



**REPORT BY THE ITC AND THE ANNEX D PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS  
TO THE TRADE FACILITATION COMMITTEE**

22-23 April 2021

**Contents**

<b>FOREWORD .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>INTERNATIONAL TRADE CENTRE (ITC) .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT (OECD) .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT (UNCTAD) .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>WORLD BANK GROUP (WBG) .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>WORLD CUSTOMS ORGANIZATION (WCO) .....</b>	<b>12</b>

## **FOREWORD**

The WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility (TFAF) was created to help WTO developing and least developed country Members find the support they need to implement the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA). One of the ways that the TFAF fulfils this role is by providing information on the TFA implementation support programs offered by partner organizations, the so-called "Annex D" organizations. This document, coordinated by the TFAF, provides updates on the TFA implementation support activities that are being carried out by partner organizations. It is also available on the TFAF website.



## **INTERNATIONAL TRADE CENTRE (ITC)**

### **1 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF YOUR ORGANIZATION'S ROLE IN SUPPORTING IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TFA**

1.1. The International Trade Centre (ITC) offers a comprehensive range of trade facilitation services to its beneficiaries towards implementation of the TFA, factoring in the business perspective and with continuous engagement and cooperation between stakeholders at its core.

1.2. ITC provides support to public and private trade actors, including National Trade Facilitation Committees (NTFCs), to implement a wide range of TFA transparency and efficiency obligations, strengthening WTO Members' national preparedness to operationalize the measures of the Agreement, and thus meet their WTO commitments. It does so by reviewing or supporting the establishment of the national legal framework enabling the implementation of the TFA measures, and by providing support to practically operationalize the measures with private sector's involvement in the overall process.

1.3. ITC also assists beneficiary countries to request financial and technical assistance to achieve implementation of Category C commitments.

### **2 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF ANY RECENT OR UPCOMING ASSISTANCE/ACTIVITIES (AND METHODS OF DELIVERY)**

2.1. With technical assistance delivered in more than 20 countries in Asia, Africa, Oceania and the Middle East, ITC is keeping the momentum high for trade facilitation reforms, providing tailored advisory services and practical support for the implementation of TFA measures. Transparency, simplification and digitalization of border procedures are at the core of ITC assistance, advanced through an inclusive and consultative approach, and amplified as a response to COVID-19 disruptions.

#### **Building national dialogue and capacity to understand, implement and monitor the implementation of the TFA**

2.2. ITC is supporting public and private stakeholders worldwide to build their capacity to understand TFA requirements and their ensuing benefits, prioritize and sequence successfully for their implementation, and establish or strengthen National Trade Facilitation Committees (NTFCs) to stir the design, operationalization and monitoring of trade facilitation reforms.

2.3. In Nepal, ITC has recently supported the review of Category C commitments, identify needs and requirements for technical assistance, and notify indicative dates for their implementation to the WTO. In Jordan, ITC is supporting stakeholders to review and refine the implementation modalities of Category A commitments, whereas in Iraq and Uzbekistan, ITC is conducting a review of the national compliance with TFA requirements in preparation for accession to the WTO.

2.4. ITC is also supporting NTFCs – at all stages of maturity – to set up or strengthen their institutional set-up, operations and network (Article 23.2). ITC is notably assisting Uzbekistan and Iraq to establish their NTFC, Nepal to build consensus and initial capacity-building on NTFC's organizational structure, mandate and tasks, Pakistan to revitalize its NTFC's operations, and Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and Burkina Faso to strengthen their NTFC's performance and practices.

2.5. With a view to deepen regional integration, ITC is also fostering dialogue and capacity-building on regional approaches to TFA implementation in the East African Community (EAC), supporting policymakers and stakeholders to harmonize trade facilitation reforms and targets at the regional economic community (REC) level (Article 24.5).

---

## **Supporting the implementation of transparency measures of the TFA**

2.6. ITC is augmenting its support to establish or enhance Trade Facilitation Portals (TFPs) in beneficiary countries, in collaboration with UNCTAD, with a view to boost implementation of the transparency measures (Article 1.1 and 1.2) enshrined in the TFA. TFPs are a digital solution serving as a one-stop-shop providing up-to-date information on export, import and transit procedures and formalities in an easily accessible manner.

