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Committee on Trade

Sixth session

Geneva, 10-12 February 2014

Report of the Committee on Trade on its sixth session

I. Overview

1. The ECE Committee on Trade held its sixth session from 10 to 12 February 2014. The Executive Secretary opened the meeting. The first day was dedicated to discussions on recent achievements in removing regulatory and procedural barriers to trade in the Caucasus and the Balkans, as well as the results of the ECE study of regulatory and procedural barriers to trade in Tajikistan.
2. The second day and the morning of the third day, the Committee discussed ECE's activities in support of Aid-for-Trade (AfT) processes in SPECA countries, the future programmes of work for the Committee and its subsidiary bodies and the decisions for inclusion in the report.

II. Attendance

3. Representatives of the following countries participated in the session: Albania, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Italy, Georgia, Greece, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Serbia, Switzerland, Tajikistan, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United States of America and Uzbekistan.
4. The European Union (EU) was also represented.
5. Representatives of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the following specialized agencies and intergovernmental organizations were in attendance: International Trade Centre (ITC), World Trade Organization (WTO), and the Eurasian Economic Commission.
6. Representatives of the following organizations attended the session at the invitation of the secretariat: Azerbaijan Export and Investment Promotion Foundation (AZPROMO); National Association of Small and Medium Businesses of Tajikistan; Administration of

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Free Economic Zone “Sughd”, Tajikistan; Union of Businessmen and Exporters of Tajikistan; KURUS LLC, Tajikistan; Global Strategy Center, the Russian Federation; Moscow State Region University; and, JSC PLASKE, Ukraine.

III. Agenda item 1. Adoption of the agenda

7. The Chair of the Committee on Trade reminded the delegations that pursuant to the Outcome of the Review of the 2005 Reform of ECE (E/ECE/1468), the UN Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business, UN/CEFACT, reported directly to EXCOM. Therefore, the latest report from UN/CEFACT, presented under agenda item 9(a), was for information only.

8. In order to ensure full information for the delegations during the discussion on the programme of work under agenda item 9(c), the Chair suggested moving agenda item 10 on stakeholder needs to take place after agenda item 9a on Updates from Subsidiary Bodies and 9b on Programme Evaluation.

9. The representative of the European Union and its Member States could agree to the proposed agenda noting first, that all discussions and any possible decisions, conclusions and recommendations would be without prejudice to the upcoming discussions on the updated ECE mandate on trade and the possible merger between the Trade and Economic cooperation and integration committees (all agenda items). In this respect, he reiterated the position, already expressed on behalf of the EU and its Member States at the Executive Committee, that the ECE should, in a focused and integrated way, help ECE member States to translate their innovative ideas into local productive capacity and export opportunities, thus delivering concrete results that help create jobs and economic growth in the ECE Region; second, that no decisions, conclusions or recommendations be adopted under agenda item 6 (except for the request to the Bureaux of the Trade and Economic Cooperation and Integration Committees to pro-actively produce a joint paper with possibilities and ideas on synergy, as early as possible in 2014); third, that the programme of work and respective work plans be adopted after completion of the discussions on the updated mandate (agenda item 9); fourth, that a specific time slot be set aside, on 11 February in the evening or 12 February in the morning, for the Trade Committee (representatives of the member States) to agree on the proposed decisions and most of the report (agenda item 12).

10. The representative of the Russian Federation said that their country understood the concerns raised by the EU, yet could not allow the session of the Committee on Trade to end without adopting recommendations. All decisions by the Committee would be based on expert discussions, and the Russian Federation was convinced that the experts could set priorities for guiding the future work of the CT. Thus, objectives would need to be set for ECE member Countries under the different areas of work of the two committees. The delegation suggested that the discussion should focus on priority needs, as this was the objective that member States had set for themselves.

11. The representative of Belarus emphasized that it was important that the Committee discussions result in conclusions and recommendations. He noted that the recommendations emanating from the Committee on Trade on Belarus had allowed the country to move quickly in terms of reform and regional integration.

Decision 2014-1¹:

12. The Committee adopted the agenda for its 6th session in the light of the above discussions.

Agenda item 2. Election of officers**Decision 2014-2:**

13. The Committee elected Mr Roman V. Sobolev (Belarus) the Chair and Mr Octavian Calmic (Moldova) and Mr Georgi Stoev (Bulgaria) Vice Chairs by acclamation. This election is for the period 2014-2015 and is without prejudice to decisions to be made on the future of the Committee on Trade by EXCOM.

