



Global Supply Chain Forum

Barbados

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THIRD GLOBAL FORUM FOR NTFCs 2024

DRAFT OUTCOME DOCUMENT

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ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asia Development Bank
AI	Artificial Intelligence
ASYCUDA	Automated System for Customs Data
CAF	Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean
CAFTA-DR	Central America Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CBIC	Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs
CBM	Coordinated Border Management
DPOs	Development policy operations
ECLAC	United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
EoT	Ecosystem of Trust
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FIATA	International Federation of Freight Forwarders Associations
GATF	Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation
HMRC	His Majesty's Revenue and Custom
ICEGATE	Indian Customs National Trade Portal
IMPACCT	Importation and Customs Clearance Together
IPF	Investment Project Financing
ITC	International Trade Centre
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NTFC	National Trade Facilitation Committees
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
SIECA	Secretariat for Economic Integration of Central America
SME	Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises
SSCBT	Small-Scale Cross-Border Trade
TACB	Technical Assistance and Capacity Building

TF	Trade Facilitation
TFIs	Trade Facilitation Indicators
TFSP	Trade Facilitation Support Program
TRS	Time Release Study
UN/CEFACT	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNCITRAL	United Nations Commission on International Trade Law
UNCTAD	United Nations Trade and Development
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
WBG	World Bank Group
WCO	World Customs Organization
WFP	World Food Programme
WTO	World Trade Organization
WTO TFA	World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement
WTO TFAF	World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Trade Facilitation Committees (NTFCs) are codified with the World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement (WTO TFA). However, organizations like United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and United Nations Trade and Development (UNCTAD) have worked on the promotion of the NTFC concept worldwide since the 70s, and this was the inspiration for inclusion in the TFA.

UNCTAD together with Annex D partners have been collaborating in the past decade to organize Global NTFC forums. The 1st Global Forum was held in January 2017 in Geneva, Switzerland, and the 2nd Global Forum was held virtually on February 2022, a delay that was due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The 3rd Global Forum for NTFCs was held as part of the [Global supply chain forum 2024](#). The event had over 1000 participants from 127 countries, with many participating in the 3rd Global Forum for NTFCs. A series of 12 sessions were included in the forum.

SUMMARIES OF THE SESSIONS

Session D1: Third Global Forum for NTFCs- Opening Session

Speakers:

- Moderator - Jan Hoffmann, Head, Trade Logistics Branch, Division on Technology and Logistics (DTL), UN Trade and Development
- Sen. Lisa Cummins, Minister of Energy and Business, Barbados
- Ricardo Treviño Chapa, Deputy Secretary General, World Customs Organization (WCO)
- Jose Raul Perales, Deputy Director Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation
- Victoria Tuomisto, Trade Facilitation Adviser, International Trade Centre (ITC)
- Alina Monica Antoci, Senior Private Sector Development Specialist, World Bank Group
- Mark Henderson, Project Manager and Trade Negotiator, World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility (WTO TFAF)
- Poul Hansen, Chief Trade Facilitation Section, UN Trade and Development

The opening session of the third Global Forum for National Trade Facilitation Committees highlighted the crucial role of NTFCs in enhancing global trade facilitation, particularly in the post-COVID-19 era.

Key points from the session include:

NTFCs' Vital Role: Jan Hoffmann of UNCTAD emphasized the importance of NTFCs. He emphasized that these institutional mechanisms are crucial for uniting stakeholders from customs, trade, transport, and both public and private sectors to collaborate on trade facilitation measures. Hoffman also pointed out the importance of collaboration

between organizations, as exemplified by the joint efforts of UNCTAD, World Trade Organization, and other partners in trade facilitation.

Government's Role: Senator Lisa Cummins from Barbados discussed the government's role as an enabler and facilitator of trade, rather than a direct trader. She stressed that government regulations should facilitate business, not hinder it, and highlighted the importance of collaboration between government, the private sector, and international agencies.

Digital innovation: Minister Cummins also discussed Barbados' advancements in digital technology and innovation, such as the implementation of ASYCUDA World and maritime single windows, which can lead to efficiencies and new opportunities in markets like e-commerce. She called for the integration of green technology and innovation into trade processes to support the energy transition and tackle the climate crisis.

World Customs Organization (WCO) Contributions: Ricardo Treviño Chapa from WCO underscored the organization's role in assisting members by harmonizing standards and providing capacity building. He highlighted the WCO's tools and initiatives, such as the revised Kyoto Convention and the Safe Framework of Standards, which promote cooperation among customs, other border agencies, and the private sector. Chapa also emphasized the importance of private sector participation in trade facilitation efforts and the role of NTFCs as effective mechanisms for cooperation.

World Trade Organization Support: Mark Henderson from the WTO shared insights on the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility's role in supporting TFA implementation. He outlined the various panels he would be participating in during the forum, which would explore challenges faced by NTFCs in areas such as donor coordination, humanitarian relief, and resource mobilization.

Private Sector Engagement: José Raúl Perales from the Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation spoke as the voice of business and the private sector. He emphasized the shared responsibility between government authorities and the private sector in ensuring efficient and secure trade. Perales noted that the alliance works through NTFCs to bring agencies together and improve border management procedures.

Inclusive Trade Facilitation: Victoria Tuomisto from the International Trade Centre (ITC) highlighted the need for trade facilitation solutions to serve not just the big players but also micro and small businesses, women traders, and small-scale traders to improve food security and engage in cross-border trade safely.