2.7. In particular, ITC is supporting Burkina Faso, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Afghanistan, Jordan, Burundi and Burkina Faso to establish their TFP; it is also supporting Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Tajikistan and Sri Lanka to update and enhance their TFP's features. In Tajikistan, ITC is also introducing the publication of the commentary to the Customs code (Article 1.1).

## **Supporting the implementation of efficiency measures of the TFA**

2.8. In an effort to make customs procedures more efficient and predictable, ITC is providing technical assistance to establish or review the national legal and regulatory framework to implement selected TFA measures. In Niger and Jordan, ITC has been supporting policymakers to develop and operationalize the legal and regulatory framework to issue advance rulings (Article 3), and piloted its implementation with the private sector. ITC has also recently supported Tajikistan's Customs administration to introduce provisions in the Customs code allowing companies, which meet pre-defined criteria, to apply for the authorized operator (AO) status and benefit from a number of facilitative measures, as stipulated in Article 7.7.

2.9. Complementarily, ITC is strengthening mechanisms for border agency cooperation (Article 8) to apply more efficient controls and streamlined procedures. In Pakistan, ITC is developing a framework methodology for border agency cooperation at Customs border stations. To make cross-border procedures faster and simpler, ITC is supporting the establishment of an integrated risk management system in line with Article 7.4, the implementation of a pre-arrival processing (Article 7.1), the establishment and publication of average release times (Article 7.6) and the acceptance of copies (Article 10.2), such as in Jordan and Pakistan.

2.10. ITC is also supporting the simplification and digitalization of border procedure and trade formalities. Using TFPs tools through national and regional partnerships, ITC is building capacity to harmonize and simplify trade formalities in the spirit of Article 10.1 of the TFA, such as in Sri Lanka, Tajikistan and Burkina Faso. ITC is also working in Sri Lanka to implement the automated processing and electronic issuance of certificates of origin, to curb unnecessary delays and costs for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs).

## **Enhancing business capacity to benefit from TFA and strengthening compliance with international trade procedures**

2.11. ITC directly assists businesses, in particular MSMEs, to enhance their regulatory compliance with trade formalities and procedures, and ensure that they can benefit from a meaningful implementation of the TFA – including through e-learning courses on the TFA, on-site coaching and advocacy support.

2.12. ITC is delivering on-the-job coaching and advisory services to SMEs to improve their compliance level with cross-border management requirements, and cut the time and cost of doing business.

2.13. ITC is also strengthened private sector and trade-support institutions (TSIs) capacity to advocate for effective policy and sectoral trade facilitation reforms at the national and regional level, as well as their representation in the NTFC to cater for businesses' needs in the reform process.

## **3 HOW TO REQUEST ASSISTANCE**

3.1. ITC is delivering its technical assistance on TFA implementation in the context of multi-annual trade-related projects that are being implemented in specific countries and regions. The portfolio of trade facilitation services provided to beneficiary clients is hence pre-determined under the

framework of these country-specific or region-specific trade-related technical assistance programmes. Nonetheless, with the support of additional funding, ITC can further assist clients to capitalize on the implementation of the TFA.

**Your contact point at ITC**

3.2. Interested WTO members and development partners may contact Dr. Mohammad Saeed, Senior Trade Facilitation Officer, at [saeed@intracen.org](mailto:saeed@intracen.org), +41227300126, to receive further information on the ITC Trade Facilitation Programme' portfolio of services and technical assistance.



## **ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT (OECD)**

### **1 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF YOUR ORGANIZATION'S ROLE IN SUPPORTING IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TFA**

1.1. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is an international organization working to promote policies that will improve the economic and social well-being of people around the world. The OECD provides a knowledge hub for data and analysis and a unique forum in which governments can work together to share experiences, best practices and seek solutions to common problems.

1.2. To help governments improve their border procedures, reduce trade costs, boost trade flows and reap greater benefits from international trade, the OECD has developed a set of Trade Facilitation Indicators (TFIs) that identify areas for action and enable the potential impact of reforms to be assessed: <https://www.oecd.org/trade/topics/trade-facilitation/>. The OECD TFIs are strongly linked to the policy areas covered by the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement. The indicators thus cover the full spectrum of border procedures for more than 160 economies across different income levels, geographical regions, and levels of development. Each TF indicator is composed of several specific, precise and fact-based variables on existing trade-related policies and regulations and their implementation in practice. The OECD TFIs allow countries to identify their strengths and weaknesses in trade facilitation, prioritize areas for action, and mobilize technical assistance and capacity building in a more targeted way. The TFIs not only measure the actual extent to which countries have introduced and implemented trade facilitation measures in absolute terms, but also their performance relative to others, using a series of quantitative measures on key areas of the border process.

