
Negotiating Group on Trade Facilitation

**TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND CAPACITY BUILDING
ON TRADE FACILITATION**

Note by the Secretariat

This document has been prepared under the Secretariat's own responsibility and without prejudice to the positions of Members and to their rights and obligations under the WTO

1. This Note updates information provided by the Secretariat in TN/TF/W/5. It describes WTO technical assistance and capacity building activities on trade facilitation that are being carried out in 2005 in collaboration with the IMF, OECD, UNCTAD, WCO and World Bank. At this stage, the activities are aimed at assisting developing countries and LDCs to assess their trade facilitation needs and priorities and at enabling them to participate fully in the negotiations (Paragraphs 4 and 5 of the negotiating mandate).

2. The Note responds also to the request by the Chairman, following the informal meeting of the Negotiating Group that took place on 14 June, that the Secretariat provide background material for the Group's further discussions on enhancing technical assistance and support for capacity building on trade facilitation. It addresses two issues that were raised at that meeting: (i) how to assist Members to identify their trade facilitation needs and priorities, on an individual, case-by-case basis, so as to prepare the ground for matching technical assistance and capacity building support with future disciplines that emerge from the negotiations; and (ii) how an inventory might be developed for use in support of the negotiations covering the following three areas: current technical assistance and capacity-building support that is being provided on a country-by-country basis in the area of trade facilitation; unmet needs and priorities of developing countries and LDCs for assistance and support to implement WTO disciplines that emerge from the results of the negotiations; sources of expert assistance and support from developed-and developing-country Members and from regional and throughout multilateral organizations that can be made available to help implement the results of the negotiations.

I. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ACTIVITIES IN 2005

3. The Secretariat is implementing the programme of activities on trade facilitation that was set out in the Technical Assistance and Training Plan 2005 (WT/COMTD/W/133/Rev.2). Its current status is shown in Annex I. It consists of:

- Eight three-day regional workshops, in cooperation with UNCTAD, the WCO, and the World Bank, as well as other regional inter-governmental organizations. For each Member, two capital-based officials – one from the trade ministry and one from customs – are invited by the WTO to participate in a workshop. Since June, financing from UNCTAD has enabled a number of Geneva-based delegates from the region concerned, as well as representatives from

the region's private sectors, to participate in certain of the workshops. Since June also, some of the workshops are being extended for two days to allow a practical exercise to be conducted with participants based on the World Bank's Support Guide (TN/TF/W/51). This exercise aims to assist participants, once they return to capitals, to work in a coordinated way with other relevant ministries and agencies as well as the private sector to assess proposals tabled at Negotiating Group meetings and provide "real time" feedback to their Geneva-based negotiators.

- Thirteen two-day national workshops for individual developing countries and LDCs. These are modelled on the regional workshops, and are conducted in response to written requests from Members and subject to the availability of Secretariat resources.
- Sessions dedicated to trade facilitation in the nine WTO Trade Policy Courses and two "Geneva Week" courses.
- Resources permitting, it is the Secretariat's intention to supplement the activities contained in the 2005 Plan with a technical assistance workshop in Geneva in the autumn for Geneva-based delegates, based on the same programme that is used at the regional seminars that are conducted for capital-based officials.

4. This year, the World Bank has conducted three five-day pilot workshops based on its Support Guide (TN/TF/W/51) at the national level in support of the WTO negotiations, in Jamaica, Uganda and Sri Lanka. These are aimed at assisting capital-based officials from all relevant ministries and agencies as well as the private sector to undertake a coordinated self-assessment and analysis of their country's trade facilitation situation, needs and priorities in the context of the WTO negotiations. As a result of the workshops, Trade Facilitation Negotiations Support Groups have been established in Kingston, Kampala and Colombo. They are meeting as required to assess proposals that are tabled in Negotiating Group meetings, and providing their Geneva-based negotiators with technical support and advice related to the content of the negotiating agenda. Further workshops will be conducted by the World Bank later this year. These activities have been considered particularly valuable by the governments of the countries concerned and by the WTO Secretariat and World Bank staff. They produce an intensive, well-focused training exercise involving all stakeholders at the national level, that is directly related to enhancing the capacity of a developing-country or LDC Member government to participate effectively in the negotiations in Geneva. The World Bank is planning to conduct a second-round activity with at least one of the three countries involved originally in the pilot projects, to reinforce the exercise and to assist officials to address concerns related to the cost and technical assistance implications of proposed trade facilitation measures (Paragraph 4 of the Group's mandate).

