



Status and Outlook for National Trade Facilitation Committees

2024

Technical Note



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This publication has not been formally edited.

UNCTAD/TCS/DTL/INF/2025/6



Acknowledgements

This study and the methodology of the UNCTAD survey to assess the operational status of national trade facilitation committees were prepared under the guidance of Ángel González, Officer-in-Charge of the UNCTAD Division on Technology and Logistics, Regina Asariotis, Head ad interim of the Trade Logistics Branch, and Poul Hansen, Chief of the Trade Facilitation Section. Arántzazu Sánchez Belastegui led the work, with the support and contributions of the Trade Facilitation Section of UNCTAD.

UNCTAD gratefully acknowledges the valuable contributions and insights from Member States of the United Nations, without which this publication would not have been possible.

This document is published in the context of the Accelerate Trade Facilitation Programme, financed by Her Majesty Revenue and Customs, United Kingdom.



Note

This document does not intend to present a comprehensive list of trade facilitation initiatives but rather aims to inform on selected and specific activities conducted in 2024, as reported to UN Trade and Development by National Trade Facilitation Committees in the framework of their roles as monitoring and coordinating bodies.

It includes examples of the following 60 countries: Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Barbados, Benin, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Comoros, Costa Rica, Democratic Republic of Congo, Dominica, Ecuador, Egypt, Eswatini, Fiji, France, Grenada, Guyana, Honduras, India, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyz Republic, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Maldives, Mongolia, Morocco, Myanmar, Namibia, Niger, Norway, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, Rwanda, São Tomé E Príncipe, Senegal, Serbia, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Tanzania, Timor-Leste, Togo, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Vanuatu, Zambia, Zimbabwe.



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List of Acronyms

- **ADB:** Asian Development Bank
- **AEO:** Authorized Economic Operator
- **AFE:** Advance Rulings
- **ART:** Advance Ruling Tool
- **ASEAN:** Association of Southeast Asian Nations
- **ASYCUDA:** Automated System for Customs Data
- **ASYHUB:** ASYCUDA Hub
- **ASYSW:** ASYCUDA Single Window
- **CBM:** Coordinated Border Management
- **CEFACT:** Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business
- **CITES:** Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
- **ECOWAS:** Economic Community of West African States
- **EU:** European Union
- **ITC:** International Trade Centre
- **LDCs:** Least Developed Countries
- **LLDCs:** Landlocked Developing Countries
- **NB:** Nota Bene (Note Well)
- **NTFC:** National Trade Facilitation Committee
- **OSBP:** One Stop Border Post
- **SEGUCE:** Single Window for Foreign Trade
- **SIDS:** Small Island Developing States
- **SIGMAT:** System for the Management of Transit
- **TACB:** Technical Assistance and Capacity Building
- **TFA:** Trade Facilitation Agreement
- **TFAF:** Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility
- **TIP:** Trade Information Portal
- **TRS:** Time Release Study
- **UK:** United Kingdom
- **UN:** United Nations
- **UNCTAD:** United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
- **USAID:** United States Agency for International Development
- **WB:** World Bank
- **WCO:** World Customs Organization
- **WTO:** World Trade Organization





Introduction

A National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC) serves as a multi-stakeholder platform that brings together public and private sector representatives to coordinate and implement policies and procedures aimed at facilitating cross-border trade. Over the years, NTFCs have gained wider recognition as key drivers of trade facilitation reforms. Their importance was strengthened with the adoption of the Agreement on Trade Facilitation (TFA) of the World Trade [Organization](#) (WTO)¹, where Article 23.2 mandates the establishment or maintenance of NTFCs in all WTO member states. This requirement has in turn reinforced the relevance to [UN-CEFACT Recommendation No. 4](#), originally issued in the 1970s.

Quantitative and qualitative [Research](#) undertaken by UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD) as well as other international organizations² has demonstrated that well-functioning NTFCs contribute significantly to accelerating trade facilitation reforms. However, it remains challenging to establish a direct statistical correlation between the existence of an NTFC and the successful implementation of such reforms. While 135 countries report [having set up an NTFC](#)³, the degree to which these committees are operational, sustainable and delivering on their mandates varies significantly.

¹ The WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) entered into force on 22 February 2017, following its ratification by two-thirds of WTO members. It is legally binding on all WTO members, with implementation schedules tailored to each country's level of development.

² A list of UNCTAD studies on National Trade Facilitation Committees can be found here: <https://unctad.org/tfc>

³ UNCTAD Database of NTFCs – <https://unctad.org/tfc>, retrieved on 31 March 2025.



In 2023 and 2024⁴, UNCTAD conducted global surveys to assess the operational status of NTFCs, their activities, and the outcomes achieved. In 2023, 52 countries participated in the survey, while 62 countries responded in 2024. The findings highlight the continued need for strong domestic and international support for NTFCs, particularly as global supply chains face increasing disruptions, and higher tariffs threaten consumer's pockets. The role of NTFCs in streamlining border procedures, reducing trade complexities, and minimizing costs is therefore more crucial than ever.

The findings of this study strongly reinforce the key principles of good practices identified in WTO document [G/TFA/W/96/Rev.1](#)⁵. For instance, the widespread efforts by NTFCs to enhance institutional frameworks, as seen in the development of Terms of Reference and strategic plans, reflect the importance of a robust institutional setup with political backing. The high levels of engagement with border authorities, ministries, and private sector stakeholders underscore the value of inclusive participation. Moreover, the emphasis on communication—through newsletters, public awareness campaigns, and digital platforms like the Reform Tracker—demonstrates a commitment to transparent and effective information flow. The prioritization of capacity-building initiatives and training programs, as well as the increasing use of performance monitoring tools, aligns directly with the principles of continuous learning and accountability. These practices not only validate the guidance of this WTO's document but also highlight the evolving maturity and strategic orientation of NTFCs globally.

⁴ Survey data was collected in December 2024 and January 2025.

⁵ Key principles of shared practice of successful National Trade Facilitation Committees, WTO, [GTFAW96R1.pdf](#)





Status and Outlook of National Trade Facilitation Committees 2024

As global trade continues to evolve, National Trade Facilitation Committees play a pivotal role in streamlining processes, improving efficiency, and fostering regional and international cooperation. Throughout 2024, NTFCs worldwide have undertaken significant activities and projects to enhance trade facilitation, as reported by 62 countries to UN Trade and Development as part of its global survey to assess the operational status of NTFCs, their activities, and the outcomes achieved.

Survey results show that NTFCs have been instrumental in ensuring efficient trade facilitation, with many committees taking an active role in simplifying, standardizing and harmonizing trade procedures and implementing reforms such as single windows, time release studies, or coordinated border management.

The responses to UNCTAD's 2024 survey identified five key areas of work for NTFCs:

- I. Strengthening trade facilitation governance and monitoring
- II. Fulfilling obligations under the WTO TFA institutional arrangements
- III. Implementing trade facilitation reforms
- IV. Enhancing regional and international cooperation
- V. Advancing gender equality in trade



KEY AREAS OF WORK IN 2024

NATIONAL TRADE FACILITATION COMMITTEES

Strengthening trade facilitation governance and monitoring

 **32%**

NTFCs developed or updated their **Terms of Reference**

 **30%**

NTFCs engaged in **resource mobilization** activities

 **74%**

NTFCs **met 1-5 times** during the year. More NTFCs met in 2024 than in 2023

 **68%**

NTFCs reported **engaging with the private sector**, an 8% decrease from 2023

 **65%**

NTFCs prioritized the **monitoring** of trade facilitation projects

 **61%**

NTFCs organized or participated in **training / capacity-building**

 **56%**

NTFCs worked on the development or monitoring of a national trade facilitation **roadmap or workplan**

Fulfilling obligations under the WTO TFA institutional arrangements

 **49%**

NTFCs drafted and/or transmitted **notifications** to the WTO TFA Committee

Implementing trade facilitation reforms

 **54%**

NTFCs contributed to the **simplification** of trade procedures

 **54%**

NTFCs were involved in **implementing TF projects** within the scope of the WTO TFA

 **50%**

NTFCs worked on the implementation of trade **information portals**

 **30%**

NTFCs conducted studies or **diagnostics** on trade facilitation issues

Enhancing Regional and International Cooperation

 **23%**

NTFCs advised/promoted the implementation of **international or regional TF obligations and standards**

 **60%**

NTFCs mentioned **advising** governmental agencies on trade facilitation

 **28%**

NTFCs negotiated or promoted trade facilitation **agreements**

Advancing Gender Equality in Trade

 **21%**

NTFCs reported having implemented initiatives aimed at facilitating trade for **cross-border women traders**



Strengthening trade facilitation governance and monitoring

In 2024, National Trade Facilitation Committees demonstrated a strong commitment to ensuring a coordinated response to trade facilitation challenges through regular meetings, enhanced governance frameworks, strategic planning and monitoring as well as resource mobilization.

