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Paperless Trade Council of the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific

Third session
Bangkok and online, 6 and 7 June 2024
Item 3 of the provisional agenda*
Evaluation of the progress made in the implementation of the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific and discussion on the way forward

Review of the progress made in the implementation of the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific and the way forward

Note by the secretariat

Summary

In the present document, the secretariat provides an updated overview of the progress made in the implementation of the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific. It highlights the substantial efforts undertaken by the signatories to the Framework Agreement to enhance trade facilitation and promote national and cross-border paperless trade following the conclusion of the second session of the Paperless Trade Council, which was held on 22 and 23 June 2023.

The Paperless Trade Council may wish to provide strategic advice to the parties to the Framework Agreement on speeding up its implementation and advancing cross-border paperless trade in practice.

* ESCAP/PTA/PTC(3)/1.

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I. Progress made in the implementation of the Framework Agreement

1. Since the second session of the Paperless Trade Council, two more States, Kyrgyzstan and the Russian Federation, have acceded to the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific, bringing the total number of parties to 13.

2. The secretariat of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific has taken the requisite measures to facilitate the completion of the tasks prioritized by both the Standing Committee of the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific and the Paperless Trade Council during their respective second sessions, based on the collective action plan that had been established during the first session of the Standing Committee (see annex I). The prioritized tasks are:

(a) Continue to update the cross-border paperless trade database;[1]

(b) Prepare a draft guide on facilitating the concurrent implementation of national and cross-border paperless trade systems;

(c) Draft a model agreement for the bilateral and plurilateral exchange of trade-related data and documents;

(d) Prepare a legal guide on engaging in cross-border paperless trade;

(e) Recommend that each party carry out further studies, potentially with the support of the secretariat, to identify and prioritize the types of documents that could be exchanged with its trading partners and be the subject of pilot projects;

(f) Carry out an analysis of the benefits of exchanging selected trade-related documents electronically.

3. During an ad hoc session of the Standing Committee, which was held online on 23 and 24 January 2024, updates were provided on each task:

(a) The secretariat reported that it had, in collaboration with the International Chamber of Commerce, updated the cross-border paperless trade database website. In particular, a tracker had been added to the website to monitor the progress made by countries in complying with the Model Law on Electronic Transferable Records,[2] and a page on key trade documents and data elements had been added to promote the interoperability of electronic trade documents and define their core elements;[3]

(b) The Standing Committee noted the importance of including case studies in the draft guide on facilitating the concurrent implementation of national and cross-border paperless trade systems. It emphasized that it would be useful to include the experience of the Eurasian Economic Union on the concurrent implementation of national and cross-border paperless trade;

(c) Regarding the draft model agreement for bilateral and plurilateral exchange of trade-related data and documents, the Standing Committee emphasized that mutual recognition was a complex topic that should be further discussed by the future working group on implementation of article 8 of the Framework Agreement. The Standing Committee emphasized that actual

[1] See www.digitalizetrade.org.

[2] See www.digitalizetrade.org/mletr.

[3] See www.digitalizetrade.org/ktdde.

agreements might vary depending on their nature and purpose (e.g. government-to-government or business-to-business). Countries should therefore retain full flexibility on how to use and apply any models that are to be developed;

(d) Regarding the draft legal guide on engaging in cross-border paperless trade, which is aimed at providing a framework for countries to move from assessment to implementation of cross-border paperless trade, the Standing Committee noted the need to address the issue of the validity of legal systems across borders and emphasized the importance of mutual recognition and harmonization;

(e) Consultants from China, Mongolia, the Philippines and the Republic of Korea presented key findings from studies they conducted on the status of selected cross-border paperless trade documents and proposed pilot projects to further advance cross-border paperless trade. The Standing Committee recognized that the studies could have important implications for potential pilot projects in other countries;

(f) Having reviewed the list of key trade-related documents recommended by the International Chamber of Commerce (see table), the secretariat proposed that the first phase of analysis of the benefits of exchanging selected trade-related documents electronically cover three types of documents, namely, certificates of origin (both preferential and non-preferential), phytosanitary certificates and commercial invoices.

Key trade-related documents listed by the International Chamber of Commerce

Documents listed in the March 2023 report	*Documents listed in the November 2023 report*
1. Warehouse receipts	8. Air cargo manifests
2. Certificates of origin	9. Air waybills
3. Commercial invoices	10. Bills of exchange and promissory notes
4. Packing lists	11. Cargo insurance documents
5. Bills of lading	12. Customs bonds
6. Customs/goods declarations	13. Export cargo shipping instructions
7. Insurance certificates	14. Letters of credit
	15. Payment confirmations
	16. Purchase orders
	17. Rail consignment notes
	18. Road consignment notes
	19. Sea cargo manifests
	20. Sea waybills
	21. Ship’s delivery orders

Sources: International Chamber of Commerce, *Key Trade Documents and Data Elements: Digital Standards Analysis and Recommendations, March 2023* (Paris, 2023); and International Chamber of Commerce, *Key Trade Documents and Data Elements: Digital Standards Analysis and Recommendations, November 2023* (Paris, 2023).

