

Third Inter-Agency Meeting on Trade Facilitation Geneva, 16 May 2003

Summary Report

1. As agreed at the Second Inter-Agency Meeting (Geneva, 28 November 2002), this third meeting was convened by UN/ECE, and took place as scheduled to deal with the following agenda:
 1. Report of the work accomplished in the area of trade facilitation by the agencies, since the Second meeting;
 2. Review of the coordination of cooperative actions in the area of trade facilitation;
 3. Discussion on potential deliverables and work programme;
 4. Aligning the cooperation scheme on the real needs of agencies and concerned institutions.
2. The meeting was attended by representatives of eight of the HLCP Member Agencies, i.e. the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Bank (WB), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNECLAC) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). The UN System Chief Executives Board (CEB) Secretariat was also represented. As observer, the representative of World Customs Organization (WCO) was also present. Other invited organizations that could not be present at the meeting were the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC).

Item 1 of the Agenda: *Report of the work accomplished in the area of trade facilitation by the agencies since the Second meeting*

3. In relation to the resources allocated to the development of the web site un-tradefacilitation.net, in addition to its own nomination, UNCTAD (representing the un-tradefacilitation.net Team) was informed by ECE, ESCAP, ECLAC, UNIDO, and WTO their nominations of web-authors and managers responsible to populate their respective "rooms." "Rooms" within un-tradefacilitation.net were sub-sites reserved for agency-specific information to participating agencies/organizations. As of the date of the 3rd Inter-Agency meeting, ECE, WTO, UNIDO and UNCTAD had populated their "rooms" with their respective information (that is: 4 partners out of the 15 agencies initially concerned).
4. UNCTAD reported that, as requested at the previous meeting, contact was made with non-UN organizations, namely: WCO, OECD and ICC. Only WCO and OECD had responded and confirmed their interest.
5. The ECLAC representative reported on the "Interregional partnership for promoting trade as an engine of growth through knowledge management and ICT" project financed by the Development Account. The project is a follow-up on a recommendation formulated at the 2002 Forum on trade facilitation. The project is aimed at developing a Web tool to increase exchange and cooperation among the five UN Regional Commissions in the area of trade facilitation with a view to reach a common understanding, policies and approach to trade facilitation, taking into account the regional perspective. Furthermore, the meeting was informed that the Transport Unit of ECLAC is contributing to an integrated initiative on transport in South America and will start work on a comparative supply chain study in August 2003.
6. The ECE representative informed the meeting on the launching of the UNeMed capacity building programme, financed by the Development Account. This programme provides capacity building in the area of trade facilitation in the supply chain and automation of documentary aspects of trade. The UNeMed programme is jointly carried out by the ECE, ESCWA and ECA.
7. The ESCWA representative confirmed ESCWA's participation in the UNeMed project. ESCWA is in the process of implementing Trade and Transit Facilitation projects in 5 member countries. ESCWA expressed interest in exploring the possibility of using the Inter-Agency meetings for additional fund raising.
8. The ECA representative reported that in the African region, trade facilitation issues were treated through sub-regional initiatives and that there is still a lack adequate resources for securing web presence of sub-regional offices. He recognized the importance of inter-agency coordination but stressed the need to initiate the process of coordination at regional level.

9. The World Bank representative informed the meeting on the launching of the Global Facilitation Partnership Distance Learning Initiative (www.gfp-dli.org) that provides programmes for capacity building through the Internet. The TRAINMAR programme for the Caribbean area (previously supported by UNCTAD) is one of the contributors to this initiative. The next program to be developed under the GFP-DLI is a Supply Chain Management Specialist training, to be piloted in the Caribbean and in Bulgaria. The World Bank representative underlined the potential synergies with the ECLAC efforts and with the UNeMed efforts on similar supply chain management training, and suggested all three parties actively coordinate the production/delivery of content to optimize the quality/replicability of the output.
10. The WCO representative reported on his Organization's activities regarding the integration of security and trade facilitation requirements. He expressed appreciation for the contributions of the present UN agencies to WCO's work and confirmed the willingness of his Organization to support existing initiatives.
11. The CEB Secretariat representative noted that the existing web site un-tradefacilitation.net was conceived as a cooperation tool to provide a platform for UN agencies to work together in an informal way and to foster collaboration among themselves in the field of trade facilitation. Such a platform could ensure that UN agencies and outsiders working on trade facilitation jointly find a common/coherent approach to trade facilitation issues. He stressed that the site should not be seen as a CEB/HLCP web site, but rather as a tool owned by the UN-related trade facilitation community.
12. The representative of the ECE, acting as Chair of the meeting, reported on the outcome of the Second International Forum on Trade Facilitation (14-15 May 2003). He informed that the Forum noted the lack of coordination among international organizations, as reflected in the Chairman's conclusions: "the business community is increasingly concerned about the lack of progress and coordination among the international organizations dealing with trade facilitation." Furthermore, he noted that the Forum had demonstrated its extraordinary capacity to serve as a networking facility for trade facilitation specialists. Such an event offers a unique opportunity to pursue efforts towards a better coherence among the numerous actors in trade facilitation. The need to inform/promote these efforts was recognized. In this context, the ECE representative suggested that the Inter-Agency meeting could issue a joint press release on cooperation among UN organizations and specialised agencies, as well as develop a Roadmap for end users on Trade Facilitation activities, using -as a model- the road map developed by UNIDO ("fish bone" model). The meeting felt that the idea of a joint press release was good but premature.