1. Coordinating trade facilitation reforms

The coordination of trade facilitation reforms is a key responsibility of National Trade Facilitation Committees, as outlined in [Article 23.2 of the WTO TFA](#): “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 the provisions of this Agreement.”

One effective way to ensure domestic coordination is by organizing regular meetings with relevant stakeholders. **In 2024, a majority of NTFCs were active, with nearly three-quarters (74 per cent) meeting between one and five times during the year.** A smaller proportion (8 per cent) convened between six and fifteen times, indicating a higher level of engagement.

The number of NTFCs that met increased in 2024 (82 per cent) compared to 2023 (76 per cent). Only 18 per cent of NTFCs (11 out of 62 countries) did not meet in 2024, compared to 24 per cent in the previous year. Moreover, in three of these 11 countries, the lack of NTFC meetings did not necessarily mean a lack of activities, as meetings in most cases were replaced by gatherings of relevant working groups, information exchange within other forums and workshops, or regular information sharing between stakeholders via email.

Holding regular consultations with the private sector is crucial for the effective and productive functioning of the National Trade Facilitation Committees. These consultations not only foster a healthy dialogue but also ensure compliance with [Article 2.2](#) of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, which mandates regular



interactions between border agencies and traders. It should be noted that, **in 2024, 68% of NTFCs reported engaging with the private sector**, marking an 8 per cent point decrease from the previous year, when 76 per cent of responding countries confirmed such engagements.

The eight Committees that did not meet in 2024 at all, not even through technical meetings, cited diverse reasons for the lack of meetings. Two countries reported conflicting priorities, two mentioned a lack of interest or support from NTFC members and stakeholders, one blamed insufficient financial resources, and another pointed to ineffective communication strategies or channels.

To ensure continued participation and coordination, UNCTAD recommends that NTFCs hold meetings with the members of the committee at least once per quarter.

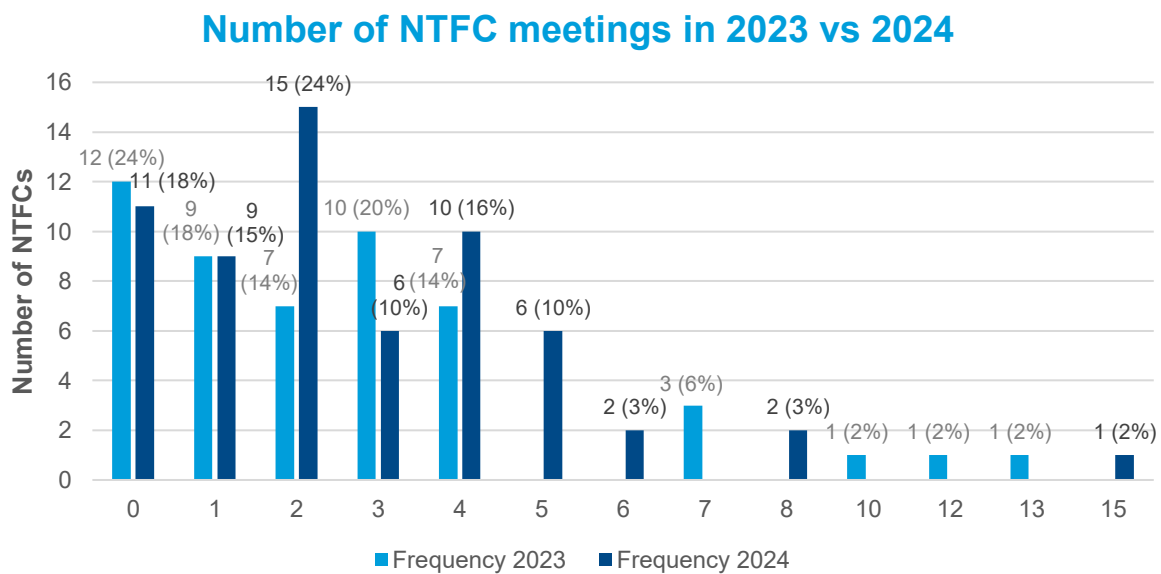


Figure 1: Frequency of NTFC meetings in 2023 and 2024

2. Engaging stakeholder, building capacity and outreach

Communicating achievements is essential for maintaining stakeholder engagement and motivation, ensuring the work of the National Trade Facilitation Committees remains relevant and visible and, consequently, enough resources are allocated to their work.

The majority of NTFCs (58 per cent) reported having collected and disseminated information on trade facilitation in 2024 but only 46 per cent said having communicated information about their NTFC itself and its work (for instance through website announcements, press releases, newsletters, social media).

In fact, **NTFCs expressed an increased need for technical support to enhance communication and outreach capacities**. In 2024, 63 per cent of NTFCs mentioned that intensified NTFC communication and coordination was critical for improving the operational performance of their NTFC, compared to 58 per cent in 2023.

Responding to this need, UN Trade and Development added in 2024 a new blog feature in its [Reform Tracker](#)⁶ – a digital coordination and monitoring tool for NTFCs – and trained the NTFC Secretariats using the Reform Tracker on this new enhancement. It helps disseminate articles written by NTFC members to all relevant stakeholders via its monthly newsletter. Since the launch of this feature in September 2024, 21 out of the 26 countries using the Reform Tracker have adopted it, resulting in the dissemination of 128 articles—an average of six articles per country over four months.

In addition to regular NTFC meetings aimed at coordinating trade facilitation reforms, the NTFC secretariat can organize or participate in various events to enhance stakeholder engagement. These include capacity-building workshops and awareness-raising initiatives.

In 2024, **61 per cent of the NTFCs claimed having organized or participated in training courses or capacity-building sessions** related trade facilitation.

For instance, **Saint Vincent and the Grenadines** conducted a public awareness campaign to educate stakeholders on the benefits of trade facilitation.

Senegal contributed to the development and validation of training modules for small cross-border traders and began implementing its communication plan with an open day event to engage the public.

The Democratic Republic of Congo launched a lobbying campaign to raise awareness about the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, aiming to inform and involve various stakeholders in the implementation process.

Norway organized a study trip to Brussels, including meetings with different European institutions and the World Customs Organization (WCO).

France provided training to the private sector on border crossing regulations, including customs and compliance.

Serbia's NTFC members visited and organized a special session at the border crossing with Hungary, the most congested border crossing between Serbia and the EU and held a workshop on strategy for private sector non-tariff measures reporting mechanism organized by UNCTAD.

Sri Lanka held two capacity-building workshops on TFA articles 5.1, 5.3, and 7.4 with the support of the World Bank Group.

These efforts highlight the NTFCs' commitment to enhancing understanding and capacity among other Government entities, traders and the public, thereby fostering a more efficient and inclusive trade environment.

It is of interest to note that one of the results of UNCTAD global survey to assess the operational status of NTFCs shows that **71 per cent of Committees indicated a need to further improve trade facilitation knowledge and capacities among their members**. This represents a nine-point increase compared to the previous year, when only 62 per cent of NTFCs expressed this need.

⁶ <https://ReformTracker.org>



3. Enhancing governance frameworks

Many countries focused on enhancing their NTFC governance structures by introducing new regulations, procedures and frameworks. **Almost a third of Committees** (32 per cent) **reported having developed or updated their Terms of Reference in 2024 and one out of five** (21 per cent) **worked on elaborating or updating the Terms of Reference of the NTFC Secretariat.**

With the support of the European Union, **Bosnia and Herzegovina** developed Terms of Reference (ToRs) for Thematic Expert Groups to address specific trade facilitation areas, ensuring better implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement and alignment with regional economic initiatives.

Similarly, **Liberia** finalized an Administrative Regulation to govern its NTFC operations, awaiting approval from the National Steering Committee.

Georgia undertook a major structural reform by amending its [NTFC Government Resolution and Charter](#), the earlier being published in October 2024, ensuring broader participation and engagement among stakeholders.