5. This type of country-by-country activity is very resource-intensive, and none of the intergovernmental agencies involved has the means to offer to conduct the exercise for every developing country or LDC that might express an interest in participating. Subject to resources being made available, it would be possible to extend the process to additional countries. In the meantime, however, the success of the pilot projects led the WTO, as noted above, to decide to extend the Secretariat's regional workshops by two-days so as to incorporate a similar exercise. The first extended workshop of this kind was conducted for Central American countries in June.

II. COORDINATION WITH OTHER RELEVANT INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS (PARAGRAPH 8 OF THE GROUP'S MANDATE)

6. In addition to the coordination that takes place among intergovernmental organizations in the implementation of the WTO's programme of technical assistance, steps being taken to enhance coordination were described in TN/TF/W/5.

7. One of the vehicles used to enhance coordination is the Global Partnership for Transportation and Trade (GFP), which groups together interested parties from international organizations, government agencies, and the private sector who want to cooperate to achieve significant improvements in trade and transport facilitation at the multilateral level. The GFP website is a valuable source of background materials and information on trade facilitation (<http://www.gfptt.org>). The next biannual GFP meeting will be hosted by UNCTAD in Geneva on 20 September 2005.

III. ASSESSING NEEDS AND PRIORITIES

8. In TN/TF/W/5, the Secretariat described a variety of existing diagnostic tools and other materials that can help Members to identify and assess their needs and priorities in the area of trade facilitation. These include the WCO's Time Release Study and its Customs Capacity Building Diagnostic Framework, from which the WCO has extracted a shortened version that is designed to be used as a self-assessment tool on customs by WTO Members (TN/TF/W/16).

9. These diagnostic tools were generally designed for purposes largely unrelated to the WTO negotiations. They aim to assist governments to conduct a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of their needs and priorities for technical assistance and capacity building support for trade facilitation defined broadly, covering not only customs but also trade logistics and transportation.

10. Now that the compilation of proposals tabled in the Negotiating Group has been prepared (TN/TF/W/43), it would be possible to develop a new self-assessment questionnaire for use by Members to identify their needs and priorities that is shorter, simpler and targeted directly at the negotiating proposals, it being understood that this is without prejudice to whatever decisions may eventually be taken by Members on the results of the negotiations. An extract from an example of a questionnaire drawn up in this way is provided in Annex II. Although it is not yet known what future disciplines will emerge from the negotiations, the questionnaire could be used in a prospective way to prepare the ground for eventually matching technical assistance and capacity building support for implementation of those disciplines. The Secretariat, as well as other intergovernmental agencies with which it collaborates on trade facilitation, intends to use this questionnaire in its own technical assistance activities from now on. Copies can be provided to interested delegations on request. If the questionnaire results were to be returned by individual Members to the Secretariat, they could be used to help to identify important areas of trade facilitation where a large number of developing countries may have common needs and priorities for assistance and support.

IV. INVENTORY OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND CAPACITY BUILDING SUPPORT AND OF NEEDS AND PRIORITIES

11. The best focal point for developing and maintaining an inventory of technical assistance and capacity-building support on trade facilitation, and of individual needs and priorities in this area, is the recipient developing country or LDC. With regard to two of the objectives of an inventory that were mentioned in the Group's last meeting – what is being done already, and what unmet needs and priorities exist – the questionnaire illustrated in Annex II, used in conjunction with the kind of coordinated exercise involving all relevant government authorities and the private sector that is being carried out on a pilot basis by the World Bank (see paragraph 4) and that now figures regularly in the Secretariat's regional workshops, can prove a useful starting point. Members that wish to provide information on the results of such an exercise could do so via the Negotiating Group, which could then collate the results if it wanted to develop a collective inventory.

12. Developing and maintaining a comprehensive and up-to-date inventory of technical assistance and capacity building activities on a multi-country basis from the providers' standpoint is viewed by organizations with expertise in that area as a particularly challenging task. Even within one organization with a large number and wide range of trade facilitation-related activities – such as the

World Bank – it is felt that it would be highly resource-intensive to try to collate fully information on past, current and planned activities that relate specifically to the issues under negotiation in the WTO. The difficulties are multiplied when an attempt is made to put together information on activities from several multilateral, regional and bilateral sources. As noted in TN/TF/W/5, one inventory of this kind that has been developed is the DDA trade capacity building database that the WTO Secretariat maintains in collaboration with the OECD, which can be accessed by WTO Members on <http://tcbdb.wto.org>. Keeping it up-to-date and genuinely comprehensive can be very resource-intensive and, it would appear, can rarely be achieved in a fully satisfactory manner. Nonetheless, Members are encouraged to make use of this facility.