World Bank's Support: Alina Monica Antoci from the World Bank Group discussed the Trade Facilitation Support Program, which provides technical assistance and capacity building to countries implementing the TFA. She underscored the World Bank's whole-of-government approach and the critical role of NTFCs in driving reforms at the national level.

In summary, the opening session of the third Global Forum for NTFCs underscored the pivotal role of NTFCs in trade facilitation, the necessity of collaboration among diverse stakeholders, the importance of digital innovation, and the challenges and opportunities faced by NTFCs in enhancing global supply chains.

Session D2: Successful NTFCs: Best Practices, Challenges and Opportunities

Speakers:

- Moderator - Michele Lowe, Senior Co-ordinator for Hemispheric and Bilateral Trade relations, Caribbean Community (CARICOM)
- Mark Henderson, Project Manager and Trade Negotiator, World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility (WTO TFAF)
- Arántzazu Sánchez Belastegui, Economic Affairs Officer, Trade Facilitation Section, UN Trade and Development
- Karen Mirtala Sosa Salgado, Trade Facilitation Coordinator and negotiator of Customs Procedures and Trade Facilitation, Ministry of Economic Development, Honduras
- Alina Monica Antoci, Senior Private Sector Development Specialist, World Bank Group

The session dedicated to NTFCs at the global forum focused on their achievements, best practices, challenges, and opportunities. Key outcomes from the session included:

Good Practices for NTFCs: Mark Henderson from the WTO highlighted the significance of NTFCs in driving sustainable trade facilitation reforms. He outlined seven good practices identified by the WTO Committee, which are essential for the effective operation of NTFCs. These practices include high-level political support, broad participation from government ministries and the private sector, clear communication, defined goals and priorities, capacity building, and performance measurement.

Reform Tracker Tool: Arántzazu Sánchez from UNCTAD introduced the new version of [Reform Tracker](#), a web-based tool designed to assist NTFCs in monitoring and managing trade facilitation reforms. The tool, launched in 2021 and enhanced in 2024, aims to improve communication and stakeholder engagement through features such as a dedicated NTFC website section, resource page, and monthly newsletter.

Honduras' Experience: Karen Mirtala Sosa Salgado shared Honduras' success with NTFCs, emphasizing the significant role of women and the challenges of involving the private sector. She stressed the importance of continuous training to address staff turnover and sustain trade facilitation reforms. Karen also discussed the use of the Reform Tracker in Honduras, which has supported institutional coordination and enabled the country to achieve a 93.3% implementation rate of the Trade Facilitation Agreement.

Private Sector Engagement: Alina Monica Antoci from the World Bank Group focused on the private sector's crucial role in NTFCs, the value of regional initiatives, and practical

examples of NTFCs' work globally. She emphasized the need for early private sector involvement in discussions and representation from diverse interests, including SMEs and women-led firms. Alina also addressed the challenges of building trust for data sharing among agencies, which is vital for coordinated border management.

Country-Driven Initiatives: The session underscored the importance of including gender and vulnerable groups in trade facilitation initiatives, with Eswatini's approach to drafting their Trade Facilitation Roadmap serving as a notable example.

In summary, the session provided a comprehensive overview of NTFCs' multifaceted role in trade facilitation, the challenges they encounter, and the tools and strategies that support their effectiveness. It also highlighted the ongoing need for collaboration, capacity building, and fostering trust among all stakeholders involved in trade facilitation.

Session D3: Supply Chain Disruptions- The Role and Response of NTFCs

Speakers:

- Moderator- Poul Hansen, Chief Trade Facilitation Section, UN Trade and Development
- Victor Ban, Special Counsel, Office of the U.S Trade Representative
- Andrea Tang, Legal services director, International Federation of Freight Forwarders Associations (FIATA)
- Ahmed Niyaz, Head of Strategic Management and International Relations, Maldives Customs Service
- Patricia Francis, Chairperson, Trade Facilitation Task Force, Jamaica

The session on the role of NTFCs in supply chain resilience highlighted their critical function in addressing global supply chain disruptions caused by events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, armed conflicts, and geopolitical tensions. Key outcomes from the session included:

Digitalization as a Key Response: The panelists agreed that digitalization was a key response to the pandemic's challenges, facilitating trade despite many countries' ad hoc implementation approaches. The significance of national trade facilitation committees in devising effective responses to such disruptions.

Jamaica's Progress: Patricia Francis highlighted Jamaica's strides towards a paperless trade environment, especially through the implementation of a single window for transactions and the integration of port community systems. She noted that the pandemic had expedited the digitalization process, which, despite initial difficulties, proved to be advantageous. Francis also addressed the challenges of implementing trade facilitation reforms, such as overcoming corruption and fostering trust among stakeholders.

Principles of Trade Facilitation: Victor Ban emphasized the principles of cooperation, communication, and automation in trade facilitation reforms, referencing the WTO TFA and its relevance to supply chain disruptions. Victor stressed that the work begins with the implementation of the TFA, especially those that deal with supply chain disruptions, such as articles 7, 8 and 10 of the TFA. He underscored the importance of focusing on the information needed by border authorities over the format it is presented in. Ban also shed light on the U.S. government's efforts to bolster supply chain resilience, particularly with developing countries, mentioning initiatives like the Americas Partnership for Economic Prosperity and the Central America Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR).

