



# United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

Distr.: General  
26 February 2019

Original: English

**Trade and Development Board**  
**Trade and Development Commission**  
**Multi-year Expert Meeting on Transport, Trade Logistics  
and Trade Facilitation**  
**Seventh session**  
Geneva, 7–9 May 2019  
Item 3 of the provisional agenda

## **Trade facilitation and transit in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

**Note by the UNCTAD secretariat**

### *Executive summary*

The Agreement on Trade Facilitation of the World Trade Organization entered into force on 22 February 2017. Trade facilitation can assist in simplifying, standardizing, harmonizing and modernizing international cross-border trade, thereby increasing trade volumes and making international trade faster and cheaper, as well as more accessible for small and medium-sized traders. According to various international studies, developing countries and the least developed countries in particular can benefit from implementing efficient trade procedures. The Agreement on Trade Facilitation also sets out provisions for transit, which are important for many developing countries and many of the least developed countries, including landlocked developing countries and transit developing countries. Implementing trade facilitation reforms, including with regard to transit, is also important for these countries in the context of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goals 16 and 17. UNCTAD is actively assisting developing countries and the least developed countries to implement their commitments under the Agreement and, through such engagement, is able to advise on good practices.

This note highlights the status of implementation of the Agreement on Trade Facilitation and provides examples of experiences and lessons learned from UNCTAD technical assistance and capacity-building projects on such implementation. The note aims to facilitate deliberations at the seventh session of the Multi-year Expert Meeting on Transport, Trade Logistics and Trade Facilitation and to stimulate discussion to generate insights, determine the additional needs of countries with regard to implementation of the Agreement and formulate conclusions for a way forward, in particular with a view to defining the technical assistance and capacity-building activities that UNCTAD can undertake in the coming years in line with the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Nairobi Maafikiano and to contribute to the midterm review of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024.

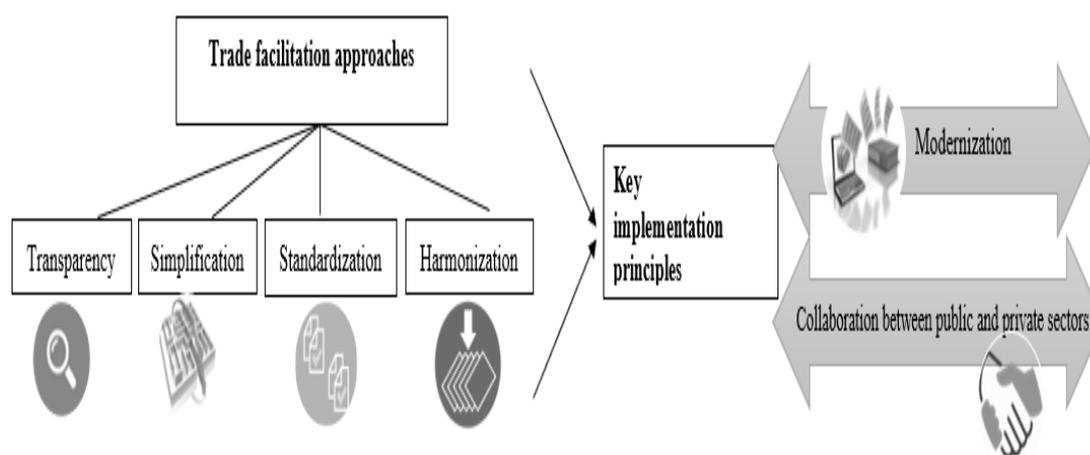


## I. Introduction

1. The Agreement on Trade Facilitation entered into force on 22 February 2017 after more than a decade of negotiations. The Agreement does not include a specific definition of trade facilitation, yet several international organizations have developed descriptions of this concept. For example, in 2012, the Economic Commission for Europe provided the following definition: “The simplification, standardization and harmonization of procedures and associated information flows required to move goods from seller to buyer and to make payment” (see <http://tfig.unece.org/details.html>). The main principles of trade facilitation may be illustrated as shown in figure 1.

