

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

IN FOCUS

The 9th Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum and other trade facilitation side events were organized by ADB, ESCAP and India in cooperation with CII, OECD, UNCTAD, WTO and many other organizations in September 2019 in New Delhi, India. Organized under the theme of “Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation for Regional Prosperity”, the Forum was attended by 270 participants from 42 countries. The summary and highlights as well as programmes and presentations of the Forum and its side events are [available here](#).



NEWS

The Philippines acceded to the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless trade in Asia-Pacific on 23 December 2019, the first in ASEAN to do so. The UN treaty is an inclusive instrument accessible to countries at all levels of development and to help them develop their capacity to engage in cross-border paperless trade.

For more trade facilitation news see [page 21](#).

ADB and ESCAP released the **Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Report 2019: Bridging Trade Finance Gaps through Technology**. The report features a special chapter on how trade finance gaps can be bridged by technology, highlighting the policies and actions required to make this happen.

UPCOMING

The 2nd Forum on Trade Digitalization for Sustainable Regional Integration will be held on 9-10 April 2020 in Bangkok, Thailand. The forum focuses on sharing initiatives and experiences related for enabling the electronic exchange of trade-related data and documents. The participants will share their initiatives' progress and lessons learnt during implementation, and discuss how to further advance trade digitalization for its contribution to sustainable development and regional integration. The event will be held back-to-back with the interim Intergovernmental Steering Group Meeting on Cross-Border Paperless Trade Facilitation.

More information is available [here](#).

PUBLICATIONS & RESOURCES

Interactive UN website on digital trade facilitation updated



Untfsurvey.org has been updated with 2015 to 2019 data from the UN Global Survey on Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade Implementation. Led by ESCAP and conducted jointly by the five United Nations Regional Commissions, the WTO TFA+ surveys now covers 128 economies around the world. The resource is [available here](#).

For more resources and publications, see [page 13](#).

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

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For more information:

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

Email: roc-tf@un.org

Website:

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

PROJECT/ACTIVITY UPDATE

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

JOINT ACTIVITIES and PARTNERSHIPS

ADB and ESCAP

Regional Organizations Cooperation Mechanism for Trade Facilitation (ROC-TF) Meeting, 16 September 2019, New Delhi, India



The 5th ROC-TF meeting took place on 16 September, back to back with the 9th APTFF. Representatives from ADB, APEC, ITC, OCO, PIF, STDF, UNECE, UNCTAD, UPU, World Bank, WCO and WTO participated and shared their trade facilitation initiatives and related action plans. This led to discussions on opportunities and modalities to improve inter-regional and subregional cooperation on trade facilitation. The ROC-TF is a cooperation mechanism between the subregional, regional, United Nations and other international organizations involved in trade

facilitation activities in the Asia and Pacific region. The overall goal of the mechanism is to facilitate the exchange of information, identify synergies and promote collaboration for effective implementation of trade facilitation initiatives.

More information on the ROC-TF webpage, here <http://www.unescap.org/our-work/trade-investment-innovation/trade-facilitation/roc-tf>.

Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum 2019, 17-19 September 2019, New Delhi, India



The 9th Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum (APTFF) was organized by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), in collaboration with the Ministry of Commerce, India and Confederation of Indian Industry (CII).

The theme of APTFF 2019 was “Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation for Regional Prosperity” and brought together about 270 participants from 42 countries. As part of the opening session of the Forum, ADB and ESCAP launched the Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Report 2019. Several capacity building side events were organized, for example, a joint ADB-OECD-ESCAP side event on enabling SMEs access to global value chains.

More information is available here: <https://www.unescap.org/events/asia-pacific-trade-facilitation-forum-2019>

ESCAP and UNECE

UNNExT Advisory Committee Meeting, 18 September 2019, New Delhi, India

The UNNExT Advisory Committee provides guidance on the work programme and activities of the network; promotes the network as a multi-stakeholder knowledge platform; and identifies potential synergies between the network and other trade facilitation institutions. At this UNNExT Advisory Committee Meeting, participants shared their thoughts on the organization of the 9th APTFF, and subsequently discussed future directions of the APTFF. As much as the holistic approaches towards advancing for implementation of trade facilitation was appreciated, the Committee suggested to have in-depth tracks of sessions and side events, to maximize impacts. Also, the Committee was briefed on progress in implementation of UNNExT work programme.

More information is available here: <https://www.unescap.org/events/unnext-advisory-committee-meeting-3>

PROJECT/ACTIVITY UPDATE

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

UNCTAD, UNECE, ITC, ESCAP and ADB

Making Trade Facilitation Happen Through Public-Private Partnerships: Role of National Trade Facilitation Committees, 19 September 2019, New Delhi, India



UNECE, ITC and UNCTAD, in cooperation with the ADB and ESCAP, co-organized an event on 19 September back to back with the APTFF 2019. The event brought together representatives of National Trade Facilitation Committees from Tajikistan, Eswatini, Sri Lanka, Kazakhstan and Afghanistan as well as government officials from the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. The experts discussed the lessons learned at various stages of their operations in the NTFCs.

More information is available here:

<http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=52323>

UNCTAD and ESCAP

Digital Identity for Trade and Development Workshop, 29 October - 1 November 2020, Singapore

This workshop was organized to facilitate the identification and drafting of policies on digital identity related to trade and development and the implementation of a National Digital Identity Framework (NDIF). A total of 26 participants attended the Workshop. The participants were from both public and private sectors of the following countries: Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. The Workshop participants were tasked to prepare a case study on one of the modules in the Distance Learning Component and each gave a short presentation during the Face-to-Face Workshop on a national case study related to Digital Identity for Trade and Development. For course content, please refer to the TrainForTrade website.

UNECE AND ESCAP

Fourteenth session of the SPECA Working Group on Trade, 18 - 19 November 2019, Ashgabat, Turkmenistan

The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) together with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) organized the fourteenth session of the SPECA Working Group on Trade on 19 November 2019, back-to-back with the 2019 SPECA Economic Forum. A number of key topics were discussed during the event including the SPECA Trade Facilitation Strategy, Sustainable Development in SPECA Region and Regulatory and Procedural Barriers to Trade in the SPECA Region. The trade facilitation strategy was presented at the Forum and adopted by the SPECA Governing Council on 21 November 2019.

More information is available here: <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=52716>

ESCAP and Greater Tumen Initiative (GTI) Secretariat

ESCAP-GTI International Seminar on Trade Facilitation in North-East Asia, 12 December 2019, Changchun, China

ESCAP together with the Greater Tumen Initiative (GTI) Secretariat organized the ESCAP-GTI International Seminar on Trade Facilitation in North-East Asia 2019 under the theme of "The Trade-Transport Facilitation Nexus: Developments and Possible Approaches for North-East Asia". The Seminar reviewed global and subregional achievements and challenges on digital and sustainable trade facilitation, including cross-border paperless trade, based on findings from the UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2019. At the seminar, participants also shared information on countries' best practices on implementing trade facilitation policies/initiatives, and discussed how to link trade and transport facilitation for the progress of the NorthEast Asia.

