

HOW COUNTRIES CAN LEVERAGE TRADE FACILITATION TO DEFEAT THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC





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The COVID-19 pandemic has spotlighted border agencies' challenge to safeguarding public health while avoiding disruptions to the free movement of goods. These agencies are undertaking unprecedented measures to speed up import, export and transit of goods. At the same time, these agencies must cope with recent restrictive measures to trade whilst preserving trade flows and supply chains.

This paper presents trade facilitation solutions, supported by country cases, to defeat trade challenges imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The solutions seek to improve efficiency in four main areas: process optimization, cost reduction, transparency and cooperation enhancement, and full display of technology to ensure cross-border trade while reducing face-to-face interaction.

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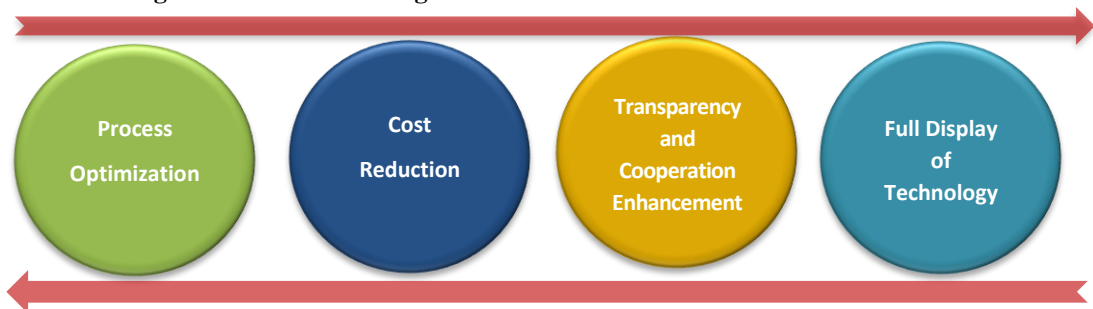
Background

As the COVID-19 pandemic advances exponentially, governments need to ensure that relief goods and other essential products can freely move across borders in the coming months. While many countries live in lockdown, trade channels remain operational. Customs and other border agencies [continue handling](#) the flow of goods.

Recently, traders have witnessed the proliferation of export restrictions through new controls and license requirements on medical devices. As a result, border posts are crowded, controls have multiplied, and truck queues are getting longer. Trade is proceeding at a slower pace, in times where agility and efficiency should be the highest priority to ensure an adequate response to the pandemic.

Against this background, trade facilitation emerges as the backbone to support border agencies in matching the safeguard of public health and the uninterrupted movement of goods. This document points out four categories of trade facilitation measures that countries can implement, including *inter alia* process optimization, cost reduction, transparency and cooperation enhancement, and full display of technology. Country cases offer concrete examples.

Figure 1: Four main categories COVID-19 related trade facilitation measures





1. Process optimization

An efficient response to the COVID-19 crisis requires to speed up and to streamline the release and clearance of essential goods. The following measures could prove relevant in further facilitating the process:



1.1. Expediting import procedures

These measures aim at accelerating import procedures to ensure that aid reaches frontlines fighting against the COVID-19 promptly, in line with criteria laid down in Article 7.8 of the [WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement \(TFA\)](#).

a Pre-arrival processing

Traders should be able to lodge, submit, register or check the goods declaration and supporting documents before the arrival of the goods in line with Article 7.1. and 8.1(b) of the WTO TFA. Thus, border agencies have the opportunity to pre-assess, identify and prioritize import procedures.

In [Cameroon](#), relief consignments and humanitarian assistance consignments are eligible for the following procedures: (i) Pre-arrival completion of Customs formalities, with inspection on quayside/runway followed by quick removal of the goods; (ii) Pre-arrival declaration procedure; (iii) Immediate collection subject to lodging of a provisional declaration and security.

b Fast-track lanes

Special counters and green lanes are working 24/7 at all clearance sites across countries, treating goods outside business hours and away from Customs offices. Article 7.8(a) and 11.5 of the TFA requires WTO Members to establish such special infrastructure or facility.

[India](#)'s Customs and Revenue Control Laboratory operates 24/7 to address any congestion, delay or surge, making available results and clearance at the earliest.

