



**UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL PROGRAMME FOR THE ECONOMIES OF CENTRAL ASIA (SPECA)**

**Seventeenth session of the SPECA Governing Council**

**31 August 2022**

**PROGRESS REPORTS ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE SPECA THEMATIC WORKING GROUPS**

**III. Trade:** In line with the overall objectives of SPECA to support its participating countries in developing subregional economic cooperation, integrating their economies into the world economy, and attaining the Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the WG on Trade shall foster subregional cooperation to promote national and regional development of sustainable trade in the SPECA participating countries. To achieve this through subregional cooperation, the Working Group shall: (i) Provide a platform for supporting progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals through subregional cooperation in trade and trade facilitation with a focus on SDGs directly related to trade development, notably SDG 17 on partnerships, taking into account interlinkages between the SDGs; (ii) Assist in improving the awareness of SPECA countries on the trade-related SDGs; help provide information and share best practice experiences, taking into account interlinkages between the SDGs; (iii) Promote policy dialogue to support: trade policy cooperation among the SPECA countries and their trade negotiators; trade facilitation; aligning positions on sustainable trade, dealing with non-tariff measures, and investment policies; and (iv) Provide analysis and capacity-building in the areas of trade facilitation, sustainable trade development, regulatory harmonization, agricultural quality standards, elimination of non-tariff barriers to trade, investment, and other areas, including identification of funding modalities for SPECA activities.

**The thematic orientation of the activities** of the Working Group on Trade includes: (i) sustainable trade development among the countries in the region and with the main trading partners; (ii) trade facilitation and promotion of trade facilitation norms, standards and best practice recommendations; (iii) public-private cooperation for trade facilitation; (iv) regulatory harmonization, market surveillance and risk management; (v) agricultural commercial quality standards; (vi) investment and trade development; and (vii) other areas of competence of UNECE and ESCAP related to the development of trade, regional markets and harmonization of standards in these areas. The deliverables of the WG on Trade focus

on four areas: (i) trade policy cooperation, including on the WTO negotiations; (ii) implementation of the SPECA Trade Facilitation Strategy; (iii) implementation of the SPECA Principles for Sustainable Trade; (iv) non-tariff measures and barriers to trade; and (v) digitalization of multimodal transport information exchange, with which the WG started dealing in 2021.

Name of Activity	Time & Venue	SPECA participating countries	Major results
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17th session of the SPECA Working Group on Trade	31 August 2022 (The Fairmont Hotel, Singapore & on MS Teams)	Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan & Uzbekistan	The event reviewed national and regional plans and strategies of the SPECA countries for sustainable trade development and facilitation and strengthen cooperation among trade diplomats of the SPECA countries.
Round table under the auspices of the SPECA WG on Trade on sub-regional collaboration in the WTO process	8 December 2021, Palais des Nations, Geneva	Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan & Uzbekistan	Informal discussion organized by UNECE ECTD for the SPECA countries, on WTO related issues, moderated by H.E Abdurahmonzoda, Deputy Minister of Economic Development and Trade of Tajikistan and Chair of the SPECA Working Group on Trade. Participants shared plans and issues as they arise in the WTO access process, covered a wide range of issues (including “new issues”) as discussed in the preparations for the WTO MC 12, implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) and the possibilities for cooperation among the SPECA countries on WTO and trade-related processes.

SPECA side event during the 12 WTO Ministerial Conference	14 June 2022, Palais des Nations, Geneva	Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan & Uzbekistan	This side event had been planned already in 2019 but was postponed due to the pandemic and the postponement of the MC12. The countries wanted to use the occasion of a SPECA country (Kazakhstan) hosting a WTO MC for the first time in the region and in a transition economy. Even if the event was held in Geneva, Kazakhstan was the formal host. Representatives from the capitals of the SPECA countries discussed all the topics of the ToR and programme of work of the WG on Trade: above all regional cooperation in the WTO process, as well as the implementation of the SPECA TF Strategy, the SPECA Principles of Sustainable Trade, NTBs, and the new topic: standardized digitalization of information flows along the SPECA multimodal trade corridors.
Readiness assessments for cross-border paperless trade in Turkmenistan	The study is carried from 1 March to 30 September 2022. As part of the study, a national validation workshop will be held in Ashgabat on 6 September 2022	Turkmenistan	Turkmenistan is a Party of the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific. The outcome of the study will provide the country with reference on effective implementation of the Framework Agreement.
Readiness assessments for cross-border paperless trade in Tajikistan	The study will be carried from 1 August to 30 September 2022. As part of the study, a national validation workshop will be held in Dushanbe in late September 2022	Tajikistan	Tajikistan is working on the domestic process to become a Party of the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific. The outcome of

