ASYCUDA
Yearbook 2025

#22

EDITORIAL   Version française   Versión española

A Year of Transformation and Partnership

The year 2025 marks a defining moment for the ASYCUDA Programme as it continues its demand-driven technical assistance transformation from a customs modernization and reform centric initiative towards a comprehensive platform for more efficient, secure, and sustainable trade. Guided by its Strategic Plan and anchored in the vision of the Geneva Consensus adopted at UNCTAD16, the Programme consolidates its role as one of the United Nations' most extensive technical assistance initiatives, serving over 100 economies worldwide.

Building on the momentum of the 6th ASYCUDA Advisory Board meeting and the Programme's active participation in UNCTAD16, 2025 is a year of measurable progress and forward planning. Across all regions, governments have adopted new solutions and advanced reforms that increase transparency, accelerate clearance processes, and strengthen revenue performance. The introduction of the New Generation of ASYCUDA Technology represents a decisive step towards a more agile, interoperable, and inclusive digital architecture for trade facilitation.

Equally important is the continued emphasis on collaboration and national ownership. Through close cooperation with governments, ministries of trade, customs administrations, cross-border agencies, international and regional organizations, and development partners, ASYCUDA helps countries design solutions tailored to their policy priorities. The Programme's work extends beyond automation, it supports digital ecosystems that enable innovation, regulatory alignment, and data-driven governance.

Looking ahead, ASYCUDA enters the next phase of its journey with a renewed mandate to deliver technology for sustainable development. As global trade systems face mounting environmental and economic challenges, the Programme's state-of-the-art open-source, and cloud-enabled solutions will remain essential for building more connected, resilient, and equitable economies.

ASYCUDA IMPACT

103 economies

EUROPE

ASIA

MIDDLE EAST

AMERICAS AND THE CARIBBEAN ISLANDS

AFRICA

PACIFIC ISLANDS

37 LDCs / 24 LLDCs / 41 SIDS

66 Projects

13 Regional initiatives

Highlights from the 6th ASYCUDA Advisory Board

Charting the Next Chapter of Digital Trade Facilitation

The sixth session of the ASYCUDA Advisory Board took place on 11 June 2025 at UNCTAD Headquarters in Geneva and was chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General[1]. The meeting gathered member States and institutional partners to review Programme performance, technological advances, and future strategic directions. Deliberations underscored ASYCUDA's pivotal role in advancing digital trade facilitation and reinforcing UNCTAD's operational pillar. The session provided a platform for strategic reflection on the Programme's governance, resource sustainability and long-term direction as global demand for digital solutions continues to rise.

1   From left: H.E. Mr. Matthew Anthony Wilson, Ambassador, Permanent Mission of Barbados; Mr. Renaud Massenet, ASYCUDA Programme; H.E. Ms. Davaasuren Gerelmaa, Ambassador, Permanent Mission of Mongolia; Mr. Pedro Manuel Moreno, Chair of the ASYCUDA Advisory Board and Deputy Secretary-General, UNCTAD; Mr. Daniel Holz, Second Secretary (Economic Affairs), Permanent Mission of the Federal Republic of Germany; Mr. Paulin Zambelongo, Country Programme Coordinator, Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) Executive Secretariat, World Trade Organization; and Ms. Elisabeth Tuerk, Director, Economic Cooperation and Trade, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE).

Guidance from UNCTAD Leadership

In his opening remarks, the Deputy Secretary-General commended ASYCUDA's ability to sustain high-impact delivery amid global financial and geopolitical uncertainty. He underscored three priorities shaping the Programme's trajectory:

1. **Demand-driven modernization** – continuing support to national customs digitalization and capacity-building.

2. **Full rollout of the New Generation of ASYCUDA Technology eliminating the need for commercial middleware licenses** – and embedding AI, open-source design, and interoperability with external systems and international standards for trade facilitation and customs modernization.

3. **Deepened partnerships** – strengthening collaboration with development partners, and regional integration frameworks.

He invited the Board to help shape strategic priorities for the coming years, to ensure alignment with outcomes of UNCTAD16.

Operational Reach and Impact

Presenting the Programme's performance, the ASYCUDA leadership reported that by the end of 2024 the system was operational in 103 countries and territories, including 37 least developed, 24 landlocked developing and 41 small island developing States, with 66 projects and 13 regional initiatives under implementation.

