The Regional Organizations Cooperation Mechanism (ROC-TF) is a cooperation mechanism between the subregional, regional, United Nations and other international organizations involved in trade facilitation activities in the Asia and Pacific region. The overall goal of the mechanism is to facilitate the exchange of information, identify synergies and promote collaboration for effective implementation of trade facilitation activities.

**IN FOCUS:**

**Asia Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum (APTFF) 2014**

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), together with the Ministry of Commerce of Thailand, will hold the sixth APTFF on 24 and 25 September 2014 in Bangkok, in conjunction with the annual Thailand International Logistics Fair (TILOG). This year’s Forum, with the theme of “trade facilitation for inclusive development”, will address various aspects of trade facilitation, including implementation of World Trade Organization Agreement on Trade Facilitation. The APTFF 2014 will be held back-to-back with other trade facilitation events, such as capacity building workshops and site visits. More details are available at: [http://unnext.unescap.org/tfforum14.asp](http://unnext.unescap.org/tfforum14.asp), including online registration.

**ESCAP 70th Commission Session Established Intergovernmental Steering Group on Cross-Border Paperless Trade.**

The 70th Session of the ESCAP Commission endorsed the decision to establish an Intergovernmental Steering Group on Cross-Border Paperless Trade Facilitation. For more information see page 7.

**Upcoming Third Annual ROC-TF Meeting**

The 3rd annual meeting of the Regional Organization Cooperation Mechanism for Trade Facilitation (ROC-TF) in Asia and the Pacific will take place on the 23rd of September 2014 at the UNCC, Bangkok, Thailand. The meeting will bring together the ROC-TF participating organizations. This year’s ROC-TF meeting will be held in conjunction with the Global Facilitation Partnership for Transport and Trade (GFP) Steering Committee Meeting. For more information see: [http://www.unescap.org/our-work/trade-investment/trade-facilitation/roc-tf](http://www.unescap.org/our-work/trade-investment/trade-facilitation/roc-tf).
WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA): International Organizations Stand Ready To Support

International Organizations issue joint statement reaffirming commitment to support implementation of the TFA. The International Trade Centre (ITC), Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), UN Regional Commissions of ECE, ECLAC, ESCAP and ESCWA, World Bank Group and World Customs Organization (WCO) released a joint statement on the 22nd of July 2014 in Geneva on the *Coordinated Assistance for Implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement*. The statement reaffirmed the commitment of the organizations to support, in a comprehensive and coordinated manner, the implementation of the TFA in developing, transition and least developed economies. To view statement, please see: [http://wto.org/english/news_e/news14_e/tfjointstatment_e.pdf](http://wto.org/english/news_e/news14_e/tfjointstatment_e.pdf)

World Bank launched a Trade Facilitation Support Programme (TFSP) on 10th June 2014. The aim of the TFSP is to help developing countries reform their trade facilitation practices in a manner consistent with the main components of the TFA. The multi-donor funded program is anchored by the WBG 2011-2021 Trade Strategy, specifically the Trade Facilitation, Transport Logistics and Trade Finance pillars therein. TFSP also seeks to enhance private sector competitiveness, thus leading to increased trade, investments and job creation. For more information, please see: [www.TradeFacilitationSupportProgram.org](http://www.TradeFacilitationSupportProgram.org)

The World Trade Organization (WTO) launched the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility (TFAF) on the 22nd of July 2014. The requirement for countries to implement the TFA is directly linked to their ability to do so. This is the first criterion of its kind in WTO history. The agreement also states that assistance should be provided to countries, in order to build their capacity. The TFAF aims to build the capacity of developing countries and least developed countries to reap the benefits of the new WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement. For more information, please see: [http://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news14_e/fac_22jul14_e.htm](http://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news14_e/fac_22jul14_e.htm)

On the 22nd of July, the International Trade Centre (ITC) announced the establishment of its Trade Facilitation Programme that will assist developing countries, LDCs as well as their small and medium-sized enterprises to better understand the World Trade Organization’s (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) and undertake the necessary steps to effectively implement its provisions. For more information, please see: [http://www.intracen.org/news/ITC-launches-Trade-Facilitation-Programme-to-help-developing-countries-implement-WTO-agreement/#sthash.0MchpzQ8.dpuf](http://www.intracen.org/news/ITC-launches-Trade-Facilitation-Programme-to-help-developing-countries-implement-WTO-agreement/#sthash.0MchpzQ8.dpuf)

As a side-event to the APTFF, ESCAP will be organizing a capacity workshop in collaboration with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) on the 26th of September 2014 in order to build the capacity of countries within Asia and the Pacific on TFA implementation. The workshop will focus on the single window provisions as well as the perishable goods provisions of the TFA. For more information, please see: [http://unnext.unescap.org/cbtfa.asp](http://unnext.unescap.org/cbtfa.asp)
ADB and ESCAP

**ADB-ESCAP National Training Workshops on Trade and Transport Facilitation Monitoring Mechanism (TTFMM) in Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal**

Under the SASEC (South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation) framework, ESCAP and ADB are working closely with the Governments of Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal to establish an Integrated and Sustainable Trade and Transport Facilitation Monitoring Mechanism (TTFMM) in each of the country, building on a joint ADB-ESCAP Business Process Analysis (BPA) study of trade procedures along key SASEC trade corridors conducted in 2012-13.

As an important step to establish TTFMM, three national training workshops were organized in Phuentsholing, Bhutan on 10-14 March, in Kathmandu, Nepal on 15-17 April and in Dhaka, Bangladesh on 28-29 April by national trade (and transport) facilitation committees, ADB and ESCAP. The workshops in each country were attended by over 40 participants, including the relevant government officials, industry and private sector. Experts from ESCAP, ADB, World Customs Organization (WCO), research institutes and industry shared their expertise at the workshops.

The workshops agreed on the corridors and products to be included for the TTFMM baseline study as well as institutional arrangement and timeframe for undertaking TTFMM.

Planning work for the TTFMM baseline study is ongoing. TTFMM has been jointly developed by ESCAP and ADB, with an aim to providing the countries with a guide on establishing a sustainable trade and transport facilitation monitoring mechanism. The key functions of the TTFMM are two-fold: (1) to formulate/update and prioritize recommendations for advancing trade facilitation; and (2) to measure and assess progress in trade facilitation. It is emphasized that TTFMM should be anchored with national trade and transport facilitation committee (or an equivalent institution) and rely upon national resources to make it sustainable and affordable. Underpinning TTFMM is the methodology called Business Process Analysis Plus (BPA+) which is built on the Business Process Analysis methodology, supplemented by Time Release Studies (TRS) and Time-Cost-Distance (TCD) methodologies. A more detailed discussion of TTFMM is available at: [http://www.unescap.org/resources/towards-national-integrated-and-sustainable-trade-and-transport-facilitation-monitoring](http://www.unescap.org/resources/towards-national-integrated-and-sustainable-trade-and-transport-facilitation-monitoring).