More information is available here: <https://www.unescap.org/events/escap-gti-international-seminar-trade-facilitation-north-east-asia>

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ORGANIZATION'S UPDATES

ADB

CAREC–SASEC Inter-Subregional Knowledge-Sharing Forum on Trade Facilitation and Customs Modernization, 31 October- 2 November 2019, Tbilisi, Georgia

Customs authorities from CAREC and South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation programs, with support from the CAREC Institute and ADB–People's Republic of China (PRC) Regional Presentations were made by ADB and CAREC officials on specific topics, including (i) Progress made on the CAREC Advanced Transit System and Information Common Exchange; (ii) Shared successes and lessons learned from implementing the Joint Customs Control pilot project of PRC and Mongolia; (iii) Status and plans for the Tajikistan Regional Improvement of Border Services project; (iv) Features and achievements of establishing the National Trade and Transport Facilitation Committee in Pakistan; and (v) The “Golden List” Program of Georgia, which grants certain customs simplifications to trusted companies when importing and/or exporting goods to and from Georgian customs territory.

More information is available here: <https://www.carecprogram.org/?event=knowledge-sharing-trade-facilitation-customs-modernization>

Eighth SASEC Customs Subgroup Meeting, 1 November 2019, Tbilisi, Georgia



ADB organized the eighth meeting of the South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) Customs Subgroup (SCS) on 1 November in Tbilisi, Georgia, which brought together senior customs officials of SASEC member countries. Outcomes of the Meeting included: (i) Reviewed implementation status of subregional and national projects under the SCS Trade Facilitation Strategic Framework and SASEC Operational Plan covering customs cooperation, modernization, automation, and border infrastructure

improvement; (ii) Trade facilitation projects for possible inclusion in the SASEC Operational Plan; and (3) Innovative trade facilitation initiatives, including e-commerce and application of blockchain technology, that the SASEC Customs Subgroup will pursue.

More information is available here: <https://www.sasec.asia/index.php?page=event&eid=305&url=scs2019>

AFACT

AFACT Plenary Meeting, 18-19 November 2019, Bangkok, Thailand



AFACT stands for the Asia Pacific Council for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business. It is a non-profit, non-governmental organization which is open to participation from the representatives of member economies and experts from private sectors within the Asia-Pacific region. AFACT aims to promote the commitment and development of trade facilitation, electronic business policies and activities in the Asia-Pacific region, mainly focusing on those promoted by UN/CEFACT (United Nations Center for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business), to guide, stimulate, improve and promote the ability of business, trade and administrative organizations from members, as well as to

exchange products and relevant services effectively within AFACT community.

More information is available here: <https://standard.eta.or.th/afact2019/index.html#schedule>

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EEC

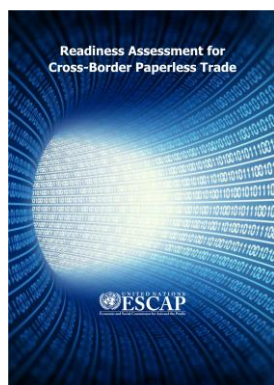
3rd session of the Coordination Council on the "Single Window", 23 November 2019, Moscow, Russia

On November 23, the third session of the Coordinating Council of the Working Group for the implementation of the Action Plan for the implementation of the Main Directions of development of the "single window" mechanism in foreign economic activity management system was held in Moscow chaired by Member of the Board - Minister in charge of Customs Cooperation Mukay Kadyrkulov. The main topics of the session include a detailed plan for 2017. In addition, members of the Coordinating Council had discussed issues related to the organisation of work to develop the national "single window" mechanisms in the Member States of the Union.

More information is available here: <http://www.eurasiancommission.org/en/nae/events/Pages/23-11-2016.aspx>

ESCAP

Readiness assessments for cross-border paperless trade conducted in 8 countries



ESCAP supported Armenia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Timor-Leste and Uzbekistan in carrying out readiness assessments for cross-border paperless trade and organizing national consultations on facilitating cross-border paperless trade as part of implementing the projects funded by the Government of China and the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF). This included completing the legal and technical readiness assessment checklists, developed by the Steering Group and its working groups, and developing draft action plans during national consultations. Building on lessons learned, ESCAP and United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) have jointly started developing an online support platform to facilitate self-assessments. In addition, the Government of China further funded a follow-up Phase II project, which will focus on the development of national policy frameworks for cross-border paperless trade and the conduct of a feasibility and scoping study on the electronic exchange of trade-related data and documents between Bangladesh, China, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Thailand, and other relevant South Asian economies between 2020 and 2021.

Readiness assessment reports are available online here: <https://www.unescap.org/resources/readiness-assessments-cross-border-paperless-trade>

Capacity Building Workshop on application of new technologies in transit facilitation for enhancing transport connectivity of LLDCs in Central Asia, 26-27 November 2019, Tashkent, Uzbekistan

The new technologies to facilitate the transportation were developed by ESCAP secretariat. The secretariat was organizing the above captioned Workshop jointly with the Secretariat of Shanghai Cooperation Organization with the following objectives: (i) to enhance understanding of the border officials of the LLDCs and transit countries in Central Asia in using new technologies to facilitate transit transport; (ii) to share experience on common challenges to facilitate transport/transit among LLDCs in Central Asian countries; and (iii) to explore the possibility of setting up a digital freight platform to meet the regulatory requirement in international transport.

More information is available here: <https://www.unescap.org/events/capacity-building-workshop-application-new-technologies-transit-facilitation-enhancing>

7th Meeting of the UNNExT Task Force on Cross-border Electronic Data Exchange: Northeast Asia, 11 December 2019, Changchun, China

The UNNExT Task Force on Cross-border Electronic Data Exchange intended to improve readiness in exchange of trade-related data electronically across borders for better regulatory compliance and improved trade facilitation. The 7th Meeting continued working on completion of data dictionaries for selected trade documents and discussed possible models for cross-border electronic data exchange.

More information is available here: <https://www.unescap.org/events/7th-meeting-unnext-task-force-cross-border-electronic-data-exchange-northeast-asia>

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7th Meeting of the Legal and Technical Working Groups on Cross-border Paperless Trade Facilitation, 14-16 January 2019, Bangkok, Thailand



The Legal and Technical Working Groups of the Interim Intergovernmental Steering Group on Cross-border Paperless Trade Facilitation held their seventh physical meeting and continued carrying out their mandated tasks, including preparing related supporting documents for the draft implementation roadmap.

More information is available here:

<https://www.unescap.org/events/7th-meeting-legal-and-technical-working-groups-cross-border-paperless-trade-facilitation>

OCO

Pacific Island Nations begin work on the Pacific Harmonised System 2022, 16-17 September 2019, Nadi, Fiji



The Oceania Customs Organisation (OCO) Secretariat organized the Pacific Harmonised Commodity Description and Coding System (PACHS) Review Meeting on 16-17 September, 2019 in Nadi, Fiji. The Meeting was attended by 19 Customs Officials representing 12 Customs Administrations of the OCO (CNMI, Cooks Islands, FSM, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu). Also present were experts from the Pacific Community (SPC), Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) and United Nations Environment Program (UNEP).

More information is available here: <https://www.ocosec.org/pacific-island-nations-begin-work-on-the-pacific-harmonised-system-2022/>

New Appointments – Head of Secretariat and Operations Manager

The Oceania Customs Organisation represents the interest of 23 member countries in the Pacific region. Its mission is to facilitate and where appropriate help customs administrations align with customs international standards and best practice leading to greater economic prosperity and increased border security within the Oceania region. The OCO is pleased to announce the appointment of Mr. Richard Brennan as its new Head of Secretariat and Mrs Irma Daphney Stone as Operations Manager.

More information is available here: <https://www.ocosec.org/new-appointments-head-of-secretariat-and-operations-manager/>

STDF

Good practices of SPS control

Recently the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) work has sought to identify, analyze and foster dialogue on experiences, lessons and good practices to improve the implementation of SPS controls in way that facilitates safe trade, while minimizing transaction costs (<https://www.standardsfacility.org/facilitating-safe-trade>). In addition, the STDF has conducted work on electronic SPS certification (SPS e-Cert) since 2016 and is currently providing funding for the implementation of the "ePhyto" and the "eVet" projects (<https://www.standardsfacility.org/SPS-eCert>).

