

Introduction

Despite the efforts made by many developing countries to facilitate trade and transport, few have effective mechanisms in place to monitor the actual effectiveness of their trade and transport facilitation reforms and identify the trade and transport process and procedures that should be prioritized for simplification or streamlining. The global trade facilitation performance surveys and databases¹ now available are useful benchmarking and awareness raising tools, but they do not provide sufficiently detailed information to develop or update national trade facilitation action plans. In addition, while trade and transport facilitation assessments of various scopes are often conducted in least developed countries or landlocked developing countries, these assessments are typically ad-hoc in nature, with little coordination among development partners and limited buy-in by the governmental agencies concerned.

The need for regularly and systematically monitoring progress and impact of trade and transport facilitation reforms has been widely recognized, as highlighted in the ADB/ESCAP Trade Facilitation Framework (ADB/ESCAP, 2009 and 2013²). Measuring performance is essential to not only examine whether progress is made according to plan, but also adapt strategy and its implementation to ever-changing national, regional and global environments. Measuring the actual time and cost involved in completing the wide array of trade and transport procedures involved in import or export is important. However, the trade and transport facilitation monitoring mechanism should also provide sufficiently concrete and detailed information so as to enable identification of specific trade facilitation measures to be prioritized for further improvement. Considerations should also be given to ensuring the sustainability of the performance monitoring and improvement mechanism.

In that context, the concept of a national integrated and sustainable trade and transport facilitation monitoring mechanism (hereafter, it is abbreviated as TTFMM) is developed below, building upon the UNNEXt Business Process Analysis (BPA) methodology³ and other relevant tools and recommendations. The note highlights the need for TTFMM to be as ‘integrated’ and ‘sustainable’ as possible and provides a description of the steps involved in establishing and operating TTFMM.

¹ These include, for example, the World Bank Doing Business and Logistics Performance Index databases, the World Economic Forum Executive Opinion Surveys, and the ESCAP-World Bank Trade Cost Database.

² ADB/ESCAP, Designing and Implementing Trade Facilitation in Asia and the Pacific, 2009 and 2013.

³ UNNEXt stands for United Nations Network of Experts for Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific. BPA is seen as a first step towards trade facilitation and paperless trade and BPA studies have been conducted in more than a dozen Asian developing countries since 2010 (www.unescap.org/tid/unnext/tools/business_process.asp).