Figure 1

### Trade facilitation approaches and key implementation principles



Source: UNCTAD secretariat.

2. Governments and the business community can both benefit from trade facilitation reforms. Public entities benefit in terms of enhanced trade tax collection, better use of resources and increased trader compliance. When implemented correctly, trade facilitation can lead to more effective government services and controls, and at the same time reduce the risk of corruption. Traders gain in terms of the higher predictability and speed of operations and lower transaction costs, resulting in more competitive exports in global markets.

3. Trade facilitation reforms may be seen as an investment, with the potential to bring about significant cost reductions for cross-border trade. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development has estimated that cost reductions could be about 13 per cent in low-income countries, 14 per cent in lower middle-income countries and 13 per cent in upper middle-income countries (see [www.oecd.org/tad/policynotes/oecd-tfi-implementation-impact-trade-costs.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/tad/policynotes/oecd-tfi-implementation-impact-trade-costs.pdf)).

4. Trade facilitation reforms can also significantly contribute towards human, enterprise and institutional development and thereby help achieve the 2030 Agenda. Such reforms help small traders, often women, enter the formal sector; make economic activities more transparent and accountable; promote good governance; generate better quality employment; strengthen information technology capabilities; and, generally, help modernize societies by bringing about benefits related to administrative efficiency. More concretely, trade facilitation is directly linked to the achievement of a number of the Sustainable Development Goals, including Goals 8, 9, 16 and 17.

5. The 2030 Agenda recognizes the particular challenges faced by a number of vulnerable economies such as those of landlocked developing countries. Trade facilitation and transit policy features prominently in the Vienna Programme of Action. Effective implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action is crucial for the attainment of the Goals in landlocked developing countries, and partnerships between landlocked

developing countries and transit countries are considered particularly important and necessary for implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Vienna Programme of Action.

6. The Nairobi Maafikiano and Nairobi Azimio outcome documents of the fourteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, held in Nairobi in 2016, outline how UNCTAD can intensify its support for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The Nairobi Maafikiano specifies UNCTAD activities in a wide range of areas, including, with regard to trade facilitation, transit and related issues, contributing to strengthening cooperation between landlocked developing countries and transit countries; reinforcing support to developing countries in undertaking trade facilitation reforms; and enhancing its work on infrastructure services.<sup>1</sup>

7. Against this background, this note briefly describes work undertaken by UNCTAD in areas related to trade facilitation and transit in recent years, including lessons learned, and highlights relevant issues with regard to which UNCTAD, in the coming years, may seek to assist developing countries and the least developed countries in the implementation of further trade facilitation-related reforms, with a view to assisting in implementing the 2030 Agenda. The objective is to provide input to the deliberations of the Multi-year Expert Meeting, stimulate discussion to generate insight and formulate member State-driven conclusions for the further work of UNCTAD in this area.

## II. Status of implementation of Agreement on Trade Facilitation

8. The Agreement entered into force on 22 February 2017 upon ratification by 110 of the 164 World Trade Organization member countries. To date, 141 countries have ratified the Agreement; 23 members have not yet transmitted their instruments of ratification. Of these, 10 are developing countries and 12 are least developed countries. Two landlocked developing countries have not yet ratified the Agreement.

