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

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.

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

Email: roc-tf@un.org

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

IN FOCUS

United Nations Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2019

Introduction to the UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2019

The United Nations Regional Commissions, including ECA, ECE, ECLAC, ESCAP and ESCWA, are conducting the third Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation (formerly the Global Survey on Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade Implementation) to collect relevant data and information from their respective Member States. The initiative will support the implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, as well as emerging regional and global initiatives on paperless trade or e-trade, such as the recent Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-Border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific. Previous reports are available at untfsurvey.org.

The Survey will lead to the production of a Global Report and five Regional Reports, as well as new data entry for the Interactive Database of Global Survey, which aim at providing insightful information for policy makers to harness trade as a key means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It is envisaged that, whenever possible, the Reports will be presented at key events of international deliberation and policymaking, including the Global Aid for Trade Review, the Global Forum on Inclusive Trade for LDCs, etc.

ESCAP, ECE and other United Nations Regional Commissions initiated data collection for the **3rd Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation** in January 2019. The Global Survey aims to provide a forward looking picture of trade facilitation implementation, including core WTO TFA measures but also paperless trade measures and measures to facilitate trade of SMEs, agricultural products and engagement of women in trade facilitation. It also serves as a capacity-building and awareness-raising tool for government officials and policy-makers. Interested experts, organizations, industry associations, academia, research institutes and other stakeholders, are very welcome to participate and/or join the initiative.
More information is available here.

UPCOMING

The **6th Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Week** will be held at ESCAP in Bangkok from 11-15 March. Drawing on the presence of senior policymakers, and representatives from UNCTAD, ITC, ISO, the Week features many engaging events. In particular, it includes a **Forum on Trade Digitalization for Sustainable Regional Integration** during which current progress and lessons learnt from regional and global initiatives on electronic exchange of trade-related data and documents will be discussed, along with the way forward for them to contribute to sustainable regional integration.
More information is available here.

The **Fifth Meeting of the Interim Intergovernmental Steering Group on Cross-Border Paperless Trade Facilitation** will also take place during the Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Week from 12-13 March 2019 in Bangkok, Thailand. Following the adoption of the UN treaty text of the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-Border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific in 2016, the steering group now focuses on preparation of an implementation roadmap of the agreement and related supporting documents.
More information is available here.

PUBLICATIONS & RESOURCES

WTO published **Can Blockchain Revolutionize International Trade?**, which explores the question of whether Blockchain may revolutionize international trade. The publication analyses the relevance of this technology to international trade and then discusses the potential of Blockchain for reducing trade costs and enhancing supply chain transparency, as well as the opportunities it provides for small-scale producers and companies.
For more information on publications see page 17.

NEWS

Neither China nor the United States can win a bilateral trade war. If trade war escalates and lasts, 9 million people could be put out of work in the Asia-Pacific region, and the world stands to lose USD 400 billion in GDP; however, regional integration and trade facilitation could offset some negative impacts, according to the Asia-Pacific Trade Investment Report 2018.
For more trade facilitation news see page 22.

PROJECT/ACTIVITY UPDATE
Selected project/activity updates from ROC-TF organizations on Trade Facilitation [Since July 2018]

JOINT ACTIVITIES and PARTNERSHIPS

ESCAP/ARTNeT and ITD

ESCAP/ARTNeT and Thailand International Institute for Trade and Development (ITD) Regional Workshop on Trade Facilitation for Sustainable Development, 7-10 August 2018, Bangkok, Thailand

ESCAP/ARTNeT and ITD held a Workshop on Trade Facilation for Sustainable Development for 4 days in August 2018. The main goal of the workshop was to build the capacity of government officials on implementing trade facilitation and paperless trade initiative, and to inform them on approaches and methods to improve effectiveness of their work. The workshop presented an update on the state of implementation of key trade facilitation and paperless trade measures in the region. Many key measures and instruments on trade facilitation were introduced, including the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) and the new Framework Agreement on the Facilitation of Cross-Border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific. On practical implementation, participants also learned how to conduct a Business Process Analysis (BPA) project.

More information is available at: https://www.unescap.org/events/escap-artnetitd-regional-workshop-trade-facilitation-sustainable-development

ADB and ESCAP

ADB-ESCAP Workshop on Promoting E-commerce in Asia and the Pacific: a Holistic Approach, 27-28 August 2018, Bangkok, Thailand

ADB and ESCAP support various activities and initiatives to promote e-commerce in Asia and the Pacific, and jointly held the Workship on Promoting E-commerce in Asia and the Pacific in August 2018. This workshop aimed at identifying programmatic approaches for promoting e-commerce and cross-border e-commerce in the participating countries. The participants were informed about global trends and issues in key development opportunities through interactive discussions. In addition, ADB staff directly related to ADB's operations in trade facilitation and finance sector participated and discussed the potential opportunities for ADB to support developing countries in enhancing e-commerce and cross-border ecommerce, particularly through a comprehensive and programmatic approach.

More information is available at: https://www.unescap.org/events/adb-escap-workshop-promoting-e-commerce-asia-and-pacific-holistic-approach

ADB, CAREC, WTO, WCO, ESCAP, UNCTAD and ITC

Inter-subregional Knowledge Sharing Forum on Enhanced Implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, 30-31 October 2018, Bangkok, Thailand

Representatives from across the Asia and Pacific region shared experience and knowledge on the implementation of the TFA at the national and regional levels. 120 senior-level participants from customs administrations, ministries of commerce and trade, and private sector organizations attended the 2-day forum. The forum showcased success stories and country experience in implementing selected TFA provisions. It provided new approaches to overcoming implementation challenges for the TFA, and expanded inter-subregional networks of customs administrations, government agencies, and private sector entities.

More information is available at: https://www.carecprogram.org/?event=adb-wto-tfa-forum-oct-2018

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

APEC and OCO

OCO attended the APEC Sub-Committee on Customs Procedures (SCCP), 10-12 August 2018, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea

The APEC SCCP meeting was held on 10-12 August in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea (PNG). The OCO was granted three-year guest status in the SCCP in July 2018. The meeting was opened by the Chief Commissioner for PNG Customs Service, Mr. Ray Paul OBE and chaired by Mr. James Kombuk Bire, Commissioner for Trade and Corporate Services of PNG Customs Service. The OCO was represented by the Chairman, Mr. Jose Mafnas, Director of Customs of Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands and the Trade & Revenue Adviser. The OCO made presentations on "Trade Facilitation in the Oceania Region" and "Narrowing the Development Gaps in the OCO Region".
More information is available at: https://www.apec.org/Groups/Committee-on-Trade-and-Investment/Sub-Committee-on-Customs-Procedures

ECE and ESCAP

Twelfth meeting of the Thematic Working Group on Trade - Achieving Trade Facilitation and Sustainable Development in Central Asia, 19 September 2018, Almaty, Kazakhstan

UNECE and UNESCAP co-organized the twelfth meeting of the Working Group on Trade of SPECA, on 19 September 2018, back-to-back with the 2018 SPECA Economic Forum and session of the SPECA Governing Council, took place on 20-21 September 2018. The Working Group supported the implementation of the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 in Central Asia, in the area of sustainable trade, notably SDGs 17.10 and SDG 17.11. The meeting focused on four deliverables of the SPECA Working Group on Trade: 1) SPECA regional strategy for trade facilitation; 2) regional cooperation for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals related to trade; 3) the link between water management, trade and environment in the SPECA region; and 4) non-tariff measures in trade in the SPECA region. The event reviewed national and regional plans and strategies of the SPECA countries for sustainable trade development and facilitation, aiming to strengthen cooperation among trade diplomats of the SPECA countries.
More information is available at: https://www.unece.org/index.php?id=49596

ECE and ITC

Traceability of Sustainable Value Chains

ITC and ECE with its Centre for Trade Facilitation and e-Business (UN/CEFACT), have launched a project for enhancing transparency and traceability of sustainable value chains in the garment and footwear sector, from raw material production to retail. The project aims at setting up a multi-stakeholder platform, and developing policy recommendations, traceability standards and its implementation guidelines for sustainable textile and leather value chains. It builds on their vast experience and expertise in supporting policies, regulations, standards and tools, which guide value chains towards more responsible production and consumption patterns, in line with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 12 of the UN Agenda 2030. The project will be implemented over the period 2018 to 2021.
More information is available at: http://www.unece.org/tradewelcome/outreach-and-support-for-trade-facilitation/traceability-for-sustainable-value-chains-textile-and-leather-sector.html

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

OCO and Melanesian Spearhead Group

OCO secretariat signs MOU with MSG Sectreriat, 13 November 2018, Suva, Fiji

The Oceania Customs Organisation (OCO) Secretariat and the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat have signed a MOU to work together in sharing information and technical expertise on areas of mutual interest; trade facilitation, revenue mobilization and border security.