IV. High-level segment: "Increasing the participation of transition economies in international trade"**Agenda item 3. Recent achievements in removing regulatory and procedural barriers to trade: experience from the Caucasus and the Balkans**

14. Representatives of Albania, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Serbia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Ukraine briefed the Committee on recent achievements in removing regulatory and procedural barriers to trade in their respective countries, and in fostering regional cooperation.

15. Key achievements cited by the representatives were: customs modernization, including the establishment of Single Window (SW) facilities for streamlining customs procedures and information requirements; the creation of trade facilitation forums and institutional mechanisms for consultations with private sector associations before adopting new laws; the adoption of new legislation in the areas of standardization and technical regulations in order to ensure compliance with the WTO agreements on Technical Barriers to Trade and Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures.

16. The representatives highlighted a number of national priority areas that required follow-up action. These included:

- (a) Further streamlining of customs procedures and information requirements;
- (b) Harmonization of technical regulations with trading partners;
- (c) Harmonization of customs administration procedures with trading partners, so as to eliminate instances of repeated submission of trade documents;
- (d) Harmonization of technical regulations and standards on food safety with international agreements and best practices;
- (e) Harmonization of sanitary and phytosanitary measures, technical regulations and conformity assessment procedures with trading partners;

¹ The decisions made at the 6th session of the Committee are without prejudice to the upcoming discussions and decisions on the revision of the mandate of and the question whether to merge or not the Committees on Trade and on Economic Cooperation and Integration.

- (f) Fostering overall transparency of trade regulations and procedures, particularly in relation to their implementation and their implications for traders;
- (g) Ensuring compliance with agricultural quality standards;
- (h) In-depth analysis of the policy implications emanating from the new obligations under the WTO Bali agreement;
- (i) Ensuring full implementation of the different commitments for addressing non-tariff barriers undertaken by individual countries within the context of WTO and regional agreements;
- (j) Supporting regional integration efforts.

17. The representatives also highlighted the importance of sharing experiences from countries that have recently achieved membership status at the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

18. During the meeting, the Governments of Albania and Moldova requested national studies on procedural and regulatory barriers to trade based on the ECE methodology including Business Process Analyses. A business process analysis (BPA), within the context of trade facilitation, is a powerful tool for identifying real-life problems and practical solutions. It involves the practical analysis of one or more real-life trade transactions where the costs and time required for each step in the trade transaction are documented and analysed in order to identify bottlenecks and unnecessary costs. Trade transactions are usually documented beginning from the moment when the seller and purchaser agree to the transaction and ending when the goods have been received by the purchaser and the payment by the seller. The ECE has developed BPA guidelines which are available in English and Russian on the ECE website.²

19. Presentations and speeches delivered by delegations under this agenda item can be found on the ECE website.³

Decision 2014-3:

20. The Committee took note of the background paper presented by the secretariat and the discussion held and requested the secretariat to prepare a proposal to undertake the requested studies including business process analyses, subject to the availability of extra-budgetary funding for approval by member States as soon as possible.

Agenda item 4. Focus on Tajikistan

21. The Minister of Economic Development and Trade of Tajikistan briefed the Committee on recent reform measures carried out by his government to remove regulatory and procedural barriers to trade. These included the adoption of new legislation, administrative and procedural measures, along with action plans to develop the required institutional capacity and improve overall performance in the areas of standardization and technical regulations, customs, border management and tax administration. To capitalise on achievements to date, the Government would implement the recommendations emanating from the ECE study on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade that had been financed by the Russian Voluntary Fund. A detailed account of reform measures were presented by a distinguished panel of representatives from the Government of Tajikistan and the private sector in the country. Then the secretariat presented an overview of the ECE evaluation

² http://www.unescap.org/tid/unnext/tools/business_process.asp

³ <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=34244>

methodology that had been used for identifying regulatory and procedural barriers to trade in Tajikistan. A summary of discussions under this agenda item can be found in the annex to this Report.

Decision 2014-4:

22. The Committee congratulated the Government of Tajikistan for embarking on a reform programme in the area of trade-related regulations and procedures. The Committee took note of the presentations made by the Government of Tajikistan and the secretariat and requested the secretariat to publish, including electronically, the ECE Study on Regulatory and Procedural Barriers to Trade in Tajikistan, and the Government to prepare a report on the follow-up on the recommendations made in the study at the next session.