**ESCAP and WORLD BANK**

**UNNExT, ARTNeT and World Bank hold Joint Seminar on Logistics Performance Index.**

The Asia-Pacific Research and Training Network on Trade (ARTNeT) and the UN Network of Experts for Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific (UNNExT) and the World Bank organized a joint seminar on the *Logistics Performance Index (LPI) Report: The Gap Persists.* The seminar discussed the results of the 2014 World Bank Logistics Performance Index, highlighting the ongoing challenges in the region related to trade facilitation logistics and connectivity. It also noted that the LPI is an overall metric for evaluating supply chain efficiency and can provide broad indications on problem areas along the supply chain. To view the publication, please see: [http://lpi.worldbank.org/sites/default/files/LPI_Report_2014.pdf](http://lpi.worldbank.org/sites/default/files/LPI_Report_2014.pdf)

**ESCAP-World Bank Trade Cost Database**

The joint bilateral international trade cost database has been updated with 2012 data. Final checks are ongoing before public release at: [http://artnet.unescap.org/databases.html#first](http://artnet.unescap.org/databases.html#first)
WCO and ADB

WCO and ADB hold Joint Subregional Train-the-Trainer Workshop on Customs Valuation in Colombo, Sri Lanka

This five-day joint subregional workshop was held in Colombo, Sri Lanka from the 3-7 February. It was designed to support the participating countries’ efforts to strengthen efficient management of customs valuation through use of post clearance audit (PCA). Robust implementation of PCA is requested of all contracting parties to the Revised Kyoto Convention, through Chapter 6 of the General Annex, and helps ensure both effective trade facilitation and the proper collection of national revenue. ADB and the World Customs Organization, Asia Pacific Regional Office for Capacity Building (WCO-ROCB A/P) developed a multi-year assistance project for SASEC countries to help enhance their respective customs valuation systems, under which the Colombo workshop was the first subregional event. The primary aims were to (i) establish a pool of national experts for sustainable development on valuation control ideally through PCA; and (ii) discuss next steps for implementing PCA.

A total of 17 participants from customs administrations of 6 SASEC countries Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka participated, together with 7 additional participants from the host country Sri Lanka. Delegations created draft national action plans to enhance management of customs valuation and agreed broadly on the next steps, including the holding of national workshops (where possible) and a second subregional workshop on customs valuation, to be conducted in October 2014 in Male, the Maldives. For more information, please see: http://sasec.asia/index.php?page=event&eid=104&url=wco-adb-joint-subregional-train-the-trainer-workshop-on-customs-valuation

National Workshops on Revised Kyoto Convention in Brunei Darussalam and Bhutan

WCO conducted a National Workshop on Revised Kyoto Convention (RKC) on 13-16 January 2014, which was attended by 29 customs officers of Brunei Customs. WCO Asia Pacific Regional Office for Capacity Building (ROCB A/P) has been working to accelerate its members’ accession to the RKC in the Asia Pacific region. The national workshop in Brunei Darussalam aimed to provide the targeted technical support to Brunei Customs in order to get national legislation in line with RKC provisions. The workshop was also able to provide a clear roadmap for future accession to the RKC by the Brunei Customs.

ADB and WCO also held a National Workshop on Revised Kyoto Convention Implementation in Thimphu, Bhutan from 9-12 June 2014. The workshop was held in conjunction with Bhutan’s Department of Revenue and Customs and aimed to support Bhutan’s accession to the RKC as well as the practical implementation of the General and identified Specific Annexes of the RKC. A stakeholder consultation also informed members of the private sector and other government agencies on how Bhutan’s accession to the RKC would impact import and export procedures. ADB, in cooperation with WCO ROCB A/P, will continue to support Bhutan’s Department of Revenue and Customs and the Government of Bhutan in trade facilitation activities.
ORGANIZATION ACTIVITIES UPDATE

Asian Development Bank (ADB)

**ADB – CAREC (Asian Development Bank – Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation)**

*Promoting Cooperation in Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Measures for Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC).* This project promotes reforms and modernization in the SPS measures consistent with international standards; and identifies priority investment needs to modernize SPS measures and their application. Assessments are ongoing in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, and Uzbekistan. For more information: [http://www.adb.org/projects/46019-001/main](http://www.adb.org/projects/46019-001/main)

*Facilitation of Regional Transit Trade in Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC):* This project will examine the potential for establishing effective and affordable a corridor-based customs transit regime in the CAREC region. Furthermore, there will be an assessment of the feasibility of implementing a pilot customs transit regime along selected priority corridors. For more information: [http://www.adb.org/projects/46026-001/main](http://www.adb.org/projects/46026-001/main)

*Coordinated Border Management for Results in Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC):* This project supports time release studies (TRS) analyses to establish the causes of cross-border delays related to border control and clearance procedures. It will also help expand the number and scope of joint customs control (JCC) pilots; improve coordination between border control agencies and move towards coordinated border management in CAREC countries. For more information: [http://www.adb.org/projects/47082-001/main](http://www.adb.org/projects/47082-001/main)

*Aligning Customs Trade Facilitation Measures with Best Practices in CAREC:* In this project CAREC seeks to support the implementation of best practices in customs reforms. Moreover, the project supports the access to and compliance with the Revised Kyoto Convention. It also aims to strengthen risk management systems and information sharing between CAREC customs administrations. For more information: [http://www.adb.org/projects/47081-001/main](http://www.adb.org/projects/47081-001/main)

*Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) Regional Improvement of Border Services (RIBS) Project in the Kyrgyz Republic and the Republic of Tajikistan:* This project supports the CAREC Transport and Trade Facilitation Strategy, which aims to streamline transport, trade logistics, customs, and other border control operations in Central Asia. The project outputs include the development of national single windows (NSWs) and the improvement of the physical infrastructure at the border crossing points (BCPs) along priority CAREC corridors in the Kyrgyz and Tajikistan. The aim is to improve working conditions and performance of border management personnel, and reduce processing time and cost. For more information: [http://www.adb.org/projects/46124-001/main](http://www.adb.org/projects/46124-001/main)

**ADB – SASEC (South Asia Sub-regional Economic Cooperation)**

*SASEC adopt Trade Facilitation Strategic Framework (TFSF) for 2014-2018*  
The Trade Facilitation Strategic Framework of 2014-18 supports the mission of the SASEC Transport and Trade Facilitation Strategy “to promote the prosperity of the subregion by facilitating the efficient movement of trade across the borders”. The Trade Facilitation Strategic Framework focuses on five priority areas, namely: (i) customs modernization and harmonization; (ii) standards and conformity assessment strengthening; (iii) cross-border facilities improvement; (iv) through transport facilitation; and (v) institution and capacity building. TFSF priority area of customs modernization and harmonization includes the following strategic thrusts: (i) simplifying and expediting border formalities to facilitate movement of goods, vehicles and people; (ii) increasing application of ICT processing; and (iii) developing the National Single Window (NSW) system to link all border agencies with the trading community. To view the TFSF, please see: [http://www.sasec.asia/uploads/news/sasec_tradefacilitation_strategic_framework.pdf](http://www.sasec.asia/uploads/news/sasec_tradefacilitation_strategic_framework.pdf)
Second Meeting of the SASEC Customs Subgroup (SCS-2)
The Second Meeting of the SASEC Customs Subgroup (SCS-2) was held on 22–23 May 2014 in Kathmandu, Nepal. The Meeting broadly endorsed the projects and initiatives in the Work Plan 2014-2015, following the March 2014 endorsement by the SASEC countries of the SASEC Trade Facilitation Strategic Framework (TFSF) 2014-2018. The Work Plan endorsed by the Subgroup consists of seven subregional projects and 20 national projects that would translate the strategic thrusts in the SASEC TFSF into concrete outputs and outcomes. Furthermore, the Meeting identified priority subregional capacity building activities. ADB and the WCO will collaborate with the SASEC countries in implementing the capacity building activities. India has also offered to share its expertise and experience in the areas of customs valuation and risk management under a South-South modality. The Meeting also agreed for ADB to carry out a study on the electronic exchange of trade data between SASEC countries. A knowledge sharing event was also held on 23 May following the Meeting of the Customs Subgroup to share expertise and experience on ICT Applications for Customs, in line with one of the strategic thrusts for customs in the TFSF.

Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)

APEC Sub-Committee on Customs Procedures (SCCP)
The APEC Sub-Committee on Customs Procedures (SCCP) held its First Meeting of the year on February 19-21 in Ningbo, China. During the Ningbo meeting, the SCCP members adopted the proposal “Advancing Supply Chain Connectivity through Mutual Recognition, Mutual Assistance and Mutual Sharing: Framework for Implementing SCCP Outcomes”. This blueprint looks to raise the profile of the SCCP in APEC, accelerate SCCP progress towards the Bogor Goals, and strengthen SCCP’s effort to implement the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation in the Asia-Pacific region. Additionally, at Ningbo, SCCP members welcomed the breakthrough of Doha Round Negotiation in Bali in December 2013, and made a joint commitment to fully implement the provisions of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA). Accordingly, the SCCP members decided to set TFA implementation as a standing topic on the agenda, emphasizing the importance of capacity building for TFA implementation.

Regarding the Supply-Chain Connectivity Framework, at the Ningbo meeting, SCCP members reviewed the advance of the diagnostic reports on Chokepoints 4 (Inefficient clearance of goods at Customs; Lack of coordination among border agencies, especially relating to clearance of regulated goods ‘at the border’); 5 (Burdensome customs documentation and other procedures (including for preferential trade); and 8 (Lack of regional cross-border customs-transit arrangements). Within the actions taken to address Chokepoint 8 the SCCP is preparing a workshop where government and private sector experts will identify best practices and positive experiences for regional cross-border customs-transit arrangements. The objective of the workshop is to draft relevant guidelines on the matter. The workshop is to be held on August 10th and 11th 2014, in Beijing, China.

Oceania Customs Organisation Secretariat (OCO)

OCO conducts Rules of Origin Training workshop From 24 to 28 April, 2014, OCO conducted a Rules of Origin (ROO) Training Workshop was held at the Customs Conference Room in Koror, Palau, attended by 19 participants including Customs and Trade Officials with key stakeholders such as the Customs Brokers and Shipping agents. The objective of the training was to build capacity and to familiarize officials with their roles and responsibilities in facilitating trade under any Free Trade Agreement (FTA). Officials were provided with concepts pertaining to ROO, with relevant examples and case studies to enhance their knowledge on how ROO is determined and the criteria’s involved in facilitating exports from the region.

The workshop was supported by European Union funding under the Trade Facilitation in Customs Cooperation (TFCC) Project and ongoing assistance will be provided by OCO.
**United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)**

**70th ESCAP Commission establishes Intergovernmental Steering Group on Cross-border Paperless Trade**

ESCAP organized the Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Meeting on a Regional Arrangement for the Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade on 22-24 April 2014 in Bangkok, Thailand. This was organized in accordance with the mandates contained the ESCAP resolution 68/3 and in the report of the Committee on Trade and Investment on its third session, the Meeting reviewed and improved the draft text of a regional arrangement on facilitation of cross-border paperless trade. It also decided to establish an interim intergovernmental steering group on cross-border paperless trade facilitation, which would be tasked with: (a) further improving the draft text of the regional arrangement as a potential intergovernmental agreement; (b) preparing a draft road map for the implementation of substantive provisions in the draft text; and (c) other functions as agreed by the steering group.

The decision of the Meeting to establish an interim intergovernmental steering group on cross-border paperless trade facilitation was subsequently endorsed by the 70th Session of the Commission, held from 4 to 8 August 2014.


**SATNET Asia trains Public and Private Stakeholders about Electronic Traceability for Facilitating Trade of Agro-food products and Smallholder Integration in South and Southeast Asia**

The Trade and Investment Division (TID) of ESCAP organized four training events titled Training on Electronic Traceability for Agricultural Trade Facilitation and Smallholder Integration in Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar and Nepal during April and July 2014. The training events were organized under the SATNET Asia (Network for Knowledge Transfer on Sustainable Agriculture Technologies and Improved Market Linkages in South and South-East Asia) project. They were organized in collaboration with the relevant ministries and departments including ministry of commerce, ministry of agriculture and food regulatory authority. More than hundred participants from public and private sector including department of agriculture, commerce, inspection agencies, customs, agro-food exporters, producers, freight forwarders and research agencies attended the training. Traceability, as explained by Codex Alimentarius, is the ability to follow the movement of a food item through specified stage(s) of production, processing and distribution. Exporters in developing countries are required to implement Traceability to be able to export their products in Europe.

The training was first of its kind in all the four countries. There was a significant interest from the local partners and participants on the topic. Bangladesh was the only country practicing traceability (not electronic) for their shrimp exports. Other countries did not have any such experience. The training events started with a presentation on Agricultural Trade Facilitation in the Asia-Pacific region and Business Process Analysis (BPA) studies in respective countries. The main topic covered by the training included: the theory of electronic traceability, food information...
systems and design, unique identification, basic supply chain traceability, practical exercise in groups, implementation strategies, what’s next in e-traceability. Public and private sector representatives also delivered presentations on agricultural trade facilitation including SPS certification and capacity.

Two more such training events are to be organized in Lao PDR and Cambodia on 13-15 and 18-20 August respectively.

**World Customs Organization (WCO)**

**WCO Regional Workshop on Leadership in Single Window and WCO Data Model**

The WCO Regional Workshop on Leadership in Single Window and WCO Data Model was held from 5 to 9 May 2014 in Brisbane, Australia under the sponsorship of the Customs Cooperation Fund, Japan (CCF/Japan) and in collaboration with the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service (ACBPS). It was attended by 36 participants from 24 Customs administrations in the Asia Pacific region and 3 additional participants from the United States and Namibia.

The Workshop was aimed at senior executives in Customs administrations and was combined with the WCO IT Conference & Exhibition 2014. Prior to the two-day lecture sessions, participants were invited to attend the three-day WCO IT Conference & Exhibition and to interact with the exhibitors in order to help them contribute to the final session of the Workshop with regard to “Developing a list of features for a National Single Window”. For more information, please see:

IN FOCUS: Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2014: Regional Connectivity for Shared Prosperity (ESCAP, August 2014).

The survey finds that Asia-Pacific region is already relatively well connected in terms of its transport infrastructure networks, despite there being wide variations in the quality of the infrastructure. However, the region’s transport networks are not yet fully operationalized or integrated, leading to underutilization of networks, especially railways. Non-physical barriers at borders also persist, increasing trade and transport costs and delaying the movement of goods and people. By investing in intermodal facilities, such as dry ports, as well as in better physical linkages between different modes, Governments could increase transport options for shippers and traders. Regional intermodal transport networks will play an important role in trade from landlocked developing countries and small island developing States. Greater use of ICT applications for trade and transport facilitation, both behind and at borders, would also improve the efficiency of freight movements and pave the way for the development of paperless trade and e-logistics.

This report looks at the ways in which better regional connectivity can contribute to the sustainable and inclusive development of the Asian and Pacific region. It finds that regional connectivity is inherently multifaceted, and that the benefits of this connectivity may be enhanced by combining different elements. Moreover, it suggests that networks are likely to become more integrated and interdependent as they evolve. Governments therefore have to develop cross-sectoral policies on connectivity, at national, subregional and regional levels. To support further integration of the region, Governments must take the lead in establishing robust institutional frameworks to plan and implement the regional connectivity agenda. Given the significant role played by the private sector and civil society in shaping the region’s economic and social development, Governments also need to explore ways to reach out and involve other stakeholders in the development and implementation of such mechanisms.