The partnership is expected to eliminate duplication of services to be delivered to mutual members and maximize efficiency.

The strengthening of cooperation to implement trade faciitation enables to help to drive regional integration. Moreover, this new partnership is expected to promote South-South cooperation between member states of both organisations enabling the exchange of idea, experiences and best practices to strengthen customs reforms and modernization in the Pacific.

More information is available at: https://www.ocosec.org/oco-secretariat-signs-mou-with-msg-secretariat/

WCO and ESCAP

4th WCO-ESCAP UNNExT Masterclass: License, Permits, Certificates and Other regulatory requirements (e-LPCO) in a Single Window Environment, 5-14 November 2018, Cheon-an, Republic of Korea

The UNNExT Masterclass is an intensive two-week capacity building programme on trade facilitation and Single Window. The 4th Masterclass focused on facilitation of processes on license, permits, certificates and other regulatory restrictions (e-LPCO) in a Single Window environment to realize digital Customs and paperless trade environment.The Masterclass supported implementation of the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific. By combining lectures with group discussions, hands-on use of paperless trade applications and field studies, the training maximized learning and interactions among course participants. The training was delivered by experts and practitioners who have extensive experience in the area of trade facilitation and paperless trade. Upon successful completion of the course, UNNExT certificates was issued to participants.

More information is available at: https://www.unescap.org/events/4th-unnext-masterclass

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

ORGANIZATION's UPDATES

ADB/CAREC

Ninth CAREC Federation of Carrier and Forwarder Associations Annual Meeting, 4 Sep 2018, Ashgabat, Turkmenistan

The objective of the meeting was to deliberate on the operations and initiatives of CAREC Federation of Carrier and Forwarders Associations (CFCFA). During the meeting, members of the Customs Cooperation Committee (CCC) and CFCFA discussed CFCFA operations and initiatives, expansion of membership to enterpise members, development and pilot of transit corridors routes, contribution to CAREC Corridors Performance Measurement and Monitoring, and skill enhancement by partnering with technical and vocational institutions. Elected new board members. New board members were elected to continue the efforts and initiatives of the federation.
More information is available at: https://www.carecprogram.org/?event=joint-ccc-cfcfa-meeting-sep-2018

17th CAREC Customs Cooperation Committee (CCC) Meeting, 5 Sep 2018, Ashgabat, Turkmenistan

The meeting focused on discussion about outcomes of the Inaugural Meeting of the Regional Trade Group (RTG) and review CCC priority areas and terms of reference. At the end of the meeting, participants agreed to amend the CCC priority areas in recognition of global trends and developments and evolving role of customs and authorities and agreed to update its TOR. Through the 2-day meeting, agreements reached to amend CCC priority and TOR.
More information is available at : https://www.carecprogram.org/?event=customs-cooperation-committee-meeting-sep-2018

Fourth Joint Meeting of the CAREC Customs Cooperation Committee and CAREC, 6 Sep 2018, Ashgabat, Turkmenistan

The Joint dialogue went on between members of CAREC's Customs Cooperation Committee and the Federation of Carriers and Forwarder Associations. At the meeting, members updated the meeting on the progress of the organization's programs and activities, and potential role in the implementation of the CAREC Integrated Trade Agenda (CITA) 2030 and Rolling Strategic Action Plan (RSAP) 2018-2020. The meeting discussed cross-cutting issues including (i) utility of corridor performance measurement and monitoring (CPMM) results as tool for improving border management, (ii) development of CFCFA standards to benefit both customs and freight forwarders, and (iii) strengthened customs to business dialogue mechanisms.
More information is available at: https://www.carecprogram.org/?event=joint-ccc-cfcfa-meeting-sep-2018

WTO TFA: Implementation Roadmap Worskhop for CAREC Countries, 29 October 2018, Bangkok, Thailand

The workshop served as a platform for developing implementation roadmaps toward full compliance of CAREC countries with their Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) commitments. CAREC countries shared ongoing activities designed to achieve TFA compliance, and identified priority areas where challenges are encountered and technical assistance is required. CAREC countries developed and shared preliminary strategic implementation roadmaps using an integrated national and regional approach, and reflecting short- and long-term plans to comply with the TFA provisions. This event was in preparation for the WTO TFA event on 30-31 October 2018.
More information is available here: https://www.carecprogram.org/?event=workshop-wto-roadmap-oct-2018

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

17th Ministerial Conference on CAREC, 15 November 2018, Ashgabat, Turkmenistan

Finance ministers and senior government officials from 11 CAREC Program member countries gathered for the 17th Ministerial Conference on CAREC. This year's ministerial conference focused on expanding regional trade and promoting economic diversification. CAREC ministers unanimously endorsed the CAREC Integrated Trade Agenda (CITA) 2030 and its Rolling Strategic Action Plan (RSAP) 2018–2030. CAREC ministers commended the progress made in advancing the five operational clusters of the CAREC 2030 strategy: (i) economic and financial stability; (ii) trade, tourism, and economic corridors; (iii) infrastructure and connectivity; (iv) agriculture and water; and (v) human development.

More information is available here: https://www.carecprogram.org/?event=carec-ministerial-conference-nov-2018

Workshop on SME Trade Finance in the CAREC Region, 3-4 December 2018, Xiamen, People's Republic of China

The objective of the workshop was to promote small- and medium-sized enterprise trade finance through cross-country learning. Through the 2-day workshop, participants had opportunity to exchange views on the current state of SME trade finance in Central Asia, including issues related to business environment for SMEs and innovation. The workshop discussed the role of commercial banks in providing trade finance to SMEs, existing and potential deployment of trade financing resources such as trade finance program, supply chain finance, and establishment of trade credit agency; as well as success stories of past SME finance projects in the CAREC region.

More information is available here: https://www.carecprogram.org/?event=workshop-sme-trade-finance-dec-2018

ASEAN

Workshop on AEO programme, 24-28 September 2018, Bangkok, Thailand

ASEAN Regional Integration Support from the EU (ARISE) Plus organised a week-long workshop for ASEAN customs officers on the implementation of Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) programmes in Bangkok from 24-28 September. The workshop was held with support from the Thai Customs Department, the government of Malaysia as the Country Coordinator of the Strategic Plan of Customs Development 7 on AEO Programme and the ASEAN Secretariat. The workshop aimed to build the capacity of ASEAN customs officials to implement AEO programmes, and to support the development of Mutual Recognition Arrangements of AEO programmes between ASEAN Member States. Successful AEO programmes have been developed in Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam, and representatives of these countries participated in the workshop and shared the steps they took to implement their AEO programmes in their respective countries.