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The STDF ePhyto project won an Innovation Award



The STDF ePhyto project won a Trade Facilitation Innovation Award at the APTFF 2019. In addition, under the STDF, an SPS e-Cert Advisory Group is being set up to drive global collaboration on electronic SPS certification. The first electronic meeting of this Group will be held in March 2020.

New technologies to improve SPS management and agricultural production

The STDF is currently using new technologies to improve SPS management and agricultural production. The P-tracker, a customizable smartphone app for plant pest field surveillance developed by the Australian Department of Agriculture and Water resources is currently being used in the STDF project to improve pest surveillance in over seven countries in Asia-Pacific region (<https://www.standardsfacility.org/PG-432>). This project addresses the inconsistent approach to pest surveillance in the Asia-Pacific region and the poor standard of reporting of surveillance outcomes.

More information is available here: www.standardsfacility.org / STDFSecretariat@wto.org

UNCTAD

Module 1 of UNCTAD Empowerment Programme for National Trade Facilitation Committees in Lesotho, 3-6 December 2019, Maseru, Lesotho

Financed by the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting via Her Majesty Revenue and Customs (HMRC), the event addressed Lesotho's National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC) members. The objectives were to: (i) Deliver Module 1 of UNCTAD's Empowerment Program for the Members of the Lesotho National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC); (ii) Introduce Lesotho NTFC members to legal frameworks of trade facilitation such as the World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement; (iii) Improve Lesotho NTFC members' knowledge on international standards and recommendations in trade facilitation.

More information is available here: <https://unctad.org/en/pages/MeetingDetails.aspx?meetingid=2289>

Training of Trainers Module 4 of UNCTAD Empowerment Programme for National Trade Facilitation Committees in Eswatini, 9-12 December 2019, Lobamba, Eswatini

Financed by the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting via Her Majesty Revenue and Customs (HMRC), the event addressed Eswatini's National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC) members. The objectives were: (i) To train selected members of the Eswatini Trade Facilitation Committee as trainers; (ii) To draft a knowledge transfer strategy for new NTFC members; (iii) To launch the Eswatini National Trade Facilitation Roadmap.

More information is available here: <https://unctad.org/en/pages/MeetingDetails.aspx?meetingid=2342> / https://unctad.org/en/pages/dtl/ttl/trade-facilitation.aspx?Me=,ows_EventDate,ascending&Pu=16,5,,&Ne=21,5,,

UNECE

34th UN/CEFACT Forum, 28 October - 1 November 2019, IMO, Albert Embankment, London, UK



The United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) held its 34th Forum in London from 28 October to 1 November 2019. Multiple conferences were organized as side events, including on Single Window: Implementation experiences and best practices; and Facilitating Data exchange: the role of Web APIs.

More information is available here: <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=51801>

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

International Conference on UN/CEFACT e-business Standards and UN/LOCODE, 25-28 November 2019, Xiamen, China

The International Conference on UN/CEFACT e-Business Standards and UN/LOCODE was organized by UNECE and hosted by China National Institute of Standardization (CNIS). The conference highlighted the role of standards for digital cross-border trade. A number of latest eBusiness initiatives from China were presented too. The third meeting of the “United Nations Code for Trade and Transport Locations” (UN/LOCODE) Advisory Group was also held at that time.

More information is available here: <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=52215>

First Session – Advisory Group on Advanced Technologies, 30 January 2020, Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland

The United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) has proposed the establishment of an Advisory Group in order to advise and support the UNECE secretariat and UN/CEFACT on advanced technologies in trade facilitation and electronic business. The technologies in question include Blockchain, Internet of Things (IoT), and Artificial Intelligence (AI) - the most recent areas of rapid development in the international supply chain.

The first session of the Advanced Technology Advisory Group took place in Geneva on 30 January 2020.

More information is available here: <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=53186>

UPU

The 4th Postal Operational Readiness for E-commerce (ORE) workshop, 4–8 November 2019, Bangkok, Thailand

As part of implementation of the Istanbul World Postal Strategy to improve the interoperability of network infrastructure, the UPU launched the operational readiness for e-commerce (ORE) project for the 2017-2020 cycle. The workshop was for ORE country project managers and their team members responsible for transport. The objectives of workshop include: (i) Follow-up of ORE roadmap and action plan to evaluate the progress made and the way forward; (ii) Better understanding of IQRS reports: E2E reliability, Dashboards, Dashboards by month, Transport reports, customs reports, compliance reports; (iii) Enhance skills of participants on usage of IT tools (IPS, CDS). The workshop was attended by 42 postal representatives of the Asia region.

Disaster Risk Management Regional Training Workshop for Asia and Pacific countries, 11–13 November 2019, Bangkok, Thailand

With the assistance of several organizations (including UNESAP), UPU published a guide to disaster risk management for the postal sector in 2015. This comprehensive guide addresses all types of hazards and touches upon every aspect of disaster risk management (DRM). By attending the workshop, participants had acquired a basic understanding of DRM and practical knowledge about DRM planning and training, and to use the knowledge acquired to promote DRM activities and develop disaster resilient postal services once back in their countries. The workshop was attended by 22 postal representatives of the Asia Pacific region.

WCO

14th Annual PICARD Conference, 22-24 October 2019, Skopje, North Macedonia

The World Customs Organization and the Customs Administration of the Republic of North Macedonia are pleased to announce that the 14th annual WCO PICARD Conference took place in Skopje, North Macedonia, from 22 to 24 October 2019. Additional donor support was being provided by the Korea Customs Service. The WCO PICARD Conference provided a platform for academics and policymakers from around the world to present their research, interact, and discuss vital policy issues that impact Customs and international trade.

More information is available here: <https://www.eiseverywhere.com/ehome/picard2019/916719/>

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1st WCO Global Communication Strategies Conference, 8-9 October 2019, Brussels, Belgium

In line with the WCO's theme for 2019, the theme of the conference "Communicating seamlessly in the digital age" provided participants with the opportunity to probe the smart use of technological solutions and innovations, and better understand how they are reshaping the Customs communication landscape.

More information is available here:

<https://www.eiseverywhere.com/ehome/2019wcoconf/2019WCOCommConf/?t=762671287d3219f962b2c5d78c797a17>

WCO Regional Workshop on AEO, 16-20 December 2019, Kashiwa, Japan

The WCO Regional Workshop on raising awareness on the development of regional cooperation and strategy in the context of Authorized Economic Operators(AEO) was held on 16-20 December 2019 at the WCO Regional Training Center in Japan(Japan Customs Training Institute(CTI). The Workshop was organized in close cooperation with the Japan Customs and the ROCB A/P. A total of 25 Customs officials representing 21 Member administrations in the Asia Pacific Region attended the Workshop. The framework covered WCO tools to implement AEP and Mutual Recognition Arrangement/Agreement (MRA). In this workshop, the participants shared the situation and discussed such as draft concepts in the AEO 2.0 to take further steps forward.

More information is available here: <http://www.rocb-ap.org/article-detail/526/>

WCO Sub-Regional Train-the-Trainer Workshop on Customs Valuation, 20-24 January 2020, Bangkok, Thailand



The workshop was organized in cooperation with the ROCB A/P as well as with the generous support by Thai Customs Department. A total of 14 participants and four observers representing seven WCO Members in the ASEAN Region. With the aim to develop a pool of expert trainers to increase the capacity in conducting training on Customs Valuation, the resource persons explained and facilitated discussion on the WTO Valuation Agreement and relevant WCO tools by using practical examples.