The **Dominican Republic** adopted a [new customs law](#) that includes the institutionalization of the National Trade Facilitation Committee and approved new regulations related to its operations.

Bolivia worked on the creation of several working groups within its NTFC.

Similarly, **Niger** organized in November 2024 a workshop on the institutional development of the NTFC.

The NTFC of **Honduras**, through the Ministry of Economic Development as the coordinating institution of the committee, as well as the Technical Secretariat, is in the process of updating the Committee's Strategic Plan and Communication Plan, including the preparation of the Terms of Reference.

Reinforcing the NTFC Secretariat and implementing additional institutional changes—whether in the legal framework, structure, composition, or procedures of the Committee—shows to be a continuous need amongst NTFCs. According to recent feedback, **57 per cent of NTFCs identified strengthening the Secretariat as critical, while 38 per cent emphasized the importance of institutional changes to ensure the operational performance of their Committees.**

4. Enabling strategic planning

National Trade Facilitation Committees invested resources in strategic planning to advance trade facilitation efforts. **In 2024, the majority of NTFC** (56 per cent) **reported having worked on the development or monitoring of a national trade facilitation roadmap or workplan** and 44 per cent developed or updated an action plan for the NTFC Chair and Secretariat.

For instance, **Madagascar** presented a national strategy on TFA implementation and validated the 2025-2029 roadmap, drafted with support of UNCTAD.

The Maldives framed its trade facilitation initiatives by drafting a comprehensive roadmap 2025-2028.

Eswatini formulated a roadmap for NTFC activities from 2024 to 2026, while **Cabo Verde** and **Togo** set the foundation for future trade facilitation initiatives through the development of their 2025 action plans.

On a wider angle, **Rwanda** developed a long-term National Strategy for the Elimination of Non-Tariff Barriers, covering the period from 2025 to 2030.



Morocco has also been working in an update of their trade facilitation roadmap.

The Cabinet of **Sri Lanka** approved the [Bill for the National Trade Facilitation Roadmap](#).

India has also rolled out the National Trade Facilitation Action Plan (NTFAP) 3.0 for the period 2024-2027.

These efforts ensured that NTFCs remained focused on long-term objectives and streamlined implementation strategies.

5. Establishing robust monitoring mechanisms

In 2024, **close to two thirds of NTFCs** (65 per cent) **prioritized the monitoring of trade-related progress but only 35 per cent** (compared to 58 per cent in 2023) **mentioned having actively participated in updating international reports and indexes by responding to surveys or questionnaires** in a timely manner.

A total of 25 countries kept tracking the progress of trade facilitation initiatives using the [Reform Tracker](#) (**Bolivia, Botswana, Burundi, Dominica, Ecuador, Egypt, Eswatini, Grenada, Honduras, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Maldives, Mongolia, Namibia, Peru, Rwanda, St Lucia, St Vincent and The Grenadines, São Tomé E Príncipe, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe**). At least five more will be adopting the tool in 2025: **Democratic Republic of the Congo, Jamaica, Somalia, South Sudan and The Gambia**. Following this example, **Sri Lanka** launched its NTFC online progress and monitoring tool with contributions from both the public and private sectors, enhancing transparency and efficiency.

In **Georgia**, the NTFC instructed its Secretariat to commence work on WTO TFA transparency notifications, as well as a general update on the implementation of Commitments (including those of Category C), with relevant communication with the WTO Secretariat planned for early 2025.

Mongolia established a dedicated Customs Working Group on Trade Facilitation, which prepared a comprehensive WTO TFA Progress Report, detailing the country's achievements, challenges, and future objectives.

Cameroon held multiple expert workshops to assess its progress in implementing WTO trade facilitation measures.

Similarly, with support from the European Union and the International Trade Center, **Uganda** is in the process of conducting a review of its trade facilitation roadmap to assess the progress of its national initiatives.

Despite this progress, **almost two thirds of NTFCs** (64 per cent) **mentioned a need to improve the monitoring and evaluation capacities of the NTFC**.

6. Mobilizing Resources for Trade Facilitation

Nearly a third of NTFCs (32 percent) **did not engage in any resource mobilization activities in 2024**. Among those that did, 30 per cent reported searching for financing partnerships, fundraising, and building relationships with donors and implementation agencies. Additionally, 22 per cent drafted and/or presented project proposals.

National Trade Facilitation Committees (NTFCs) in developing and least developed countries are recommended to integrate donor coordination into their regular activities. In countries where an official



national donor coordinator is already designated, for instance in the framework of the Integrated Enhanced Framework for Least Developing Countries, it is recommended that this individual becomes a regular member of the NTFC⁷. If the role of the national donor coordinator does not exist in a country, then, it is advisable that the NTFC designates a member covering the scope of the activities of the donor coordinator for the NTFC. Despite these recommendations, only 6 per cent designated a donor coordinator in 2024, compared to 12 per cent in the previous year.

In contrast to this modest engagement, **71 per cent of NTFCs reported the need to increase their resource mobilization efforts**, compared to only 62 per cent in 2023. This might be an indication of increasing difficulties in securing adequate funding for trade facilitation amidst competing financial priorities on a global scale but also a need for capacity building on resource mobilization. In 2024, UNCTAD delivered a [course on resource mobilization for NTFCs](#) in French and English, with over 100 NTFC stakeholders satisfactorily completing the course. The course is planned to be delivered at least once per year.

Here are some examples reported to UNCTAD on resource mobilization initiatives conducted in 2024.

Belize focused on resource mobilization for an electronic single window.

In **Malawi**, the Secretariat for NTFC engaged and presented NTFC project proposals to the country donor grouping responsible for Trade Industry and Private Sector Development.

Costa Rica's Trade Facilitation National Council actively sought financing for its participation in the UNCTAD's Empowerment Programme for NTFCs.

Togo has elaborated a resource mobilization plan. **Madagascar** has submitted a proposal to the TFAF of the WTO and requested donor assistance from WB, WTO, African Development Bank, and others.

Democratic Republic of Congo participated in various resource mobilization activities to finance the implementation of its trade facilitation roadmap.

Niger organized a workshop on the institutional development of the NTFC, including actions to identify additional funding sources, held in November 2024, in Niamey.

Antigua and Barbuda made an official request to several International Organizations to seek donor funding to implement outstanding trade facilitation obligations.

Moreover, in 2024, **Angola, Togo, Kenya, Senegal and Myanmar** submitted applications for project preparation to the [WTO TFA Facility](#). **Guyana, Grenada, Sri Lanka, Kyrgyz Republic and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines** reached out to the same Facility to request Project Implementation Grants.

⁷ [NATIONAL TRADE FACILITATION COMMITTEES AS COORDINATORS OF TRADE FACILITATION REFORMS](#), page 4





Fulfilling obligations under the WTO TFA institutional arrangements

In 2024, NTFCs were active in the drafting and submission of notifications to the WTO Trade Facilitation Committee as part of their obligations under the institutional arrangements of the Trade Facilitation Agreement. **Nearly half of the NTFCs (49 per cent) reported to UN Trade and Development having drafted and/or transmitted notifications to the WTO TFA Committee.**

According to the data extracted from the [WTO TFA Database](#), a total of **91 notifications were submitted to the WTO Trade Facilitation Committee by 45 countries and the European Union.** These notifications covered a range of topics related to the implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement, including transparency measures, technical assistance needs, and extensions of implementation deadlines. A total of 48 notifications came from developing countries (53 per cent of the total). Least Developed Countries (LDCs) followed closely, with 25 notifications, making up 27 per cent of all submissions. Meanwhile, developed countries submitted 6 notifications related to transparency measures.

Among the different types of notifications, the most frequently submitted were notifications related to **donor arrangements and progress in TACB implementation and notifications for contact points for TACB** accounting for 26 submissions (29 per cent of the total).

Transparency notifications accounted for **23 submissions**, representing 25 per cent of the total. These notifications relate to provisions such as Article 1.4, Article 10.4.3, Article 10.6.2, and Article 12.2.2, which require countries to share information on publication of trade related information and enquiry points, single window, use of customs brokers and contacts for customs cooperation respectively.