More information is available here: https://asean.org/asean-customs-officers-join-workshop-aeo-programme/

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

Workshop on Implementing the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, 24-29 September 2018, Singapore

The United States and Singapore jointly hosted a workshop for Southeast Asian customs and trade officials on "Implementing the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA)" from September 24-29, 2018. Trainers from the United States Trade Representative (USTR), Customs and Border Protection, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and Department of State Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs worked with 26 participants from from eight Southeast Asian countries – Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam on transparency and fairness issues under the TFA. Private sector participants from DHL, FedEx, UPS, Intel, the U.S.-ASEAN Business Council, and other industry associations joined the training to discuss implementation challenges and opportunities.
More information is available here: https://sg.usembassy.gov/u-s-and-singapore-host-asean-trade-facilitation-workshop/

APEC

APEC FSCF Workshop on Trade Facilitation through the Recognition of Food Safety Systems Equivalence, 21-22 June 2018, Lima, Peru

The APEC FSCF (Food Safety Cooperation Forum) Workshop on Trade Facilitation through the Recognition of Food Safety Systems Equivalence, proposed by Peru and co-sponsored by Australia, Chile, New Zealand, Philippines and Thailand, was held in Lima, Peru. The Workshop sought to generate an exchange of views, increase knowledge and discuss two approaches of the determination of food equivalence in the APEC region: a) measure-by-measure approach; b) food safety system equivalence approach. The workshop also aimed to discuss and develop a set of recommendations and next steps, including possible cooperation among APEC economies for the development and implementation of food safety system equivalence approach.
More information is available here: https://www.apec.org/Publications/2018/10/APEC-FSCF-Workshop-on-Trade-Facilitation-through-the-Recognition-of-Food-Safety-Systems-Equivalence

APEC Workshop on Implementation of APEC Customs Transit Guidelines, 11-12 September 2018, San Pedro de Atacama, Chile

Workshop on Implementation of APEC Customs Transit Guidelines took place on 11-12 September, San Pedro de Atacama, Chile. During the event, participants discussed how to align the transit rules of each APEC economy with the contents established in the APEC Customs Transit Guidelines in order to make them foreseeable for international trade operators and, in consequence, facilitate customs clearance and improve the smoothening of processes among APEC Members and the different international trade operators. Representatives of the Private Sector and WCO discussed with customs administrations on APEC's priority of promoting supply chain connectivity in the APEC region.

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

ESCAP

UNNExT Northeast Asia Task Force on Cross-border Electronic Data Exchange:

The UNNExT Northeast Asia Task Force on Cross-border Electronic Data Exchange aims at improving readiness in electronic exchange of data between Northeast Asian economies to achieve higher levels of regulatory compliance and trade facilitation. The task force, comprising officials from China, Mongolia, Republic of Korea and Russian Federation, has worked on 1) analyzing cross-border trade processes that can be streamlined through electronic data exchange, including identifying issues and challenges, 2) identifying and prioritizing processes and data elements that can be exchanged electronically for better risk assessment, 3) designing practical models for arranging and initiating electronic data exchange, and verifying feasibility of electronic data exchange. The task force held its first meeting in September 2018 in Bangkok, the second meeting in December 2018 in Kemerovo, Russian Federation and the third meeting in January 2019 in Bangkok. Capacity building workshops have been organized back-to-back with these meetings on the issues of business process re-engineering, data harmonization and electronic message development. The task force will have its fourth physical meeting on 15 and 16 March 2019 in Bangkok.
More information is available at: https://www.unescap.org/events/first-meeting-unnext-task-force-cross-border-electronic-data-exchange-and-subregional

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

After 5 countries formally signed the UN Treaty entitled *Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-Border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific* in 2017 (Armenia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, and Islamic Republic of Iran), Azerbaijan became the first country to ratify the UN treaty in March 2018. The steering group now focuses on preparation of a draft implementation roadmap of the agreement and related supporting documents. Current version of the draft road map is available online. The Legal and Technical Working Groups under it continue developing supporting documents for the implementation road map, in particular technical gap checklist, legal gap checklist and background note on mutual recognition mechanism for trade related documents and data in electronic form, to effectively support fast implementation of the agreement and participation of interested ESCAP member states in it.
More information is available at: https://www.unescap.org/events/fifth-meeting-interim-intergovernmental-steering-group-cross-border-paperless-trade

Meeting of the Extended UNNExT Advisory Group on Cross-border Paperless Trade Facilitation, 30 October to 1 November 2018, Bangkok, Thailand

The work of the Steering Group mentioned above is supported by an Extended UNNExT Advisory Group, which met last in November 2018. The meeting focused on selected legal and technical work items, including legal gap checklist, technical gap checklist and mutual recognition mechanism for trade-related data and documents in electronic form. The outcome of the meeting will be used as an input for the upcoming deliberation of the Interim Intergovernmental Steering Group on Cross-border Paperless Trade Facilitation in further advancing delivery of supporting documents of the draft road map.
More information is available at: https://www.unescap.org/events/meeting-extended-unnext-advisory-group-cross-border-paperless-trade-facilitation-0

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

Facilitating Cross-Border Paperless Trade along the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) Corridors for Regional Integration and Sustainable Development

The project, funded by China, intends to build capacity of selected ESCAP member states in implementing the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific as well as to the achievement of SDG 17, including SDG Targets 17.10 and 17.11. Technical and legal readiness assessments on cross-border paperless trade as well as business process analysis (BPA) on selected corridors will be conducted in selected four developing countries of the region, namely Armenia, Mongolia, Myanmar and Uzbekistan. This project is envisaged as the first phase of a sustained capacity building effort on cross-border paperless trade facilitation along the BRI corridors. Phase 2 would involve implementation of pilot projects on exchange of trade-related data and documents in electronic form, based on outcomes of Phase 1. As part of the project, visits by international consultants to collect data and conduct interviews with stakeholders are completed. Currently, the assessment reports are being prepared, which will be presented at national consultations in May 2019, and to be finalized along with the action plan for on paperless trade for target countries.

Facilitating Cross-Border Paperless Trade in Least Developed Countries for Regional Integration and Sustainable Development

The project, funded by the WTO Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF), also intends to build capacity of selected ESCAP member states in implementing the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific as well as to the achievement of SDG 17, including SDG Targets 17.10 and 17.11. Legal and technical readiness analysis on cross-border paperless trade will be conducted in four least developed countries (LDCs) in the region, namely Bangladesh, Cambodia, Nepal and Timor-Leste. This project will be implemented in close coordination with the sister project (above), funded by China. The project is envisaged as the first phase of sustained capacity building efforts on cross-border paperless trade facilitation for LDCs. Phase 2, if developed, would involve implementation of projects to exchange information electronically on a pilot basis, based on the gap analyses conducted in Phase 1. Currently, a team of international consultants to carry out the assessments and national consultants for assisting data collection are being formed under the project.

ECE

Strengthening the national capacity of trade-support institutions of Kyrgyzstan

During 2017-2018, and following the recommendations of the trade needs assessment Regulatory and Procedural Barriers to Trade, UNECE has implemented a capacity-building project for trade-support institutions in Kyrgyzstan. To improve transparency and facilitate trade, the assessment recommends the establishment of "training facilities, equipped with trained staff and training material adapted to the local context, within relevant market support institutions, in order to familiarize traders with emerging trends in supply chain management marketing, outsourcing and financial management.
More information is available at: http://www.unece.org/tradewelcome/outreach-and-support-for-trade-facilitation/support-to-transition-countries.html

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

Trade facilitation reforms for e-business in Moldova and Kazakhstan

The expansion of the digital economy and cross-border electronic commerce means there is greater need for trade facilitation reforms. UNECE is addressing this issue by providing capacity building support at through three workshops on trade facilitation and e-commerce in Chisinau, Moldova, 1- 4 October and in Astana, Kazakhstan, 23-24 October and 27-28 November, respectively co-organized by the Ministry of Economy of Moldova and the Organization for Security Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and the Ministry of National Economy of Kazakhstan, and the Organization for Security Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).
More information is available at: http://www.unece.org/info/media/news/trade/2018/unece-supports-trade-facilitation-reforms-for-e-business-in-moldova/doc.html