The results demonstrated the Programme's measurable impact on efficiency, transparency and fiscal performance. In Afghanistan, exemption processing time for twelve UN agencies was reduced by 99 per cent; in Iraq, nationwide deployment increased customs revenue by 128 per cent; in The Gambia, revenues rose 32 per cent between 2023 and 2024; in Jordan, the launch of ASYHUB Maritime and Express at the Port of Aqaba enhanced pre-arrival processing and logistics efficiency; Georgia successfully integrated the New Computerized Transit System (NCTS) in line with EU standards; Barbados operationalized a national Single Window for Trade; and Zimbabwe digitalized enforcement of seven regional and bilateral trade agreements.

Technological Breakthroughs

The Board previewed a live demonstration illustrating how Artificial Intelligence is being integrated within ASYCUDAWorld to enhance core customs functions. The presentation illustrated the practical use of AI-assisted classification and risk management to accelerate clearance processes, reduce human error and strengthen decision-making capacity. Members welcomed these innovations as an important step toward the future ASYCUDA New Generation environment, highlighting their potential to improve operational efficiency while maintaining transparency and data sovereignty.

Institutional Adaptation

In response to the expanding scope of its operations, the Programme presented a refined organizational model aimed at reinforcing strategic capacity while maintaining cost efficiency.

The approach is guided by eight principles, including field-based management, enhanced staff mobility and technical specialization. These adjustments will enable ASYCUDA to respond more flexibly to country demands, integrate emerging technologies more effectively and continue delivering technical assistance at scale.

Feedback from the Board

Member States and partners welcomed ASYCUDA's responsiveness and innovation:
- **Germany** acknowledged the successful Jordan project.
- **Barbados** highlighted MSME competitiveness gains and proposed stronger visibility.
- **Mongolia** recommended more showcasing of the ASYCUDA New Generation.
- **Canada** encouraged continued results-based management.
- **ICC** and **WFP** praised the Programme's collaboration with the private sector and humanitarian actors.
- **UNECE** emphasized alignment with open-source and data-protection standards.

Looking Forward

Closing the session, the Deputy Secretary-General reaffirmed ASYCUDA's centrality to UNCTAD's operational pillar, noting that its value lies not only in technological delivery but in building institutional resilience and regional connectivity.

The Board agreed to reconvene in late 2025, following the outcomes of UNCTAD16, to refine the strategic guidelines and to guide the phased transition toward the ASYCUDA New Generation environment. Members collectively reaffirmed support for the Programme's innovation agenda and its broadened scope "beyond customs", integrating trade, environment and logistics within a single digital ecosystem.

> 66 ASYCUDA remains one of the UN's most impactful technical-assistance Programmes, delivering real results under pressure."
>
> Pedro Manuel Moreno,
> Deputy Secretary-General.

Iraq
128% **increase** in **customs revenue**

Afghanistan
99% **reduction** of **processing time**

Palau
20% **increase** in **automation gains**

UNCTAD16: Shaping the Future of Development

The sixteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD16), held in Geneva in October 2025 under the theme *"Shaping the Future: Driving Economic Transformation for Equitable, Inclusive and Sustainable Development,"* came at a decisive moment for the global economy. The world is undergoing what the Secretary General's report calls "development against the odds": slow progress on the Sustainable Development Goals, widening inequality, and a shifting multipolar order compounded by rapid technological change, climate disruption and growing debt pressures. UNCTAD16 therefore renewed the call first articulated in the Bridgetown Covenant, to accelerate four interlinked transformations in trade, investment, finance and technology capable of unlocking structural diversification, sustainable growth and greater resilience in developing economies. Within this context, ASYCUDA stands out as one of UNCTAD's most effective operational responses to that mandate. By helping over 100 economies digitalize trade procedures, strengthen fiscal governance and connect to global value chains, ASYCUDA directly embodies the conference's objective of harnessing innovation to drive inclusive and sustainable economic transformation.

