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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 sub programme on trade during the period April 2018 – April 2019. It includes activities carried by 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.

Sections implemented by UN/CEFACT are for information only.

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

I. Introduction

1. The ECE Trade Sub-programme 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 sub-programme contributes to ensuring:

(a) A predictable, transparent and harmonized regulatory environment for commerce and business through strengthening of the convergence of regulations, as well as through the promotion of international standards and 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. 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 sub programme's capacity building and technical assistance activities for the period April 2018 – March 2019, highlighting the main objectives, achieved results, and development partners. Section three lists the activities carried out by the Trade Sub-programme's Regional Adviser.

II. Capacity building activities for the period April 2018 – April 2019

<i>No.</i>	<i>Title, Venue, Dates</i>	<i>Objective(s)</i>	<i>Results</i>	<i>Partners</i>
1.	Strengthening the national capacity of trade-support institutions of Kyrgyzstan (1 July 2016-30 June 2018)	To develop training materials for trade support institutions and familiarize traders and government officials with international and national trade-related regulations, policies, trends and issues.	The project contributed to the national implementation of Kyrgyzstan's obligations under the World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement, which entered into force in February 2017. Additionally, the project built the necessary skills to apply a risk-based approach in regulatory frameworks and resulted in the development of a generic sectoral implementation plan that can be applied within any economic sector. Kyrgyzstan has acquired all the necessary elements that could allow it to be the first country in the region to systematically apply the risk-based approach in regulation, market surveillance and enforcement.	Government of Kyrgyzstan
2.	Enhancing usage and uptake of the standards for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (July 2018 -July 2019)	The objective of the project is to enhance the usage and uptake by policymakers of standards, developed both by UNECE and other standards bodies, as a vital tool to support the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.	<p>The main results of the project were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The development of a mapping tool to identify standards that support the implementation of four selected SDG - The development of four case studies to showcase how implementing standards advances the implementation of specific SDGs by national policy makers; - The publication of awareness-raising materials on "Standards for the SDGs" (videos, brochures); - The organization of the Joint {UNECE-ISO event on the topic of "Standards for the SDGs" (Geneva, 26 Sept. 2018). 	
2.	Supporting the Removal of Regulatory and Procedural Barriers to Trade in the Republic of Tajikistan	To assist Tajikistan in establishing a National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC) in line with the recommendations emerging from the ECE study on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade and, thereof, enable the Government to fulfil its commitments under the Agreement on Trade Facilitation (ATF)	Organized a national workshop to discuss the roadmap for trade facilitation and export diversification with members of the NTFC (March 2019).	Government of Tajikistan, NTFC

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3.	Validation Workshop at the Ministry of Communications, Minsk, Belarus (26 October 2018)	To support the removal of regulatory and procedural barriers to trade in the country	ECE report “Risk Management Approaches for A Successful and Sustainable National Paperless Trading System“ was discussed and recommendations were adopted	Government of Belarus
4.	Strengthening the capacity of Central Asian countries to implement trade facilitation measures (Capacity building project, 1 January 2018-31 December 2019)	To strengthen national capacities of the beneficiary countries to implement trade facilitation measures and better integrate into the international rules-based trading system.	Training materials and modules for national TF courses are being developed, covering relevant target areas for implementing WTO ATF Articles 10.1 on formalities and documentary requirements; 10.3 on use of international standards; 10.4 on single window; and 23.2 on national trade facilitation committee (NTFCs).	
5.	Workshop on Sustainable Trade of Fruits, Vegetables and Nuts - Quality Matters, 10-13 September 2018, Tashkent, Uzbekistan jointly organized with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and supported by Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) Uzbekistan. Carried out as part of United Nations Development Account (UNDA) project, 11 th tranche (2018-2021) Increased policy coherence and sustainability of national production and consumption patterns in North-South and South-South agriculture trade	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.	The workshop consisted of a general introduction for 90 participants and a focused training for 40 selected participants in a “train the trainer” format. It included theoretical and practical sessions on the sustainable trade of fruits, vegetables and nuts trade within the region and beyond with a view of raising awareness and fostering the adoption and implementation of ECE quality standards to enable export diversification and better domestic quality to prevent food loss. The training also included segments on export and import inspection methods, food safety and quality assurance. Following the adoption by three Central Asian countries of a large number of ECE standards and their active involvement through the ECE supported Central Asia working group and participation in ECE activities, this workshop was the first where trainers from Central Asia trained Central Asian participants. The workshop contributed to UNDP and GIZ field projects, and involved field visits and on-site training. The standing central Asia working group expanded to include public and the private sectors as well as UNDP offices and donor agencies in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and, newly, Kazakhstan. The group meets on a regular basis twice a year in full and in topical ad-hoc groups several times more. The group helped finalize further training material	UNDP, GIZ, Hilfswerk Austria; UZSTANDARD Agency (Uzbekistan)

