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Programme of work – Trade subprogramme’s programme of work for 2023 and outline of key components of the programme of work for 2024

Outline of key components of the Trade subprogramme’s programme of work for 2024

Note by the secretariat

Summary

Following the sequential review procedure adopted by the Executive Committee (EXCOM) of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the secretariat is presenting this document for the consideration of the member States. The member States’ recommendations will be reflected in the proposal for the programme plan for 2024.

I. Introduction

1. This document presents an outline of key components (objective, strategy and deliverables) of the programme of work of the Trade subprogramme (“the subprogramme”) for 2024. These components are based on the subprogramme-related section of the ECE proposed programme budget for 2023. The Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards (“the Committee”) is invited to consider this information and provide recommendations on these components, as necessary. Those modifications and/or member States’ recommendations agreed by the Committee and included in its decisions will be reflected in the proposed programme plan of the subprogramme for 2024. It will be prepared by the secretariat at the end of 2022 and included in the ECE proposed programme budget for 2024.

II. Objective

2. The objective to which the subprogramme contributes is to strengthen trade facilitation, electronic business, regulatory cooperation, standardization policies, agricultural quality standards and trade-related economic cooperation in the ECE region and beyond.

III. Strategy

3. The responsibility for the subprogramme is vested in the Economic Cooperation and Trade Division.

4. The strategy of the subprogramme is based on the implementation of core interlinked functions. The first function is international policy dialogue on reducing regulatory and procedural barriers to trade that hamper market access, including those caused by cumbersome procedures and substantial paperwork; differences in trade procedures, standards and documents; and divergent regulatory approaches and product standards. The second function is normative work to develop standards and recommendations in the areas of trade facilitation and e-business, agricultural quality standards and regulatory cooperation. The third function is focused on capacity-building and the sharing of best practices and lessons learned in all areas of work. Through its work, the subprogramme will contribute to the achievements of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to the topic of the forthcoming seventieth session of ECE on digital and green transformations for sustainable development.

5. The subprogramme will continue to carry out analytical evidence-based studies to identify regulatory and procedural barriers to trade and assist Governments in setting action-oriented recommendations for implementing the above-mentioned instruments. This will support member States’ work towards Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 9 and 12 among others.

6. In support of member States’ work towards SDGs 4, 5, 17 and others, the subprogramme will continue to promote a predictable and harmonized regulatory environment through strengthening regulatory cooperation and promoting standards and best practices in regulatory frameworks, risk management, conformity assessment and market surveillance. This will include an enhancement of activities around gender-responsive standards, which aim at providing a practical way forward for standards bodies wishing to make both their standards and the standards development process gender-responsive. In addition, it will further support capacity-building and dissemination on the use of standards and regulatory cooperation, notably with its Standards for SDGs Portal and its initiative on education on standards.

7. The subprogramme will continue to promote up-to-date agricultural quality standards and explanatory guidelines through its normative work in these areas. Mindful of 1.6 billion tonnes of food lost or wasted while more than 800 million people suffer from hunger worldwide, the subprogramme will also address food loss and waste, by promoting awareness on food loss reduction through policy dialogues, partnerships with international

organizations, technology-based initiatives (e.g. blockchain-based food loss application) etc. This will support member States' work towards SDG 12 among others.

8. To contribute to the objective and in support of SDGs 8 and 12 among others, the subprogramme will

- continue to promote simple, transparent and effective processes for global trade
- continue its normative work to develop standards and recommendations in the areas of trade facilitation and electronic business
- continue to facilitate international policy dialogue on establishing digital trading environments and ensuring compliance with the requirements of the multilateral trading system
- disseminate the instruments such as standards, recommendations and guidelines
- promote sustainable and resilient value chains and enhanced traceability and circularity, e.g. minimizing waste and maximizing the use of natural resources towards circular economy, through studies, policy dialogues, technology-based pilot initiatives (for example, blockchain-based traceability for textile value chains), etc.

9. The subprogramme plans to continue support to member States on issues related to the new normal after COVID-19 by further deepening its normative, technical assistance and capacity-building activities as well as international policy dialogue of the subprogramme on digitalization in order to support a sustainable and resilient trading environment. This will support member States' work towards SDGs 8 and 9 among others.