More information is available here: <http://www.rocb->

[ap.org/article-detail/530/](http://www.rocb-ap.org/article-detail/530/)

WTO-TFAF

Trade Facilitation Week 2019, 14-18 October 2019



Trade Facilitation Week took place at the WTO from 14 to 18 October. Events were centred around the WTO Trade Facilitation Committee on 15 October and the Committee's annual dedicated session on technical assistance on 16 October. Building on the success of a similar initiative in 2018, TFAF funded government officials with trade facilitation expertise from more than 50 LDC and developing country WTO Members to attend the week. Sessions organized by TFAF reflected an increasing focus on implementation of the Agreement following a successful push to meet notification deadlines over the summer. A special emphasis was placed on sessions designed to bring together development partners and

Members seeking assistance to implement provisions of the Agreement designated under Category C – requiring technical assistance to implement. In this regard, a cocktail reception allowing bilateral discussion of TACB needs rounded up Monday October 14.

More information is available here: <https://www.tfafacility.org/trade-facilitation-week-october-2019>

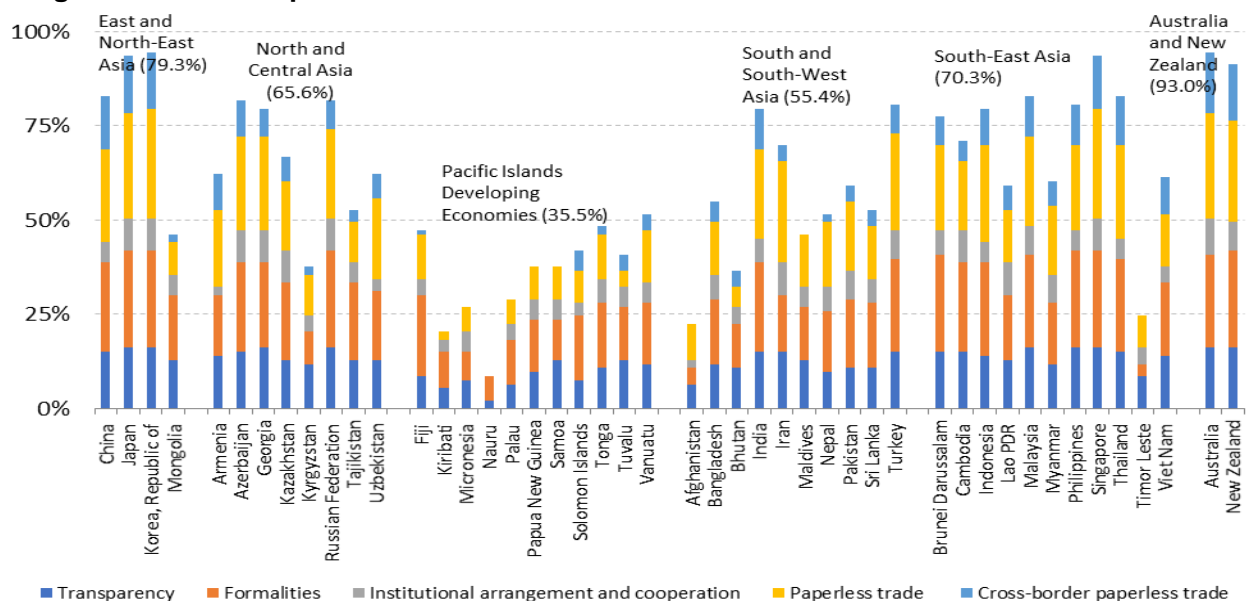
Highlights from ADB-ESCAP ASIA-PACIFIC TRADE FACILITATION REPORT 2019 Bridging trade finance gaps through technology

International trade is included as an important *Means of Implementation* of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Trade facilitation, or making trade procedures more efficient to ensure that engaging in licit trade is easier and cheaper for all, has been acknowledged as one of the keys to ensuring that trade contributes to addressing the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development in a more balanced way.

Trade costs in Asia and the Pacific remain high despite having declined modestly and vary widely across subregions. The ESCAP-World Bank Trade Cost Database shows that the cost of trading goods is highest among the Pacific island developing economies, followed by the Russian Federation and Central Asia, and South Asian economies. Both Central Asia and the Pacific have, however, made progress in reducing trade costs with East and Southeast Asia. East Asia shows the lowest trade costs in the region, followed by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) middle-income members.

The 2019 Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation shows significant progress toward streamlining trade procedures in the region. The average implementation rate of trade facilitation measures in Asia and the Pacific jumped by 10 percentage points between 2017 and 2019, to nearly 60%. The Russian Federation and Central Asian countries made the most progress, as implementation rates increased by more than 13 percentage points to 65.6% in 2019. The Pacific islands made the least progress. Implementation in 2019 varies by subregional group. After Australia and New Zealand, the highest average rate is found in East Asia (79.3%), followed by South-East Asia and Timor-Leste (70.3%), the Russian Federation and Central Asia (65.6%), and South Asia, Iran, and Turkey (55.4%). The Pacific lags at 35.5% (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Overall implementation of trade facilitation measures in 46 Asia-Pacific countries



Source: United Nations Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, unfsurvey.org, 2019

Implementation also varies across groups of measures. Transparency measures, along with many of the general trade facilitation measures featured in the World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement (WTO TFA) are well implemented across the region, averaging implementation rates close to 80%. In contrast, cross-border

paperless trade measures such as *electronic exchange of certificates of origin or of sanitary or phytosanitary certificates* have been initiated in less than 40% of the economies of the region, often only on a pilot basis. Measures targeted at agricultural trade facilitation have a regional average implementation rate of nearly 50%. However, low average implementation rates for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs, 36%) and women-owned firms (23%) show that very few countries have customized trade facilitation measures. Trade finance facilitation measures, such as the provision of trade finance through electronic single window systems, are found to have been considered by only a few countries, and rarely implemented (see Figure 1).

Impact of Trade Facilitation on Trade Costs

A simulation analysis demonstrates that implementation of trade facilitation measures that emphasizes trade digitalization, combined with improved maritime connectivity and access to credit issues, can reduce trade costs significantly. Simulated implementation was tested for different packages of trade facilitation measures. As shown in table 1, implementation of binding and non-binding WTO TFA measures reduces trade costs, on average, by 5% under a partial implementation scenario, and by 9% under the more ambitious full implementation scenario. Under a WTO TFA+ scenario where digital trade facilitation measures not specifically included in the WTO TFA are implemented, the average trade cost across countries declines by almost 17%.

Table 1: Changes in trade costs in Asia and the Pacific resulting from implementation of trade facilitation and paperless trade

Asia-Pacific: trade costs model		WTO TFA (binding only)		WTO TFA (binding + non-binding)		WTO TFA+ (binding + non-binding + other paperless and cross-border paperless trade)	
		Partially implemented	Fully implemented	Partially implemented	Fully implemented	Partially implemented	Fully implemented
Model 1							
Overall	trade facilitation	-2.84%	-5.79%	-4.57%	-9.39%	-10.52%	-16.92%
Model 2							
General	trade facilitation measures	-1.52%	-3.05%	-1.99%	-4.29%	-2.35%	-4.76%
Digital	trade facilitation measures	-	-	-1.97%	-3.23%	-9.53%	-13.34%

Source: United Nations Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, untfsurvey.org, 2019

While continuous implementation of TFA-related measures is important, economies in Asia and the Pacific need to move gradually toward digital trade facilitation. The 2019 Survey confirms that most countries in the region are engaged in implementing measures to improve transparency, enhance interagency coordination and cooperation, and streamline the fees and formalities associated with trade. However, implementation of bilateral and/or subregional paperless trade systems remains mostly at the pilot stage. The Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-Border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific, a United Nations treaty developed by more than 25 countries at different stages of development, provides the inclusive and flexible intergovernmental platform needed to accelerate progress, while leaving no one behind.

