2015).

⁵ On average, between 2009 and 2015 the region saw a 10% increase in the international supply chain connectivity scores.

Figure 2: Evolution of performance by economies in the International Supply Chain Connectivity Index, 2009-2015



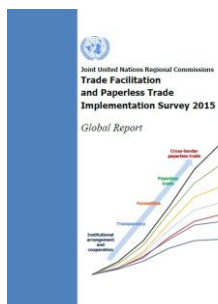
Sources : ESCAP, ISCCI data for 2015.

The subregion that has shown the greatest progress in international supply chain connectivity between 2009 and 2015 is the North and Central Asia. In particular, Uzbekistan, the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan have each improved their connectivity level by more than 30%. The greatest momentum of this progress was between 2009 and 2012. While the progress has tapered off slightly between 2012 and 2015, the trend remains positive. This may be due, in part, to the improvements in liner shipping connectivity made by the Russian Federation, the main transit port for many of the Central Asian economies, in recent years; this demonstrates the fact that progress in transit countries can have knock-on benefits and result in improved international supply chain connectivity throughout a subregion.

In order to achieve trade cost reductions and advance international supply chain connectivity as quickly and as efficiently as possible, it will be important for countries in the region to continue implementing comprehensive and pragmatic national trade facilitation reform programmes. Such programmes should not be limited to customs facilitation or simplification, or exchange of documents but should instead be aimed at identifying and addressing procedural bottlenecks along the entire international supply chain, including through improvements in transport, logistics, payment and other trade-related infrastructure and services⁶.

⁶ This may be done by applying the Business Process Analysis methodology developed by the United Nations Network of Experts for Paperless Trade and Transport in Asia and the Pacific. Available from <http://unnex.unescap.org/>

RESOURCE IN FOCUS: United Nations Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade Implementation Survey 2015: Global Report, October 2015



The inaugural Global Report of the Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade Implementation Survey provides data for 119 countries and serves as a useful basis for benchmarking and monitoring trade facilitation performance. Within the Asia-Pacific region, the report shows Singapore and the Republic of Korea leading East Asia in moving goods effectively. India tops the South Asian subregion, with Russia and Turkey leading in Europe and Central Asia. The top trade facilitation performer among these economies is the Netherlands. According to the new report, efficient movement of goods is key to maintaining trade competitiveness, and enabling effective engagement of firms, in particular small and medium enterprises, with regional and global production networks. The global average implementation rate of the ambitious set of trade facilitation measures considered in the report is about 53 per cent.

Developed economies average more than 75 per cent implementation, while Pacific Island developing economies barely reach 26 per cent.

As highlighted in the report, accelerating implementation of paperless trade measures will be crucial to reducing trade costs. The report also recommends the adoption of modern information and communication technologies, as well as development of legal frameworks to enable the exchange of electronic trade data and documents across borders. The report outlines the extent to which key measures of the recent World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement are currently being implemented, showing that a significant number of developing economies, particularly in East Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, have already acted on many of the commitments associated with the arrangement. For most countries, however, much still remains to be done. An integrated step-by-step approach is suggested, starting with building up institutional arrangements and inter-agency cooperation. Overall, the report finds that most economies have already taken concrete steps towards streamlining trade procedures. The United Arab Emirates leads the Middle East and North Africa region and Benin and Mauritius lead in Sub-Saharan Africa. Several leaders emerge in Latin America and the Caribbean including Mexico, Colombia, Ecuador and Chile.

The survey, led by ESCAP, was developed in collaboration with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and implemented by all of the United Nations regional commissions, namely: the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the UN Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and the UN Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (ESCWA). The report was produced with the support of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, (UNCTAD), the International Road Transport Union (IRU), the International Trade Centre, (ITC), OCO and the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System (SELA).

The Global Report, regional reports and dataset are available here:

<http://unnex.unescap.org/UNTFSurvey2015.asp>

ADB

Asian Economic Integration Report 2015, December 2015

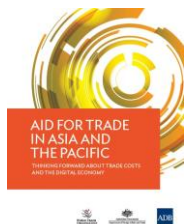


Special economic zones (SEZs) can play a catalytic role in economic development, provided the right business environment and policies are put in place. In Asia, SEZs can facilitate trade, investment, and policy reform at a time the region is experiencing a slowdown in trade and economic growth. The Asian Economic Integration Report is an annual review of Asia's regional economic cooperation and integration. It covers the 48 regional members of the Asian Development Bank. This issue includes Special Chapter: How Can Special Economic Zones Catalyze Economic Development?

Available here: <http://www.adb.org/publications/asian-economic-integration-report-2015>

RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS

Aid for Trade in Asia and the Pacific, July 2015



Aid for Trade (AiT) flows have increased each year since 2006 in the region and while regional aggregate trade costs continue to fall, many subregions continue to struggle with trade costs that are substantially higher than the global average. Trade performance in the Pacific in particular has been undermined by its geography. At the same time, the relevance of different categories of trade costs is changing. The growing number of firms that are trading online face different logistics and shipping issues than traditional traders. This report takes stock of how AiT has contributed to these trends and considers some constructive ways to move forward, to continue to address trade costs in Asia and the Pacific.

