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Caribbean Regional Private Sector Dialogue on Trade Facilitation and the Covid-19 Pandemic

NTFCs - What works and what does not work?

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28 October 2020

What does the private sector want from trade facilitation?

Reform

- Predictability
- Reduced cost
- Facilitated connectivity
- Have a say
- Results

WTO TFA Art. 23.2

*Each Member **shall** establish and/or maintain a national committee on trade facilitation or designate an existing mechanism to facilitate both **domestic coordination and implementation of provisions** of this Agreement.*

WTO TFA Art. 2

*Art.2.1. Each Member **shall, to the extent practicable and in a manner consistent with its domestic law and legal system**, provide **opportunities and an appropriate time period to traders and other interested parties to comment** on the proposed introduction or amendment of laws and regulations of general application*

*Art. 2.2. Each Member **shall,** as appropriate, provide for **regular consultations** between its border agencies and **traders** or other stakeholders located within its territory..*

NTFC, structure and organization

- Political leadership and champion
- Private sector involvement
- Joint chair
- Structure and committee alignment
- Sustainable secretariat
- Private sector contribution and commitment, all levels
- Result oriented, work plans etc.
- Consultation, validation

Private sector in NTFC, how to engage?

- Speak a with unified voice, be organized
- Cover all areas of the private sector, represent sub-sectors views
- Focus on policy and process issues, not individual cases

- Be ambitious, but realistic
- Be constructive and engaged, provide solutions, don’t only complain
- Select representatives that are respected, assertive, collaborative and knowledgeable
- Provide facts and data, not hearsay
- Adopt a Public-Private-Partnership approach, support the NTFC Secretariat,
- Sustain participation and support
- Make use of resources and good practices from the international business sector

Challenges for NTFCs during the COVID-19 crisis

- **Lack of defined role and involvement of the NTFCs in national COVID Emergency Task Forces:** NTFC and private sector not involved
- **Emergency issues dealt by the political level**: NTFCs considered technical
- **Absence of regulatory guidelines about teleworking, online meetings and messaging**: COVID-19 has established new channels of communication
- **Lack of connectivity**
- **Lack of coordination**
- **Absence of a national crisis database of focal points** : Trade facilitation focal points and border agencies

NTFCs are part of the recovery and preparing for future crisis

- **Increased political commitment in trade facilitation:** allocate resources ensuring trade facilitation is coordinated through NTFCs
- **Increased visibility of the NTFCs**: More visibility for NTFCs is required.
- **NTFCs working as One**:
  - Through technology: simple IT management tools can help NTFCs in coordinating implementation and monitoring progress of reforms.
  - Through Committee reform and alignment
  - **Linkage between the NTFCs and the RECs** for a regional coordinated policy response

Regional action to help vulnerable countries while continuing to protect global public health.

- Governments to refrain from any unjustified restraints on traffic
  - Goods in transit (LLDC)
  - Ports operations (SIDS)
- LLDCs and transit partners as well as SIDS' and transshipment ports to make use of trade facilitation standards and digital technologies to limit physical checks and contact at borders to protect health of workers
- View the crisis as an opportunity to reorient international freight transport operations on a sustainable path.
- LLDCs, SIDS and partners to strengthen global and regional cooperation on transport connectivity and coordination

UNCTAD PROPOSED Action Plan in response to COVID-19

1. Ensure uninterrupted shipping
2. Maintain ports open
3. Protect international trade of critical goods and speed up customs clearance and trade facilitation
4. Facilitate cross-border transport
5. Ensure the right of transit
6. Safeguard transparency and up-to-date information
7. Go paperless
8. Address legal implications for commercial parties
9. Protect shippers and transport service providers alike
10. Ensure coordination

https://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/presspb2020d3_en.pdf

HOW COUNTRIES CAN LEVERAGE TRADE FACILITATION TO DEFEAT THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

https://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/dtlinf2020d2_en.pdf

UNCTAD EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME
for National Trade Facilitation Committees

Intensive Courses

- Blended – online and webinars
- Members and the Secretariat
- Certification

http://unctad.org/tfcommittees

Trade portal

- 35 Electronic Portals
- 2,993 processes documented
- 80% reduction in procedures and documentation

http://tradeportal.eregulations.org

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Advisory Services

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Rapid Scan of National Emergency Provisions in Trade Facilitation

Undergo a desk based rapid scan of the framework of national emergency regulations

- Develop strategy for introducing emergency measures related to trade and transport
- Information to be featured on the country's respective trade portals to enhance transparency

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Trade Facilitation Advice for Emergency Situations and Recovery Plans

Provide clear and tailor-made guidelines in facing future challenges on trade facilitation due to health, economic or environmental crisis

- Include best practices implemented for countries and/or regions in similar situations
- Formulate list of steps to enhance National Trade Facilitation Committees' response during crisis

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Legal Package

Deliver assistance in building legislative and regulatory framework towards crisis and recovery response as well as implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement and other trade facilitation tools

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Action Plan

Based on the previous services, UNCTAD can support National and Regional Trade Facilitation Committees to prepare Action plans and an action checklist for future emergencies

GUIDELINES FOR CUSTOMS ADMINISTRATIONS

- Promote further paperless processing
- Review ASYCUDA Risk Criteria
- Review organizational arrangements
- Tax Policy Changes
- ICT infrastructure adjustments
- Perform Trade Data Analysis

ASYCUDA COVID-19 Measures

- **Guidelines for Customs Administrations** to adapt the ASYCUDA system to reduce the impact of COVID-19 (further paperless procedures, review of risk management and organizational arrangements, ICT infrastructure adjustments, implementation of tax policy changes…)

- **Survey** on the tailoring of ASYCUDA systems against COVID-19 Key findings:
  - ✓ 39% user-countries do not require submission of hard copies of documentation
  - ✓ 72% use ASYCUDAWorld reports to monitor impact of crisis on trade
  - ✓ 48% need assistance to develop Business continuity plan

- Remote local, regional and international assistance from ASYCUDA experts to user-countries due to travel restrictions

UN development account project on Transport and Logistics in times of COVID

UNCTAD and the five UN Regional Commissions COVID-19 response in trade and transport :

1. Assist developing countries to implement existing UN solutions to build transport, trade and logistics resilience in the wake of COVID-19

2. Equip governments in developing countries to adapt to new post-COVID-19, while considering their specific and local conditions.

3. Based around three clusters designed to match existing and emerging standards and best practices in transport and trade facilitation with new realities and demands arising from COVID-19:.

   – **Cluster 1** Contactless solutions and good practices. Reducing physical contact among people in cross-border supply chains by facilitating the flow of goods without spreading the virus.

   – **Cluster 2 Seamless connectivity.** Eliminating obstacles to cross-border trade and transport operations arising from the COVID-19 crisis.

   – **Cluster 3 Collaborative solutions.** Strengthening regional and sectoral cooperation to facilitate joint actions and solutions in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The three clusters build on the UN's proven conventions, standards, tools and instruments, such as UNCTAD's Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA), the eTIR International System (TIR Convention) carnet and trade data exchange standards of the UN Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT), as well as the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade.

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Thank you for your attention

https://unctad.org/en/Pages/DTL/TTL/Trade-Facilitation.asp

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