1.3. Donor support (i.e. ODA and OOF) for trade facilitation programmes are recorded in the OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS) under the heading 'trade facilitation': <https://stats.oecd.org/qwids/>.

### **2 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF ANY RECENT OR UPCOMING ASSISTANCE/ACTIVITIES (AND METHODS OF DELIVERY)**

#### **OECD COVID-19 Policy Responses Hub**

2.1. COVID-19 issues have continued to be mainstreamed under different areas of the OECD's work, including trade facilitation. Several policy-relevant and timely analyses on trade facilitation issues were released on the OECD COVID-19 Policy Responses Hub: <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/en/>.

#### **OECD Trade Facilitation Indicators (TFIs) visualization tools**

2.2. The OECD TFIs latest data can be accessed through the Compare your Country tool, which allows to explore the performance of various countries or groups of countries as well as to visualize worldwide progress across specific trade facilitation areas. The Policy Simulator tool allows to discover the key measures driving the performance of a selected country in a specific indicator and simulate the effects of potential policy reforms on the overall performance.

#### **OECD TFIs 2021 update cycle**

2.3. The data underpinning the OECD TFIs are updated every two years, which allows countries to monitor their progress since 2013, when the project was first launched. The data collection, factual check and processing of information for the 2021 update will be undertaken until the end of the year, with a view to release the update series in the first quarter of 2022.

### 3 HOW TO REQUEST ASSISTANCE

3.1. Any enquiries regarding the OECD work on trade facilitation and the OECD Trade Facilitation Indicators can be directed to: Ms. Silvia Sorescu, Emerging Policy Issues Division, Trade and Agriculture Directorate ([silvia.sorescu@oecd.org](mailto:silvia.sorescu@oecd.org)).

### 4 USEFUL INFORMATION (LINKS TO WEBSITE, RESEARCH ARTICLES, ETC.)

4.1. OECD Trade Facilitation Indicators visualization tools: *Compare your Country and Policy Simulator* (<https://www.compareyourcountry.org/trade-facilitation> and <https://sim.oecd.org/default.ashx?ds=TFI>).

4.2. *Using trade to fight COVID-19: Manufacturing and distributing vaccines* (<https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/using-trade-to-fight-covid-19-manufacturing-and-distributing-vaccines-dc0d37fc/>) discusses trade and policy considerations underpinning access to the final and intermediate goods needed to effectively produce, deliver and administer COVID-19 vaccines.

4.3. *Getting goods across borders in times of COVID-19* (<https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/getting-goods-across-borders-in-times-of-covid-19-972ada7a/>) provides insights into the evolution of new border protocols and trade facilitation measures impacting trade, exploring what more can be done to prepare for the next stages of the pandemic as uncertainty persists.

4.4. *Connecting businesses and consumers during COVID-19: Trade in parcels* (<https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/connecting-businesses-and-consumers-during-covid-19-trade-in-parcels-d18de131/>) discusses the trade facilitation policies that can ensure parcel trade and e-commerce are able to promote an inclusive economic recovery from COVID-19.

4.5. *Leveraging digital trade to fight the consequences of COVID-19* (<https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/leveraging-digital-trade-to-fight-the-consequences-of-covid-19-f712f404/>) explores how digital technologies can be leveraged to enable more efficient movement of goods across borders.

4.6. *Digital opportunities for Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) systems and the trade facilitation effects of SPS electronic certification* ([https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/agriculture-and-food/digital-opportunities-for-sanitary-and-phytosanitary-sps-systems-and-the-trade-facilitation-effects-of-sps-electronic-certification\\_cbb7d0f6-en](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/agriculture-and-food/digital-opportunities-for-sanitary-and-phytosanitary-sps-systems-and-the-trade-facilitation-effects-of-sps-electronic-certification_cbb7d0f6-en)) explores the effects of the use of electronic SPS certificates on agro-food trade, as well as the challenges and policy implications for a more successful adoption of such digital technologies for facilitating trade.



## UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT (UNCTAD)

### 1 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF YOUR ORGANIZATION'S ROLE IN SUPPORTING IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TFA

1.1. UNCTAD provides a broad range of technical assistance and capacity building activities in the field of trade facilitation, including: Elaboration of needs assessments and assistance with the ratification, categorization and notification of WTO TFA obligations; Support for development and implementation of national trade facilitation implementation plans and road maps; Development of project proposals and plans; Advisory services in all fields of trade and transport facilitation implementation; Targeted and specialized **training and support to national trade facilitation committees through the UNCTAD Empowerment Program**; Monitoring and evaluation support of trade facilitation initiatives; General capacity-building and technical assistance on trade facilitation reforms; as well as assistance with the implementation of trade facilitation measures. In addition, UNCTAD provides extensive assistance world-wide in the field of Customs and trade automation through the ASYCUDA program; support for implementation of Single Window solutions, including legal assessments and creating the necessary legal frameworks; and finally UNCTAD provides support in the field of transparency and simplification through the dedicated UNCTAD Trade Information Portal initiative. Please visit the UNCTAD Trade Logistics, Trade Facilitation and ASYCUDA web sites as indicated below.

### 2 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF ANY RECENT OR UPCOMING ASSISTANCE/ACTIVITIES (AND METHODS OF DELIVERY)

2.1. In February 2020, UNCTAD published the third volume of our recurrent **study on National Trade Facilitation Committees**: National Trade Facilitation Committees as coordinators of trade facilitation reform. See link below.

2.2. UNCTAD maintains the **on-line database on trade facilitation committees around the world**. Please see the link below. The data base provides information about more than 100 NTFCs around the world. UNCTAD is continuously adding new information about NTFCs to the platform based on information received from countries. Countries are encouraged to update information about their NTFCs or add information about their NTFCs in cases where this is missing.

2.3. UNCTAD has launched an **on-line training platform to support trade facilitation implementation**, in particular for national trade facilitation committees. Please see link below. This initiative is based on a blended approach including a series of on-line training modules mixed with online sessions with the participants, webinars on selected issues and meetings with the national trade facilitation committees. Interested countries can approach UNCTAD for support to roll-out this program.

2.4. UNCTAD provides a **specialized training module for implementation of WTO TFA Articles 11.16 and 17 on transit collaboration and transit coordinators**. The training is predominantly provided on regional or sub-regional basis to appointed or designated transit coordinators. Interested countries can approach UNCTAD for support to roll-out this program.

2.5. UNCTAD has launched a web-based **project management and monitoring tool for implementation of trade facilitation reforms, the so-called Reform Tracker**. The tool is presently being implemented with more than 10 countries. Please contact UNCTAD for additional information.

2.6. Countries that have adopted the **UNCTAD trade information portals** have in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic all been offered include dedicated COVID-19 information on their portals.

This approach has been adopted widely amongst almost all users of the UNCTAD portals. Please refer to the link below.

2.7. In relation to the **COVID-19 pandemic, UNCTAD is providing support** to interested countries, including through collaboration with UN Regional Commissions. See link below.

2.8. UNCTAD has launched a **Rapid Scan methodology, assessing the preparedness of countries of crisis management in the field of trade facilitation**. These assessments also provide local capacity building. Interested countries can approach UNCTAD for support to roll-out this program.

2.9. In general, the **UNCTAD ASYCUDA program for Customs and Trade Automation** provides a host of automation options in relation to implementation of Customs and trade facilitation, also including Single Window solutions. Please see link below. UNCTAD's ASYCUDA program has in connection with COVID-19 published a guide on: Adapting the use of ASYCUDA World to the COVID -19 Situation.

### 3 HOW TO REQUEST ASSISTANCE

3.1. For Trade Facilitation, trade portals etc.

Mr. Poul Hansen, Chief, Trade Facilitation Section  
Palais des Nations  
1211 Geneva, Switzerland  
Telephone: +41 22 917 32 58 or +41 79 4444 366  
E-Mail: [poul.hansen@unctad.org](mailto:poul.hansen@unctad.org) or [tfs@unctad.org](mailto:tfs@unctad.org)

3.2. For ASYCUDA

Mr. Fabrice Millet  
Palais des Nations  
1211 Geneva, Switzerland  
Telephone: +41 22 917 20 59  
E-Mail: [fabrice.millet@unctad.org](mailto:fabrice.millet@unctad.org)

### 4 USEFUL INFORMATION (LINKS TO WEBSITE, RESEARCH ARTICLES, ETC.)

4.1. UNCTAD web site on Trade Logistics <https://unctad.org/topic/transport-and-trade-logistics> and Trade Facilitation <https://unctad.org/topic/transport-and-trade-logistics/trade-facilitation>