[Republic of Korea](#)'s Customs operates a 24/7 Customs clearance system for sanitary products, medical devices/equipment and raw materials imports. It also resolved clearance delays by utilizing channels such as Customs attachés, Customs hotlines of major trading partners, and fostering Customs cooperation.



c Release upon arrival

Customs can release goods prior to the submission of the goods declaration as laid down in Article 7.8.2(b), provided that the declarant will subsequently accomplish all formalities in respect of the clearance of goods.

Italy ordered direct release for devices to fight against the COVID-19, and rapid release of goods useful for limiting the spread of the COVID-19.

Brazil allows the early release of goods, before an inspection and Customs clearance, following the WCO's HS classification reference documents.

d Prioritization

According to [Annex J to Revised Kyoto Convention-Chapter 5](#) (hereinafter referred to as RKC Annex J-Chapter 5), when establishing workloads, Customs and other border agencies must give absolute priority to the clearance of relief consignments. They should carry out clearance of relief consignments for export, transit, temporary admission and import as a matter of urgency.

Japan's Customs prioritizes clearance for relief goods and goods necessary to maintain the lifeline. Besides, importers/exporters and Customs brokers can lodge import/export declarations to Customs offices which are more convenient to them, based on prior consultation with Customs.

Bosnia and Herzegovina provide priority to any shipments related to the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

Maldives enables the faster release of medical equipment.

e Trusted traders

Authorized Economic Operator (AEO), as established under Article 7.7 of the WTO TFA, can provide further facilities to expedite the release and clearance of relief consignments and essential goods during the crisis. These benefits multiply when countries mutually recognize the equivalence of their AEO schemes.

The [WCO](#) affirms that benefits are twofold. Initially, AEO's compliance record will allow expediting procedures relating to the entry or exit of international assistance. Then, AEO will mitigate the risks for the importing country while ensuring that the humanitarian assistance is tailored to requirements because of the assisting group's expertise.



1.2. Relaxing procedures

Handling goods against the clock requires Customs and other border agencies to drop some requirements. Risk management and post-audit controls must complement to prevent any misuse of these facilities.

a Simplification of goods declarations

Customs can provide whether a simplified goods declaration or a provisional or incomplete goods declaration provided that traders add any missing information or documents within a specified period, according to [RKC Annex J-Chapter 5](#). Another modality is a single goods declaration whenever cleared by the same person.

The [EU](#) provides for the possibility to use commercial, port or transport documents as an Entry Summary Declaration provided that these documents contain the necessary information (Article 127.7 of the [Union Customs Code](#), hereinafter referred to as UCC). Following the release of goods, the declarant may request the amendment of the Customs declaration within three years of the date of its acceptance (Article 173.3 UCC).

[Chile](#) is granting reasonable deadlines to complete documentation that is missing at the moment of release.

b Minimizing requirements

In accordance with Article 7.8.2(a) of the WTO TFA, documentation requirement can be minimized to speed up the release of expedited-shipments. With this purpose in mind, Customs and other border agencies i.e. Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) or Standard agencies must work hand-in-hand to adapt requirements temporally. For instance, Sanitary agencies could validate SPS certificates issued by exporting countries for critical supplies.

[Colombia](#) and [China](#) have suspended sanitary registration for donated medical items.

[Republic of Korea](#)'s Customs and the Food and Drug Administration exempted the importation of masks from import requirements foreseen in the Pharmaceutical Affairs Law, such as attaching the import requirement approval procedure.



Obtaining representation from consignees may pose a significant additional administrative burden for all these categories of economic operators. Thus, Customs can ease this onus by using the presumption of empowerment.

The [EU](#) allows Customs to waive the requirement to prove of the empowerment from postal operators, express carriers or Customs agents for Customs clearance activities they are carrying out on behalf of the consignee.

As the COVID-19 pandemic hinders several services, border-regulatory agencies may consider extending or suspending timeframes to avoid disruption of ongoing procedures.

The [EU](#) requests Customs no to invalidate declarations for the export, re-export or outward processing procedure unless the declarant explicitly requests it of the declaration concerned.