			the study will support the country to accede to the Framework Agreement and prepare the country for the implementation of the Agreement once the country becomes a party.
Business Process Analysis of trade procedures in Kazakhstan	The study will be carried out from 1 July to 30 September 2022	Kazakhstan	It is envisaged that the study will highlight the importance of converting paper-based trade documents to paperless trading. This will provide the country with useful reference to accede to the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific
Draft national trade facilitation strategy of Uzbekistan	First draft of the national trade facilitation strategy of Uzbekistan finalized in March 2022. Preparation of the second draft under way – to be finished by the end of 2022.	Uzbekistan	The assessment of the readiness of Uzbekistan to implement the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement accomplished in 2021 with assistance from UNECE recommended drafting a national trade facilitation roadmap
Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation in United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia 2021	This study was published in May 2022 <a href="https://www.unescap.org/kp/2022/untf-survey-2021-SPECA?ref=untfsurvey.org">https://www.unescap.org/kp/2022/untf-survey-2021-SPECA?ref=untfsurvey.org</a>	Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan	The report presents results of the 2021 United Nations Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation for six participants in United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA), namely Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, reviewing the progress of trade facilitation reforms and provides a detailed analysis based on 58 trade facilitation

			measures covering both binding and non-binding WTO TFA measures, as well as measures beyond the scope of WTO TFA.
Working Paper on the harmonization of border-crossing procedures in the SPECA region (updated working document of the SPECA WG on Trade)	Published on the SPECA WG on Trade web page, to be discussed at the 17 <sup>th</sup> session of the SPECA WG on Trade (31 August 2022) by the author Ms Larisa Kislyakova	Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan	This is a working paper of the SPECA WG on Trade for the next years until it is ready to be presented for adoption by the SPECA Governing Council as a strategic document of SPECA.
Capacity-building events in support of the establishment, functioning and regional cooperation of the National Trade Facilitation Committees of the SPECA countries.	20-22 June 2022, Almaty; 23 March 2022; 16 Nov. 2021, Tashkent	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan	With assistance from UNECE and GIZ, several capacity-building events took place in support of the establishment, functioning and regional cooperation of the National Trade Facilitation Committees of the SPECA countries. GIZ has supported the establishment of a regional network of NTFCs in collaboration with UNECE, UNCTAD and several other agencies.
Guide on how to establish and operate a Trade Facilitation Enquiry Point for SPECA countries	March 2021 – March 2022	All SPECA countries with potential for use by all countries.	The Guide on how to establish and operate a TF Enquiry Points was developed in collaboration with a consultant and a group of experts from the SPECA region. Published in March 2022 at <a href="#">Guide on TF Enquiry Points</a> . This activity was part of the implementation of the SPECA TF Strategy
Establish a Trade Facilitation Enquiry Point in Uzbekistan	January 2022	Uzbekistan	This was the first case of using the SPECA Guide on how to establish and

			operate a TF Enquiry Points (published at <a href="#">Guide on TF Enquiry Points</a> ) for the implementation of a national enquiry point in a SPECA country
Technical Specification for a Uniform Customs Information Page in the SPECA Countries	January 2022	All SPECA countries	This model template describes the installation and set-up procedures necessary to deploy a specified information page at the websites of the Customs authorities of the Central Asian countries. Such page would contain all relevant information on border checkpoints in a universal and easy-to-use form (both documents are in Russian). They can be found at the <a href="#">Model template for Customs regional information page</a>
Review of the results of implementing Authorized Operator schemes. Planned seminar to examine the ways to harmonize the criteria for recognition of companies as AEOs, harmonizing the AEO schemes, mutual recognition of AEOs among the countries and exchange of information on the status of firms as AEOs.	Ongoing. Seminar later in 2022.	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan	This activity is implemented with varying success. Possibilities for harmonizing the conditions for AEO status are currently being explored, with a view to facilitating the development of schemes for the mutual recognition of AEO between countries, and/or the exchange of information on the status of specific companies as AEOs.

Assist the development of transit in the region: eTIR implementation pilots and meeting of the nominated transit coordinators in the region	Meeting of the transit coordinators – later in 2022	Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan	Support for the coordination of the work of national transit coordinators (as per the Roadmap to implement the SPECA trade facilitation strategy)
Time Release Studies	ongoing	Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan	With support of other organizations
Seminar on the promotion of UN/CEFACT standards for digitalization of trade and multimodal data exchange	24-25 October 2022, Baku	All SPECA countries	Seminar on the promotion of UN/CEFACT standards (for the digitalization of data exchange standards for multimodal transport and trade)