Notifications requesting extensions of implementation dates made up 25 per cent of the total (23 submissions). The high number of extension requests highlights the ongoing need for capacity-building

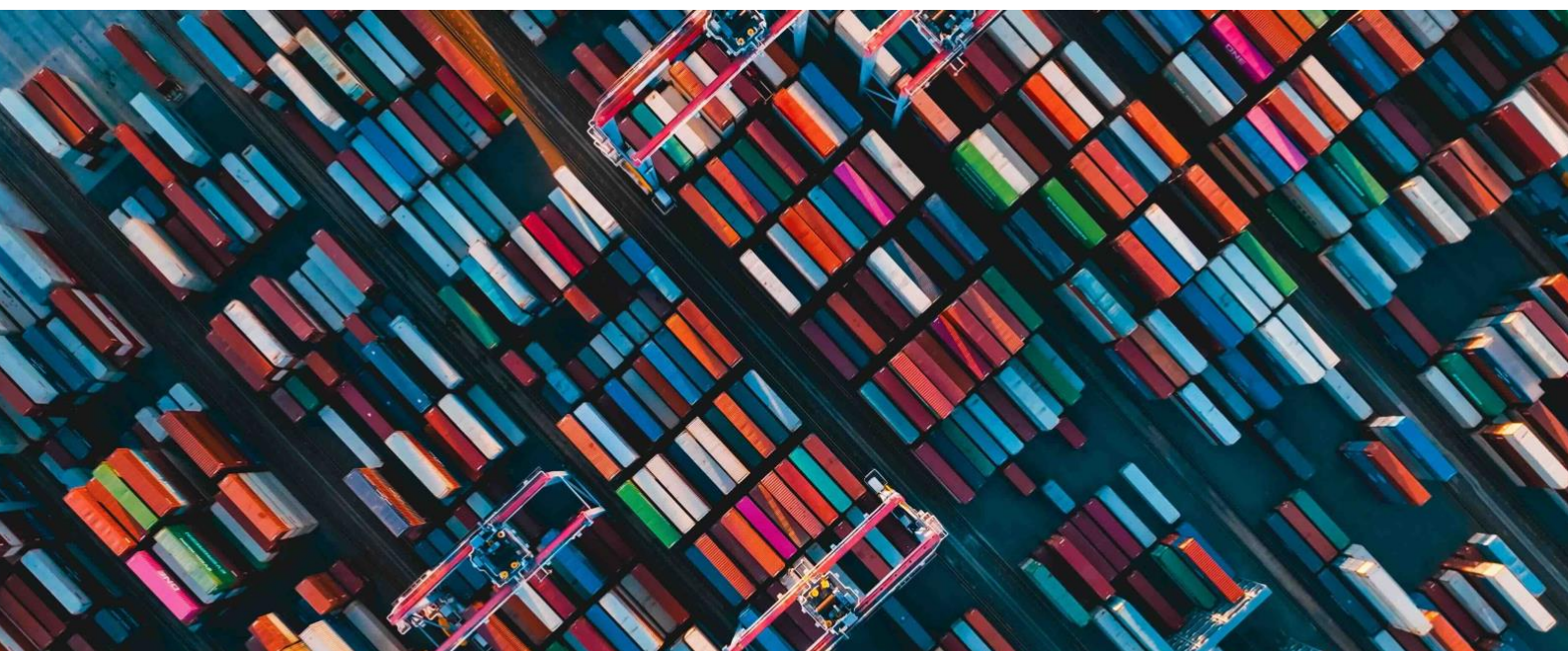


and the struggle that some countries face when seeking technical and financial assistance under the framework of the Special and Differential Treatment of the WTO TFA (Articles 13 to 22).

Other types of notifications included **implementation of Categories A, B, and C, earlier implementation reports, category shifting, and country-specific communications on trade facilitation measures**, each representing a smaller share of the total.

The preparation and submission of notifications to the WTO Trade Facilitation Committee demonstrate the capacity of WTO member states to fulfill their technical commitments and monitor the implementation of the Agreement's provisions. This role is often carried out by the National Trade Facilitation Committees in many countries. It entails not only domestic coordination in-country, but it also requires a continuous contact with the national missions and delegates to the WTO in order to communicate achievements and challenges faced to the WTO Trade Facilitation Committee and the WTO Secretariat.





Implementing trade facilitation reforms

NTFCs have highlighted their ongoing efforts to implement trade facilitation projects. In 2024, 30 per cent of NTFCs reported conducting studies or diagnostics on trade facilitation issues, a decrease from 38 per cent in 2023. Additionally, 60 per cent mentioned advising governmental agencies, making recommendations, or providing special advice on trade facilitation.

More than half of the NTFCs (54 per cent) affirmed being involved in implementing trade facilitation projects within the scope of the WTO TFA, such as Single Window and Time Release Studies, while 57 per cent contributed to the simplification of trade procedures.

The percentages increase significantly for Least Developed Countries and Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs). Specifically, 61 per cent of LDCs and 70 per cent of LLDCs report involvement in implementing WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement provisions and transparency-related measures. LLDCs are particularly engaged in simplifying procedures, with 80 per cent (8 out of 10) of LLDCs responding to the UNCTAD survey affirming their participation in such activities.

On the contrary, the NTFCs of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) claim to have been less productive in terms of outcomes in 2024. This might be due to the specific challenging situation that Caribbean SIDS faced in 2024 with [Hurricane Beryl](#) since 7 out of the 11 SIDS that responded the survey are located in the Caribbean.

Most significantly, **the implementation of technical assistance projects and programs beyond the scope of the WTO TFA by NTFCs has significantly increased**, from 24 per cent in 2023 to 41 per cent in 2024. This can for example cover reforms of national priority export products or value chains, or implementation of regional trade facilitation reforms. Interestingly, this is an aspect mentioned more by LDCs than Developing countries.

Further engaging in the implementation of concrete trade facilitation reforms is seen as critical by 59 per cent of NTFCs. According to them, it will help ensuring the operational performance of their Committees.



The most frequently mentioned initiatives in 2024 included Trade Portals (Article 1.2), Advance Rulings (Article 3), Time Release Studies (Article 7.6), Authorized Economic Operators (Article 7.7), Border Agency Cooperation (Article 8), and Single Window Systems (Article 10.4).

7. Trade Information Portals

National Trade Facilitation Committees are a crucial stakeholder in implementing Article 1 of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement regarding transparency. By coordinating border agencies and liaising with the private sector, the NTFC is uniquely positioned to oversee and monitor the implementation of transparency initiatives, such as trade information portals and enquiry points.

The contribution of NTFCs to the implementation of transparency measures, such as trade information portals, increased from 38 per cent in 2013 to 50 per cent in 2024. In 2024, several NTFCs actively worked on the implementation of Article 1.2 of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement by either updating their already existing trade portals or launching new platforms.

For instance, the **Democratic Republic of Congo** has initiated the implementation of the Trade Information Portal (TIP) with Trademark Africa, and participated in a regional workshop of NTFCs of countries of the East African Community on the TIP.

Madagascar launched its [Trade Information Portal](#) in 2024.

Cabo Verde has been focusing on the functioning, content insertion, and dissemination of its Trade Portal.

Togo has been following up on the implementation of its Trade Information Portal as per Article 1.2 of the TFA.

Namibia developed its [Trade Portal](#), which was launched in March 2025.

Rwanda and Uganda have added a Real-Time Tariff Calculator to their Trade Information Portals and **Burundi** is planning to do the same in 2025. This tool offers businesses, researchers, and policymakers accurate and up-to-date information on all applicable tariffs, duties, and taxes payable at the border when importing goods into a country. Accessible through the National Trade Portal, the system allows users to search by product at the 6-digit Harmonized System code level—with plans to extend to the 8-digit level soon. Integrated with the national customs database, the tool ensures that the information reflects the actual taxes and charges applicable at the time of importation.

Morocco reported that they are exploring the implementing of Artificial Intelligence applied to their national trade portal to further assist importers and exporters.

Egypt started working with UNCTAD for the set-up of its [Trade Portal](#) under the UK financed [Accelerate Trade Facilitation Programme](#).