Available here: <http://www.adb.org/publications/aid-trade-asia-and-pacific-thinking-forward-about-trade-costs-and-digital-economy>

ITC

SMEs and the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, December 2015



Businesses can extend their reach in regional and global markets by understanding how to make the most of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement. This guide will enable businesses to make border clearance faster, simpler and cheaper; resolve customs disputes fairly; obtain information on regulations and customs procedures easily; and become trusted partners of governments in implementing and monitoring trade facilitation reforms. As a training manual, it has clear descriptions and practical exercises.

Available here: <http://www.intracen.org/publication/SMEs-and-the-WTO-Trade-Facilitation-Agreement-A-training-manual/>

National Trade Facilitation Committees: Moving Towards Implementation, November 2015

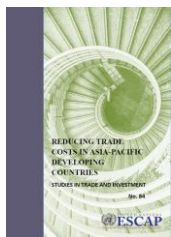


Developing countries can benefit from trade facilitation reforms by establishing a well-run National Trade Facilitation Committee. This guide gives developing countries a step-by-step approach to evaluate policy, organizational and funding options to create a detailed roadmap to setting up National Trade Facilitation Committees, which are an obligation for countries implementing the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement. This is a joint guide by ITC; the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development; and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, including the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business.

Available here: <http://www.intracen.org/publication/National-Trade-Facilitation-Committees---Moving-towards-implementation/>

ESCAP

Reducing Trade Costs In Asia-Pacific Developing Countries, December 2015

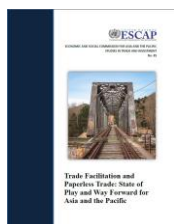


International trade has been a major engine for economic growth and development in Asia and the Pacific. However, the International Trade Cost Database, maintained by ESCAP in collaboration with the World Bank, reveals that although tariffs on trade for many countries and subregions in Asia and the Pacific are at historic lows, overall trade costs continue to remain excessively high. Further efforts in reducing transaction costs are necessary to ensure that more economies, firms, and people can benefit from trade and participation in international production networks. Following an assessment of the existing intra- and extra-regional trade cost situation in Asia and the Pacific, this monograph identifies the factors and policies that may help in reducing trade costs in developing countries of the region, including for small and medium size enterprises.

Available here: <http://www.unescap.org/resources/reducing-trade-costs-asia-pacific-developing-countries>

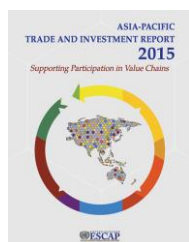
RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS

Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade: State of Play and Way Forward for Asia and the Pacific, December 2015



Trade facilitation (the simplification and harmonization of import, export, and transit procedures) including paperless trade (the use and exchange of electronic data and documents to support the trade transaction process), has taken increasing importance as evidenced by the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement reached in December 2013, as well as the growing number of regional and subregional initiatives aimed at facilitating the electronic exchange of information along international supply chains. This book features the results of the 2015 UNRCs Joint Survey on Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade implementation for the Asia-Pacific region and incorporates this information into an econometric analysis, estimating the impact of trade facilitation on trade costs. It recommends that a holistic but step-by-step approach towards trade facilitation implementation be considered, emphasizing the importance of paperless trade the need to enable the cross-border exchange and legal recognition of electronic data and documents for trade facilitation.

Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report 2015: Supporting Participation in Value Chains, November 2015



This edition of ESCAP's *Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report (APTIR)* highlights the challenges posed by slowing regional trade growth and outlines how changing dynamics in the global economy call for a renewed effort to enhance the prospects of export-led growth, both of merchandise trade and in commercial services. The 2015 report also provides analysis on the spread of Global Value Chains in the Asia-Pacific region and evaluates policies that contribute to developing countries participation in GVCs. The Report is aimed at policymakers as well as practitioners and experts, academia, business, international agencies and non-governmental organizations working or interested in these issues in the Asia-Pacific region.

Available here: <http://www.unescap.org/resources/asia-pacific-trade-and-investment-report-2015-supporting-participation-value-chains>

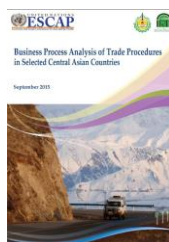
Least Developed Countries and Trade: Challenges of Implementing the Bali Package, November 2015



This monograph explores challenges in implementing the Bali package, by Least Developed countries (LDCs) in the WTO. It provides in-depth analysis of key decisions, identifies opportunities and challenges and, in certain cases, outlines strategies for assessing impacts. The important aspect of this book relates to policy advisory about the preparedness of the LDCs as a group for a successful negotiations at the WTO. At the same time, given the high trade costs facing the LDCs, the study rightly suggests that they must capitalise on the successful implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement

Available here: <http://www.unescap.org/resources/least-developed-countries-and-trade-challenges-implementing-bali-package>

Business Process Analysis of Trade Procedures in Selected Central Asian Countries, September 2015