UN/CEFACT Forum, 14-19 October 2018, Hangzhou, China

The UN/CEFACT Forum was hosted by the China National Institution of Standardization (CNIS). The priorities of this Forum will included: Advancing current projects and domain activities; Ongoing maintenance tasks; Formulating and approving a series of new projects to be conducted within the framework of the approved programme of work; and Advancing UN/CEFACT's current and forthcoming technical framework. The forum consisted of various conference as follows:

- *Conference on Internet of Things (IoT) in Trade Facilitation: Use Cases and Examples of Implementation*
  More information is available here: https://www.unece.org/hangzhouforum-iot.html

- *Conference on Blockchain in Trade Facilitation: Looking Toward Implementation*
  More information is available here: https://www.unece.org/hangzhouforum-blockchain.html

- *Conference on Showcasing of Transport & Logistics deliverables: Concrete applications of Trade Facilitation through automation*
  More information is available here: https://www.unece.org/hangzhouforum-transportlogistics.html

- *Conference on Orchestration Focal Point - Conference: Showcase UN/CEFACT semantic specifications in a way that suits implementers of web platforms*
  More information is available here: https://www.unece.org/hangzhouforum-orchestration.html

- *Conference on Towards a circular economy – Traceability and transparency for Sustainable Value Chains (Use Cases and Examples of Implementation)*
  More information is available here: https://www.unece.org/hangzhouforum-circulareconomy.html

- *Conference on Cross-border eCommerce*
  More information is available here: https://www.unece.org/hangzhouforum-ecommerce.html

- *Conference on UN/LOCODE Advisory Group Meeting 2018*
  More information is available here: https://www.unece.org/hangzhouforum-unlocodeagmtg.html

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

OCO

OCO 20th Annual Conference, 11 June 2018, Canberra, Australia

The Oceania Customs Organisation (OCO) 20th Annual Conference commenced on 11th June, 2018 in Melbourne, Australia, hosted by the Australian Border Force (ABF) with the theme "Strengthening regional connections to support a safe and prosperous Pacific". The annual conference is attended by 16 of the 23 OCO customs administrations and key partners including the WCO, ROCB Asia Pacific, Statistics New Zealand , IMF Pacific Financial and Technical Assistance Center (PFTAC), Pacific Immigration Directors' Conference (PIDC) , Japan Customs, Pacific Transnational Crime Coordination Centre (PTCCC), Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), United Nations Conference for Trade and Development (UNCTAD), World Bank Group, Her Majesty's Customs and Excise, Pacific Island Forum Fisheries Agency, Asia Pacific Group on Money laundering, Statistics New Zealand, US Immigration and Customs Enforcement, United States Coast Guard, US Secret Service and JIATF West. At the conference members witnessed three milestone achievements: 1. Memorandum of Understanding on Customs Cooperation; 2. Kiribati's accession to the WCO Revised Kyoto Convention; 3. Launch of the PACH 17.

UNCTAD

UNCTAD, Australia and New Zealand launch project for Pacific islands, July 2018

UNCTAD launched earlier this month an 18-month, AU$2 million project to help nine Pacific island countries align their trade and investment rules and regulations with their obligations under a regional free trade deal that enters into force in June 2019. The deal, the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER) Plus, covers goods, services and investment and has been signed by Australia, New Zealand and nine island neighbours – Cook Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. The goal of PACER Plus is to boost trade between the signatory countries and thus create more opportunities in the Pacific Ocean for their businesses to grow. The project will also include workshops at the regional level to help the countries develop a common strategy and to facilitate the exchange of information between them. In addition, UNCTAD will set up a network of National Transparency PACER Plus Committees and a regional trade hub to ensure project sustainability.
More information is available here: https://unctad.org/en/pages/newsdetails.aspx?OriginalVersionID=1827

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

WCO ROCB A/P

ROCB A/P discussed the IPR Border Enforcement with CLMVT Customs administrations

As an initiative of Thai Customs, the Workshop on Trade Facilitation Agreement and Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) was held on 10 -14 December 2018 in Bangkok, Thailand, and Ms. Saori Nojima, Program Manager of the ROCB A/P, participated in the IPR-related sessions on 13 -14 December 2018 as a resource speaker. More than 20 officials of Customs administrations of Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam and Thailand (CLMVT) participated in the workshop and intensively discussed their border enforcement challenges and procedural regulations reviews regarding the IPR border enforcement.

More information is available here: http://www.rocb-ap.org/article-detail/457/?crmid=sr9tpgq0ros17mqbol1qphud30

WCO Sub-regional Workshop on Customs Valuation, 3-7 December 2018, Suva, Fiji

The WCO, in cooperation with the ROCB A/P and the Fiji Revenue and Customs Services (FRCS), organized the WCO Sub-regional Workshop on Customs Valuation on 3-7 December 2018 at the WCO Regional Training Center in Suva (FRCS Training Center) with sponsorship of the Japan Customs Cooperation Fund (CCF/Japan). The program of this Sub-regional Workshop included, among other things, valuation key principles, overview of the transaction value, related party transaction, adjustments under Article 8, stages of valuation control including advance ruling and post clearance audit, alternative methods of valuation as well as group exercises on valuation case studies and the WCO Revenue Package Diagnostic Tool.

WTO

Committee on Trade Facilitation, 9-11 October 2018, Geneva, Switzerland

At the 9-11 October meeting of the Committee on Trade Facilitation, WTO members held discussions on their respective policies and experiences in enhancing the efficient movement of goods across borders in order to help each other fully implement the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA). Members also took stock of progress made, and of activities being organized, to support the Agreement's implementation. So far, the WTO has received notifications from 114 members of Category A commitments. The current number of Category B notifications stands at 71, and at 60 notifications for Category C. At the Committee, WTO members were updated on recent and upcoming activities and discussed the administration of the Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility, which was set up to help developing and LDC members assess their specific needs and to identify possible development partners to help them meet these needs. The next meeting of WTO Committee on Trade Facilitation will be held in February 2019.

More information is available here: https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news18_e/fac_09oct18_e.htm

APEC Initiatives on Trade Facilitation: Single Window and Authorised Economic Operator

[*Excerpt from a Policy Brief on **Trade Facilitation in APEC: Progress and Impact**, jointly prepared by APEC Policy Support Unit and ESCAP*]

In terms of trade facilitation, APEC has been leading efforts on two initiatives in the Asia-Pacific region: Single Window (SW) and Authorised Economic Operator (AEO). APEC has consistently drawn on these two initiatives to reduce trade costs and to make trade faster, cheaper and safer, which represent the core values of trade facilitation. The SW focuses more on reducing trade costs while the AEO has an added emphasis on ensuring safe and secure trade.

Single Window

The APEC region hosts some of the world-class SWs, and ESCAP has conducted case studies in 2018 to identify and showcase the best practices of SW development. The four featured cases are the SWs of Hong Kong, China; Japan; Korea; and Singapore. The study looked at the evolution of each SW in terms of institutional arrangement, funding sources and services offered, as well as implementation issues and challenges, along with future development plans. Key features and characteristics of modern SW identified in the case studies include: single entry and submission of information; paperless environment; standardised documents and data; information sharing; centralised risk management; coordination of agencies and stakeholders; analytical capability; and electronic payment.

Another key feature of these world-class SWs is their future orientation — all of them have laid down specific plans for further improvement. Singapore has announced a National Trade Platform that will support firms, particularly in the logistics and trade finance sectors, to improve supply chain visibility and efficiency. Hong Kong, China has been working on a new generation SW to provide one-stop lodging for all Business-to-Government (B2G) documents, and plans to acquire technical capability to facilitate, if required in future, interfaces with Business-to-Business (B2B) platforms operated by the private sector as well as connections with SWs of other economies. Since 2017, Korea has been devising a new plan to upgrade their national SW, the uTradeHub, adopting the concept of a platform with open innovation and cross-border e-commerce. Similarly, Japan's SW, the Nippon Automated Cargo and Port Consolidated System, has been consistently and continuously upgraded, with the sixth generation in implementation since October 2017.