Agenda item 5. ECE country studies on regulatory barriers and procedural barriers to trade: follow-up and policy implications

23. The representative of Belarus briefed the Committee on follow-up activities to the ECE study on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade that had been carried out in 2011. The representative of Gosstandart of Belarus noted that the Government needed additional capacity as well as instruments and tools to implement the recommendations. The Government was working, with assistance from the EU, particularly in the area of food safety. More assistance was needed to implement other recommendations. The integration of risk management and regulatory impact assessment in the area of technical regulation had proven to be a challenge. This had been highlighted in the ECE recommendations and Belarus hoped that the work of ECE's Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies (WP.6) could help it in establishing risk management systems.

24. The representative of Belarus also mentioned that the country needed assistance to implement the recommendations related to harmonization of standards, technical regulations and conformity assessment procedures with trade partners, and especially the EU. Support was also needed for complying with the multilateral trading system in the area of trade facilitation, especially in the light of the outcome of the WTO Bali Ministerial Meeting.

25. The representative of Kazakhstan noted that the recommendations emerging from the ECE study, carried out jointly with the International Trade Centre (ITC) in 2012, had contributed to enhancing the country's export competitiveness; an area that had been accorded priority in all of the country's development strategies. The government was harmonizing its legislation and procedures with trading partners, and would use the recommendations to step up reform efforts for removing regulatory and procedural barriers to trade, particularly in the light of the outcome of the WTO Bali Ministerial Meeting. He noted that the study was being reviewed by the Government for final publication.

26. The secretariat informed the meeting of follow up activities to the studies on Belarus, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan. These included the development, with countries, of up-to-date Aid for Trade (AfT) action matrices, taking into account the studies' recommendations, for eventual integration into their United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAF), so as to support the countries' resource mobilization efforts and coordination among donors. The secretariat was also assisting the three Governments in preparing bankable project documents to follow-up on needs identified in the ECE studies.

27. For Belarus and Kazakhstan, this work was financed from the ECE regular budget. For Tajikistan, the work was financed within the context of an interregional United Nations Development Account (UNDA). Under this project, ECE was assisting Azerbaijan,

Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in preparing project documents to support the implementation of AfT activities. These projects would focus on addressing regulatory and procedural barriers to trade, taking into account the priorities in the action matrices, and the issues and areas defined by national stakeholders during face-to-face interviews using the ECE methodology. Priority areas requiring immediate intervention had been defined in consultation with SPECA countries using the AfT national matrices as the starting point for discussions, and following a formal process, whereby national focal points had been appointed by their governments to liaise between the secretariat and relevant state agencies.

28. A representative of the Eurasian Economic Commission noted that the recommendations made to Belarus highlighted regional issues and enquired as to how these would be addressed. The secretariat noted that these concerns could be addressed if extra-budgetary resources could be made available.

29. The Government of Kazakhstan requested a study on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade in the Customs Union of Belarus, Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation and requested that the secretariat develop a proposal to undertake this work subject to the availability of extra-budgetary funding.

Decision 2014-5:

30. The Committee took note of the reports presented by the Governments of Belarus and Kazakhstan as well as the secretariat.

Agenda item 6. Matters arising

31. The Representative of the European Union and its Member States asked the secretariat to update the document (ECE/TRADE/NONE/2014/3/Rev.1) for the website so that the Annex would also contain points 1 and 6 of Commission Decisions A(65) and the recent EXCOM understanding on the revision of the ECE mandates in trade and economic cooperation. He reiterated that, in addition to the revision of the mandate (on which discussions would start after the meetings on trade and economic cooperation) and the possible merger of the trade and economic cooperation committees (for which a procedure was agreed), there was the third issue of how to synergize ECE work on trade and economic cooperation. There should be a joint focus on helping ECE member States translate innovative ideas into local productive capacity and value added, possibly with the help of PPP financing for instance for small and medium sized enterprises, and on helping them to implement ECE standards to facilitate import of the necessary inputs in the productive process, and export of the resulting products and services. This joint focus should aim at the concrete deliverables of creating jobs and economic growth in the ECE region, which since the 2008 crisis has had the need to transition to a more competitive and innovative economy. This objective would also be important for better streamlined future capacity building and technical cooperation activities as well as regional advisory services, which should focus primarily on the needs of countries in the region. In addition, the representative of the EU and its Member States requested the Bureaux of the Trade and Economic Cooperation and Integration Committees to pro-actively produce a paper, as soon as possible in 2014, with possibilities and ideas on creating local productive capacity and export opportunities, in order to deliver concrete results that help create jobs and economic growth in the ECE Region so that the discussions amongst member States could be fruitful and forward looking. A new approach was also necessary because the Trade Committee could not continue to meet in its present form, with less than 20 delegations and 50 participants on the first day, and less than 10 delegations and 30 participants on the second day.