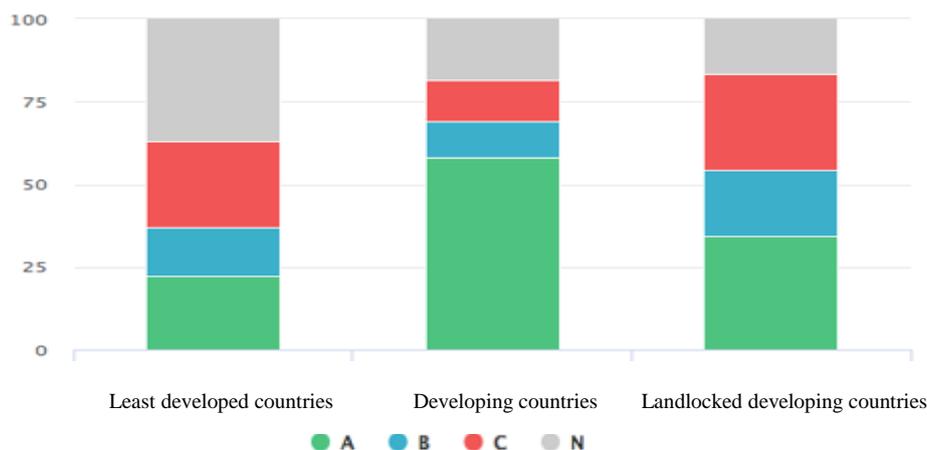
9. Section II of the Agreement contains special and differential treatment provisions that allow developing country and least developed country members to determine when they will implement individual provisions of the Agreement and to identify provisions that they will only be able to implement upon receipt of technical assistance and support for capacity-building. To benefit from the provisions, the members, based on self-assessments, should place each provision of the Agreement into one of three categories (A, B or C depending on implementation readiness) and notify the World Trade Organization accordingly, in accordance with specific deadlines.

10. Those provisions that a country has implemented by the time the Agreement enters into force (or, for least developed country members, within one year after entry into force, i.e. 22 February 2018), or at the time of ratification if this date is later than 22 February 2017, are designated under category A. Provisions under categories B and C have dates of implementation set by the developing country and least developed country members, based on self-assessments. Category B provisions are those that the member will implement after a transitional self-determined period following the entry into force of the Agreement. Category C provisions are those that the member will implement after a transitional self-determined period following the entry into force of the Agreement and with regard to which the member requires assistance and support. For categories B and C, specific deadlines are set out in section II for notification by each member. The deadlines vary depending on the categorization and whether they are notified by a developing country or least developed country member.

11. Figure 2 shows the rate of notification by country group as at 20 January 2019. Notably, provisions have not yet been notified among both developing countries (around 20 per cent) and the least developed countries (around 40 per cent). In accordance with article 16 of the Agreement, notifications should have been made by 22 February 2018. The figures strongly indicate that some developing countries and least developed countries require additional technical assistance and capacity-building.

<sup>1</sup> TD/519/Add.2, paragraph 55 (j) and (x) and paragraph 76 (t).

Figure 2  
**Special and differential treatment provisions: Share of all notifiable items notified to date, by country group**



Source: Trade Facilitation Agreement Database, World Trade Organization, available at [www.tfadatabase.org/notifications/global-analysis](http://www.tfadatabase.org/notifications/global-analysis).

Note: N, not yet notified.

### III. Experiences and lessons learned in trade facilitation and transit implementation

12. As evidenced by the rate of notification among developing countries and the least developed countries, the implementation of trade facilitation reforms, including the provisions of the Agreement on Trade Facilitation, is complex. Trade facilitation procedures are often based on a multi-stakeholder approach, which not only includes collaboration among multiple public-sector stakeholders, but also requires private sector participation from start to end of the process. In addition, in order to optimize the cross-border aspect of trade facilitation, collaboration between stakeholders in neighbouring countries is also required.

13. Some trade facilitation procedures are more difficult to implement than others, and require a high level of collaboration and integration, in particular those related to the implementation of single windows (see chapter III.C). It is therefore important for trade facilitation stakeholders to be well organized, and this is the purpose of national trade facilitation committees.

14. This chapter describes some of the trade facilitation procedures with regard to which UNCTAD, through technical assistance and capacity-building work with developing countries and the least developing countries, has identified lessons learned and good practices to be shared.

