

# TRADE FACILITATION

## MAKING TRADE EASIER AND FASTER



### GLOBAL CONTEXT



In an international environment where falling tariffs and quotas represent less of a barrier to trade, trade facilitation has emerged as an important trade policy tool. The main objective of trade facilitation is to reduce complexities and costs associated with cumbersome border procedures and controls, while maintaining efficient compliance controls. World Bank estimates suggest that administrative hurdles arising from cumbersome border procedures can cause up to 75 per cent of delays of shipments.

The Agreement on Trade Facilitation of the World Trade Organization, which entered into force on 22 February 2017, is a major international achievement. It aims to reduce trade transaction costs and bureaucratic barriers, speeding up clearance procedures for the cross-border trade of goods, thereby making trade easier, faster and less costly. The alignment of national and regional rules with the multilateral trade facilitation framework is instrumental to achieving increased trade integration.

To facilitate the implementation of the technical and institutional obligations resulting from the Agreement on Trade Facilitation, UNCTAD assists developing countries and LDCs with a range of activities, as follows: elaboration of needs assessments and assistance with the ratification, categorization and notification of national trade facilitation implementation plans; development of project plans; assistance with the establishment of national trade facilitation committees; general capacity-building and technical assistance on trade facilitation reforms; and assistance with the implementation of trade facilitation measures through related activities such as the Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA).



### HOW DOES UNCTAD SUPPORT NATIONAL TRADE FACILITATION COMMITTEES?

UNCTAD provides an intensive professional programme for the secretariat and members of national trade facilitation committees, namely the Empowerment Programme for National Trade Facilitation Committees. The main objective is to assist committees to implement, in a coordinated manner, trade facilitation reforms, including the provisions of the Agreement on Trade Facilitation, and to be able to monitor implementation.

With a view to ratification and implementation of the Agreement, UNCTAD support covers the following:

- (a) Assessments of technical assistance needs and preparation of categorization of provisions of the Agreement;
- (b) Tailored training on trade, transit and transport facilitation;
- (c) Advisory services on ratification of the Agreement;
- (d) Assistance in the creation and sustainable operation of national trade facilitation committees.

Upon successful completion of the Empowerment Programme, members of national trade facilitation committees are granted a certification of completion by UNCTAD. Empowered committees are featured in the UNCTAD repository of national trade facilitation committees, at [unctad.org/tfc](http://unctad.org/tfc), which contains data on and analyses of national trade facilitation bodies and assists several regional organizations in coordinating trade and transit facilitation reforms.





## RESULTS AND IMPACT AT A GLANCE

UNCTAD has developed 45 implementation plans and 145 project proposals related to needs assessments and gap analyses.

UNCTAD has established an online repository of national trade facilitation committees, containing information and analyses of over 130 committees worldwide.

UNCTAD published *Trade Facilitation and Development: Driving Trade Competitiveness, Border Agency Effectiveness and Strengthened Governance*.

UNCTAD has provided assistance to the East African Community secretariat and has supported the East African Community and its members in achieving the following:

- Notification of Category A provisions;
- Establishment of a regional subcommittee on trade facilitation;
- Establishment of five national trade facilitation committees;
- Design of strategic planning on trade facilitation;
- Elaboration of 15 project proposals;
- Completion of gap analyses and need assessments.



## PROGRAMME FACTS AND FIGURES

**Scope:** All regions

**Start date:** 2012

**Countries assisted:** 50+

**Ongoing programmes:**  
Empowerment Programme for National Trade Facilitation Committees, in 15 developing countries and LDCs

**Website:** [unctad.org/tf](http://unctad.org/tf)

**Sustainable Development Goals addressed:**

**Directly:** 10 and 16

**Indirectly:** 17



## DONORS/ FUNDING SOURCE

**Current:** China, Germany, the United Kingdom, the United States (Agency for International Development), the European Union and Trade Mark East Africa

**Past:** Norway, Spain, Sweden and United Nations Development Programme