As stated in UN Trade and Development publication [Roadmap for building a national trade information portal](#), “as the TIP becomes known as the go-to place for reliable information on trade, it is natural for it to evolve to serve as the country’s enquiry point. The process of responding to queries can be based on the same institutional framework setup to document and maintain information on procedures. It is expected that most answers to user enquiries can be found on the TIP by the team, but the more complex issues



can be escalated to the relevant agencies via the designated focal points under the auspices of the NTFC”⁸

1. Advance Rulings

Several NTFCs have reported progress on the implementation of Article 3 of the WTO TFA on Advance Rulings. An advance ruling is a written decision issued by a Member of the WTO to an applicant before the importation of goods. This decision outlines how the Member will treat the good at the time of importation, specifically regarding its tariff classification and origin. The ruling is issued in a reasonable, time-bound manner upon receiving a written request with all necessary information. If the Member declines to issue an advance ruling, it must notify the applicant in writing, explaining the relevant facts and the basis for its decision.

The **Namibia** Revenue Agency (NamRA) launched in 2024 the [Electronic Advance Ruling Tool](#) (e-ART) to enhance trade facilitation and move towards a paperless customs environment. These digital solutions enable traders to receive binding decisions on tariff classification and the origin of goods before shipment, thereby reducing uncertainty in customs processes. The e-Tariff platform provides real-time information on tariffs, trade agreements, and duty calculations, offering a user-friendly online database for traders. This initiative is part of NamRA's digitization strategy, supported by the World Customs Organization and aligns with Namibia's commitment to modernizing trade facilitation.

Tunisia reported the successful implementation of Article 3 on Advance Rulings.

Saint Lucia mentioned having received support from the World Bank Group for the development of the draft bill and regulations on Advance Ruling.

2. Time Release Study

Effective coordination among all border agencies is essential when conducting a Time Release Study (TRS), highlighting the pivotal role of NTFCs. Article 7.6 of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement encourages WTO members to measure and publish the average release times of goods at the border. This measure aims to provide traders with information on the time usually taken to release goods, thereby improving predictability, transparency and efficiency in customs procedures. In 2024, numerous NTFCs reported their involvement in implementing WTO TFA Article 7.6 on the Publication of Average Release Times. Members are encouraged to use tools such as the Time Release Study of the World Customs Organization to periodically and consistently publish these times. Many countries have received technical support from the WCO in implementing their TRS.

Namibia conducted a TRS at the [Transkalahari Border Post](#), which was published in March 2025 and worked on the execution of the recommendations from the [TRS report for the Walvis Bay Port](#) which was published at the end of 2023.

Bolivia worked in the implementation of the recommendations of the Time Release Study at [Yacuiba Border Post between Bolivia and Argentina](#), which was published at the end of 2023.

Belize's NTFC supported the execution of its first Time Release Study.

India conducted its [National Time Release Study](#) in 2024.

⁸ [Roadmap for building a national trade information portal](#), page 35



Mauritius published its [Time Release Study for sea and air import and exports](#).

Eswatini conducted a [Bilateral TRS with South Africa](#).

Fiji published its time release study at [Suva and Lautoka](#) sea ports and **Egypt** its TRS at ports of [Alexandria, El Dekhalia and Damietta](#).

Zimbabwe worked in a TRS at the Chirundu Border Post that will be published in 2025.

Rwanda also published its [average clearance times](#) for 2024.

3. Authorized Economic Operator Scheme

Article 7.7 of the WTO TFA mandates that WTO members provide additional trade facilitation measures to operators who meet specified criteria and, therefore, can be considered known and trusted partners. Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) programs usually offer several benefits to businesses involved in international trade, including reduced clearance delays, less inspections, priority processing if selected for inspection, and enhanced marketability as a trusted operator. Additionally, AEO-certified companies can access comprehensive guarantees at reduced fees and benefit from improved security measures that reduce the risk of tampering and build confidence with customs authorities.

The [WCO AEO Database](#) registered in 2024, 89 AEO programmes and 122 Mutual Recognition Agreements, compared to 70 and 48 respectively in 2016. This demonstrates a steady increase in the number of AEO programmes and, more significantly, a substantial rise in the number of Mutual Recognition Agreements worldwide.

Several NTFCs reported to UN Trade and Development specific progress on the implementation of Authorized Economic Operators. **India** signed multiple [agreements of mutual recognitions](#) for AEOs, rolled out automated Out of Charge for AEO clients, and conducted continuous outreach programs related to AEO.

Zimbabwe implemented its [national AEO program](#), aligning with international best practices to enhance trade facilitation and security.

Bolivia proposed a Supreme Degree for the Authorized Economic Operator to formalize its [AEO program](#).

Sri Lanka completed its [AEO Tier One program](#) and **Mongolia** enhanced its AEO program to strengthen trust and partnerships between customs and trade stakeholders.

These efforts reflect a global commitment to improving customs and other clearance procedures and facilitating trade through the implementation and enhancement of AEO programs.

4. Border Agency Cooperation

Efforts to modernize border management have been a common theme among NTFCs, with several countries implementing coordinated border management (CBM) strategies and One Stop Border Posts (OSBPs).

Thanks to the capacity building provided by the WCO under the [Accelerate Trade Facilitation Programme](#), **Zambia** drafted the Inter-Agency Standard Regulation on Coordinated Border Management. This initiative contributed to providing a platform for coordinating the functions of the six border agencies present at borders following reduction from 18 agencies originally present. The Inter-Agency Standard



Regulation on Coordinated Border Management provides a base which outlines how the delegations and scope of the various mandates which have been delegated to six agencies will be performed to support trade facilitation and the maintenance of the various legislative controls.

Belize worked on the expansion of working hours at the western point of entry between Belize and Guatemala and started a study on integrated border management with Guatemala.

Malawi has completed two One Stop Border Posts (OSBP) and has concluded the installation of smart gates at Mchinji OSBP.

Namibia has initiated pilot testing of pilot testing of the OSBP system at the [Trans-Kalahari/Mamuno border posts](#). This initiative aims to streamline the clearance process for travelers and goods through a single border facility, utilizing harmonized procedures between Namibia and Botswana.

Eswatini has signed a [Joint Bilateral Action Plan with South Africa](#). Its implementation will be monitored by the Eswatini Trade Facilitation Committee with the Reform Tracker.

In 2025, UN Trade and Development will publish a roadmap that aims at guiding countries to implementing efficient border agency cooperation, especially focusing on the coordination between NTFCs and border committees and stakeholders.

5. Digitalization & Single Window

Digitalization in trade facilitation refers to the use of information and communication technologies to streamline and enhance trade processes, reducing costs and improving efficiency. As stated in the [Outcome Document](#) of the [First UN Global Supply Chain Forum organized by UN Trade and Development](#) in May 2024⁹, “the importance of political will and private sector engagement outweigh the significance of technology, and awareness and transparency are crucial components in the process of digitalization”¹⁰.

In 2024, several countries reported significant advancements in digitalizing their trade procedures. **India** implemented the Hub & Spoke Model for e-commerce exports and automation of the Postal Bill of Exports and enabled electronic clearances at Land Customs Stations.

Morocco digitalized the export certificate for handicraft products to preserve authenticity, implemented E-CITES for electronic authentication in export markets, and [digitalized the entire process of conformity certificates for industrial products](#).

Sri Lanka commenced electronic issuance of certificates of origin under preferential trade agreements and implemented the ASYHUB Project with UNCTAD's support. ASYHUB is an open, standardized, platform for processing and integrating data between ASYCUDAWorld and other external systems. The platform is designed to be cloud-native, using micro service-centered principles.

⁹ The Forum was organized in collaboration with the Government of Barbados and in partnership with over 100 stakeholders, including UN agencies, regional organizations, governmental bodies, and private sector entities. It addressed the compounding effects of climate change, geopolitical tensions, and the COVID-19 pandemic on global supply chains. For instance, geopolitical conflicts in the Red Sea are causing ships to spend more days at sea and emit higher levels of greenhouse gases, highlighting our interconnected world's growing unreliability and uncertainty. A special focus was given to the urgent challenges faced by Small Island Developing States (SIDS) due to the disproportionate impact that disrupted supply chains have on their economy.

¹⁰ [Outcome of the Global Supply Chain Forum 2024](#), page 111



Zimbabwe launched electronic certificates of origin, and an [electronic tariff tool](#). **Namibia** also introduced the [e-Tariff platform](#) to enhance trade facilitation and move towards a paperless customs environment.

Peru announced the participation in the project “[Blockchain for Trade Facilitation](#)” of the United Nations, which will pilot the integration of blockchain technology in a specific trade facilitation digitalization project.

