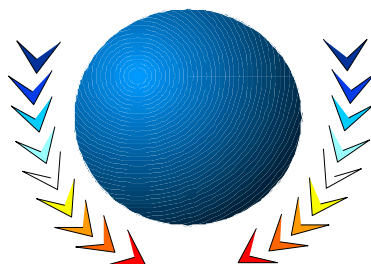


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Note

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Abbreviations

APTPF	Asia/Pacific Trade Point Forum
ATPF	Arab Trade Point Forum
ATPI	African Trade Point Initiative
BOAD	West African Development Bank
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CAF	Andean Corporation for Development
CBI	Centre for the Promotion of Imports from Developing Countries
CEDOPEX	Dominican Centre for Export Promotion
CEPROBOL	Bolivian Promotion Centre
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council of the United Nations
ETO	Electronic Trading Opportunity
EU	European Union
GTDS	Global Trade Directory Service
GTPNet	Global Trade Point Network
HS	Harmonized System
IATPF	Inter-American Trade Point Forum
IT	information technologies
ITC	International Trade Centre UNCTAD/WTO
LDCs	least developed countries
JITAP	Joint Integrated Technical Assistance Programme to Selected Least Developed and Other African Countries
NAICS	North American Industry Classification System
NGO	non-governmental organization
PROPARAGUAY	General Direction of Export and Investment Promotion
SIC	Standard Industrial Classification
SMEs	small and medium-sized enterprises
TACIS	Technical Assistance to the CIS Countries
UEMOA	West African Economic and Monetary Union
UN	United Nations
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UN/ECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UN/EDIFACT	United Nations Directories for Electronic Data Interchange for Administration, Commerce and Transport
UNISTE	United Nations International Symposium on Trade Efficiency
UN/LOCODE	United Nations Code for Trade and Transport Locations
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
WTO	World Trade Organization
WTPF	World Trade Point Federation

Foreword

The year 2002 marks 10 years of the existence of the Trade Point Programme. This is a suitable opportunity to assess the pioneering nature of a Programme that in 1992 anticipated the dramatic entry of the Internet onto the scene and acknowledged the importance for developing countries of increasing the efficiency of their trade procedures in order to be competitive and be able to take full advantage of the benefits of globalization. Moreover, the Programme subsequently provided a practical platform for electronic commerce to companies in those countries that would otherwise have been left behind. The Programme's original objective of assisting SMEs, in particular those in developing and least developed countries, to trade more effectively using information technologies is now more relevant than ever.

At the same time, the fierce competition in international markets and rapid technological developments are driving the global Trade Point operations to adapt to the new environment. Trade Points have thus decided to set up an international non-governmental organization, the World Trade Point Federation, which will take over the Programme from UNCTAD and manage it on behalf of its beneficiaries. Since its creation in 2000, the Federation has proved its commitment to further development of the Programme and to the values that it represents. UNCTAD will officially transfer the Programme to the Federation in November 2002. As this date is fast approaching, I would like to wish the Federation success and assure it, as well as its member Trade Points, of UNCTAD's continuing support of their work on behalf of SMEs worldwide.

Rubens Ricupero
Secretary-General
United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

The World Trade Point Federation, established in November 2000, originates from UNCTAD's Trade Point Programme that was launched 10 years ago. It was created by Trade Points, in close coordination with UNCTAD member States. The Federation aims to become a global trade facilitator and trade information provider for small and medium-sized enterprises. Our services are available through our website (www.wtpfed.org), as well as the human network of 121 Trade Points, one-stop-shops with local know-how, located in 80 countries on the 5 continents, where around 1,200 persons are at your disposal for assistance.

Uniquely placed to combine the forces of the private sector and international organizations, we also aim to serve as a practical tool for the intergovernmental organizations dealing with trade efficiency and trade facilitation.

We are committed to making sure that our organization continues promoting and implementing those basic principles and values that have been inherent to the Programme since its inception, and propagating them among the Trade Points worldwide so that they become a standard in business.

Bruno Masier
President
World Trade Point Federation

Chapter 1: Ten years of the Trade Point Programme

1992-1994: The beginnings

The Trade Point Programme was launched in 1992 as part of a larger initiative to improve trade efficiency. Its main objective was to open international trade to new participants – especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) – by simplifying and harmonizing trade procedures worldwide, disseminating knowledge about best practices in this regard and giving traders access to advanced technologies and information networks.