Trade Connectivity and Explaining Differences in Subregional Trade Performance

In the area of trade and transport connectivity the countries in Asia-Pacific region have taken significant measures to liberalize their markets. The differences in subregional trade performance are therefore only partly explained by preferential and regional trade and investment agreements. Other factors, particularly trade costs, significantly influence business decisions on where to invest and trade. This result is confirmed by the ESCAP-World Bank Trade Cost Database (see table 1).

This database provides a comprehensive aggregate measure of all costs involved in trading goods internationally with another partner (that is, bilaterally) relative to those involved in trading goods domestically. It therefore captures not only international transport costs and tariffs but also other trade costs, such as the direct and indirect costs associated with cumbersome import or export procedures and inefficient logistics or payment services, as well as differences in currencies and languages.
Table 1: Intraregional and extraregional comprehensive trade costs (excluding tariff costs) in the Asian and Pacific region, 2006-2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>ASEAN-4</th>
<th>East Asia-3</th>
<th>North and Central Asia</th>
<th>Pacific Islands Developing Economies</th>
<th>SAARC-4</th>
<th>Australia - New Zealand</th>
<th>EU-3</th>
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<td>(17)</td>
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</table>


Notes: Trade costs may be interpreted as tariff equivalents. Percentage changes in trade costs between 2000-2005 and 2006-2011 are in parentheses.


According to the above-mentioned database, comprehensive trade costs between South Asian economies (SAARC-4: Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka) and South-East Asian economies (ASEAN-4: Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand), at 124, are higher than those between either subregion and the European Union or the United States. Meanwhile, the data also suggest that trade costs between Pacific island developing economies and all other subregions are significantly higher than those between other subregions, while trade costs between ASEAN-4 economies and North and Central Asia are also relatively high.

The analysis shows that trade costs within several of these subregions are also high. For example, trade costs within North and Central Asia, Pacific island developing economies and SAARC-4 economies are more than double the trade costs between China, Japan and the Republic of Korea. Bringing these costs down within subregions is therefore as important as addressing costs between subregions.

Analysis of Informal Obstacles to Cross-Border Economic Activity in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, ADB Working Paper No. 130, Published May 2014

This study aims at addressing the issues surrounding the prevalence of informal trade barriers in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. While it appears to be logical that the strongest economies of Central Asia should increase trade volume with neighbouring countries, in reality the potential for intensifying cross-border trade is barely being realized. This paper attempts to shed light on trade barriers in key industries in both countries, including manufacturing, transport, and agriculture. The paper places special emphasis on informal barriers and the tools companies use to overcome those barriers. The paper is based on a survey of 108 companies in both countries and the output of a roundtable discussion in Kazakhstan with representatives of companies and other experts in the above-mentioned industries.


WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation: Assessing the Level of Ambition and Likely Impacts, ADB Working Paper No. 141, Published July 2014

At the Ninth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO) held in Bali on 3–6 December 2013, the ministers agreed upon the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA). This working paper assesses the level of ambition of the TFA from two angles. First, the use of softening language in each provision is examined. Second, the final agreement is compared against the draft text prepared before the Bali conference. Then, the paper considers the likely legal, economic, capacity-building, and reform-inducing impacts of the TFA.

http://aric.adb.org/publications/workingpaperseries

Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade Implementation: 2013/14 Asia-Pacific Update

The Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) adopted by the WTO member countries at the Bali Ministerial Conference in December 2013 highlights the importance of trade facilitation for international trade and the global economy. This paper produced by ESCAP provides a unique set of data on the progress made by 29 countries in Asia and the Pacific in implementing various trade facilitation and paperless trade measures in 2013/14, as well as estimates of the benefits from moving forward with implementation.

The study reveals that, at the regional level, automation and paperless trade, including establishment of national single window, were the key focus of trade facilitation reforms in 2013. At the subregional level, East and Northeast Asia and ASEAN lead implementation of trade facilitation measures, followed by Central Asia (including the Russian Federation) and South Asia (SAARC).

Enabling cross-border paperless trade was also identified as the most challenging task in advancing trade facilitation in Asia-Pacific. The study highlighted the need for timely conclusion of regional arrangements to facilitate cross-border recognition and exchange of trade-related electronic data and documents, as discussed by countries of the region under ESCAP Resolution 68/3. The empirical analysis included in the paper reveals that direct trade costs for containerized goods in the region, excluding international transport costs between seaports, amount to approximately US$ 159 billion annually and that full implementation of trade facilitation measures included in the survey could lower such costs by 20% on average, amounting to savings of at least US$ 31 billion every year. It also reveals that full implementation of trade facilitation measures in the 14 landlocked developing and/or least developed countries (LLDCs and/or LDCs) included in the study would enable these countries to collectively reduce direct trade costs for containerized goods by US$ 3 billion per annum. More detailed information is available at:

APEC

Perceptions on the Use of Non-Tariff Measures within the APEC Region, Published June 2014

This study aims to achieve a better understanding of the implications in the use of non-tariff measures (NTMs) and raise awareness on how it is possible to achieve legitimate objectives by using policy alternatives that facilitate rather than restrict trade and investment, thereby assisting APEC economies to move closer to attaining the Bogor Goals. The study includes a literature review on the discussions to define and classify an NTM as well as on the legitimacy of these measures. [http://publications.apec.org/publication-detail.php?pub_id=1531](http://publications.apec.org/publication-detail.php?pub_id=1531)

Outcome Report Symposium on APEC Connectivity Blueprint (Qingdao, China – 12 May 2014), Published June 2014

The Symposium on APEC Connectivity Blueprint on the sidelines of the Second Senior Officials’ Meeting (SOM 2) was held in Qingdao, China on 12 May 2014. The symposium was organised to help inform member economies on the specifics of connectivity and how it will help shape future APEC work streams. The symposium also aimed to draw insights from experts who have been working on specific technical issues relating to connectivity such as monitoring and evaluation, targeting and benchmarking, and how to create successful review mechanisms and oversight structures. This report highlights the key outcomes of the symposium, providing a brief summary of the messages in each session and synopses of the speakers’ presentations. [http://publications.apec.org/publication-detail.php?pub_id=1532](http://publications.apec.org/publication-detail.php?pub_id=1532)

ESCAP

Trade facilitation potential of Asian transit agreements in the context of the WTO, Working paper series, Published January 2014

This paper examines how freedom of transit and transit facilitation are addressed in trade and transport (as well as transit-specific) agreements in the ESCAP region. The objective is to identify good practices and understand the extent to which existing agreements meet the transit facilitation provisions set out in the draft text of the WTO trade facilitation agreement (TFA). Following an overview of the provisions on transit found in 153 preferential trade agreements involving ESCAP countries, the study provides a more detailed analysis of a sample of 19 international transport and transit agreements in Asia in terms of their trade facilitation potential. [http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/swp114.pdf](http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/swp114.pdf)

Estimating the Benefits of Cross-Border Paperless Trade, Published June 2014

This report estimates the possible economic benefits—export gains, and cost savings—from partial or full implementation of this set of measures. The approach of this report is to conduct counterfactual simulations: “what if” exercises based on the current reality of cross-border paperless trade implementation, and two ambitious but realistic reform scenarios. [http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Benefits%20of%20Cross-Border%20Paperless%20Trade.pdf](http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Benefits%20of%20Cross-Border%20Paperless%20Trade.pdf)