10. The above-mentioned work is expected to result in:

- (a) simplified trade processes, increased digitalization and greater productivity;
- (b) increased transparency and traceability of the value chains and reduction of waste promoting sustainable consumption and production patterns;
- (c) greater uptake of international standards by countries, in order to enable the implementation of internationally harmonized regulatory processes;
- (d) support for the public and private sectors in the member States to facilitate trade; and
- (e) increased gender equality in trade.

11. The planned support towards the new normal post-COVID-19 is expected to result in enhanced digitalization of trade (e.g. progress towards adoption of trade-related digital services like Single Window) to minimize epidemic transmission risks in the ECE member States and in support of the topic of digital and green transformations for sustainable development.

IV. Deliverables to be implemented in 2024

12. The below table provides an outline of deliverables that are expected to contribute to the attainment of the objective stated above.

<i>Category and subcategory</i>	<i>2023 planned</i>	<i>2024 planned</i>
A. Facilitation of the intergovernmental process and expert bodies		
Parliamentary documentation (number of documents)	110	110
1. Documentation for the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards	13	13
2. Documentation for the Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies	13	14
3. Documentation for the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards	60	60

<i>Category and subcategory</i>	<i>2023 planned</i>	<i>2024 planned</i>
4. Documentation for the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business	24	24
Substantive services for meetings (number of three-hour meetings)	91	103
5. Meetings of the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards and its Bureau	7	10
6. Meetings of Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies	5	9
7. Meetings of Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards and its specialized sections	26	26
8. Meetings of the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business	53	53
B. Generation and transfer of knowledge		
Field and technical cooperation projects (number of projects)	4	4
9. Projects on enhancing usage and uptake of standards for sustainable development, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls	-	1
10. Project on food loss and agriculture	1	1
11. Projects on trade facilitation	3	3
Seminars, workshops, and training events (number of days)	18	18
12. Workshops for policymakers and experts in low- and middle-income countries in the ECE region on trade procedures, supply chain management, conformity assessment and market surveillance and gender-inclusiveness	3	6
13. Seminars for standardization and inspection agencies and other stakeholders in transition economies and developing countries in the ECE region or beyond on ECE agricultural quality standards	6	6
14. Seminars for policymakers and experts in transition economies and developing countries in the ECE region or beyond on support for the implementation of trade-related standards, recommendations, and guidelines	9	9
Publications (number of publications)	7	7
15. Publication on the regulatory and procedural barriers to trade in a country to be decided	1	1
16. Publication on the summary of ECE trade facilitation best practice and recommendations	1	1
17. Publications on the guides on trade standards in the following areas: traceability and risk management; e-business; education; gender-inclusiveness and sustainable development	2	2
18. Publication on agricultural trade and supply chains	1	1
19. Publications on the trade facilitation recommendations, standards, and strategies to support policymakers	2	3
Technical materials (number of materials)	8	8
20. Guidelines on cross-border trade	1	1
21. Material on trade standards and/or regulatory cooperation	2	2
22. Standards and guidelines on agricultural quality	4	4
23. Training material on trade facilitation and electronic business	1	1
C. Substantive deliverables		
Consultation, advice, and advocacy: advisory services to government officials and other stakeholders in at least 10 ECE member States on trade facilitation and electronic business, agricultural quality standards, regulatory cooperation and standardization and regulatory and procedural barriers to trade.		

<i>Category and subcategory</i>	<i>2023 planned</i>	<i>2024 planned</i>
<p>Fact-finding, monitoring and investigating missions: fact-finding missions in 3 ECE member States on trade facilitation and electronic business, agricultural quality standards, regulatory cooperation and standardization and regulatory and procedural barriers to trade.</p>		
<p>D. Communication deliverables</p>		
<p>Outreach programmes, special events and information materials: booklets, fact sheets and information brochures reaching at least 17 ECE programme countries, more than 1,000 public and private sector experts.</p>		
<p>External and media relations: press releases for the subprogramme for regional access, publication launching events and articles in external newsletters.</p>		
<p>Digital platforms and multimedia content: update and maintenance of the website and databases, which is provided to approximately 500,000 users accessing web pages, databases etc.</p>		