



SPECA/PWG-Trade/2020/EN/2

Report on progress of the implementation of the Programme of Work of the SPECA WG on Trade

(Report of the Chairperson)

In line with the overall objectives of SPECA to support its participating countries in developing subregional economic cooperation, integrating their economies into the world economy, and attaining the Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the SPECA Working Group on Trade fosters subregional cooperation to promote national and regional development of sustainable trade in the SPECA participating countries. To achieve this through subregional cooperation, the Working Group: (i) Provides a platform for supporting progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals through subregional cooperation in trade and trade facilitation with a focus on SDGs directly related to trade development, notably SDG 17 on partnerships, taking into account interlinkages between the SDGs; (ii) Assists in improving the awareness of SPECA countries on the trade-related SDGs; helps provide information and share best practice experiences, taking into account interlinkages between the SDGs; (iii) Promotes policy dialogue to support: trade policy cooperation among the SPECA countries and their trade negotiators; trade facilitation; aligning positions on sustainable trade, dealing with non-tariff measures, and investment policies; and (iv) Provides analysis and capacity-building in the areas of trade facilitation, sustainable trade development, regulatory harmonization, agricultural quality standards, elimination of non-tariff barriers to trade, investment, and other areas, including identification of funding modalities for SPECA activities.

The thematic orientation of the activities of the Working Group on Trade includes: (i) sustainable trade development among the countries in the region and with the main trading partners; (ii) trade facilitation and promotion of trade facilitation norms, standards and best practice recommendations; (iii) public-private cooperation for trade facilitation; (iv) regulatory harmonization, market surveillance and risk management; (v) agricultural commercial quality standards; (vi) investment and trade development; and (vii) other areas of competence of UNECE and ESCAP related to the development of trade, regional markets and harmonization of standards in these areas. The deliverables of the WG on Trade focus on four areas: (i) trade policy cooperation, including on the WTO negotiations; (ii) implementation of the SPECA Trade Facilitation Strategy; (iii) implementation of the SPECA Principles for Sustainable Trade; and (iv) non-tariff measures and barriers to trade.

At its fourteenth session (Ashgabat, 19 November 2019), the SPECA WG on Trade finalized the SPECA Trade Facilitation Strategy, the SPECA Principles of Sustainable Trade and a proposal for a regional study on non-tariff barriers to trade. All these documents were adopted by the fourteenth SPECA Governing Council session on 21 November 2019 in Ashgabat. These strategic documents proved very useful in the work on the immediate response to the

challenges of the COVID-19 infection to transport and trade in the subregion. The Working Group continues to work on:

1. The Roadmap for implementation of the SPECA Strategy on Trade Facilitation, inviting other development partners to join the effort;
2. Raising funds and organizing activities for the implementation of the Strategy;
3. The promotion of the Principles for Sustainable Trade (assessment of the readiness of the countries to implement them);
4. Raising funds and draft studies on non-tariff measures and barriers;
5. Strengthening the network of WTO negotiators from the SPECA countries;
6. Promoting the implementation of the conclusions and recommendations of the SPECA Economic Forum on *Connectivity: Sustainable Trade and Transport Facilitation in the SPECA Region*, 20-21 November 2019; and
7. Cooperation with other organizations working on trade facilitation: OSCE, CAREC, GIZ, EAEU, etc.

Name of Activity	Time & Venue	SPECA participating countries	Major results
Implementation of deliverables in the strategic areas for the WG on Trade (Ashgabat Initiative; TF Strategy; Principles for Sustainable Development; non-tariff measures/barriers; trade policy cooperation)			
Subregional workshop on non-tariff measures in Azerbaijan and North and Central Asia	9 -11 December 2019 Baku	Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan	Enhance capacity of Azerbaijan, North and Central Asian countries to monitor and evaluate the impact of their own and their trade partner's NTMs.
National workshop on the readiness of Uzbekistan to implement the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement	16-19 March 2020 Tashkent Online	Uzbekistan	Capacity of the trade negotiation team of Uzbekistan to assess the level of readiness for the country and plan actions for its improvement enhanced significantly. Plans to carry out a small project on the assessment agreed (held back by the pandemic).
Webinar on Implementation of Paperless Trade in the Context of Customs Administration (virtual)	20 October 2020 Online	Uzbekistan	The webinar was organized to help officials of the State Customs Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan better understand implementation issues in paperless trade. The webinar discussed

			implication of the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific and share lessons and practices of the Korea Customs Service in creating paperless trade and electronic customs environment.
Accession/Ratification Accelerator Programme for the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific	To begin in November 2020 (request received from the government)	Tajikistan	Technical assistance and advisory services offered to developing member States, including translation of treaty text, provision of experts, development of notes/briefs and support of organization of interagency consultations.
(Implementation of the TF Strategy) Study on the current state of play and possibilities for harmonization of border-crossing procedures in the SPECA region (with a special focus on the effects of the COVID-19 crisis)	January-June 2020	All 7 SPECA countries	Study drafted, translated into Russian, uploaded on the SPECA WG on Trade webpage with a view to become a working paper for the WG on Trade and SPECA.