Bridging Trade Finance Gaps through Technology

Trade finance supports international trade and more inclusive growth. International trade and policy reforms to lower barriers to trade are widely known to benefit inclusive growth. Access to trade finance allows businesses to fund operating costs and deal with various risks, whether commercial, exchange rate, transportation, or political. These risks are addressed through different instruments such as letters of credit, bank guarantees, and export credit insurance. While advanced economies typically have financial systems that provide widespread access to funding, developing economies find access to finance far more difficult— particularly for SMEs.

Unmet demand for trade finance is persistently large. An indicative measure of rejected trade finance applications shows a gap of about \$1.4 trillion–\$1.6 trillion, or around 8%–10% of world merchandise trade. Around half of global trade finance proposals originate from Asia and the Pacific, while 40% of rejected applications come from the region. SMEs are most affected as they tend to have higher rejection rates than larger firms. Banks have higher transaction and information costs when dealing with smaller companies, including anti-money-laundering/know-your-customer requirements and the low credit ratings of issuing banks and importers. High costs also make it unprofitable for small businesses to use trade finance instruments such as letters of credit.

There are three main challenges in providing trade finance. First, the continued use of paper means that documentary transactions in trade finance are prone to costly delays and errors. Letters of credit, for instance, may involve examination and validation of 10 to 20 documents involving more than 20 parties in information exchange and transmission. Second, financial institutions are required to conduct significant due diligence, which raises the cost of supplying trade financing. Third, while banks require knowledge of their clients to mitigate information asymmetry, this may pose significant hurdles in SMEs accessing finance.

Digitalization and automation may help address some long-standing issues in trade finance, such as high transaction processing costs and costly know-your-customer procedures. SMEs are usually burdened by high interest rates and collateral requirements, while banks are discouraged by the high cost of regulatory compliance. Technologies can help cut costs and facilitate transactions by eliminating manual documentation and enable accumulated digital information on SME profiles for lenders to assess risk. E-commerce platforms and cloud-based invoicing, for example, allow direct transactions among smaller firms with reduced costs. Blockchain technology and artificial intelligence can facilitate due diligence and payments for SMEs that have difficulty in accessing bank credit. Such technologies utilize big data and alternate credit information that can enable more efficient know-your-customer compliance and due diligence. These technologies offer solutions that substantially improve efficiencies at various stages of international trade and therefore draw more SMEs into the system.

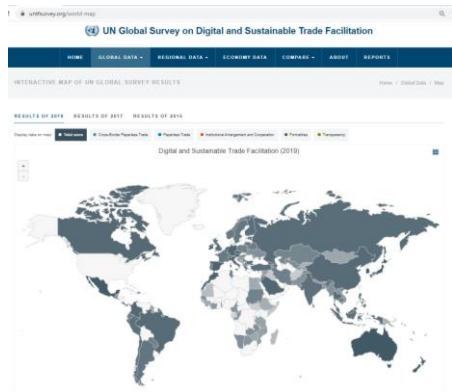
Despite its rapid expansion, digitalization and fintech in trade finance still need to overcome major challenges. Digitalization is far from complete and implementation costs are one of its biggest issues. Blockchain technology is not entirely free of the risks related to transparency, cybersecurity, and operations, and can pose regulatory challenges. Fragmented digitalization can also create problems with digital implementation, making it difficult to be compatible and interoperable with other parties' systems.

For more details please refer to “**Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Report 2019: Bridging trade finance gaps through technology**”, ADB-ESCAP, 2019, available here <https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/asia-pacific-trade-facilitation-report-2019.pdf>

RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS

Highlighted resource

UNTFSURVEY.ORG



To help countries benchmark and reduce the time and cost of trading across border, the UN Regional Commissions jointly conduct the UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, led by ESCAP. The WTO TFA+ Survey currently covers 128 economies around the globe, and 53 measures related to the WTO's Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), as well as to other emerging regional and global initiatives on paperless trade or e-trade, such as the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-Border Paperless Trade in

Asia and the Pacific. The Survey leads to the production of a Global Report and five Regional Reports, 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. The Survey is conducted in collaboration with growing number of global and regional partners, since 2015 and every two years and all data is now available through an interactive website.

Available here: <https://unftsurvey.org/>

ADB



Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Report 2019: Bridging Trade Finance Gaps through Technology, September 2019

The report reviews trade facilitation progress in Asia and the Pacific, including recent trends in paperless trade and transit facilitation and its impact on trade costs. Includes a special chapter discussing how trade finance gaps could be bridged by technology.

Available here: <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/523896/asia-pacific-trade-facilitation-report-2019.pdf>

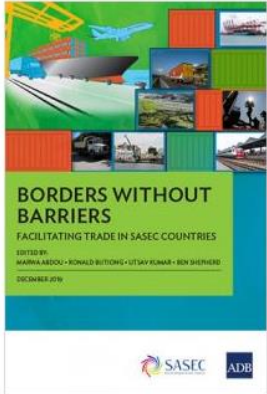


Implementing the Trade Facilitation Agreement: From Global Impacts to Value Chains, September 2019

This paper uses a new methodology that factors in general equilibrium effects to estimate the potential impacts of the World Trade Organization's Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA).

Available here: <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/528566/swp-067-implementing-trade-facilitation-agreement.pdf>

RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS



Borders without Barriers, December 2019

This book presents an analysis of the state of trade facilitation in member countries of the South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) program. It includes country-level studies and identifies four common trade facilitation priorities among SASEC countries.

Available here: <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/541971/borders-without-barriers-facilitating-trade-sasec.pdf>

APEC



Best Practices of Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) Implementation within APEC Economies: Opportunities and Challenges, August 2019

This report summarizes the discussion from the APEC Workshop on Best Practices of Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) Implementation within APEC Economies: Opportunities and Challenges held in Bali, Indonesia on 19 – 20 June 2019. The workshop gave emphasis on discussing topics including streamlining bureaucracy, legislative framework, institutional procedure and ICT development.

Available here: <https://www.apec.org/Publications/2019/08/Best-Practices-of-Trade-Facilitation-Agreement-Implementation-within-APEC-Economies>



Compendium of Best Practice Technology Solutions for Single Window Interoperability, November 2019

This compendium takes a detailed look at the current state of the APEC member single window systems focusing on the following: (i) Use of WCO data model and or use of International Standards; (ii) Messaging technology used; (iii) Governance (government agency, private corporation, public-private partnership); (iv) IT infrastructure; (v) Openness to adopting international interoperability; (vi) How responsive is the receiving NSW to requests from another NSW; (vii) NSW autonomy; (viii) Service level agreements; (iv) Sustainability; (x) Features/functionality

There is also a myriad of associations and platforms that are forming or are in place today trying to piece together the challenge of international trade and the issues of interoperability between regions and trading blocs. The emergence of blockchain has led to a sharp increase in trade associations and platforms built on distributed ledger technology. The compendium takes in an in-depth look into some of these associations and platforms to analyze their success factors and if APEC members can accelerate the integration of their single window systems by leveraging on this technology.