Freight Forwarders' Experiences: Andrea Tang discussed the varied experiences of freight forwarders with National Trade Facilitation Committees during the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting the necessity of inclusivity and meaningful private sector engagement to effectively address disruptions.

Maldives experience: Ahmed Niyaz shared the unique challenges faced by the Maldives due to its geography and how digitalization and automation have been successfully implemented in trade processes. With an economy valued at 6.5 billion U.S. dollars, making the enhancement of trade processes critical for enduring economic expansion.

Maldives implementation score of the WTO TFA as per the [WTO TFA database](#) stands at 64.7% in 2024. An increase from 30% in 2019. He attributed political will and international support as crucial to these reforms' success such as Asia Development Bank and UN Trade and Development. Future plans include establishing a national single window and licensing the first authorized economic operator.

Humanitarian Sector Concerns: During the audience intervention, Jean Cedric Meeus, Senior Supply Chain Advisor, United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF) highlighted the complexity of trade facilitation, pointing out the difficulties humanitarian organizations face in transporting supplies during crises. He called upon national border agencies to put in place frameworks for trade facilitation in time of emergency and humanitarian crisis. This highlighted the need for a comprehensive approach that considers the impact on all stakeholders.

Broader Engagement and Co-ownership of Supply Chains: The session called for broader engagement and input from stakeholders on supply chain resilience, particularly regarding the role of developing countries and the move towards co-ownership of supply chains.

In summary, the panelists acknowledged the importance of national trade facilitation committees in coordinating responses to supply chain disruptions and the necessity of diverse perspectives for effectiveness. The session ended with an acknowledgment of the complexities surrounding issues like humanitarian aid within the context of trade facilitation and a recognition of the progress made in the face of challenges.

Session D4: Humanitarian Relief, The Role and Preparedness of the NTFC

Speakers:

- Moderator- Mark Henderson, Mark Henderson, Project Manager and Trade Negotiator, World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility (WTO TFAF)
- Virginie Bohl, Coordinator of IMPACCT hosted by the Global Logistics Cluster, World Food Programme (WFP)
- Stanley Trief, Manager, Vanuatu Electronic Single Window
- Özlem Soysanli, Senior Technical Officer, World Customs Organization (WCO)
- Alina Antoci - Senior Private Sector Development Specialist, World Bank Group
- Roxana Cortina, Economic Affairs Officer, UN Trade and Development
- Jean Cedric Meeus, Senior Supply Chain Advisor, United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF)

The panel created an opportunity to discuss the application of TFA principles to facilitate the movement of humanitarian relief consignments in the event of a sudden-onset natural disaster.

Preparedness and transparency are two critical elements of an adequate immediate emergency response. Speakers stressed the critical role NTFC can play in preparing simplified emergency procedures, defining lists of essential goods, and publishing requirements and entry procedures that apply to those goods in case of a disaster.

WTO TFAF made reference G/TFA/W/94/Rev.3 that has been presented to the WTO Committee on Trade Facilitation and identifies the following four principles:

- Simplification of Clearance Procedures
- Border Agency Coordination
- Clear Communication to Traders and Interested Parties
- Digitization

Representatives of National Trade Facilitation Committees in the audience were invited to engage with this document, both as an NTFC and via their Geneva Delegates participating in the WTO Committee on Trade Facilitation. Especially as Members with direct perspectives on such disaster scenarios.

Session D5: Role of the NTFC in Pioneering Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation

Speakers:

- Moderator- Pamela Ugaz, Economics Affairs Officer, UN Trade and Development
- Ms. Noura Al Dhaheri, CEO, Digital Cluster and CEO, Maqta Gateway, AD Ports Group, Abu Dhabi
- Jane Musyoki, Principal officer, E-portal & Value Add services, Kenya Trade Network Agency (KenTrade)
- Kumar Kanishk, Assistant Director in the Department of Commerce, Government of India
- Khetsiwe Dlamini, Senior Trade Policy Analyst, Ministry of Commerce, Trade, and Industry

The UNCTAD Trade Facilitation Section organized a panel discussion. The moderator began by emphasizing the significant role of digitalization during and after the pandemic, as highlighted in the UN Global Survey for Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation. Nowadays, digitalization has been integrated into trade facilitation reforms.

Digitalization initiatives:

Ms. Noura Al Dhaheri discussed Maqta Gateway's work in creating digital trade facilitation solutions, including electronic data submission and port community systems.

Ms. Jane Musyoki highlighted the important role of Kenya's Trade Information Portal in harmonizing and streamlining trade procedures by minimizing duplications, complexities, and redundancies by digitizing and or automating the processes. The best practice is to ensure the portal is implemented with traders view from the onset as the consumers of the information.

Ms. Khetsiwe Dlamini emphasized the significance of following a digitalization roadmap in Eswatini. Digitalization is crucial for monitoring and evaluation using tools like the UNCTAD Reform Tracker, which automates the monitoring and assessment of the WTO TFA implementation.

Mr. Kumar Kanishk mentioned new technological developments such as remote inspections, Single Window for Trade 2.0, a digitalization roadmap, and the use of AI in ICEGATE (Indian Customs National Trade Portal) implemented in India.

Challenges in implementing digital tools:

Ms. Noura Al Dhaheri mentioned that maintaining political will and implementing change management proved to be difficult in the long term.

Ms. Musyoki identified resources both human and financial as a challenge in keeping the Kenya Trade Portal updated and consistent.

