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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

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

I. Conclusions and recommendations

1. The Paperless Trade Council noted the expansion of its membership from 13 member States at its third session to 14 member States at its fourth session. The Paperless Trade Council encouraged all Parties to the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific, both in their communications with trading partners and in the context of their participation in forums and meetings, to promote the Framework Agreement and encourage other States to accede to it.

2. The Paperless Trade Council acknowledged the significant progress made by all Parties and commended their efforts in advancing paperless and cross-border trade solutions under the Framework Agreement.

3. Having reviewed the draft recommendations on adopting international standards for the implementation of the Framework Agreement (see ESCAP/PTA/PTC(4)/3), the Paperless Trade Council finalized the recommendations as set out in annex II to the present report. It invited development partners to assist the Parties to the Framework Agreement in adopting and implementing the recommended standards.

4. The Paperless Trade Council welcomed the outcomes of the fourth session of the Standing Committee of the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific, held in Bangkok and online from 9 to 11 June 2025.

5. The Paperless Trade Council called upon those members and associate members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific that were in a position to do so, as well as development partners, to provide technical or financial assistance to support capacity-building for the implementation of the Framework Agreement.

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6. The Paperless Trade Council requested the secretariat to carry out capacity-building, training and outreach activities, where possible, to support Parties in their efforts to implement the Framework Agreement.

II. Organization

A. Opening, duration and organization of the session

7. The Paperless Trade Council held its fourth session in Bangkok and online on 12 and 13 June 2025. The Executive Secretary of the Commission and the Chair of the fourth session of the Paperless Trade Council made opening statements.

B. Attendance

8. Representatives of the following States members of the Commission that are Parties to the Framework Agreement attended: Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, China, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Timor-Leste, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

9. Representatives of the following States members of the Commission attended as observers: Australia, Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Japan, Kazakhstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Sri Lanka, Türkiye, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Vanuatu and Viet Nam.

10. Representatives of the following offices of the Secretariat attended: Economic Commission for Europe, United Nations Commission on International Trade Law and United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

11. Representatives of the following intergovernmental organizations also attended: Eurasian Economic Commission, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and World Customs Organization Asia-Pacific Regional Office for Capacity-Building.

12. Representatives of the German Agency for International Cooperation also attended.

13. In accordance with rule 11.3 of the Paperless Trade Council's rules of procedure and rule 12 of the Commission's rules of procedure, the Chair and Vice-Chair examined the credentials of all the representatives and found them to be in order.

C. Election of officers

14. The Paperless Trade Council elected the following officers:

Chair:	Mr. Sultan Akhmatov (Kyrgyzstan)
Vice-Chair:	Mr. Natig Shirinov (Azerbaijan)

D. Agenda

15. The Paperless Trade Council adopted the following agenda:

1. Opening of the session:

   (a) Opening addresses;

   (b) Election of officers;

   (c) Adoption of the agenda.

2. Statements by the members of the Paperless Trade Council.

3. 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.

4. Dates and venue of the fifth session.

5. Other matters.

6. Adoption of the report of the Paperless Trade Council on its fourth session.

E. Other events

16. The following side events were held in conjunction with the fourth session of the Paperless Trade Council:

(a) 9 June 2025: side event on global and regional trends in the adoption of electronic certificates of origin;

(b) 10 June 2025: side event on accelerating cross-border paperless trade for digital transformation;

(c) 10 June 2025: side event on green trade facilitation and digital transformation (part one);

(d) 10 June 2025: side event on the development of a digital trade interface and on how sound regulation and innovative technologies produce economic payoffs;

(e) 10 June 2025: side event on single-window interoperability for trade digitalization and the challenges and ways forward for States members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in Asia and the Pacific;

(f) 11 June 2025: side event on green trade facilitation and digital transformation (part two);

(g) 11 June 2025: side event on recent developments and perspectives regarding the legal and operational framework affecting the use of electronic bills of lading;

(h) 11 June 2025: side event on steps taken by India to adopt cross-border paperless trade and implement the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific;

(i) 11 June 2025: side event on artificial intelligence-powered trade digitalization;

(j) 11 June 2025: side event on bridging the digital trade gap by developing standards, technologies and legal reforms;