Available here: <https://www.apec.org/Publications/2019/11/Compendium-of-Best-Practice-Technology-Solutions-for-Single-Window-Interoperability>

ASEAN



ASEAN ECONOMIC INTEGRATION BRIEF

Featuring in the first article of this issue of the AEIB, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Commerce of Thailand, H.E. Jurin Laksanawisit, who is also Chair of the ASEAN Economic Ministers, highlights key progress and achievements in the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) this year. Taking up the theme of 'Advancing Partnership for Sustainability', Thailand's ASEAN Chairmanship is focused on ensuring ASEAN's readiness towards the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), enhancement of connectivity, and the attainment of economic development that is inclusive and sustainable.

Available here: https://asean.org/storage/2019/11/AEIB_6th_Issue.pdf

CAREC – ADB

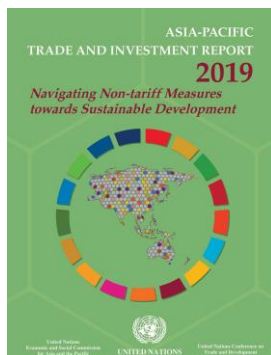


CAREC Corridor Performance Measurement and Monitoring Annual Report 2018, November 2019

This report analyzes 2018 data from the Corridor Performance Measurement and Monitoring (CPMM) mechanism that assesses the efficiency of the six CAREC transport corridors. The data show steady average improvement in speed without delay, largely attributed to infrastructure investment. Delays at the border decreased but remain a major hindrance to efficient trade. This report informs policy makers about transport and trade blockages, and aims to help guide infrastructure investment and trade facilitation reform and modernization.

Available here: <https://www.carecprogram.org/?publication=carec-corridor-performance-measurement-monitoring-2018>

ESCAP



Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report 2019: Navigating Non-tariff Measures towards Sustainable Development, 14 October 2019

The Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report (APTIR) is a biennial publication prepared by the Trade, Investment and Innovation Division of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific to provide insights into the impact of recent and emerging developments in trade and foreign direct investment on countries' abilities to meet the challenges of achieving sustainable development.

The theme of APTIR 2019 is Navigating Non-tariff Measures (NTMs) towards Sustainable Development. The Report provides an overview of NTM trends and developments in the Asia and the Pacific region, and explores the best ways to navigate NTMs

towards sustainable development goals and building on good practices at the national, regional, and multilateral levels. It evaluates the impacts of NTMs on trade and investment, based on both quantitative analysis and private sector surveys. The Report highlights the importance of aligning NTMs with international standards, and of simplifying procedures related to these regulatory measures. It also includes a review of good practices for addressing NTMs unilaterally, as well as through multilateral and regional trade agreements. The report closes by offering sets of national- and regional-level policy recommendations for streamlining NTMs for sustainable benefits.

Available here: <https://www.unescap.org/publications/aptir2019>

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EIF

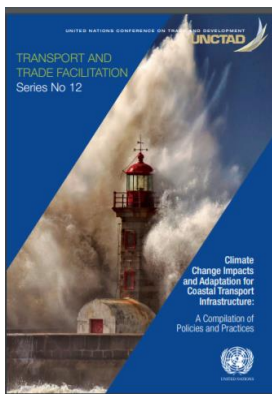


Trade for Development News by EIF Aid for Trade & LDCs, 2019

Trade for Development News is a place to share EIF stories on the ground, across 47 least developed countries (LDCs), 4 recently graduated countries and several themes and sectors. From op-eds to impact stories, videos to photo essays, this platform is a window into the far-reaching impact of the EIF. Also designed with a strong focus on partner content in mind, Trade for Development News is intended to be a knowledge hub on all things trade for development and aid for trade. We invite you to share your stories with us, so we can disseminate them further to our readers.

Available here: <https://www.enhancedif.org/sites/default/files/trade4devnews-policy-series.pdf>

UNCTAD

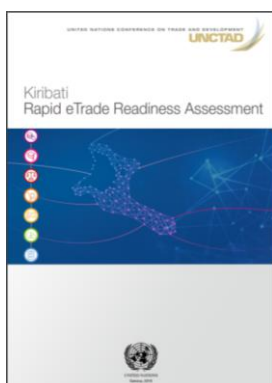


Climate Change Impacts and Adaptation for Coastal Transport Infrastructure: A Compilation of Policies and Practices, January 2019

Transport and Trade Facilitation Series, No 12, Ports are critical infrastructure assets that serve as catalysts of economic growth and development and are key-nodes in the network of closely interconnected global supply-chains.

At the same time, ports and other coastal transport infrastructure are exposed to the risk of climate change impacts, particularly in view of their location in coastal zones, low-lying areas and deltas. The document also provides a brief overview of climate change impacts on coastal transportation, and of recent trends and projections regarding some key climate drivers of relevance to coastal zones, as well as of approaches to risk-assessment and adaptation.

Available here: https://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/dtlitlb2019d1_en.pdf



Kiribati Rapid eTrade Readiness Assessment, 2019

With this report, UNCTAD contributes to the recommendations of the joint WTO/UNCTAD/PIFS June 2017 Workshop on e-Commerce for the Pacific to have all PIFS members benefit from an eTrade Readiness Assessment as a first step towards developing a coherent regional e-commerce policy.

The Kiribati Rapid eTrade Readiness Assessment and action matrix also contribute to the Pacific Aid-for-Trade strategy. With the eTrade for all partners, UNCTAD is committed to support Kiribati and other Pacific Islands Nations in their resolve to harness the potential of e-commerce for development.

Available here: https://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/dtlstict2019d15_en.pdf

UNECE



Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation Implementation in the UNECE Region, December 2019

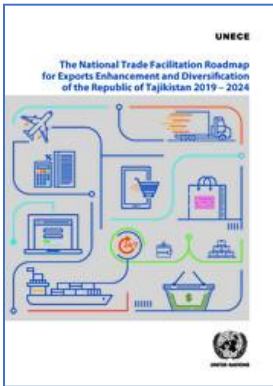
Under the Joint UNRC Approach to Trade Facilitation, since 2015 the United Nations Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation has been successfully conducted by five United Nations Regional Commissions for Africa (ECA), Europe (ECE), Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and West Asia (ESCWA).

The UNECE Regional Report based on the survey findings have been published in December 2019. In the UNECE region, the average implementation rate is higher than the global average reaching 72.6%, marking a 5.6%-percentage point increase since 2017. The survey for the region, covering a total of 42 member States shows improvement in all

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categories of measures. This year's survey includes a revamped-section on trade facilitation measures related to the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda including SMEs, women participation and sectors like agriculture.

Available here: http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trade/Publications/ECE_TRADE_448-UNECE-RegionalReport.pdf

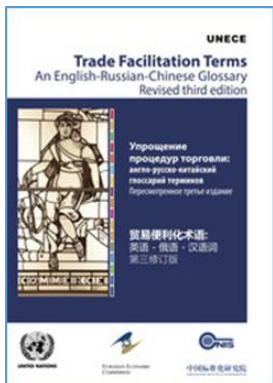


The National Trade Facilitation Roadmap for Exports Enhancement and Diversification of the Republic of Tajikistan 2019 – 2024, December 2019

This National Trade Facilitation Roadmap for Exports Enhancement and Diversification provides the framework for a national trade facilitation reform programme over a five-year period (2019-2024) and includes a strategic vision supported by goals and activities, and performance indicators to measure progress against set targets. It is the result of a consultative effort of the National Coordination Committee on Trade Facilitation (CCTF), under the UNECE guidance, and in collaboration with key international partners including the ITC and UNCTAD. This document has been developed in the context of the project on “Removing regulatory and procedural barriers to trade in the Republic of Tajikistan” at the request of the Government.