13. A contribution to meeting the objectives sought by Members in this area could be the creation on the WTO Website of a section dedicated to Technical Assistance and Capacity-Building in the context of the Trade Facilitation negotiations. An example is provided in Annex III. With regard to the objectives of constructing an inventory of what technical assistance and capacity building support is being provided already, and of sources of expert assistance and support that can be made available to help implement the results of the negotiations, intergovernmental organisations and WTO Members (developed and developing) could be encouraged to provide information on activities they are carrying out now, and would be willing to carry out in the future, multilaterally, regionally and bilaterally. The information could be loaded in directly or provided through hyperlinks to other websites, including, for example, the WTO/OECD DDA website and the GFP website mentioned above. With regard to the objective of collating unmet needs and priorities, recipient countries could be encouraged to use the website to provide relevant information, and to seek suitable matches with providers of technical assistance and capacity building support.

ANNEX 1

Technical Assistance and Capacity-Building Activities on Trade Facilitation
provided for in paragraphs 6, 7 and 8 of Annex D of the "July Package"

2005 - 2006

Activity	Supplementary Activity	Cooperation with	Venue
Regional Workshop for Arab and Middle East Countries		WCO, UNCTAD, ESCWA, World Bank	United Arab Emirates (Abu Dhabi) 13-15 March
Regional Workshop on Trade Facilitation for Asia and Pacific Countries		WCO, UNCTAD, World Bank, APEC Secretariat, ASEAN Secretariat,	China (Hangzhou) 5-7 April
National Seminar			Mauritius (Port Louis) 17-19 May
Regional Workshop for Caribbean Countries		WCO, UNCTAD, World Bank	Antigua (St. Johns) 21-23 June
Regional Seminar for Central American and Caribbean Countries	Workshop on World Bank Trade Facilitation Pilot Support Project	WCO, UNCTAD, World Bank, SIECA	Guatemala (Guatemala City) 27 June – 1 July
Regional Workshop for Central and Eastern European and Central Asian Countries		WCO	Bulgaria (Sofia) 12-14 July
National Seminar			Jordan (Amman) 2-4 August
Regional Seminar for Latin American Countries	Workshop on World Bank Trade Facilitation Pilot Support Project	WCO, UNCTAD, World Bank, IADB-INTAL	Argentina (Buenos Aires) 8-12 August
National Seminar			Ghana (Accra) 25-26 August
National Seminar			Myanmar (Rangoon) 5-6 September
Regional Workshop for Francophone Africa	Workshop on World Bank Trade Facilitation Pilot Support Project	WCO, UNCTAD, World Bank, AfDB	Tunisia (Tunis) 12-16 September
Regional Workshop for Anglophone Africa	Workshop on World Bank Trade Facilitation Pilot Support Project	WCO, UNCTAD, World Bank, AfDB	Namibia (Windhoek) 10-14 October
National Seminar			Zambia (Lusaka) October [date to be confirmed]

National Seminars (2005) for which dates are to be confirmed by the Secretariat

Bolivia
Cuba
Egypt
Honduras
Kenya
Malawi
Mozambique
Paraguay

National Seminars (2006) for which dates are to be confirmed by the Secretariat

Djibouti (COMESA)
Papua New Guinea
Indonesia

ANNEX 2

Extract from Questionnaire

I. INTRODUCTION

1. This questionnaire has been prepared by the Secretariat for use by Members in order to assist them individually to assess their Trade Facilitation needs and priorities on a case-by-case basis. It has been designed to allow each Member to develop an inventory of the proposed facilitation measures that have been implemented already in its territory, to identify gaps where further facilitation measures could be taken, and to identify areas where targeted technical assistance and/or capacity building support is needed and could be requested. If Members wish, the Secretariat could eventually compile the results of completed questionnaires, without attribution to the Member concerned, so as to provide the Negotiating Group as a whole with an overall picture of the needs and priorities in this area.