Item 2 of the Agenda: *Review of the coordination of cooperative actions in the area of trade facilitation*

13. The cooperation scheme among UN agencies was launched in April 2002. The present meeting offered the opportunity to assess the results achieved after one year of operation. For the time being, the cooperation scheme has focused on the development of a common web site for the concerned UN agencies. As a means to assess results, the UNCTAD representative informed the meeting on the use made of the web site over the past 12 months. It appeared that some 940 people have been recorded when browsing the web site. Some 48'000 pages were visited ("hits"). A finer analysis of the hits showed that one person who made over 16'000 hits (the UNCTAD's web-master), 4 persons made between 1'000 and 10'000 hits (web-masters of the agencies that have populated their respective rooms). Around 30 persons visited between 100 and 1'000 pages, while 127 persons had probably accessed few times the web site, browsing between 10 and 100 pages. The rest (around 780 persons) paid only one visit to the site, browsing few pages. These figures lead to the conclusion that the web site has not been effectively used over the past year.
14. Commenting these figures, the representative of UNCTAD observed that the mere fact of having only 4 rooms (partially) populated by partner agencies could explain the limited interest from web surfers who could not find information meeting their expectations.
15. Regarding the efforts to make the Inter-agency cooperation scheme visible to the trade facilitation community, ECE informed that it presented the web site un-tradefacilitation.net at the last meeting of the WCO Task Force for Supply Chain Security (February 2003). UNCTAD reported that the cooperation scheme was mentioned in various documents supporting recent intergovernmental meetings (Expert Meeting on Trade Facilitation, November 2002; Commission on Enterprise, Business Development, February 2003) organized by UNCTAD. Furthermore, two UNCTAD staff have included activities related to the cooperation scheme into their respective Performance Appraisal System (PAS).

Item 3 of the Agenda: *Discussion on potential deliverables and work programme*

16. The ECA representative noted that the ECE Roadmap suggestion would require that sub-regional initiatives be integrated to allow effective coordination in Africa.
17. The UNCTAD representative stressed that the objective of the Inter-agency meetings was not to coordinate, a difficult task probably not essential in the daily work of each organization. It was rather to offer an opportunity for each organization not only to show what it is doing in the area of trade facilitation but also to appreciate what other agencies are doing. In other words, to exchange of information among agencies on their ongoing trade facilitation activities, with a view to identify areas for improved cooperation.
18. The World Bank representative underlined that the cost of coordination in terms of increased overheads might be offset by savings resulting from avoiding duplication of efforts.
19. The WTO representative noted that each organization has a different perspective of trade facilitation, different areas of competence and different uses of terminology that would need to be harmonised if a roadmap were to be developed. The web site could help to identify the areas of competence for the users but the development of a roadmap might not be feasible from a WTO perspective.
20. The CEB representative suggested that it might be useful to develop a “Who does What and Where” approach and that a progress report could be presented at an upcoming meeting of the HLPC (next meetings July/September) to increase visibility and support for the cooperation scheme within the UN system.