32. The Russian Federation stated that ECE had a strong potential for creating incentives to improve the economic competitiveness of the region and for strengthening various integration processes through the development and harmonization of advanced quality standards for export and import products. It was the view of the delegation of the Russian Federation that this goal was efficiently addressed by the subsidiary bodies of the ECE Committee on Trade, i.e. the Working Parties on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies (WP.6) and on Agricultural Quality Standards (WP.7). For the Russian delegation it was important that the intergovernmental framework should envisage a coordinating body for the work of these mentioned groups, which was the Committee on Trade.

33. The Russian Federation also mentioned the existing challenge of developing an agenda that would unify all ECE member States.

34. In this regard, the Russian delegation believed it was necessary to upgrade the use of the quality work of the Committee on Trade and aim it at raising the competitiveness, modernization and innovation of the region, as well as at strengthening the dialogue between the various integration groupings. The Russian delegation stressed the importance of strengthening the capacity of the Commission to carry out these tasks, taking into account the opinion of the experts involved in the ECE work on trade and economic cooperation and integration.

35. The Russian delegation stressed that the discussions during the first day of the session had revealed a significant interest of the ECE member States in receiving technical assistance from the Commission in identifying and overcoming barriers to the development of trade and a need for the Commission to continue its focus on technical assistance to countries in need.

36. The Russian delegation further stated that the reduction in the number of professional posts in the Division on Economic Cooperation, Trade, and Land Management servicing, in particular, the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UNCEFACT) following the Outcome of the review of the 2005 reform of ECE, should not affect technical assistance for CIS countries.

Decision 2014-6:

37. The Committee took note of the Outcome of the Review of the 2005 reform of ECE as contained in Commission Decision A(65) of 11 April 2013 (E/ECE/1468, Annex III). The Committee also noted that EXCOM had reached an understanding that 1) the Committee on Trade and the Committee on Economic Cooperation and Integration may meet – on an exceptional basis – during the week of 10 February 2014 in accordance with Commission Decision A(65) and that consultations on revised mandates/terms of reference will have to be undertaken after those meetings; and that 2) paragraph 31g of Commission Decision A(65) provides amongst others that the secretariat will draw up a report by the summer of 2014 so as to allow EXCOM to take a decision, before 1 December 2014, on whether or not to merge the two Committees (see also EXCOM/CONCLU/66).

38. The Committee requested that the Bureau of the Trade Committee (preferably, in cooperation with the Bureau of the Committee on Economic Cooperation and Integration) produce a paper for EXCOM as early as possible in 2014, with suggestions and ideas on how ECE work on trade and economic cooperation could be synergized taking into account the views expressed by member States.

Agenda item 7. Aid for Trade in the countries of the Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) and other countries with economies in transition

39. The representative of the Ministry of Economy and Industry of Azerbaijan informed the Committee on follow-up activities by the Government to implement the Aid for Trade (AFT) national action plan that had been presented during the 2010 Baku Ministerial Conference. The national action plan had been updated with the assistance of the ECE secretariat and discussions were underway for developing a project document to implement the priority areas identified by the Government. In identifying these areas, the Government had benefited from a UNDA project. Deliverables under this project included recommendations based on the results of face to face interviews with traders and relevant government agencies undertaken by a national consultant using the ECE evaluation methodology; a policy report summarizing the results of the interviews; and a review of ongoing reform efforts and donor funded projects aimed at removing regulatory and procedural barriers to trade in Azerbaijan.

40. The representative of the Azerbaijan Export and Investment Promotion Foundation (AZPROMO) briefed the Committee on trade promotion efforts undertaken by his agency. He also provided an overview of an action plan for establishing a Trade Information Portal.