Keeping abreast of technological and policy developments, APEC Ministers Responsible for Trade in 2016 "welcome(d) the Initiative on Single Window Systems' International Interoperability which aims to foster the flow of goods, enhance supply chain security, reduce costs and provide quality and timely information on trade across borders". Interoperability as defined by Recommendation N° 36 UN/CEFACT (2017)15 is the "ability of two or more systems or components to exchange and use information across borders without additional effort on the part of the user".

A recent APEC PSU report (2018) on SW interoperability in APEC economies highlighted four aspects of interoperability that must be achieved to ensure successful implementation, namely: technical, information, processes, and legal. Technical, information and process interoperability can be achieved through the use of common terminology, procedures and technical standards. Legal interoperability requires relevant legal structures to be in place to facilitate international data exchange. More than half of the economies that responded to a survey on SW interoperability in 2017 reported developments in addressing legal issues

pertinent to the following areas: identification, authentication and authorisation procedures; ownership of data; accuracy and integrity of data; and data retention, archive and audit trails.

The report recognised the different paths taken by each economy to attain interoperability, and encouraged the development of actions under these three core areas:

1. Integration of security, piracy and risk management among the economies to ensure implementation of relevant laws and policies and harmonisation of procedures.
2. Development of dynamic and effective policies to ensure the economies can react to changes in markets and regulatory conditions as required.
3. Technological solutions that ensure security to build trust among the users of the SW. A robust legal framework that is able to maintain cross-border interoperability of the SWs is necessary as well.

The report also identified several key challenges. Ensuring interoperability through the harmonisation of terminology, processes and technologies is the most pressing one. Harmonisation has been difficult due to factors like different legal frameworks, regulations, trade processes and standards. In addition to this challenge, Indonesia acknowledged that coordination problems have caused delays in the implementation of live data exchange through the ASEAN SW. In the case of Peru, OECD noted a lack of formalities to address data requirements and procedures among the local agencies and partner economies.

Inadequate technological architecture is also an ongoing challenge to Single Window Systems' International Interoperability. Australia, for example, considered it necessary to improve this aspect prior to the development of a SW system. Indonesia acknowledged the tedious and time-consuming process of deploying regional servers when developing the ASEAN SW, and Peru identified the need for modernising its IT structures and systems to better allow electronic data exchange.

Authorised Economic Operator

In 2011, APEC adopted the Consolidated Counter-Terrorism and Secure Trade Strategy which focuses on strengthening the regional supply chains, travel systems, financial systems, and critical infrastructure. The Strategy recognises the critical role customs officials can play in securing the supply chains, among others by implementing the APEC Framework for Secure Trade, specifically by fostering development of the Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) programs in member economies and establishing common AEO guidelines and standards. As defined by the SAFE Framework of Standards to Secure and Facilitate Global Trade (SAFE Framework), the AEO is "a party involved in the international movement of goods in whatever function that has been approved by or on behalf of a national Customs administration as complying with WCO or equivalent supply chain security standards. AEOs may include manufacturers, importers, exporters, brokers, carriers, consolidators, intermediaries, ports, airports, terminal operators, integrated operators, warehouses, distributors and freight forwarders"

The WTO also portrayed the importance and scope of AEO in the TFA. Article 7 of the WTO TFA mentions that economies shall provide additional trade facilitation benefits related to import, export, or transit formalities and procedures to operators who meet specified criteria. These specified criteria to qualify as an authorised operator shall be related to compliance, or the risk of non-compliance, with requirements specified in a member's laws, regulations or procedures.

The AEO was further emphasised in 2014 when APEC adopted the Customs 3M Strategic Framework (Mutual Recognition of Control, Mutual Assistance of Enforcement, and Mutual Sharing of Information). The 3M Framework covers the areas of trade facilitation, SW, AEO, among others, with the following objectives:

- Implementation of WTO TFA: (i) to update each other on the work done for the implementation of the TFA and share experience in this regard; and (ii) to prepare for the review of the operation and implementation of the TFA and to explore the possibility of implementing non-binding or best endeavour provisions of the TFA.

- SW: (i) to continue providing capacity building and technical support for member economies to establish and improve their individual SW with the least delay possible; and (ii) to realise interoperability of SW systems amongst APEC economies.

- AEO: (i) to continue carrying out capacity building for the member economies that have not established the AEO program and further advancing the formulation of the minimum standards for AEO enterprises, including SMEs; and (ii) to continue the capacity building programs, promote AEO mutual recognition between economies, and work out the benefit list of the AEO Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) to further facilitate trade in the Asia-Pacific region.

In terms of application, a 2016 APEC PSU report found 17 APEC member economies with operational AEO programs in varying stages of development and 36 MRAs concluded by APEC members. The report also highlighted the state of AEO development across APEC economies under seven main themes as follows:

1. Scope of AEO Programs: A variety of sectors were represented in the various AEO programs in APEC economies. Around 88.2 percent of programs were open to importers and exporters. More than 64 percent of the programs included customs brokers, 58.8 percent included warehouse operators, and 52.9 percent included manufacturers. All other operator types identified (logistics operators, terminal operators, and other operators) were represented in less than half of the surveyed AEO programs. Only 41.2 percent of programs had multiple classes in the program with multiple tiers of benefits and associated security/compliance standards. A variety of sectors were also represented in the AEO programs, including manufacturing, trade (retail/wholesale), agriculture and services.

2. Application, Verification and Authorisation Requirements: Most AEO application processes were similar across economies, requiring the same types of documents. However, timeframes diverged greatly, between 1 to 6 months. All AEO programs in APEC were required to undergo an onsite validation and verification audit. Only 35.3 percent of programs however, conducted a risk check on applicants with other ministries or databases beyond the customs authority.

3. Security and Compliance Requirements: There were generally high levels of convergence in security and compliance requirements where APEC AEO programs have adhered to the SAFE Framework closely. Almost all programs required site, goods and document security, but only 58.8 percent of programs required a recovery plan.

4. Post-authorisation, Audit / Revalidation, Suspension and Revocation Policies: Some member economies required the AEOs to reapply, while other economies based their revalidations on identified changes in the businesses' operations, paired with ongoing monitoring. All AEO programs had regular revalidation and auditing mechanisms. Around 52.9 percent of programs required the AEOs to conduct an internal audit. Most programs had mechanisms to suspend an AEO status if administrative orders were ignored, but only 58.8 percent had an appeal process.

5. Customs Organisational Structure for AEO Programs and their Major Roles: There was wide variation in the organisational level of customs authority in charge of the AEO program: some

customs authorities preferred to centralise while others devolved AEO authority to regional and field offices. Only 23.5 percent of AEO programs created a dedicated Customs Technical Specialty Position for AEO program administration.

6. Partnership Initiatives between Customs and Private Sector: Since AEO programs are voluntary, strong partnerships between customs and the private sector are important. There were some forms of consultation with the private sector: 64.7 percent of customs authorities consulted with the private sector stakeholders during the AEO program design stage, while 88.2 percent did so during the AEO program implementation. Strong consultation with the private sector is needed to understand the kind of benefits that will drive firms to pursue an AEO status.

7. Accessibility of Information on Customs' Website about the AEO Program: Websites are important sources of centralised information. Almost all websites had explanatory information and listed the requirements and benefits of an AEO status. However, about half did not have a section on frequently asked questions and/or did not allow online applications.

Large firms have more incentives to attain an AEO status since SMEs may view the investments involved in upgrading their security system to meet AEO requirements as costly and less beneficial. A recent development on the inclusion of SMEs in AEO programs in APEC was the endorsement of the Boracay Action Agenda (2015) which includes an emphasis to widen the base of the AEO and trusted trader programs to include SMEs in order for them to contribute to security, integrity and resilience in supply chains.

