



UNCTAD'S TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PACKAGE ON TRADE FACILITATION



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Trade facilitation is more important for developing countries' trade competitiveness and development than ever. The requirements of global supply chains and international logistics networks make fast and reliable border crossings ever more crucial. In view of this importance, members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) concluded negotiations on a new trade facilitation agreement in Bali, Indonesia, in December 2013.

UNCTAD – your partner in trade facilitation

UNCTAD's mandate in the area of trade facilitation dates back to the Final Act of its very first ministerial-level Conference in 1964. The Final Act of the Conference recommended that UNCTAD "should promote, within the United Nations family, arrangements for... intergovernmental action for... the simplification of formalities relating to customs procedures, commercial travel, etc." Over the following years, UNCTAD's continued work on trade facilitation led to the United Nations International Symposium on Trade Efficiency, organized in 1994 in Columbus, Ohio (United States of America) and the Columbus Ministerial Declaration on Trade Efficiency. The latter was instrumental for the inclusion of trade facilitation in the agenda at the first WTO Ministerial Conference in Singapore in 1996.

UNCTAD possesses long-standing expertise and experience in trade facilitation on which basis it provides technical assistance and capacity-building support to developing countries, including in the establishment of national trade and transport facilitation committees, needs assessments, trade facilitation implementation plans, transit agreements and customs automation through its Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA) programme. It also undertakes a number of activities in the framework of its port management training programme and its e-regulation and e-registration systems. Through their impact on trade facilitation stakeholders (such as port authorities and small and medium-sized enterprises in particular), these programmes also contribute to enhancing trade facilitation in beneficiary countries. UNCTAD assistance and expertise encompass many aspects of trade facilitation that can be addressed by several programmes, to be articulated and tailored according to each country's needs.

Six ways UNCTAD can help in various fields of trade facilitation

1. Capacities to comply with international trade facilitation standards and rules

The WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation, concluded in Bali, Indonesia, in December 2013, provides for commitments from both developing and developed countries as regards its implementation. Developing country members of the WTO are to implement the measures set out in the Agreement in line with their capacity. Developed countries and international organizations are to support developing country members to acquire the necessary capacity. UNCTAD partners with both developing and developed countries to help achieve compliance with the above commitments through a programme of tailor-made technical cooperation for the implementation of the Agreement.

The UNCTAD [Trade Facilitation Section](#) has, since 2004, provided the necessary assistance for the development and strengthening of the [implementation capacity](#) of developing countries with regard to foreseen WTO rules. This assistance includes national implementation plans for the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation and national [trade facilitation committees](#) as required under article 13 of the Agreement.



2. Customs automation

The WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation creates binding commitments for all WTO members to expedite the movement, release and clearance of goods, increase customs efficiency, cut transaction costs and reduce documentation requirements (art. 7). The UNCTAD [ASYCUDA](#) programme has the substantial, internationally recognized expertise, powerful information and communications technology tools and a highly professional team to assist developing countries, particularly least developed countries, in the implementation of all customs-related provisions of the WTO Agreement. ASYCUDA has been providing technical assistance to member States for over 30 years. The highly reliable ASYCUDA service, implemented in over 90 countries, provides a single window and has become a de facto international standard of customs automation.

3. Online portals on foreign trade procedures: E-regulations and E-registrations

In application of article 1 of the Agreement on Trade Facilitation (publication and availability of information), foreign trade procedures, forms, documents and contact data can be published through a turnkey electronic portal developed by UNCTAD called [E-regulations](#). The system is installed on a local server and training is provided so that a national technical counterpart is able to maintain it autonomously and keep the information up to date.

In the context of article 10.4 of the Agreement, electronic single windows, which allow traders to consult online, through a single interface, all data and documents required by the various bodies involved in foreign trade operations (immigration, licensing and sanitary authorities, etc.), can be developed on the

basis of UNCTAD's [E-registrations](#), in cooperation with the ASYCUDA programme as appropriate in each country.

4. Port training

The UNCTAD port training programme, Train for Trade, contributes to strengthening trade facilitation by supporting port communities in developing countries in the quest for efficient and competitive port management. In order to increase trade flows and foster economic development, the programme creates port networks bringing together public, private and international entities. Its aim is to share knowledge and expertise between port operators and strengthen talent management and human resources development in port communities.

5. Transit and support to landlocked developing countries

Responding to the specific problems of landlocked developing countries requires a multidimensional approach to the development challenge of being landlocked. This implies notably the implementation of policies and measures aimed at economic restructuring and specialization in these countries that take into account their transport-related obstacles. The development of productive capacities is a key element of this process. In this context, [UNCTAD supports landlocked developing countries](#) to tackle persisting and emerging challenges by providing advisory services and organizing high-level expert group meetings, among other activities, to address key challenges facing these countries.

6. Complementary assistance

Assistance related to trade facilitation can also be provided in the following fields: support to countries acceding to the WTO, collection and analysis of non-trade measures, analysis of maritime transport connectivity, and competition law and policy issues related to trade facilitating services.

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Bali Ministerial Decision: Agreement on Trade Facilitation

Article 13: Institutional arrangements

2. National committee on trade facilitation

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 provisions of this Agreement.

Article 7: Release and clearance of goods

Article 1: Publication and availability of information

2. Information available through Internet

- a. Description of importation, exportation and transit procedures
- b. Forms and documents required for importation and exportation
- c. Contact information on enquiry points

Article 10: Formalities connected with importation and exportation and transit

4. Single window

- 4.1 Members shall endeavour to establish or maintain a single window, enabling traders to submit documentation and/or data requirements for importation, exportation or transit of goods through a single entry point to the participating authorities or agencies...
- 4.2. ...the same documentation and/or data requirements shall not be requested by participating authorities or agencies...
- 4.4 Members shall, to the extent possible and practical, use information technology to support the single window.

UNCTAD's Technical Assistance Package for WTO members

NATIONAL TRADE FACILITATION IMPLEMENTATION PLANS

AUTOMATED CUSTOMS
CLEARANCE
ASYCUDA

PORT MANAGEMENT
Train for Trade

INFORMATION PORTAL ON FOREIGN TRADE PROCEDURES
E-regulations

ELECTRONIC SINGLE WINDOW
ASYCUDA + E-registrations

TRANSIT AND SUPPORT TO
LANDLOCKED DEVELOPING
COUNTRIES

Support to countries accessing to
WTO, collection and analysis of
non-trade measures,
analysis of maritime transport
connectivity,
competition law and policy