“**Implementing a Single Window system should mark the beginning of the digitalization journey, not the ending.**”¹¹ A Single Window is a digital tool that enables traders and businesses to submit standardized information and documents through a single-entry point to fulfill all regulatory requirements related to import, export, and transit. This system simplifies and streamlines interactions with government authorities, thereby improving efficiency and reducing costs and delays in cross-border trade. Article 10.4 of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement encourages WTO members to establish or maintain a single window to facilitate trade. With an implementation rate of only 60 per cent by the end of 2024, as reported to the WTO TFA Committee, **the Single Window provision remains one of the least implemented articles of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement.**

In 2024, several countries [reported advancements](#) in their single window systems. Several of them are still working on preparing the [roadmap for the implementation](#) of such a project.

For instance, ASYCUDA handed the Single Window Blueprint to **Papua New Guinea**.

Belize conducted a feasibility study for its electronic single window and worked on mobilizing resources for its implementation.

Togo conducted study missions on the operationalization of SEGUCE in Côte d’Ivoire and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Sri Lanka NTFC participated in meetings with the Project Implementation Unit of the National Single Window under the Ministry of Finance.

Saint Lucia received technical assistance through the WTO’s Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility to develop the High-Level Functional and Technical Requirements for its National Electronic Single Window.

Niger participated in meetings of the Technical Committee for the implementation of Single Window.

A single window for trade system based on ASYCUDA technologies (ASYSW) has gone live in **Turkmenistan** and a technical assistance project was agreed with **Saint Vincent and the Grenadines**, joining Barbados, Burundi, Comoros, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Timor-Leste, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Vanuatu, and Zimbabwe, who are already working on or have implemented an ASYSW.

The principles behind creating an ASYSW are detailed in UN Trade and Development’s [Roadmap for Building a Single Window](#). The publication helps countries that already use ASYCUDA software, or other standards-based automated customs systems, to design, build and implement a tailor-made single window system based on existing capacities. The roadmap uses case studies to bring to life the theory of single window development by using real life examples.

Other NTFCs reported progress on the implementation and upgrade of their single window tools. **Malawi** upgraded its ASYCUDA system at the Malawi Revenue Authority, linked the Malawi Bureau of

¹¹ [Outcome of the Global Supply Chain Forum 2024](#), page 111



Standards operational system with ASYCUDA, and developed a National Electronic Single Window Software that is expected to be launched on a pilot basis in 2025.

With support from a USAID project, **Rwanda** upgraded its ASYCUDA single window into a Single Transaction Portal, which will serve as a one-stop center for all applications related to export, import, and transit documents, including the issuance of licenses and permits.

India is developing Single Window 2.0 with single sign-on, unified dashboard, unified application, and unified payments.





Enhancing Regional and International Cooperation

National Trade Facilitation Committees play a crucial role in supporting regional integration across various countries. However, engagement in this area appears to have decreased in 2024 compared to 2023. In 2024, 28 per cent of NTFCs negotiated or promoted trade facilitation agreements, down from 36 per cent in 2023. Additionally, 47 per cent of NTFCs advised or promoted the implementation of international or regional trade facilitation obligations and standards, or other trade facilitation reforms, compared to 51 per cent in 2023. Furthermore, 61 per cent of NTFCs participated in meetings and/or experience-sharing with other NTFCs at the regional and/or international level, a decrease from 67 per cent in 2023.

Several factors may have contributed to this decline in engagement. Geopolitical issues and environmental disruptions have strained resources and diverted attention from trade facilitation efforts. These challenges highlight the need for NTFCs to adapt and find innovative ways to maintain their crucial role in regional integration.

However, some NTFCs still reported worth mentioning engagements in regional and international cooperation in 2024.

The National Trade Facilitation Committee of **Honduras** had an active participation at the national and regional levels in the construction and national adoption of the [Central American Trade Facilitation and Competitiveness Strategy](#), a strategy launched by the Secretary of Economic Integration of Central America in 2023. This strategy includes measures to be implemented based on five pillars, including the measures and actions prioritized through the consultation process with the countries. A general objective was jointly constructed to reduce the costs and times of cross-border trade, ports, and airports, and to expedite the movement of people by implementing effective coordinated controls to improve regional logistics efficiency and competitiveness.

In this regard, and within the framework of the Strategy, Honduras drafted in 2024 a National Implementation Plan that involves all organizations dealing with cross-border commercial operations, as



well as the members of the National Trade Facilitation Committee. Honduras is advancing in the review and harmonization of its foreign trade processes, with the aim of reducing the clearance time of goods. Additionally, it will implement actions that will contribute to the development of regulations promoting the acceptance of digital documents and the use of digital signatures in its processes. It will strengthen the national contingency plan, which involves all institutions delegated at the borders, to ensure the continuity of operations.

In 2024, Honduras hosted the II Meeting of National Trade Facilitation Committees of the region, where topics of interest were addressed, including the creation and approval of the Model for the mandatory use of the Regional Advance Declaration, a model approved in December 2024, with implementation roadmaps set for early 2025.

In **Cabo Verde**, the NTFC participated in the ECOWAS meeting on the implementation status of SIGMAT and the development of the National Strategy for the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area ([AfCFTA](#)) in Praia.

The **Democratic Republic of Congo's** NTFC reported having taken part in a workshop organized by AfCFTA in Cotonou, Benin.

Eswatini's NTFC has been mandated with the monitoring of the implementation of those provisions of the AfCFTA related to trade facilitation.

Cameroon's NTFC engaged in the [Central Africa component of the "Trade and Transport Facilitation and Strategic Corridors"](#).

Mongolia's NTFC supported the negotiation of the Customs and Trade Facilitation chapter in the Mongolia-Korea Economic Partnership Agreement.

Regional Trade Facilitation Committees are also playing a crucial role. In 2024, **ECOWAS** organized two Regional Capacity Building Workshops on Trade Facilitation, that were finally delivered early 2025. The training programme was delivered jointly by UN Trade and Development and the Trade Facilitation West African Programme. The main objective was to contribute to the regional approach and activities towards the implementation of trade facilitation reforms, strengthening NTFC's roles as effective coordinators. The regional sessions followed up on the 2023 specialized capacity building programme delivered by UNCTAD under the same programme to the 15 NTFCs in the region.

ECOWAS has continued supporting the implementation of the ASYCUDA supported solution for regional customs interconnection 'SIGMAT'. The tool enhances regional integration through the automation of transit procedures in Western Africa. In 2024, the [ASYCUDA SIGMAT](#) solution saved traders time and money along five corridors, reducing paper usage by 88 per cent and transit times by more than 45 per cent¹².

In May 2024, the **East African Community**, with the technical cooperation of UNCTAD and the financial support of the African Development Bank and the Multi Cooperation Center for Development Finance, embarked on a [project](#) aimed at addressing trade information and Communications Technology systems capacity, inadequate market information, low levels of online connectivity and improved transparency for trade and investment within the East African Community. The project helps increase transparency, connectivity of border systems and regional accountability where countries will communicate more systematically, widely, and effectively on trade facilitation reforms and their impact. This is expected to improve the investment climate and greater intra-regional trade within the African market and extra-

¹² [ASYCUDA Report 2024 - Innovation for a Changing World](#), page 23



regional trade with ASEAN+ markets linking global value chains, using the Reform Tracker, Trade Information Portals and customs modernization systems. The East African Community is now composed of eight (8) Partner States, namely, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda.





Advancing Gender Equality in Trade

Promoting inclusivity in trade has gained traction among National Trade Facilitation Committees in 2024, with several initiatives aimed at facilitating trade for cross-border women traders. However, these efforts remain marginal with only one out of five NTFCs (21 per cent) reporting having implemented any initiative in this area.

Togo focused on strengthening the capacities of Committee members in inclusive project management and gender integration.

With support of UNCTAD under the Accelerate Trade Facilitation Programme, financed by UK Customs, **Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia** [conducted a study](#) on women and gender at the borders of Huaquillas (Peru-Ecuador) and Desaguadero (Peru-Bolivia) to better understand the challenges faced by female traders.

Eswatini's NTFC commissioned a gender study with support from the World Bank Group to identify and address barriers faced by women traders.