ASYCUDA's Renewed Mandate

The Bridgetown Covenant, adopted at UNCTAD XV (Bridgetown, Barbados, October 2021), established a forward-looking agenda for transforming trade and technology into instruments of equitable and sustainable development. In paragraph 127 (c), Member

States reaffirmed UNCTAD's mandate to *"continue to cooperate with member States in implementing the Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA)"*, recognizing it as one of the organization's most impactful and enduring technical cooperation programmes. This renewed commitment positioned ASYCUDA not merely as a customs automation tool, but as a strategic enabler of digital transformation across the wider trade and logistics ecosystem.

Over four decades, the Programme has evolved in step with the changing dynamics of global commerce. From its origins in the 1980s as a system designed to computerize paper-based customs procedures, ASYCUDA has progressively expanded its reach and sophistication, embracing digital trade facilitation, data analytics, environmental compliance, and humanitarian logistics. The 2023 ASYCUDA Report documented how the Programme's work now extends well beyond the automation of declarations and revenue collection. It supports governments in building digital public infrastructures that underpin national trade systems, enabling interoperable data exchange between customs administrations, port authorities, ministries, and private operators.

This transformation has been guided by three pillars articulated in the 2024 ASYCUDA Report:

1. **Technology and innovation** – the adoption of open-source, cloud-based architectures to enhance scalability, interoperability and data security;

2. **Institutional capacity and governance** – embedding legal, procedural and organizational reforms to ensure sustainability and transparency; and

3. **Regional and global cooperation** – aligning national systems with international standards such as the WCO Data Model, the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, and the UN/CEFACT frameworks.

The Programme's trajectory reflects a shift from *automation to integration*. The development of the ASYCUDA New Technology creates a unifying digital backbone that allows all ASYCUDA-based applications, ASYHUB, ASYNTS, ASYREC, eCITES, ASYPM, and the Single Window for Trade, to operate within one secure, interoperable environment. This open-source approach strengthens national ownership, facilitates innovation by local developers, and ensures the long-term sustainability of public sector digital systems without reliance on commercial vendors.

Today, ASYCUDA's renewed mandate aligns directly with the Bridgetown Covenant's emphasis on *digital inclusion, resilience, and sustainability*. It contributes to structural economic transformation by reducing trade costs, improving compliance, and expanding fiscal space for investment in development priorities. It also responds to the Covenant's call for "a reinvigorated multilateralism fit for purpose in the digital era" by demonstrating how technology, when deployed through a demand-driven, partnership-based model, can yield tangible results for developing countries.

As the UN Conference on Trade and Development advances the outcomes of UNCTAD16, ASYCUDA remains a flagship operational mechanism for delivering on that vision, bridging global commitments with country-level implementation, and turning the principles of the Bridgetown Covenant into measurable progress on the ground.

ASYCUDA at UNCTAD16

New Technology to Foster Efficient, Secure and Sustainable Trade

Held on 20 October 2025 at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, the ASYCUDA parallel event to UNCTAD16 marked a milestone in the Programme's history. As the first official side event of UNCTAD16, it demonstrated the centrality of ASYCUDA's work to UNCTAD's vision for an inclusive and sustainable digital economy. The session convened ministers, permanent representatives, customs directors, development partners and private sector leaders to explore how technology, data and innovation can reshape trade systems for the benefit of all economies.

Opening Remarks: Framing Technology as a Public Good

In his opening address, Deputy Secretary-General of UN Trade and Development and Chair of the ASYCUDA Advisory Board, described digitalization as a *"public good for development"*. He noted that ASYCUDA had become *"one of the most successful operational Programmes in the United Nations system"*, consistently delivering tangible outcomes, from faster clearance and higher customs revenues to greater institutional transparency in over 100 economies.

Mr. Moreno also formally launched the ASYCUDA New Generation, defining it as *"a platform purpose-built to deliver secure, data-driven trade facilitation for the next decade."*

❝ Shaping the future of trade requires inclusive and secure digitalization that empowers all economies."

Pedro Manuel Moreno, Deputy Secretary-General, UN Trade and Development

Keynote Address: Resilience Through Digitalization

Delivering the keynote, H.E. Moustoifa Hassani Mohamed, Minister of Economy, Industry, Investment and Economic Integration of the Union of the Comoros, underlined that for Small Island Developing States, digitalization is not a luxury but a lifeline. He cited the success of ASYCUDA in Comoros and the creation of the national Single Window for Trade, which strengthened governance and inspection efficiency by 30 per cent.