Ms. Dlamini added that the engagement of the private sector was another challenge.

Similarly, Mr. Kumar stressed that involving all public agencies is quite challenging. In India, for example, the implementation of the Single Window involves over 80 agencies. These challenges resulted in information asymmetries, non-standardized procedures, high costs, and more resistance to change.

Solutions in implementing the digital tools:

Ms. Noura Al Dhaheri urged developing economies to adopt trade single windows faster. Highlighting how the trade single window marks the beginning of endless opportunities for nations, she recommended stakeholders to come together under the guidance of its government and collectively benefit from the trade single window implementation.

Ms. Musyoki recommended seeking symmetry of information, following a roadmap, and eliminating redundancies.

Ms. Dlamini called for NTFCs to collaborate with the private sector in various working groups and to track the reforms using tools such as the reform tracker.

Mr. Kumar suggested focusing on standards. For example, G20 countries are working on a 10-point plan that includes the UNCITRAL model law, Mole Law Electronic Trade Record, voluntary standards, interoperability, and technology neutrality.

General recommendations:

Implementing a Single Window system should mark the beginning of the digitalization journey, not the end. NTFCs should aim to go further than the requirements of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement.

The importance of political will and private sector engagement outweighed the significance of technology, and awareness and transparency were crucial components in the process of digitalization.

In summary, the session showcased the importance of digitalization in trade facilitation and the importance of political will, private sector engagement, and transparency in successfully implementing these digital reforms.

Session D6: The Role of Customs in NTFCs and the link to Customs Consultative Committees

Speakers:

- Moderator- Ricardo Treviño Chapa, Deputy Secretary General World Customs Organization (WCO)
- Bibiana Das Chagas Meroni, Tax Auditor and Customs Officer, Federal Revenue of Brazil
- Surjit Bhujabal, Member, Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC), Government of India
- Victoria Weyulu, Senior manager, Trade Facilitation and Customs Procedures, Namibia Revenue Authority
- Fabián Villarroel, Regional Private Sector Group Representative for World Customs Organization Americas and Caribbean Region

This session highlighted that the proper functioning of NTFCs requires the involvement of all relevant government agencies, including the full and active participation of Customs administrations given the key role that Customs plays at borders in facilitating and securing global trade. Additionally, many countries highlight increased dialogues between public and private sectors as one of the benefits of NTFCs.

Key Outcomes:

1. The status of NTFCs varies greatly depending on the country.
2. A clear road map is essential for the well-functioning of NTFCs.
- Communication and regular information exchange are important in the margins of NTFCs.
3. Coordination and cooperation are challenging, not only with the private sector but also between public sector agencies.
4. Harmonization of efforts is important.
5. Public-private sector partnership is key; a mindset change is needed on all sides.
6. The private sector should understand the norms applied by Customs.
7. Importance of Customs-to-Customs cooperation.
8. Global expectations should be understood: What others are doing.
9. Knowledge and trust are important in relations between public and private sectors, companies should be transparent.
10. Notification to the WTO does not represent reality and the role of the NTFCs goes beyond a simple notification mandate to the WTO, there is still a lot of work to be done.
11. There is no standard in terms of the number of agencies operating at the border or involved in NTFCs.
12. Not everything can be done in NTFCs.

Country case examples:

Brazil:

Local Committees: Need for operational improvement across 29 ports, airports, and borders, which need consistent procedures.

Stakeholder Engagement: Engagement of all stakeholders is needed. This is a major challenge because no actor has the full picture. Engagement must be strategic and go beyond interest to ensure comprehensive participation.

India:

Steering Committees and Working Groups: Frequent meetings with the steering committees and working groups under the National Committees on Trade Facilitation are essential.

Innovative Approaches: Innovative and technology-driven approaches facilitate Customs and trade operations. Global expectations are converging with new ideas and synergies.

Multi-Tiered System: The structure of NTFC in India is described as a multi-tiered system based on a three-year plan. The goal is to have seamless cross-border trade that benefits everyone.

High Digitalization: The key to India's success lies in a high rate of digitalization of its processes. The NTFC has merged top-down and bottom-up approaches to create synergy with national roles and enable the integration of global programmes and partners.

Namibia:

Active Customs Participation: Customs is the Chair of the NTFC in Namibia which has led to prioritized reforms.

Identification of bottlenecks: With customs at the NTFC lead in Namibia, trade facilitation reforms have been prioritized. For example, they prioritized trade facilitation reforms through the first Time Release Study (TRS) in Walvis Bay, which led to the identification of bottlenecks.

Information Sharing: Sharing information is key. Inviting business for close collaboration has led to a positive impact on NTFC.

Increased TFA Implementation: The implementation score of Namibia for the Trade Facilitation Agreement (as measured in [UNCTAD Reform Tracker](#)) has improved from 7% in 2021 to 51% as of 2024. The implementation score can identify weaknesses that can be addressed without delay to harmonize collective efforts.

In summary, the session underscored the diverse experiences and best practices of NTFCs in different regions, and how Customs within NTFCs can contribute to strengthening dialogue between the public and private sectors. Emphasizing the need for clear communication, cooperation, and stakeholder engagement. While the role of Customs is pivotal, the success of NTFCs hinges on a collaborative approach that

includes public and private sectors, with a focus on digitalization and continuous improvement of processes.