Enabling Participation of SMEs in International Trade and Production Networks: Trade Facilitation, Trade Finance and Communication Technology, Working Paper, Published June 2014

This study aimed at identifying key factors affecting SME participation in direct export and international production networks (IPNs), both globally and in Asia and the Pacific. A global dataset of firm-level data from developing countries was analyzed to identify the main obstacles to establishment and operation of direct and indirect small and medium size exporters. Logit models of SME export and IPN participation revealed the importance of several trade facilitation and related factors. The importance of modern information technology and international quality
certification appear to be particularly crucial to participation in IPNs with SMEs using both at least 13% more likely to be involved in such networks. Exporting SMEs both globally as well as in the Asia-pacific region reported access to finance as the key obstacle to their business operations.

http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/AWP%20No.%20146.pdf


The Trade Facilitation Agreement adopted by the WTO member countries at the Bali Ministerial Conference in December 2013 highlights the importance of trade facilitation for international trade and the global economy. This paper provides a unique set of data on the progress made by 29 countries in Asia and the Pacific in implementing various trade facilitation and paperless trade measures in 2013/14, as well as estimates of the benefits from moving forward with implementation.


Impacts of trade facilitation measures on poverty and inclusive growth: Case studies from Asia, Published August 2014.

In the post-crisis world, new drivers of growth are required to drive further reductions in poverty. This new ARTNeT book examines the role of trade facilitation measures in lowering barriers to trade and raising incomes. In addition to a review of relevant literature and theoretical findings, empirical case studies are presented from across the region including: Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Thailand, and China.

http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/impacts%20of%20trade%20facilitation.pdf

Trade Performance and Competitiveness: Selected Issues Relevant for Asian Developing Economies. Published August 2014

Structural transformation, economic diversification and logistics are some of the issues explored in this new ARTNeT book. The volume's essays use various methodologies to provide new perspectives on the region's growth and prospects. Individual chapter's focus on: trade policy in Nepal; logistics in Bangladesh and Thailand; Sri Lankan exports; and SMEs in Cambodia.

http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Trade%20performance_0.pdf

OECD

The WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement – Potential Impact on Trade Costs: Trade and Agriculture Directorate, OECD, Published February 2014

A WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation was concluded at the Bali Ministerial in December 2013. The OECD has since re-calculated the potential benefits of the Agreement for various groups of countries, using the OECD Trade Facilitation Indicators (TFIs) and taking into account the fact that, in reaching agreement, WTO Members set aside a few provisions from their original agenda and cast a number of others on a “best endeavours” basis.

UNCTAD

Port Management Case Studies: UNCTAD Port Management Series, Published February 2014

This publication presents the dissertations from the past cycle of the English-speaking network of the Train For Trade Port Training Programme (2011–2013). The document is structured in two parts. The first chapter gives background information on the Port Training Programme, in particular the English-speaking network, and explains the dissertation process. The second chapter focuses on the results of the research done by the participants and provides summaries of the best three dissertations from each member country: Ghana, Indonesia, the Maldives, Namibia and the United Republic of Tanzania.


WORLD BANK

Trade and Transport Corridor Management Toolkit, Published May 2014

Trade and transport corridors—major routes that facilitate the movement of people and goods between regions and between countries—have existed for millennia. They enable regions and countries to offer high-capacity transport systems and services that reduce trade and transport costs by creating economies of scale. Regional corridors are particularly important to landlocked countries, often providing the only overland routes to regional and international markets. Despite a long and complex history, guidance is often lacking on how to design, determine the components to include, and analyze the impact of corridor projects. The Trade and Transport Corridor Management Toolkit fills this void. The Toolkit synthesizes the experiences of the World Bank and other development agencies in assessing, designing, implementing, and evaluating the impact of trade and transport corridor projects. It saves project developers the task of looking for the best available tools and ensures greater consistency to facilitate comparison and benchmarking.


The Report focuses on some of the most pressing questions policy makers are asking. What role should the state take in helping people manage risks? When should this role consist of direct interventions, and when should it consist of providing an enabling environment? How can governments improve their own risk management, and what happens when they fail or lack capacity, as in many fragile and conflict-affected states? Through what mechanisms can risk management be mainstreamed into the development agenda? The WDR 2014 provides policy makers with insights and recommendations to address these difficult questions. It should serve to guide the dialogue, operations, and contributions from key development actors—from civil society and national governments to the donor community and international development organizations.

UPCOMING EVENTS

REGIONAL

- Sub-Committee on Customs Procedures (SCCP) Chokepoint 8 Workshop, Beijing, China, 10 - 11 August 2014 (APEC)
- Sub-Committee on Customs Procedures (SCCP) Virtual Working Group (VWG) Meeting, Beijing, China, 11 August 2014 (APEC)
- Sub-Committee on Customs Procedures (SCCP) Meeting, Beijing, China, 13 - 15 August 2014 (APEC)
- 5th CFCFA Annual Meeting, Urumqi, PRC, 1-2 September 2014 (ADB-CAREC)
- CFCFA Business Networking Forum, Urumqi, PRC, 3 September 2014 (ADB-CAREC)
- 13th Customs Cooperation Committee (CCC) Meeting, Issyk Kul, Kyrgyz Republic, 22-23 September 2014, (ADB-CAREC)
- Regional Organizations Cooperation Mechanism for Trade (ROC-TF) Annual Meeting, Bangkok, Thailand, 23 September 2014 (ESCAP)
- Asia Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum 2014, Bangkok, Thailand, 24-25 September 2014 (ESCAP)
- UNNExT Advisory Committee Meeting, Bangkok, Thailand, 25 September 2014 (ESCAP)
- APTFF Capacity Building Workshop: Implementing Provisions of WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, Bangkok, Thailand, 26 September 2014 (ESCAP)
- SATNET Workshop on Good practices for agricultural trade facilitation - Country Evidences from the Asia-Pacific, Bangkok, Thailand, 26 September 2014 (ESCAP)
- Workshop on Enabling Cross-border Paperless Trade, Bangkok, Thailand, 26 September 2014 (ESCAP)
- UNNExT Advisory Group on Transit meetings, Bangkok, Thailand, 26 September 2014 (ESCAP)
- Seventieth Commission Session, Bangkok, Thailand, 4 - 8 August 2014, Event URL: http://www.unescap.org/commission (ESCAP)
- High-level Consultation on the G20 Brisbane Summit: Perspectives from Asia-Pacific, Bangkok, Thailand, 6 August 2014 (ESCAP)
- CAREC Learning Opportunity: Modernizing SPS Measures to Expand Trade and Ensure Food Safety–Sharing the Baltic Experience, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, 6-9 October 2014, (ADB-CAREC)
UPCOMING EVENTS

NATIONAL

- National Capacity Building Workshop on Sustainable and Inclusive Transport Development, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 12 - 13 August 2014 *(ESCAP)*
- National Training on Electronic Traceability for Agricultural Trade Facilitation in Lao PDR, 13-15 August 2014 *(ESCAP)*
- Time Release Study National Planning Workshop, Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic, 16-19 Sept *(ADB-CAREC)*
- National Training on Electronic Traceability for Agricultural Trade Facilitation in Cambodia, 18-20 August 2014 *(ESCAP)*
- Ad Hoc Expert Meeting on "Addressing the Transport and Trade Logistics Challenges of the Small Island Developing States (SIDS): Samoa Conference and Beyond", Samoa, 1 to 4 September 2014 *(UNCTAD)*
GLOBAL & REGIONAL

WTO members fail to agree global trade deal, BBC News, 31 July 2014
The World Trade Organization says its 160 members have failed to agree a global customs pact drawn up in meetings in Bali last December. The Trade Facilitation Agreement would have streamlined global customs procedures, and should have been finalized by Thursday. But it was blocked over a number of rifts, including India's demands for concessions on the stockpiling of food. The WTO said it had not been possible to find a breakthrough. "We have not been able to find a solution that would allow us to bridge the gap," WTO director-general Roberto Azevedo said. He asked WTO members "to reflect long and hard on the ramifications of this setback". And US ambassador to the WTO, Michael Punke, said that the failure to agree a deal had "put this institution on very uncertain new ground".