4.2. UNCTAD ASYCUDA Program <https://unctad.org/topic/transport-and-trade-logistics/customs-automation-ASYCUDA>

4.3. UNCTAD Online-database of Trade Facilitation Committees around the world <https://unctad.org/topic/transport-and-trade-logistics/trade-facilitation/national-trade-facilitation-bodies/map>

4.4. UNCTAD Trade Facilitation E-learning platform (the details of the platform is password protected for participating NTFCs) <https://tfelearning.unctad.org/>

4.5. UNCTAD Trade Information Portal Website <http://tradeportal.eregulations.org/?l=en>

4.6. National Trade Facilitation Committees as coordinators of trade facilitation reform [https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/dtltlb2020d1\\_en.pdf](https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/dtltlb2020d1_en.pdf)

4.7. UNCTAD COVID-19 response <https://unctad.org/programme/covid-19-response>

4.8. UNCTAD ASYCUDA COVID-19 response <https://unctad.org/webflyer/adapting-use-asycuda-world-covid-19-situation>

4.9. UNCTAD Transport and Trade Facilitation Newsletter <https://unctad.org/topic/transport-and-trade-logistics/transport-newsletter>



## **WORLD BANK GROUP (WBG)**

### **1 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF YOUR ORGANIZATION'S ROLE IN SUPPORTING IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TFA**

1.1. The WBG is the one of the largest multilateral providers of financial and technical assistance support for trade facilitation, and the TFA provides the framework for the WBG's trade facilitation support to more than 70 countries. The WBG works closely with the WTO, and other partners (including Annex D) and donors, in supporting developing and least developed countries in TFA implementation. WBG support on trade facilitation is implemented through a mix of technical assistance, investment lending and policy development operations.

1.2. The WBG provides global TFA implementation support through two flagship trust fund programs; (i) the Trade Facilitation Support Program (47+ countries & supported by Australia, Canada, the European Union, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States); and (ii) the Trade Facilitation Programme in Middle Income Countries (5 countries & supported by the UK).

1.3. The WBG assists countries to identify existing constraints and bottlenecks to cross-border trade; design and plan for the implementation of reforms; and increase the predictability, transparency, and harmonization of systems and procedures in line with international standards covering import, export, and transit activities. Focused on supporting the full and effective implementation of the WTO TFA and related trade facilitation reforms, these programs are designed to provide practical and demand-driven assistance.

1.4. Recognizing the important roles of both the public and private sectors in trade facilitation, the World Bank Group implements support by drawing on the unique expertise of both the World Bank and the International Finance Corporation (IFC).

### **2 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF ANY RECENT OR UPCOMING ASSISTANCE/ACTIVITIES (AND METHODS OF DELIVERY)**

2.1. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to highlight the urgent need for trade facilitation reforms to ensure critical goods flow through borders. The WBG is focusing support to countries on implementing paperless and automated systems, streamlining of customs and border agency procedures, harmonization of procedures to limit the impact of the pandemic and implementation of special regimes for the import, export and transit of the COVID-19 Vaccine and ancillary medical products and access to information in a transparent and predictable manner.

2.2. With the spread of COVID-19, the WBG has maintained flexibility and pivoted its activities to virtual modalities to support business continuity in ongoing and planned projects, as well as to provide guidance to countries on best trade facilitation practices to respond to COVID-19.

2.3. The WBG continues excellent cooperation and coordination with TFAF to ensure complementarity of activities. The WBG and TFAF jointly hosted a session with the LDC Group at the Aid for Trade Stock-take focused on the TFA and COVID-19 recovery. As COVID-19 recovery continues, the WBG will look forward to leveraging the critical focus on TFA implementation in coordination with TFAF, TFSP donors and WTO Members.