Event Setting and Visual Identity

The event was staged against a dedicated backdrop designed around the theme "New Technology to Foster Efficient, Secure and Sustainable Trade." Large AI-themed roll-ups and banner stands showcased the evolution of ASYCUDA and its integration of artificial-intelligence-enabled tools such as automated tariff classification, predictive risk profiling and performance analytics. The branding visually reinforced the Programme's new digital identity, modern, open-source and cloud-ready, while symbolizing the convergence of human expertise and machine intelligence in shaping the future of trade.

> ❝ ASYCUDA is more than software, it is a digital alliance linking institutions, people and trade."
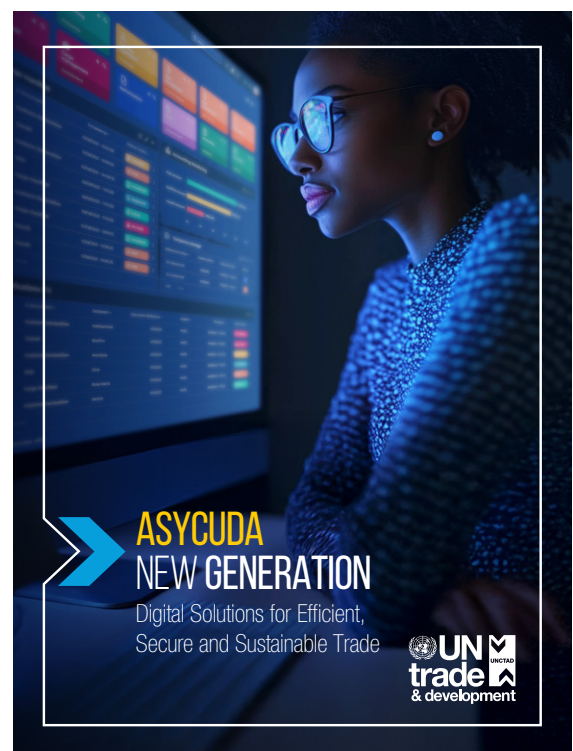>
> H.E. Moustoifa Hassani Mohamed, Minister of Economy and Investment, Comoros

Official Launch of ASYCUDA New Generation Technology

A short video presentation traced ASYCUDA's four-decade journey, from its origins in the 1980s as a customs data-processing tool to its transformation into a global trade-digitalization platform. The film unveiled the ASYCUDA New Generation, built entirely in-house. It introduced core modules such as ASY5 (customs management), ASYHUB (pre-arrival and pre-departure data exchange), eCITES (digital environmental-permit management) and ASYREC (humanitarian logistics coordination).

The video concluded with real-world examples illustrating how AI and machine learning support smarter decision-making and sustainability reporting.

[Watch the Launch Video.](#)[2]

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2   Click here to [watch the launch video in french](#).
     Click here to [watch the launch video in spanish](#).

High-Level Panel: Global Voices on Digital Transformation

Moderated by the ASYCUDA Regional Coordinator for the Americas, the panel gathered perspectives from government, intergovernmental and private-sector actors:

- **Mongolia – Permanent Representative to the UN and WTO**, stressed that digital connectivity enables landlocked economies to overcome physical barriers and empower women and youth entrepreneurs: *"We are landlocked but not mind-locked."*

- **Cambodia Deputy Director General of Customs**, described Cambodia's implementation of ASYHUB in 2024 for pre-arrival/departure processing as a data flow facilitator for a fully paperless clearance system, attributing success to political commitment and donor collaboration (EU, Germany, Switzerland).

- **UPU Director of Postal Operations**, highlighted that integration between postal and customs systems through ASYCUDA cut average clearance times in Cambodia from eight to four days, improving e-commerce reliability.

- **ICC Global Policy Lead on Customs**, underscored the need for interoperable digital standards and responsible AI governance, presenting the ICC Digital Standards Initiative (DSI) as a blueprint for harmonizing cross-border data flows.

Interactive Dialogue and Conclusions

Interventions from Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Sierra Leone, Vanuatu and GiZ commended ASYCUDA's responsiveness and impact, and expressed interest in adopting the New Generation platform. The Secretariat confirmed that implementation would follow a phased, demand-driven approach aligned with national readiness.