The Roadmap can be accessed here:

http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trade/Publications/ECE_TRADE_450_NTFR-Tajikistan.pdf

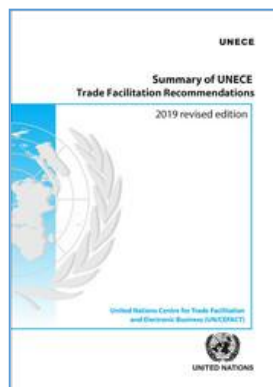


Trade Facilitation Terms: an English-Russian-Chinese Glossary, December 2019

This Glossary represents an English-Russian-Chinese dictionary of terms that are widely used in trade facilitation. The purpose of this Glossary is not to provide standard definitions for trade facilitation terms, but to help translators into Russian and Chinese; trainers building capacity on trade facilitation in countries and organizations that use Russian and Chinese; as well as practitioners from the public and private sectors, to establish a harmonized way of using trade facilitation terms in the three languages.

The Glossary can be accessed here:

http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trade/Publications/ECE_TRADE_377Rev.2_01.pdf



Summary of UNECE Trade Facilitation Recommendations, December 2019

This revised publication provides an updated summary on the status and availability of the UNECE trade facilitation recommendations and will serve as a useful reference document for both governments and traders. This year's publication includes summaries for Recommendation No. 37 (Single Submission Portal) and Recommendation No. 43 (Sustainable Procurement).

The summary can be accessed here:

http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trade/Publications/ECE_TRADE_442-Rev.1_CF-SummaryRecs.pdf

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Trade Facilitation White Paper on Smart Containers, December 2019

This publication (ECE/TRADE/446) provides a detailed look into the various benefits of using Smart Containers as well as the various potential use cases for this technology. This publication offer a useful aid to all parties interested in the technical applications and implementation of IoT technologies and that this important process will continue to contribute to the enhancement and growth of international trade.

Available here: <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=53347>



Accelerating action for a sustainable and circular garment and footwear industry, through transparency and traceability of value chains (ECE/TRADE/449)

UNECE, with its United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and e-Business (UN/CEFACT), published a Policy Paper (ECE/TRADE/449) on accelerating action for a sustainable and circular garment and footwear industry, through transparency and traceability of value chains. UNECE has engaged with industry stakeholders and recommends the launch of a framework initiative.

Available here:

[http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trade/Publications/ECE_TRADE_449-](http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trade/Publications/ECE_TRADE_449-AcceleratingTanspRraceabilityTextile.pdf)

[AcceleratingTanspRraceabilityTextile.pdf](http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trade/Publications/ECE_TRADE_449-AcceleratingTanspRraceabilityTextile.pdf)

UNESCAP



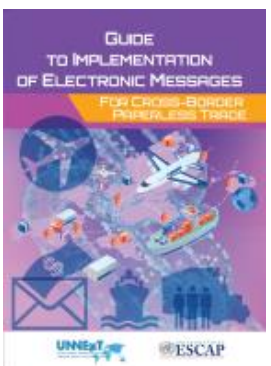
Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation Report: Asia-Pacific 2019, 1 September 2019

This report presents the results of the third UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, undertaken jointly by the five United Nations Regional Commissions for Africa (ECA), Europe (ECE), Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and West Asia (ESCWA).

The survey covers 46 countries in Asia and the Pacific, consisting of a questionnaire that includes 53 trade facilitation measures under four groups: “General Trade Facilitation”, “Digital Trade Facilitation”, “Sustainable Trade Facilitation” and “Trade Finance”.

The results of the survey will enable countries and development partners to better understand and monitor progress on trade facilitation, support evidence-based public policies, share best practices and identify capacity building and technical assistance needs. For more reports please visit our resource page here or untfsurvey.org.

Available here: <https://www.unescap.org/resources/digital-and-sustainable-trade-facilitation-report-asia-pacific-2019>



UNNExT Guide to Implementation of Electronic Messages for Cross-Border Paperless Trade

The UNNExT Guide to Implementation of Electronic Messages for Cross-border Paperless Trade provides a stepwise approach on how to develop and implement an e-message for paperless trade data exchange. Building on the UNNExT Business Process Analysis Guide To Simplify Trade Procedures and the UNNExT Data Harmonization and Modelling Guide for Single Window Environment, it provides guidance on how to systematically move from process analysis and modelling to data harmonization and modeling, and then to designing an e-message. The Guide is also intended to be an

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UNNEXT instrument for building technical capacity of stakeholders in their development of an e-message for use in Single Windows and paperless trade systems, including under cross-border electronic data exchange environment.

Available here: <https://www.unescap.org/resources/guide-implementation-electronic-messages-cross-border-paperless-trade>

World Bank

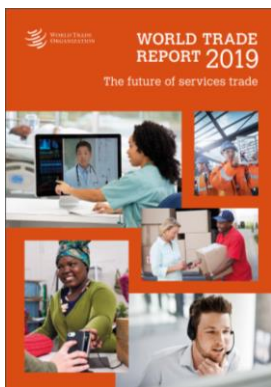


Global Economic Prospects, January 2020 : Slow Growth, Policy Challenges

Global growth is projected to reach 2.5 percent in 2020, slightly faster than the post-crisis low registered last year. While growth could be stronger if reduced trade tensions lead to a sustained reduction in uncertainty, the balance of risks to the outlook is to the downside. Growth in emerging market and developing economies (EMDEs) is also expected to remain subdued, continuing a decade of disappointing outcomes. A steep and widespread productivity growth slowdown has been underway in EMDEs since the global financial crisis, despite the largest, fastest, and most broad-based accumulation of debt since the 1970s. In addition, many EMDEs, including low-income countries, face the challenge of phasing out price controls that impose heavy fiscal burdens and dampen investment. These circumstances add urgency to the need to implement measures to rebuild macroeconomic policy space and to undertake reforms to rekindle productivity growth. These efforts need to be supplemented by policies to promote inclusive long-term growth and accelerate poverty alleviation.

Available here: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/33044>

WTO



World Trade Report 2019 The future of services trade

Services have become the most dynamic component of global trade, with an increasingly important role in the global economy and in everyday life. Yet the extent of services' contribution to global trade is not always fully understood. The World Trade Report 2019 attempts to remedy this by examining how trade in services is evolving and why services trade matters.