Session D7: Border Agency Cooperation and Regional Trade Facilitation: Contributions of the NTFCs

Speakers:

- Moderator- Jane Korinek, Senior Economist, Trade Policy Division, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)
- Özlem Soysanli, Senior Technical Officer, World Customs Organization (WCO)
- Michelle Belgrave, Customs and Trade Compliance Director for the Caribbean, DHL Express
- Eduardo José Espinoza Valverde, General Director Economic Integration, Trade Facilitation and Transport, Secretariat for Economic Integration of Central America (SIECA)
- Ruari Bride, HM Revenue and Customs, UK

This session explored how NTFCs could contribute to improving coordination between Customs and other border agencies and thus enhance global and regional trade facilitation.

Improvement in border agency cooperation: Jane Korinek opened the session by highlighting the OECD work on Trade Facilitation Indicators which shows that co-operation between agencies at the border is one of the trade facilitation areas that improved most since the COVID-19 pandemic, but challenges remain. These relate to the use of harmonized systems to manage documents, inspections, risk management, share and exchange data. Border agency co-operation is among the top areas for action across all regions covered by the Trade Facilitation Indicators (TFIs): Asia-Pacific, Europe and Central Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Middle East and North Africa (MENA), and Sub-Saharan Africa. The OECD policy toolkit [4 Keys to Resilient Supply Chains](#) also emphasises trade facilitation policies as a key area of international co-operation and enablers of economic resilience and diversification along supply chains.

Coordinated Border Management (CBM): Özlem Soysanli highlighted that the CBM concept is not a new one and has been around for almost two decades. She emphasised how CBM is embedded in the work of the WCO which has been actively supporting its implementation in Customs administrations worldwide. Going forward, the Customs

Community can actively promote the partnerships with other cross-border regulatory agencies to improve and expedite border processing. This can help border agencies to acquire a better knowledge and understanding of the roles and responsibilities of each other.

Regional Cooperation in Central America: Eduardo José Espinoza Valverde presented the opportunities and challenges in bringing together NTFCs across multiple countries from Central America since they first convened in 2022. He highlighted for instance the Central American Digital Trade Platform, launched in 2023, to streamline trade processes within and outside the region and facilitate paperwork. This strategy can also provide important support to facilitating the necessary exchange of information and data between customs and other relevant border agency, as well as operationalising the mechanisms of coordination on the ground between countries in the region.

National Perspective and Practical Implementation: Ruari Bride highlighted the opportunities and challenges from a national perspective, and the importance of ‘getting the right people in the room’, including experts and business representatives, and the benefits of closing gaps between policy and practice at borders. The UK has been setting up the 2025 Border Target Operating Model and implementing Ecosystem of Trust (EoT) pilots. In addition to continued challenges when bringing together the different processes and agencies in the Single Trade Window under development, the initial evaluation of Ecosystem of Trust pilots highlights that collaboration between government and industry is essential for driving innovation at the border, while interoperability proves to be the biggest barrier to scaling an EoT model. Border agency co-operation and increased collaboration with the private sector through digital tools requires thus a solid and holistic institutional, technical, and regulatory architecture.

Private Sector Engagement: Michelle Belgrave highlighted the desirability of ensuring NTFCs are operating, particularly in the Caribbean, and the importance of consistently engaging the private sector in NTFCs to incorporate feedback from businesses on the challenges faced during day-to-day operations. These perspectives can also provide important insights into the specific challenges faced by SMEs and by firms operating in different sectors which can involve dealing with different border agencies.

Recommendations:

Integration of Border Agencies: NTFCs should fully integrate border agencies other than Customs to improve coordination and efficiency.

Leveraging Technology: Utilize technology to enhance communication and data exchange between agencies.

Strengthening Partnerships: Strengthen partnerships between public and private sectors to foster innovation and effective trade facilitation.

Collaboration and Stakeholder Engagement: Maintain high levels of collaboration with stakeholders, including the private sector, to ensure practical implementation of policies and address operational challenges.

In summary, the session examined the gaps between the implementation of regulatory frameworks for trade facilitation and operational practices and the way these impact border agency cooperation mechanisms.

Session D8: Fostering private sector engagement in NTFCs

Speakers:

- Moderator- Jose Raul Perales, Deputy Director Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation (GATF)
- Wendy Aydeé Torrejón Gómez, Supervisor of International Relations, Bolivia National Customs Office
- Edna Ramírez Robles, Dean of Legal Studies, University of Guadalajara
- Michelle Belgrave, Customs and Trade Compliance Director for the Caribbean, DHL Express
- Nirad Tewarie CEO, American Chamber of Commerce of Trinidad and Tobago.
- Fabiola Gamboa Avalos, Trade Facilitation Advisor, Ministry of Foreign Trade, Costa Rica

The session on private sector involvement in National Trade Facilitation Committees (NTFCs) highlighted the high interest of the private sector in NTFCs but noted that effective participation is inconsistent. Not all NTFCs welcome private sector participation or engagement, and when they do, it is often in an observer capacity and without some clear role or responsibility. NTFCs that have developed successful working relationships with their private sectors have done so through the following set of measures and best practices.

Best Practices for Effective Private Sector Participation:

Embedding Private Sector Roles in NTFCs: The private sector's role should be integrated into the NTFC's foundational instrument, ideally through legislation. Being present together at the creation means governments and business develop a sense of shared responsibility for the output, and ideally success, of the committee.

Country case examples: Costa Rica and Honduras allow the private sector to vote on NTFC decisions, enhancing their involvement and accountability.