4. At its ad hoc session, the Standing Committee adopted the terms of reference of the working group on implementation of article 8 of the Framework Agreement. It agreed that both legal and technical experts from the parties should be nominated to participate in the working group. Furthermore, the secretariat would invite independent experts to provide advisory support to

the working group. The Standing Committee encouraged each party to provide input on the specific tasks that the working group should prioritize and to submit that input as soon as possible but no later than the first meeting of the working group, which was to be held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, and online on 3 April 2024.

5. In addition to the activities reviewed at the ad hoc session of the Standing Committee, the secretariat has carried out other activities as described below.

6. To further validate and enrich the above-mentioned studies, the secretariat, with the support of the United Nations Network of Experts for Paperless Trade and Transport in Asia and the Pacific, organized the following:

(a) Expert group meeting on mutual recognition of trade-related data and documents in electronic form, held online on 9 November 2023;

(b) Expert group meeting on the concurrent implementation of national and cross-border paperless trade systems, held online on 15 December 2023;

(c) Expert group meeting on developing a legal guide for cross-border paperless trade, held online on 15 January 2024;

(d) Webinar on upscaling the International Plant Protection Convention ePhyto Solution to other trade-related documents, held on 23 and 24 January 2024.

7. As part of its capacity-building efforts and to provide policymakers in the region and beyond with the data needed to make evidence-based decisions, the secretariat has continued to maintain and enhance relevant online resources and tools, in particular the interactive website for the United Nations Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation,[4] the Readiness Assessment Guide for Cross-border Paperless Trade[5] and the aforementioned cross-border paperless trade database. The secretariat, in collaboration with partner organizations, issued subregional, regional and global reports based on data from the Global Survey.[6]

8. The secretariat, in collaboration with the Asian Development Bank, has been supporting the Government of Bangladesh in updating its readiness assessment for cross-border paperless trade, based on the original readiness assessment conducted by the secretariat in 2019.

9. The secretariat has been supporting five countries in Central Asia, namely Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, in carrying out feasibility studies on cross-border paperless trade. Together with the Asian Development Bank and other partners, the secretariat organized the Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum 2024, to be held in Samarkand from 1 to 5 April 2024, along with several capacity-building side events in support of cross-border paperless trade implementation.

[4] www.untfsurvey.org.

[5] https://readiness.digitalizetrade.org.

[6] www.untfsurvey.org/report.

II. Efforts made by the parties on advancing national and cross-border paperless trade

10. During the ad hoc session of the Standing Committee, representatives of the following parties reported on their progress in implementing the Framework Agreement and advancing cross-border paperless trade: Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, China, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Mongolia, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation and Tajikistan.

11. The Government of Azerbaijan had initiated an action plan for 2024–2026 to increase the transit potential of international transport corridors through its territory and to stimulate transit cargo transportation; launched its single window project; implemented a new artificial intelligence-based automated risk management system for its customs services; and launched a trans-Caspian customs transit portal.

12. The Government of Bangladesh was aiming to transform the country into "smart Bangladesh" by 2041. It was formulating rules and regulations and creating an authority to provide legal and institutional support for the implementation of cross-border paperless trade. In addition, a national single window system was being developed to support information-sharing with other government agencies. Furthermore, it was in the process of including cross-border paperless trade activities in the terms of reference of its national trade facilitation committee.

13. The Government of China had developed an electronic system for exchanging and verifying inspection and quarantine certificates with a view to cooperating with regulatory authorities around the world for the exchange of electronic certificates. It had signed electronic certificate cooperation arrangements with 18 countries, regions and regional alliances. It had also been actively promoting cooperation on electronic bills of lading and encouraging local enterprises and other interested parties to use electronic bill of lading platforms to carry out pilot projects with partners from Chile and Singapore. Furthermore, it had continued to promote paperless trade cooperation through free trade agreements. For example, there were special articles on the digital economy in its free trade agreement with Nicaragua, which included relevant provisions on paperless trade.

14. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran had taken several steps towards advancing national and cross-border paperless trade, in particular on the development of a national single window platform. It was also establishing a national committee on cross-border paperless trade under its national electronic commerce council.