#### A. National trade facilitation committees and national trade facilitation implementation road maps

15. Article 23.2 of the Agreement states: “Each member shall establish and/or maintain a national committee on trade facilitation or designate an existing mechanism to facilitate both domestic coordination and implementation of the provisions of this Agreement.” However, the Agreement does not provide further guidance on the modalities for establishing and operating such a committee.

16. UNCTAD has therefore created the Empowerment Programme for National Trade Facilitation Committees, providing training to the secretariat and the members of national trade facilitation committees. The main objective is to help implement, in a coordinated

manner, trade facilitation reforms, including the provisions of the Agreement.<sup>2</sup> The programme directly supports compliance with article 23.2 of the Agreement, as well as the achievement of target 17.17 of Goal 17, on encouraging and promoting effective public, public–private and civil society partnerships.

17. Since the launch of the programme in 2016, UNCTAD has been providing extensive support to national trade facilitation committees in more than 30 countries. UNCTAD is preparing additional programmes to be launched in the near future in at least another 10 countries. The work of UNCTAD has reached more than 1,800 trade facilitation stakeholders (one third of whom are women), all of whom have been certified. In workshop evaluation feedback collected by UNCTAD, 93 per cent of beneficiaries stated that the programme helped them improve their knowledge of trade facilitation, and 82 per cent that they felt in a better position to assume their roles as members of their national trade facilitation committees.

18. Apart from the capacity-building aspect of the programme, the main outcome for countries is the establishment of national road maps for trade facilitation implementation developed by members of national trade facilitation committees based on an UNCTAD template. The road maps provide countries with a three to five-year work plan of focused and sequenced implementation of the trade facilitation reforms that they have defined, including implementation of the Agreement.

19. With a view to sharing experiences and good practices between countries, UNCTAD organized the following two forums for national trade facilitation committees: a global forum held in January 2017 in Geneva, Switzerland; and an African forum held in November 2018 in Addis Ababa. There were 250–300 participants at each of these events, representing public sector agencies, such as ministries of trade and customs authorities, and the private sector. One quarter of participants were women.

20. Issues discussed at the African forum included the role of the African regional organizations, the role of national trade facilitation committees in the implementation of trade facilitation provisions in the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, paperless initiatives at entry points, the involvement of the private sector in national trade facilitation committees, how to coordinate border agencies and the role of transit corridors. Sessions were also held on the gender dimension in cross-border trade and the application of digital technologies in future modes of trading. Some of the outcomes of the African forum were as follows:

(a) Awareness-raising on African initiatives in trade facilitation reform, in the context of regional integration schemes such as the Continental Free Trade Area;

(b) Information-sharing on the numerous available tools, including trade portals, Agreement on Trade Facilitation facility and database, trade facilitation implementation guide, repository of national trade facilitation committees and learning tools for customs and other border agencies;

(c) Provision of guidelines by experts for the private sector to reap the maximum benefits from trade facilitation reforms, namely to identify the reforms that will yield the maximum results; partner with the Government to implement the identified reforms; and provide a feedback loop that monitors whether the reforms are functioning as intended;

(d) A call for strengthened capacity-building on the subject of gender mainstreaming in national trade facilitation committees.

21. The successful implementation of trade facilitation reforms is greatly dependent on well-functioning national trade facilitation committees. This requires both political will by countries to establish and operate committees and the commitment and capacity of committee members to actively contribute to the reform process. Well-functioning committees are also good practice case studies of public–private-partnerships, in line with Goal 17.

<sup>2</sup> See <https://unctad.org/en/DTL/TLB/Pages/TF/Committees/Empowerment-Programme-for-National-Trade-Facilitation-Bodies.aspx>.