41. The representative of Tajikistan said the government would be implementing recommendations emanating from the ECE study of regulatory and procedural barriers to trade in Tajikistan. At the regional level, discussions with SPECA members and development partners had highlighted the following needs:

- (a) Developing a plan for simplifying trade regulations and procedures,
- (b) Developing a master plan for guiding the implementation of SW facilities in the region,
- (c) Harmonizing and simplifying trade related procedures building on internationally recognized standards and best practices in risk management,
- (d) Developing the export competitiveness of agricultural products by ensuring their compliance with internationally recognized quality standards,
- (e) Continuing analytical work for supporting the removal of trade barriers in the region.

42. The representative of Turkmenistan said that his country was convinced that the SPECA programme could make a significant contribution to the development of mutually beneficial cooperation arrangements between participating countries. The programme provided a neutral platform to discuss strategic issues for fostering regional cooperation, with the participation of representatives of the private sector and the academic community.

43. Turkmenistan expressed appreciation to the ECE and, in particular, to the Committee on Trade for assisting his Government in preparing project proposals in key areas of regional cooperation, including the implementation of Aid for Trade initiatives. The Government was working with the ECE to revise their national Aft action plan, taking into account recent realities.

44. The secretariat noted that the Aft action matrices covered, in addition to priority needs in areas covered by the Trade subprogramme, priority needs for transport and productive capacity development as well as other areas that form part of the ECE programme of work as a whole. She informed the Committee that the secretariat had prepared a brochure on Aid for Trade Resource Materials for Trade Development, which

compiled the relevant recommendations, standards and guidelines from all ECE subprogrammes (ECE/TRADE/415).⁴

45. The secretariat explained that ongoing work in support of AfT for SPECA countries included updating the AfT action matrices presented during the 2010 Baku Ministerial Conference. Those for Kazakhstan and Tajikistan were being updated benefiting from the findings from the needs assessment studies. The secretariat was also developing project documents to address priority areas identified by the Governments, and these would be presented during a UN-wide donor conference meeting in Tunisia in April 2014.

Decision 2014-7:

46. The Committee took note of the AfT action matrices and the report on how they were being coordinated and taken into account within the discussions on United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks in SPECA countries. The Committee took note of the Aid for Trade Resource Materials for Trade Development (ECE/TRADE/415) and requested the secretariat to update it for 2015. The Committee also requested the secretariat to prepare a progress report on and concrete proposals for the Aid for Trade follow-up projects for 2015, setting out the cost, sources of finance and expected outcomes for approval by member States.

Agenda item 8. ECE contribution to trade development in countries with economies in transition: recent initiatives

47. The secretariat had prepared two documents to inform the Committee about its cooperation with other organizations (ECE/TRADE/C/2014/9) and the Committee on Trade's joint work with other ECE subprogrammes (ECE/TRADE/C/2014/10).

48. The secretariat drew attention to the enhanced cooperation between the ECE and the Customs Union of Belarus, Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation, as the ECE had signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Eurasian Economic Commission. He added that a plan had also been developed for implementing the MoU.

49. The representative of the Eurasian Economic Commission expressed the Commission's appreciation for the ECE's role in promoting economic development and the integration of ECE member States into the world economy, as well as maintaining and strengthening economic relations and harmonization between ECE member States in the area of conventions, norms and standards.

50. She noted that several items in the plan were already being actively implemented. Work was under way on projects on trade facilitation and the Single Window of the Customs Union and the Common Economic Space, and the Commission was interested in the rapid preparation of the third edition of the glossary of trade facilitation terms.

Decision 2014-8:

51. The Committee took note of the secretariat's report on cooperation with other international organizations and joint activities with ECE subprogrammes and requested the secretariat to further enhance such work and to issue a report to the next session, subject to the decision by EXCOM on the possible merger of the Committee on Trade with the Committee on Economic Cooperation and Integration.

⁴ The brochure is available in English and in Russian and can be found on the ECE website at: <http://www.unece.org/publications/oes/welcome.html>

Agenda item 9. Programme of work

52. The secretariat briefed the delegates on the implementation of the programme of work for the biennium 2014-2015. As the document had been prepared using the UN format for reporting on regular budget activities, UNCEFACT activities were still reflected in the document because it remained part of ECE's Subprogramme 6 on Trade.