2.4. Examples of WBG knowledge products providing guidance in addressing key challenges related to the pandemic include:

**Video:**

- Managing Risk and Facilitating Trade During COVID-19  
<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/video/2020/06/22/managing-risk-and-facilitating-trade-during-covid-19>

**Guidance Notes:**

- Managing Risk and Facilitating Trade During COVID-19  
<http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/751981585606039541/pdf/Trade-and-COVID-19-Guidance-Note-Managing-Risk-and-Facilitating-Trade-in-the-COVID-19-Pandemic.pdf>
- Best Practices of Border Processes and Procedures  
<http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/824081587487261551/pdf/Trade-and-COVID-19-Guidance-Note-Trade-Facilitation-Best-Practices-Implemented-in-Response-to-the-COVID-19-Pandemic.pdf>

Examples of country-level technical assistance scaled up during this crisis include:

- Virtual and in-country support to National Trade Facilitation Committees (NTFC).
- Virtual support to enhance border agency cooperation and operations to facilitate import of critical supplies (including food and medical items).
- Virtual and in-country guidance on increasing the availability of trade-related information on websites and through enquiry points.
- Virtual and in-country support to increase the application of risk management.
- Virtual advice to specific countries on business continuity and protection of front-line officers.

### **3 HOW TO REQUEST ASSISTANCE**

3.1. To receive support, countries are expected to have demonstrated a strong commitment to implementing trade facilitation reforms. The trust funds prioritize assistance to countries with limited access to other donor support. Requests for assistance can be made directly to Mr. Bill Gain, Global Lead for Trade Facilitation ([wgain@ifc.org](mailto:wgain@ifc.org)), World Bank Group offices or donor partners.

### **4 USEFUL INFORMATION (LINKS TO WEBSITE, RESEARCH ARTICLES, ETC.)**

- World Bank Group TFSP webpage  
<https://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/trade-facilitation-support-program>
- WBG Trade and COVID-19 Resources Webpage  
<https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/trade/brief/trade-and-covid-19>



## **WORLD CUSTOMS ORGANIZATION (WCO)**

### **1 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF YOUR ORGANIZATION'S ROLE IN SUPPORTING IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TFA**

1.1. The World Customs Organization (WCO) is the only intergovernmental organization dealing with Customs matters. It provides TFA support to its Members through its Mercator Programme launched in June 2014. The Mercator Programme follows a dual-track approach that comprises of overall and tailor-made tracks, allowing the WCO to respond to important cross-cutting, as well as country specific challenges to TFA implementation. The Mercator Programme is a unique initiative that allows for uniform implementation by applying WCO instruments and tools and is supported by the practical experiences of the global Customs community. It has been evolving to address the needs and requirements of the Membership, including those arising from the most recent challenges faced by the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **2 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF ANY RECENT OR UPCOMING ASSISTANCE/ACTIVITIES (AND METHODS OF DELIVERY)**

2.1. In November 2020, the WCO launched the second edition of the Mercator Programme Report, which highlights some common TFA implementation challenges. The Report also outlines how the Programme is assisting Members in providing tailor-made solutions to overcome these challenges. More information can be found at:

<http://www.wcoomd.org/en/media/newsroom/2020/november/the-wco-launches-the-second-edition-of-the-mercator-programme-report.aspx>.

#### **Overall track of the Mercator Programme**

2.2. In the period since October 2020, the WCO working body structure has approved the following tools:

- Compendium of Best Practices in the Area of Transit;
- E-Commerce Package (to support implementation of the WCO Framework of Standards for Cross-Border E-Commerce);
- Compendium of Case Studies on E-Commerce;
- AEO Compendium 2020;
- Guidance for Customs administrations in Small Island Economies;
- Updated Compendium on Coordinated Border Management;
- Joint WCO-ICAO Guiding Principles on Pre-loading Advance Cargo Information;
- Joint WCO-ICAO Guidelines on Alignment of Customs AEO and Aviation Regulated Agent/Known Consignor (RA/KC) Programmes;
- Practical Guidance on Free Zones; and
- WCO Data Model version 3.10.0.

2.3. A number of tools and guidance materials are under development and have been submitted for endorsement or further enhancement by the WCO working body structure during autumn 2020 and spring 2021:

- WCO Guidelines on Disaster Management and Supply Chain Continuity;
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition of the Compendium of Case Studies on E-Commerce;
- Secretariat note on expanding the concept of Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) to cross-border e-commerce;
- Secretariat note on effective and efficient revenue collection in cross-border e-commerce;
- Comprehensive Capacity Building Framework for Data Analytics in Customs;
- Authorized Economic Operators (AEO) Implementation and Validation Guidance;
- 2021 SAFE Framework of Standards;
- Online AEO Compendium;

- Regional Customs union AEO programmes and plurilateral MRAs;
- Risk Management Maturity Model;
- Risk Management Diagnostic Tool;
- Review of the Risk Management Compendium (Volume 1); and
- Railway Guidance.