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			with the support of donor agencies active in Tajikistan (including Hilfswerk Austria) and their funds from the EU. The training material was translated into Tajik, Kyrgyz and Uzbek languages. The guide on the standard for dried apricots was presented to the ECE WP.7 Specialized Section and will be reviewed for their adoption in June 2019. Further two requests for workshops were received in early 2019 from Central Asian authorities and UNDP. ECE coordinates all its activities through the UN country teams, UNDP and donor agencies active in the region to maximize impact and sustainability of achieved results.	
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 2018, Geneva, Switzerland. Carried out as part of UNDA project, 11 th 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. As this is done as 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.	The workshops were organized as part of regular WP.7 sessions and resulted in increased understanding amongst participants from Central Asia of the development and implementation of international best practices for facilitating cross-border agri-food trade and food loss prevention. It also resulted in the adoption of international best practice and standards as first steps towards increased agricultural trade.	GIZ, Hilfswerk Austria, UNDP

III. Regional Adviser's capacity building and technical assistance activities during the period April 2018 – April 2019

<i>No.</i>	<i>Title, Venue, Dates</i>	<i>Objective(s)</i>	<i>Results</i>	<i>Partners</i>
1.	Four advisory services to the Governments and business community in Belarus, the Czech Republic, Ukraine and Uzbekistan	Support national projects and Trade Facilitation Committees in these countries Support Port Community System and Single Window projects in Ukraine Promote new projects in support of trade facilitation and the implementation of the SDGs.	Recommendations of previous trade facilitation capacity building projects implemented. Request endorsed to help Belarus increase its capacity to implement the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (SDG 17.10)	Governments of Belarus, the Czech Republic, Ukraine and Uzbekistan, Central Asian Partnership for transports and logistics development, GIZ, USAID, the Eurasian Economic Commission, the National Trade Facilitation Committees of the Czech Republic and Ukraine
2.	8th ECE seminar in Odessa on trade facilitation and the Single Window, 1 June 2018, on agricultural trade procedures simplification, WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement Impact on Agri-food Trade, and a peer review of the Odessa port community system.	Organize the 8th UNECE trade facilitation and Single Window seminar in Odessa, in collaboration with the International Port Community Systems Association (IPCSA) with a view to foster work on data harmonization in the various projects to which we contribute in Ukraine: Port Community System in Odessa (PPL 33-35), national Single Window (SW), digital corridor development	Further progress of the development of the Port Community System in Odessa (www.singlewindow.org), and the Ukrainian Single Window project, launched in June 2018); and broadened the use international standards for data harmonization for Port Community and Single Window systems, and related projects (seminar materials published at http://unece.plaske.ua/ and http://www.unece.org)	Interagency Working Group on Trade Facilitation and Logistics of Ukraine, WTO, FAO, various government agencies