The Trade Point Programme was designed to establish, operate and interconnect Trade Points in all regions of the world. These Trade Points comprise three key elements:

- They are trade facilitation centres, where all participants in foreign trade transactions (e.g. customs, banks, insurance companies, freight forwarders, transport companies, Chambers of Commerce) are grouped together under a single physical or virtual roof.
- They serve as a source of trade-related information, which provides actual and potential traders with data about business and market opportunities, potential clients and suppliers, trade regulations and requirements, etc.
- They act as a gateway to global information networking. It was decided that all Trade Points would be interconnected through a worldwide network, and equipped with efficient telecommunication tools to link up with other global networks.

During the first two years after the creation of the Programme, UNCTAD concentrated on a pilot implementation of the Trade Point concept in a limited number of countries. Activities focused on:

- The development of the Trade Point concept, including the drafting of guidelines on how to establish a Trade Point, and promotion of this concept at intergovernmental and institutional meetings;
- The preparation of several Trade Point project documents and their submission to different donors in order to facilitate the establishment of Trade Points in developing countries, more particularly the least developed countries (LDCs), and countries with economies in transition;
- The regional coordination of government requests and advisory assistance in the implementation of the Trade Point concept and development of Trade Points.

The Trade Point Programme was started with the modest ambition of establishing 16 Trade Points around the world. Between February 1992 and October 1993, the secretariat received requests from 40 countries interested in establishing Trade Points. By October 1993, 17 pilot Trade Points had been set up in 14 countries. By May 1994, other governments had requested the establishment of Trade Points, bringing the total number of countries to 51. The establishment of Trade Points was facilitated by substantive support provided by Trade Point experts and regional coordinators, who went to visit the relevant countries.

At the same time, work began on the setting up of the Global Trade Point Network (GTPNet). GTPNet aimed at interconnecting an increasing number of Trade Points through electronic means. In order to promote products through the Trade Point network using the most advanced communication techniques available, UNCTAD developed in June 1993 a service to distribute offers and demands for products, services and investment via e-mail and news groups. The service was named the Electronic Trading Opportunities (ETO) system.

1994-1996: Consolidating the Trade Point Programme

Between 1994 and 1996, Trade Point experts and regional coordinators were mainly involved in consolidation activities. The Trade Point concept was further promoted and the establishment of new Trade Points pursued. UNCTAD trade efficiency and telecommunications experts contributed to the development of the GTPNet and facilitated access to it for the LDCs. In January 1995, ETOs started to be disseminated using the World Wide Web.

As of March 1996, UNCTAD had granted operational status to 39 Trade Points in 25 countries, with 89 Trade Points still in the process of being established. At the end of 1996, the GTPNet had expanded to

over 100 Trade Points at different stages of development and had become a major global pre-transactional network for electronic commerce. It was therefore ready to move to its next objective, which was to become an instrument for worldwide participation in electronic commerce.

1995 saw the beginning of enhanced regional cooperation among Trade Points in Latin America. The first Latin American Trade Point meeting took place in Colombia in March 1995, a second meeting followed in September and a third one in April 1996. At the fourth Inter-American Trade Point meeting, held in Peru in November 1996, Trade Point representatives from North, Central and South America and the Caribbean laid the foundations for the establishment of the Inter-American Trade Point Forum. Its main objective was to be the strengthening of the Trade Point network on the continent through regional cooperation and mutual assistance.

Between 1994 and 1996, several conferences of considerable importance to the future of the Trade Point Programme took place. Some of them anticipated new approaches to the Trade Point concept, especially with respect to enhanced self-sustainability.

- **United Nations International Symposium on Trade Efficiency (UNISTE) (Columbus, Ohio, October 1994).** In the framework of the symposium, Trade Point representatives from over 30 countries met to share ideas and discuss administrative and organizational issues necessary for the Programme's transition to a fully operational status. Furthermore, United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali announced the official launch of the GTPNet, which would formally interconnect Trade Points around the world. A coordinated programme of the United Nations in the area of trade facilitation and efficiency was jointly launched by UNCTAD, the International Trade Centre UNCTAD/WTO (ITC) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN/ECE).
- **Third World Meeting of Trade Point Directors (Tampere, Finland, September 1995).** Two important messages resulted from the discussions. First, quality should be given preference over quantity as far as information circulating on the GTPNet and services provided by Trade Points were concerned. Second, all efforts made to improve the operation of the GTPNet should keep in mind the Trade Points' main target group, SMEs.
- **UNCTAD IX Ministerial Conference, National Executive Symposium on Trade Efficiency and the Fourth World Meeting of Trade Point Directors (Midrand, South Africa, May 1996).** Participants in these events issued a series of important recommendations for the Trade Point Programme, namely to consolidate the Trade Point network, to enhance the capacity of Trade Points to function as information and training centres for SMEs and to explore the means to make them financially sustainable. In addition, the move from "contacts to contracts" was announced as the next stage in the development of the Trade Point Programme. This would allow enterprises to conduct electronic commerce on an open but secure network.