Moving goods across borders requires meeting a vast number of commercial, transport and regulatory requirements, which typically entail complex procedures and often many documents. Using UNNEXt Business Process Analysis (BPA) of Trade Procedures this report analyses the following trade processes of specific products in Central Asia: a) Imports of processed fruits by Kyrgyzstan from Kazakhstan; b) Exports of cereal products from Kazakhstan to Azerbaijan; and c) Imports of fabric by Kyrgyzstan from China. This report concludes that, in the long term, each of the countries studied needs to be in the driving seat for monitoring trade facilitation performance. As a fundamental step, every country needs to establish a continuous, affordable and sustainable monitoring mechanism. In this regard, the countries may take advantage of the existing work carried out by ESCAP and ADB on a sustainable and integrated approach to monitoring trade facilitation.

Available here: <http://www.unescap.org/resources/business-process-analysis-trade-procedures-selected-central-asian-countries>

RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS

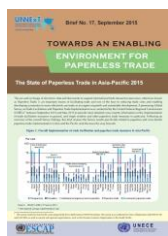
Trade Facilitation Implementation in Asia-Pacific 2015: Moving Towards Paperless Trade (Trade Insights: Issue No. 12), August 2015



This issue of the Trade Insights series provides analysis of the United Nations Regional Commissions (UNRC) Global Trade Facilitation (TF) and Paperless Trade Implementation Survey 2015 for 44 economies and 5 sub-regions across the Asia-Pacific. The survey provides data on the implementation of 38 TF measures, including but not limited to those featured in the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (WTO TFA). The analysis of the implementation data collected reveals that the level of implementation of the ambitious set of TF measures considered in the UNRC Survey reaches almost 50%, indicating that the region has been actively engaged in implementing TF initiatives. However, implementation of TF remains very heterogeneous across the Asia-Pacific region, with Australia, Republic of Korea and Singapore achieve scores in excess of 85%, while other economies barely achieve 15% implementation. Whilst more than half of all 44 Asia-Pacific economies have at least partially implemented 80% of TFA-related measures included in the Survey, there is significant room for progress to further facilitate trade and reduce trade costs.

Available here: <http://www.unescap.org/resources/trade-facilitation-implementation-asia-pacific-2015-moving-towards-paperless-trade-trade>

UNNExT Briefs No. 15-17: Towards an Enabling Environment for Cross-Border Paperless Trade, 2015

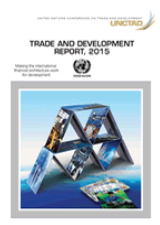


The use and exchange of electronic data and documents to support international trade transaction processes, otherwise known as Paperless Trade, is an important means of facilitating trade and one of the keys to reducing trade costs and enabling developing economies to more effectively use of trade as an engine of growth and sustainable development. UNNExT Brief is a series of briefs covering a range of critical issues to be tackled in the successful development of paperless trade and Single Window initiatives. Also, they showcase best practices in the region and beyond to share experiences and lessons learnt. The latest briefs include: *The State of Paperless Trade in Asia-Pacific 2015*; *Electronic Traceability of Aquaculture Products: the Case of TraceVerified in Viet Nam*; and *Electronic traceability of agricultural products in India: the case of GrapeNet*.

Available here: <http://unnex.unescap.org/pub/brief.asp>

UNCTAD

Trade and Development Report 2015, October 2015



The Trade and Development Report (TDR) 2015: Making the international financial architecture work for development reviews recent trends in the global economy and focuses on ways to reform the international financial architecture. It warns that with a tepid recovery in developed countries and headwinds in many developing and transition economies, the global crisis is not over, and the risk of a prolonged stagnation persists. The main constraint is insufficient global demand, combined with financial fragility and instability, and growing inequality.

Available here: <http://unctad.org/en/pages/PublicationWebflyer.aspx?publicationid=1358>

Review of Maritime Transport, October 2015



UNCTAD's Review of Maritime Transport has since 1968 provided coverage of key developments affecting international seaborne trade, shipping, the world fleet, ports, freight markets, and transport-related regulatory and legal frameworks. The year 2015 is a milestone for sustainable development. The international community has a unique opportunity to strengthen its commitment to sustainable development and consider how best to mainstream sustainability principles across all economic activities and sectors, including maritime transport. In this context, in addition to the review of key economic and legal developments, the present edition of the Review of Maritime Transport highlights some issues that are at the interface of maritime transport and sustainability.

Available here: <http://unctad.org/en/pages/PublicationWebflyer.aspx?publicationid=1374>

RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS

UNECE

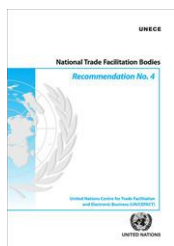
Guide to Drafting a National Trade Facilitation Roadmap, December 2015



This trade facilitation strategy provides the framework for a national trade facilitation reform programme over a period of three to five years. It defines the scope of trade facilitation, as this is a horizontal subject that affects several policies. Thus, it indicates what the trade facilitation reform wants to achieve, what activities will be carried out and by whom, and how the progress of implementation will be measured. The document that describes the national trade facilitation strategy and programme is, hereafter, referred to as the “National Trade Facilitation Roadmap”. This Guide describes the components of a National Trade Facilitation Roadmap and how such a document can be drafted in a country.