[Japan](#) is extending exporters and importers' certificates by offering only a written statement in which traders themselves explain the reasons for the extension.

[El Salvador](#) suspended legal terms and deadlines for 30 days, related to administrative procedures on taxes liquidation, sanctions imposition, Customs value determination, origin verifications or revision appeal.

[Brazil](#) suspends for 12 months the compulsory certification procedure of surgical and non-surgical gloves of natural rubber, synthetic rubber and synthetic rubber mixtures.



c Flexibilities regarding inspections

According to [Standard 3-RKC Annex J-Chapter 5](#), border agencies should conduct inspections of relief consignments on an exceptional basis when considered indispensable, i.e. security, narcotics or contraband control purposes. Such inspections should sleeve to the extent necessary to ensure compliance with laws and regulations of the importing country.

[Republic of Korea](#)'s Customs has mitigated Customs investigations, foreign exchange inspections and origin verification.

Inspections and release of relief consignment can take place outside the Customs office. For instance, they can be carried out at the importer's premises provided it counts with the appropriate equipment. Other options could be a Customs office different to the Clearance office, or the place of destination.

[Chile](#) authorizes physical inspections of merchandise without the presence of the employees or auxiliaries of the Customs Agents upon electronic request. The removal of goods in Customs warehouses may be carried out by employees of a Customs agency other than the one responsible for their dispatch, who must issue a pure power of attorney and adopt the necessary control measures. The validity of the Customs cards that expire during the period of special measures established by the Customs resolution is also extended.



d Acceptance of copies

To reduce the burden of compliance for traders, border agencies may accept paper or electronic copies of the required documentation in accordance to Article 10.2 of the WTO TFA. Notwithstanding, they may reserve the right to request *a posteriori* the original document in case of doubts.

Russia's Authorities allows imports of goods accompanied by a copy of veterinary and phytosanitary documents, upon prior notification from the competent authority of exporting country. The cargo receiver must also send a guarantee letter to confirm the submission of original documents subsequently.

Costa Rica authorizes the National Animal Health Service and the State Phytosanitary Service to review documents based on copies, print-outs or photocopies of the original documents in order not to unduly delay trade flows during the international epidemiological emergency of the COVID-19.

In Australia and South Africa, where an importer is unable to supply the original paper phytosanitary certificate (PC) from the exporting country's National Plant Protection Organization as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the inspection officers will instead accept the electronic copy of the PC as lodged by brokers through their standard lodgement process.

In Spain, flexibilization measures have been taken to avoid non-essential movements of people: (i) The original copy is not requested when submitting a guarantee; (ii) EUR-1 certificates are issued a posteriori; (iii) An electronic procedure has replaced the A.T.A carnet stamp; (iv) Seal in transit procedure can be replaced by a detailed description of the goods that provides their identification; (v) Origin certificates for preferential purposes in the form of a copy, issued on paper or electronically, should be accepted when it is impossible to provide original certificates. Importers should nevertheless obtain from exporters the corresponding original certificates once the situation is back to normal; (vi) Temporarily suspension of Customs duties and VAT on importation of equipment and other relevant medical devices imported in the context of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Cameroon has relaxed requirements for certain commercial documents and specific procedures, and accept documentation transmitted electronically (copies) in place of the originals, subject to regularization, where necessary.

Japan's Customs lessens the requirements for seal, original copies, and submission of certificates of origin.



e Risk management

To avoid mishandling these flexible measures, Customs needs to bolster its risk management and post-clearance audit systems in line with paragraphs 4 and 5 of Article 7 of the WTO TFA. Therefore, appropriate criteria and random checks must ensure that low-risk consignments thoroughly enjoy these flexibilities, while Customs focused on the high-risk cargos.

According to [Guidelines](#) issued by the [UNCTAD Automated System for Customs Data \(ASYCUDA\)](#) to Customs administrators for adapting the use of the system to the COVID-19 situation, the National Risk Management Unit has been suggested to create risk criteria to expedite shipments of COVID-19 emergency medical supplies. Likewise, the [WCO](#) encourages Customs to work in close collaboration with the public health and safety agencies, to ensure the smooth movement of relief goods and personnel while applying appropriate risk management.

