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Programme of work: Capacity-building and technical assistance activities

Report on capacity-building and technical assistance activities*

Submitted by the secretariat

Summary

This document provides an overview of capacity-building and technical assistance activities carried out under the ECE subprogramme on trade during the period May 2019–April 2021. It includes activities carried by the secretariat under the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards as well as by the Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies (WP.6); Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (WP.7); the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) and the Regional Adviser. Since April 2020, a particular focus on ECE support to member States' efforts has been placed on supporting a resilient, inclusive, sustainable post COVID recovery.

Sections covering activities by UN/CEFACT are for information only.

This report is presented to the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards for decision.

* This document was submitted late for processing since clearance in finalizing this document took longer than anticipated.



I. Introduction

1. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Trade subprogramme supports trade and economic cooperation among ECE member States and facilitates their integration into global value chains, drawing on the work of its intergovernmental bodies and expert groups. The subprogramme contributes to ensuring:

(a) A predictable, transparent and harmonized regulatory environment for commerce and business through strengthening the convergence of regulations, promoting international standards and developing best practices in areas of regulatory cooperation, conformity assessment and market surveillance.

(b) Sustainable trade in agricultural produce, integration into international supply chains and food loss reduction through the development of agricultural quality standards and related international best practice for implementation and use by regulatory authorities as well as the private sector.

(c) Simple, transparent and effective processes for global commerce through the development and maintenance of international trade facilitation instruments including global standards and best practices for moving from paper-based to automated electronic environments and for the harmonization and simplification of the business processes underpinning export and import activities.

2. Technical assistance and capacity-building activities are demand-driven and delivered in close cooperation with development partners. The activities aim at supporting ECE member States, especially less economically developed and landlocked countries, in their efforts to implement ECE trade-related standards, recommendations and best practice guides. The activities also seek to support the removal of regulatory and procedural barriers to trade caused by capacity shortfalls and differences in administrative procedures, regulations and standardization policies.

3. The next section provides an overview of the Trade subprogramme's capacity-building and technical assistance activities for the period May 2019–April 2021, highlighting the main objectives, results achieved, and development partners. Section three lists the activities carried out by the Trade subprogramme's Regional Adviser.

II. Capacity-building activities for the period May 2019–April 2021

<i>No.</i>	<i>Title, Venue, Dates</i>	<i>Objective(s)</i>	<i>Results</i>	<i>Partners</i>
1.	Supporting the Removal of Regulatory and Procedural Barriers to Trade in the Republic of Tajikistan (2017–2019).	To assist Tajikistan in establishing a National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC) in line with the recommendations emerging from the UNECE Study on Regulatory and Procedural Barriers to Trade in Tajikistan, and to enable the Government to fulfil its commitments under the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation (TFA).	The project assisted Tajikistan in empowering its NTFC and in establishing a National Trade Facilitation Roadmap for Exports Enhancement and Diversification (ECE/TRADE/450), formally adopted by NTFC (6 December 2019), in line with the recommendations emerging from the UNECE Study on Regulatory and Procedural Barriers to Trade in Tajikistan.	Government of Tajikistan, NTFC.
2.	Strengthening the Capacity of Central Asian Countries to Implement Trade Facilitation Measures (1 January 2018–31 December 2020).	To strengthen national capacities of the beneficiary countries to implement trade facilitation measures and better integrate them into the international rules-based trading system.	In 2018 UNECE developed the training material on streamlining formalities and documentary requirements (TFA Art.10.1). Training materials on the use of international standards (Art.10.3), Single Window implementation (Art.10.4) and NTFCs (Art.23.2) are being finalized.	Governments of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan.
3.	United Nations Development Account – Evidence-based trade facilitation measures for economies in transition (1819AC from 2018–2021).	To enhance countries’ exports and cross-border trade in four subregions of UNECE member States. Special attention is paid to help countries recover from COVID-19 trade disruptions using the UNECE trade facilitation policy recommendations, standards and tools and to develop an evidence-based policy coherence to support implementation of provisions of WTO TFA.	Enhanced capacities of national trade facilitation bodies and other stakeholders to develop and implement trade facilitation policies and measures; In 2018 UNECE developed the training material on streamlining formalities and documentary requirements (TFA Art.10.1). Training materials on the use of international standards, Single Window implementation and NTFCs are being finalized. Development of national trade facilitation roadmaps based on the UNECE Guidelines for beneficiary countries are under implementation. Improved capacities of policymakers to measure progress in trade facilitation and achieve internal and cross-border policy coherence for the simplification and harmonization of trade procedures.	UNESCAP, Governments of Georgia, Kazakhstan, North Macedonia, Ukraine.

No.	Title, Venue, Dates	Objective(s)	Results	Partners
			<p>Members of NTFC and other stakeholders received training on establishing a national Trade and Transport Facilitation Monitoring Mechanism (TTFMM) in Kazakhstan. ESCAP developed several training materials, including a video presentation. Training and discussion on TTFMM were carried out by ESCAP and UNECE in collaboration with the Asian Development Bank Virtual event on Trade in Support of Circular Economy, Sustainable Development and Green Recovery Post-COVID-19 (ADB) in May 2018. All SPECA countries were invited to indicate their interest and start working on TTFMM.</p>	
4.	<p>Update of the Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide (TFIG) (2020).</p>	<p>To update and integrate two new itineraries as well as new trade facilitation instruments.</p>	<p>The UNECE secretariat further enhanced the Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide (TFIG) portal with contributions from ITC, particularly in relation to the update of the WTO TFA itinerary and the development of a new itinerary on trade facilitation for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. Further enhancements may be forthcoming in cooperation with the UNECE Transport Division.</p>	<p>International Trade Centre (ITC).</p>
5.	<p>Regional Training on “Sustainability of national production and consumption patterns in agriculture trade” Tashkent, Uzbekistan, 23–24 September 2019 (jointly organized with UNDP) and supported by Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) Uzbekistan and Hilfswerk International Austria (via an EU funded project). Carried out as part of United Nations Development Account (UNDA) project, 11th tranche</p>	<p>To strengthen national capacities for using international best practices, tools and instruments as well as developing integrated strategies for facilitating cross-border agri-food trade.</p>	<p>“Train the trainer” regional workshop for 20 participants. Two days with intensive theoretical and field training which resulted in increased capacity of participants to improve sustainable production patterns and food supply chains. UNECE partnered with national government agencies in Uzbekistan and continued to work with the Central Asia Working Group, a solid and sustainable platform for impactful capacity-building in the beneficiary country to ensure the sustainability of UNECE efforts. The comprehensive impact assessment was initiated at the end of 2019 at the request of UNECE Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards, UNDP and GIZ have revealed that concrete results were achieved under this and previous trainings including: implementation and use of ECE standards at national</p>	<p>UNDP, GIZ, Hilfswerk Austria (via EU-funded project); UZSTANDARD Agency (Uzbekistan).</p>

