



United Nations
Economic Commission for Africa



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ESCAP
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Project: Enhancing the Contribution of Preferential Trade Agreements to Inclusive and Equitable Trade

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PTA ADVISORY BOARD TERMS OF REFERENCE

I. BACKGROUND

While multilateral liberalization—with sufficient flexibility for developing countries—has long been considered the first-best policy, the lack of progress in concluding the Doha Round has prompted many countries to pursue preferential trade agreements (PTAs). It is likely these will continue to be negotiated even if there is renewed progress with multilateral efforts. It is therefore vital that developing (and especially the least developed) countries have the capacity to: identify the potential benefits and costs of PTAs; effectively negotiate development-focused PTAs; utilize already negotiated concessions, and understand linkages between PTAs and autonomous trade policies on one side, as well as multilateral trading system on the other, in order to use PTAs as an effective development tool. This need is particularly acute for least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, and other countries with special needs, which have not benefited from trade as much as some other developing countries.

To address these issues, ESCAP is undertaking a UN Development Account project for enhancing the contributions of preferential trade agreements to inclusive and equitable trade, together with ECA and ECLAC during 2015-2017.

In this connection, ESCAP will take the lead in establishing a PTA Advisory Board consisting of trade and development experts. In the first phase, the PTA Advisory Board provides support to the project, the implementing parties and their respective networks including ARTNeT. In particular, the PTA Advisory Board will provide guidance and advice on topics such as the negotiation process of PTAs, the assessment and management of the economic and social impacts of PTAs and complimentary policies related to the implementation of PTAs.

The advisory board will draw part of its membership from the ARTNeT and UNNExT network of scholars, knowledge communities and trade and development practitioners who have already demonstrated a willingness to provide advice and assistance to governments on these issues.

II. COMPOSITION OF THE BOARD

- The PTA Advisory Board shall consist of no more than ten eminent experts in areas related to preferential trade liberalization and a chairperson selected from the pool of board members.
- The experts are to be selected so as to ensure that the PTA Advisory Board covers all essential areas of expertise related to trade liberalization including market access, rules of origin, investment, intellectual property rights, labour standards, trade negotiations, econometrics and modeling and so on.
- Particular attention shall be given to the geographic distribution of members of the board, to ensure that Africa, Asia-Pacific and Latin-America and the Caribbean are represented.
- Board members shall be appointed by ESCAP in consultation with ECLAC ECA, and the PTA Advisory Board may by consensus propose the addition or separation of members.

III. MAIN FUNCTIONS

The functions of the PTA Advisory Board shall include the following:

- Maintaining a close cooperative and consultative relationship with the implementing parties of the project, including ECA, ECLAC and ESCAP
- Advising and assisting the ECA, ECLAC and ESCAP in the development and implementation of the project that aims at enhancing the contribution of preferential trade agreements to inclusive and equitable trade and other similarly aligned activities;
- Supporting the development of a sustainable mechanism for providing guidance and advice to all ECA, ECLAC and ESCAP member states on enhancing the contribution of preferential trade agreements to inclusive and equitable trade;

IV. MEETINGS AND CONSULTATIONS

- The PTA Advisory Board will meet annually in person (*in accordance to the availability of resources*) or through teleconferencing.

V. FOCAL POINTS FOR EACH REGION

The functioning of the PTA Advisory Board will be facilitated in Africa, Asia-Pacific and Latin-America by the following entities:

ECA:

African Trade Policy Centre
Regional Integration and Trade Division
First point of contact: mevel@un.org

ECLAC:

Division of International Trade and Integration
First point of contact: andea.pellandra@cepal.org

ESCAP:

Trade and Investment Division,
Trade Policy and Analysis Section and ARTNeT Secretariat
First point of contact: puutio@un.org