[Maldives](#) uses Risk Management to the maximum to expedite process & release consignments, and only the necessary items will be examined.

A posteriori controls or post audits could further accelerate the release of low-risk consignments while ensuring the application of the legislation.



1.3. Temporary admission

Inventory of the goods together with a written undertaking to re-export ([Annex B.9 of the Istanbul Convention](#)) can replace Customs document and security for the temporary admission of medical, surgical and laboratory equipment. Countries can also accept A.T.A and [CPD](#) (Carnet de Passages en Douane) carnets in place of Customs documents and security for temporary admission.

The [EU](#) may allow relief consignment to be declared by any other act, e.g. by the single act of crossing the border (Article 141.1.d of [the UCC Delegated Act](#), hereinafter referred to as UCC DA). Another possibility would be to lodge an oral declaration (Article 136.1 UCC DA) or postpone it up to 120 days after the release of the goods (Articles 166.2 UCC and 147.2 UCC DA).

In respect of lockdown rules, many traders had to close their premises and stop working, making the re-exportation of goods under temporary admission impossible within the established time-limit. Customs may opt for extending those validation timeframes.



[Czech Republic](#)'s Customs shall recognize the validity of an already expired A.T.A carnet for the re-exportation of goods from the territory of the EU. As to re-importation of EU goods under an A.T.A carnet, Customs will relieve those goods from import duties and taxes in cases when the re-importation happens after the deadline or after the expiry of validity of the A.T.A Carnet.



1.4. Transit measures

Measures to contain the spread of the COVID-19 may impact transit procedures, i.e. health screening test to drivers. According to [Standard 3-RKC Annex J-Chapter 5](#), authorities of the transit country must facilitate as far as possible the carriage of relief consignments and possessions of disaster relief personnel. Thus, the transit of relief consignments should be completed without examination, except for reasons of security or in exceptional circumstances, subject to simple documentation where required. Transit coordinators, appointed under Article 11 of the WTO TFA, could play a critical role in further streamline the process.

[Cameroon](#) calls on concerted actions to secure the continuity of service to ensure the best possible provision of supplies, both nationally and to neighbours for which Cameroon serves as a transit country.

[South African](#) Revenue Service has issued notices with information on the available alternative routes after closing two seaports and 35 land ports. Any urgent trade-related movements can still be arranged with local authorities.

[EU](#)'s Customs may accept scanned supporting documents along with the electronic transit declaration, e.g. transport document, invoice etc. provided the original documents remain available in accordance with Article 51.1 UCC.

[The Customs Convention on the International Transport of Goods under Cover of TIR Carnets](#) (TIR Convention) is also a key trade facilitation tool during the COVID-19 pandemic. [It is a global transit solution](#) that enables goods to be shipped from a country of origin, through transit countries, to a country of destination via a multilateral, mutually recognised system. By using the TIR system during the COVID-19 pandemic, authorities and companies are able to: (i) protect drivers and Customs officers as there are no physical checks or unloading/loading of cargo at borders; (ii) accelerate the border crossing process via dedicated green lanes to allow the fast transport of essential goods and everyday supplies; (iii) have access to paperless solutions through eTIR that offers tracking of shipments at all times, thus reducing the risk of fraud.



2. Cost reduction

As the COVID-19 has negatively impacted global economy, trade costs represents an over burdern for traders. In order to streamline trade, trade facilitation offers measures to alleviate traders' financial situation.



2.1 Flexibilities regarding payments, interests and guarantees

As an aftermath of the outbreak, merchants may experience delays in receiving intermediate goods, which in turn causes delays in deliveries and final payments. In order not to further worsen the lack of liquidity, the border agencies may show flexibilities regarding tariff payment, interest and guarantees.

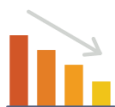
[Standard 3-RKC Annex J-Chapter 5](#) allows Customs officers to defer the payment of taxes and duties without interest charges, provided that the moratorium complies with the relevant Standards found in Chapter 4 of the General Annex regarding Duties and Taxes. Customs may even consider refunding fees and duties.

