

# NATIONAL TRADE FACILITATION COMMITTEES

MOVING TOWARDS IMPLEMENTATION



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## Abstract for trade information services

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### **National Trade Facilitation Committees – Moving Towards Implementation**

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The report focusing on the World Trade Organization's Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), and its Article 23.2 that mandates Member States to establish or maintain national trade facilitation bodies (NTFBs) - analyses the scope and purpose of Article 23.2 and links it with the trade facilitation activities of other international organizations; considers some possible models for NTFBs and draws lessons and experiences from those that already exist; includes examples of NTFBs that have been established by governments or the private sector; sets out a detailed step-by-step process on how to establish an NTFB, and suggestions for developing countries to consider as they reflect on the best way of implementing the TFA to suit their own circumstances; concludes with an analysis of ways in which NTFBs may choose to engage with business stakeholders, from participation in working groups to public-private dialogue, including the UNECE recommendations on NTFBs and consultation approaches, includes bibliographical references (pp. 45-46).

Descriptors: **Trade Facilitation, WTO, Trade Agreements, Trade Policy.**

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English

ITC is the joint agency of the United Nations and the WTO dedicated to supporting the internationalisation of Small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Through its trade related capacity building and market intelligence, ITC works with SMEs, trade and investment support institutions (TISI) and policy makers to foster sustainable development through trade and to support the achievement of the UN Global Goals.

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## Foreword

Governments around the world are preparing to implement the World Trade Organization's Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), a key outcome of the WTO's 9<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference in Bali in December 2013.

Implementation of the agreement will make an important contribution to improving a country's business and trade environment. Simplifying customs, border procedures and related documentation speeds up the movement of goods across borders, reduces trade transaction costs and improves predictability in delivery time. These issues are critical to efficient global value chains and the integration of countries into the world economy.

The agreement contains an important provision (Article 23.2) requiring Member States to "establish and/or maintain a national committee on trade facilitation or designate an existing mechanism to facilitate both domestic coordination and implementation of provisions of this Agreement".

Policymakers, trade and investment support institutions and the business community all have a role in determining the best way to work together to promote implementation of this important TFA provision.

The benefits of national trade facilitation bodies (NTFBs) are many. They bring governments and traders together to work in partnership through a platform for continuous dialogue. This enables the design and implementation of border procedures that minimize regulatory costs and inconvenience to trade flows, while enabling governments to pursue public policy objectives related to border controls, consumer protection, public health and revenue collection.

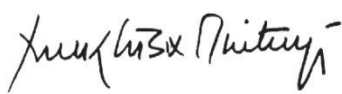
When NTFBs bring together the right constellation of stakeholders, they understand trade facilitation from the perspective of both the public and private sectors. They use their technical knowledge of border procedures and their experience in complying with regulations. They draw upon best practices in their own countries and from around the world. By recommending optimal solutions to maximize trade flows and minimize trade transaction costs, a well-run NTFB can help countries implement their WTO commitments and benefit from trade facilitation reforms.

This document helps developing countries to better evaluate the policy, organizational and funding options that best suit their circumstances in three ways. First, it draws upon the lessons of both longstanding and newly established trade facilitation bodies. Second, it takes into account existing recommendations and guidelines, to offer consistent strategic, technical and operational suggestions. Finally, it seeks to set out a detailed roadmap to implement the TFA obligation on NTFBs.

This publication was produced by the International Trade Centre (ITC), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, UNCTAD), and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, UNECE), including the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business, and illustrates the power of inter-agency cooperation. It draws from the rich technical assistance experiences of each organization, to provide developing countries with a holistic perspective on challenges and opportunities to be gained from a national trade facilitation body. It is an example of the UN system delivering as one.



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