## UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL PROGRAMME FOR THE ECONOMIES OF CENTRAL ASIA (SPECA)

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**Progress report of the SPECA WG on Trade**

In the period between July 2017 and September 2018, UNECE continued its support for the readiness assessment and implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement in Kazakhstan, and in January 2018 provided practical assistance to Kazakhstan on how to notify the WTO Secretariat on B and C measures in the TFA. As a result, on 17 July 2018, Kazakhstan notified to the WTO on its readiness to implement category B and C measures using these advisory services and the results of the UNECE-led study on the readiness of Kazakhstan to implement the TFA.

On 21-22 June 2018, UNECE organized with the Ministry of Economy of Azerbaijan a Seminar on the readiness assessment of Azerbaijan to implement the TFA. The seminar helped the Government of Azerbaijan to prepare for the WTO accession negotiations on the TFA, and to prepare for action on the implementation of the unfulfilled measures. It prepared the ground for an interagency, public-private national committee for trade facilitation in Azerbaijan. This project is a contribution to SDG 17.10: Promote the universal, rules-based, trading system.

In June 2018, a series of workshops took place in Bishkek, Osh and Jalal-Abad, Kyrgyzstan, to improve the know-how of trade ministry officials, customs officials, the traders including micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and women entrepreneurs on supply chain management, business process analysis, and e-business tools like Single Window development that can be used to submit import-export documents for regulatory purposes. The Government of Kyrgyzstan expressed its gratitude for these seminars and agreed on priorities for further action.

The implementation of the project “Strengthening the national capacity of trade-support institutions of Kyrgyzstan” continued in 2018. Training materials on risk management in regulatory systems, conformity assessment and market surveillance were developed in English and Russian. Two training courses were organized. Two train-the trainer courses were held resulting in the creation of a group of trainers. Advisory services for applying a risk-based approach in regulation and market surveillance were given to all relevant institutions.

On 24-26 July 2018, three-day training on trade facilitation took place in Dushanbe for SPECA countries to raise the capacity of senior experts from these countries to achieve tangible results in trade facilitation. 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 analyze TF issues and identify solutions. The successful inclusion of Uzbekistan in this training was a positive development.

ECE assisted the Governments of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in establishing a comprehensive database of applied non-tariff measures (NTMs) using the internationally recognized United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) administered Multi-Agency Support Team (MAST) classification system. With the support of the ECE and UNCTAD, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan experts created national sets of NTMs in accordance with the UNMAST classification system 2017.

In the area of agricultural standards, UNECE continued delivering a multi-year training project for producers of apricots in the three countries sharing the Fergana Valley to combine the harvest in a cross-border production scenario, increase export opportunities and provide the Valley’s family farmers with employment and sustainable income. The project brought together the three Fergana Valley countries to cooperate on cross-border supply chains for the production, processing and exportation of dried apricots that are compliant with international standards.