(k) 11 June 2025: side event on enhancing cross-border trade digitalization in countries participating in the Trade Connect Central Asia+ Programme;

(l) 12 June 2025: side event on enhancing international trade through the digitalization of maritime transport;

(m) 12 June 2025: side event on taking a holistic approach to policymaking to encourage paperless trade;

(n) 12 June 2025: side event on fostering regional cooperation among national trade facilitation committees and the development of paperless trade in Central Asia;

(o) 12 June 2025: side event on digital multimodal trade and transport corridors using United Nations standards for the exchange of data on cargo;

(p) 12 June 2025: side event on enabling paperless trade through the use of texts of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law and on the outcome of the stocktaking exercise;

(q) 12 June 2025: side event on blockchain and emerging technologies for trade digitalization;

(r) 13 June 2025: side event on the adoption of electronic bills of lading through a collaborative approach;

(s) 13 June 2025: side event on shaping trade digitalization in the Eurasian Economic Union and its partners;

(t) 13 June 2025: side event on the legal and operational aspects of identity management in paperless trade.

III. Account of proceedings

17. The discussions held during the session have been summarized in an account of proceedings (see annex III).

Annex I

List of documents

Symbol	*Title*	*Agenda item*
General series		
ESCAP/PTA/PTC(4)/1	Provisional agenda	1 (c)
ESCAP/PTA/PTC(4)/1/Add.1	Annotated provisional agenda	1 (c)
ESCAP/PTA/PTC(4)/2	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	3
ESCAP/PTA/PTC(4)/3	Draft recommendations on adopting international standards for the implementation of the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific	3
ESCAP/PTA/PTC(4)/4	Report of the Paperless Trade Council of the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific on its fourth session	
Limited series		
ESCAP/PTA/PTC(4)/L.1	Draft report	6

Annex II

Recommendations on adopting international standards for the implementation of the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific

1. Pursuant to article 9 of the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific on international standards for exchange of trade-related data and documents in electronic form, the Parties to the Framework Agreement should endeavour to apply international standards and guidelines in order to ensure interoperability in paperless trade and to develop safe, secure and reliable means of communication for the exchange of data. The Parties should also endeavour to become involved in the development of international standards and best practices related to cross-border paperless trade.

2. In selecting the international standards for adoption, the following factors should be taken into consideration:

(a) Alignment with global, regional and subregional recommendations and initiatives;

(b) The content of other recent digital trade agreements to which the Parties to the Framework Agreement are also Parties;

(c) The content of other trade agreements, including any provisions and articles on cross-border paperless trade, as appropriate;

(d) The various economic, geographical and trade circumstances of the Parties and how these circumstances affect the degree to which international conventions and standards are relevant to each Party (depending, for example, on whether they are landlocked or islands);

(e) The fact that international standards and trade patterns evolve over time, requiring periodic adjustments to ensure that the adopted standards remain relevant and effective.

3. The Paperless Trade Council recommends that the Parties to the Framework Agreement consider the adoption of the following standards, in whole or in part, as appropriate:

(a) The Model Law on Electronic Commerce of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL)[1] or the United Nations Convention on the Use of Electronic Communications in International Contracts;[2]

(b) The UNCITRAL Model Law on Electronic Signatures [3] (especially article 12, on trust and assurance) or the UNCITRAL Model Law on the Use and Cross-border Recognition of Identity Management and Trust Services;[4]

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[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Supplement No. 17* (A/51/17), annex I.

[2] General Assembly resolution 60/21, annex.

[3] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 17* and corrigendum (A/56/17 and A/56/17/Corr.3), annex II.

[4] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Seventy-seventh Session, Supplement No. 17* (A/77/17), annex II.

(c) The UNCITRAL Model Law on Electronic Transferable Records[5] (especially article 19, on no discrimination between foreign-issued and domestic-issued electronic transferable records);

(d) The World Customs Organization Data Model;[6]

(e) The United Nations Trade Data Elements Directory.[7]

4. The Paperless Trade Council requests the Standing Committee of the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific, with the support of the secretariat, to monitor the development of international standards and update the above-mentioned list regularly to ensure the continued relevance of the recommended standards.

