United Nations ESCAP/PTA/PTC(4)/2

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
2 April 2025

Original: English

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

Fourth session
Bangkok and online, 12 and 13 June 2025
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 implementing the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific. It highlights the significant efforts undertaken by the parties to the Framework Agreement to enhance trade facilitation and promote national and cross-border paperless trade following the conclusion of the third session of the Paperless Trade Council, which was held on 6 and 7 June 2024.

The Paperless Trade Council may wish to offer strategic advice to the parties to the Framework Agreement on continuing its implementation.

I. Progress made in the implementation of the Framework Agreement

1. Since the third session of the Paperless Trade Council, Uzbekistan has acceded to the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific, bringing the total number of parties to 14.

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2. Subsequent to the third session of the Paperless Trade Council, an ad hoc session of the Standing Committee of the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific was held in Incheon, Republic of Korea, on 11 December 2024. Among other topics discussed during the ad hoc session, the Standing Committee reviewed the updated collective action plan and noted that most of the tasks listed in the plan had been completed (see annex). Nevertheless, the Standing Committee requested the secretariat to formally invite the parties to provide their responses before the fourth session of the Standing Committee, to be held in June 2025. Among other achievements in implementing the collective action plan are the following tools and guides:

- A template for designing a national policy framework[1]
- A capacity-building strategy for the implementation of the Framework Agreement[2]
- A note on maintaining an effective national committee on the implementation of the Framework Agreement[3]
- A reference map for cross-border paperless trade processes[4]
- A strategy for collaborating with development partners[5]

[1] Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), "Towards a template and guidelines for development of national policy framework for paperless trade", background document for the second session of the Standing Committee of the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, June 2023. Available at www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/event-documents/Agenda%20item%202a%20Template%20for%20National%20Policy%20Framework.pdf.

[2] ESCAP, "Capacity building strategy for implementing Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific", background document for the second session of the Standing Committee of the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, June 2023. Available at www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/event-documents/Agenda%20item%202b%20Capacity%20Building%20Strategy_0.pdf.

[3] ESCAP, "Maintaining an effective national committee on implementing the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific", background document for the second session of the Standing Committee of the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, June 2023. Available at www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/event-documents/Agenda item 2c national committee.edited.pdf.

[4] ESCAP, "A reference map for cross-border paperless trade processes", background document for the second session of the Standing Committee of the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, June 2023. Available at www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/event-documents/Agenda%20item%202j%20draft%20reference%20map.pdf.

[5] ESCAP, "Collaborative strategy for inclusive implementation of the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and Pacific", background document for the second session of the Standing Committee of the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, June 2023. Available at www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/event-documents/Agenda item 3 partnership strategy.pdf.

- A template for an individual action plan for the implementation of the Framework Agreement[6]
- A model agreement for mutual recognition of electronic trade data and documents[7]
- A guide on the legal aspects of implementing cross-border paperless trade[8]
- A methodology for prioritizing documents for cross-border paperless trade[9]

3. The ad hoc meeting of the Standing Committee held on 11 December 2024 also featured a discussion on the implementation of article 9 of the Framework Agreement, the text of which indicates that the parties shall endeavour to apply international standards and guidelines to ensure interoperability in paperless trade and to develop safe, secure and reliable means of communication for the exchange of data. To support the parties in implementing the article, the secretariat has prepared a document in the form of a recommendation from the Paperless Trade Council, and the document was reviewed during the ad hoc session. The Standing Committee agreed to submit any feedback to the secretariat within 60 days after the session. However, no feedback was submitted during the period. Therefore, the document will be submitted for the consideration of the Paperless Trade Council at its fourth session.

4. To enhance the discussion at the ad hoc session of the Standing Committee in December 2024, a regional workshop on advancing paperless trade facilitation for sustainable development was jointly organized by the secretariat and the Korea Customs Service and held in Incheon, Republic of Korea, on 10 and 11 December 2024, prior to the ad hoc session.