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	(2018–2021) “Increased policy coherence and sustainability of national production and consumption patterns in North-South and South-South agriculture trade”.		level, preparation of training material in national languages, multiplication of national and regional cooperation and training efforts by public and private sectors, increased sales volumes and new export destinations, creation of employment – in particular for women, empowerment of national stakeholders.	
6.	Workshops on the development of quality standards and food loss prevention for fresh fruit and vegetables, nuts and dried fruit back-to-back with regular intergovernmental meetings as part of existing multilateral mechanisms May, June, August 2019, Geneva, Switzerland and Potsdam, Germany. Carried out as part of the UNDA project, 11th tranche (2018–2021).	To strengthen national capacities for using international best practices, tools and instruments as well as developing integrated strategies for facilitating cross-border agri-food trade, back-to-back with regular intergovernmental meetings. This work is part of existing multilateral mechanisms to define export requirements and improve the understanding of national stakeholders from target countries of the link between international standards, best practices, and quality production and for the increase of sustainable agricultural food supply. It also serves as a cost-efficient way to enhance the interregional dialogue, with importing countries and particularly the private sector.	UNECE organized three international expert workshops back-to-back with regular intergovernmental meetings in Geneva, Switzerland in May and June and in Potsdam in August 2019 (TFA Art.2.3). The latter focused on the sustainability of national production and consumption patterns in North-South and South-South meat trade as well as meat quality for a sustainable future. Over 55 participants were trained on sustainable livestock, food loss and waste prevention, eating quality, standards and innovative solutions for meat trade. At the Geneva events, 11 experts were trained in the development and implementation of international best practice for food quality and food loss prevention. Since the inception of this project, experts from Central Asia have developed the first quality standard for dried melons, at international level and within an intergovernmental body (adopted in November 2019). This is expected to increase the quality and export readiness of this Central Asian produce to world markets. In 2019, the total participation of experts from Central Asia in ECE regular meetings increased from 16 in 2018 to 21 in 2019. The contributions from the Central Asian region extended to many new and on-going work areas. In the Central Asian region, this resulted in the development of a multitude of training material and over 30 local training courses led by experts trained by this project. It facilitated the cross-border agri-food trade and food loss prevention in the region and the adoption of	UNDP, GIZ, Hilfswerk Austria (via EU funded project).

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7.	Enhancing usage and uptake of the standards for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (July 2018–July 2019).	To increase awareness of and usage by policymakers of voluntary standards developed by national, regional and international standards bodies, as part of their strategies for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).	<p>international best practice and standards for increased regional and international agricultural trade.</p> <p>UNECE organized two high-level events (the Standards for the SDGs event on 26/9/2019 and the Opening of the Declaration on Gender Responsive Standards and Standards Development for signature on 14/5/2019). UNECE also published two studies on “Standards for the SDGs” and “Gender Responsive Standards”.</p> <p>UNECE developed and launched the portal: https://standards4sdgs.unece.org/ This is a tool to identify standards that help to realize Sustainable Development Goals and Targets; a collection of case studies of countries, cities and regions that have successfully used standards for sustainability; and supporting online training materials.</p> <p>UNECE produced two videos and one animation video on Standards for the SDGs and on Gender Responsive standards as well as numerous awareness raising materials (pull up posters, brochures, etc).</p>	The Government of Germany, PTB, ISO, IEC, ITU, IEEE, ASTM International CEN/CENELEC and national standards bodies.
8.	Enhancing usage and uptake of standards for sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, with special emphasis on gender equality (December 2019–December 2021).	To enhance the usage and uptake of standards as instruments of sustainable development.	<p>Expansion of the Standards for the SDGs Portal to include SDGs 12 and 13. UNECE also launched a successful campaign to increase the number of signatories of the Gender Responsive Standards declaration leading to more than 25 new organizations signing taking the total number of signatories to 77.</p> <p>UNECE launched the first online training course on “Risk management in regulatory systems”.</p> <p>UNECE implemented an online event on “Re-tooling for Sustainability held on 19 March 2020 replacing previously scheduled side event for the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development: https://unece.org/trade/events/online-event-re-tooling-sustainability.</p>	The Government of Germany, PTB, ISO, IEC, ITU, and national standards bodies.