5. The Paperless Trade Council invites development partners to assist the Parties, upon their request, in adopting and implementing the recommended standards.

6. The Paperless Trade Council requests the secretariat:

(a) To continue to update the cross-border paperless trade database[8] to include relevant legal and implementation instruments and standards;

(b) To provide, where feasible and appropriate, capacity-building and technical assistance to support the Parties in adopting the standards.

[5] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Seventy-second Session, Supplement No. 17* (A/72/17), annex I.

[6] See www.wcoomd.org/DataModel.

[7] See https://unece.org/untded-iso7372.

[8] See www.digitalizetrade.org/.

Annex III

Account of proceedings

I. Introduction

1. The fourth session of the Paperless Trade Council of the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific was held in Bangkok and online on 12 and 13 June 2025. The present account of proceedings does not contain details of any individual statements made, but a summary of the views of the Paperless Trade Council on the topics raised under items 2–6 of the agenda.

II. Summary of discussions

A. Statements by the members of the Paperless Trade Council (agenda item 2)

2. Representatives of the following members of the Paperless Trade Council made statements: Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, China, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Timor-Leste, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The Paperless Trade Council noted the expansion of its membership from 13 member States at its third session to 14 member States at its fourth session.

3. The Paperless Trade Council was informed that substantial progress had been made by Parties in several areas relevant to the implementation of the Framework Agreement, including the following: initiatives and pilot projects on the electronic exchange of trade data and documents; enhancement of national single-window systems; legal and regulatory reforms; assessment of national readiness for implementation of the Framework Agreement; adoption of technologies such as artificial intelligence; electronic signature recognition; data protection; and dispute resolution.

4. Several representatives reported on the progress made by their Governments in establishing and maintaining a national committee and making a national plan for the implementation of the Framework Agreement.

5. Several representatives reported on the outcomes of various national and subregional meetings on paperless or cross-border paperless trade organized by agencies of their Governments.

6. Several representatives highlighted the importance of international cooperation in the region to achieve sustainable solutions for the cross-border exchange and mutual recognition of trade documents.

7. Several representatives expressed support for the ongoing efforts to develop practical guides that facilitate mutual recognition of key trade documents, such as certificates of origin, phytosanitary certificates and invoices, and to promote the adoption of electronic bills of lading.

8. Representatives proposed that the Parties to the Framework Agreement take the following actions for its further implementation, either individually or collectively, with the support of the secretariat where appropriate and possible:

(a) Place greater emphasis on implementing practical, results-oriented projects, including pilot projects;

(b) Enhance knowledge-sharing and capacity-building efforts to ensure that the benefits of digital transformation are inclusive and accessible to all countries, communities and individuals;

(c) Harmonize legal frameworks for mutual recognition of electronic documents.

B. 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 (agenda item 3)

9. The Paperless Trade Council had before it the note by the secretariat on the 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 (ESCAP/PTA/PTC(4)/2) and the note by the secretariat containing draft recommendations on adopting international standards for the implementation of the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP/PTA/PTC(4)/3).

10. The Chair of the fourth session of the Standing Committee of the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific reported on its key outcomes. The Paperless Trade Council welcomed those outcomes and requested the Standing Committee and the secretariat to take follow-up actions thereon and to report to it at its fifth session on the progress made in that regard.

11. The Paperless Trade Council reviewed and finalized the draft recommendations on adopting international standards for the implementation of the Framework Agreement. It invited development partners to assist the Parties to the Framework Agreement in adopting and implementing the recommended standards.

C. Dates and venue of the fifth session (agenda item 4)

12. The Paperless Trade Council recalled the decision made during its third session that its fifth session would be held in Bangkok and online on 11 and 12 June 2026. The Paperless Trade Council agreed to maintain this decision, while noting that the dates and venue for the fifth session of the Standing Committee would be determined at a later stage, with support from the secretariat in consultation with the Parties.

D. Other matters (agenda item 5)

13. No matters were discussed under the agenda item.

E. Adoption of the report of the Paperless Trade Council on its fourth session (agenda item 6)

14. On 13 June 2025, the Paperless Trade Council adopted the report on its fourth session.