Clear Roles and Tasks for the Private Sector: Defined roles and tasks for private sector participants help stabilize expectations regarding outcomes.

Tiered or Functional NTFC Structure: A structured approach compels public-private interaction at different levels of policy discussion, evolution, and adoption. This commits parties, and especially the private sector, to accompany the decision-making process

inside the NTFC rather than pursuits through outside channels. This behavior, in turn, strengthens the commitment of parties to the success of the NTFC.

Transparency and Communication: NTFC activities, rules, procedures, decisions, and measures should be publicly available and communicated to the entire private sector. This reduces potential conflicts or concerns about transparency and representation in the committee.

Challenges:

Engaging Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs): Effectively involving SMEs and addressing their specific concerns remains a challenge.

Policymaking vs. Problem-Solving: Differentiating between policy-making and problem-solving roles within the NTFC can be difficult, depending on whether there is information asymmetry or the broader environment of public-private relations in the country.

In summary, the session highlighted the importance of integrating the private sector into NTFCs through clear roles, legislative backing, and transparent processes. While some NTFCs have successfully developed collaborative relationships with the private sector, challenges remain in ensuring effective engagement, particularly for SMEs, and in balancing policy-making and problem-solving functions. These insights point to the need for structured, transparent, and inclusive approaches to enhance NTFC effectiveness and private sector participation.

Session D9: The Role of the NTFCs in Mobilizing Resources for Trade Facilitation Reforms: Bridging Opportunities and Challenges

Speakers:

- Moderator- Alina Monica Antoci, Senior Private Sector Development Specialist, World Bank Group
- Gabriela Cárdenas Rivadeneira, Technical Secretariat, National Trade Facilitation Committee, Ministry of Production, Foreign Trade, Investments, and Fisheries, Ecuador
- Bou Bunnara, Director of Legal Affairs and PR Department General Department of Customs and Excise Cambodia
- Ruari Bride, HM Revenue and Customs, UK
- Mark Henderson, Project Manager and Trade Negotiator, World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility (WTO TFAF)

The Session, organized by the World Bank Group (WBG), focused on providing the participants with a unique chance to gain insights from donor organizations, revealing the different forms of assistance available.

The session offered a forum for open discussions on the complexities and challenges of identifying and securing necessary funding for achieving successful trade facilitation reform and most importantly, on the proactive role the NTFCs should take in bridging the opportunities and challenges in mobilizing resources and support from donors and international organizations whose dedication to bolstering trade facilitation efforts through a variety of assistance programs is crucial.

Overview of Trade Facilitation Support Program (TFSP): The session was moderated by Alina Monica Antoci, Senior Private Sector Development Specialist, World Bank Group, who have an overview of the World Bank Group as the largest provider of Technical Assistance and Capacity Building (TACB) around the implementation of the TFA through its flagship program, the Trade Facilitation Support Program (TFSP). Launched in 2014, the TFSP was specifically designed as a global response to support developing countries in reforming and aligning their trade facilitation laws, procedures, processes, and systems with international best practices and standards for full and effective implementation of the WTO TFA. The TFSP is supported by 9 donor partners with implementation of projects in over 70 countries.

Insights from the government representatives: The panel discussion featured insights from government representatives from Ecuador and Cambodia, including challenges faced by the NTFCs in obtaining funding, and added the perspective of trade and development experts including from HM Revenue and Customs, UK and WTO TFAF.

Ms. Rivadeneira spoke about the proactive experience in obtaining funding of the Technical Secretariat of the National Trade Facilitation Committee in Ecuador.

Mr. Bunnara spoke about leveraging strategic initiatives of the Department General Department of Customs and Excise in Cambodia to the NTFC level.

Mr. Bride brought in the perspective of HM Revenue and Customs, UK, and Mr. Henderson gave critical insights from WTO TFAF.

Challenges: One of the main barriers raised by members was on what is the best way to approach a donor partner: Who's the right person; Where is the right location; Which is the right program? Members also noted a gap between the language used in donors' programs and projects – which not always have “trade facilitation” listed in their names – and the focus on general societal outcomes versus the country clients more technical and specific requests.

Communication and Outreach: Insights from the panel helped understand how to make communication and outreach more effective. Empowering NTFC's to better communicate with the donor community on their needs and help them better bridge the opportunities and challenges in leveraging financing support for trade facilitation is key. The importance of linking trade facilitation projects to broader themes such as job growth, private sector development and SME development was also emphasized.

5C's for successful trade facilitation reform: The World Bank Group also emphasized the list of 5C's for successful trade facilitation reform as part of the due diligence process in addressing requests for assistance which guides the prioritization process on where the funding goes to achieve an increase in TFA alignment: Commitment, Coordination, Collaboration, Consistency and Communication. They hint to the need to have a conversation with client governments and to see a demonstrated commitment to reform, and a clear demonstration of private sector involvement.

Partnership and Coordination: The session called for continued partnership and coordination among governments, the private sector, and international organizations to support the trade facilitation reforms through the critical role of the NTFC.

The flagship Trade Facilitation Support Program of the WBG is ideally placed to provide a rapid response, and Technical Assistance Capacity Building (TACB) support to help identify the gaps in alignment, assist with the notification process and as needed, undertake a TRS to establish a baseline at the onset of the project. In addition to providing TACB, the WBG is also in a unique position to be able to also provide longer term assistance through a range of financing instruments which include investment project financing (IPF) and development policy operations (DPOs) where partnerships and collaboration with international partners such as the UN Trade and Development are key for implementation; financing through these instruments could include ASYCUDA or Risk Management modules implementation.