Available here: <http://www.unece.org/tradewelcome/outreach-and-support-for-trade-facilitation/guide-to-drafting-a-national-trade-facilitation-roadmap.html>

Recommendation No. 4: National Trade Facilitation Bodies, December 2015, December 2015



This Recommendation, first published in 1974, has been revised in light of the changing context for Trade Facilitation and the adoption of the Trade Facilitation Agreement of the World Trade Organization. The revised Recommendation suggests that governments establish national trade facilitation bodies (NTFB) as an indispensable component of trade policy formation which embraces the views and opinions of all stakeholders in pursuing agreement, cooperation and collaboration. The revised Recommendation No. 4 integrates Guidelines that provide a detailed description of the steps for establishing the NTFB as well as a model terms of reference for an NTFB which countries use or customize based on their national context. It also provides a non-exhaustive list of those

stakeholders that should be represented in an NTFB, including: importers, exporters, freight forwarders, carriers, customs, other government agencies, banks, insurance companies and others.

Available here: <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=41836&L>

Recommendation N°. 40: Consultation Approaches: Best Practices in Trade and Government Consultation on Trade Facilitation Matters, December 2015

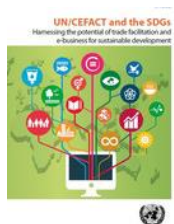


The purpose of Recommendation N°. 40 is to inform government agencies and private sector stakeholders about approaches to effective consultations that will be flexible, transparent, fair, accountable, and participatory. This Recommendation addresses issues such as information sharing, preparations prior to consultations, and measures that aim at building a trust-based dialogue. When available, best practices in the field of consultation are provided. The goal is to present flexible and diverse approaches to consultations and inspire successful solutions. This Recommendation should be seen as a complement to Recommendation No. 4 on "National Trade Facilitation Bodies", as it provides suggested complementary and alternative forms and approaches to consultation and offers a qualitative methodology to improve the very core of the consultative

process.

Available here: <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=41945&L>

UN/CEFACT and the SDGs, November 2015



The activities carried out by UN/CEFACT have very significant effects on the world we live in. They not only have specific impacts related to trade and e-business cutting across a broad range of domains, they also play a significant role in efforts to achieve even the most overarching goals such as poverty eradication and the reduction of inequality within and between countries. Moreover, UN/CEFACT's work also contributes to the achievement of goals related to environmental sustainability. Therefore, it can be expected that UN/CEFACT will be a very important actor in the upcoming implementation of the SDGs.

Available here: <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=41546&L>

RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS

WCO SAFE Package



Key improvements to the SAFE Framework of Standards 2015 encompass a new version of the SAFE Framework that includes a new Pillar 3 on Cooperation between Customs and other Government and Inter-Government agencies. In order to bring together important material in one convenient place, the WCO compiled a SAFE Package which incorporates relevant instruments and guidelines. As the SAFE Framework continues to be more fully implemented by WCO Members it is clear that a substantial amount of additional support material will be developed in the future and it is envisaged that the SAFE Package will be able to be readily updated and expanded. In 2015, in addition to the presentation of instruments and tools by pillar, the updated SAFE Package comprises the introduction of a new toolkit for Pillar 1, an update of the AEO Compendium, and an update of the Guidelines for the Procurement and Deployment of Scanning/NII Equipment.

Available here: http://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/facilitation/instrument-and-tools/tools/safe_package.aspx

World Bank

World Development Report 2016: Digital Dividends, January 2016



Digital technologies have spread rapidly in much of the world. Digital dividends—that is, the broader development benefits from using these technologies—have lagged behind. In many instances, digital technologies have boosted growth, expanded opportunities, and improved service delivery. Yet their aggregate impact has fallen short and is unevenly distributed. For digital technologies to benefit everyone everywhere requires closing the remaining digital divide, especially in internet access. But greater digital adoption will not be enough. To get the most out of the digital revolution, countries also need to work on the “analog complements”—by strengthening regulations that ensure competition among businesses, by adapting workers’ skills to the demands of the new economy, and by ensuring that institutions are accountable.

Available here: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/wdr2016>

Doing Business 2016: Measuring Regulatory Quality and Efficiency, October 2015



Doing Business 2016: Measuring Regulatory Quality and Efficiency, a World Bank Group flagship publication, is the 13th 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 189 economies 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.

Available here: <http://www.doingbusiness.org/reports/global-reports/doing-business-2016>

WTO

World Trade Report 2015 - Speeding up trade: benefits and challenges of implementing the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, October 2015



The 2015 World Trade Report is the first detailed study of the potential impacts of the WTO TFA based on a full analysis of the final agreement text. The Report’s findings are consistent with existing studies on the scale of potential benefits from trade facilitation, but it goes further by identifying and examining in detail a range of other benefits from the TFA. These include diversification of exports from developing countries and least-developed countries to include new products and partners, increased involvement of these countries in global value chains, expanded participation of small and medium-sized enterprises in international trade, increased foreign direct investment, greater revenue collection and reduced incidence of corruption.

