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Agenda item 3 (b)

Review of issues pertinent to the subsidiary structure of the Commission, including the work of the ESCAP regional institutions: Trade and investment

Resolution 68/3

Enabling paperless trade and the cross-border recognition of electronic data and documents for inclusive and sustainable intraregional trade facilitation

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific,

Conscious of the importance of trade as an engine of growth and development and of the need to increase the cost-effectiveness and efficiency of international trade transactions to maintain the competitiveness of the region,

Recognizing that electronic commerce enhances the expansion of trade opportunities, the importance of avoiding barriers to its use and development, and the need to promote uniformity in the application of international standards and to aim for interoperability of paperless trade systems,

Also recognizing the potential of paperless trade in making international trade transactions more efficient and transparent,

Noting that the trade and supply-chain security initiatives under implementation in major export markets will make it increasingly necessary for all actors in the international supply chain to exchange data and documents electronically,

Considering the fact that many countries in the Asia-Pacific region are currently engaged in implementing national electronic single window or related systems to expedite the processing of trade documents,

Aware that the benefits from these and related paperless trade systems would be greatly enhanced if the electronic documents generated by them could be used across borders,

Also aware that facilitating the cross-border recognition and electronic exchange of trade documents between landlocked and transit countries would significantly contribute to the implementation of Commission resolution 67/1 on the Ulaanbaatar Declaration: Outcome of the High-level Asia-Pacific Policy Dialogue on the Implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action and other Development Gaps Faced by the Landlocked Developing Countries as well as the Almaty Programme of Action,¹ which was endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 58/201 of 23 December 2003,

Recalling that, during its sixty-seventh session, the Commission supported the intent of the secretariat to promote and develop innovative projects that made effective use of information and communications technology in the area of transport, and the use of information and communications technology in the area of trade,²

Emphasizing the need to enable the cross-border use and recognition of electronic trade data and documents, and the need for all countries to adopt single window and mutual recognition of documents, as part of efforts to facilitate exports from least developed and landlocked developing countries,³

Taking note of the proposal of the Committee on Trade and Investment supporting a regional agreement on electronic trade data and document exchange,⁴

1. *Invites* member States to work towards the development of regional arrangements on the facilitation of cross-border paperless trade;

2. *Encourages* all members and associate members:

(a) To support and participate in the knowledge-sharing and capacity-building activities of the United Nations Network of Experts for Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific, including the Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum and related activities supported by regional and international organizations active in the field of trade facilitation;

(b) To initiate or accelerate the implementation of national paperless trade systems, including national single windows defined in United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business recommendation No. 33⁵ and related recommendation No. 35;⁶

¹ *Report of the International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation, Almaty, Kazakhstan, 28 and 29 August 2003 (A/CONF.202/3), annex I.*

² See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2011, Supplement No. 19 (E/2011/39-E/ESCAP/67/23)*, para. 158.

³ See E/ESCAP/68/6, para. 32.

⁴ See *ibid.*, para. 3.

⁵ United Nations publication, Sales No. 05.II.E.9.

⁶ ECE/TRADE/401.

(c) To take into account, and whenever possible adopt, available international standards made by relevant United Nations bodies, such as the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business, and the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law, and other international organizations, such as the World Customs Organization and the International Organization for Standardization, when implementing these systems so as to facilitate their interoperability;

(d) To participate in the development of new international standards to achieve the seamless exchange and recognition of trade-related information and documents across borders among all relevant stakeholders from both the public and private sectors;

(e) To share lessons learned and the outcomes of existing bilateral and subregional pilot projects on the recognition and exchange of trade-related electronic data and documents with other members and associate members, and to initiate new ones;

(f) To consider entering into bilateral and subregional agreements on the cross-border recognition and exchange of trade-related documents as building blocks towards regional and global cross-border paperless trade;

3. *Requests* the Executive Secretary:

(a) To support and facilitate the process for the development of regional arrangements on the facilitation of cross-border paperless trade, including by conducting studies, developing potential options, and organizing expert review and member consultations, and in this regard to present its results to the Committee on Trade and Investment at its third session;

(b) To ensure that the regional arrangements take into account and are consistent with the existing international and regional agreements, mechanisms, and undertakings as well as build on existing international standards and conventions and are developed in consultation with the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law, the World Customs Organization and other relevant international bodies;

(c) To continue and further strengthen the secretariat's support for capacity-building activities related to trade facilitation and paperless trade, including transit facilitation, particularly with regard to least developed and landlocked developing countries and for the preparation, in consultation with member States, of such regional arrangements;

4. *Also requests* the Executive Secretary to report to the Commission at its seventieth session on the progress made in the implementation of the present resolution.