2.4. Furthermore, the comprehensive review of the Revised Kyoto Convention (RKC) continued through the RKC Management Committee (RKC/MC) under a Four-Step Framework, whereas the RKC/MC took this role over from the Working Group on the Comprehensive review of the RKC after October 2020.

2.5. During the current financial year, national and regional workshops in the areas of TFA, e-commerce, performance measurement, risk management, data analytics, advance rulings, COVID-19, disruptive technologies, free zones, and many other areas have been held and are continuing to be organized.

### **Tailor-made track of the Mercator Programme**

2.6. During the pandemic, the WCO Secretariat has remained agile and focused on exploring alternative Member support arrangements that have included using various on-line tools and remote delivery activities.

2.7. Under the tailor-made track of the Mercator Programme, the WCO adopted a proactive approach and carried out over 100 Mercator Programme online technical assistance and capacity building missions.

2.8. In consultation with WCO regional coordinators, a comprehensive mapping exercise of all 50 multiyear (MY) Mercator beneficiary countries has been carried out to determine future (on-line) priority WCO activities that will assist administrations implement the TFA in a coordinated and harmonized manner and enhance collaboration with stakeholders. An analysis of the over 500 recommendations stemming from the diagnostic missions carried out in these Members revealed a continuing high requirement for support in the areas of publication and transparency, customs procedures, risk management and cooperation and collaboration with other government and private sector stakeholders.

2.9. Comprehensive review/update of the TFA (Mercator) Maturity Model that provides an assessment of implementation maturity used to measure overall implementation progress and improve activities, has been initiated. The WCO is working closely with its Members in implementing this tool for monitoring implementation at national level. Work has also been initiated on the review and update of the Mercator Programme Advisor (MPA) Handbook.

### **COVID-19 related work**

2.10. Work related to the COVID-19 pandemic remained a priority in the period since October 2020. The WCO continued its work on developing the Guidelines on Disaster Management and Supply Chain Continuity, under the COVID-19 project funded by the Government of Japan. Since October 2020, the WCO organized four regional workshops on disaster management and supply chain continuity.

**2.11.** Bearing in mind the challenges associated with the handling of time- and temperature-sensitive vaccines in large quantities, during its 137<sup>th</sup> Session in December 2020, the WCO Council unanimously adopted a Resolution on the Role of Customs in facilitating the cross-border movement of situationally critical medicines and vaccines <http://www.wcoomd.org/-/media/wco/public/global/pdf/about-us/legal-instruments/resolutions/resolution-facilitating-cross-border-movement-of-situationally-critical-medicines-and-vaccines.pdf?la=en> (hereafter referred to as the Resolution). The Resolution contains recommended measures to be implemented by Member Customs administrations and by the Secretariat. The Resolution is available on the WCO web-site in English, French, Arabic, Chinese, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish languages. The WCO Secretariat developed a COVID-19 Action Plan to support implementation of the Resolution and is reporting on its implementation in the relevant WCO working bodies.

2.12. Following the adoption of the Resolution, the Secretariat created a new section on the WCO web-site to share information related to the cross-border movement of the COVID-19 vaccines <http://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/facilitation/activities-and-programmes/natural-disaster/covid19-vaccines-distribution.aspx>. The web page, among others, includes guidance materials issued by partner organizations such as IATA and the WTO, to which the Secretariat had contributed with input in the drafting process as well as links to information, guidance and policy papers issued by the WHO, the GEA and the FIATA. Members' good practices are also being published on this WCO web-section as they come in, with currently 26 Members' practices published. In order to support the implementation of the Resolution by Members, the Secretariat developed a Secretariat Note on the Role of Customs in facilitating and securing the cross-border movement of situationally critical medicines and vaccines [http://www.wcoomd.org/-/media/wco/public/global/pdf/topics/facilitation/activities-and-programmes/natural-disaster/covid\\_19\\_vaccine/secretariat-note-vaccines\\_en.pdf?la=en](http://www.wcoomd.org/-/media/wco/public/global/pdf/topics/facilitation/activities-and-programmes/natural-disaster/covid_19_vaccine/secretariat-note-vaccines_en.pdf?la=en). The objective of the Secretariat Note is to provide guidance with regard to the implementation by Members of the first twelve measures outlined in the Resolution, as well as provide information on WCO instruments and tools that can support the implementation of the Resolution. The Secretariat Note also contains Members' good practices.