5. In line with the recommendations made at the third session of the Standing Committee, the working group on the implementation of article 8 of

[6] ESCAP, "Template for individual action plan for implementation of the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific", background document for the second session of the Standing Committee of the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, June 2023. Available at www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/event-documents/Agenda%20Item%203%20Template%20for%20National%20action%20plan.pdf.

[7] ESCAP, "A draft model agreement for mutual recognition of electronic trade data and documents", background document for the second session of the Standing Committee of the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, June 2023. Available at www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/event-documents/agenda item 2b Model MoU_0.pdf.

[8] ESCAP, "Legal implementation guide for cross-border paperless trade", background document for the second session of the Standing Committee of the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, June 2023. Available at www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/event-documents/agenda 2c. draft Legal Guide.pdf.

[9] ESCAP, "A methodology for prioritizing cross-border paperless documents for pilot projects", background document for the second session of the Standing Committee of the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, June 2023. Available at www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/event-documents/agenda item 2d prioritize documents_0.pdf.

the Framework Agreement conducted five meetings in 2024. The working group has surveyed experts from the parties to the Framework Agreement on possible mutual recognition mechanisms and collected case studies pertaining to mutual recognition and covering peer-to-peer, gateway-to-gateway and service provider solutions. Building on these efforts, the working group has been preparing a guide on mutual recognition. During the ad hoc session held in December 2024, the Standing Committee was updated on the progress made by the working group. The working group is continuing its work in 2025 and will report on its progress to the Standing Committee and the Paperless Trade Council.

6. In collaboration with the working group, the secretariat has carried out additional work that has been focused on the mutual recognition of documents, including certificates of origin, phytosanitary certificates, commercial invoices and bills of lading. Background studies on these documents have been carried out and case studies have been collected. Furthermore, the United Nations Network of Experts for Paperless Trade and Transport in Asia and the Pacific Advisory Group held an online meeting focused on electronic certificates of origin on 27 March 2025. All the work undertaken in these areas, including the key recommendations, will be reported to the Standing Committee and the Paperless Trade Council.

7. In order to support work aimed at cross-border paperless trade, national feasibility studies on the electronic exchange of trade data and documents were conducted in four Central Asian countries: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. National consultations were conducted and the findings of the studies served as a point of reference for the implementation of pilot projects.[10]

8. In 2024, the secretariat and the Bureau of Customs of the Philippines jointly released the findings and recommendations of a national feasibility study on the cross-border electronic exchange of trade-related data and documents to guide the adoption of cross-border paperless trade.[11]

9. 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, together with the World Customs Organization and the Korea Customs Service, organized the seventh masterclass of the United Nations Network of Experts for Paperless Trade and Transport in Asia and the Pacific, which was focused on electronic single windows and data analytics for trade compliance and facilitation.[12] In collaboration with the Asian Development Bank and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the secretariat organized the Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Conference, which was held in Manila on 4 and 5 March 2025.[13] Representatives from 11 parties to the Framework Agreement that were also member States of the Asian Development Bank attended the Conference.

10. The secretariat has also continued to maintain and enhance relevant online resources and tools. In collaboration with partner organizations, it has issued subregional, regional and global reports based on data from the United

[10] ESCAP, “Feasibility studies: identifying and unlocking cross-border paperless trade potential”, 7 February 2025.

[11] Philippines, Bureau of Customs, “BOC and ESCAP release a joint feasibility study on opportunities for cross-border electronic trade in the Philippines”, 3 October 2024.

[12] See www.unescap.org/events/2024/wco-escap-7th-unnext-masterclass-electronic-single-windows-and-data-analytics-trade.

[13] See https://adb.eventsair.com/tfc2025/.