The dialogue concluded with broad consensus that technology alone is insufficient, success depends equally on institutional capacity, human capital and long-term partnerships. The event thus encapsulated UNCTAD's ethos: deploying innovation as a means to foster resilient, transparent and inclusive trade systems that leave no country behind.

The New Technology Dimension

The ASYCUDA New Generation marks a strategic inflection point in the Programme's evolution, from automating customs procedures to architecting the next layer of digital public infrastructure for trade. It redefines how data, governance and sustainability intersect. The platform uses artificial intelligence to analyze trade flows, anticipate risks and support evidence-based policymaking, while its open-source architecture ensures transparency, scalability and national ownership. By embedding interoperability with the WCO, UN/CEFACT and WTO frameworks, the system enables seamless links between customs, ports, postal services and other border agencies. This technological shift embodies the spirit of UNCTAD16's Geneva Consensus, demonstrating how innovation can serve as a catalyst for more secure, efficient and environmentally sustainable trade systems across the developing world.

Transparency
Trade portals & e-Query tracking

Adaptability
Agile tech for evolving trade conditions

Streamlining & Harmonization
Digital documentation & workflows

Availability
24/7 systems & CPU balancing

Inclusion
Access to ICT & capacity building

ASYCUDA ICT OBJECTIVES ALIGNED FOR IMPACT

Compliance
Adherence to laws & standards

Integrity & Reliability
Data validation & audit logs

Confidentiality
Safeguards for sensitive information

Efficiency
Paperless clearance & resource optimization

Cooperation
Data harmonization & messaging

Bilateral Engagements and Global Partnerships

Throughout the UNCTAD16 period, the ASYCUDA Programme deepened its global engagement through a series of bilateral discussions and partnership dialogues with governments, regional organizations, and development partners. These exchanges reinforced ASYCUDA's position as a trusted multilateral platform for advancing trade digitalization and capacity building.

During the conference, ASYCUDA management met with high-level representatives from Angola, Bangladesh, Cambodia, CARICOM, Comoros, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Pacific Islands Forum (PPIU PACER Plus), Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka and Venezuela, as well as institutional partners such as the German Agency for International Cooperation (GiZ), the HARAKAT Foundation, an Afghan NGO, and the Universal Postal Union (UPU). Discussions focused on expanding deployment of the ASYCUDA New Generation, integrating national single windows, and developing regional "digital trade hubs" in the Caribbean and Pacific to enhance inter-island connectivity. Partners such as GiZ and UPU reaffirmed collaboration on postal-customs interoperability, sustainability reporting, and blended-finance models for system maintenance. Several member States expressed interest in leveraging ASYCUDA's open-source framework to build new data-sharing tools for environmental monitoring and trade statistics.

These engagements underscore the Programme's evolution from a technical assistance provider to a strategic enabler of digital cooperation, aligning with the broader UNCTAD agenda of inclusive innovation, institutional resilience, and multilateral partnership for sustainable growth.

Outlook

The conclusion of UNCTAD16 marks the beginning of a new phase for ASYCUDA, one that builds on four decades of impact while advancing the transformative potential of next-generation technologies. Efforts will focus on consolidating achievements and addressing identified institutional and operational gaps to ensure stronger coordination, leadership continuity, and resource sustainability. Key areas of emphasis will include scaling migration to the ASYCUDA Cloud Framework (ACF), expanding regional trade hubs across Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific, and integrating sustainability and environmental metrics into customs and trade systems. The forthcoming ASYCUDA 2025 Report, "The New Generation of ASYCUDA Technology for Efficient, Secure and Sustainable Trade" documents implementation results and guides this transition, highlighting country-led innovations, AI integration and open-source collaboration. Looking ahead, ASYCUDA will continue implementing tailored national projects such as ASYHUB, ASYREC and eCITES alongside new analytical tools, while deepening partnerships. ASYCUDA remains not just a digital platform but a global public good, embodying multilateral cooperation, innovation and inclusivity to drive efficient, secure and sustainable trade for all.

