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Economic Commission for Europe

Executive Committee

Recommendations concerning the Committee on Trade

The Executive Committee of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) adopted the following text at its thirty-fourth meeting on 26 February 2010:

1. In September 2008, the Executive Committee requested the Chairman of the Committee on Trade to submit a paper with different options on the future of the Committee.
2. Following the report (ECE/TRADE/C/2009/2) by the Chairman of the Committee on Trade, the Executive Committee held several meetings, both in formal and informal settings, to discuss and decide upon the two options presented: (a) to revitalize and maintain the Committee; or (b) to dissolve it.
3. The discussions held have shown that the Committee on Trade could undertake a focused work plan over the next three years, as outlined below, within its existing terms of reference (ECE/TRADE/C/2009/2) and programme of work (ECE/TRADE/C/2009/10). Through this work plan the Committee is expected to add value to ECE's work and to attract broad participation from different member States. It is to be undertaken in close cooperation with other international organizations and without overlapping or duplicating their work.
4. It was also agreed that this work plan should be implemented within the Committee's existing resources, supplemented by the Russian Federation's contribution of US\$ 185,000 under extrabudgetary resources, as well as other possible voluntary contributions, for the implementation of the Committee's work plan. The Executive Committee expressed appreciation for the contribution made by the Russian Federation.
5. These recommendations are without prejudice to future discussions on the future of the Committee on Trade.

Recommendations

6. Consequently, the Executive Committee *recommends* that, until the end of 2012, the Committee on Trade focuses its work on:
 - (a) Identifying procedural and regulatory barriers in a country's or subregion's trade environment, with a focus on countries with transition economies, *through demand-driven needs assessments* and in coordination and cooperation with other relevant

international organizations, including the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank and the World Trade Organization (WTO);

(b) Discussing regional trade issues, as agreed, with an emphasis on the policy implications of the bottlenecks identified in the needs assessments and on the needs of transition economies. These would include discussions on possible strategies, including best practices, to address identified issues as part of a regional trade integration dialogue;

(c) Follow-up to the needs assessments and the policy discussions by:

(i) Identifying capacity building needs and the possible supporting roles of concerned national, regional and international organizations;

(ii) Building increased awareness and understanding of the policy and technical steps required at national level to implement the necessary identified changes (tools and standards).

7. The above recommendations shall be implemented as follows:

(a) Key deliverables

(i) A needs assessment methodology focusing on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade, based on existing trade facilitation methodologies such as that of the Global Facilitation Partnership for Transportation and Trade and taking fully into account the implementation of relevant ECE instruments as well as selected areas of the work of subsidiary bodies (in consultation with them). Other modifications may also be made with the objective of allowing for comparisons within subregions and over time;

(ii) Three demand-driven needs assessments, their translation and publication. These assessments shall also take into account any existing work by other organizations, such as UNDP, the World Bank and WTO. For example, the assessments would use already available information and data, whenever possible, and then would undertake new research only to fill in those areas not covered by other organizations (which may differ from one country to another);

(iii) Peer reviews of the needs assessments during the annual sessions of the Committee on Trade involving governments and other key stakeholders, including multilateral organizations (such as UNCTAD, UNDP and the World Bank) and the formulation of recommendations as appropriate;

(iv) A forum for discussing procedural and regulatory issues in transition economies in their trade among themselves and with the rest of ECE region;

(v) Demand-driven capacity-building support i.e. the identification of capacity building needs and the possible supporting roles by:

a. Building increased awareness and understanding of the policy and technical steps required at national level to implement the necessary identified changes;

b. Identifying where ECE can provide expertise to other implementing agencies in the areas of trade facilitation and regulatory cooperation, in particular the Inland Transport Committee (border crossing, customs questions and transport facilitation);

c. Mapping information on existing trade-related capacity-building that is related to the needs identified and the work of the Committee on Trade.

(b) Financing and resources

At present, the Committee on Trade and its Bureau are supported by two professional level secretariat staff members (a P-3 and half a P-5), plus half the time of a General Service support staff member and, for capacity-building, the work of a regional advisor. The recommended work plan shall be implemented within these existing, available **regular budget resources** taking into account the offer from the Russian Federation (US\$ 185,000) to fund three assessments and by also arranging the workload within the subprogramme so that more of the time of the P-5 and the General Service staff member is devoted to the Committee.

(c) Reporting

Without prejudice to the regular reporting of the Committee on Trade, it is invited to report back to the Executive Committee, so as to review the above activities undertaken, including an assessment and feedback of results achieved, before the 2013 session of the Commission.