Nations Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, which it coordinates, and it has been updating the cross-border paperless trade database, adding a significant number of new projects, services and legal instruments over the past year.[14]

11. The secretariat, in collaboration with other regional commissions and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, launched the United Nations trade digitalization index during the World Trade Organization Global Review of Aid for Trade in 2024. The index is dedicated to measuring the implementation of national and cross-border paperless trade and may be developed further by the parties to the Framework Agreement to monitor their progress in digitalizing trade. The secretariat also released new estimates of the impacts of paperless trade that were aimed at providing the evidence base needed to further accelerate progress and expand membership in the Framework Agreement.[15]

12. The secretariat organized a series of thematic webinars focused on mutual recognition and data security.[16] Topics included: cybersecurity and data protection (held on 13 June 2024); digital identity management (held on 8 August 2024); trust services (held on 3 October 2024); and trustless cross-border data validation using verifiable credentials and application programming interfaces (held on 16 January 2025).

II. Efforts by parties to the Framework Agreement to advance national and cross-border paperless trade

13. Since the conclusion of the third session of the Paperless Trade Council, a large number of initiatives have been undertaken by the parties to the Framework Agreement in implementing measures aimed at national and cross-border paperless trade. The overview presented here is focused primarily on cross-border collaboration between the parties to the Framework Agreement and with States members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. All parties are invited to present any further information on their efforts to implement the Framework Agreement, especially during the fourth session of the Standing Committee and fourth session of the Paperless Trade Council.

14. While the efforts of each party are highlighted individually below, it is important to emphasize subregional initiatives. Among the 14 parties to the Framework Agreement, five – Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan – are from Central Asia. Various projects and initiatives, such as the training activity on digitalization for cross-border paperless trade offered by the German Agency for International Cooperation[17]

[14] See www.untfsurvey.org/report.

[15] For example, see Yann Duval and Chorthip Utoktham, “Partial and general equilibrium impacts of trade digitalization using structural gravity model”, Asia-Pacific Research and Training Network on Trade Working Paper, No. 242 (Bangkok, ESCAP, 2024).

[16] See www.unescap.org/event-series/paperless-trade-2022.

[17] German Agency for International Cooperation, “Facilitating cross-border trade in Central Asia”. Available at www.giz.de/en/worldwide/139478.html (accessed on 31 March 2025).

and the "Ready4Trade" project[18] supported by the European Union and the International Trade Centre, along with other partners, exemplify the collective efforts of several parties in the subregion to work collectively.

15. The Government of Azerbaijan hosted the customs meeting of the Organization of Turkic States, which was focused on cooperation, digitalization and the development of the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route, often referred to as the "middle corridor". A key outcome of the meeting was the signing of a road map for the implementation of the eTIR international system, setting a 2025 operational deadline for all countries that are members of the Organization of Turkic States. Moreover, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan have agreed to fully transition to electronic permits for international freight transport by road, effective from 1 September 2025.[19]

16. The Government of Bangladesh launched a national single window to simplify trade procedures.[20] The Bangladesh Land Port Authority, in collaboration with the Ministry of Shipping and the private sector, launched the Bhomra e-Port Management System.[21] Furthermore, a draft cross-border digital commerce policy aimed at the creation of an internationally accepted digital commerce payment system that is connected to existing domestic payment systems was unveiled in late 2024.[22]

17. The Government of China announced a global cross-border data flow cooperation initiative to promote international collaboration on data governance; facilitate secure and efficient cross-border data transfers; and establish standardized rules to support global digital trade and economic growth. It continued to promote paperless trade cooperation through several free trade agreements or arrangements such as: (a) the "3.0 upgrade" to the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area; (b) the free trade agreement between the Governments of China and Maldives; and (c) a protocol to upgrade the free trade agreement between the Governments of China and Peru. All three measures included provisions on cross-border paperless trade solutions. The Government of China also promoted paperless trade cooperation with Thailand on a one-stop electronic data linkage system for cross-border trade. Furthermore, the Governments of China and Kazakhstan have introduced an electronic system for exchanging digital foreign permit forms to facilitate cargo transportation between the two countries.[23]

18. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union have completed the procedures necessary for the entry into force of the free trade agreement between the two parties in support of the transition to paperless trade, including with regard to provisions on the use of

[18] International Trade Centre, "Central Asia: Ready4Trade (R4TCA)". Available at www.intracen.org/our-work/projects/central-asia-ready4trade-r4tca (accessed on 31 March 2025).