The session also recognized the significance of having a continuous and organized dialogue in reaching out to the donor community for Technical Assistance Capacity Building (TACB) through the coordinating mechanism the National Trade Facilitation Committees provides and a need for a whole of government coordinated approach.

Session D10: Inclusivity in Trade Facilitation: The Role of NTFCs

Speakers:

- Moderator- Victoria Tuomisto, Trade Facilitation Adviser, International Trade Centre (ITC)
- Tadiwanashe Mutibura, UN Trade and Development Supply chain Innovation Challenge Winner
- Jeffrey Maganya, Program and Influencing Director, OXFAM
- Ingrid Huapaya, Customs and Trade Facilitation Coordinator, Peru Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Tourism
- Aryeetey Densua Naa, Chair sub-committee on gender, Ghana National Trade Facilitation Committee
- Houssein Gharbi, Expert in Trade Inclusion, Universal Postal Union

The panel discussion focused on the complexities and challenges faced by small-scale cross-border traders, with a special focus on the role and challenges faced by women and vulnerable groups in this sector.

Key Issues Identified:

Lack of Formal Recognition and Support: Tadiwanashe Mutibura highlighted that women contribute significantly to small-scale cross-border traders in Zimbabwe, but these traders often operate without formal recognition or adequate support, which limits their ability to trade profitably and safely.

Lack of comprehensive data: There is a significant lack of comprehensive data on SSCBT, which is necessary for creating informed policies and support systems.

Specific Obstacles Encountered by Traders: Challenges at the border include legal issues, harassment, lack of specialized services, and even arbitrary confiscation of goods. Generally, economic instability, particularly currency volatility, further affects small-scale cross-border traders' ability to maintain a stable income.

Proposed Solutions:

Government involvement: Jeffrey Maganya from Oxfam emphasized the responsibility of governments to ensure legal protection and fair pricing for traders, advocating for trade policies that are grounded in human rights values. He highlighted Oxfam's initiatives to strengthen civil society, conduct research, and harmonize policies to support marginalized traders.

Improved Border Procedures: Implementation of transparent and safe border environments, including border scanners, and establishing predictable charges and fees to help traders in moving goods across the border.

Gender-specific initiatives: Ingrid Huapaya from Peru outlined her ministry's efforts to reduce gender disparities and promote the inclusion of women and SMEs in export initiatives. Naa Densua Aryeetey shared insights from Ghana, where a subcommittee on trade and gender was established to address women traders' issues, including the introduction of gender champions to assist women at borders.

Regional and international collaboration: Houssein Gharbi from the Universal Postal Union discussed the postal sector's role in facilitating trade for SMEs and women. He presented initiatives like the Trade Post Project and the Postal Prosperity Zone, aimed at enhancing trade inclusion through postal networks.

Inclusivity in trade: The session concluded with a call for action on inclusivity in trade, emphasizing the need for practical solutions and the sharing of best practices across

regions and countries. The moderator, Victoria Tuomisto, encouraged ongoing dialogue and collaboration to promote meaningful trade facilitation that serves all types of businesses.

In summary, key observations from the discussion included the recognition of significant barriers to trade for many small-scale and women traders and the potential for key policy, technology and education solutions to address their challenges. The conversation also highlighted the importance of understanding the lived experiences of traders to inform policy and decision-making effectively. The diverse experiences and focus areas of the panelists provided a rich array of perspectives, underscoring the multifaceted nature of trade facilitation and the critical role of inclusivity in improving livelihoods of all economic operators.

Session D11: NTFC Involvement in Pioneering Climate-Smart Trade Facilitation

Speakers:

- Moderator- Matthew Wilson, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Barbados to the United Nations, World Trade Organization, and other offices in Geneva
- Ingrid Zabaleta Chaustre, Regional Executive Assistant + Cotton Project (Peru Pima), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)
- Victoria Tuomisto, Trade Facilitation Adviser, International Trade Centre (ITC)
- Stanley Trief, Manager, Vanuatu Electronic Single Window
- Poul Hansen, Chief, Trade Facilitation Section, UN Trade and Development
- Kevin Bishop, Associate Information Management Officer, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN/CEFACT)

The session, chaired by Ambassador Matthew Wilson, focused on integrating environmental sustainability into trade facilitation practices with an emphasis on digital innovation.

Key Points and Proposals:

Digitalization and Sustainability in Trade: Poul Hansen from UNCTAD spoke about the relevance of green trade facilitation and the significant contribution of trade and transport to global carbon emissions. He stressed the need for streamlined procedures and digital trade facilitation tools, which can lead to reductions in costs and CO2 emissions. Hansen provided the example of Kenya, where digitalization and simplification of trade

procedures led to a significant reduction in the time and cost required to obtain a plant health certificate, along with a decrease in CO2 emissions.

Traceability and Certification: Ingrid Zabaleta Chaustre from the FAO shared insights into digital innovations in the cotton sector, focusing on the importance of traceability and certification for connecting small actors to markets. She discussed the PLOS Cotton Project, which demonstrated the benefits of digital platforms in providing transparency and traceability, leading to better market access and premium prices for sustainable products.