Available here: https://www.wto.org/english/res_e/publications_e/wtr15_e.htm

UPCOMING EVENTS

REGIONAL EVENTS			
Event	Date	Venue	Organizer
Workshop for the Implementation of TTFMM baseline studies in Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal	13-15 January	Bangkok, Thailand	ESCAP & ADB
Meeting of Legal Working Group of the Interim Intergovernmental Steering Group on Cross-border Paperless Trade Facilitation	19-21 January	Bangkok, Thailand	ESCAP
SAARC-ADB Second Special Meeting on REI Study	27-28 January	Male, Maldives	ADB
Regional Transit Consultation Meeting on Single Guarantee Mechanism	January (TBC)	TBC	ADB
Working Group on Information Sharing	24 - 26 February	Guam	OCO
ARTNeT Seminar: Assessment of the WTO Nairobi Outcome and the Implications for Asia and the Pacific	4 February	Bangkok, Thailand	ESCAP
SASEC 2025 Finalization Workshop	February (TBC)	Sri Lanka	ADB
Third Meeting of Legal and Technical Working Groups of the Interim Intergovernmental Steering Group on Cross-Border Paperless Trade Facilitation	21-23 March	Bangkok, Thailand	ESCAP
Second Meeting of the Interim Intergovernmental Steering Group on Cross-Border Paperless Trade Facilitation	23-25 March	Bangkok, Thailand	ESCAP
Capacity Building Workshop on Cross-border Paperless Trade	25 March	Bangkok, Thailand	ESCAP
Inception Meeting of SASEC SPS/ TBT Subgroup	March (TBC)	Bangkok, Thailand	ADB
Signing of India-Myanmar-Thailand (IMT) Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA)	March (TBC)	Myanmar (TBC)	ADB
Multi-country conference on Time Release Study (TRS)/Corridor Performance Measurement and Monitoring	March (TBC)	TBC	ADB
Consultation on Legal and Regulatory Framework for Regional Customs Transit	March (TBC)	TBC	ADB
Meeting to Finalize the IMT MVA Protocol	March (TBC)	India	ADB
Regional Workshop to Support Development of Customs Data and Trade Statistics	18 - 29 April	Suva, Fiji	OCO
UN/CEFACT Plenary	21-22 April	Geneva, Switzerland	UNECE
27th UN/CEFACT Forum	25-29 April	Geneva, Switzerland	UNECE
5 th SASEC Customs Subgroup Meeting	April (TBC)	Maldives	ADB
Transport Sector Coordinating Committee (TSCC) Meeting	April (TBC)	TBC	ADB
Coordinated Border Management Training for Mongolia	April (TBC)	TBC	ADB
SAARC Finance Ministers' Meeting	3 May	Frankfurt, Germany	ADB
SASEC Nodal Officials' Meeting	4 May	Frankfurt, Germany	ADB
Regional Workshop to Advance Implementation of Customs Single Window Systems	9 - 13 May 2016	TBC	OCO
ICT Solutions for Regional Customs Transit	May (TBC)	TBC	ADB
Working Group on Information Sharing	May (TBC)	Auckland, New Zealand	OCO
OCO Annual Conference	1 - 3 June	Funafuti, Tuvalu	OCO

UPCOMING EVENTS

Midyear CAREC Senior Officials Meeting (SOM)	June (TBC)	TBC	ADB
Trade Policy Coordinating Committee (TPCC) Meeting	June (TBC)	TBC	ADB
Presentation of Joint Custom Control Case Study MON-People's Republic of China	June (TBC)	TBC	ADB
Regional Meeting on Capacity Building	11 - 15 July	Suva, Fiji	OCO
15th Customs Cooperation Committee (CCC) Meeting	August (TBC)	TBC	ADB
28 th UN/CEFACT Forum	26-30 September	Bangkok, Thailand	UNECE
5th International Capacity Building Program on Trade Facilitation	September (TBC)	Cheonan ROK	GTI
SASEC Trade and Transport Facilitation Working Group Meeting	September (TBC)	Sri Lanka	ADB
Consultation Meeting with CAREC National Focal Points	September (TBC)	TBC	ADB
7th CAREC Federation of Carriers and Forwarders Association (CFCFA) Annual Meeting	September (TBC)	TBC	ADB
CAREC Senior Officials Meeting	October (TBC)	TBC	ADB
15th CAREC Ministerial Conference	October (TBC)	TBC	ADB
Regional Seminar on GTI Cross-Border Trade Facilitation and Single Window Implementation	November (TBC)	Vladivostok, Russia	GTI
6 th SASEC Customs Subgroup Meeting	November (TBC)	TBC	ADB
6th GTI International Seminar on Trade Facilitation in Northeast Asia	November (TBC)	Incheon, ROK	GTI
4th GTI 2016 Trade & Investment EXPO	November (TBC)	Sokcho, ROK	GTI
Inaugural Meeting of Trade and Investment Committee & Customs Sub-Committee	November (TBC)	Incheon, ROK	GTI
Final Consultation Regional Transit Study	December (TBC)	TBC	ADB