2.13. In line with measure 15 of the Resolution, on 29 January 2021 the WCO issued HS Classification reference for vaccines and the associated supplies and equipment <http://www.wcoomd.org/-/media/wco/public/global/pdf/topics/facilitation/activities-and-programmes/natural-disaster/covid-19-list-for-vaccines/hs-classification-reference-vaccines-english.pdf?la=en> that was developed in cooperation with the WHO. The document aims to support Member Customs administrations and supply chain stakeholders in classifying vaccines and related supplies and equipment at the international level, i.e. 6 digits as per the HS. The related supplies and equipment include vials, syringes, needles, dry ice, freezers, etc.

2.14. On 2 February, the Secretaries General of ICAO and the WCO signed an ICAO/WCO Joint Statement on the global transportation and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines and associated medical supplies [http://www.wcoomd.org/-/media/wco/public/global/pdf/topics/facilitation/activities-and-programmes/natural-disaster/covid\\_19\\_vaccine/t-on-the-global-transportation-and-distribution-of-covid\\_19-vaccines-and-associated-medical-supplies\\_en.pdf?la=en](http://www.wcoomd.org/-/media/wco/public/global/pdf/topics/facilitation/activities-and-programmes/natural-disaster/covid_19_vaccine/t-on-the-global-transportation-and-distribution-of-covid_19-vaccines-and-associated-medical-supplies_en.pdf?la=en). The Joint Statement calls for open collaboration between the aviation and Customs communities, as well as those responsible for other transport modes and other relevant stakeholders, in order to ensure safe, secure and efficient transport of vaccines and associated equipment across borders.

2.15. The WCO has also developed a document on Risk Management during a pandemic and organized five series of webinars to provide customs with knowledge of the essential characteristics and specifications of the COVID-19 vaccines of different manufacturers. This will enable Customs to be better equipped to identify and limit the traffic of counterfeit COVID-19 vaccines. The WCO will soon launch Operation STOP II, which will benefit from the participation of 141 Members and will target counterfeit, substandard and/or illicit medicines, medical supplies/equipment and vaccines related to COVID-19 and will give special attention to small consignments and electronic commerce.

### Upcoming events

2.16. The WCO is in the process of organizing the following events:

- 5th WCO Global AEO Conference, 25-27 May 2021
- WCO Second Global Conference on Cross-Border E-Commerce, 28-29 June 2021
- 2021 WCO TECH-CON, November 2021
- 16<sup>th</sup> Annual PICARD Conference, 9-10 December 2021

## 3 HOW TO REQUEST ASSISTANCE

3.1. The WCO Capacity Building delivery is based on the multi-year project planning as well as on the annual Capacity Building needs assessment carried out by the Secretariat together with Member Customs administrations and supported by the Regional Offices for Capacity Building (ROCBs).

3.2. However, in addition to this needs assessment process, developing countries and LDCs may submit their requests for assistance to the WCO Capacity Building Directorate ([capacity.building@wcoomd.org](mailto:capacity.building@wcoomd.org)) at any time.

3.3. Interested development partners and donor institutions may contact the WCO Office of External Relations ([external.relations@wcoomd.org](mailto:external.relations@wcoomd.org)) with regard to further cooperation, including financial support for technical assistance and capacity building projects.

#### **4 USEFUL INFORMATION (LINKS TO WEBSITE, RESEARCH ARTICLES, ETC.)**

WCO web site: [www.wcoomd.org](http://www.wcoomd.org)

Mercator Programme:

<http://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/capacity-building/activities-and-programmes/mercator-programme.aspx>

WCO Implementing the TFA:

<http://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/wco-implementing-the-wto-atf.aspx>

COVID-19 web page:

<http://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/facilitation/activities-and-programmes/natural-disaster/coronavirus.aspx>

COVID-19 vaccines distribution

<http://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/facilitation/activities-and-programmes/natural-disaster/covid19-vaccines-distribution.aspx>

What Customs can do to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic:

[http://www.wcoomd.org/-/media/wco/public/global/pdf/topics/facilitation/activities-and-programmes/natural-disaster/covid\\_19/covid\\_19-categorization-of-member-input\\_may-29-2020\\_edition-4\\_en.pdf?la=en](http://www.wcoomd.org/-/media/wco/public/global/pdf/topics/facilitation/activities-and-programmes/natural-disaster/covid_19/covid_19-categorization-of-member-input_may-29-2020_edition-4_en.pdf?la=en)

---