Obama signs orders to expedite trade process, Business Standard, 20 February 2014
US President Barack Obama signed an executive order introducing a raft of measures to streamline export and import procedures for the country's small businesses. The order is especially important to small and medium-sized companies that depend on global trade, as it will cut the time of processing and approval procedure "from days to minutes" for small businesses that export American-made goods and services through the International Trade Data System (ITDS), Xinhua quoted the White House as saying. Currently, businesses must submit information to dozens of government agencies, often on paper forms, and wait for days for approval before moving goods across the borders. The ITDS, the new electronic system connecting US Customs, the trade community and 47 government agencies, will enable businesses to electronically transmit the data required to import or export cargo through a "single-window."

APEC free-trade pact pushed, Inquirer, 14 July 2014
Business leaders from the Asia-Pacific rim want talks for the proposed Free Trade Area of the Asia Pacific (FTAAP) fast-tracked to drive economic growth in the region. “Asia Pacific business leaders have expressed concern that, unless APEC [Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation] stays committed to meeting the Bogor Goals of free and open trade by 2020, accelerate infrastructure development and promote innovation, the growth and prosperity ambitions they share in the region would not be realized,” the APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC) warned in a statement issued after its meeting in Seattle last week. ABAC is preparing the recommendations it will present at the APEC Summit to be held in Beijing, China, this November. “It has been seven years since APEC leaders adopted our recommendation that Free Trade Area of the Asia Pacific (FTAAP) would be the most effective means for achieving the Bogor Goals. It’s about time that APEC takes greater strategic leadership to bring the FTAAP into reality starting with a roadmap,” said Ning Gaoning, ABAC chair for 2014. Gaoning said ABAC was “ready to be part of the process and provide business inputs” in FTAAP discussions.
http://business.inquirer.net/174635/apec-free-trade-pact-pushed

G-20 trade chiefs reaffirm importance of trade facilitation, Global Post, 19 July 2014
Trade ministers from the Group of 20 industrialized and emerging economies on Saturday reaffirmed the importance of promoting global trade facilitation, a key part of a trade deal agreed last year in Bali. Attention was focused on whether developed and emerging economies could bridge their gaps to rapidly implement the so-called "Bali Package" agreed on in December under the long-stalled Doha Round of global market-opening talks, with the deal's first implementation goal looming on July 31. The Bali Package contains agreements on some of the issues negotiated in the talks, including trade facilitation through such measures as reducing customs procedures. It is one of the major outcomes yielded under the negotiations sponsored by the 160-member World Trade Organization.

Trade facilitation remains challenge for global trade: B20, the Jakarta Post, 18 July 2014
Trade facilitation remains a substantial challenge to global trade, as no significant improvement has been
made since the Bali agreement, business leaders from the world’s 20 largest economies have said in a Business 20 (B20) Summit forum. According to B20 Summit chair Richard Goyder, none of the Group of Twenty (G20) members had passed legislation in their respective countries to enable implementation of the agreement. The agreement was made last December during the ninth World Trade Organization (WTO) ministerial meeting in Bali. At the time, the 160 WTO members — including the G20 countries — agreed to produce a global trade reform deal, whichcovered agricultural issues, trade facilitation and developing and least-developed countries (LDCs). Global leaders cited the Bali outcome as a historic moment because the WTO had not produced deal since the breakdown of the Doha Round of talks, which began in 2001.


AZERBAIJAN

Azerbaijan introduces new procedure for declaring goods and vehicles, Trend, 1 August 2014

The goods and vehicles transported through the customs border of Azerbaijan will be declared under the new rules from November 1, 2014. The rules approved by the Cabinet of Ministers' decision dated July 22, 2014 were published in the official press on August 1. The rules apply to the goods and vehicles imported and exported from the country. For individuals passing through the customs border, a system of "green" and "red" channels will be created to simplify the procedure of declaring goods. Individuals can use the "green" channel when declaring the goods orally, except unescorted baggage and goods sent by international mail. In this case, a preferential order of transporting goods is envisaged. Thus, while declaring the goods, they are exempt from customs procedures, customs payments and trade policy measures. "Green" channel can be chosen by physical entities transporting goods which are not subject to mandatory written declaration. In other cases, physical entities must follow the "red" channel. At the same time, they must deliver a simplified declaration in a written or an electronic form.


CHINA – PAKISTAN

China, Pakistan agree to bolster ties, sign documents to boost economic cooperation, Associated Press of Pakistan, 19 February 2014

President Mamnoon Hussain on Wednesday said that China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, a gigantic development project would prove to be a game changer in transforming the whole region by generating massive trade and economic activity and opening new vistas of progress and prosperity for the people of the two countries and around three billion people of the region. President Mamnoon Hussain said this in his one-to-one meeting with President of the People’s Republic of China Xi Jinping followed by delegation level talks at the Great Hall of the Peoples in Beijing. The two leaders discussed a whole gamut of bilateral relations and regional and global issues of mutual interest. Giving details of the two rounds of talks, the Press Secretary to the President said that discussions between the two sides focused on China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, enhancing connectivity and further cementing trade and investment ties.


CHINA -Taiwan

New MOF regulations aim to clamp down on international tax evasion, the China Post, 19 February 2014

In an effort to curb tax evasion conducted via online shopping, the Ministry of Finance (MOF) has recently passed an amendment to customs regulations in an effort to more closely monitor cross-border shipping and to maintain taxation justice. Internet shopping across the strait as well as around the globe has become increasingly popular. Take e-commerce website taobao.com, a major internet shopping portal based in mainland China that recently broke into the Taiwan market. It is estimated that up to NT$300 billion worth of transaction value will be created on taobao in Taiwan in 2014. However, online transactions have also become a haven for tax evasion. The MOF initiated a special work team last year, in an effort to sniff out tax evasion practices through online shopping. The nation’s five taxation bureaus and the Customs Administration have been charged with the responsibility. Under the current regulation, parcels that are worth of NT$3,000 or less
are exempt from taxation. However, online shoppers have exploited this tax loophole through various methods. For instance, some buyers have requested to have their goods worth more than NT$3,000 to be shipped in multiple packages to avoid tax.