NATIONAL EVENTS

The Maldives: Second National Workshop on Customs Valuation	24-28 January	Male, Maldives	ADB
Customs Trade Facilitation Stakeholders Consultation and a Seminar on the draft legal amendments to align with the RKC provisions	25 January	Nepal	ADB
World Customs Day (Launch of the ASYCUDA World)	26 January	Nepal	ADB
Stakeholder consultation on Customs initiatives in the Relief Consignment clearance.	27 January	Nepal	ADB
Seminar on the Mid-term Review of the Customs Reform and Modernization Strategies and Action Plan, 2013-2017.	28 January	Nepal	ADB
Sri Lanka: Second National Workshop on Customs Valuation	15-19 February	Colombo, Sri Lanka	ADB
BBIN MVA Negotiation Meeting on Protocols	17-18 February	Dhaka, Bangladesh	ADB
Nepal: Second National Workshop on Customs Valuation	7-11 March	Kathmandu, Nepal	ADB
Mission to Nauru to support implementation of HS Classification System	8 - 18 March	Nauru	OCO
Mission to support Modernisation of Tonga Customs Legislation	8 - 26 March	Nukualofa, Tonga	OCO
Bangladesh: Second National Workshop on Customs Valuation	21-25 March	Dhaka, Bangladesh	ADB
Papua New Guinea Short Term Attachment Program	March (TBC)	Australia	OCO
Samoa Short Term Attachment Program	March (TBC)	New Zealand	OCO
Mission to Support Modernisation of Niue Customs Legislation,	7 - 18 April	Alofi, Niue	OCO
Mission to Support Introduction of HS in Republic of Marshall	11 - 22 April	Marshall	OCO

UPCOMING EVENTS

Islands		Islands	
Coordinated Border Management Training for Mongolia	April (TBC)	Mongolia,	ADB
TRS Workshop for Tajikistan	May (TBC)	Tajikistan	ADB
Bhutan: Second National Workshop on Customs Valuation	9-13 May	Gelephu, Bhutan	ADB
India: Second National Workshop on Customs Valuation	6-10 June	New Delhi, India	ADB
Mission to Support Modernisation of Kiribati Customs Legislation	June (TBC)	Kiribati	OCO

GLOBAL

WTO members secure “historic” Nairobi Package

WTO members concluded their Tenth Ministerial Conference in Nairobi on 19 December by securing an historic agreement on a series of trade initiatives. The “Nairobi Package” pays fitting tribute to the Conference host, Kenya, by delivering commitments that will benefit in particular the organization’s poorest members. The Nairobi Package contains a series of six Ministerial Decisions on agriculture, cotton and issues related to least-developed countries. These include a commitment to abolish export subsidies for farm exports, which Director-General Roberto Azevêdo hailed as the “most significant outcome on agriculture” in the organization’s 20-year history. The other agricultural decisions cover public stockholding for food security purposes, a special safeguard mechanism for developing countries, and measures related to cotton. Decisions were also made regarding preferential treatment for least developed countries (LDCs) in the area of services and the criteria for determining whether exports from LDCs may benefit from trade preferences.

https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news15_e/mc10_1_9dec15_e.htm

REGIONAL

AFGHANISTAN

Ministers approve Afghanistan’s WTO membership at MC10, 17 December 2015

Ministers formally approved Afghanistan’s WTO membership terms at a special ceremony held at the WTO’s Tenth Ministerial Conference (MC10) in Nairobi on 17 December 2015. Afghanistan’s First Deputy Chief Executive Mohammad Khan Rahmani said the ceremony marks a historic day for Afghanistan and a significant step in the country’s journey of economic and political reforms. Trade ministers unanimously welcomed Afghanistan’s WTO membership deal, which was approved at a ceremony attended by Mr Mohammad Khan Rahmani of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and Director-General Roberto Azevêdo. The Protocol of Accession was officially signed by DG Azevêdo and Mr Mohammad Khan Rahmani at the end of the ceremony. Afghanistan will have until 30 June 2016 to ratify the deal and would become a full-fledged WTO member 30 days after it notifies the acceptance of its Protocol of Accession to the WTO Director-General. Afghanistan would become the ninth least-developed country to become a WTO member since the organization was established in 1995.

https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news15_e/acc_afg_17dec15_e.htm

AZERBAIJAN

Customs Committee introduces discounts for entrepreneurs, *Azernews*, 28 January 2016

The Azerbaijani State Customs Committee has introduced a 70 percent-discount on formalizing customs declarations for customs clearance of goods and vehicles, the committee reported. This discount decreased the cost of the customs declaration formalization service up to 50 manats (\$30) without VAT, starting from January 27. The decision was made given the president’s instructions to create favorable conditions for entrepreneurs, and to support and improve the quality of services provided to them. The Committee has recently introduced another service to facilitate the custom procedures – e-service primary declaration-- that allows entrepreneurs importing goods into Azerbaijan to submit a brief declaration on imported goods and vehicles. This option opens opportunity to speed up the registration process, eliminate various bureaucratic obstacles, as well as save time.