## B. Transparency

22. Article 1 of the Agreement, on transparency, aims to ensure predictability in cross-border trade procedures, in particular the publication of relevant procedures. UNCTAD technical assistance in this context aims to build national capacity to ensure the transparency of rules and regulations; simplify trade-related procedures; and coordinate an effective network of enquiry points. These three areas of intervention rely on accurate and precise step-by-step information on procedures as they are experienced in practice by traders. The development of trade information portals is, therefore, the main pillar around which UNCTAD centres its trade facilitation work.

23. In 2016–2018, UNCTAD assisted Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania, and the East African Community secretariat and Benin, Mali and Nigeria and the Economic Community of West African States secretariat in establishing national and regional trade information portals. This involved working with national trade facilitation committees to train national teams and organize system-wide data collection on procedures with trade regulating agencies. The data are continuously integrated into national portals such as Info Trade Kenya, Rwanda Trade and Uganda Trades, which are then connected through a regional trade facilitation index, enabling real-time measurement and comparison of the ease of importing and exporting and administrative burdens between countries.<sup>3</sup> By the end of 2018, the five East African portals had provided access to 473 national procedures, all easily comparable through the index.

24. The transparency of rules and regulations is ensured by national trade information portals, which become the one-stop shop for accurate step-by-step guides on licences, permits and clearance procedures applicable to the most traded commodities. Trade information portals are embedded within government agency websites, a solution that multiplies access channels to trade information for traders and ensures that the information is presented in a standardized format across the online tools of member States.

25. Simplification is made possible through the specific information on procedures emanating from the trade information portals. Analysis of this data has consistently shown that at least 50 per cent of steps, requirements, durations and administrative costs can be eliminated without changing laws and regulations. UNCTAD technical assistance focuses on training national trade facilitation committee members on simplification techniques, thereby establishing mechanisms to identify, discuss and effectively implement simplification measures. In practice, this is often done by supporting working groups addressing simplification under the auspices of national trade facilitation committees.

26. Strengthening enquiry points involves empowering a network of focal points to answer enquiries and assist traders and operators to overcome the trade barriers they face. Capacity-building in this area includes developing tools such as a complaint management system for traders, who can easily get in touch with the appropriate enquiry points with their requests for information or complaints. Such systems also enable enquiry points, trained as problem-solving agents, to forward queries to the relevant public agencies and/or agents and to follow up until a satisfactory outcome is communicated to the trader.

27. Transparency in trade procedures is important as it creates predictability for traders and in the supply and value chain. Transparency is particularly important in enabling microenterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises to participate in international trade, as such traders often do not have the resources to seek out relevant and correct information on international trade procedures if it is not easily accessible. Furthermore, transparency assists in promoting good governance by public authorities and combatting corruption, as information on procedures and related costs is made available and thus they should not seem arbitrary. The transparency provisions of the Agreement and trade information portals are therefore important elements in the achievement of Goal 16.

---

<sup>3</sup> See <http://tradehelpdesk.eac.int>.

## C. Automation and single windows

28. Article 10.4 of the Agreement states that members “shall endeavour to establish or maintain a single window” and shall, “to the extent possible and practicable, use information technology to support the single window”, that is, by providing an electronic single window.

29. Single windows provide a single entry point for all import, export and transit-related regulatory requirements, as a means of improving connectivity between customs, port and terminal operators, other regulatory agencies and traders, and improving coordination between all border and regulatory agencies.

30. Electronic single windows provide a single entry point for the electronic submission of data in order to facilitate the transmission of standardized information through a single electronic gateway rather than requiring submission of the same information multiple times to different government agencies. The overall aim of an electronic single window is to create conditions to establish the following:

(a) Efficiency, through streamlined processes and procedures, costs savings and better use of resources;