**Beijing, Tianjin begin customs integration, China Daily, 2 July 2014**

The General Administration of Customs said on Tuesday that Beijing and Tianjin are collaborating on customs clearance procedures, marking a giant step forward in facilitating foreign trade in the Beijing area. Starting Tuesday, all imported and exported goods from Beijing and Tianjin could enjoy simplified procedures through the regional integrated clearance system. Only one customs declaration is required, according to a news release from the administration. In October, Hebei will join the integrated system. Beijing Benz Automotive Co Ltd’s declaration of imported windshield wipers was the first applied maritime import customs order on Tuesday. By 5 pm, customs offices in Tianjin and Beijing had received a total of 14,940 applications. Each of the 259 cross-customs orders took only a minute to complete customs clearance.

http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/epaper/2014-07/02/content_17637989.htm

**INDIA**

**Trade facilitation through single window custom clearance, The Free Press, 10 July 2014**

In a move to fast-track the process of getting customs clearance and to facilitate trade, the Indian Finance Minister Arun Jaitely today proposed to implement an Indian Customs Single Window Project. “Under this, importers and exporters would lodge their clearance documents at a single point only. Required permissions, if any, from other regulatory agencies would be obtained online without the trader having to approach these agencies,” Jaitely said while presenting the Union Budget for 2014-15 (Apr-Mar). “This would reduce interface with governmental agencies, dwell time and the cost of doing business,” he added. The minister also said that measures are being initiated to extend the existing 24x7 customs clearance facilities to 13 more airports for all export goods and to 14 more sea ports for certain import and export goods. Faster clearance of import and export cargo reduces transaction costs and improves business competitiveness, he said.

http://freepressjournal.in/trade-facilitation-through-single-window-custom-clearance/

**Commerce Secretary says government is committed to trade facilitation, Business Standard, 15 July 2014**

Commerce Secretary Rajeev Kher on Tuesday said that the organization is committed to trade facilitation at the CII National Council Meeting at New Delhi. "We are committed to trade facilitation” said Kher, speaking at a session on ’An approach to foreign trade.’ "While the last few years have not been good with declining exports, there are signs that there will be reasonable resurgence in foreign trade. With changes in the global economic landscape and changing dynamics in the context of international trade, the challenge, he elaborated, is that in the next few years India has to perform strategically," he said. "While India continues to negotiate at the WTO and other such global platforms, it has to be well prepared to deal with the new architecture that is developing, such as the Transpacific Partnership, Transatlantic Partnership and the RCEP. Our conventional approach to FTAs is highly unsustainable, he said, and there is a pressing need to put our house in order to take on the challenges that India will now face.


**India, US to focus on trade policy, commercial ties, Money Control, 28 July 2014**

Indo-US trade talks are all set to kick off on July 31. India's World Trade Organisation (WTO) stand on trade facilitation is likely to come up during discussions. There are a host of issues that will be on the table when foreign minister Sushma Swaraj and US secretary of state John Kerry sit down to talk. There are two sets of meetings that are scheduled. First, the strategic dialogue between Sushma Swaraj and her counterpart John Kerry and a second set of dialogues would focus on commercial cooperation that is between Commerce Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and her US counterpart Penny Pritzker. In the strategic dialogue, Indian officials believe that United States will raise the issue of India taking stand against the Trade Facilitation Agreement in the WTO as it is of immense importance to United States and hence officials on Indian side expect the delegation
with John Kerry to raise this issue when they have a meeting with Swaraj.


India expects deal on trade facilitation, food security in Sept – source, Reuters, 1 August 2014

India is prepared to engage with members of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to sign a deal on trade facilitation and food security in September, a senior trade ministry official said on Friday. India’s demands for concessions on agricultural stockpiling blocked on Thursday a global deal to standardise customs rules, which would have been the first global trade reform in two decades. New Delhi has sought an indefinite peace clause on food security until a permanent solution is found, said the official, who did not wish to be identified due to the sensitivity of the matter.

http://in.reuters.com/article/2014/08/01/india-trade-wto-deal-idINKBN0G143K20140801

NEPAL
Reducing NTMs crucial to promote trade, the Himalayan Times, 24 July 2014

Providing different perspectives on non-tariff measures (NTMs) and how they give rise to non-tariff barriers, a study on NTMs in South Asia has underlined the need of reducing such measures for promotion of intra-regional trade. The study report ‘NTMs in South Asia: Assessment and Analysis’ was released amid a function recently in Bhutan by Lyonpo Norbu Wangchuk, minister for economic affairs of Bhutan. Based on the report, the recommendation on reducing NTMs was also forwarded to the ninth meeting of the SAFTA Committee of Experts held in Thimphu, Bhutan from July 22 to 23, for further action. According to SAARC-Trade Promotion Network (TPN), the study is an outcome of an extensive exercise with private and public sector organisations and enterprises, which are facing problems arising from NTMs. The study was initiated by SAARC-TPN Working Group Regional Trade Facilitation (WG-RTF) in 2012.

http://www.thehimalayantimes.com/fullNews.php?headline=%27Reducing+NTMs+crucial+to+promote+trade%27&newsID=422163

PACIFIC ISLANDS
Pacific nations urged to back the Solomons, Solomon Stars, 14 July 2014

The Pacific Island nations have been urged to stand with the Solomon Islands and ensure that any commitments made in the global trade body can only come into effect if the current round of negotiations is completed. Currently six Pacific Island nations are members of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) which is soon to decide the sequencing for commitments on trade facilitation in regards to a broader set of global negotiations launched over 10 years ago, with the aim of addressing development issues. Pacific Network on Globalisation’s Campaigner Adam Wolfenden said: “Australia, New Zealand and other key export markets for the Pacific are not the ones who will be undertaking the commitments in this agreement, there is no cost involved in this for them. “When we talk about trade facilitation, this agreement does nothing to address the non-trade barriers that prevent the Pacific from greater exports.”


PHILIPPINES
DTI, ITC to survey 1,200 exporters on non-tariff measures, PIA, 22 July 2014

Trade and Investment Center (PTIC) in Geneva, Switzerland, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) through the Export Marketing Bureau (EMB), in cooperation with the International Trade Center (ITC), launched the Philippine Nationwide Survey on Non-Tariff Measures (NTMs). This ITC-funded nationwide survey intends to increase transparency about NTMs by collecting, classifying, and disseminating relevant information on NTMs and by understanding the non-tariff obstacles to trade the business sector is facing. Ms. Poonam Mohun, the NTM Project Market Analyst of Market Analysis and Research Division of ITC, discussed how NTM nationwide survey will be implemented in the Philippines and ardently encouraged the business sector to be part of the survey.

RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Trade sanctions could trigger a flood of Russian wheat, ABC news, 24 July 2014

Tighter international trade restrictions on Russia could trigger a flood of wheat onto global markets. Ukraine and Russia, along with North America, are Australia’s biggest grain export competitors. Market analysts are expecting Russian wheat yields to reach 50 million tonnes this year, with 20 million tonnes set for export. Harvest of that grain is currently underway at a time when the United States and the European Union are considering further sanctions on Russia following the Malaysian Airlines plane crash. Sydney University economics lecturer Mark Melatos says Russian wheat exporters might flood the market if they fear sanctions will restrict their exports.


SINGAPORE

Steady progress in building ASEAN Economic Community: Lee Yi Shyan, Channel News Asia, 9 July 2014

ASEAN member states have made steady progress in building the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) by 2015, said Senior Minister of State for Trade and Industry Lee Yi Shyan. Mr Lee said in Parliament on Wednesday (July 9) they are strengthening customs and cross-border cooperation, enhancing trade facilitation initiatives, as well as eliminating tariff and addressing some non-tariff measures to facilitate and increase trade in goods. "We are also working hard to complete the 9th package of commitments under the ASEAN Framework Agreement on Services, which will reduce services barriers including the lowering of foreign equity limits,” said Mr Lee. “On investment, there are ongoing activities aimed at improving ASEAN’s investment regimes and promoting ASEAN as a single investment destination.”