Some notable good practices in facilitating SMEs' inclusion into the AEO status are provided below (APEC PSU, 2016):

1. Australia engages SMEs during the design phase to listen to their specific concerns and forms a formal consultative working group with SMEs to design the "outcome-based approach" used in the security standards. This approach specifies the required security outcome, and the operators describe how those standards are being met in their individual circumstances. The approach was designed to foster SMEs' participation in maintaining a secure supply chain.

2. Korea offers expedited AEO authorisation examinations to SMEs through multiple procedural preferential provisions, including a 'priority audit'. To facilitate SMEs' access to the program, support for consulting fees is given to firms that show a lack of personnel and financial resources. Larger firms also sign Memorandums of Understanding with their SME partners to support their AEO authorisation process.

3. Since many of its businesses are SMEs, New Zealand recognises every business is unique and security arrangements for cargo are therefore different for each. New Zealand follows an outcome-based approach by asking the exporters to demonstrate how they intend to comply with the minimum standards and by working with them to achieve mutually acceptable criteria.

4. Singapore's AEO criteria are not prescriptive and assessment is based on the security risks involved. The emphasis is on outcomes when engaging with SMEs.

For more information, please refer to *"APEC Policy Support Unit Policy Brief No.25: Trade Facilitation in APEC: Progress and Impact"*, https://www.apec.org/Publications/2019/01/Trade-Facilitation-in-APEC--Progress-and-Impact

RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS

Can Blockchain revolutionize international trade?
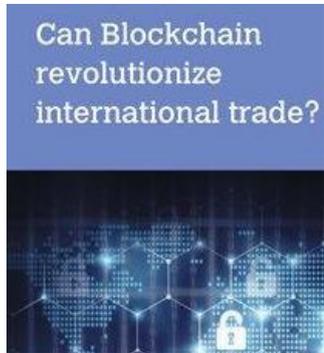
This report explores whether Blockchain may revolutionize international trade. The publication analyses the relevance of this technology to international trade and then discusses the potential of Blockchain for reducing trade costs and enhancing supply chain transparency, as well as the opportunities it provides for small-scale producers and companies.

The report finds that Blockchain could help trade move closer to becoming paperless, give rise to a new generation of services, help administer intellectual property rights in a more efficient and transparent way and fight counterfeits, enhance government procurement processes (balancing costs and benefits), open multifaceted cross-cutting opportunities by building trust and enhancing transparency of supply chains, reduce a variety of trade costs, and last but not least, open up new opportunities for MSMEs and small producers from developing countries.

Read the full report here: https://www.wto.org/english/res_e/booksp_e/blockchainrev18_e.pdf

ADB

Asian Economic Integration Report, October 2018

This report documents Asia's progress in regional cooperation and integration. It covers the 48 regional members of the Asian Development Bank and analyzes regional as well as global economic linkages. The 2018 report's special chapter "Toward Optimal Provision of Regional Public Goods in Asia and the Pacific" examines how collective action among countries can help find solutions to growing transnational development challenges. The special chapter also discusses how to best provide regional public goods that transcend the so-called "collective action problem" which occurs when individual interests are too weak on their own to drive cooperation on common issues.

Available here: https://www.adb.org/publications/restrictiveness-services-trade-policy-sustainable-development-goals

APEC

Promoting Cross-border E-Trade Under the Framework of RTAs/FTAs, December 2018

This report reviews cases of e-trade and cross-border e-trade development in the APEC region, analyzes e-trade and cross-border e-trade measures/ provisions in selected RTAs/FTAs, researches three best practices of cross-border e-trade under the framework of RTAs/FTAs, addresses critical challenges in promoting cross-border e-trade, and puts forward several recommendations on how to promote cross-border e-trade under RTAs/FTAs, potential measures/ provisions in future RTA/FTA negotiations as well as promoting the possible realization of FTAAP from the e-trade facilitation perspective.

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

RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS

ESCAP – CAREC - ADB

### Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade Implementation in CAREC Countries, November 2018

This report presents an analysis of the results of the 2017 UN Global Survey on Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade Implementation (Global Survey) for nine members of the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) Program. Based on a set of 31 trade facilitation measures included in the Global Survey, the average trade facilitation implementation in CAREC was 49% against the Asia–Pacific average of around 50 percent, indicating that implementation of trade facilitation measures by CAREC members are roughly the same as the region's. However, in comparison with the global average implementation rate of 60%, CAREC members need to strengthen their trade facilitation efforts.

Available here: https://www.unescap.org/resources/trade-facilitation-and-paperless-trade-implementation-carec-countries

ESCAP

Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade Implementation in APEC Economies, October 2018
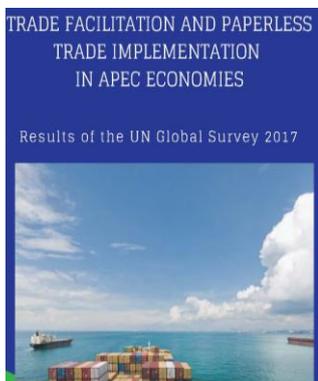
Trade facilitation has been a longstanding item on the agenda of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). In recent years, APEC members have also fully supported the implementation of WTO TFA – with an implementation rate of 92.6 per cent based on notifications to the WTO. In addition, as single window is one of the key initiatives under APEC, member economies have started to explore the issue of its International Interoperability. This report presents an analysis of the results of the 2017 United Nations Global Survey on Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade Implementation for 18 APEC members. APEC members' aggregate implementation rate of the measures stood at 75 per cent, above the global average at 60 per cent.

Available here: https://www.unescap.org/resources/trade-facilitation-and-paperless-trade-implementation-apec-economies

Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report 2018: Recent Trends and Developments, December 2018
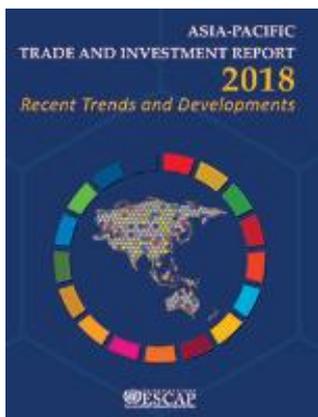
The Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report is a recurrent publication prepared by the Trade, Investment and Innovation Division of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. It provides information and independent analyses of regional trends and policy developments in trade, goods and commercial services, as well as foreign direct investment. It also provides insights into the impacts of these recent and emerging developments on countries' abilities to meet the challenges of achieving sustainable development.

APTIR 2018 shows that the Asia-Pacific region further increased its share of global merchandise trade, thanks to double-digit growth in trade in 2017. The region also remained the most important destination and source of foreign direct investment. Countries in Asia and the Pacific accelerated their economic integration intra- and inter-regionally, but protectionism is on the rise and trade tensions between the United States and China are expected to lead to a significant trade slowdown in 2019.