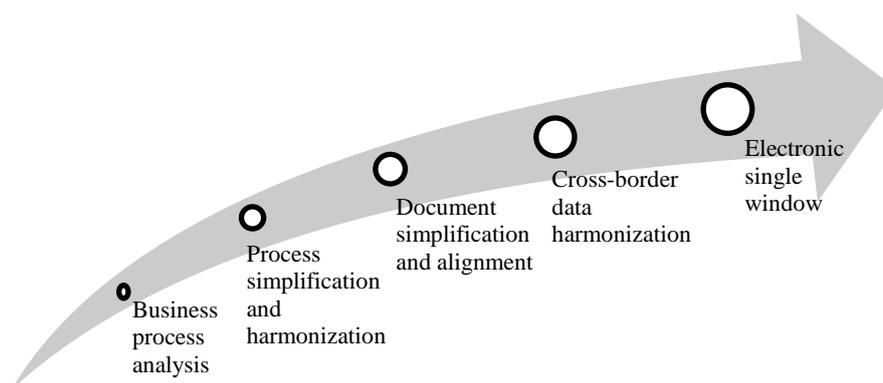
(b) Transparency, through the availability of accurate, reliable and timely information online;

(c) Competitiveness, through improved conditions of doing business, capacity-building and the use of technology.

31. For many years, UNCTAD has assisted more than 90 countries worldwide to automate customs management processes through its Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA). ASYCUDA was initially built as a data collection system for foreign trade and has since developed into a comprehensive automated system for the customs management of import, export and transit procedures. The latest version is ASYCUDA World, which uses web-based services. ASYCUDA has a number of core components for the automated management of customs procedures. In addition, based on user needs, UNCTAD has developed a number of additional services, such as a performance management module (ASYCUDA System for Performance Measurement (ASYPM)) and an electronic phytosanitary certification system (Automated System for Certification (ASYCER)). The system is also conceived in such a way as to permit countries to develop their own user-defined modules and services. This functionality is based on the fundamental philosophy of ASYCUDA, namely that user countries are involved in the development of the system from initial stages to delivery. User countries are trained to take over the management, updating and, potentially, the further development of new features of the system, thereby establishing ownership of the project.

32. In recent years, a number of countries, based on positive experiences and results in implementing ASYCUDA World, have requested UNCTAD assistance in developing an electronic single window system. UNCTAD is therefore working with a number of countries to implement such a system, for example Jamaica and Rwanda. The UNCTAD approach in this field is based on the relevant international standards and builds on experience in implementing similar projects in other countries. Implementation guidelines for establishing an electronic single-window system have been developed for use by project implementation teams; in general, implementation follows the process outlined in figure 3.

Figure 3  
**Single-window system implementation process**



*Source:* UNCTAD secretariat.

33. Automation and electronic single windows for cross-border trade procedures are important elements in trade facilitation reforms in line with the approaches of simplification, harmonization, standardization and modernization. The implementation of customs automation through ASYCUDA and the implementation of electronic single windows have proven beneficial for countries in terms of increased revenue collection, improved compliance and efficiency gains, and contribute to good governance, in line with the achievement of Goal 16.

#### **D. Transit and sustainable freight transport corridors and networks**

34. Transit is an important trade facilitation tool, in particular for landlocked developing countries, which depend on passages through other countries for their import and export goods to reach markets. Transit entails both on the principle of freedom of transit, i.e. the right for goods to transit a third-country territory and the obligation of third countries to allow this, and on the related legitimate procedures transit countries can implement for transit operations. The importance of transit is recognized in various international agreements, policy frameworks, such as the Vienna Programme of Action, and conventions, such as the Convention and Statute on Freedom of Transit, 1921; the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, 1947, the Convention on Transit Trade of Landlocked States, 1965; and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, 1982.

35. Transit is a central part of the trade facilitation framework of the World Trade Organization and is reflected in article V of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and article 11 of the Agreement on Trade Facilitation, which builds on article V. Notably, at present, the rate of notification of transit provisions under the Agreement is generally higher among transit countries than landlocked developing countries. Furthermore, transit countries seem in general to notify of a higher level of readiness regarding the implementation of the transit provisions of the Agreement than landlocked developing countries.