[19] Farid Zohrabov, "Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan move to full digitalization of freight transit permits", Trend, 25 February 2025.

[20] For further information, see https://bswnbr.gov.bd/en/.

[21] Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation, "Bhomra e-Port transition marks significant milestone towards 'smart Bangladesh'", 4 July 2024.

[22] Fibre2Fashion, "Bangladesh unveils draft cross-border digital commerce policy 2024", 7 November 2024.

[23] Dana Omirgazy, "Kazakhstan, China introduce digital cross border permits to facilitate shipments", *The Astana Times*, 10 December 2024.

web databases and the development of an electronic origin verification system.[24]

19. The Governments of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan concluded a pilot system for the mapping of information systems supporting cross-border trade formalities (the "CART.IS" system),[25] building on the legal and technical readiness assessment tool developed by the secretariat and the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law.[26] The Government of Kyrgyzstan signed an enhanced partnership and cooperation agreement with the European Union aimed at promoting cooperation in the development of the digital economy, as well as the associated information and communications technology and data infrastructure.[27]

20. The Government of Mongolia established a national working group on the facilitation of paperless trade, in line with article 6 of the Framework Agreement. In addition, the country's Digital Trade Week, organized in collaboration with development partners, including the secretariat, was held from 24 to 28 March 2025.[28] The event served as the setting for: (a) the second meeting of the national working group on paperless trade facilitation, during which an individual action plan was adopted; and (b) capacity-building sessions on digital trade policy and facilitation.

21. The Government of the Philippines advanced the digitalization of its import verification and invoicing systems through its administrative order No. 23 of 2024. Furthermore, an electronic phytosanitary certificate exchange programme has been initiated between the Philippines and other member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).[29]

22. The Republic of Korea became a party to the Digital Economy Partnership Agreement in 2024. The Government of the Republic of Korea has continued its efforts to broaden capacity-building support in the region. In addition to holding the regional workshop on advancing paperless trade facilitation for sustainable development discussed in paragraph 4, the Korea Customs Service, in collaboration with the Asian Development Bank, also organized a regional workshop on cross-border digital trade for member countries of the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Programme, held in Seoul from 12 to 14 November 2024.[30]

23. The Government of the Russian Federation made progress in the implementation of digital and paperless trade mechanisms for government authorities such as the Federal Customs Service.[31] The Government announced

[24] See https://eec.eaeunion.org/upload/medialibrary/77b/FTA-EAEU_Iran.pdf.

[25] International Trade Centre, "ITC advances trade digitalization in Central Asia", 11 June 2024.

[26] See https://readiness.digitalizetrade.org/.

[27] See https://investmentpolicy.unctad.org/international-investment-agreements/treaty-files/8490/download.

[28] See https://www.unescap.org/events/2025/mongolias-digital-trade-week.

[29] ASEAN, "Joint media statement", the fifty-sixth ASEAN Economic Ministers' Meeting, 17 September 2024. Available at https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/AEM-56-Joint-Media-Statement-adopted-1.pdf.

[30] See https://www.carecprogram.org/?event=regional-workshop-on-cross-border-digital-trade-for-carec-countries .

[31] Russian Federation, Presidential Executive Office, "Meeting with Head of the Federal Customs Service Valery Pikalyov", 18 July 2024.

plans for the development of cross-border payment services to promote more efficient cross-border trade.[32] In collaboration with the Eurasian Economic Union, the Government is continuing to work towards the facilitation of cross-border paperless trade with partners in the region.

24. The Government of Tajikistan has continued its efforts to further develop its single window system with a view to digitalizing its customs processes. Furthermore, the Government has developed a programme on e-commerce for the period from 2025 to 2029, with support from development partners.[33] In collaboration with the secretariat, the Government of Tajikistan also organized the first national consultation for the development of its individual action plan, in line with the Framework Agreement. The consultation was held on 29 November 2024, during which a review of the first draft of the plan was conducted.