[Dubai Customs](#) is refunding 20% on the Customs fees imposed on imported products sold locally in Dubai markets. Furthermore, fees imposed on submitting Customs documents of companies are being reduced by 90%.

To further reduce trade costs, border agencies can apply flexible requirements on guarantees.

[EU's Customs](#) may refrain from requiring a guarantee or charging credit interest if it is established based on a documented assessment that this would create serious economic or social difficulties (Article 112.3 UCC).

[Dubai Customs](#) is refunding existing and eliminate new bank guarantees required to undertake Customs clearance activity. It also removed the requirement for providing a banking instrument while submitting Customs-related grievances.



2.2 Tariff reductions

[Standard 5-RKC Annex J-Chapter 5](#) provides the waiver of relief consignments from any export duties or taxes. According to [Standard 6-RKC Annex J-Chapter 5](#), relief consignments received as gifts by approved organizations for use by or under the control of such organizations, or for distribution free of charge by them or under their control, should be admitted free of import duties and taxes.

[Republic of Korea](#)'s Customs adopted a series of tax relief measures for companies importing raw materials for domestic production that include an extension of payment of duties, instalment payment of duties, and duty drawback on the same day of application.

[Peru](#) and [Paraguay](#) have temporarily reduced tariff duties on medicines, medical and health-related products. Also, Paraguay has established reference prices and a permanent monitoring system for the supply of these items in the market.

[Japanese](#) Customs duties and consumption taxes are exempted for the importation of relief goods.

[Maldives](#) exempts duty on masks, gloves & all protective equipment's related to the COVID-19.

[Cameroon](#) suspends the collection of interest on the late payment of Customs duties and taxes.

[Canada](#) is waiving tariffs and sales taxes on goods imported by or on behalf of public health agencies, hospitals and testing sites, and first response organizations (e.g., police, fire and local civil defence groups, including medical response teams), until further notice.



3. Transparency and cooperation enhancement

Increasing transparency helps expand and deepen cooperation and *vice versa*. The two have mutually reinforcing effects. They both play an essential role in responding to the pandemic as well as facilitating trade across borders.



3.1 Promoting transparency

One of the most effective means of addressing this crisis is through timely and accurate information. International instruments impose obligations on transparency, such as the WTO TFA containing 11 specific measures in Articles 1-5. Likewise, [WCO instruments](#) have emphasized the importance of ensuring an open flow of information in times of crisis.

Therefore, [UNCTAD](#) has created a dedicated page on its website, compiling available online repositories providing up-to-date trade-related information, including relevant notifications by [WTO](#) members. It also includes the WCO dedicated page, publishing a regularly updated [list of countries](#) that have adopted temporary export restriction measures for medical supplies in response to the COVID-19, as well as making available a useful list containing the [HS classification reference for COVID-19 medical supplies](#).



Philippines Customs published educational material on expedited procedures for relief cargo such as infographics.

Qatar has held several TV and social media meetings to reassure the public about the progress of import and export operations.

Maldives Customs media team has been working daily to update the relevant stakeholders about the changes being brought, such as the changes in service hours and import duty.

Rwanda Customs has shared contacts for operational managers with the public for ease of communication.

Brazil provides daily monitoring of the clearance of goods in the fight against the epidemic, per the WCO's HS classification reference documents. It also allows online transactions on Customs issues due to the suspension of in-person operations.

South African Revenue Service has issued notices with information on the available alternative routes to trade, as it has declared the closure of ports among which there is one commercial border.

Mongolia's Customs had established the Interim Operative Working Group and appointed immediate duty officers on a day-to-day basis to provide the State Emergency Commission with real-time data.

Besides, availability of information on the Internet through, for instance, trade portals, plays a crucial role in democratizing the dissemination of knowledge about the current situation and governments' responses to the COVID-19 crisis. Trade information portals increase predictability for stakeholders within and beyond the territory of the concerned country. In addition, this tool allows easily the accessibility of information in a cost-effective manner.

Kenya published information on COVID-19 trade-related emergency measures on **InfoTradeKenya Portal**, which was set up with UNCTAD technical assistance. It also covers step-by-step guides on export and import procedures of pharmaceutical products and medical devices. The COVID-19 webpage is updated on a regular basis by border regulatory agencies.