15. In Mongolia, a joint project with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development had been initiated in 2023 to digitalize the country's customs services, which involved identifying gaps in customs automation and delivering innovative digital customs tools for the exchange of information by cross-border traders and e-commerce operators. The Government was working to establish a subcommittee on paperless trade that could be incorporated into an existing national committee on the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on Trade Facilitation, to renew a dedicated inter-agency steering committee on the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation and to advance ongoing preparations for the introduction of a single window system, which was expected to be finalized by 2025. In addition, in collaboration with the Conference on Trade and Development, it had conducted an e-trade readiness

assessment between 2022 and 2023. Furthermore, the parliamentary adoption of laws on electronic signatures and on the national payment system underscored the Government's commitment to building a robust digital infrastructure. For instance, to expedite the use of digital documents and electronic signatures, the Government had submitted amendments to 120 existing national laws to recognize digital documents as equivalent to paper documents, which received parliamentary approval in December 2023.

16. The Government of the Philippines expressed its commitment to the Framework Agreement, in line with its efforts to modernize and standardize trade-related operations. It was aiming to promote a government-wide approach to digital transformation, enhancing digital connectivity and information exchange in trade. It had introduced the use of electronic certificates of origin within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and joined the initiative to electronically exchange the Association's customs declaration documents. Furthermore, it was in the process of testing the exchange of electronic phytosanitary certificates.

17. The Government of the Republic of Korea had formed a trade facilitation committee comprising government officials and private sector experts. The committee met in November 2020 and January 2023 to endorse the Government's basic trade facilitation plan and review its progress with regard to the Framework Agreement and WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation. Moreover, the Republic of Korea had entered into significant digital trade agreements, including a digital partnership agreement with Singapore, effective from January 2023. The Government recognized the relevance of electronic origin data exchange systems for cross-border paperless trade and was planning to host an electronic origin data exchange system workshop in the third quarter of 2024 in partnership with the secretariat.

18. The Government of the Russian Federation had prepared the first draft of the legal and technical readiness assessments for the implementation of the Framework Agreement. It had also identified the existing government working bodies that cover various aspects of paperless trade (e.g. customs, transport, taxes and other charges and electronic signatures). Furthermore, it had started an awareness campaign about the Framework Agreement that was targeted at government agencies, businesses and academic institutions.

19. In its role as the serving Chair of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia, the Government of Tajikistan planned to host an economic forum on trade digitalization. It had established a coordination committee on trade facilitation and, within the committee, a working group on the implementation of the Framework Agreement.

20. In addition to the updates provided during the ad hoc session of the Standing Committee, substantial efforts have also been observed by the parties below in advancing national and cross-border paperless trade.

21. Kyrgyzstan acceded to the Framework Agreement in December 2023, demonstrating the Government's strong commitment to advancing cross-border paperless trade.

22. Timor-Leste acceded to the WTO on 26 February 2024, paving the way for further advancement of trade and trade facilitation.

23. The Government of Turkmenistan has adopted the Automated System for Customs Data and introduced a single window system for export-import operations, laying the foundation for paperless trade.

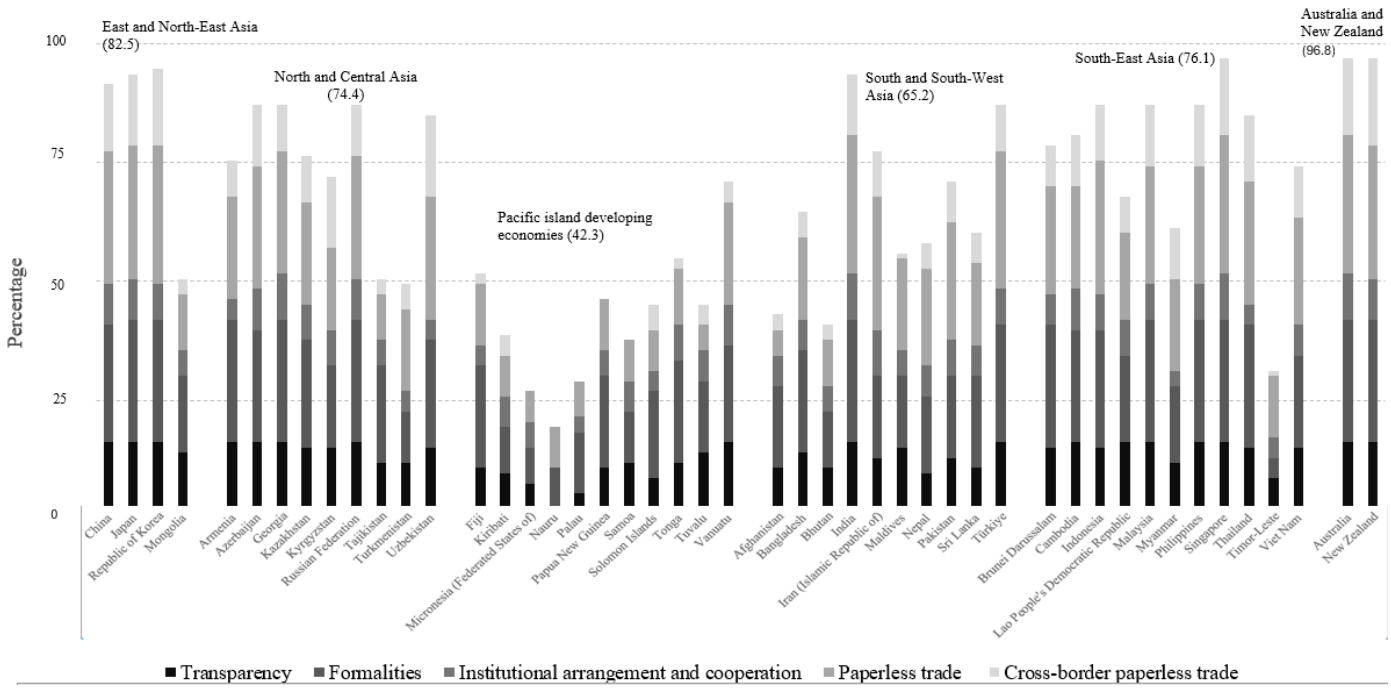
24. The Government of Tuvalu has also adopted the Automated System for Customs Data. With the support the secretariat, it conducted a cross-border paperless trade readiness assessment in July 2023.[7]