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9.	Strengthening the capacity of the Kyrgyz National Trade Facilitation Council to implement WTO TFA (October 2019–June 2022).	To strengthen the capacity of NTFC to implement trade facilitation reforms and to develop a trade information portal with the focus on emergencies and overcoming trade disruptions caused by COVID-19.	Multiple deliverables are currently being finalized including the National Trade Facilitation Roadmap (2021–2025), Business Process Analysis (BPA) for export of textile products and import of pharmaceutical products from the Kyrgyz Republic. Information from BPAs will be uploaded to the Kyrgyz Trade Information Portal. The capacity of the Kyrgyz Economic University will be increased through supporting the development and testing of training modules on trade facilitation. Expected results of the project include: Enhanced knowledge and technical capacities of policymakers and experts of the National Trade Facilitation Council, regulatory agencies and other relevant stakeholders to effectively implement trade facilitation policies and priority measures under Category C of WTO TFA. Improved access of traders to information related to trade regulations and procedures on the National Trade Facilitation Council online portal.	The Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, ITC, Kyrgyz Economic University.
10.	Virtual Project Launch Meeting for the Kyrgyz project (29 May 2021).	To launch the project Strengthening the capacity of the Kyrgyz National Trade Facilitation Council to implement the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), and to reach an agreement with stakeholders on the way forward.	UNECE launched a project titled Strengthening the capacity of the Kyrgyz National Trade Facilitation Council to implement WTO TFA. The two-year project is enhancing knowledge and technical capacities of policymakers and experts of NTFC, regulatory agencies and other relevant stakeholders to effectively implement trade facilitation policies and priority measures.	UNECE, the Kyrgyz economic University, Ministry of Economy.
11.	Expert Consultation Workshop for National Trade Facilitation Roadmap for the Kyrgyz Republic (27 October 2020).	To present and discuss the content of the draft National Trade Facilitation Roadmap.	This workshop successfully discussed the content of the draft National Trade Facilitation Roadmap. The workshop also discussed new recommendations and action points that need to be implemented in the Roadmap as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.	Ministry of Economy, Centre for Standardization under MoE KR, KEU, NTFC, SW KG, Ministry of Agriculture, UNIDO, Private Sector, Chamber of Commerce and Industry, ESCAP, the Kyrgyz Republic Mission to WTO, UBS Transit, United Nations

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12.	Enhancing Traceability and Transparency for Sustainable Value Chains in Garment and Footwear (June 2019–June 2022).	Improving transparency and traceability is a priority for the garment and footwear industry to increase its ability to manage the value chains more effectively, identify and address labour and human rights violations, health and safety and environmental impacts to handle operational and reputational risks, while embracing more sustainable production and consumption patterns in line with the 2030 Agenda, specifically SDGs 8, 12 and 17. The project aims at providing the tools to take risk-informed decisions, build robust sustainability claims and to operate along a set of internationally agreed practices, thereby increasing visibility and accountability throughout the entire value chain.	This project created a multi-stakeholder policy dialogue platform engaging with more than 200 UN/CEFACT experts representing over 190,000 companies in more than 30 countries, which have been consulted to produce a toolbox to advance transparency and traceability. At the twenty-seventh UN/CEFACT Plenary UNECE Member States embraced a series of policy recommendations, implementation guidelines and an information exchange standard that together make it possible to assert and verify sustainability claims in the highly globalized garment and footwear sector. The project also launches a call to action, inviting Governments and industry actors to apply this toolkit of measures and take a positive step towards improving the environmental and ethical credentials of the sector. The traceability framework is testing the enabling role of advanced technologies, such as blockchain and DNA markers to support traceability and due diligence for the main textile fibres and materials value chains (cotton, leather, synthetic).	Resident Coordinator Office in the Kyrgyz Republic. ITC and the European Commission Directorate-General for International Partnerships.
13.	Business Process Analysis for export of pharmaceutical products in Georgia regular coordination meetings (2020–2021).	To establish and identify possible bottlenecks and propose solutions in the trade-related regulatory and commercial procedures for exporting pharmaceutical products to the Central Asian countries. This study will be conducted under UNDA and its 11th tranche. This project, 1819AC, aims to strengthen national capacities for better integration of selected economies in transition in the international rules-based trading system (SDG 17.10).	The scope of the Business Process Analysis (BPA) has been agreed with the Government of Georgia. BPA will first realize an overview of the pharmaceutical industry in Georgia. It will then aim at eliminating red tape to cross border trade of Pharmaceuticals from Georgia to Central Asian countries.	Government of Georgia.

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14.	UNECE/UNESCAP Task Force on eCITES EPIX Pilot.	To support ECE and ESCAP interested Management Authorities (MAs) of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora (CITES) and other relevant national stakeholders of CITES Parties, in initiating and carrying out live electronic exchanges of CITES permits.	Regular meetings of the task force (one every two months) on CITES permits to provide a forum for discussion, information sharing and mutual capacity assistance. Electronic exchange is developing in the UNECE/UNESCAP region.	UNESCAP, UNCTAD and UNECE/UNECSCAP interested Management authorities.
15.	Online Conference on the “Role of Advanced technologies in overcoming COVID-19 disruptions in international trade” (2 July 2020).	Short-term training activity or other event on the importance of advanced technologies in trade and logistics to overcome the COVID-19 disruptions.	Conference provided a platform for experts to discuss how to overcome international supply chain and trade disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak. The conference has been organized by the Advisory Group on Advanced Technologies of UN/CEFACT.	
16.	Online Workshop: “Towards Global Interoperable Blockchain Infrastructure” (9 July 2020).	Short-term training activity on the use of Blockchain to promote interoperable data exchange in international trade.	The project established a framework/mechanism for development and implementation of UN/CEFACT blockchain services infrastructure, which will be compatible and in line with other services infrastructure and usable or extendable globally and started to prepare a whitepaper on the strategy for development and implementation of interoperable global blockchain technology infrastructure, taking into consideration existing relevant standards.	
17.	National technical cooperation seminar for Azerbaijan on how to establish and function a National Trade Facilitation Committee (4 September 2020).	Short-term training activity to establish an NTFC in Azerbaijan.	Seminar organized a technical cooperation webinar for Azerbaijan on how to establish and function a National Trade Facilitation Committee using the experience of the UNECE Regional Adviser on this subject, responding to an urgent request of the Government of Azerbaijan. Presentation and discussion will be used in the process of establishing an NTFC in Azerbaijan.	
18.	Virtual event on Trade in Support of Circular Economy, Sustainable Development and Green Recovery	Short-term training activity on the importance of circular economy to achieve sustainable and green trade objectives.	The event considered existing tools and good practices, identified practical barriers faced by business sector in terms of circular economy and discussed corresponding recommendations for	