53. The secretariat drew the attention of the Committee to the draft strategic framework of the Subprogramme for the period 2016-2017, contained in document ECE/TRADE/NONE/-2012/1 which was for information only. The strategic framework would be discussed and approved by the General Assembly during 2014.

54. The secretariat also drew attention to the list of publications for 2014-2015, provided in document ECE/TRADE/C/2014/15, and explained the move towards paperless publications within the UN as a whole. As a result, the large majority of publications would be electronic and only a limited number would be produced in hard copies.

55. To support discussions on creating possible synergies between the CT and CECEI, the secretariat provided a brief overview of the mandate of CECEI, its subsidiary bodies and programme of work, and highlighted overarching themes around which synergies could be made. The secretariat informed delegates that it would be circulating a questionnaire to member States at the end of February 2014 to solicit their feedback on this issue. The results of the questionnaire would be used by the secretariat and the Bureaux of the Committee on Trade and the Committee on Economic Cooperation and Integration to prepare a report on possible synergies between the two committees for submission to EXCOM by 1 June 2014.

56. The Committee on Trade was briefed on activities undertaken during 2012-2013 by its subsidiary bodies. Because of its relevance to other work under the Committee, the secretariat also gave a short briefing on the work of UN/CEFACT, for information only.

57. The representative of Gosstandart of Belarus expressed his appreciation for the activities undertaken by the Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies (WP.6), which provides tools for supporting the implementation of WTO agreements and for strengthening regulatory cooperation. These instruments and tools were instrumental for supporting national development efforts in such areas as market surveillance, metrology, risk management and regulatory impact assessment. All these areas were of interest to Belarus, particularly in relation to the Customs Union of Belarus, Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation. In addition, mutual recognition of conformity certificates between Belarus and its trading partners required further work. Belarus was also interested in the sectoral initiatives of WP.6.

58. The Russian Federation noted that while resources had been transferred from the Division, it should not undermine technical assistance activities in the area of trade facilitation.

59. The secretariat emphasized that it was committed to responding to member States requests for technical assistance and suggested discussing these issues separately as UN/CEFACT no longer reported to the Committee.

60. The secretariat presented the biennial evaluation report for 2012-2013 (document ECE/TRADE/C/2014/12). The Chair noted that the only increase in activities reflected in the indicators was the number of downloads, the remaining indicators suggested that there had been no increase in activities. The secretariat explained that this was mainly due to the nature of the indicators, which were not cumulative and the limited resources available to the secretariat. For example, the indicators for new and revised recommendations in one biennium generally reflected the maximum number that could be done within existing

secretariat and member State resources (in the form of expert contributions), therefore, no significant increases could be expected. The secretariat invited member states to inform the secretariat on the implementation of ECE standards and recommendations for inclusion in evaluation reports.

61. The representative of Belarus said that the Programme of Work (ECE/TRADE/C/2014/13) was closely linked to the decisions on the future of the Committee. He added that his country and the Russian Federation were of the view that this document needed to be presented to member States for comments as part of these discussions.

62. On synergies, the representative of Bulgaria proposed adding another player, the European Economic and Social Committee, which provided an important forum for creating synergy. An example could be the joint implementation of projects with programmes such as the Horizon 2020 for SMEs, which supported both EU and non-EU members.

Decision 2014-9:

63. The Committee reviewed the proposed Programme of Work for the Trade subprogramme (ECE/TRADE/C/2014/13), agreed that it should be indicative for work to be undertaken in 2014 and that the part for 2015 should be finalized before the end of 2014, in the light of the results of EXCOM's discussions on the revision of the mandate and the future of the Committee. Several delegations submitted suggestions on the proposed programme of work.

64. The Committee took note of the secretariat's report on capacity-building activities (document ECE/TRADE/C/2014/11), the biennial evaluation report for 2012-2013 (document ECE/TRADE/C/2014/12) and the biennial evaluation plan for the Trade subprogramme for the 2014-2014 (document ECE/TRADE/C/2014/14) and requested the secretariat to focus its demand-driven capacity building and technical assistance activities and regional advisory services on ECE member States in accordance with paragraph 18 of the outcome of the Review of the 2005 Reform. The secretariat will prepare, and update as appropriate, a list of its capacity-building and technical assistance activities including regional advisory services setting out the cost, sources of finance and expected outcomes for approval by member States. It was understood that further activities could be added if and when extra-budgetary resources became available.