THAILAND

Commerce Ministry launches project in search of best logistics operator, NNT, 1 July 2014

The Commerce Ministry has launched a project in search of the best logistics operator in the country. The move hopes to improve the quality and enhance servicing standards to the international level, pushing Thailand towards becoming the trade and logistics hub of ASEAN. Director General of the Department of International Trade Promotion (DITP), Ms. Nantawan Sakuntanaga, launched the project in finding the best logistics operator to compete for the Export Logistics Model Award (ELMA), which is a guarantee of great logistic standards for the winning operator. The selection process will be categorized into four groups. Among those groups, they are operators providing logistics services, operators providing warehouse services, operators providing international logistics services, and operators providing one stop services for interested businesses.

http://thaipress.pr.go.th/centerweb/newsen/NewsDetail?NT01_NewsID=WNECO5707010010005

Call to cut costs to stay competitive, Bangkok Post, 2 July 2014

The International Trade Promotion Department says logistics costs must be cut to 10-12% of GDP from 14.4% now if Thailand wants to stay competitive with other export-oriented nations once the Asean Economic Community (AEC) and technological capability. "The logistics industry will become increasingly important to the country as exports expand. Lower logistics costs will play a more important role in improving the country’s trade performance," she said.


VIET NAM

Vietnam says its seafood faces non-tariff barriers in 49 countries, regions, Shanghai Daily, 21 July 2014

Vietnam’s seafood is facing non-tariff barriers in 49 countries and regions, said Vietnam Industry and Trade Information Center (VITIC) under the Ministry of Industry and Trade on Monday. Several non-tariff barriers that were recently established in 2014 include technical barriers to trade on Vietnamese seafood into the European Union (EU) market, the application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary measures on the seafood
into the United States via its Food Safety Modernization Act and Agricultural Act. In addition, the United States is carrying out anti-dumping trials against Vietnamese catfish among others, said the VITIC. Due to these barriers, Vietnam’s total export revenue of catfish in the first five months of 2014 stood at 682 million U.S. dollars, down 3.8 percent year-on-year.


OTHER REGIONS

AFRICA

Kenya

Kenya: New customs system to speed up cargo movement, The Stars, 30 June 2014

IMPORTERS and exporters will benefit from a new system put in place by the Kenya Revenue Authority’s Customs Services Department. Dubbed 'Authorized Economic Operators', it gives operators preferential treatment in the processing of transactions. According to KRA southern region senior assistant commissioner Fatma Yusuf, players must be compliant with the Kenya Revenue Authority procedures to be enlisted. Players will benefit from minimal checks of their cargo, lower storage cost due to faster release of cargo and reduced transit time among other benefits. Speaking during the KRA stakeholders meeting in Mombasa, she urged companies and players in the trade industry to join the AEO. "The system enhances the relationship between customs and its stakeholders. This is part of fulfilling the world customs organisation framework of standards," said Yusuf.

http://allafrica.com/stories/201407010418.html

West Africa

Nigeria


The World Customs Organisation (WCO) said that it would support the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) in its quest to achieve international trade through the Pre-arrival Assessment Report regime (PAAR). The Secretary-General of the organisation, Mr. Kunio Mikuriya, said this at a stakeholders’ meeting in Lagos held at the Apapa Customs Area Command. Mikuriya said that the customs was operating a global model that needed stakeholders’ collaboration to advance its policies.

“Nigeria Customs Service is under transformation. It is not only taking over the destination inspection, but it is adopting a modern customs operation model that the World Customs Organisation really commends. “So it is that needed transformation that I want to hear the views of the stakeholders and stakeholders wish to work with the customs to improve port facility and the trade facilitation is very impressive.


Challenges of transit trade and trade facilitation in West Africa addressed by UNCTAD at workshop, 3 July 2014

UNCTAD held a panel discussion with the secretariat of the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) about the consequences for West African countries of the WTO’s Bali Trade Facilitation Agreement in Banjul, the Gambia, on 17 June 2014. A special event on transit trade and trade facilitation-related problems facing least developed countries (LDCs) in the West African region was held by UNCTAD, in collaboration the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) secretariat following the decision of the EIF board to hold its June meeting in the Gambia, one of the EIF beneficiary countries.

The event was held under the title "Addressing the Trade Facilitation Agreement in the context of regional trade integration and transit trade: Identifying a possible role for the Enhanced Integrated Framework". UNCTAD has completed the updating of EIF-funded Diagnostic Trade Integration Study (DTIS) of two transit countries in West Africa - the Gambia and Senegal - and is currently updating the DTISs of two other landlocked countries in the region: Mali and Niger. Transit trade and trade facilitation-related issues feature prominently as major challenges to international trade in the Gambia and Senegal.


EUROPE

Portugal - Colombia

Colombia and Portugal agreed to streamline procedures for bilateral agricultural trade, fresh Plaza, 21 February 2014

The general manager of the Colombian Agricultural Institute (ICA), Luis Humberto Martínez Lacouture, and
the Ambassador of Portugal, João Ribeiro de Almeida, agreed to expedite the study of sanitary and phytosanitary measures that would regulate trade in agricultural products between the two countries. Portugal is interested in exporting stallion semen, poultry, pork, and fruits, such as pears and apples to Colombia. Meanwhile, Colombia could export products such as coffee, fruits, flowers and tuna, among others, to Portugal. The Ambassador of Portugal said that, "Europe, especially Portugal, is very interested in the high quality of Colombian agricultural products, which can be successfully established in several countries of the continent."

http://www.freshplaza.com/article/118072/Colombia-and-Portugal-agreed-to-streamline-procedures-for-bilateral-agricultural-trade

LATIN AMERICA and THE CARIBBEAN

Dominican Republic

Exporters want a one-stop, foreign trade window, 16 July 2014

Dominican Exporters Association (ADOEXPO) president Sadala Khoury asked the Government implement a one-stop window for foreign trade, to expedite procedures and export permits. "Our greatest opportunity is in developing SMEs into world-class companies, to incorporate them into this sector and becoming an exporting powerhouse,” Khoury said, speaking at the ADOEXPO luncheon.

http://www.dominicantoday.com/dr/economy/2014/7/16/52146/Exporters-want-a-one-stop-foreign-trade-window

MIDDLE EAST

Arab-Emirates

Dubai Customs demonstrates to private-sector partners the benefits and mechanisms of the Virtual Corridor project, Albawaba, 7 July 2014

Dubai Customs hosted a business meeting with companies chosen to execute Virtual Corridor project to introduce them to the systems and procedures that will be put in place for optimal utilization of this vibrant project. The meeting was attended by Mr Abdullah Al Khaja, Executive Director of Customer Management Division at Dubai Customs, and Mr Saeed Ahmed Al Tayer, Acting Executive Director of Policies & Legislation Division at Dubai Customs. Held by the Customer Management in partnership with the Customs Tarrif and Origin Department and Business Process Department at Dubai Customs, the meeting was a unique opportunity for DC officials to present the project of goods movement between Customs centers in the emirate of Dubai using the Virtual Corridor. This Customs process – Virtual Corridor – enables the movement of goods among handling authorities and shipping agencies in seaports and airports using faster, easier, simpler and more cost-effective customs procedures. Accordingly, cargo will be moved in shorter times not exceeding four hours without the need for clients to submit any cash bond or bank guarantees. Dubai Customs will grant clients virtual financial guarantee for each consignment to be transferred between Customs centers in Dubai.

http://www.albawaba.com/business/pr/dubai-customs-virtual-corridor-project-588624