

Country: Liberia

Background:

Type of body: National Trade Facilitation body

Official name: Trade Facilitation Forum

Year of establishment: 2012

Motivation for its establishment: The Trade Facilitation Forum was established in continuation of a work concluded by the Trading Across Borders Working Group and in response to the US Millennium Challenge Corporation Indicators on Government Effectiveness; Corruption; Business Start Up; etc. UNSAID/Deloitte (Liberia Trade Policy and Customs Project) provided the initial technical assistance.

Other national bodies dealing with WTO issues and/or with Trade Facilitation: Yes, WTO Unit at Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Former multi-agency group/committee: No

Current status of the working group (running, pilot phase, not functioning, etc): Running

Institutional Framework:

Degree of institutionalisation: Policy level. The Trade Facilitation Forum has Terms of Reference and concept note.

Type of organisation (ad hoc group, legal entity/organisation, etc): Ad hoc group

Coordinating agency: Ministry of Commerce and Industry

Scope/mandate: The Terms of Reference defined the mandate.

Terms of reference: Yes

Working structure of the group: The Trade Facilitation Forum has three (3) tiers.

The top tier consists of the Ministers of Finance, Commerce and Justice, with the aim to sponsor and drive forward the Trade Facilitation Strategy, monitor progress, and periodically report progress to the President's Cabinet.

The second tier composed of representatives from the following organizations forming the technical body of the Trade Facilitation Forum and nominated observers:

Ministry of Commerce and Industry – Deputy Minister of Commerce and Trade Services – Chair
Ministry of Finance and Development Planning – Deputy Minister Economic Management (or designated representative)

Liberia Revenue Authority – Bureau of Customs & Excise (or delegated representative)

Ministry of Transport – National Ports Authority - role (or delegated representative)

Ministry of Justice – Deputy Minister for Economic Affairs (or delegated representative)

Liberia Better Business Forum

Importers Associations

Shippers Associations

Liberian Chamber of Commerce

National Investment Commission

Customs Brokers

Truckers Association

BIVAC

APM Terminals

World Bank Group – Investment Climate Advisory Services - observer

The third tier are other Observers, as invited to support specific Trade Facilitation solutions

Permanent technical secretariat: Set up ongoing.

Liberia Chamber of Commerce will chair the Permanent Secretariat.

Funding:

Budget: No.

Because of the lack of domestic resources and the lack of financial support of donors and development partners

Objectives / Focus:

Objectives: The objectives of the Trade Facilitation Forum are facilitation, regulation, policy development and awareness/training.

Working plan: Yes

Monitoring and evaluation: Technical secretariat.

Familiar with the following tools: World Bank Doing Business Trading Across Borders, and World Economic Forum Global Enabling Trade Report.

Familiar with the following tools to some extent: UNCTAD statistics (country and maritime profiles), UN Global Survey on Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade Implementation, World Bank Logistics Performance Index (LPI), and OECD Trade Facilitation Indicators.

Reporting form and supervisory authority: Semi-annually

Membership / Composition:

Public or quasi-public agencies:

Ministry of Commerce and Industry,

Ministry of Finance and Development Planning,

Liberia Revenue Authority,

Ministry of Justice,

Ministry of Transport,
Ministry of Agriculture,
Liberia Immigration Services,
Central Bank of Liberia,
Environmental Protection Agency,
National Standards Laboratory,
Liberia Telecommunications Authority,
Governance Commission,
National Port Authority.

Private associations or entities:

Liberia Chamber of Commerce,
National Customs Brokers Association of Liberia,
APM Terminals Liberia,
Liberian Business Association,
Liberia Small Business Association,
Bivac Int'l Liberia,
SGS Liberia,
Shipping Lines,
Importers Association,
Liberia Better Business Forum,
Liberia Marketing Association,
Association of Women in Cross Border Trade,
Truckers Association.

Level of seniority of participants: The heads or representative of private institutions and associations, and principal deputies of public/government ministries and agencies.

Senior-35%, Middle-65%

Participation:

Frequency of meetings: Semi-annually

Level of participation: Above average

Meetings format: Brainstorming

Gender:

Chairman / President / Vice-president is female: 30%

Promotion / Communication:

Communication channels to keep stakeholders informed of TF meetings: Yes. By Email, Administrative letters and Telephone

Interface with other working groups/committees on similar issues: When the need arises through recommendations based on the trade issues.

Undertake information sessions to stakeholders or general public: No

Benefits:

Impact: Reduction of some non-tariff barriers

Benefits for the country's responsiveness to the WTO negotiation process: Transparency is enhanced

Concrete operational outcomes: Implementation of concrete trade facilitation measures, Developed an implementation plan for the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, Ratification / notifications of the Trade Facilitation Agreement sent to the WTO

Lessons learned:

Success factors: Regularity of meetings / communications to NTFC members, Commitment from members, Financial assistance / adequate resources, Political commitment / high level support, Strong leadership

Greatest obstacles: Lack of funding / resources, Incorrect representation of members / frequent replacement of members, High level support / political buy-in, Lack of permanent secretariat, Lack of regularity of meetings.

Future plans:

Plans for further development: There are plans with support, for the following:

- Targeted short, medium and long term trainings, including advance level education abroad;
- Training and capacity building of middle level staff in areas of logistics movement and transport, customs procedures and border's management;
- Capacity building programs on related trade rules/agreements;
- Private sector engagement, awareness, and development in areas like Logistics, Transport and Maritime Services;
- Operational organizational structure of the Trade Facilitation Forum. Etc.

Contact information:

Contact Information: Hon. Cyril A. Allen, II.

Deputy Minister for Commerce and Trade Services,
Ministry of Commerce and Industry and,
Chairman, National Trade Facilitation Forum

Hon. Steve Marvie,

Assistant Minister for Commerce and Trade Services,
Ministry of Commerce and Industry,
Chairman,
Technical Secretariat, TFF,
Email: smarvie@moci.gov.lr
Tel: +231 886 548 320