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	Post-COVID-19 (30 September 2020).		policymakers. This session built common understanding on sustainable trade and development.	
19.	35th UN/CEFACT Forum Webinar: Engaging private sector in National Trade Facilitation Bodies, What works and what does not work? (06 October 2020).	Short-term training activity to promote the engagement of private actors in NTFC bodies.	This webinar provided an opportunity to discuss the challenges of engaging the private sector in the activities of an NTFB. It aimed to investigate some of the barriers and challenges in participation and to present possible solutions and approaches towards an effective engagement. With this webinar UN/CEFACT provided guidance on the effective implementation of UNECE Recommendations No. 4 and No. 40 and WTO TFA Art. 23.2.	
20	35th UN/CEFACT Forum Webinar: Trade Information Portals (07 October 2020).	Short-term training activity to share best practises on Trade information portals.	This conference examined some implementations and country experiences in order to share best practices. It has been an opportunity to be inspired by current practices and identify the future evolutions. provided the opportunity to shape the work of UN/CEFACT on a future recommendation on Trade Information Portals.	
21	35th UN/CEFACT Forum Webinar: Advancements in AI towards facilitating cross border paperless trade (12 October 2020).	Short-term training activity to promote the use of artificial intelligence technology to promote paperless trade.	This webinar focused on how AI can help in facilitating cross border paperless trade. The webinar focused on use cases and implementation examples including areas of trade data analytics for risk and fraud management, computer vision and imaging for logistics and monitoring and others.	
22.	35th UN/CEFACT Forum Webinar: Traceability within the context of eBusiness Standards (22 October 2020).	Short-term training activity on traceability standards as an aim to promote sustainable trade.	This webinar developed an understanding of what traceability is and what it means, why we have traceability and how it works. It also created a common understanding of the topic.	
23.	35th UN/CEFACT Forum Webinar: Technology Developments: Potential for Impacting Cross-Border Trade (11 November 2020).	Short-term training activity on the use of new technologies to promote efficient and resilient cross border trade.	This webinar presented a variety of technology topics and how they can be applied to cross border paperless trade.	

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24.	Advisory group on advanced technologies in trade and logistics second session (25 November 2020).	Short-term training activity on advanced technologies usage to develop opportunities for social and economic sustainability, in order to better utilize our planet's natural resources.	This meeting provided more insight into the relation between technology and sustainability, within the Circular Economy concept, in order to provide benefit to businesses and trading parties involved in sustainable international trade and value chains.	
25	Fourth United Nations Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation (2021).	The survey results allow the countries to monitor progress in the implementation of measures for sustainable and digital trade facilitation and serve as evidence base for policymaking helping to identify areas where efforts are most needed to address the remaining policy, legal, regulatory and technical obstacles as well as needs for capacity-building and technical assistance.	As part of the Joint United Nations Regional Commission's Approach to Trade Facilitation, the secretariat is conducting the fourth Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2021, to collect relevant data and information from the UNECE member States. The survey assesses implementation progress of the WTO TFA articles as well digital and sustainable trade facilitation measures, biennially.	The five United Nations Regional Commissions (UNRCs) – ECA, ECE, ECLAC, ESCAP and ESCWA.
26.	Strengthening the national capacities of selected UNECE countries for evidence-based regulatory and procedural trade policies to achieve SDGs (2017–2020)	Strengthen national capacity of the beneficiary countries to design and implement integrated reforms for removing regulatory and procedural trade barriers in a manner that is conducive to the achievement of SDG, with a special emphasis on industrial development and innovation (SDG 9), poverty eradication (SDG 1), the achievement of growth with equity (SDG 10) and strengthening the global partnership for development (SDG 17).	Completed a study on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade in Serbia, which provides action-oriented recommendations for increasing the contribution of trade to the achievement of SDGs. To support COVID-19 surge efforts, five national COVID-19 impact assessments were conducted over the course of May-December 2020 in Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Serbia as part of the repurposing funds to respond to the impact of COVID-19.	UNCTAD and United Nations Resident Coordination Offices in Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Serbia.

III. Regional Adviser's capacity-building and technical assistance activities during the period May 2019–April 2021

4. Based on the mandate of UNECE to support integration in the UNECE region and set standards for trade facilitation and e-business, the Regional Adviser assists economies in transition¹ to facilitate and develop their trade through the implementation of trade facilitation standards, recommendations and other tools, as well as support them in building subregional cooperation and integration, notably to strengthen their capacity for economic development and to achieve SDGs. In 2019 and 2020, the Regional Adviser's work focused on three areas: (1) assist transition economies in the implementation of the WTO TFA, contributing to SDG 17.10: promotion of a universal, rules-based trading system; (2) promote the implementation of UNECE trade facilitation standards, recommendations, and reference data models (RDMs); and (3) support the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA). On this basis, the Regional Adviser has continued to manage projects and activities supporting countries in the implementation of UNECE and UN/CEFACT trade facilitation recommendations and standards and assisting them build subregional cooperation for the achievement of SDGs.