Decision 2014-10:

65. The Committee adopted the list of publications 2014-2015 (document ECE/TRADE/NONE/2012/1), without prejudice to decisions to be made on the future of the Committee on Trade by EXCOM, and took note of the draft Strategic Framework 2016-2017: Subprogramme 6: Trade (document ECE/TRADE/NONE/2012/1).

Agenda item 10. Stakeholder needs and priorities

66. The representative of the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Entrepreneurship of Albania requested that the ECE's assistance to the Government in conducting an assessment of regulatory and procedural barriers to trade.

67. The representative of the Azerbaijan Export and Investment Promotion Foundation (AZPROMO) requested the ECE's assistance in creating a trade information portal for providing up-to-date information on trade-related regulatory and procedural measures, international best practices in the areas of trade facilitation, standards, technical regulations, conformity assessment and transport.

68. The representative of the Ministry of Economy and Industry of Azerbaijan requested the ECE's assistance in preparing a project proposal for supporting the development of the system of standardization, technical regulation and conformity assessment.

Agenda item 11. Other business

69. No discussion took place under this agenda item.

Agenda item 12. Adoption of the report

70. The Representative of the EU and its Member States indicated that they were ready to examine proposals for technical assistance and capacity building activities and regional advisory services which would outline for each project a list of intended activities and per activity, the estimated cost and expected outcome.

71. The Representative of the Russian Federation stressed that the position of the European Union and its Member States on the proposals for technical assistance, capacity building and regional advisory services must be applied to all project activities within all subprogrammes and sectoral committees of the ECE in line with a process initiated by EXCOM.

Decision 2014-11:

72. The Committee approved the report of its 6th session and requested that it be published in English, French and Russian.

ANNEX**Summary of Discussions under Agenda item 4
Focus on Tajikistan**

1. This Annex summarizes the statements made by the Tajik delegation under Agenda item 4 on Focus in Tajikistan, during which the delegation briefed the Committee on the relevance of the UNECE study on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade in Tajikistan to the country's overall development efforts, and its contribution to reforms in the areas of trade facilitation, standardisation policies and regulatory cooperation.
2. The Minister of Economic Development and Trade of Tajikistan briefed the Committee on recent reform measures implemented by his government to remove regulatory and procedural barriers to trade. He explained that the Government has adopted new laws to bring the legal framework underpinning export and import activities in line with the World Trade Organisation (WTO) requirements, and has established capacity-building action plans to develop the required institutional capacity in the areas of standardization and technical regulations, customs administration, border management and tax administration. Most notable among the action plans is the one concerning the establishment of a Single Window facility for exports, imports and transit operations, which was being implemented by the State Unitary Enterprise "Single Window Centre" (SUE SW) amidst plans to launch the Single Window by the end of 2014.
3. He noted that the ECE study on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade in Tajikistan would assist his country in capitalising on achievements to date, and in initiating a dialogue within the Committee on Trade and its subsidiary bodies about future cooperation. The study provides a range of concerted recommendations, which will contribute to: ensuring complete harmonisation of national legislation in line with the WTO requirements; improving trade facilitation conditions; achieving deeper regional integration; implementing the National Quality Infrastructure Strategy; and creating a more favourable investment climate.
4. The Ministry had already prepared a draft plan for implementing the recommendations advanced by the ECE. The Plan stipulated measures for simplifying the documentary requirements of each agency; creating a unified risk management policy; strengthening inter-agency cooperation between border control bodies; and for speeding up cross border trade. In addition, and drawing upon relevant ECE reference models, Tajikistan would also develop its own national trade facilitation strategy, which takes into account the outcome of the WTO Bali Ministerial Meeting.
5. The Minister noted that his country also attached great importance to fostering regional cooperation. In October 2013, it hosted the eighth meeting of the SPECA⁵ Working Group on Trade, which took place in Dushanbe and was co-chaired by Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. The meeting emphasized the need for developing a strategy for supporting trade development and regional cooperation in Central Asian countries, and

⁵ SPECA is the United Nations Special Programme for Central Asia and covers the following countries: Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. SPECA is supported by both the UNECE and UNESCAP. All of the countries are members of both Commissions with the exception of Afghanistan which is only a member of UNESCAP

concluded with an agreement to develop a reference master plan for supporting the implementation of Single Window facilities in SPECA countries.