Une année de transformation et de partenariat

L'année 2025 marque un tournant décisif pour le Programme SYDONIA, qui poursuit sa transformation en matière d'assistance technique axée sur la demande, passant d'une initiative centrée sur la modernisation et la réforme douanières à une plateforme complète pour un commerce plus efficace, plus sûr et plus durable. Guidé par son Plan Stratégique et ancré dans la vision du Consensus de Genève adopté lors de la CNUCED 16, le Programme consolide son rôle d'une des initiatives d'assistance technique les plus importantes des Nations Unies, au service de plus de 100 économies à travers le monde.

S'appuyant sur la dynamique de la 6e réunion du Conseil Consultatif du Programme SYDONIA et sur la participation active du Programme à la CNUCED 16, 2025 est une année de progrès mesurables et de planification prospective. Dans toutes les régions, les gouvernements ont adopté de nouvelles solutions et mis en œuvre des réformes avancées qui renforcent la transparence, accélèrent les processus de dédouanement et améliorent les recettes fiscales. L'introduction de la nouvelle génération de la technologie SYDONIA représente une étape décisive vers une architecture numérique plus agile, interopérable et inclusive pour la facilitation du commerce.

Il est tout aussi important de continuer à mettre l'accent sur la collaboration et l'appropriation nationale. Grâce à une coopération étroite avec les gouvernements, les ministères du commerce, les administrations douanières, les agences transfrontalières, les organisations internationales et régionales et les partenaires de développement, SYDONIA aide les pays à concevoir des solutions adaptées à leurs priorités politiques. Le travail du Programme va au-delà de l'automatisation, il soutient les écosystèmes numériques qui permettent l'innovation, l'harmonisation réglementaire et la gouvernance fondée sur les données.

Pour l'avenir, SYDONIA entame une nouvelle phase de son parcours avec un mandat renouvelé visant à fournir la technologie au service du développement durable. Alors que les systèmes commerciaux mondiaux sont confrontés à des défis environnementaux et économiques croissants, les solutions de pointe open source et basées sur le cloud du Programme resteront essentielles pour bâtir des économies plus connectées, plus résilientes et plus équitables.

Un año de transformación y colaboración

El año 2025 representa un punto de inflexión para el Programa SIDUNEA, que continúa su transformación desde un modelo de asistencia técnica basada en la demanda, pasando de ser una iniciativa centrada en la modernización y la reforma aduanera a convertirse en una plataforma integral destinada a promover un comercio más eficiente, seguro y sostenible. Guiado por su Plan Estratégico y en consonancia con la visión del Consenso de Ginebra adoptado en la UNCTAD16, el Programa consolida su posición como una de las iniciativas de asistencia técnica más amplias de las Naciones Unidas, prestando servicio a más de 100 economías en todo el mundo.

Aprovechando el impulso de la sexta reunión del Consejo Asesor de SIDUNEA y la participación activa del Programa en la UNCTAD16, el año 2025 marca un período de avances concretos y planificación prospectiva. En todas las regiones, los gobiernos han adoptado nuevas soluciones y promovido reformas que aumentan la transparencia, aceleran los procesos de despacho y refuerzan los ingresos fiscales. La introducción de la nueva generación de la tecnología SIDUNEA representa un paso decisivo hacia una arquitectura digital para la facilitación del comercio más ágil, interoperable e inclusiva.

Igualmente importante es mantener el énfasis continuo en la colaboración y la apropiación nacional. A través de una estrecha cooperación con los gobiernos, los ministerios de comercio, las administraciones aduaneras, los organismos transfronterizos, las organizaciones internacionales y regionales y los socios para el desarrollo, SIDUNEA ayuda a los países a diseñar soluciones adaptadas a sus prioridades políticas. La labor del Programa va más allá de la automatización, ya que apoya los ecosistemas digitales que permiten la innovación, la armonización normativa y una gobernanza basada en datos.

De cara al futuro, SIDUNEA entra en la siguiente fase de su trayectoria con un mandato renovado para proporcionar tecnología al servicio del desarrollo sostenible. A medida que los sistemas de comercio mundial se enfrentan a crecientes desafíos medioambientales y económicos, las soluciones de vanguardia del Programa, de código abierto y basadas en la nube, seguirán siendo esenciales para construir economías más conectadas, resilientes y equitativas.

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