Item 4 of the Agenda: *Aligning the cooperation scheme on the real needs of agencies and concerned institutions: Presentation by the World Bank*

21. The World Bank representative introduced Global Facilitation Partnership (GFP) for Transportation and Trade supported by the World Bank. He informed the meeting that the partnership gathered over 200 partners’ worldwide. The GFP web site includes functions such as: list of trade recommendations, list of working groups, list of discussion groups, list of activities, etc.
22. He informed the meeting that the GFP web site is currently under review and restructuring. He suggested that this on-going process offered the opportunity to strengthen the existing synergies by joining the GFP and the UN Trade Facilitation web sites into a new platform. He recommended adopting a web structure based on trade facilitation topics, a distinct approach to the one used in the current United Nations Trade Facilitation site that is structured by organizations. He proposed that the existing URLs for both sites would remain unchanged but point to the same joint site.
23. The World Bank representative offered to make available a short document highlighting the key elements of a GFP and UN-tradefacilitation.net Website Partnership. The documents covers the core aspects of the partnership, the steps to be taken by the partners, a tentative time table, as well as an estimation of the cost for data input and maintenance. It also include a preliminary matrix of responsibilities, inviting each partner to specify its likely contributions. This document is attached as an annex to the present minutes (Annex 1).
24. In the process of upgrading of the GFP web site, the World Bank is contributing resources to develop technical and content components of the new platform. Participants to the Inter-agency meeting were offered to review the proposed topics list and to include any additional topics deemed appropriate. The resulting comprehensive topics list could be considered as the beginning of a roadmap for trade facilitation, as referred to previously by ECE. He stressed the need to form a core team of organizations that would lead the early stages of development and maintenance of the site.
25. The UNCTAD representative recalled that the original decision to structure the un-tradefacilitation.net web site into “room” was taken on technical grounds, as a means to facilitate the contribution of each participating agency. From a user’s perspective, the functional view proposed under GFP is probably preferable and the current content of UN web site could easily be transferred into the new proposal.
26. The WTO representative expressed reservations on the proposed structure and definitions of the topics. She suggested that a glossary of the terms used in the topic list be developed.
27. The ECE representative welcomed the proposal to join forces and supported the setting-up of the joint GFP-UN Trade Facilitation web site. He confirmed that ECE would review the topics list and submit comments to the World Bank representative. Further, ECE will provide a first draft for the glossary, making use of the resources available in the UN Translation Section.

28. The World Bank representative explained that the existing topics list can be updated, at any time, on request from the participating agencies and developed/refined over time. Furthermore, he mentioned that the World Bank would make available some staff time to review and select substantive content from the existing web sites of those organizations that do not want yet to develop their respective content to populate the new site (initial fill). Each organization will have the opportunity to update the information.

Item 3 of the Agenda: Programme of work

29. The meeting agreed in principle to accept the offer presented by the World Bank representative to merge the two existing web sites into a new site that could be ready for presentation/release by October 2003.

30. The present draft list of topics was distributed to the participants (Annex 2). The meeting agreed that participants would review the proposed topic list and send their comments to the World Bank representative by 10 June 2003.

31. It was understood that participating agencies would provide to the World Bank the authorization to extract from the partner site relevant summary information, and a commitment establish mechanisms to systematically update the partner content after the initial information upload. Furthermore, each participating agency will have to register one main contact and one web contact person. Those agencies that have already nominated these contact persons under the un-tradefacilitation.net scheme are expected to confirm their nominations.

32. During the month of June 2003, the World Bank will start screening web sites of the participating agencies to create content for the new site.

33. Participating agencies are invited to react as soon as possible to the proposed distribution of responsibilities (see Matrix of Responsibilities in the annexed document), taking due account of the proposed time frame.

34. Participants agreed that the Fourth Inter-agency meeting will be hosted by UNIDO probably during the week of the 10 November 2003. The precise date will be communicated later.

ANNEX 1

GFP/UN-TRADEFACILITATION.NET Website Partnership

1. Core Aspects

- ❖ **Based on need for coordination/cooperation/knowledge sharing/improved synergies in Trade and Transport Facilitation** to maximize collective impact
- ❖ **Central Virtual Team** coordinating the effort consisting of members from the various core partners coming from the UN-TRADE Facilitation/Global Facilitation Partnership for Transportation and Trade
- ❖ **Single website for both initiative** accessible to the public but with restricted information for UN staff
- ❖ **Extension of present efforts** (transfer of all content entered in earlier sites)
- ❖ **Definition of common terminology (Glossary)**
- ❖ Focus on **maintenance** after original data entry through systematic mechanisms
- ❖ Focus on **marketing** after the launch (internal/external)
- ❖ Improve internal workflow of Core Partners to facilitate data capture
- ❖ **Shared responsibility** matrix with deadlines → Proactive contribution required from all Partners
- ❖ **Monitoring** by the Central Virtual Team with regular reporting of progress
- ❖ **Value-added tools** for Core Partners (advance notification...)
- ❖ Focus on TTF aspects **nationally, regionally and globally**

2. Next Steps

- ❖ Identification among each partner of a main coordination person and a web person
- ❖ Identification of potential contribution based on the matrix next page
- ❖ Definition of each term included in topics/sub-topics

3. Timing

- ❖ Site design by June 30
- ❖ Identification of Core Partners by July 15
- ❖ Data capture and data entry by October 30 for all Core Partners
- ❖ Active internal and external promotion from November 15

4. Estimated Cost for data input and maintenance for Core Partners

- ❖ About 2 staff weeks for Core Partner Main Contact Person : policies/internal marketing/workflow review
- ❖ About 3 staff weeks for Core Partners Website Person : data entry/ update/monitoring of entered content linked to Core Partner/feedback on tool.