25. Timor-Leste joined the World Trade Organization on 30 August 2024 as its 166th member. The Government of Timor-Leste has advanced its digital trade ecosystem by funding a 48-month project in the period from 2020 to 2024 on the implementation of a national single window system.[34]

26. The Government of Turkmenistan held a meeting on 26 June 2024 on establishing a national body in line with the Framework Agreement.[35] The State Customs Service launched a new feature in the single window system for the preliminary electronic notification of imported goods to further streamline the import process. The United Nations Development Programme and the national agency for transport and communications of Turkmenistan launched a collaborative project to implement a pilot electronic data interchange system. The Government of Turkmenistan also hosted a seminar, together with the secretariat and the Economic Commission for Europe, on the digitalization of railway consignment notes along the Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran (Islamic Republic of) Railway Freight Corridor in March 2025.

27. The Government of Tuvalu has been working towards accession to the Convention on Facilitation of International Maritime Traffic. In particular, it hosted a national seminar on maritime digitalization, organized by the International Maritime Organization and the Pacific Community. The seminar was focused on simplifying port procedures and aligning them with the latest amendments to the Convention on Facilitation of International Maritime Traffic mandating the use of maritime single window systems in ports worldwide and improving international maritime traffic facilitation.[36]

28. The Government of Uzbekistan has been making progress towards the digitalization of international road freight transport, including the electronic exchange of permit forms. In that regard, it has recently conducted the first

[32] John Everington and Anita Hawser, “Explainer: Putin’s SWIFT rival a bridge too far for BRICS”, *The Banker*, 25 October 2024.

[33] International Trade Centre, “Tajikistan launches national programme on e-commerce with the help of the European Union and ITC”, 30 August 2024.

[34] See https://airdrive.eventsair.com/eventsairseasiaprod/production-adb-public/59927fa6265e449c81dca890d5bcac07.

[35] See www.newscentralasia.net/2024/06/29/turkmenistan-takes-steps-to-streamline-trade-with-national-facilitation-body/.

[36] International Organization for Marine Aids to Navigation, “Shipping digitalization: Tuvalu”, 17 December 2024.

shipment of cargo using the electronic permit system with Azerbaijan[37] and intends to implement the system with other partners such as Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia and Tajikistan.[38]

III. Issues for consideration by the Paperless Trade Council

29. Evidence continues to emerge on the benefits of implementing paperless and cross-border paperless trade measures. For example, a working paper by the secretariat revealed that global trade would increase by nearly 13 per cent once the trade digitalization measures included in the United Nations trade digitization index have been implemented.[39]

30. As discussed above, all parties to the Framework Agreement have been active in implementing paperless trade measures at the national level, with some making progress in implementing cross-border paperless trade measures as well. Moving forward, the parties may continue efforts to strengthen bilateral arrangements and explore projects that involve as many parties as possible. Furthermore, efforts should be made to communicate more frequently about ongoing initiatives so that the synergies may be explored.

31. 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) Encouraging the parties to the Framework Agreement to share information on new initiatives, including new projects or capacity-building events, with the secretariat, and requesting the secretariat to collect such information and share it with the parties regularly;

(c) 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;

(d) 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.

[37] Caliber, “Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan conduct first cross-border transport with digital e-Permit system”, 29 January 2025.

[38] KUN.UZ, “Uzbekistan and Mongolia to introduce electronic system for cargo transport permits”, 11 February 2025.

[39] Yann Duval and Chorthip Utoktham. “Partial and general equilibrium impacts of trade digitalization using structural gravity model”.

Annex

Summary 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 (task 6.1)	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. The task has been completed.
6	Identify and select relevant international legal frameworks and best practices (task 6.2)	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, in collaboration with partners such as the International Chamber of Commerce, has developed a cross-border paperless trade database (www.digitalizetrade.org/). The database includes legal instruments and pilot projects and will be updated regularly. Furthermore, a guide on legal issues has been published as a working paper, covering tasks 6.2 and 10.2.
7	Prepare a guide on how to develop or upgrade paperless trade systems in line with general principles (task 7.1)	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 task 7.2