III. State of implementation of trade facilitation and paperless trade in Asia and the Pacific

25. The information on the regional state of implementation of trade facilitation presented in this section is based on the results of the fifth United Nations Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, conducted in 2023. The survey covers 60 trade facilitation measures, which are classified into four groups and 11 subgroups and include measures contained in the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation and digital trade facilitation measures related to the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific.

26. Implementation rates[8] for the measures in the "general trade facilitation" and "digital trade facilitation" groups were calculated for 47 countries in Asia and the Pacific (see figure I). At the regional level, the overall average implementation rate stands at 67 per cent, but there is variation at country level. Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea and Singapore all have an implementation rate above 90 per cent, while many Pacific countries have a rate below 50 per cent.

Figure I
Implementation rates of trade facilitation measures in Asia and the Pacific, 2023



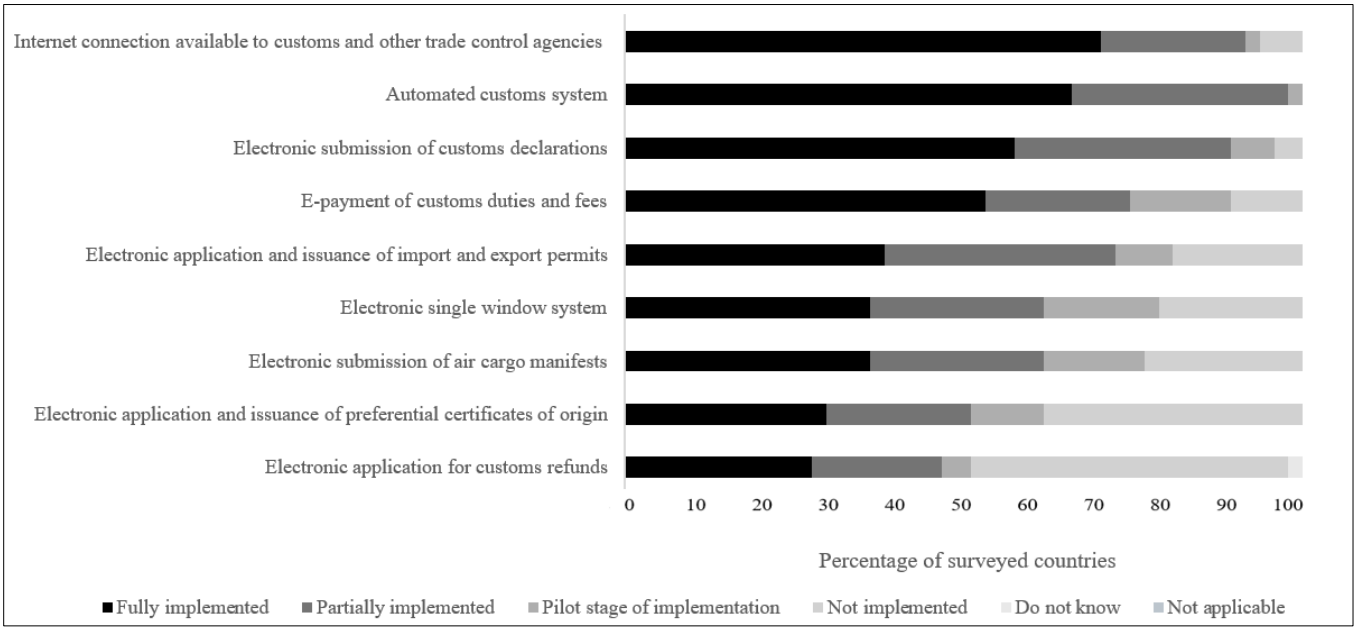
Source: United Nations, United Nations Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation. Available at www.untfsurvey.org/.