Read the full report here: https://www.unescap.org/publications/APTIR2018

RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS

Cross-border Paperless Trade: a Legal Readiness Checklist, March 2019

This document contains a legal readiness checklist prepared by the Legal and Technical Working Groups of the Interim Intergovernmental Steering Group on Cross-border Paperless Trade Facilitation. The legal readiness checklist is one of the supporting documents for a draft road map for the implementation of the substantive provisions of the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific. The checklist will help users to assess the degree to which the laws of their country will support cross-border paperless trade, identify existing legal gaps and design actions to improve the legal environment. It should be noted that the checklist is not intended to assess the readiness of a country to join the Framework Agreement.
**Available here**: https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/IISG_2019_3_English.pdf

Cross-border Paperless Trade: a Technical Readiness Checklist, March 2019

The present document contains a technical readiness checklist prepared by the Legal and Technical Working Groups under the Interim Intergovernmental Steering Group on Cross-border Paperless Trade Facilitation. The technical readiness checklist is one of the supporting documents for a draft road map for the implementation of substantive provisions of the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific. The checklist will help users to assess the technical readiness of a country to participate in crossborder paperless trade, identify existing technical gaps and design actions to improve the technical environment. It should be noted that the checklist is not intended to assess the readiness of a country to join the Framework Agreement.
Available here: https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/IISG_2019_4_English.pdf

UNECE

Training manual on Trade Facilitation for easier access to regional and global markets, 2018
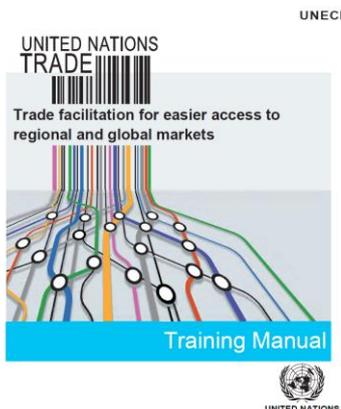
The training manual was prepared under the Strengthening the national capacity of trade-support institutions of Kyrgyzstan project. It includes modules on supply chain management, facilitation of import and export procedures, single window implementation and related concepts. It is available in both English and Russian.
The manual is available at:
http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trade/workshop/2018_Kyrgyzstan/TrainingManual_TFEasierAccess_Eng.PDF (English)
http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trade/workshop/2018_Kyrgyzstan/TrainingManual_TFEasierAccess_Rus.PDF (Russian)

UN/CEFACT Code Management User Guide, March 2018

This user guideline describes how to define and apply restrictions and extensions to code lists in UN/EDIFACT (the United Nations rules for Electronic Data Interchange for Administration, Commerce and Transport) messages as well as UN/CEFACT XML messages. In addition, it describes example processes for validating those messages.
Available here: http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/cefact/GuidanceMaterials/CodeManagementUserGuide-v1.pdf

UN/CEFACT White Paper on Blockchain, December 2018

Blockchain is a type of Distributed Ledger Technology (DLT). Both DLT and blockchain have the potential to deliver significant improvements and automation in this layer of trust. As the focal point for trade facilitation and electronic business standards in the United Nations system, UN/CEFACT analyses how this new technology impacts its work and whether there are any new technical specifications that it should develop in order to

maximize this technology's value to UN/CEFACT's constituency. This paper seeks to answer these important issues. This white paper is focused on blockchain in order to create a single architectural vision that positions blockchain within a future environment for supply chain automation that makes the best use of technology.
Available here: http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/cefact/GuidanceMaterials/WhitePaperBlockchain.pdf

UN/CEFACT White Paper on Overview of Blockchain Technology for Trade: An introduction to Blockchain Use in Trade Facilitation, January 2019

This second White Paper on Blockchain looks at how blockchain technology could be used to facilitate trade and related business processes. The white paper describes how blockchain technology works, the various types of blockchain, functionality with other technologies e.g. Internet of Things (IoT), when to use blockchain and when not to and other useful vocabularies.
Available here: http://www.unece.org/tradewelcome/un-centre-for-trade-facilitation-and-e-business-uncefact/outputs/guidance-material.html

UN/CEFACT White Paper on real-time Smart Container data for supply chain excellence, January 2019

The aim of this White Paper is to have a common understanding of Smart Container solutions. The stakeholder(s) of the Smart Container data are identified along with a description of the use cases to explain the potential usage for those data elements of interest.
Available here: http://www.unece.org/tradewelcome/un-centre-for-trade-facilitation-and-e-business-uncefact/outputs/guidance-material.html

UN/CEFACT Briefing note on the importance of Semantics within Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business for SDG 17, January 2019

This briefing note discusses the importance of clear semantic data-exchange standards and how this supports both the World Trade Organization's Trade Facilitation Agreement (WTO TFA) as well as the United Nations SDGs. The United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) aims to be the semantic hub for all trade-related data-exchange standards.
Available here: http://www.unece.org/tradewelcome/un-centre-for-trade-facilitation-and-e-business-uncefact/outputs/guidance-material.html

UNCTAD

Fostering Gender Mainstreaming in National Trade Facilitation Committees, September 2018

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development aims, among other goals, to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Since NTFCs are bodies working on the development of trade policies and trade facilitation standards, achieving a gender balanced membership is crucial. Recent UNCTAD research shows that national trade facilitation committees are far from being gender balanced bodies. Most of these committees consider specific actions for gender mainstreaming in trade facilitation neither a priority nor relevant at this stage. There is a lack of awareness on the importance of gender mainstreaming in trade facilitation at national level. International agencies that support national trade facilitation committees could play a role to address this gap. For that to happen, NTFCs should place the gender issue on their agendas and, if necessary, request support on this specific subject from international partners.
Available here: https://unctad.org/en/pages/PublicationWebflyer.aspx?publicationid=2241

UPCOMING EVENTS

Event	Date	Venue	Organizer
WCO Regional Workshop on Transit	8-10 January 2019	Faridabad, India	WCO
Team of Specialists on Sustainable Fisheries	29-30 January 2019	Geneva	ECE
WCO-OECD Joint Regional Workshop on Customs Valuation and Transfer Pricing	4-8 March 2019	Yangzhou, China	WCO
Fifth Meeting of the Interim Intergovernmental Steering Group on Cross-Border Paperless Trade Facilitation	12-13 March 2019	Bangkok, Thailand	ESCAP
Committee on Trade and Investment, Sixth Session	13-15 March 2019	Bangkok, Thailand	ESCAP
Forum on Trade Digitalization for Sustainable Regional Integration	14-15 March 2019	Bangkok, Thailand	ESCAP
WCO Regional Workshop on Accreditation of TRS Experts	11-15 March 2019	Xiamen, China	WCO
WCO Sub-regional Workshop on Risk Management for the Pacific	18-22 March 2019	Suva, Fiji	WCO
UN/CEFACT 33rd Forum	1-5 April 2019	Geneva	ECE
UN/CEFACT 25th Plenary	8-9 April 2019	Geneva	ECE
Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards, 9-10 May	9-10 May 2019	Geneva	ECE
WCO A/P Regional Heads of Customs Administration Conference	8-10 May 2019	Cochin, India	WCO
OCO Annual Meeting	13-16 May 2019	Saipan, USA	OCO
Seminar on implementing four of the WTO TFA measures in Central Asia (SPECA)	20-22 May 2019	Astana, Kazakhstan	ECE-ESCAP
Trade Facilitation Conference	TBC June 2019	Shanghai, China	ADB
ADB subregional workshop on trade facilitation	11-14 June 2019	Armenia	ADB-ESCAP
Single window implementation in EEC workshop	13-14 June 2019	Armenia	WCO-ESCAP-ADB
Aid for Trade Global Review 2019	2-5 July 2019	Geneva, Switzerland	WTO
High-level seminar for the SPECA countries	4 July 2019	Geneva, Switzerland	ECE
Joint UNRC side event on Global Survey on Trade Facilitation	3-5 July 2019	Geneva	UNRC
Seminar on implementing four trade facilitation measures of the WTO TFA for the Western Balkans	TBC, September 2019	Skopje, Macedonia	ECE
Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum	9-13 September 2019	India	ADB-ESCAP
UN/CEFACT 34th Forum	TBC, October 2019	Geneva, Switzerland	ECE
Capacity-building Seminar for National TF Committees	TBC, October 2019	Astana or Istanbul	ECE
3rd UN/LOCODE Advisory Group Meeting	TBC, November 2019	Geneva, Switzerland	ECE
1st Advisory Group on New Technologies	TBC, November 2019	Geneva, Switzerland	ECE
SPECA working group on trade	18-19, November 2019	Ashgabat, Turkmenistan	ECE
SPECA 2019 Forum on Connectivity: Trade and Transport Facilitation and Sustainable Development in the SPECA region	20-21, November 2019	Ashgabat, Turkmenistan (TBC)	ECE

TRADE FACILITATION NEWS

Highlight

Trade to slow in 2019, Millions of jobs in Asia and the Pacific put at risk by trade conflicts, 12 December 2018

The Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report (APTIR) 2018 notes an accelerated imposition of restrictions on trade in goods and services, and more reservations on FDI. The mounting United States-China tensions disrupt existing supply chains and dampen investor confidence, especially for Asia-Pacific countries. If the tariff wars further escalate and investor and consumer confidence drop, global GDP could be cut by nearly US$400 billion, also driving regional GDP down by about US$100 billion. Importantly, as many of the main export industries in the region are relatively labour-intensive, a contraction of export could spell at least temporary hardship for many workers. At a minimum, Asia and the Pacific will see a net loss of 2.7 million jobs due to the trade war, with unskilled workers shouldering more severe impact.

