

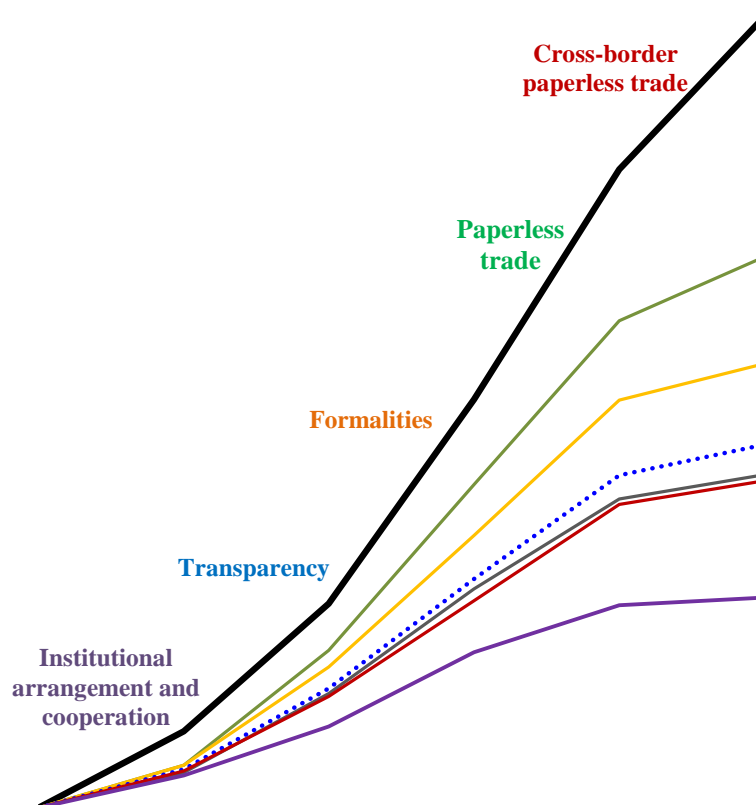


United Nations  
Economic Commission for Africa

Joint United Nations Regional Commissions

# Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade Implementation Survey 2015

## *Africa Report*



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## Preface

In September 2014, the United Nations Regional Commissions (UNRCs) including ECA, ECE, ECLAC, ESCAP and ESCWA, initiated a global survey to collect data and information on trade facilitation and paperless trade implementation from their respective member states. Conducted in collaboration with UNCTAD, OECD, ITC, OCO and SELA, the results of the survey are expected to enable countries and their development partners to better understand and monitor progress in trade facilitation, support evidence-based policy-making, identify good practices and identify capacity building and technical assistance needs.

The global survey represents a key initiative under the framework of the Joint UNRC Approach to Trade Facilitation, which was agreed upon by the Executive Secretaries of the five UNRCs in Beirut (January 2010), to enable the UNRCs to present a joint (global) view on key trade facilitation issues. The questionnaire for the global survey was jointly prepared and finalized by UNRCs and OECD to ensure data could be shared and compared.

The global survey builds on an annual regional survey carried out by ESCAP since 2012. It covers not only implementation of some important measures included in the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), but also of measures aimed at enabling paperless trade, or the conduct of trade using electronic rather than paper-based data and documentation. Indeed, a recent ESCAP study found that “next generation” trade facilitation measures have just as much potential as more traditional measures to reduce trade costs and increase intra- and extra-regional trade, with full implementation of cross-border paperless trade expected to generate USD 257 billion of additional export potential annually for the Asia-Pacific region alone.

This regional report is part of this global survey effort. It is prepared by ECA’s African Trade Policy Centre, in collaboration with the Trade Facilitation Unit, Trade and Investment Division, ESCAP.

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## Abbreviations

AAEC	African Alliance for Electronic Commerce
AEO	Authorized economic operator
APoA	Almaty Programme of Action
ASYCUDA	Automated System for Customs Data
AUC	African Union Commission
CEMAC	Communauté Economique et Monétaire de l'Afrique Centrale
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
EAC	East Africa Community
ECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
ECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
ECLAC	United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
ECOWAS	Economic Community of Western African Countries
ESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
ESCWA	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
ICT	Information and communications technology
IRU	International Road Transport Union
ITC	International Trade Centre
LDC	Least developed country
LLDC	Landlocked developing country
NTFC	National trade facilitation committee
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PACCI	Pan African Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PACCI)
RADDEx	Revenue Authorities Digital Data Exchange
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SELA	Latin American and Caribbean Economic System
SIDS	Small island developing states
TF	Trade facilitation
TFA	Trade Facilitation Agreement
UN/CEFACT	United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNNExT	United Nations Network of Experts for Paperless Trade and Transport for Asia and the Pacific
UNRC	United Nations Regional Commission
USA	United States of America
USD	United States dollar
WAEMU	West African Economic and Monetary Union
WTO	World Trade Organization