[7] Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, *Readiness Assessment for Cross-Border Paperless Trade: Tuvalu* (Bangkok, 2023).

[8] For details of how implementation rates are calculated, see the survey methodology, which is available at www.untfsurvey.org/files/documents/2023-Survey-Methodology.pdf.

27. The implementation rates of the nine measures in the "paperless trade" subgroup vary significantly across the region (see figure II). One of the most widely implemented measures is the "automated customs system" measure, which has implementation rates ranging from 79 per cent to 92 per cent across the subregions. The average implementation rate for the "Internet connection available to customs and other trade control agencies" measure was 85 per cent, the second highest rate in this subgroup. The "electronic submission of customs declarations" and "e-payment of customs duties and fees" measures have also been relatively well-implemented, with average implementation rates of 81 per cent and 72 per cent, respectively. Furthermore, 37 countries have established an electronic single window system, at least on a pilot basis, accounting for nearly 79 per cent of all surveyed countries.

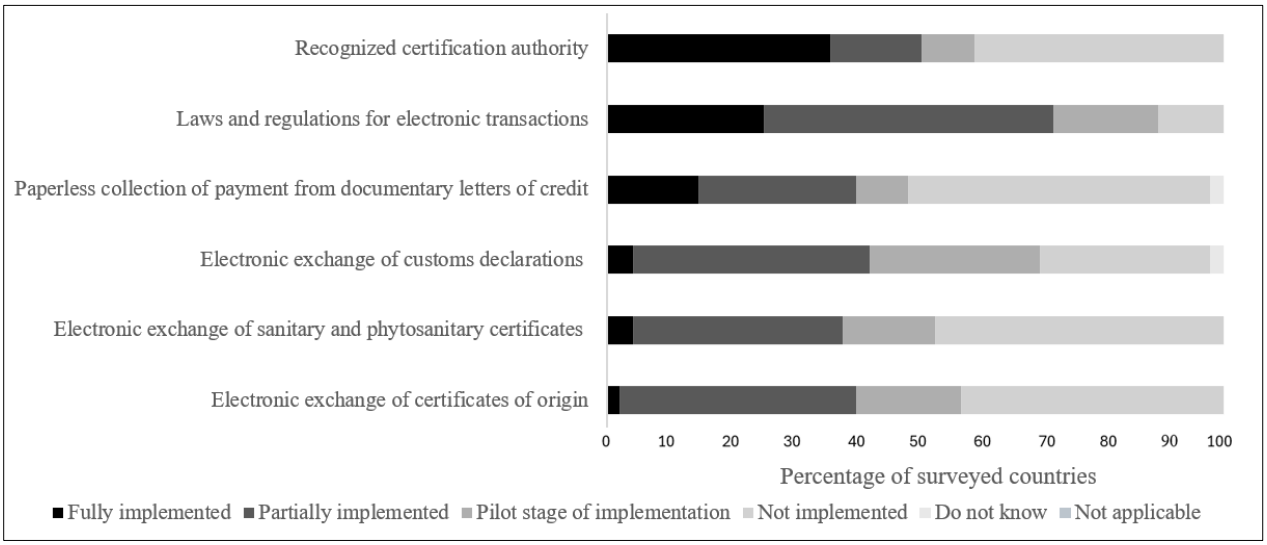
Figure II
Implementation of paperless trade facilitation measures in Asia and the Pacific, 2023



Source: United Nations Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation (see figure I).

28. The "cross-border paperless trade" subgroup encompasses six measures aimed at facilitating the exchange and recognition of trade-related data and documents. Of these six measures (see figure III), the one with the highest rate of implementation (62 per cent) is "laws and regulations for electronic transactions". Still, with fewer than 30 per cent of surveyed countries having fully implemented the measure, the region lacks a comprehensive framework for the legal recognition of electronic data or documents. Similarly, fewer than 40 per cent of surveyed countries in the region have fully implemented the "recognized certification authority" measure, which involves establishing an entity responsible for issuing electronic signature certificates to facilitate electronic transactions. Between the lack of institutional and legal frameworks to support cross-border paperless trade and the limited capacity to implement paperless systems in many developing economies, the electronic exchange of trade-related documents is being conducted on a limited basis.

Figure III
Implementation of cross-border paperless trade facilitation measures in Asia and the Pacific, 2023



Source: United Nations Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation (see figure I).