3.2 Strengthening cooperation

Mitigating the health risks and economic consequences from the COVID-19 require coordinated preparedness and response. Article 12 of the WTO TFA aims explicitly at enhancing cooperation among Customs authorities. Likewise, [WCO instruments](#) stress the importance of strengthening the partnership with international organizations, non-governmental organizations and the private sector which play an essential role in the management of humanitarian emergencies, and of providing them with all necessary information about the regulations and procedures applicable to relief consignments.

[UNCTAD](#) calls on responsible agencies to coordinate and cooperate within and among countries to ensure that vital goods reach consumers and hospitals in coastal and landlocked countries alike. Besides, the [International Road Transport Union \(IRU\)](#) has launched a global call for immediate and concerted action by governments and global organizations to ensure the flow of goods keeps moving and stabilizing mobility networks.

Country cases below show that national, regional, and international coordination are all essential to address the consequences of the pandemic.



At the National Level, cases involve cooperation among government agencies as well as between public-private sectors. [Republic of Korea](#)'s Customs collaborates with the Ministry of Food and Drug Safety in exempting importing protective face masks for relief and donation from import requirements. In [Chile](#), a public-private group has analyzed and coordinated the technical measures upon the outbreak of the pandemic. [Rwanda](#) has called for the collaboration of private and public institutions to implement national measures, to ensure the society is protected.

At the regional level, countries must cooperate within their regions by sharing information and best practices. In Asia, [ASEAN](#) and [Lancang-Mekong Cooperation](#) have acknowledged it. In Africa, a [Joint Statement](#) on COVID-19 preparedness and response in East African Community (EAC) Region has been signed by Ministers responsible for Health and EAC Affairs, following which the EAC Secretariat has issued the Administrative Guidelines to Facilitate Movement of Goods and Services during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The EAC Secretariat has also set up a [Regional Coordination Committee](#) with Risk Communication, Policy, Logistics, Data and Statistics Sub-committees to oversee the regional COVID-19 response. Likewise, the [EU Commission](#) is coordinating a common European response to the pandemic. In the Caribbean, [CARICOM](#) recommends members to stimulate local food production to meet future demands in case of trade disruption.

At the international level, [Joint Ministerial Statement](#) by seven countries (Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Chile, Myanmar, New Zealand and Singapore) has affirmed commitment to ensure supply chain connectivity amidst the COVID-19 situation. Likewise, the [G20 Trade and Investment Ministerial Statement](#) has called for ensuring the smooth and continued operation of the logistics networks that serve as the backbone of global supply chains. Explore ways for logistics networks via air, sea and land freight to remain open, as well as ways to facilitate the essential movement of health personnel and businesspeople across borders, without undermining the efforts to prevent the spread of the virus. Besides, the Ministerial Statement has also urged to continue working with international organizations to establish coordinated approaches and collect and share good practices to facilitate flows of essential goods and services.



4. Full display of technology

Making full use of the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) not only ensures the continuity of cross-border trade but also reduces the direct contact among people through remote operation.

The WCO [RKC](#) stipulates that the Customs shall apply information technology to support Customs operations, where it is cost-effective and efficient for Customs and trade. Furthermore, [RKC Annex J-Chapter 5](#) puts emphasize on providing rapid, efficient and centralized processing of relief consignments, for achieving which the ICT can play a crucial role. Article 10.4 of the WTO TFA also stipulates that Members are called to establish or maintain a Single Window to allow traders to submit documents and data requirements through a single-entry point and just one time.

[India](#) has set up a help desk on the homepage of Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs, for the trade to reach out to various Ministries through a Single Window.

[Bulgaria](#) has also strongly recommended using electronic services.

[Chile](#) has adopted series of measures such as (i) The authorization of dispatch mandates through email has been approved; (ii) Customs Agents and their assistants can perform their duties remotely; (iii) Some official paper-like essential documents that allow import and export processing, the request for modification to Customs document and the legalization of export declarations, can be received via email.

