

## Country: Afghanistan

### Background:

**Type of body:** PRO-committee

**Official name:** AFPRO Afghanistan Pro committee to promote efficient trade, transit and transport procedures and methods.

**Motivation for its establishment:** AFPRO was established in 2006 to enable the private sector to head Afghanistan's development within a competitive market-based economy in which the Government is the policy maker and regulator of the economy, not is competitor.

Trade facilitation issues in Afghanistan are: high transit costs, high trade transaction costs, and long truck and rail journey time.

**Year of establishment:** 2006

**Other national bodies dealing with WTO issues and/or with Trade Facilitation:** A WTO Unit in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry supported by an inter-ministerial task force on WTO matters.

**Former multi-agency group/committee:** No

**Current status of the working group (running, pilot phase, not functioning, etc):** Stopped its activities in January 2009.

### Institutional Framework:

**Degree of institutionalisation:** Presidential decree.

**Type of organisation (ad hoc group, legal entity/organisation, etc):** Stand alone permanent governmental body.

**Scope/mandate:** To act as a focal point to collect and disseminate information on best practices; Forum to research solutions for reducing trade transaction costs and lowering truck and rail journey time.

**Coordinating agency:** CEO from Chamber of Commerce.

**Working structure of the group:** Executive Committee (Chairman: Chief Executive Officer of the Chamber of Commerce, Vice chairman: Director General of Customs-Ministry of Finance and Director General of Transit and Trade Facilitation Directorate-Ministry of Commerce and Industry). Four working groups were established: Trade Facilitation, Transport and Transit Facilitation, Training, Public Private Partnership and Investment Projects.

**Permanent technical secretariat:** The Secretariat, counting with one assistant, was established and located in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

### Funding:

**Budget:** Funding for the Secretariat was provided by the UNCTAD Trade Facilitation project

(financed by the World Bank). No agreement was reached on a sustainable business plan or annual budget.

**Sources of funding:** Technical Assistance

**Items covered by the budget:** This question is not applicable.

## Objectives / Focus:

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Facilitation;  
Regulatory;  
Development Policy; and  
Training.

**Working plan:** No

**Monitoring and evaluation:** This question is not applicable.

## Membership / Composition:

**Public or quasi-public agencies:** AFPRO is composed of:

President Office;  
High Council of Ministers;  
Secretary Office;  
Ministry of Economy and Finance;  
Ministry of Mine;  
Ministry of Energy and Water;  
Ministry of Communication;  
Ministry of Agriculture;  
Ministry of Environment; and  
Central Bank of Afghanistan.

**Private associations or entities:** National traders and Private Sector.

## Participation:

**Frequency of meetings:** Several meetings took place between June 2006 and June 2008.

## Benefits:

**Impact:** Most of the meetings of AFPRO actually dealt with organisational matters, such as procedures and financing issues and very little substantive issues. Even on the organisational matters, no agreement was reached on budget, work plan etc.

**Benefits for the country's responsiveness to the WTO negotiation process:** AFPRO Secretariat

staff participated in the preparation and the organisation of the WTO Trade Facilitation self-assessment.

**Concrete operational outcomes:** Conducted a study on "Trade Route Analysis: Kabul to Karachi vs Bandar Abbas"

## **Lessons learned:**

### **Greatest obstacles:**

Lack of sufficient government commitment;

The Afghan Private Sector has not been interested to participate in AFPRO activities preferring to raise their concerns and problems through the Chamber of Commerce;

Lack of financing commitment to establish a permanent Secretariat;

Lack of realistic goals and results and ToRs for AFPRO and the working groups;

Lack of understanding of the role of AFPRO amongst stakeholders;

AFPRO never functioned as a training institute for its stakeholders.

## **Future plans:**

### **Plans for further development:**

Strengthen existing professional representative organisations and ensure regular and direct consultations with the government;

The inter-ministerial task force on WTO issues can also follow up on the trade facilitation issues and may set up a sub-group for Trade Facilitation, following the successful example of the organisation of the WTO self assessment and other WTO Trade Facilitation related activities, such as the WTO questionnaires on aid for trade and trade facilitation.