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3.	SPECA Expert Meeting to Review the Evaluation of SPECA, Almaty, Kazakhstan, 11-12 June 2018	develop a package of measures to strengthen SPECA and better enable regional cooperation among the countries, using the evaluation report on SPECA; and build capacity of middle level policy makers from the SPECA countries to cooperate on the SDGs, on a regional level. Start organizing the September 2018 SPECA events.	Participants from all SPECA countries (middle to senior level managers from ministries of foreign affairs, economy, finance etc.) gathered to discuss the future of SPECA, and how it can serve as a platform for regional cooperation to implement the SDGs. For the first time since many years we managed to bring Uzbekistan to a policy discussion in the SPECA setting. Evaluation of SPECA reviewed; recommendations drawn up. UNECE and ESCAP collaborated on the level of two DESs. A series of practical steps agreed.	
4.	Seminar on the readiness assessment of Azerbaijan to implement the TFA, Baku, 19-23.6.2018	Organize a follow-up seminar on the readiness assessment of Azerbaijan to implement the TFA. Review latest developments and assist the Azeri Government in its preparations for the next round of WTO accession negotiations, end of June 2018, and carry out consultations on the readiness to establish a national trade facilitation committee. Discuss A, B and C categorization of measures, with a view to help the Government prepare for notifying its readiness in the WTO accession negotiations and 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 Azerbaijan.	Consultations and seminar on the National Trade Facilitation Committee and the Readiness Assessment Report carried out, and recommendations on both items to the Government drafted. This RPTC project is a UNECE contribution to SDG 17.10: Promote the universal, rules-based, trading system. Consultations and agreement on cooperation on pending projects of the Regional Adviser with Albania, Georgia, Serbia, Macedonia. Agreement with the IT and International Departments Chiefs of Azeri Customs to carry out a small project on alignment of their work to international standards for data harmonization.	
5	UNECE-OSCE training on trade facilitation at the OSCE Border Management Staff College, Dushanbe, Tajikistan, 24-26 July 2018. Overall dates of the mission: 23-26 July 2018	Organize three-day training on trade facilitation for SPECA and other countries to raise the capacity of senior experts from these countries to achieve tangible results in trade facilitation, using the UNECE Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide (TFIG) and other tools.	Participants (middle to senior level managers from ministries of economy and trade, Customs and other regulatory agencies and the business community in the four countries) improved their capacity to analyse TF issues discussed at the seminar, identify solutions; successful inclusion of Uzbekistan in these regional training events; ways for improving regional cooperation in trade and developing cross-border supply chains in the	

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			SPECA subregion identified. Broad outline for cooperation on the SPECA WG on Trade agreed with the new Vice Minister Mr Zavqi Zavqizoda and his staff identified.	
6	CB workshop “Single Window, Port Community Systems and Global Data Sharing” organized with UNCTAD ASYCUDA Venue: ASYCUDA Centre of Excellence, University of Gibraltar, Gibraltar, 11-12.9.2018.	Organize with UNCTAD/ASYCUDA, a technical cooperation seminar on Single Window and data sharing for several vulnerable economies in the UNECE region.	Exchange of information between Gibraltar Customs, UNTAD/ASYCUDA, UNECE, European Commission DG TAXUD, IPCSA, and transition economies focused on the implementation of Single Window and Consultations with Tajikistan Customs and other partners on using the tools presented at the seminar on data sharing and Single Window.	
7	12 th session of the SPECA WG on Trade,	Co-organize with ESCAP and the Government of Kazakhstan the 12 th session of the WGs on Trade (19.09.18): develop further documents on regional trade facilitation strategy; principles of sustainable trade; non-tariff measures	- 12 th session of the SPECA WG on Trade successfully carried out, discussions on 4 papers led to agreements on future work of at least two deliverables (a trade facilitation strategy and principles for aligning regional trade to sustainable development); recommendations produced for the Governing Council session.	
8	2018 SPECA Economic Forum and 13 th session of the SPECA Governing Council. Almaty, Kazakhstan: 19-21.9.2018	- 2018 SPECA Economic Forum (20-21.09.18); and 21.09.18 13 th session of the SPECA Governing Council): support decisions on the evaluation of SPECA and the review of SPECA. Review the future structure, financing, secretariat support to SPECA.	- 2018 SPECA Forum “Twenty years of SPECA: A new stage in regional cooperation for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” and 13 th session of the Governing Council successfully carried out (ESCAP in the lead, but documentary support and much else provided by UNECE); Conclusions and Recommendation of the Economic Forum and Decisions of the Governing Council session were adopted; draft Outline and the Roadmap for Elaborating the SPECA Innovation Strategy for Sustainable Development to be elaborated by UNECE were endorsed.	