With support of the World Bank Group, **Ghana** NTFC established a [Trade and Gender Sub-committee](#) back in November 2021. The Sub-Committee has been actively advocating for mainstreaming a gender perspective into trade facilitation reforms and improving the lives of women in cross-border trade. In 2024, the Chair of the Sub-committee undertook several awareness-raising campaigns in national, regional and international forums. The Sub-committee also set criteria for selecting Gender Champions in the Trade Ecosystem for the benefit of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and cross border women traders, identifying the men and women whose organisations satisfied the criteria. In addition, the Sub-committee collaborated with the World Customs Organisation and the Gender Unit of the Ghana Revenue Authority-Customs Division to hold a workshop for SMEs and cross border women traders. The Sub-Committee has given itself an ambitious workplan for 2025, including:

- Launch of the Gender Champion Initiative - For Sustainability
- Sensitize on the AfCFTA Protocol on Women & Youth
- Raise awareness and train Women and SMEs on the usefulness of Digital trade and Innovation



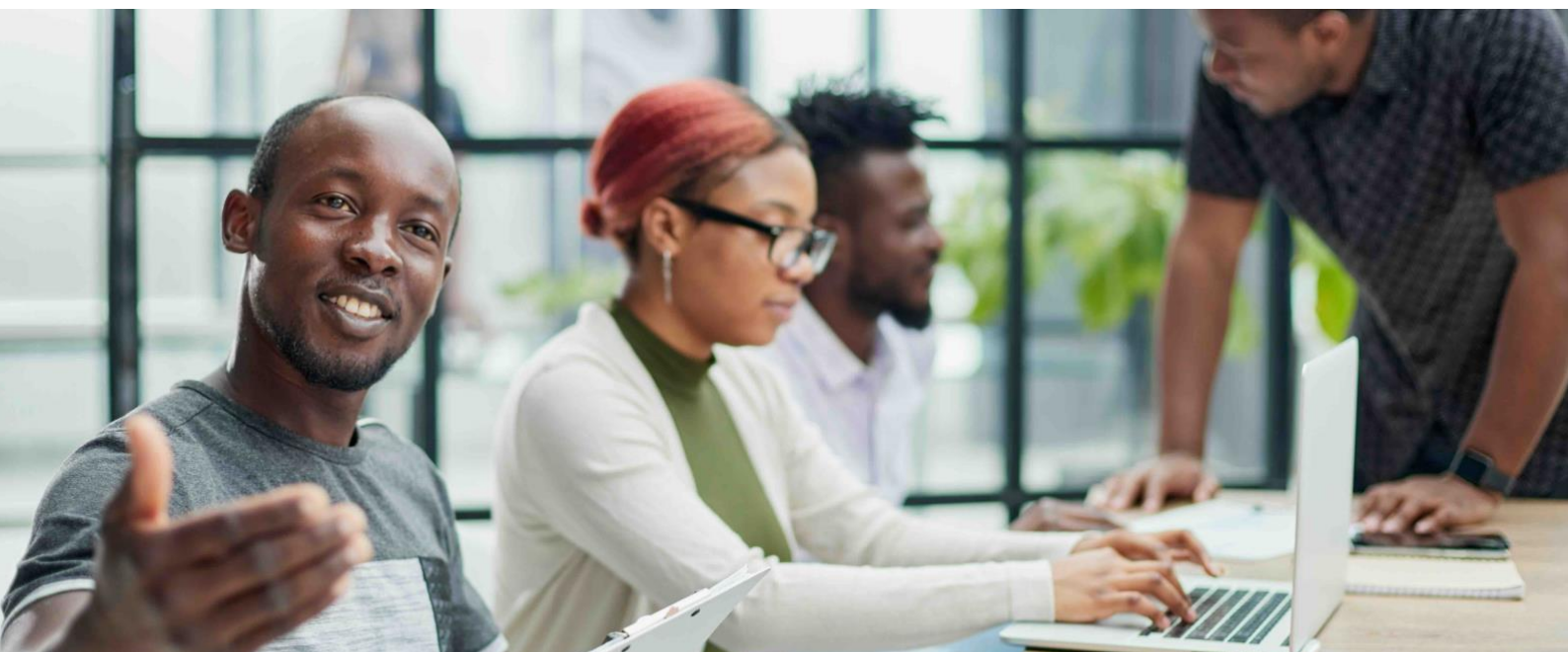
- Continuous Engagement with Cross Border Women Traders and SMEs in the regions of Ghana
- Work in partnership with women in Agribusiness
- Collaborate with Women Associations in Trade, Logistics, and Shipping

India reported the inclusion of gender-specific infrastructure facilities by the Custodian Customs Cargo Service Providers at Container Freight Stations, Air Freight Stations, and Inland Container Depots. This can include facilities such as separate restrooms, breastfeeding rooms, and secure waiting areas. The aim is to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for women, ensuring their comfort and safety while engaging in trade activities. This initiative aligns with broader efforts to promote gender equality and inclusivity in trade facilitation, as outlined in various international frameworks and agreements.

At a regional level, a Technical Sub-Committee on Women in Trade under the Regional Trade Facilitation Committee of the Economic Community of West African States (**ECOWAS**) was official launched in November 2024.

These activities reflect a growing commitment to gender inclusivity in trade facilitation, aiming to create a more equitable trading environment for women.





An imperative need to keep supporting NTFCs

NTFCs continue to seek support to enhance their performance in various areas of work. In fact, **only 11 per cent of respondents in 2024 felt that their NTFC was performing well at an operational level**, a decrease from 16 per cent in 2023.

To address these gaps, the UN Trade and Development has put together a variety of trade facilitation solutions, providing [support to more than 80 countries since 2015](#).

Empowerment Programme for Trade Facilitation



In 2024, **over a third of NTFCs (38 per cent) considered conducting institutional changes (legal framework, structure, composition, procedures) critical**, up from 29 per cent in 2023. Many NTFCs were created after the entry into force of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement in 2017. However, the mandates and structure set back then need to be revised and adapted to the new global events and trends. Many NTFCs seek the expertise of international partners such as UNCTAD for guidance in this process.



As concluded during the Global Supply Chain Forum 2024, **NTFC mandates need to incorporate new topics which are essential to advance trade facilitation beyond the measures of the WTO TFA**¹³.

In fact, in 2024, less than half of the NTFCs (48 per cent) claimed to discuss topics such as issues relating to supply chain disruptions, emergency preparedness, or congestion at ports or borders. More alarming, the incorporation of climate change and green policies in the trade facilitation national agenda is down to only 4 per cent from 18 per cent in 2023. Thus, in many countries, NTFCs still need guidance to gain institutional maturity and establish themselves as advisory bodies that will evolve over time and adapt to the different needs of society and businesses. UNCTAD Trade Facilitation Solutions on [Climate Smart Trade Facilitation](#), [Rapid Scans for Emergency Preparedness](#) or courses on new technologies such as [blockchain](#) are critical to raise awareness on these critical influencers of cross-border trade.

Proposals for integrating sustainability into trade facilitation practices and the potential of digital innovation to advance climate action

1. Green transition and sustainability must be put on the trade facilitation radar, especially given the carbon intensive role of trade.
2. Need to streamline regulations and invest in digital trade facilitation 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 certifications matter to track the sustainability of the value chain along the full product life cycle. Traceability of value chains can lead to premium prices for products.
4. Cutting back on paper, cutting back of waste at border posts, illegal trade can all be addressed through enhancing digitalization.
5. Need to address fragmentation of tools that seek to do similar things.
6. Use digital tools and border agency coordination to cut down on congestion at the border.
7. Explore scaling up the assessments of Carbon neutral borders and other innovations that have been proven to cut down on emissions.
8. NTFCs can have a role to play in discussing and implementing the World Trade Organization TFA ++ and exploring the inclusion of environmental measures in their work.
9. Multifaceted use of the technology – positive benefits on efficiencies at border, sustainability and even on issues like providing humanitarian assistance.
10. Standardization of data, risk analysis, and exchange of information matters.

Source: Global Supply Chain Forum – Outcome Document

NTFCs' engagement in transit coordination decreased drastically from 18 per cent in 2023 to 4 per cent in 2024. While it is not expected for NTFCs to hold this role, which is typically integrated with Customs or Ministry of Transport, there is a clear need for the NTFC to address any issue related to the improvement

¹³ [Outcome of the Global Supply Chain Forum 2024](#), page 121



of transit conditions and the application of the freedom of transit. In 2025, UNCTAD will be offering an [open-to-all training programme for Transit Coordination](#), in order to help NTFCs be in a better position to comply with [Article 11](#) of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement.