The UNCTAD [ASYCUDA](#) affords Customs, cross-border agencies and traders to electronically submit and exchange data and documentation, and to computerize procedures to expedite the clearance of imports, exports, transits and other trade transactions, reducing to a great extent the need for face-to-face interaction. Furthermore, to answer life-saving emergencies, the [Automated System for Relief Emergency Consignments](#) (ASYREC) has been developed, fully integrated with the ASYCUDA. The ASYREC software provides for immediate recognition of organizations involved in UN relief operations, and allows these entities to expedite imports of humanitarian relief. In addition, Customs authorities are enabled by ASYREC to have a more accurate overview of incoming relief consignments.



Some economies, including [Small Island Developing States \(SIDS\)](#) such as [St Kitts and Nevis](#) and [Curaçao](#), have adopted 100% paperless trade processes through ASYCUDA, allowing for the continuity of business in situations such as the COVID-19. Likewise, the [Democratic Republic of the Congo](#) has also taken advantage of ASYCUDA to facilitate Customs clearance of food supplies, vital medical supplies and protective equipment, as well as to exempt taxes and duties for these imports. Elsewhere, [Jamaica Customs Agency](#) has recommended carrying-out all Customs' related payments through the e-payment feature developed by ASYCUDA. [Madagascar](#) and [Rwanda](#) have also adopted similar measures above, and the latter has moreover enforced stakeholders and the general public to use ASYCUDA and the online services available in [Rwanda Electronic Single Window](#).

It should be noted that [inequalities in digital readiness](#) hamper the ability of large parts of the world to take advantage of technologies that help cope with the pandemic. The least developed countries (LDCs) are the most vulnerable to the human and economic consequences of the pandemic, and they also lag farthest behind in digital readiness. It will need much more attention and coordinated multilateral response to bridge existing and emerging digital divides to allow more countries avail of digitalization.



Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic is a global crisis that is spreading human suffering and infecting the global economy. Defeating it requires global solidarity and concerted response. The four categories of measures and countries' best practices mentioned in this article illustrate that policies and measures from governments, joint efforts from public and private entities, and cooperation with regional as well as international partners are crucial. At the national level, Trade Facilitation Committees could serve as a focal point to coordinate the initial response to the pandemic and sow the seed for further cooperation at the regional and international levels.

[UNCTAD](#) assists developing, least developed countries, economies in transition, and regional organizations with trade facilitation reforms and measures. It offers technical assistance including, *inter alia*, (i) General Trade Facilitation Assistance; (ii) Support for National Trade Facilitation Committees; (iii) ASYCUDA Programme; (iv) TrainforTrade Port Management Programme; (v) Business Facilitation Programme-Online Trade Portals; (vi) Transit and Corridor Solutions; and (vii) Non-tariff Measures Programme.



LIST OF INSTRUMENTS

1. [Convention on International Civil Aviation \(Chicago Convention\)](#)
2. [Convention on Temporary Admission \(Istanbul Convention\), Annex B.9](#)
3. [Customs Convention on the A.T.A Carnet for the temporary admission of goods \(A.T.A Convention\)](#)
4. [Guidelines to Chapter 5 of Specific Annex J to the International Convention on the Simplification and Harmonization of Customs Procedures, as amended \(Revised Kyoto Convention\)](#)
5. [International Convention on the Simplification and Harmonization of Customs Procedures, as amended \(Revised Kyoto Convention\)](#)
6. [International Maritime Organization Convention on Facilitation of International Maritime Traffic](#)
7. [Istanbul Convention Handbook](#)
8. [Model Agreement between the United Nations and the State/Government of concerning measures to expedite the import, export and transit of relief consignments and possessions of relief personnel in the event of disasters and emergencies](#)
9. [The Customs Convention on the International Transport of Goods under Cover of TIR Carnets \(TIR Convention, 1975\)](#)
10. [The Relevance Key Principles of the SAFE Framework of Standards, in further Facilitating the Process of Clearing Relief Consignments](#)
11. [WCO Recommendation of the Customs Co-operation Council to Expedite the Forwarding of Relief Consignments in the event of Disasters \(1970\)](#)
12. [WCO Resolution of the Customs Co-operation Council on the on the Role of Customs in Natural Disasters Relief \(2011\)](#)

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