1997-1999: In search of new directions of action

By 1997, the Trade Point Programme had achieved a very broad distribution of Trade Points both geographically and between the developing and developed world, which put it in an excellent position to facilitate global trade and to serve as a unique tool for broadening the emerging opportunities related to electronic commerce. As of January 1998, 117 countries were involved in the GTPNet, of which 21 were LDCs. There were 138 Trade Points, including 44 fully operational. An average of 200 ETOs were disseminated daily to over 10,000 subscribers.

While pursuing its activities according to its original strategy, the Trade Point Programme was also involved in a process of reorientation. To this end, a number of events and activities were undertaken in 1998 and 1999 with the aim of assisting this process. The following were among the most significant:

- **Fifth World Trade Point Meeting (Lyon, France, November 1998).** During this meeting, extensive discussions took place with regard to future orientations of the Programme. The emphasis was on the quality of services provided, creation of trust among customers and enhancement of cooperation among Trade Points within the framework of regional and national Trade Point forums.

- **In-depth evaluation of UNCTAD's Trade Point Programme (December 1998).** In 1998, the Trade Point Programme was selected for evaluation by an independent team led by PriceWaterhouseCoopers. The evaluators concluded that the Programme appeared to be valued quite highly by Governments, Trade Point managers and users of Trade Points and that the original concept of the Programme continued to be valid. Suggestions were made in a number of areas relating to both the concept of the Programme and its implementation, including the GTPNet, the ETO system, product and service development, Trade Point certification, a Trade Point Federation and fundraising activities.
- **Expert meeting on the Trade Point Programme (Geneva, May 1999).** It was suggested that value-added services, including those in the area of trade facilitation, should be further developed, as well as capacity building to assist in bringing Trade Points to the operational stage. In addition, existing experience accumulated in more advanced Trade Points should be used more extensively for the benefit of other Trade Points and the Programme as a whole. The need to focus on quality in the further development of the ETO system was also stressed as a matter of priority.
- **New Trade Point Programme strategy (Geneva, September 1999).** UNCTAD member States adopted a new Trade Point Programme strategy aimed at reducing the dependence of the Programme on UNCTAD resources by externalizing it to a suitable outside non-profit entity. It focused on a limited number of objectives, which aimed essentially at consolidating the core services of the Programme and strengthening individual Trade Points as well as the Trade Point community so that they could take over the Programme at a later stage.

2000-2002: Towards the transfer of the Programme to the World Trade Point Federation

In 2000, at the Sixth World Trade Point Meeting in Geneva, Trade Points decided to set up the World Trade Point Federation (WTPF) and committed themselves to taking over the Trade Point Programme by the end of the three-year implementation period of the strategy. The Seventh World Trade Point Meeting/Second General Assembly of the Federation in November 2001 in Geneva adopted the institutional, strategic and operational frameworks of the Federation, namely statutes, a strategic business development plan, an operational plan for the year 2002 and general principles of cooperation within the Trade Point community. As a first step in line with the externalization of the Trade Point Programme to the Federation, UNCTAD transferred the Electronic Trading Opportunities system to the Federation in May 2001. In November 2001, UNCTAD also officially transferred the ownership of the names, trademarks and logo of the Trade Point Programme to the Federation.

Since its formal establishment, the Federation has made considerable progress in the enhancement of the self-management capacity of the Trade Point community and in approaching public and private sector partners. Work is now under way with regard to the creation of its new website, which will be officially launched in mid-October 2002. The Federation is also negotiating with strategic partners for the enhancement of current services and the development of new value-added services, such as the Global Trade Directory, certification of companies and credit rating.

With regard to the development of Trade Points, the objective under the new Trade Point Programme strategy was to consolidate the membership of the Programme. In fact, the share of operational Trade

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