



SPECIAL PROGRAMME FOR THE ECONOMIES OF CENTRAL ASIA (SPECA)

SPECA/WG-Trade/2024/EN/3

Recommendations of the Nineteenth Session of the SPECA Working Group on Trade hybrid, Samarkand, 3 April 2024



The nineteenth session of the SPECA Working Group on Trade took place on 3 April 2024, back-to-back with the eleventh session of the Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum: Leveraging Digitalization for Sustainable Supply Chains (1-5 April 2024). The session focused on advancing digital trade and trade digitalization in SPECA participating States, and reviewed progress of the implementation of the work plan of the SPECA Working Group on Trade. The event reviewed national and regional plans and strategies of the SPECA participating States for sustainable trade development and facilitation and strengthen cooperation among trade diplomats of the SPECA participating States.

H.E. Mr. Nuriddinzoda, Deputy Minister of Economic Development and Trade of Tajikistan and Chairperson of the SPECA Working Group on Trade, led the nineteenth session of the SPECA Working Group on Trade. Its overall objectives were to foster exchange of experiences and mutual assistance among the SPECA participating States, to implement trade facilitation and achieve sustainable trade and the trade-related SDGs; promoted the implementation of the UN/CEFACT standards for multimodal transport and supply chains along corridors in the region, reviewed the regional SPECA trade facilitation strategy, and encouraged the development of a regional private sector network in support of these objectives. The meeting encouraged participation of experts from the SPECA States in the implementation of the SPECA Roadmap for the Digitalization of Multimodal Data and Document Exchange along the Trans-Caspian Transport Corridor, Using United Nations legal instruments and standards (<https://unece.org/speca/speca-digitalization-roadmap>).

The participants recommend to the Governments of the SPECA participating countries to:

- Strengthen collaboration among the SPECA countries on trade policy issues.
- More actively use SPECA as a collaborative platform of the countries to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, notably to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to trade.

- For countries not yet part to the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific (CPTA), accelerate efforts to accede to the Framework Agreement.
 - Strengthen capacity development of trade policymakers in the SPECA subregion to negotiate trade agreements that help to achieve sustainable development, including through ESCAP's Trade, Intelligence and Negotiations Advisor (<https://tina.trade>).
 - Take note of discrepancies in trade statistics, a potential symbol of trade misinvoicing and illicit financial flows and lost government revenues. These can be addressed through greater degree of digital trade facilitation, in particular, through cross-border trade data information exchange. New module on TINA (<https://tina.trade>) facilitates examination of bilateral trade statistics which can aid in highlighting the issue. Participants were also told about two pilot projects in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan on estimating trade-based illicit financial flows.
 - Continue to include trade facilitation measures and the Principles of Sustainable Trade in work programmes, cooperation plans, best-practice exchanges, fundraising, and the use of standards and tools for sustainable trade to achieve the SDGs. Explore possibilities to develop an implementation road map for one of the next sessions of the working group.
 - By the SPECA Trade Working Group meeting in 2025, review the implementation of the SPECA Trade Facilitation Strategy and the Ashgabat Initiative on reducing barriers to trade and transport in the SPECA subregion, using UN instruments. Reinforce the work on implementation of the previously adopted recommendations regarding these strategic documents. Prepare an update of the Roadmap on the implementation of the SPECA Trade Facilitation Strategy, considering the achievements so far.
 - Continue support for the next editions of the UN Global Survey Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation (<https://www.unfsurvey.org/>).
 - Encourage participation of experts from the SPECA participating States in capacity-building activities for the implementation of the SPECA Trans-Caspian Digitalization Roadmap using the UN/CEFACT standards (<https://unece.org/speca/speca-digitalization-roadmap>).
 - The Group took note of the Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report 2023/24 : unleashing digital trade and investment for sustainable development (<https://www.unescap.org/kp/APTIR2023>).
 - Prepare a progress report to the 19th session of the SPECA Governing Council in Dushanbe, in the fall of 2024.
 - Working with the SPECA chairing country in 2025 organize the 20th session of the Working Group in a location and timing to be discussed through the diplomatic channels.
 - The Group expressed its gratitude for the excellent hospitality of the Ministry of Investment, Industry and Trade of Uzbekistan.
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