<i>No.</i>	<i>Title, Venue, Dates</i>	<i>Objective(s)</i>	<i>Results</i>	<i>Partners</i>
1.	Six advisory services to the Governments and business community in the Czech Republic, the Kyrgyz Republic, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.	Support project NTFCs in these countries. Support trade facilitation and business process analysis projects in Ukraine. Promote subregional cooperation to achieve the SDGs, notably in Central Asia. Cooperate with CAREC/ADB, the Eurasian Economic Commission, and other key partners on trade facilitation in Central Asia.	Two business process analysis projects completed (in Kazakhstan and Ukraine). Request endorsed to help Uzbekistan implement WTO TFA in order to fulfil the requirements for accession to WTO (SDG 17.10). Strengthened capacity of the SPECA countries to cooperate for the achievement of the SDGs.	Governments of the Czech Republic, the Kyrgyz Republic, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan, ESCAP, Association Central Asian Partnership for transports and logistics development, GIZ, ADB, Eurasian Economic Commission, NTFCs in the Czech Republic and Ukraine.
2.	Capacity-building on 4 TFA measures, national Trade and Transport Facilitation Monitoring Mechanisms (TTFMM): under UNDA 11. project. Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan, May 2019.	Assist the SPECA countries implement 4 TFA measures and national TTFMM, following up on TF projects implemented in the SPECA countries the last decade.	Raised skills of SPECA countries NTFCs on the four TFA items and their implementation. Possibility to develop a national TTFMM in Kazakhstan discussed. Second BPA (after one in 2014) on exports of grain from Kazakhstan to Azerbaijan finalized to illustrate the principle of TTFMM – repeated studies.	Cooperation with the Ministry of National Economy of Kazakhstan, ESCAP and GIZ on this seminar.

¹ The Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation (RPTC) countries. See <https://www.unece.org/operact/opera/rptc.html>.

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3.	9th ECE trade facilitation and Single Window seminar (Odessa 28 May 2019).	Organize the 9th UNECE trade facilitation and Single Window seminar in Odessa with focus on using UN/CEFACT reference data models for data sharing along multimodal digital corridors: reinforcing the development of the Port Community System in Odessa (PPL 33-35), the Ukrainian national Single Window (SW), the Ukrainian NTFC, and present the BPA report on exports of grain from Ukraine.	Work on data sharing along multimodal digital corridors using UN/CEFACT reference data models launched, the Port Community System in Odessa (www.singlewindow.org) and the Ukrainian NTFC reinforced; the BPA report on exports of grain from Ukraine presented and validated. (seminar materials published at http://unece.plaske.ua/).	NTFC of Ukraine, Ministry of Agriculture, various government agencies, UN/CEFACT, IPCSA.
4.	3rd High-Level Seminar on Trade in Central Asia and 13th session of the SPECA Working Group on Trade “Integrating Central Asia into the World Economy through Sustainable Trade and Transport Facilitation”, (WTO, Geneva, 4 July 2019).	Organize, upon request from the SPECA countries, the 13th session of WGs on Trade at WTO HQ, in combination with a high-level policy seminar, during the biannual Aid for Trade review, on 4 July 2019. The objectives were to strengthen the regional cooperation of the SPECA countries in the WTO process, to review and validate the SPECA documents on regional trade facilitation strategy; principles of sustainable trade; non-tariff measures and new ToR of SPECA WG on Trade.	Seminar strengthened the regional cooperation of the SPECA countries in the WTO process, reviewed and validated the following documents for approval by the SPECA Governing Council: regional trade facilitation strategy; principles of sustainable trade; concept for a regional study on non-tariff barriers; and new ToR of SPECA WG on Trade.	SPECA WG on Trade, WTO, IRU, UNEP, various development partners.
5.	Validation seminar on the report on the readiness assessment of Belarus to implement TFA (Minsk, 15–16 August 2019).	Organize validation seminar on the assessment report on the readiness of Belarus to implement TFA. Review latest developments and assist the Government of Belarus in its WTO accession negotiations. Discuss the categorization of measures, with a view to help the Government prepare for action on the implementation of the unfulfilled measures. Start preparing the ground for an interagency, public-private national committee for trade facilitation in Belarus.	Validation consultations on the Readiness Assessment Report carried out, and recommendations to the Government drafted. This RPTC project is a contribution of UNECE to SDG 17.10.	Government of Belarus, WTO, UNCTAD.
6.	Second capacity-building seminar on Single Window and data sharing for the Western Balkans (Skopje, North	Organize with the Customs Administration of North Macedonia, the World Bank and others a second seminar on Single Window and data sharing to align Single Window and related projects in the Western Balkans to the semantic standards and	The workshop supported the alignment of SW projects to international (UN/CEFACT) standards. The participants appreciated the input of the results of the workshop to the development of “blueprints” for their SW	Governments of the Western Balkan countries (notably Customs), UN/CEFACT, the European Commission, the