The report finds that implementation of mega-regional trade agreements such as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, RCEP, could offset much of the economic losses from trade tensions. ESCAP estimated that implementation of mega-regionals could boost exports by 1.3 to 2.9 per cent and add 3.5 to 12.5 million jobs in employment for the Asia-Pacific. Therefore, APTIR 2018 underscores the importance of regional cooperation and calls on countries to take advantage of all existing initiatives, including the new UN treaty aimed at digitalizing trade procedures and enabling cross-border paperless trade in Asia and the Pacific.

https://www.unescap.org/news/trade-slow-2019-millions-jobs-put-risk-trade-conflicts-says-new-regional-un-report

Azerbaijan

Implementation of Trade Facilitation Agreement to be accelerated, November 2018

Azerbaijan attended the Workshop on Roadmap on implementation of WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement in CAREC member countries and Inter-subregional Knowledge Sharing Forum on Enhanced Implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement. Representative of the State Customs Committee gave information about the reforms carried out in Azerbaijan's customs system. Top priorities were to facilitate trade through new management system, ensure rapid crossing of goods and transport vehicles through the customs checkpoints, minimize public servant-citizen contact, in general, create favorable business environment for foreign trade participants and necessary activities were being carried out. Preliminary information exchange in a bilateral manner between Azerbaijan-Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan-Georgia, Azerbaijan-Ukraine and Azerbaijan-Turkey was contributing to ensuring rapid crossing of goods and transport vehicles through customs checkpoints.
http://customs.gov.az/en/faydali/xeberler/2997_/

China

China expands AEO Mutual Recognition Agreement Partners, October 2018

On Oct. 26, 2018, China GAC and Japan Customs bureau officially signed "Agreement on Mutual Recognition between Chinese Enterprise Credibility Management System and Japanese Authorized Economic Operator System". According to this agreement, AEO enterprises in China and Japan can enjoy the following 4 trade facilitation measures: 1.Lower rate of being inspected; in China the inspection rate for AEO enterprises is 0.5%. 2.Cargo inspection will be finished as soon as possible. 3.A customs official will be specially assigned to AEO enterprise to deal with problems occurring during customs clearance. 4.AEO enterprises from the country/region that China has signed mutual recognition agreement with will be subject to priority customs clearance. Up to now, China has signed AEO mutual recognition agreements with 36 countries/regions, including Singapore, Korea, Hong Kong, Europe Union, Australia, New Zealand and Japan, is now negotiating agreements with Thailand, Russia, Canada, Mexico and etc.
https://food.chemlinked.com/news/food-news/china-signs-aeo-mutual-recognition-agreement-japan

China-Singapore FTA: Upgrade Deal Reached, 6 November 2018

China and Singapore wrapped up negotiations to upgrade the FTA in three years. Through upgraded China-Singapore Free Trade Agreement (CSFTA), Singaporean enterprises are expected to expand not only access to the Chinese market but also trade volume and investment between the two countries. The main content of the upgraded CSFTA is Singapore's expanded approach to foreign investment in China. The revised version will protect Singaporean investors from investing in China and help them benefit from improved trade facilitation.
http://www.ecns.cn/news/economy/2018-07-11/detail-ifyvzyvz7260628.shtml

TRADE FACILITATION NEWS

India

Import, export clearance time cut by 300 hours, says Customs, 25 Jan 2019

According to the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs chairman, India custom reached a reduction of approximately 300 hours in import and export clearance time and transaction costs. India Trading Across Borders ranking increased from 146th to 80th. The chairman mentioned that these outcomes derived from two factors: filing of import declaration within a specified time and the introduction of eSanchit because those two measures help to do the entire process of consignment clearance faceless and paperless. When it comes to exports, various improvements, such as strengthening the existing risk management system, have reduced the time associated with customs clearance of export containers. The aegis of the National Trade Facility Action Plan 2017-2020 is aimed at improving the effectiveness of the overall cross-border so reform measures are being considered at the highest level.

https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/import-export-clearance-time-cut-by-300-hours-says-customs/story-bgyMdDd06zZPfb98iBRUiM.html

Cambodia

Trade facilitation remains a challenge for Cambodia, 1 January 2019

Cambodia, which has adopted a liberal market economy since the mid-1990s, has seen economic growth of 7.7 percent over the past two decades. The government has a plan to do governance reform under the five-year development strategy 2018-2023, Cambodia is working closely with its development partners, including the World Bank, on trade policies, and trade liberalization and facilitation are the main areas. Cambodia also announced the implementation of the WTO FTA as of February 2016 after ratifying the WTO FTA: 60.9 percent under Category A, 19.3 under Category B, and 19.7 percent under Category C.

But implementation is the problem. There are several issues to be solved, including a lack of policy coordination and inter-agency collaborations and low competitiveness of the private sector. Therefore a comprehensive strategy in Cambodia should be developed in order to implement the TFA and eliminate trade barrier, such as strengthening the accountability and transparency of government agencies and establishing a national establishment committee to eliminate trade barriers.

https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50565883/trade-facilitation-remains-a-challenge-for-cambodia/

Palau

Bureau of customs & border protection hosts HS workshop in Palau, 25 September 2018

Harmonized System 2017 and Classification of Goods Workshop organized by the Bureau of Customs & Border Protection (BCBP) held from 17 to 21 September 2018. The goal of the workshop was to assist stakeholders in Palau in the uniformity and application of the HS 2017 and any changes and updates on the HS-related tariff classifications. The workshop helped educate stakeholders in Palau to implement the correct identification of the products being traded and address some specific HS-related aspects under the HS 2017. The national workshop was expected to benefit both to the public and private sector because Palau does not have any legislation defining the framework and use of the Harmonized Tariff Coding System.

https://www.ocosec.org/bureau-of-customs-border-protection-hosts-hs-workshop-in-palau/

Viet Nam

Vietnam's cross-border trade index drops by seven places, 23 January 2019

The Central Institute for Economic Management (CIEM) held a conference to review the effect of Resolution 19 and to announce the newly revised resolution aiming to promote the business environment and enhance national competitiveness. The Resolution 19 is about the inclusive reforms on regulations on the administration of specialized inspections for trade. According to CIEM, the most specialized inspection procedures have been improved, resulting in time and cost savings via simplification and transparency, as of 2014 when the resolution was passed. The cross-border trade index of Vietnam fell seventh from 93rd to 100th out of 190 countries. Despite these improvements, import and export procedures are similar to other countries, and customs clearance procedures on goods subject to special inspection are still long, complicated and costly. To improve these problems, CIEM pointed out that it is necessary for the Vietnamese government to take action on a wide range of specialized inspection administration, reduction of commodities subject to pre-clearance inspections, adoption of products inspected with a high standard from exporter countries, and a digitized national single window.

https://english.vietnamnet.vn/fms/business/216628/vietnam-s-cross-border-trade-index-drops-by-seven-places.html