IV. Issues for consideration by the Paperless Trade Council

29. The parties to the Framework Agreement, supported by the secretariat, have achieved considerable progress in rolling out the collective action plan outlined in annex I.

30. However, initiatives related to pilot projects are still in their nascent stages. Preliminary investigations have been conducted into potential pilot projects in China, Mongolia, the Philippines and the Republic of Korea, as discussed earlier. The Paperless Trade Council may wish to consider encouraging the parties to accelerate their efforts towards launching pilot projects.

31. In addition to collective efforts, it is essential for each party to develop its own national plan to enhance national and cross-border paperless trade. To this end, the Standing Committee, at its second session, approved a standard template for such national action plans (see annex II) and urged parties to regularly update their plans and share them with the secretariat and other parties annually, in advance of the Standing Committee's regular meetings. The Paperless Trade Council may wish to encourage all parties to diligently submit their action plans, which would bolster the efforts of the Standing Committee and enable more effective sharing of up-to-date information and lessons learned.

32. The establishment of national committees is essential for crafting and executing action plans. Acknowledging this, at its second session, the Standing Committee agreed that each party should share their progress in creating national committees within the subsequent three months. Furthermore, parties were encouraged to aim to have these committees operational before the third session of the Paperless Trade Council. The Paperless Trade Council may wish to encourage parties to proactively report on the formation of national committees and on their activities.

33. The Paperless Trade Council may wish to consider:

(a) Providing strategic guidance on accelerating the implementation of the Framework Agreement and advancing cross-border paperless trade in practice;

(b) Discussing ways to accelerate and promote accession to and ratification of the Framework Agreement by as many States as possible, with a view to maximizing the benefits and impact of the Framework Agreement;

(c) Calling upon relevant States members of the Commission and development partners to provide financial or in-kind contributions to support capacity-building for the implementation of the Framework Agreement and encouraging parties that have provided project-based support to consider ways to provide long-term support.

Annex I

Status of implementation of tasks in the collective action plan for the parties to the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific

Article number	*Task*	*Period in which the task is started*	*Efforts required*	*Resources required*	*Level of priority*	*Rationale for the assigned level of priority*	*Partnership opportunities*	*Status of implementation*
6	Develop a template for designing a national policy framework	2022–2023	Review and refine the draft document	Dedicated time by members of the Standing Committee	High	This can be a quick win considering that several parties have completed readiness assessments.	Capacity-building by partners is welcome.	The template was presented at the second session of the Standing Committee. The Standing Committee agreed that the template should be kept flexible.
6	Identify and select relevant international legal frameworks and best practices	2023–2024	• Review the draft document • Agree on the list of international legal frameworks and best practices	Dedicated time by members of the Standing Committee	High	Aligning domestic frameworks with international legal frameworks and best practices is an ongoing activity.	Capacity-building by partners is welcome.	The secretariat has supported the following countries in conducting cross-border readiness assessments, which include discussions on international legal frameworks: Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Mongolia, Philippines, Tajikistan, Timor-Leste, Turkmenistan and Tuvalu.
7	Prepare a guide on how to develop or upgrade paperless trade systems in line with general principles	2023–2024	• Have the working group undertake background studies with the support of the secretariat • Prepare and finalize the guide	• Background studies by external consultants, if needed • Dedicated time by members of the Standing Committee	Medium	Updating paperless systems is an ongoing process.	Financial support from partners for such studies is welcome.	This task is being implemented in conjunction with the task “Develop a guide to help facilitate the concurrent implementation of national and cross-border paperless trade systems”.

Article number	*Task*	*Period in which the task is started*	*Efforts required*	*Resources required*	*Level of priority*	*Rationale for the assigned level of priority*	*Partnership opportunities*	*Status of implementation*
7	Develop a guide to help facilitate the concurrent implementation of national and cross-border paperless trade systems	2022–2023	• Have the working group undertake background studies with the support of the secretariat • Prepare and finalize the guide	• Background studies by external consultants, if needed • Dedicated time by members of the Standing Committee	High	This is essential to support the parties in developing cross-border paperless systems.	Financial support from partners for such studies is welcome.	The draft guide was presented at the ad hoc session of the Standing Committee held on 23 and 24 January 2024. The advanced draft will be presented at the third session of the Standing Committee.
8	Develop a technologically neutral mutual recognition mechanism, including defining criteria for satisfying the requirements to offer a substantially equivalent level of reliability	2022–2023	• Have the working group undertake background studies with the support of the secretariat • Prepare and finalize the guide	• Background studies by external consultants, if needed • Dedicated time by members of the Standing Committee	High	Implementing article 8 is crucial to achieve cross-border paperless trade.	Financial support from partners for such studies is welcome.	The topic was discussed during the second session of the Standing Committee and is being implemented in conjunction with the task “Develop a model memorandum of understanding and service-level agreement to be used by parties at the bilateral and multilateral levels”.
8	Develop a model memorandum of understanding and service-level agreement to be used by parties at the bilateral and multilateral levels	2022–2023	• Review existing models for reference • Develop a model memorandum of understanding	• Background studies by external consultants, if needed • Dedicated time by members of the Standing Committee	High	Implementing article 8 is crucial to achieve cross-border paperless trade.	Financial support from partners for background studies is welcome.	The draft model was presented at the ad hoc session of the Standing Committee held on 23 and 24 January 2024. An advanced draft model will be presented at the third session of the Standing Committee.
8	Develop a plan for regular reviews of the mechanism	2024–2025	Draft, discuss and agree on a plan	Dedicated time by members of the Standing Committee	Low	Such a plan could be developed after some foundation work has been carried out.	Partners may be consulted during the process.	This task has not been started.