No.	Title, Venue, Dates	Objective(s)	Results	Partners
	Macedonia, 4–5 September 2019).	reference data models of UN/CEFACT and the work on Single Window in the European Union.	projects. A session on four items of WTO TFA and NTTFMM (UN/CEFACT Recommendation 42) was well received. North Macedonia requested cooperation to implement a NTTFMM.	World Bank, CEFTA2006, SEED, and others.
7.	SPECA Days, including the 14th session of the SPECA WG on Trade, the 2019 SPECA Economic Forum and 14th session of the SPECA Governing Council, (18–21 November 2019 in Ashgabat).	Organize, jointly with the Government of Turkmenistan and ESCAP, the 14th session of the SPECA Governing Council; the 2019 SPECA Economic Forum on Connectivity: Sustainable Transport and Trade Facilitation in the SPECA Region; the 24th session of the WG on Sustainable Transport, Transit and Connectivity; the 14th session of the SPECA WG on Trade and a Round Table on Trade Policy, WTO and the TFA. Support the development and adoption of concluding documents and recommendations from the 14th session of the SPECA Governing Council, including a decision on the establishment of a SPECA Fund. Support the development of a SPECA Work Plan for 2020–2021 and prepare SPECA countries to chair the Programme in 2020 and further. Support the development and adoption of an “Ashgabat Initiative” to reduce barriers to trade and transport among the countries using United Nations instruments.	<p>14th session of the SPECA WG on Trade finalized for approval by the Governing Council 6 documents and approved Conclusions, ToR and the WG work plan.</p> <p>24th session of the SPECA WG on Sustainable Transport, Transit and Connectivity approved: revised ToR.</p> <p>The 2019 SPECA Economic Forum on Connectivity: Sustainable Transport and Trade Facilitation in the SPECA Region successfully carried out; “Ashgabat Initiative” to reduce barriers to trade and transport using United Nations instruments adopted.</p> <p>UNECE publication Trade Facilitation Terms: English-Russian-Chinese Glossary (third revised edition) launched.</p> <p>14th session of the Governing Council adopted the “Ashgabat Initiative” to reduce barriers to trade and transport among the countries using United Nations instruments; SPECA Innovation Strategy for Sustainable Development; SPECA Trade Facilitation Strategy; Principles of Sustainable Trade; the Progress Report and the revised ToR of SPECA and of all SPECA Thematic Working Groups, except for the WG on Statistics.</p> <p>The Kyrgyz Republic elected to chair SPECA in 2020. Discussions on electing Uzbekistan for 2021.</p>	UNCTAD, UNRCCA, ADB, CIS, EU, GIZ, ITC, OECD, WTO.

<i>No.</i>	<i>Title, Venue, Dates</i>	<i>Objective(s)</i>	<i>Results</i>	<i>Partners</i>
8.	Seminar on assessing the readiness of Uzbekistan to implement the WTO TFA, (16, 17 & 20 March 2020).	Organize a seminar (using Webex due to COVID-19) to help agencies of Uzbekistan implement the WTO Trade Simplification Agreement to meet WTO accession requirements.	Seminar successfully organized in extremis as an interactive event via Webex. A small project on WTO TFA readiness assessment launched. All TFA measures presented, with emphasis on 3 measures identified by the beneficiary, and 4 measures in which UNECE has a comparative advantage. Discussion after each measure. The new Single Window system (launched on 1 January 2020) presented and received comments on improvement.	Government of Uzbekistan (Chief Negotiator on accession to WTO and State Customs Committee of Uzbekistan).
9.	Strengthening the Capacity of Central Asian Countries to Implement Trade Facilitation Measures (1 January 2018–31 December 2020).	Strengthen national capacities of the beneficiary countries to implement trade facilitation measures and better integrate them into the international rules-based trading system.	In 2020, UNECE developed training materials on the use of international standards (Art.10.3) on Single Window implementation (Art.10.4) are being finalized NTFC (Art.23.2) for the target countries. In 2018 UNECE has developed the training material on streamlining formalities and documentary requirements (TFA Art.10.1).	Governments of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan.
10.	Segment of the UNDA project “Transport and Trade Connectivity in the Age of Pandemic: United Nations solutions for contactless, seamless and collaborative transport and trade”.	Implement existing (UN/CEFACT) standards for electronic data and document exchange, develop new ones for various modes of transport, allowing for a quick change towards more standardized electronic data and document exchange. Build on the wealth of traditional best practices in trade and transport facilitation accumulated by the participating agencies.	Guide for National Trade Facilitation Bodies on How to Use UN/CEFACT Standards and Tools; ² A package of standards for electronic document equivalents accompanying goods in multimodal transport. Experts developed new standards for 8 logistics documents (multimodal waybill, packing list, etc.); maritime waybill; inland water transport documents; railway consignment notes; invoice for customs; phytosanitary certificate; and certificate of origin. Experts from Belarus and Ukraine started implementing the UN/CEFACT standards for	All UNECE countries with economies in transition.

² See <https://unttc.org/stream/national-tf-committees-ece>.

No.	Title, Venue, Dates	Objective(s)	Results	Partners
11.	RPTC project: self-assessment of readiness of Uzbekistan to implement WTO TFA with two seminars and an internal survey.	Assist Uzbekistan to assess its readiness to implement WTO TFA, as part of its drive to accede to WTO.	<p>exports of wood from Belarus to Serbia, along multimodal transport routes. The pilot implementation cases included the development of an electronic FIATA multimodal Bill of Lading, aligned with the UN/CEFACT reference data models and contributions to the Black Sea/Baltic Sea digital corridor. UNECE and ICAO will cooperate on the development of standards for three air cargo documents.</p> <p>Activities on data sharing and alignment with the Multi-Modal Transport Reference Data Model (MMT-RDM) in 2020 included:</p> <p>The 10th International UNECE Odessa Trade Facilitation seminar, focused on multimodal transport data exchange (27–29 April 2020);</p> <p>Brainstorming on data harmonization and modelling using UN/CEFACT standards,³ organized by UNECE and the Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC) on 18 June 2020;</p> <p>Regional seminar for the Western Balkans on data sharing and single window implementation⁴ (27–28 October 2020).</p> <p>For more details, see UNECE ECTD segments at unttc.org.</p>	Ministry of Investment and Foreign Trade and State Customs Committee of Uzbekistan.

³ <https://unece.org/trade/events/data-harmonization-and-modelling-using-uncifact-standards-and-reference-data-models>.

⁴ <https://unece.org/trade/events/third-technical-cooperation-workshop-western-balkans-single-window-and-data-sharing>.

<i>No.</i>	<i>Title, Venue, Dates</i>	<i>Objective(s)</i>	<i>Results</i>	<i>Partners</i>
12.	RPTC project: assessment of the readiness of the SPECA countries to implement the SPECA Principles of Sustainable Trade.	Assist SPECA countries to assess their readiness to implement the SPECA Principles of Sustainable Trade, adopted by the 14th session of the SPECA Governing Council, 21 November 2019.	Six national studies based on interviews and desk research were carried out and combined into a regional report. The regional report will be finalized in 2021 and presented to the 2021 SPECA Economic Forum and Governing Council session in November 2021 in Uzbekistan.	All SPECA countries.