In addition, other contributions to expand/improve the site functionalities will be required, based on the priorities/strengths of each Partner.

Initial Matrix of Responsibilities :

Please specify contributions you would like to make in this table.

Task	Contribution	Deadline	Cost	Comment
1. Website design	WB	June 30	\$35k	Ongoing
2. Definition of Topics-Glossary	UNCTAD and other partners	June 30	Staff time to be estimated	Based on proposed topic list
3. Site Hosting	Potentially through UNCTAD	June 30	To be estimated	
4. Initial data capture -definition of template to authorize data extraction	Core Partners and WB	October 30	Staff time (2 staff week per core partner) Support from WB up to 8 s/w)	Core partners can enter content themselves or ask for WB support ¹
5. IT maintenance	WB for software UNCTAD for hosting	To be defined by July 15	To be estimated	Further software development could be funded by other partners
6. Site upgrade (graphic designs/ functionalities)	Looking for your proposals	Ongoing	To be estimated	
7. External Promotion/ Marketing -inclusion in Partners' promotional brochures -marketing through staff -inclusion in regular work -separate brochures for the site/effort	All Partners (your proposal)	To be defined by September 30	To be estimated	
8. Internal Marketing -management guidelines -internal meetings	Each core partner Sample directive to be prepared by (??)	To be defined by September 30	To be estimated	
9. Awareness /Monitoring -monthly report -evaluation of constraints (getting information)	Central Virtual Team	From October 30, 2003	To be estimated	
10. Other Aspects				

¹ In case WB support is requested, authorization should be provided to the WB to extract from the partner site relevant summary information, and commitment should be provided to establish mechanisms to systematically update the partner content after the initial information upload. In any case registration of one main contact and one web contact person required for each Core Partner.

ANNEX 2

Present list of topics and sub-topics

Topics	Sub-topics
Economic Development and Trade Facilitation	
	Economic impact of trade facilitation
	Trade facilitation and income distribution
	Trade Facilitation and SME development
	Trade Facilitation and competitiveness
	Logistics costs and export earnings
	Landlocked countries
Trade Logistics and Facilitation	
	Global supply chain management
	TTF Performance Indicators
	Performance measurement
	Trade logistics' statistics
	Trade logistics and developing countries
	Trade Facilitation through Security
	Trade Facilitation audits
	Cargo and vehicle tracking
	Trade Logistics practical measures
Border Agency Issues	
	Customs valuation
	Preshipment Inspection
	Risk assessment methods
	Joint border posts
	Border monitoring systems
	Single window environment
	Integrated border management
	Clearance facilities
	Border agency modernization
	Integrity programs
	Rules of origin
	Kyoto Convention
	Customs audit based controls
	Control on animal and animal products
	Clearance procedures
	Streamlining and harmonization of procedures
Transit	
	Transit logistics
	Transit guarantee systems
	Economic impact of transit trade for transit countries
	Landlocked countries access : corridor agreements
	Bilateral and regional transit agreements
	Corridor arrangements
Other Trade Facilitation Aspects	
	Payments
	Insurance
	Commercial trade practices
	Product standards
	Trade Finance

Topics	Sub-topics
Trade Liberalization	
	Multilateral trade negotiations
	Free trade agreements
	WTO negotiations
	Trade Policies and Non-Tariff Barriers
Cooperation/Partnerships	
	Public-private partnerships
	International cooperation/organizations
	TTF promotion
	Regional Partnerships
Regional transport integration	
	Efficiency of transport intermediaries
	Trip permits
	Dangerous goods
	Waste products
	Movement of persons
	Vehicle standards
	Market access
	Public Policies in Freight Transport Management
	Customs and other Statutory Controls on Freight Movements
Electronic commerce and business	
	Use of ICT for Facilitation
	E-signature and certification authorities
	Technology platforms
	Admission of electronic documents
	Electronic Documents
	Electronic standards/EDI
	Information technology for Customs

Participants

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Geneva, 16 May 2003

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