Available here: https://www.wto.org/english/res_e/booksp_e/01_wtr19_0_e.pdf

UPCOMING EVENTS

Event	Date	Venue	Organizer
Third Session Team of Specialists on Sustainable Fisheries	4 February 2020	Geneva, Switzerland	UNECE
Trade Facilitation Committee Meeting	11-12 February 2020	Geneva, Switzerland	WTO-TFAF
First Meeting of the Committee on Trade and Investment 2020	17-18 February 2020	Putrajaya, Malaysia	APEC
The WTO TFA: Supporting Strategic and Effective Implementation in the Pacific Region	19 March 2020	Sydney, Australia	WTO-TFAF, WB, PIFS and CS
WCO Global AEO Conference	10 March 2020	Dubai, UAE	WCO
The 4th ORE¹ workshop on the physical products specifications and operational efficiency, integrated IT solutions for e-commerce	23-27 March 2020	Nadi, Fiji	UPU
Sustainable Trade: What Role for Voluntary Sustainability Standards?	24 March 2020	Bangkok, Thailand	ESCAP
Public-Private Dialogue on Understanding Non-Tariff Measures on Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries	1-2 April 2020	Bali, Indonesia	APEC
Workshop on Cross border exchange of electronic CITES permits	7-April-2020	Bangkok (tbc)	ECE/ESCAP
STDF Working Group on border risk management	7-8 April 2020	Sydney, Australia	STDF
Sixth Meeting of the Interim Intergovernmental Steering Group on Cross-Border Paperless Trade Facilitation	8 April 2020	Bangkok, Thailand	ESCAP
2nd Forum on Trade Digitalization for Sustainable Regional Integration	9 April 2020	Bangkok, Thailand	ESCAP
Capacity building workshop on Trade and Transport Facilitation Monitoring Mechanism (TTFMM)	10 April 2020	Bangkok, Thailand	ESCAP
2nd WCO Global Origin Conference	15 April 2020	Dominican Republic	WCO
Ministers Responsible for Trade Meeting (MRT)	20-21 April 2020	Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia	APEC
Asia-Pacific Regional Integration: Measuring, Monitoring and Improving Performance for Sustainable Development	22-23 April 2020	Bangkok, Thailand	ESCAP
35th UN/CEFACT Forum, Geneva	27 April -1 May 2020	Geneva, Switzerland	UN/CEFACT
26th Session UN/CEFACT Plenary	4-5 May 2020	Geneva, Switzerland	UN/CEFACT
2020 WCO Technology Conference and Exhibition	1-5 June 2020	Bali, Indonesia	WCO, ADB
The 5th ORE workshop on the physical products specifications and operational efficiency, integrated IT solutions for e-commerce	1-5 June 2020	Bangkok, Thailand	UPU
ITD-ESCAP Workshop on Trade Facilitation for Sustainable Development	23-26 June 2020	Bangkok, Thailand	ESCAP

¹ Operational Readiness for E-commerce

Highlight

Philippines

PH accedes to UN treaty on paperless trade across Asia-Pacific, 27 December 2019

The Philippines was the first in ASEAN to approve a UN treaty facilitating paperless trade across the region, the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) said on Thursday.

Thus far in Southeast Asia, only the Philippines had acceded to the United Nation's Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific, UNESCAP said on a social media post. UNESCAP said the Philippines acceded to the agreement on Monday, Dec 23.

The framework agreement, which had been deposited with the UN secretary general in New York, is aimed at "accelerating the implementation of digital trade facilitation measures for trade and development," UNESCAP said.

"Designed as an inclusive instrument accessible to countries at all levels of development to develop their capacity to engage in cross-border paperless trade, the final treaty text was adopted by the [Unescap] in May 2016," it explained.

"Trade cost reductions expected from full implementation of cross-border paperless trade are estimated at 10-30 percent of existing transactions costs, depending on the current state of paperless trade development in the participating countries. Significant benefits in terms of trade compliance are also expected," UNESCAP said. INQ

<https://business.inquirer.net/286167/ph-accedes-to-un-treaty-on-paperless-trade-across-asia-pacific#ixzz6CsTDYxGf>

definitions are based on the Industry Blueprint, published by DCSA and its carrier members in 2019, which established a consistent vocabulary and proposed a common set of industry processes. The T&T standards are aligned with the UN/CEFACT (United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business) standards to provide a global industry framework that preserves existing investments and streamlines communication among all supply chain participants.

<https://www.hellenicshippingnews.com/dcsa-establishes-track-and-trace-standards-for-the-global-container-shipping-industry/>

Trade facilitation & role of an effective post-clearance audit regime, 28 January 2020

The international trade is under constant pressure from the challenges like terrorism, trade agreements, smuggling of contrabands and trade barriers etc. In this context, the role of customs became more indispensable. Customs administrations have to ensure safe, secure and facilitated trade controls with key focus on revenue collection and enforcement. Interestingly, the slogan of this year International Customs Day, 26th January 2020, "Customs fostering Sustainability for People, Prosperity and the Planet", has highlighted the importance of safe and secure supply chain network. A progressive trade activity in a region directly contributes towards a politically peaceful, economically empowered and environmentally healthy society.

<https://www.brecorder.com/2020/01/28/565438/trade-facilitation-role-of-an-effective-post-clearance-audit-regime/>

Global

DCSA Establishes Track and Trace Standards for the Global Container Shipping Industry, 29 January 2020

The Digital Container Shipping Association (DCSA), a neutral, non-profit group established to further digitalisation of container shipping through technology standards, today in conjunction with its nine member carriers, published a common set of processes, as well as data and interface standards for Track and Trace (T&T). The standards can be implemented by carriers, shippers and third parties to enable cross-carrier shipment tracking. This is the first of many initiatives to be put forth by DCSA to transform inefficient practices and accelerate digitalisation through a unified industry effort. The DCSA T&T standard comprises an information model and interface standards that can be freely downloaded from the DCSA website. The data model ensures track and trace data definitions are consistent for all users, leveraging any system. These

New Zealand and Singapore

Unpacking the digital economy partnership agreement (DEPA), 28 January 2020

The Digital Economy Partnership Agreement (DEPA) was concluded last week between Chile, New Zealand and Singapore. It represents a new type of trade agreement—one aimed at facilitating trade and creating a framework for the digital economy. As our parallel Talking Trade post today outlines, governments have been working on multiple options to try to craft rules to govern the digital world. Solutions range from unilateral to multilateral approaches.

<http://asiantradecentre.org/talkingtrade/unpacking-the-digital-economy-partnership-agreement-depa>

Saudi Arabia and Bahrain

Trade facilitation agreement linking Saudi, Bahraini Customs, 5 January 2020

(MENAFN) According to a report by Arab News, Saudi and Bahraini Customs signed in Riyadh a deal of mutual recognition of the Authorized Economic Operator Program (AEO) and the deal plans to improve the security of the supply chain and the advantages of trade facilitation offered by the AEO. They said this agreement will enhance intra-trade and overcome obstacles that limit the flexibility of trade exchange, in addition to strengthening and consolidating the principle of partnership between customs and the private sector.

<https://menafn.com/1099508679/Trade-facilitation-agreement-linking-Saudi-Bahraini-Customs>

United Arab Emirate

Dubai Customs celebrates International Customs Day and 3rd UAE Customs Week, 28 January 2020

Dubai Customs celebrated the International Customs Day and the 3rd UAE Customs Week today Sunday 26th January with the theme “Dubai Customs: Driving Sustainability”. The events of the 3rd UAE Customs Week kicked off at the Etihad Museum with the presence of Sultan bin Sulayem, DP World Group Chairman & CEO and Chairman of Ports, Customs and Free Zone Corporation, Ahmed bin Lahej, Director General of Federal Customs Authority and Ahmed Mahboob Musabih, Director General of Dubai Customs.

<https://www.logisticsmiddleeast.com/34997-dubai-customs-celebrates-international-customs-day-and-3rd-uae-customs-week>

Malaysia

Towards Shared Prosperity: Malaysia Begins Host Year in Putrajaya, 13 January 2020

Media registration is open for the First APEC Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM1) and related meetings in Putrajaya, Malaysia from 3 February to 22 February 2020. Close to 1500 policymakers, business leaders and academics from 21 APEC member economies will gather in Malaysia's administrative capital to deliberate and advance a policy agenda for the region's most pressing issues in the digital era, including multilateralism, trade and investment, human capital development, and sustainability.

https://www.apec.org/Press/News-Releases/2020/0113_som1