

TRADE FACILITATION PROGRAMME

MAKING TRADE EASIER AND FASTER



GLOBAL CONTEXT

In an international environment where the falling tariffs and quotas represent less of a barrier to trade, trade facilitation has emerged as an important trade policy tool. The main objective of trade facilitation is to reduce complexities and costs associated with cumbersome border procedures and controls. World Bank estimates suggest that administrative hurdles arising from cumbersome border procedures can cause up to 75 per cent of delays of shipments.

The Agreement on Trade Facilitation signed at the ninth Ministerial Meeting of the World Trade Organization in 2013 is a major international achievement. It aims at reducing trade transactions costs and red tape, speeding up customs procedures and making trade easier and faster. Enhanced compliance with such multilateral trade rules and alignment of national and regional rules with the multilateral trade facilitation agreement is instrumental to achieving increased trade integration.

To facilitate the technical and institutional challenges resulting from compliance with the disciplines of the World Trade Organization, UNCTAD assists developing countries in the finalization of national trade facilitation implementation plans, in particular by providing support for the establishment of the National Trade Facilitation Committee, as well as in the establishment of national and regional trade facilitation coordinating mechanisms.

HOW IS TRADE FACILITATION SUPPORTED?

UNCTAD supports developing and least developed countries in the implementation of their trade facilitation plans. The plans are elaborated using a standardized questionnaire based on section I of the World Trade Organization Agreement on Trade Facilitation. For each country, they contain a description of the current situation for the trade facilitation measures analysed, a list of actions which would be required for the implementation of measures, the need for external resources, the proposed lead implementation agency and a preliminary sequencing of the measures.

With a view to ratification and implementation of the Agreement, UNCTAD support covers (a) assessing technical assistance needs and preparation of categorization of provisions of the Agreement; (b) tailored training on trade, transit and transport facilitation; (c) advisory services on ratification of the Agreement; and (d) assisting in the creation and sustainable operation of national trade facilitation committees.

In addition, UNCTAD manages an online repository – covering more than 90 countries – of data on and analyses of national trade facilitation bodies and assists several regional organizations in coordinating trade and transit facilitation reforms.

PROGRAMME FACTS AND FIGURES

Trade Facilitation
programme coverage: all regions

Programme start date: 2012

Number of countries assisted since 2014:
35 in the process of ratifying the World Trade
Organization Agreement on Trade Facilitation

**Number of countries benefiting from
UNCTAD assistance per year: 12 (average)**

Programme website:
unctad.org/TF



RESULTS AND IMPACT AT A GLANCE

Although the World Trade Organization Agreement on Trade Facilitation is fairly recent, there are already early indications of the impact of UNCTAD's trade facilitation work:

- Mauritius, the first African country to have ratified the Agreement, requested UNCTAD's assistance in the form of advisory services. These contributed to the Mauritius decision on 5 March 2015 to deposit at the World Trade Organization the instrument of acceptance of the Protocol incorporating the Agreement on Trade Facilitation into the Marrakesh Agreement that established the World Trade Organization. Mauritius is among the countries to have formally accepted the Protocol.
- UNCTAD has also assisted in developing the World Trade Organization Agreement implementation plans for 15 countries: Antigua and Barbuda, Burundi, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Gabon, Grenada, Guatemala, Jordan, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Paraguay, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and the United Republic of Tanzania. These countries figure among the 66 countries who have recently notified the World Trade Organization secretariat of their readiness to implement measures/obligations deriving from the Agreement.

DONORS/ FUNDING SOURCE

Current: China, Germany, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom

Past: Norway, Spain, United Nations Development Programme, European Commission