Annex

Capacity-building report of the Regional Adviser for 2020

I. Introduction

1. The Regional Advisor's work is based on the mandate of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) to set standards for trade facilitation and e-business. It aims at improving cooperation and integration in the UNECE region and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Regional Advisor helps the seventeen UNECE programme countries to facilitate and develop their trade capacity by implementing UN/CEFACT standards and trade facilitation recommendations. In 2020–2021, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Regional Advisor's work included two areas related to UN/CEFACT:

- Thirteen transition economies received assistance to implement measures of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), in which UNECE and UN/CEFACT have a comparative advantage (WTO articles 10.1, 10.3, 10.4, and 23.2) due to their normative instruments. This is reflected in the improved categorization of measures in the countries' notifications to WTO.⁵ The Regional Advisor thus contributed to the achievement of SDG 17.10. Specifically, he provided support to the countries participating in the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA)⁶ to implement the Ashgabat Initiative on Reducing barriers to trade and transport;⁷ the SPECA Trade Facilitation Strategy;⁸ and to limiting the negative effects of non-tariff barriers to trade in times of pandemic.
- The activities of the Regional Advisor boosted the implementation of UN/CEFACT semantic standards and reference data models, notably to limit the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on connectivity, trade, and transport.

2. In this sense, the Regional Advisor continued to manage projects and activities supporting countries in the implementation of the UNECE and UN/CEFACT trade facilitation recommendations and standards.

⁵ At the WTO trade facilitation database <https://tfadatabase.org/members> one can view the latest notifications of the countries (typically at the end of each country's page, to view data on the dynamics of implementation of the TFA measures in the relevant countries). The UNECE advisory services helped Kazakhstan and Ukraine, as well as Azerbaijan, Belarus and Uzbekistan (three WTO accession countries) assess their readiness and plan the implementation of the TFA measures. All seventeen programme countries received assistance for implementing the TFA measures in which UNECE has competitive advantage (notably art. 23.2, 10.1, 10.3, and 10.4). Kazakhstan, for example, notified to the WTO Secretariat improvement in the implementation in July-August 2019: it moved three measures, on which there had been collaboration with the Regional Advisor (enquiry points, use of international standards and Single Window) from category C to category B and clarified that practically all measures will be fulfilled by 22 February 2022. On 15 July and 3 December 2020, Kyrgyzstan notified with information on the implementation of several measures, for some of which they received assistance from UNECE. On 7 July 2020, Tajikistan notified of ministries and agencies responsible for the implementation of most TFA measures, as well as progress in the implementation of four measures, including the Single Window, on which they have received assistance from UNECE. Unfortunately, Afghanistan notified in May 2020 regress in its readiness to implement three Customs-related measures, yet UNECE has little leverage to affect that development.

⁶ www.unece.org/speca.

⁷ https://unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/SPECA/documents/gc/session14/IV._AHGABAT_INITIATIVE_English.pdf.

⁸ https://unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/SPECA/documents/gc/session14/SPECA_Trade_Facilitation_Strategy_English.pdf.

3. Activities of the Regional Advisor during the last years have contributed to two major developments in 2020:

- Activities in support of Turkmenistan since 2016 helped the country obtain in July 2020 observer status with WTO (a step towards achieving SDG 17.10); and
- On 28 October 2020 the European Commissioners agreed on a new proposal for European Union single window legislation.⁹ The UNECE Regional Advisor had contributed for two years to the drafting of this legislation upon invitation by the Directorate General Taxation and Customs Union (DG TAXUD).

II. Assisting the transition economies with trade facilitation and implementing TFA

4. Two training events organized by the Regional Advisor, in cooperation with the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and other partners, boosted the capacity of 210 experts from the SPECA countries (Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan) to implement trade facilitation. First, a training event, originally planned to be held in Dushanbe, was held online on 6–7 July 2020.¹⁰ This event was organized with Tajikistan, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and GIZ. It encouraged the establishment of national trade facilitation committees (NTFCs) in the SPECA countries, notably in Azerbaijan (which requested and received further assistance from the Regional Advisor) and Uzbekistan. It started work on harmonizing border-crossing procedures under the SPECA Working Group on Trade. Second, a seminar on 3–4 November 2020 for NTFCs in the SPECA subregion laid the foundations for regional cooperation of NTFCs and produced a list of recommendations for action.

5. Two working papers of the SPECA Working Group on Trade were drafted and published in 2020. Respective agencies in the SPECA countries currently continue to review the two papers, including their recommendations, with a view to providing a revised version for the next meeting of the Working Group. The first is a working paper on harmonizing border-crossing procedures in the SPECA countries,¹¹ which contains recommendations for action to the SPECA countries. The second is a study on the impact of COVID-19-induced non-tariff measures (NTMs).¹² It provides guidance to countries on how to prevent NTMs imposed due to the pandemic from becoming barriers to trade.

6. In 2020, upon request from the Government of Uzbekistan, the Regional Advisor started a project on self-assessment of readiness of Uzbekistan to implement WTO TFA with two seminars and an internal survey. The project will finish later in 2021 and is expected to help with the accession of Uzbekistan to WTO and with the achievement of SDG 17.10.

III. Data sharing in the age of COVID-19

7. The Regional Advisor took up new tasks in the rapid response to the challenges of COVID-19, notably managing a segment of the United Nations Development Account (UNDA) project “Transport and Trade Connectivity in the Age of Pandemic: United Nations solutions for contactless, seamless and collaborative transport and trade”.¹³ The segment led by the UNECE Economic Cooperation and Trade Division (ECTD) has the following deliverables:

⁹ 201028_commission_proposal_single_window.pdf (europa.eu).