<p>(TF Strategy) Capacity-building on trade facilitation in the SPECA countries (4 items of the WTO TFA) with the OSCE Border Management College in Dushanbe and GIZ</p>	<p>6-7 July 2020 Dushanbe Online</p>	<p>All 7 SPECA countries</p>	<p>Interactive event organized using two channels of WEBEX in English and Russian. The seminar advanced the agenda for trade facilitation in the SPECA region in times of COVID-19. The seminar reviewed the state of play in trade facilitation in the region and marked the next steps for implementing all strategic documents and recommendations adopted by SPECA before the pandemic, notably the Ashgabat Initiative, the SPECA Trade Facilitation Strategy and the SPECA Principles of Sustainable Trade.</p>
<p>(TF Strategy) National capacity-building seminar on establishing and functioning of a National Trade Facilitation Committee in Azerbaijan</p>	<p>19 August 2020 Baku Online</p>	<p>Azerbaijan</p>	<p>Knowledge on how to establish and make function a National Trade Facilitation Committee using the UNECE experience in a number of transition economies.</p>
<p>Launch of the project: Strengthening the capacity of the Kyrgyzstan National Trade Facilitation Council to implement the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement</p>	<p>29 May 2020</p>	<p>Kyrgyzstan</p>	<p>Ongoing Activities: Development of substantive content and IT platform for national Trade Information Portal (TIP); Conducting Business Process Analyses (BPA) for export of textile/garments and import of pharmaceutical products; and Development of National Trade Facilitation Roadmap (NTFR) for economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.</p>
<p>(Implementation of the SPECA Principles of Sustainable Trade) Study on the current state of play in the implementation of the</p>	<p>November 2020</p>	<p>All 7 SPECA countries</p>	<p>Study drafted, translated into Russian, uploaded on the SPECA WG on Trade webpage with a view to become a working paper</p>

SPECA Principles of Sustainable Trade)			for the WG on Trade and SPECA.
(Non-tariff measures) A study on the non-tariff measures introduced in the SPECA region during the COVID-19 crisis	May-October 2020	All 7 SPECA countries	Data on new and reinforced NTMs in the SPECA subregion collected and analyzed. Recommendations on how to prevent them from becoming NTBs drafted.
Seminar for NTFCs on subregional cooperation	3-4 November 2020 Online	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan	Enhance the capacity for regional cooperation among the NTFCs. Seminar was organized in cooperation with GIZ.
Participation of the SPECA countries in broader regional initiatives			
Regional Consultation on Harnessing Trade for Sustainable Development with Focus on Asia-Pacific Least Developed Countries	2 - 3 December 2019 Bangkok, Thailand	Kazakhstan	Strengthen capacity in the region to position development interest of developing countries, including least developed countries.
Asia-Pacific Regional Integration: Measuring, Monitoring and Improving Performance for Sustainable Development	22 - 23 April 2020 Asia-Pacific Online	Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan	Support technical assistance for smooth integration into regional and global economy and achieve the SDGs.
Expert Group Meeting on Trade Facilitation in Times of Crisis and Epidemic	29 - 30 July 2020 Online	Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan	Identify good practices that countries have implemented during the crisis and develop a set of recommended measures that will help cope with future crises.
ESCAP-ARTNET-ITD Online Course on Trade Facilitation for Sustainable Development	3 August - 18 September 2020 Bangkok, Thailand Online	Azerbaijan	Participants should be able to understand what trade facilitation is and available key trade facilitation measures and instruments, as well as apply selected techniques to analyze and improve trade facilitation performance.

Evidence-based policymaking to facilitate deeper integration of Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC): Trade-in-value added analysis	6 - 7 October 2020 Asia-Pacific Online	Uzbekistan	Knowledge and understanding of policy analysts and applied policy researchers in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond on evidence-based policymaking to facilitate deepening integration between Asia and LAC through value development.
8th Meeting of the Legal and Technical Working Groups on Cross-border Paperless Trade facilitation	14 - 16 October 2020 Bangkok, Thailand Online	Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan(expert)	Update on progress made in developing supporting documents for the draft road map for implementation of substantive provisions of the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific since the seventh meeting.

The WG's Programme of Work includes the following projects:

TRADE DEVELOPMENT		
Name of Project/Activity	Timeframe	Budget
Ongoing and planned projects/activities with funding secured or expected. These activities will be implemented in mutually reinforcing way. Additional support from interested partners could expand the scope and the number of beneficiaries of these projects/activities		
Enhancing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through strategic cooperation among the SPECA countries	2020-2022	US\$250,000
Evidence-based trade facilitation measures for economies in transition (UNDA project), in SPECA: implementing 4 items of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement	2018-2021	US\$490,000
Strengthening the capacity of Central Asian countries to implement trade facilitation measures and better integrate into the international rules-based trading system	2018-2020	US\$351,900
Strengthening capacity of trade support institutions in Kyrgyzstan	2016-2019	US\$190,000

Supporting the Removal of Regulatory and Procedural Barriers to Trade in the SPECA countries (project proposal)	2020-2022	US\$190,000 to \$400,000
---	-----------	--------------------------