2. The questionnaire has been drawn up on the basis of the Secretariat's compilation of suggested clarifications and improvements of the relevant GATT Articles that have been proposed by Members in the Negotiating Group (TN/TF/W/43/Rev.1). As such, it is intended to complement more detailed diagnostic tools for assessing needs and priorities that are available from other sources – such as UNCTAD, the World Bank and the World Customs Organization.¹ These tools should be consulted by Members who wish to carry out a more comprehensive analysis of their needs and priorities for assistance on trade facilitation issues more generally.

3. The questionnaire takes up the proposals as compiled in document TN/TF/W/43/Rev.1. Questions aim at identifying existing rates of implementation and related technical assistance and capacity building needs in a preliminary fashion and in approximate terms. The description of the measures generally follows the headings of the compilation paper, which should therefore be consulted when seeking additional information on the precise coverage of a given question.² Specific proposals with no room for corresponding action at the national level³ were excluded as not susceptible to the format of the questionnaire. Some deviations from the compilation's headings were also made where they seemed too short to make the questions fully comprehensible. Here, the questionnaire seeks to provide more clarity by adding further elements of the proposed measures.

4. The Secretariat has collaborated with UNCTAD, the World Bank and the World Customs Organization in preparing the questionnaire. All of the agencies are available on request to assist Members to complete the questionnaire and to provide advice on any requests Members may have for follow-up technical assistance and capacity building.

¹ These were described in TN/TF/W/5, paragraphs 14-25.

² When seeking the precise content of "Maintenance of Integrity Among Officials", for instance, the corresponding section in document TN/TF/W/43/Rev.1 should be consulted, clarifying that this measure is proposed to cover (i) the development of codes of conduct for staff of border agencies and (ii) the appointment of officials in charge of providing training to relevant officials.

³ Such as the proposal to "*Clarify and improve the terminology [of Article V] to reduce perceived uncertainty and avoid loopholes, for example with regard to the definition of goods (including baggage)*".

II. QUESTIONNAIRE/INVENTORY

1. Publication of Trade Regulations

- Has such a measure already been implemented in your country/customs territory?

Yes, fully	Yes, partially (specify)	No

- If that is not (or merely partially) the case, would you require technical assistance/capacity building-support for its implementation?

Yes	No

- If that is the case, what would you require for its implementation in terms of technical assistance and capacity building?.....
.....

2. Publication of Penalty Provisions

- Has such a measure already been implemented in your country/customs territory?

Yes, fully	Yes, partially (specify)	No

- If that is not (or merely partially) the case, would you require technical assistance capacity/building-support for its implementation?

Yes	No

- If that is the case what would you require for its implementation in terms of technical assistance and capacity building?
.....

3. Internet Publication of (i) Trade Regulations and (ii) of Requirements for Importing Goods

- Has such a measure already been implemented in your country/customs territory?

Yes, fully	Yes, partially (specify)	No

- If that is not (or merely partially) the case, would you require technical assistance capacity/building-support for its implementation?

Yes	No

- If that is the case what would you require for its implementation in terms of technical assistance and capacity building?
.....

ANNEX 3

Draft WTO Website on Technical Assistance and Capacity Building in the Context of the Negotiations

Technical assistance and capacity building in the context of the negotiations

Technical assistance and support for capacity building are essential elements of the WTO negotiations on Trade Facilitation and an integral part of Members' work in this area. Assistance is provided by various stakeholders, including Member states, the WTO Secretariat and other intergovernmental organizations.

The following section offers a forum for those partners to provide information about their respective activities and for recipients to inform themselves about the work carried out in this field and to provide information about their trade facilitation needs and priorities. It was set up in response to Members' request for such information and complements the information on Trade Facilitation-related technical cooperation activities contained in the [WTO/OECD database](#) and listed on the website of the [Global Facilitation Partnership for Transportation and Trade](#). The site will be updated and expanded upon the receipt of additional information by the aid providers.

> Consult the [Guide to downloading files](#)

N.B. You should download these documents rather than calling them into view through the browser since the formatting may change (eg. paragraph numbering) when viewed through the browser.

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- **European Communities**
 - Document [TN/TF/W/37](#): Negotiating Group on Trade Facilitation – Communication from the European Communities – Technical Assistance and Support for Capacity Building
 - Contact Person

- **Japan**
 - Document [TN/TF/W/52](#): Negotiating Group on Trade Facilitation – Communication from Japan – Trade facilitation: Technical Assistance activities of Japan
 - Contact Person

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<http://www.gfptt.org>