36. Generally, many countries regulate transit based on transit traffic rights. These are often subject to negotiations between States and form a part of bilateral, regional or multilateral agreements on transit or cross-border transport. Such agreements define the terms and modalities of transit traffic rights, at times including quotas and permits, and other technical aspects related to transit operations. The Agreement on Trade Facilitation states that transit products should be accorded treatment no less favourable than that which applies to the national transport of products.

37. From an operational perspective, a transit operation involves goods, services, operations, vehicles or other means of transport and infrastructure. Transit must therefore comply with various national regulations, including traffic and transport laws, licence requirements, vehicle safety rules, environmental laws and immigration laws.

38. In parallel with bilateral agreements, the trend in recent years has been to ensure more comprehensive solutions at regional levels, with a view to establishing or enhancing integrated and harmonized transit and transport systems, to support regional economic integration. Regional agreements cover some elements, such as the regional harmonization of customs transit procedures and documents, regional cooperation between authorities, in particular at border posts, and regional customs transit guarantee systems.

39. In many national contexts, transit-related obstacles are linked to two main issues, namely the management of transit guarantees, which most countries require to allow goods to transit through their territories without the payment of duties and taxes; and the cross-border transfer of data on transit operations. These two issues are the cause of many of the delays and inhibitive costs linked to transit.

40. Transit, as with trade facilitation in general, is complex, as it involves many stakeholders, both private and public, and distributed between the various countries along a transit route. To assist with smooth communications between the countries involved in transit operations, in particular between landlocked developing countries and transit countries, article 11.17 of the Agreement states: "Each Member shall endeavour to appoint a national transit coordinator to which all enquiries and proposals by other Members relating to the good functioning of transit operations can be addressed." However, the role of such coordinators is not defined in the Agreement.

41. By September 2018, only a few members and observers had appointed and notified their national transit coordinators to the World Trade Organization. The Agreement does not contain an obligation for members to notify the Organization of their transit coordinators, but with a view to ensuring coordination in transit issues, which are by nature multi-country operations, a listing of such coordinators is being established at the World Trade Organization level.

42. In 2018, UNCTAD organized an empowerment course for current and future national transit coordinators, held in Geneva from 23 to 29 April 2018. The objectives were to assist developing countries and the least developed countries to better understand the role and functions of a national transit coordinator; train national transit coordinators; and encourage countries to notify of their national transit coordinators to the World Trade Organization.

43. Furthermore, UNCTAD assists countries in establishing transit agreements and assessing the options for implementing transit solutions. In addition, ASYCUDA contains a transit module that can assist customs authorities to manage national customs transit processes, including guarantees and data management. UNCTAD is working with several regional organizations and at bilateral levels to transfer transit data electronically between countries.

44. UNCTAD work in the field of transport is increasingly focused on promoting sustainable freight transport, including sustainable transport and transit corridor solutions. Well-functioning sustainable transport networks and corridors are essential for the economic and trade development of countries and to ensure social inclusiveness and progress, as well as for supporting regional and global integration, in particular for landlocked developing countries and small island developing States. Under its three pillars of work, UNCTAD aims to assist developing countries in promoting sustainable transport solutions, including for corridors and network systems. UNCTAD adopts a broad and inclusive understanding of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable freight transport. Adhering to sustainability principles in freight transport, including corridors, entails, among others, the ability of the sector (and therefore countries and their trade) to achieve economic efficiency and effectiveness, to improve connectivity and quality of service and to ensure social inclusiveness while, at the same time, reducing negative externalities, including energy and resource depletion, environmental degradation and climate change-related effects.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> See <https://unctad.org/en/Pages/DTL/TTL/Infrastructure-and-Services/Sustainable-Transport.aspx>.