¹⁰ <https://unece.org/trade/events/seminar-trade-facilitation-times-covid-19>.

¹¹ Available at

https://unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trade/workshop/2020_Nov_SPECAWG/Overview_BorderCrossing_s_Eng.pdf.

¹² Available at https://unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trade/workshop/2020_Nov_SPECAWG/COVID-ConsolidatedReport_Eng.pdf.

¹³ For more information, see the UNDA COVID-19 Trade and Transport Project website: <https://www.unttc.org>.

- A Guide for National Trade Facilitation Bodies on How to Use UN/CEFACT Standards and Tools¹⁴ in the age of COVID-19 is published and intended for distribution among National Trade Facilitation Bodies (NTFBs) in 2021;
- Experts working under the UNDA COVID-19 project developed a package of standards for electronic document equivalents accompanying goods in multimodal transport. The Regional Advisor contributed to the advancement and rollout of this package. Under this project the following activities have taken (or continue to take) place:
 - Experts developed new standards for eight new logistics and other documents (including multimodal waybill, packing list and other documents) to advance pilot implementation;
 - They continue filling in gaps in the package of standards for documents accompanying goods transported by different modes of transport. By February 2021, these include the following: maritime waybill; inland water transport documents;¹⁵ railway consignment notes;¹⁶ invoice for customs; and Certificate of Origin;¹⁷
 - Experts from Belarus and Ukraine have started implementing existing UN/CEFACT standards for electronic transport document equivalents¹⁸ – notably for the electronic road consignment note (eCMR) under the Convention on the Contract for the International Carriage of Goods by Road (CMR). Experts are also working on the possible use of the eCERT standard to implement electronic phytosanitary certificates in Belarus and Ukraine;
 - The Regional Advisor has engaged with the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) for further cooperation in the area of data and document exchange for cargo transport by air; and
 - The first pilot implementation cases involve (1) the development of an electronic version of the Bill of Lading of the International Federation of Freight Forwarders' Associations (FIATA), aligned with the UN/CEFACT reference data models, and (2) contributions to the Black Sea/Baltic Sea digital corridor and a Dnieper/Danube pilot implementation.
- Activities on data sharing and alignment with the Multi-Modal Transport Reference Data Model (MMT-RDM) have taken place:
 - At the Tenth International Seminar on Trade and Transport Facilitation: Multimodal Transport Data Exchange, Digital Transport Corridors, and Trade Facilitation,¹⁹ organized by UNECE (27–29 April 2020), business community and government representatives from Belarus, Lithuania and Ukraine demonstrated interest in working on multimodal data exchange in the Black Sea/Baltic Sea corridor and starting a pilot implementation. The seminar issued policy recommendations to that effect. It initiated collaboration with FIATA, freight forwarders in Ukraine, and UN/CEFACT experts, to develop an electronic equivalent of the FIATA multimodal Bill of Lading aligned with the UN/CEFACT standards;

¹⁴ See <https://unttc.org/stream/national-tf-committees-ece>.

¹⁵ Experts are exploring the possibility of developing standards for a “Bill of Lading” for inland water transport or an electronic equivalent to the consignment note under the Budapest Convention on the Contract for the Carriage of Goods by Inland Waterway (CMNI).

¹⁶ Experts are working on standards aligned with the UN/CEFACT Multi-Modal Transport Reference Data Model for the CIM/SMGS and SMGS railway consignment notes.

¹⁷ See <https://unttc.org/stream/electronic-trade-and-transport-documents-and-data>.

¹⁸ For a streamlined list of UN/CEFACT standards, see www.unece.org/unecefact/mainstandards.html.

¹⁹ <https://unece.org/trade/events/tenth-international-seminar-trade-and-transport-facilitation-multimodal-transport-data>.

- At the brainstorming session on data harmonization and modelling using UN/CEFACT standards,²⁰ organized by UNECE and the Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC) on 18 June 2020, experts from UNECE, EEC, and UN/CEFACT agreed to cooperate and use the window of opportunity created by COVID-19 to harmonize standards for data exchange; and
- At the regional seminar for the Western Balkans on data sharing and single window implementation²¹ (27–28 October 2020) experts from UNECE, UN/CEFACT, the Western Balkan countries' single window projects, the World Bank, the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) and others issued a set of recommendations on how to use UN/CEFACT semantic standards and reference data models in their single window projects.

8. Work on the UNDA COVID-19 project has strengthened collaboration with the European Commission, EEC, railway, air, and other sectorial organizations to advance the digitalization of multimodal transport data and document exchange with reference to the UN/CEFACT standards. Letters from the European Commission²² and ICAO²³ attest to their support for this initiative and for the UNDA COVID-19 project.

9. Due to restrictions caused by COVID-19, capacity-building seminars and subregional cooperation events have taken place online, and this will be the case for the foreseeable future. Information sessions on the objectives and results of the UNDA COVID-19 project will take place for the UNECE Sustainable Transport Division, the five United Nations Regional Commissions and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) – which are the agencies participating in the UNDA COVID-19 connectivity project – as well as the European Commission and other partners.

²⁰ <https://unece.org/trade/events/data-harmonization-and-modelling-using-uncefact-standards-and-reference-data-models>.

²¹ <https://unece.org/trade/events/third-technical-cooperation-workshop-western-balkans-single-window-and-data-sharing>.

²² The acting Director General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) of the European Commission sent a letter of support on 4 December 2020, coordinated with the Directorates General on Taxation and the Customs Union (DG TAXUD) and the Directorate General on Mobility and Transport (DG MOVE).

²³ Letter sent on 30 December 2020 by the Secretary-General of ICAO Ms. Fang Liu.