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

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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.

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) : (a) the Seminar on the automation of transit procedures and electronic exchange of data in the context of trade facilitation (Istanbul, 19-20 April 2017); (b) the Workshop on the regional computerized TIR corridor (Batumi, 11-12 May 2017); (c) the International Transport Forum (Leipzig, 31 May-2 June 2017); (d) the WCO Global Conference on Transit (Brussels, 10-11 July 2017); (e) the fifth meeting of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on the follow-up and implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for the Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) for the Decade 2014-2024 (New York, 3-5 October 2017); (f) the eighth WCO Trade Facilitation Agreement Working Group (Brussels, 16-18 October 2017); (g) the ADB UNESCAP workshop on cross-border and transit transport facilitation (Bangkok, 11-12 December 2017); (h) the 17th Transport Sector Coordinating Committee Meeting (Istanbul, 18-19 April 2018); (i) the OSCE Training for border guards and customs officers serving at the border crossing points on the international railway and international road crossings (Ashgabat, 29-30 May 2018);

The Thematic Working Group may wish to

- Encourage SPECA countries to embark on eTIR projects and support the adoption of the new Annex 11 of the TIR Convention;
- 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.