Article number	*Task*	*Period in which the task is started*	*Efforts required*	*Resources required*	*Level of priority*	*Rationale for the assigned level of priority*	*Partnership opportunities*	*Status of implementation*
9	Prepare a strategy for implementing international standards, which involves selecting relevant international standards and guidelines to be used and developing safe, secure and reliable means of communication for the exchange of data in Asia and the Pacific	2023–2024	• Review the draft document • Finalize the document	Dedicated time by members of the Standing Committee	Medium	The adoption of international rules and regulations is an ongoing and dynamic process.	Capacity-building by partners is welcome.	This task has not been started.
10	Identify relevant provisions of international laws and regional and international regulations, as well as best practices	2023–2024	• Review the draft document • Finalize the document	Dedicated time by members of the Standing Committee	Medium	The adoption of international rules and regulations is an ongoing and dynamic process.	Capacity-building by partners is welcome.	A working paper has been prepared by secretariat staff on paperless trade in United Nations and other international conventions involving the cross-border exchange of trade-related data and documents.
10	Develop a guide on how to engage in the cross-border exchange of trade-related data and documents electronically in line with regional and international laws and regulations and best practices	2022–2023	• Carry out the relevant studies • Prepare the guide	• Background studies by external consultants, if needed • Dedicated time by members of the Standing Committee	Very high	Such a guide is a foundation for implementing cross-border paperless trade.	Financial support from partners for such studies is welcome.	A guide was presented at the second session of the Standing Committee.
11	Nominate national representatives to the Paperless Trade Council and the Standing Committee	2022–2023	Decide on the composition of the Paperless Trade Council and the Standing Committee	Minimal resources	Very high	An institutional structure is essential to carry out all activities under the Framework Agreement.		This is an ongoing process. The previous sessions of the Paperless Trade Council and the Standing Committee were attended by representatives of the parties.

Article number	*Task*	*Period in which the task is started*	*Efforts required*	*Resources required*	*Level of priority*	*Rationale for the assigned level of priority*	*Partnership opportunities*	*Status of implementation*
11	Prepare terms of reference for working groups	2023–2024	Decide on the composition of working groups	Minimal resources	Medium	Working groups will be set up according to needs.	Financial support from partners for conducting background studies is important. Also, capacity-building for working groups is important.	The terms of reference of the working group on mutual recognition were adopted at the ad hoc session of the Standing Committee held on 23 and 24 January 2024.
11	Develop and adopt protocols containing legal and technical specifications and requirements for certain aspects of operationalizing the exchange of data for cross-border paperless trade	2024–2025	• Carry out background studies • Develop the protocol	• Background studies by external consultants, if needed • Dedicated time by members of the Standing Committee	Low	The level of priority depends on the specific projects to be carried out by the parties.	Financial support from partners for such studies is welcome.	This task has not been started.
13	Prepare a reference map on which potential cross-border paperless trade processes, documents and data are indicated	2022–2023	Prepare the reference map	Dedicated time by members of the Standing Committee	High	Implementing article 13 is crucial to achieve cross-border paperless trade.	Capacity-building by partners is welcome.	A reference map for cross-border paperless trade processes was presented at the second session of the Standing Committee.
13	Prioritize cross-border paperless trade processes, documents and data for pilot projects	2022–2023	• Carry out the relevant studies • Review and discuss prioritization	• Background studies by external consultants, if needed • Dedicated time by members of the Standing Committee	Very high	Specific trade-related documents and data must first be identified before discussions can take place on the subjects of other articles, such as international standards.	Financial support from partners for such studies is welcome.	At the ad hoc session of the Standing Committee held on 23 and 24 January 2024, three documents (certificates of origin, phytosanitary certificates and commercial invoices) were prioritized for further studies.

