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**Thematic Working Group on Sustainable Transport, Transit and  
Connectivity (TWG-STTC)**

22<sup>nd</sup> Session  
1-2 November 2017  
Astana, Kazakhstan

**National coordinating mechanism for transport facilitation**

(Item 4.3 of the Agenda)

*Note by ECE/ ESCAP*

1. The removal of physical and non-physical barriers in international trade and transport requires involvement of numerous government agencies. Efficient and effective coordination and cooperation among all the relevant agencies through proper inter-agency coordination institutions are crucial for the facilitation of international trade and transport. Cooperation from the private sector is essential as the private sector has to go through the whole procedures to bring people and goods across the borders.
2. Further streamlining and harmonization of customs and transit procedures and formalities and transparent and efficient border management and coordination of agencies involved in border clearance, should have a concrete and direct impact on reducing the cost of doing trade and stimulating faster and competitive trade for landlocked developing countries. Such improved trade facilitation would help landlocked developing countries towards enhancing the competitiveness of their export products and services. Therefore, technical assistance is needed to enable landlocked developing countries to fully participate in and benefit from multilateral trade negotiations and effectively implement policies and regulations aimed at facilitating transport and trade.
3. The Vienna Programme of Action (2014) recommended that landlocked and transit developing countries should enhance coordination and cooperation of national agencies responsible for border and customs control procedures as well as to consider establishing, where appropriate, national committees on trade facilitation and/or strengthening existing ones, with the involvement of all relevant stakeholders, including the private sector.

4. In most of the cases, the mechanisms for establishing national mechanisms for the coordination of transport facilitation initiatives take the following forms:

A. Permanent coordination institution:

- National trade facilitation committee;
- National transport facilitation committee;
- National trade and transport facilitation committee.

B. Temporary coordination mechanism:

- Coordination body for specific programme;
- Coordination body for specific project;
- Case-based coordination approach;
- Coordination of specific initiative through meetings;
- Coordination of specific initiative through official communications.

5. A number of initiatives have been taken by SPECA countries in establishing national transit transport facilitation bodies. However, existing facilitation coordinating bodies are facing difficulties in sustaining their operations, often resulting from insufficient financing sources, inadequate recognition of their role and functions, inadequate organizational structure and lack of representation from key stakeholders.

6. ESCAP secretariat has developed the guidelines on establishing and strengthening national coordination mechanisms. The guidelines lay down broad principles, salient aspects and main requirements for a successful national coordination institution. The publication complements the existing UNECE guidelines on setting up national trade facilitation bodies consequent to Recommendation No. 4 adopted by the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN CEFAC). The publication is available in English at [http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Study\\_on\\_Coordination\\_Mechanisms\\_Ch4.pdf](http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Study_on_Coordination_Mechanisms_Ch4.pdf).

7. Given that the design and industrial development cycle of innovative technologies are shorter than the policy cycle, regulatory authorities often lag behind at the national level, but do so particularly at the international level. This leads to technical fragmentation and, eventually, inter-operability issues within and across countries. UNECE, having recognized the importance of innovation and the difficulties that accompany the use of new technologies in transport and border crossing, is scaling up efforts towards the development and implementation of regulations

and agreements on technical and technological compatibility (e.g. eTIR - please check SPECA/TWG-STTC (22)/5 for more details).

8. Since the last report, UNECE has participated in a series of events, most notably (and non-exhaustively) in a first exploratory meeting for a possible project involving Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan and Ukraine, which took place in Batumi (Georgia) on 11 and 12 May 2017. Participants expressed great appreciation for the pilot projects already undertaken and were interested in launching an intermodal eTIR corridor between their countries. UNECE and IRU also jointly presented the results of the UNECE-IRU eTIR pilot project at the World Customs Organization (WCO) IT Conference in Tbilisi on 7 to 9 June 2017. Furthermore, UNECE participated at the High-Level Meeting for the Euro-Asia Region on Improving Cooperation on Transit, Trade Facilitation and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Hanoi, 7-9 March 2017). One of the main conclusions at this meeting was that the TIR convention is a powerful tool for improving international transit. In the key recommendations of the meeting, LLDCs and their transit partners are recommended to ratify the TIR Conventions.

#### **The Thematic Working Group may wish to**

- Encourage SPECA countries to use the results of the “Strengthening the capacities of developing countries and countries with economies in transition to facilitate legitimate border crossing, regional cooperation and integration” project;
- Encourage SPECA countries to establish or strengthen national coordination mechanisms to review, assess, propose and take actions for the facilitation of international trade and transport;
- Encourage SPECA countries to mobilize public and private sector resources to finance the operations and activities of the national coordination mechanisms; and
- Encourage SPECA countries to hold workshops on establishing and strengthening of national coordination mechanisms to build common position of different stakeholders on ways to reduce barriers for cross-border and transit transport.