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All SPECA countries, two ministers, six deputy ministers, heads of departments and numerous experts participated. - SPECA review advanced; ECE prepared a template to submit to all TWGs to ask them to prepare harmonized ToR of all thematic working groups. 	
9	<p>capacity-building on the implementation of selected measures of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, with a special focus on art. 10.1 (streamlining formalities and documentary procedures), Kiev, 25 Oct. 2018</p>	<p>Organize with CLDP a seminar on four TFA measures and Trade and Transport Facilitation Monitoring Mechanism (TTFMM) in Ukraine, with a focus on Streamlining Formalities and Documentary Procedures (TFA art. 10.1), following up on the readiness assessment done in 2015 and capacity-building since then. This was the first capacity-building activity under the UNDA 11 project. Consultations on the readiness of Ukraine for Business Process Analysis on specific product(s) and for a TTFMM.</p>	<p>(a) Raised understanding among the Ukrainian NTFC members and its chairman of the importance of streamlining formalities and documentary procedures, raised awareness of UNECE and UNCEFACT tools for streamlining formalities, aligning trade and transport documents to international standards and managing a Single Window. (b) Raised awareness of the importance of monitoring progress in trade and transport facilitation, establishing a TTFMM, adopting and implementing a national Trade Facilitation Strategy under the NTFC. (c) agreement on a small project on Business Process Analysis under the UNDA 11, with a view to further develop it with additional financing from other sources. (d) advisory services provided to the managers of the Ukrainian Single Window project. (e) Further cooperation with CLDP agreed.</p>	
10	<p>Capacity-building seminar on Single Window Implementation Approach and Data Sharing: Connectivity for the Western Balkans, Skopje,</p>	<p>Organize with the Customs Administration of the FYR Macedonia and USAID a seminar on Single Window and data sharing, to align Single Window and related projects in the Western Balkans to the semantic standards and reference data models of UN/CEFACT and the work on Single Window in the European Union. Promote common data standards in the broader European space.</p>	<p>The seminar was assessed as timely and useful by all participants as it corresponded to the new stage of development of Single Windows in Europe and the Western Balkans and the emergence of new tools and standards for data exchange and modelling, notably in UN/CEFACT - hence the need to align work in the W. Balkans on SW and related projects to these new standards. The seminar also coincided with the preparations</p>	

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	Northern Macedonia, 15-16 November 2018		for a new project of the World Bank for the Western Balkan countries on trade facilitation and the Single Window. Concrete discussions took place on the use of technical standards, notably in the EXIM Single Window system in Northern Macedonia.	
11	Seminar on Single Window interoperability and data sharing, co-organized with Belarus and the Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC), 10-11 December 2018, Minsk, Belarus;	Reset the work on the Single Window in the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) countries and focus on data sharing among the SW systems in the EEU and with partners and neighbours of the EEU countries, using international, notably UN/CEFACT, standards. Help develop projects on paperless trade to the benefit of the EEU countries (Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Russia), and promote the use of international (notably UNCEFACT) standards for data sharing - using the UN/CEFACT tools for data modelling.	Work on the Single Window and data sharing in the EEU countries as well as new UN/CEFACT tools for building Single Window, data harmonization and modelling reviewed. Recommendations for aligning the work in the EEU MS to international standards.	
12	12-13 December 2018. Training seminar on the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), Minsk, Belarus, and 14 December 2018: training for the consultant on how to carry out interviews for the readiness assessment.	Open a project on the assessment of the readiness of Belarus to implement the WTO TFA. Train the prospective consultant on how to do interviews for the TFA readiness assessment.	Project on WTO TFA readiness assessment launched; the lead consultant and several potential respondents to the survey trained on the contents and specificities of the TFA by a team of experts (from UNECE, WTO and Ukraine). First interview carried out as a training exercise.	