Challenges and Solutions in Trade Facilitation: Victoria Tuomisto from the ITC addressed the role of trade facilitation in the global response to climate change and environmental sustainability. She outlined challenges such as carbon emissions, paper usage, waste at border posts, and illegal trading. Tuomisto proposed solutions including digitalization, virtual line management systems, carbon-neutral borders, and adherence to multilateral environmental agreements, emphasizing the need for measurable impacts.

Standardization and Interoperability: Kevin Bishop from the UNECE discussed the importance of standardization in supply chain due diligence, interoperability, and standardized data sets. He mentioned UNECE's role in developing standards and best practice recommendations for trade facilitation and electronic business, as well as promoting sustainable and digital trade practices.

Country-Specific Example:

Vanuatu: Stanley Trief, manager, Vanuatu electronic single window shared the country's experience with the ASYCUDA-based single window system, which led to significant reductions in paper usage and trips to customs and biosecurity offices. He highlighted the system's role in enforcing environmental and climate change policies and its contribution to disaster resilience.

Key Points and Proposals:

1. We must put green transition and sustainability on the TF radar especially given the carbon intensive role of trade
2. Need to streamline regulations and invest in digital TF tools to measure carbon impact, reduce paper, physical trips to different agencies, monitoring climate impact of trade and reducing wastage like return of goods
3. Traceability and certification matter to track the sustainability of the value chain along the full product life cycle and Traceability of value chains can lead to premium prices for products
 - Cutting back on paper, cutting back of waste at border posts, illegal trade-can all be addressed through enhancing digitalization - highlight success stories like that of Vanuatu
5. Need to address fragmentation of tools that seek to do similar things
6. Use digital tools to cut down on congestion at the border. But border agency coordination is key

7. Explore scaling up the assessments of Carbon neutral borders and other innovations that have proven to cut down on emissions
8. NTFCs can have a role to play in discussing and implementing [World Trade Organization](#) TFA including measures beyond the TFA also known as (TFA+) and exploring including environmental measures in work of the NTFC
9. Multifaceted use of the technology- positive benefits on efficiencies at border, sustainability and even on issues like providing humanitarian assistance
10. Standardization matters- of data, of risk analysis, of exchange of information

In summary, the session underscored the importance of integrating sustainability into trade facilitation practices and the potential of digital innovation to advance climate action. The discussions highlighted the need for a collaborative approach to foster innovation and exchange best practices, ultimately paving the way for a sustainable trade agenda.

Session D12: 3rd NTFC Global Forum-Closing ceremony

Speakers:

- Shamika N. Sirimanne, Director, Division on Technology and Logistics (DTL), UN Trade and Development
- Sen. Lisa Cummins, Minister of Energy and Business, Barbados

The forum on trade facilitation concluded with a session emphasizing the Barbadian government's commitment to the issues discussed. Lisa Cummins, Minister of Energy and Business, underscored the importance of the event, reflecting on the inclusive and productive discussions that brought together various stakeholders.

The following issues were highlighted:

Government Commitment: The Barbadian government's prioritization of the forum's agenda was highlighted by Minister Cummins, demonstrating strong political support.

Collaboration: Cummins emphasized the necessity of collaboration among various stakeholders, including port communities, UNCTAD, multilateral development banks (MDBs), and the private sector, which was identified as a key takeaway.

Role of NTFCs and Customs Authorities: The critical role of customs authorities in facilitating trade was stressed, with a call for strengthened collaboration between NTFCs and customs administrations.

Digitalization and Technology: The future of trade facilitation is tied to advancements in technology, including blockchain, artificial intelligence, and digitalization for more transparent and efficient processes.

Private Sector Engagement: The private sector's role was acknowledged as vital, with public-private partnerships deemed essential for addressing challenges such as supply chain resilience and border compliance.

Resource Mobilization: Identified as a significant challenge, there was a call for more streamlined support from international partners.

Inclusivity and Sustainability: Discussions on empowering small traders, promoting gender mainstreaming, and pioneering climate-smart practices.

Emphasis on inclusivity in trade facilitation was highlighted to ensure that small traders and women, youth, and peoples with disabilities in trade are not overlooked.

Capacity Building and Communication: The forum also recognized the need for strategic capacity building and clear communication with private sector entities, including port agents.

Comprehensive Wrap-Up by Shamika N. Sirimanne (UNCTAD):

Political Will and Technology Leverage: Political will and leveraging technology are crucial for successful trade facilitation efforts.

Collaboration: Importance of stakeholder collaboration for effective implementation.

Crisis Coordination: NTFCs' role in crisis coordination is increasingly important.

Focus on adaptation strategies to global shocks like supply chain disruptions and climate change.

Resource Mobilization: Long-term engagement with donors and development partners is necessary to support complex trade facilitation reforms.

Commitment to Ongoing Collaboration: Shamika affirmed the participants of the ongoing commitment to work together to address the challenges in trade facilitation.

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The success of the 3rd NTFC Forum was made possible thanks to the close collaboration with our partners, including the Government of Barbados, His Majesty's Revenue and Custom (HMRC UK Government), Caribbean Community (CARICOM), United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation (GATF), International Trade Centre (ITC), Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), World Customs Organization (WCO), World Trade Organization (WTO), Asia Development Bank (ADB), Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean (CAF), and all the remarkable speakers and participants.

UN Trade and Development and the Government of Barbados also wish to extend their deep appreciation to all the exceptional speakers and participants that have joined this event and have contributed to all the invigorating conversations.