Further **engaging in the implementation of concrete trade facilitation reforms is seen as critical by 59 per cent of NTFCs**. According to them, it will help ensuring the operational performance of their Committees. However, moving from planning to execution requires a different set of skills.

Improving trade facilitation knowledge and capacities of NTFC members was seen as crucial by 71 per cent of respondents in 2024, up from 62 per cent in 2023. This reflects a significant need for capacity building. A key component of UNCTAD's Empowerment Programme for Trade Facilitation is the [Trade Facilitation e-Learning Platform](#), which helps stakeholders build skills and knowledge, strengthening global trade. Since its launch in 2021, the platform has trained over 3,000 trade facilitation stakeholders around the world.

Investing in strengthening the capacities of the NTFC Secretariat will generate positive spillover effects, advancing the country's trade facilitation agenda.

More than half of the NTFCs (57 per cent) emphasized the need to reinforce the NTFC Secretariat. In 2024, UN Trade and Development continued providing NTFCs with its [Executive Training for NTFC Chairpersons and Secretariat](#) but further resources are needed to bring such capacity building sessions to other NTFCs in need.

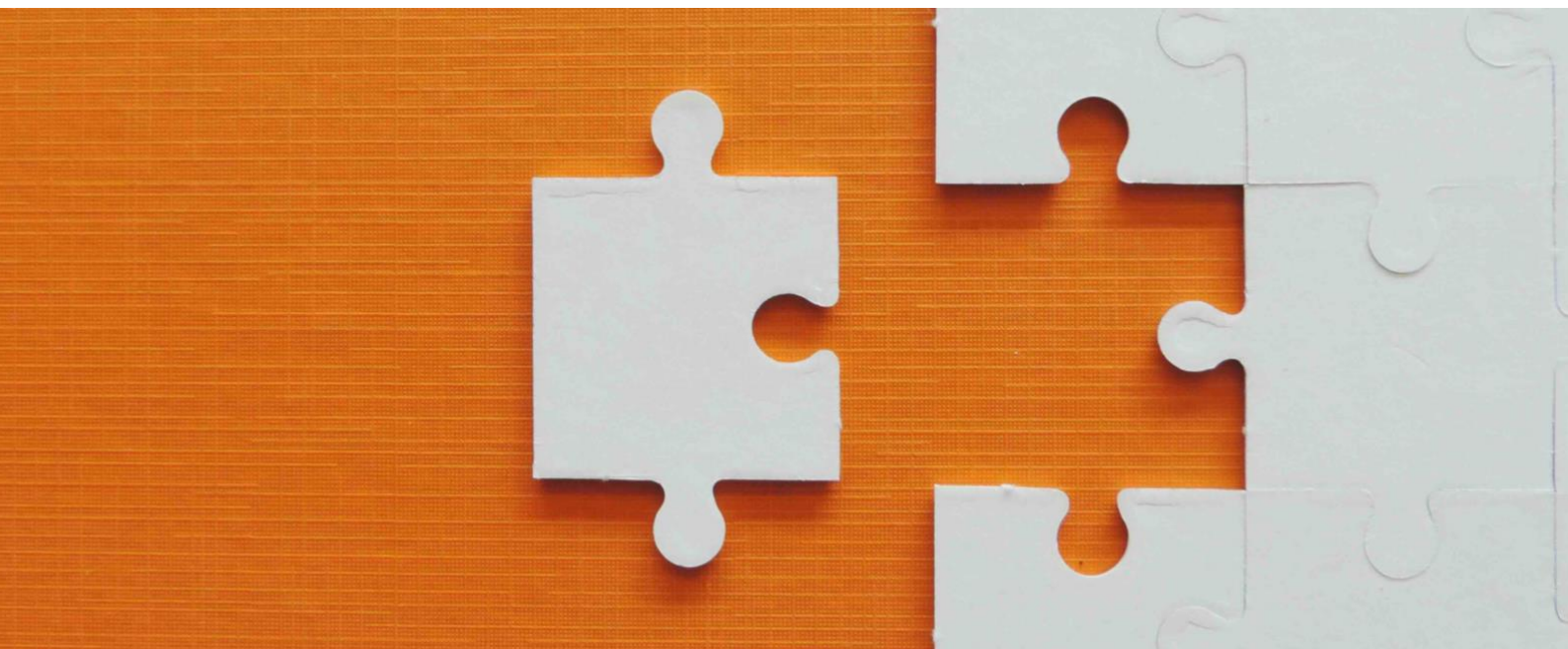
Almost two thirds of NTFCs (64 per cent) mentioned a need to improve the monitoring and evaluation capacities of the NTFC. Apart from the continuous support to the 26 countries using the Reform Tracker, UNCTAD delivered [several courses on M&E](#) in 2024. Moreover, approximately five more countries are expected to set up the UNCTAD Reform Tracker in 2025.

Additionally, **63 per cent of NTFCs mentioned that improving NTFC communication and coordination was critical for improving the operational performance of their NTFC**, compared to 58 per cent in 2023. UNCTAD has been training trade facilitation stakeholders on [effective communication](#) since 2015 and will be launching its new Executive Training for Effective Communication for NTFCs in 2025.

Increasing efforts to mobilize resources was considered critical by 71 per cent of respondents in 2024, up from 62 per cent in 2023. This indicates growing challenges in securing funding. In 2024, UNCTAD organized two training sessions on [resource mobilization for NTFCs](#), with over 100 NTFC stakeholders satisfactorily completing the course. Moreover, in 2025, UNCTAD is partnering with WTO to deliver a training session on resource mobilization in the context of the WTO TFA.

The survey responses reveal a clear recognition among NTFCs of the need for various improvements to enhance operational performance. Key areas of focus include institutional changes, reinforcing the Secretariat, improving communication and coordination, and increasing resource mobilization efforts. Despite some decreases in engagement levels, the overall trend indicates a strong commitment to addressing these critical areas.





Conclusion

The year 2024 has been a testament to the pivotal role that National Trade Facilitation Committees play in advancing the trade facilitation agenda of countries worldwide.

While this document does not intend to enumerate a comprehensive list of trade facilitation initiatives, it includes selected and specific activities conducted in 2024 by 60 countries, namely, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Barbados, Benin, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Comoros, Costa Rica, Democratic Republic of Congo, Dominica, Ecuador, Egypt, Eswatini, Fiji, France, Grenada, Guyana, Honduras, India, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyz Republic, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Maldives, Mongolia, Morocco, Myanmar, Namibia, Niger, Norway, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, Rwanda, São Tomé E Príncipe, Senegal, Serbia, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Tanzania, Timor-Leste, Togo, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Vanuatu, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Through their dedicated efforts, NTFCs have successfully coordinated the implementation of national and regional trade facilitation reforms, engaged stakeholders, enhanced governance frameworks, and implemented strategic planning and robust monitoring mechanisms. These initiatives have led to significant improvements in trade processes, fostering regional and international cooperation, and advancing gender equality in trade.

The outcomes achieved by NTFCs in 2024 are significant. They have streamlined border procedures, reduced trade complexities, and minimized costs, thereby contributing to more efficient and inclusive trade environments. The implementation of trade information portals, advance rulings, time release studies, authorized economic operator schemes, border agency cooperation, and digitalization efforts, including single window systems, have all been instrumental in enhancing trade facilitation. These outcomes increase significantly for Least Developed Countries and Landlocked Developing Countries while decrease for SIDS.



However, the journey is far from over. Continued support for NTFCs is imperative to sustain and build upon these achievements. Investing in capacity building and digital tools will empower NTFCs to address emerging challenges, adapt to new global trends, and ensure their operational performance. Strengthening the capacities of the NTFC Secretariat, improving communication and coordination, and increasing resource mobilization efforts are critical areas that require attention.

As global supply chains face increasing disruptions and higher tariffs threaten consumers, the role of NTFCs in facilitating domestic coordination between public and private sectors, identifying bottlenecks, streamlining trade processes, and reducing complexities is more crucial than ever. Their mandates need to be adjusted to confront this changing environment. They need to include issues beyond WTO TFA as well as focus on supply chain efficiency. The positive spillover effects of investing in NTFCs will advance the country's trade facilitation agenda, fostering economic growth and development.

In conclusion, NTFCs have proven their worth as key drivers of trade facilitation reforms across all levels of development. Their continued support and empowerment through capacity building and digital tools will ensure that they remain at the forefront of advancing trade facilitation, contributing to a more efficient, inclusive, and resilient global trade system.



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