UNECE

Pandemic Crisis Trade-Related Response





United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business

Recommendation No. 47: Pandemic Crisis Trade-Related Response



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Foreword

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the challenges of facing a health crisis and its impact on society. In an effort to slow down and ultimately stop the spread of the disease, many countries have instituted lockdowns, restrictions on movement, curfews, additional sanitary measures, among others. However, such measures have negatively impacted the global economy.

The disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic left a lasting scar on the global economy. The World Trade Organization reported that in 2020 the value of global trade in goods and services in nominal dollar terms fell by 9.6 per cent. Such gloomy scenarios are the result of an overall decrease in investment flows, an erosion of human capital through lost work and schooling, and a fragmentation of global trade and supply linkages.

There are ways to ensure that trade can continue to flow despite such a pandemic. For example, an increased use of electronic information exchange through internationally agreed upon e-business standards can reduce, and in some cases eliminate, human contact, while allowing smoother trade flows. Consultation with all stakeholders, from both the public and private sectors, can also help achieve mutually agreeable solutions; this could be achieved through National Trade Facilitation Bodies.

In an effort to ensure that global supply chains remain functional despite the pandemic, the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) has developed this Recommendation to outline measures to mitigate the adverse impact of the pandemic on trade flows. Recommendation N°47 has been developed in partnership with several international organizations from both the public and private sectors. It has also benefitted from the experience and input of several United Nations agencies, including the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the International Trade Centre (ITC) and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

This Recommendation is part of a larger effort within the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) to assist countries in containing and mitigating the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, with the three pillars of: facilitating connectivity, addressing transboundary and other risks, and promoting a resilient, sustainable and inclusive recovery. Among others, UNECE's COVID-19 response includes a series of reports on the pandemic's impact on trade, with the findings of these studies relating in many ways to the guidance provided in this document. Moreover, additional electronic business standards have been developed to help countries and companies with their efforts to dematerialize their cross-border data exchange. A platform has been created to allow national statistical offices to share their data on COVID-19 responses. Statistics have been compiled and shared on the impact of this pandemic on transport.

As the situation evolves, the UNECE secretariat will be monitoring the effectiveness of the measures proposed in this Recommendation through the UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation. In the meantime, I invite all concerned actors to make effective use of this and other UNECE resources.

Olga Algayerova

United Nations Under-Secretary-General Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

Note

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The United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT)

Simple, Transparent and Effective Processes for Global Commerce

UN/CEFACT's mission is to improve the ability of business, trade and administrative organizations, from developed, developing and transitional economies, to exchange products and relevant services effectively. Its principal focus is on facilitating national and international transactions, through the simplification and harmonization of processes, procedures and information flows, and so contribute to the growth of global commerce.

Participation in UN/CEFACT is open to experts from United Nations Member States, Intergovernmental Organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations recognised by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Through this participation of government and business representatives from around the world, UN/CEFACT has developed a range of trade facilitation and e-business standards, recommendations and tools that are approved within a broad intergovernmental process and implemented globally.

UN/CEFACT is committed to ensuring that the gender dimension is reflected in norms, roles, procedures, and access to resources. Government and trade are encouraged to promote equal opportunities for women and men within the scope of Trade Facilitation activities. UN/CEFACT specifically encourages the collection, analysis, and monitoring of gender disaggregated data in order to better understand and support women's engagement in international trade and transport facilitation.

This Recommendation encourages governments, business communities, development partners, international organizations, and other policymakers to follow UN/CEFACT's commitment to ensure inclusiveness for women.

Contents

Pages

FO	REW	ORD	······	Ш	
I.	REC	СОМ	MENDATION NO.47: PANDEMIC CRISIS TRADE-RELATED RESPONSE	. 1	
	A.	INT	RODUCTION	. 1	
	В.	PU	RPOSE AND SCOPE	. 1	
	C.	BEI	NEFITS	2	
	D.	INT	ERNATIONAL STANDARDS	. 2	
	E.	REC	COMMENDATION	. 2	
II.			INES TO RECOMMENDATION NO. 47: PANDEMIC CRISIS TRADE-RELATED	3	
	A.	INT	RODUCTION	. 3	
	В.	SCOPE			
	C.	COMPLEXITY OF PANDEMICS			
		1. 2. 3. 4.	DEFINITION	4 6	
	D.	GU	IDELINES TO FACILITATE PANDEMIC RELIEF	. 7	
		1. 2.	COLLABORATION REQUIRED		
	E.	USI	E OF TECHNOLOGIES	16	
		 2. 3. 4. 	IMPORTANCE OF SYSTEM-TO-SYSTEM EXCHANGES (REMOVING/REDUCING HUMAN CONTACT)	17 18	
	F.	СО	NCLUSIONS	19	

预览已结束, 完整报告链接和二

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