6. A more detailed account of the country's achievements and priority needs in the areas of trade facilitation, standardisation and technical regulation were provided by representatives from the following line Ministries and State agencies: Ministry of Transport; Ministry of Agriculture; Customs Service; Tajikstandart; Tax Committee under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan; State Centre for Sanitary Epidemiological Control under the Ministry of Health; State Veterinary Inspection Service under the Ministry of Agriculture; and State Service for Phytosanitary and Quarantine Inspection under the Ministry of Agriculture. The key concerns raised by these representatives were related to:

(a) Capitalizing on achievements to date in the area of tax administration. The institutional and operational capacity of the Tax Committee and its field offices had been strengthened with modern administrative structures and new skills; the adoption of an electronic payment system; and, the establishment of electronic kiosks in remote locations to facilitate taxpayers who wished to file electronically but did not have computer access. It is important to promote these modern systems and continue efforts to establish a relation of trust between the Government and tax payers

(b) Developing the capacities of food-testing laboratories

(c) Harmonizing national legislation with international standards on food safety and quality, especially those of Codex Alimentarius

(d) Implementing the Programme for the Preparation of Technical Regulations for the period 2013-2014, which stipulates developing technical regulations in priority sectors

(e) Developing a trade facilitation strategy

(f) Simplification and harmonization of customs procedures, focusing on customs automation, risk management and post-entry audit customs intelligence, joint customs control regional transit development, communication and training.

(g) Establishing modern transport infrastructure

(h) Developing the country's information and communications infrastructure.

(i) Harmonising national agricultural quality standards with internationally recognised standards

7. The representatives of the private sector raised the following concerns:

(a) The new Customs Code in 2005 set the context of simplified procedures. Most notable has been the adoption of electronic documents which has reduced the time required for obtaining the customs declaration to 20 minutes only. It would be useful if the Government would establish an electronic payment system for customs duties and fees and further streamlined customs procedures.

(b) Customs reform needed to be complemented with targeted efforts to simplify and streamline the administrative procedures of the remaining state bodies involved in supporting export and import activities. These agencies also need to publish their documentary requirements and the fees charged for issuing trade documents as this would foster transparency.

(c) There is a need to assist small and medium enterprises in developing their productive capacity. ECE could directly contribute to achieving this goal by building on its

work in the areas of green industries, innovation and public private partnerships.

(d) More needs to be done in the area of transport infrastructure development, as this is important for capitalising on Tajikistan's strategic location as a transit country.

8. The secretariat explained that the study of regulatory and procedural barriers to trade in Tajikistan, which was conducted in 2013 using the ECE evaluation methodology. The study focused on strategic non-resource based sectors operating in the capital city of Dushanbe and the country's second largest city of Khujan. The sectors were selected in consultation with the Ministry of Trade and Economic Development based on their contribution to exports and income growth in general. Based on the top level of the Standard International Trade Classification (SITC), these sectors included:

- (a) Food and live animals
- (b) Beverages and tobacco
- (c) Chemicals
- (d) Manufactured goods classified chiefly by material
- (e) Machinery and transport equipment
- (f) Miscellaneous manufactured articles.

9. The assessment was implemented in close consultation with the Tajik National Working Group, which brings together representatives from relevant line ministries, State agencies and private sector support institutions under the leadership of the Deputy Minister of Economic Development and Trade. The results of the study were presented to the Working Group on 7 February 2014, and a second round of consultations would be undertaken to obtain more detailed feedback from the Working Group. The secretariat would publish the study during the second half of 2014.

10. The representative of the Russian Federation said that his country looked forward to receiving the complete and final version of the study, and requested the Tajik delegation to elaborate on the country's future plans in the area of economic integration. The Minister of Economic Development and Trade of Tajikistan said that a special unit was established within the Ministry to look into fostering regional integration, and noted that the Russian Federation is one of Tajikistan's strategic partners. He added that cooperation with the Customs Union (CU) of Belarus, Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation requires shared borders with at least one of the CU members. Tajikistan has common borders with Kyrgyzstan, which has declared its intention to join the CU.

11. The representative of Ukraine noted that his country had noted significant progress in removing regulatory and procedural barriers to trade in Tajikistan since the latter's accession to the WTO. Tajikistan has complied with the WTO rules and with the requirements associated with fulfilling its post-accession commitments. It was clear that while Tajikistan would develop trade relations with its immediate neighbours, reform measures would also have a positive impact on trade relations with Ukraine.