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 (task 7.2)	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 was presented at the third session of the Standing Committee. The guide is being finalized and is to be published. The task has been completed.
8	Develop a technologically neutral mutual recognition mechanism, including defining criteria for satisfying the requirements to offer a substantially equivalent level of reliability (task 8.1)	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 achieving cross-border paperless trade.	Financial support from partners for such studies is welcome.	The Standing Committee has set up a working group to work on article 8. It is therefore proposed that all the tasks under article 8, including tasks 8.1 to 8.3, should be discussed by the working group under the guidance of the Standing Committee. The working group will report the outcomes to the Standing Committee on a regular basis.
8	Develop a model memorandum of understanding and service-level agreement to be used by parties at the bilateral and multilateral levels (task 8.2)	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 achieving cross-border paperless trade.	Financial support from partners for background studies is welcome.	
8	Develop a plan for regular reviews of the mechanism (task 8.3)	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.	

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 (task 9.1)	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.	Relevant international standards are featured in the cross-border paperless trade database (www.digitalizetrade.org/) A recommendation on the adoption of international standards has been prepared for consideration by the Standing Committee.
10	Identify relevant provisions of international laws and regional and international regulations, as well as best practices (task 10.1)	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. A recommendation on international and regional laws and regulations may be prepared for consideration by the Standing Committee.
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 (task 10.2)	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 on legal issues has been published as a working paper covering tasks 6.2 and 10.2. The task has been completed.

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	Nominate national representatives to the Paperless Trade Council and the Standing Committee (task 11.1)	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.
11	Prepare terms of reference for working groups (task 11.2)	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. The task has been completed.
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 (task 11.3)	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.	The topic is covered in the report prepared by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law and the World Trade Organization entitled *Cross-Border Paperless Trade Toolkit* . The task has been completed.
13	Prepare a reference map on which potential cross-border paperless trade processes, documents and data are indicated (task 13.1)	2022–2023	Prepare the reference map	Dedicated time by members of the Standing Committee	High	Implementing article 13 is crucial to achieving 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. The task has been completed.

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	Prioritize cross-border paperless trade processes, documents and data for pilot projects (task 13.2)	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	The parties reiterated the importance of working towards the initiation of pilot projects during the third session of the Standing Committee.	Financial support from partners for such studies is welcome.	A background document on how to prioritize documents has been accepted by the Standing Committee. Studies may be carried out on specific documents and should be aimed at preparing the parties to initiate pilot projects.
13	Prepare model memorandums of understanding and agreements for arranging bilateral and multilateral exchanges of cross-border data (task 13.3)	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.	Task 13.3 has been deleted since it overlaps with task 8.2.
13	Prepare a plan for developing technical and legal guides to be used for pilot projects (task 13.4)	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 and Uzbekistan. However, task 13.4 may be kept on hold until a pilot project has been identified by the parties.
13	Prepare a strategy and guidance on how to transition pilot projects into live projects (task 13.5)	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.	Task 13.5 can only be carried out after the pilot project has been started; therefore, it may be kept on hold until a pilot project has been identified.
13	Prepare a template for reporting the progress of pilot projects to the Standing Committee (task 13.6)	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.	Task 13.6 can only be carried out after a pilot project has been started; therefore, it may be kept on hold until a pilot project has been identified.

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	Work towards the establishment of an alliance for electronic bills of lading (task 13.7)	2025–2026	Studies and meetings	Support studies and meeting participants	Very high	In line with proposals made by the parties.	Relevant partners are welcome.	This is a new task. It is envisaged that work on implementation will start in 2025.
14	Define options and mechanisms for capacity-building, including a customization strategy for national, subregional and regional levels (task 14.1)	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. The parties may review the strategy and decide what needs to be updated or developed further.
14	Prepare a guide on how to request technical support and assistance and how to provide technical support and assistance (task 14.2)	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. The task has been completed.
14	Prepare a plan for engaging development partners in capacity-building activities (task 14.3)	2022–2023	Prepare a plan	Dedicated time by members of the Standing Committee	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. The parties may wish to review the strategies further.
14	Define a reporting mechanism for capacity-building support received or provided (task 14.4)	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.