<http://www.azernews.az/business/92203.html>

Non-intrusive customs controls to be introduced at Azerbaijani-Russian border since February, *abc news*, 1 February 2016

The State Customs Committee (SCC) of Azerbaijan continues taking steps aimed at improving customs procedures. SCC chair Aydin Aliyev has stated that non-intrusive customs controls will be applied on the railway border of Azerbaijan with the Russian Federation since 1 February. Germany-made equipment was bought for this goal. “11 sets of similar equipment have been already installed, and they will enable to fasten the process of border crossing for freight train transport without unloading,” Aliyev said. He points out that such a system has been installed by Russia as well, and thanks to that non-intrusive control will be applied starting from February.

http://abc.az/eng/news_29_01_2016_93800.html

CAMBODIA

Fishery manual to aid export potential, *phnompenhpost*, 21 January 2016

A trade facilitation manual aimed at increasing the size of Cambodia’s seafood products export will be ready by April and looks to help producers and exporters improve their export readiness and take advantage of ASEAN integration. At a workshop held yesterday in the capital, stakeholders discussed the progress of the UNIDO-led project, with the draft manual expected to outline export procedures, customs formalities and the requirements of importing countries, according to Ing Try, deputy director-general of the Fisheries Administration. “The manual will play an important role and it will facilitate investors who plan to invest in the fisheries sector with information to certify their products, food standards and the protection of the environment and natural resources,” Try said. The project, which

was started in 2014 with assistance from the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, has a \$1.3 million budget and is working with small and medium processors and exporters in the Kingdom's four coastal provinces. Shetty Seetharama Thombathu, the chief technical adviser for the project, said currently most exports were processed by small- to medium-sized businesses who have limited knowledge of export procedures and requirements.

<http://www.phnompenhpost.com/business/fishery-manual-aid-export-potential>

INDIA

India scores above the global average in trade facilitation, Business Today, 29 January 2016

India has registered an above-average performance in terms of trade facilitation in 2015, according to the analysis on value-added trade and global value chains by the World Trade Organisation (WTO). The WTO data indicates that the cost of exporting one container from an Indian port in 2015 was \$ 1,332, as compared to the world average of \$ 1841 per container. The cost to import to India was even cheaper, at \$ 1462 per container, compared to the global average of \$ 2084 per container. The average time taken to export a consignment from India was 17 days, against the global average of 22 in 2015. It took 21 days to import, on an average, as against 25, the global average. The only area where India lagged behind the global average was in terms of the number of documents required for carrying out international trade. While an Indian exporter needs to clear seven documents as against the global average of six, an importer has to furnish 10 documents as against the global average of eight.

<http://www.businesstoday.in/current/world/india-scores-above-the-global-average-in-trade-facilitation/story/228670.html>

NEPAL – U.S. A

Garment entrepreneurs fail to tap other markets, The Himalayan Times, 27 December 2015

The US Senate recently endorsed the 'Trade Facilitation and Trade Enforcement Bill', which particularly deals with extending zero-tariff access to Nepali readymade garments into the US market. Along with this move, Nepali entrepreneurs believe that the garment industry in the country will revive once again. The country's garment sector was on the verge of collapse after the expiry of the Multi Fibre Agreement (MFA) on January 1, 2005. The US had until now extended such duty-free facility only to African countries since 2000 through the African Growth Opportunity Act to support economic growth of African countries. Along with the endorsement of the Bill, the US senate has authorised the US government to extend duty-free facility for Nepali apparels too.

<http://thehimalayantimes.com/business/garment-entrepreneurs-fail-to-tap-other-markets/>

PAKISTAN

Pakistan to negotiate FTA with Iran, the Nations, 20 January 2016

Pakistan on Tuesday showed interest to negotiate a free trade agreement (FTA) with Iran after United States and European Union lifted sanctions on Tehran. "Lifting sanctions from Iran has provided Pakistan with a historic opportunity to raise mutual trade and investment to new heights as the leaders of the two nations envisioned in their meeting in 2014," said Federal Minister for Commerce, Khurram Dastgir Khan. Pakistan is interested to negotiate a FTA with Iran and draft of the agreement template can be forwarded to the authorities concerned in Iran as soon as they express their willingness, he added. Bilateral trade that was nearing \$1 billion reduced drastically as a result of sanctions and the unwillingness of banks to finance trade. Pakistan and Iran had agreed in 2014 on a five-year trade facilitation plan to enhance bilateral trade to \$5 billion following the removal of sanctions imposed on Iran on ground of its peaceful nuclear programme. However, the volume of bilateral trade could start increasing after sanctions are lifted on Tehran.