## Introduction

### 1.1 Background and objective

There is a unanimous consensus in the international trade literature on the fact that disproportionately high trade-related costs constrain Africa's participation to international trade, acting as an obstacle to firms' effective participation in regional and global value chains. Whether looking at direct measures of trade costs, such as those drawn from the World Bank Doing Business data base, or to indirect measures inferred from theoretical approaches – like the comprehensive trade costs of the ESCAP-World Bank International Trade Cost Database – trade frictions appear to create a competitiveness wedge that puts African traders at a disadvantaged position.

Recent studies suggest that much of the trade cost reductions achieved over the past decade have been through elimination or lowering of tariffs. Further trade cost reduction therefore, will have to come from tackling non-tariff sources of trade costs, such as inefficient transport and logistics infrastructure and services, but also cumbersome regulatory procedures and documentation. In line with this evidence, empirical research suggests that addressing lengthy and expensive custom procedures and upgrading infrastructural provision could go a long way in unleashing the region's trade potential. Furthermore, research points to the fact that trade facilitation measures could significantly boost the gains from regional integration initiatives, allowing a greater number of countries to reap the benefits from the trade liberalization envisaged in the Tripartite Free Trade Area - TFTA or the Continental Free Trade Area - CFTA (ECA, AUC and AfDB 2012, Mevel and Karingi 2013, Valensisi et al 2014).

Against this background, African policy-makers have recognized the strategic importance of trade facilitation for the development of their economies. As documented in ECA (2013), regardless of the process of negotiation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), several trade facilitation reforms have been undertaken on the continent at a national or sub-regional level, often in the context of Regional Economic Communities (RECs) Trade facilitation has also been included as one of the priority clusters of the African Union Action Plan for Boosting Intra-African Trade (BIAT) and the international community has supported these efforts through increasing Aid for Trade flows (ECA, 2015a).

Notwithstanding the “buy-in” of the trade facilitation agenda by African countries, one of the key challenges in assessing the degree of implementation of reforms, and their impact on the real economy has traditionally been the lack of systematic and reliable information about what is happening on the ground. The present report represents a key step in tackling this very issue; it

provides the basis for a more evidence-based discussion of trade facilitation in Africa, and for better tailoring capacity building and technical support in designing and implementing trade facilitation strategies. The report presents and analyses the findings of the Global Survey on Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade Implementation, a joint initiative of the five United Nations Regional Commissions (UNRCs), in cooperation with other interested international organizations.

The report is structured as follows. The next session will briefly outline the survey instrument and methodological issues, and is followed by a region-wide overview of implementation of trade facilitation measures across countries, sub-regions and in countries with special needs. Section 4 focuses on the implementation levels of the various groups of trade facilitation measures, as well as a review of the main trade facilitation achievements reported by African economies over the past year and the key challenges faced. Finally section 5 concludes and draws some policy implications on the way forward

## 1.2 Survey Instrument and Methodology

The Global Survey on Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade Implementation has been prepared in close consultation by the 5 UNRC, building on the annual regional exercise carried out by un-ESCAP since 2012. The survey targeted a broad array of actors: namely government officials, practitioners (like representatives of single windows or corridor management organizations), private sector representatives and researchers. In terms of questions composing the survey, the latter reflects the final list of provisions included in the WTO TFA, as well as measures on cross-border paperless trade facilitation discussed in the context of the regional UN treaty under negotiation at ESCAP.

Overall, the questionnaire covers 38 trade facilitation measures divided into four groups, namely, *General trade facilitation measures* (sub-divided further into Transparency, Formalities, Institutional arrangement and cooperation), *Paperless trade*, *Cross-border paperless trade* and *Transit facilitation*, as per Table 1. In this respect, general trade facilitation measures and transit facilitation measures represent essentially instruments that feature in the WTO TFA, unlike most paperless trade

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