Article number	*Task*	*Period in which the task is started*	*Efforts required*	*Resources required*	*Level of priority*	*Rationale for the assigned level of priority*	*Partnership opportunities*	*Status of implementation*
13	Prepare model memorandums of understanding and agreements for arranging bilateral and multilateral exchanges of cross-border data	2023–2024	• Review the draft documents • Finalize the documents	Dedicated time by members of the Standing Committee	Medium	This can wait until after pilot projects have been identified.	Capacity-building by partners is welcome.	This task is to be implemented in conjunction with the task “Develop a model memorandum of understanding and service-level agreement to be used by parties at the bilateral and multilateral levels”.
13	Prepare a plan for developing technical and legal guides to be used for pilot projects	2023–2024	• Undertake background studies • Prepare a plan	Dedicated time by members of the Standing Committee	Medium	This can wait until after pilot projects have been identified.	Capacity-building by partners is welcome.	Feasibility studies on exploring pilot projects have been carried out in China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. However, this task has not been started because no pilot projects have been identified by the parties.
13	Prepare a strategy and guidance on how to transition pilot projects into live projects	2024–2025	Discuss and prepare a strategy	Dedicated time by members of the Standing Committee	High	This will be crucial for continuous efforts towards achieving live projects based on the success of pilot projects.	Partners will be invited to be involved in discussions and implementation.	This task has not been started.
13	Prepare a template for reporting the progress of pilot projects to the Standing Committee	2024–2025	Prepare a template	Dedicated time by members of the Standing Committee	Low	This can wait until after pilot projects have been identified.	Not applicable	This task has not been started.

Article number	*Task*	*Period in which the task is started*	*Efforts required*	*Resources required*	*Level of priority*	*Rationale for the assigned level of priority*	*Partnership opportunities*	*Status of implementation*
14	Define options and mechanisms for capacity-building, including a customization strategy for national, subregional and regional levels	2022–2023	Study capacity-building needs	Dedicated time by members of the Standing Committee	High	Human capacity is fundamental for the implementation of the Framework Agreement.	Financial support from partners for such studies is welcome.	The strategy for capacity-building was presented at the second session of the Standing Committee.
14	Prepare a guide on how to request technical support and assistance and how to provide technical support and assistance	2022–2023	• Review the draft document • Finalize the document	Dedicated time by members of the Standing Committee	High	Human capacity is fundamental for the implementation of the project.	Financial support from partners for background studies is welcome.	Templates for parties to request technical support and assistance and to provide technical support and assistance were adopted at the second session of the Standing Committee.
14	Prepare a plan for engaging development partners in capacity-building activities	2022–2023	Prepare a plan	Dedicated time by members of the Standing Committee	Very high	Development partners can provide useful financial support and capacity-building.	Advice from partners is welcome.	Strategies for identifying and engaging development partners were identified at the second session of the Standing Committee.
14	Define a reporting mechanism for capacity-building support received or provided	2023–2024	Prepare a reporting mechanism	Dedicated time by members of the Standing Committee	Medium	This does not have a significant impact on the delivery of capacity-building.	Not applicable	To help define such a reporting mechanism, the Standing Committee, at its second session, adopted templates for parties to request technical support and assistance and to provide technical support and assistance.

Annex II

Template for individual action plans for the parties to the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific

Article number	*Goals*	*Tasks*	*Actions (in sequence)*	*Priority level*	*Potential key agencies*	*Deliverables*	*Implementation schedule*	*Progress made*	*Capacity-building needs*
6	Establish a national policy framework for paperless trade	Develop and implement a national policy framework for paperless trade							
	Create an enabling domestic legal environment for paperless trade	Align the domestic legal framework with selected international legal frameworks and best practices							
7	Develop or upgrade paperless trade systems in line with general principles	Develop or upgrade paperless trade systems, including single window systems, in line with the general principles of the Framework Agreement							

Article number	*Goals*	*Tasks*	*Actions (in sequence)*	*Priority level*	*Potential key agencies*	*Deliverables*	*Implementation schedule*	*Progress made*	*Capacity-building needs*
8	Develop and agree on a mutual recognition scheme for the electronic exchange of trade-related data	Operationalize mutual recognition							
9	Select and use relevant international standards and guidelines	Apply selected international standards and guidelines Participate in the development of relevant international standards and best practices							
10	Take into account and adopt available and accepted international legal instruments	Apply selected legal instruments or relevant provisions of legal instruments in conjunction with the result of the legal readiness assessment							

Article number	*Goals*	*Tasks*	*Actions (in sequence)*	*Priority level*	*Potential key agencies*	*Deliverables*	*Implementation schedule*	*Progress made*	*Capacity-building needs*
13	Initiate and launch pilot projects	Plan and implement pilot projects Report the progress of pilot projects to the Standing Committee							
14	Cooperate in providing technical support and assistance	Request and offer capacity-building							