<http://nation.com.pk/business/20-Jan-2016/pakistan-to-negotiate-fta-with-iran>

PHILIPPINES

Trade facilitation pact seen to benefit agri sector, Business Inquirer, 16 January 2016

The Philippine agriculture sector stands to significantly benefit from the country's ratification of the World Trade Organization's (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), which is expected to substantially reduce the cost of trading globally. Once the TFA has been ratified by all WTO members, local products, particularly agricultural goods, are expected to have better chances of competing in the global arena as the agreement calls for the removal of subsidies that often give some countries an unfair competitive advantage. The Philippines, however, has yet to ratify the TFA as it was still being reviewed by at least two more agencies, Trade Secretary Adrian S. Cristobal Jr. said. <http://business.inquirer.net/205649/trade-facilitation-pact-seen-to-benefit-agri-sector>

SRI LANKA

Private sector importers and exporters to have access to single-location document submission system, News First, 13 January 2016

Sri Lanka Customs has announced that importers and exporters of the private sector will be able to use the single-window system model beginning next week. Sri Lanka Customs uses a web based software named "ASYCUDA" in the single-window system model, which was launched earlier this month and is recommended by the UN Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business. The single-window system is a trade facilitation idea. Therefore, the implementation of a single-window system enables international

(cross-border) traders to submit regulatory documents at a single location or single entity. Such documents are typically customs declarations, applications for import and export permits, and other supporting documents such as certificates of origin and trading invoices. Director General of Customs, Chulananda Perera, stated that traders will benefit from cutting down on unnecessary delays and cumbersome procedures. He added that there will be faster clearance and predictable rules in expedition and applications. He went on to note that the internal processes would be updated and customs officers would undergo training.

<http://newsfirst.lk/english/2016/01/private-sector-importers-and-exporters-to-have-access-to-single-location-document-submission-system/124778>

TURKEY

Georgia and Turkey to simplify customs procedures for international services, Vestnikkavkaza, 28 January 2016

Georgia and Turkey are preparing to launch a pilot project for electronic exchange of TIR-related information (TransPorts International Routers) between the customs administrations of the two countries in March. The intergovernmental agreement was signed in Ankara between the Georgian Minister of Finance, Nodar Khaduri, and the Turkish Minister of Customs and Trade, Bulent Tufenkci. The pilot project is intended to simplify customs procedures in three years, Trend reports.

<http://vestnikkavkaza.net/news/Georgia-and-Turkey-to-simplify-customs-procedures-for-international-services.html>

VIETNAM

World Bank, Viet Nam to create trade information website, Vietnam News, 13 January 2016

The World Bank will help the General Department of Customs develop the Viet Nam Trade Information Portal under a programme to support Viet Nam in implementing the World Trade Organisation's Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA). A declaration to this effect was signed between the WB and the General Department of Customs yesterday, under which the WB will also help establish a National Committee on Trade Facilitation, making it easier for Viet Nam to fulfill TFA's terms based on the assessment of ministries and agencies' readiness for complying with commitments. The objective of the portal, which is due to be launched in the next eight months, is to make all regulatory trade-related information useful to Vietnamese exporters and importers easily and readily available in a single integrated website, provide transparency and consistency of trade procedures, and in doing so, increase the compliance level and reduce the cost of doing business at border crossings.

<http://vietnamnews.vn/economy/281101/world-bank-vn-to-create-trade-information-website.html>

Ministry will clarify procedures this year, Vietnam News, 28 January 2016

The Ministry of Industry and Trade reviewed and abolished 30 administrative procedures and simplified 54 others in 2015 to allow businesses and citizens to carry out administrative procedures quickly and efficiently. This was part of the ministry's administrative reform efforts in 2015 were discussed at a meeting yesterday to review administrative reform in 2015 and discuss tasks for 2016. The ministry upgraded a total of 21 public services to level 3 or 4 last year, which means all applications relating to these public services will be implemented online to save time and costs. Deputy Director of the Department of Export and Import Phan Thi Dieu Ha said the ministry carried out many administrative reform activities, particularly in exports and imports. For example, the ministry has joined the national and ASEAN one-door mechanism which was designed to implement paperless trade and e-administrative procedures, helping to facilitate investment activities, she said.

<http://vietnamnews.vn/society/281787/ministry-will-clarify-procedures-this-year.html>

OTHER REGIONS

NORTH AMERICA

Single Window for Trade Data Envisioned for North America

A working group recently formed within U.S. Customs and Border Protection's Advisory Committee on Commercial Operations has begun work on the concept of a single window for the submission of trade data to the U.S., Canada and Mexico. A vision statement finalized by the group, which consists of importers, filers, software vendors, Canadian and Mexican trade partners, and CBP representatives, describes a North American Single Window through which importers, exporters and relevant supply chain parties would be able to provide all import and export information required by the Canadian, Mexican and U.S. customs services and associated departments or government agencies responsible for establishing border-related decisions and regulating goods crossing the borders. Simplified data sets, timely information assessment and streamlined processing would be enabled through compatible regulatory requirements, government-to-industry partnership program requirements (through mutual recognition arrangements) and data definitions, thereby advancing an account-based whole-of-government and whole-of-region approach that meets shared responsibilities for risk-based trade facilitation and enforcement.

<http://www.strtrade.com/news-publications-single-window-trade-data-North-America-012516.html>