45. An example of relevant technical assistance work carried out by UNCTAD to assist countries to promote and implement sustainable freight transport solutions is the project under the United Nations Development Account titled “Building capacities of developing countries to shift towards sustainable freight transport”. As part of this project, UNCTAD has carried out a number of activities to help strengthen the capacity of policymakers, transport operators and key financial institutions in beneficiary countries to promote and finance sustainable freight transport systems through sound transport policy measures and adequate financing actions and mechanisms. This work has been supported by a step-by-step methodology and practical tools developed by UNCTAD to support stakeholders from both the public and private sectors across all modes of transport in their efforts to plan, design, develop and implement tailored sustainable freight transport strategies.<sup>5</sup>

46. A concrete outcome in this regard is the collaboration with the Central Corridor Transit Transport Facilitation Agency and the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority, which culminated in various outcomes including defining the sustainable freight transport strategies of each corridor, including objectives, goals and visions; identifying key challenges undermining economic, social and environmental sustainability in each corridor; and mapping out specific and tailored solutions in response to the identified challenges. Relevant work has assisted the Agency, the Authority and their respective States to articulate draft sustainable freight transport strategies and related action plans. The aim is for these strategies to be integrated into the five-year strategic plans of the Agency and the Authority. As a first step, the Authority has developed, in collaboration with UNCTAD and the United Nations Environment Programme, a green freight programme to be integrated into the sustainable freight transport strategy of the Authority.<sup>6</sup>

#### **IV. Conclusions and way forward**

47. Successful implementation of trade facilitation reforms, including with regard to transit, requires political will and multi-stakeholder engagement at the national level and efficient collaboration with neighbouring countries along transit corridors and in regional contexts.

48. Chapter III highlights some trade facilitation activities and solutions undertaken by UNCTAD to support the implementation of selected trade facilitation reforms in developing countries and the least developed countries. To further support these countries in the impactful implementation of trade facilitation reforms, including provisions of the Agreement on Trade Facilitation, UNCTAD is considering which enhancements to present programmes or additional activities can be provided to countries and regional and subregional organizations.

49. In this context, and bearing in mind the considerations raised in this note, delegates at the seventh session of the Multi-year Expert Meeting are invited to discuss the strategic role of trade facilitation and transit in the context of the 2030 Agenda, and may wish to consider, inter alia, the following issues:

(a) What is the status of implementation of the Agreement on Trade Facilitation? What are the needs for further technical assistance and capacity-building programmes in developing countries and the least developed countries?

(b) How can national trade facilitation committees be strengthened and empowered in order to ensure the capacity of each country to implement the Agreement?

(c) What are best practices and case studies of selected trade facilitation solutions for implementation of the Agreement? How can countries move from a focus on compliance with the Agreement towards the simplification of trade facilitation through business process analysis and the use of trade information portals? How can countries

---

<sup>5</sup> See the UNCTAD Framework for Sustainable Freight Transport at [www.sft-framework.org/](http://www.sft-framework.org/).

<sup>6</sup> Available at [www.ccacoalition.org/sites/default/files/resources/2017\\_northern-corridor-green-freight\\_NCTTCA.pdf](http://www.ccacoalition.org/sites/default/files/resources/2017_northern-corridor-green-freight_NCTTCA.pdf).

secure political buy-in for trade facilitation reforms, at both the national and regional levels?

(d) With regard to the transit provisions of the Agreement, what are the requirements for collaboration and coordination between landlocked developing countries and transit developing countries? How can the corridor approach be applied efficiently in transit? What is the role of bilateral and regional agreements?

(e) How can countries monitor implementation of the Agreement? What examples exist for monitoring and evaluation, including assessments of the implementation of national trade facilitation workplans and road maps?

(f) How can countries best promote gender aspects in trade facilitation reforms? How can policies on support to small cross-border traders, many of whom are women, be established?

(g) In the longer term and beyond implementation of the Agreement, how can new technologies such as blockchain, artificial intelligence and the Internet of things contribute to more efficient trade and transport facilitation and transit processes, including cross-border trade along corridors?

---