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Joint United Nations Regional Commissions  
Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade  
Implementation Survey 2015

*Sub-Regional Notes –  
Pacific Island Developing Economies<sup>1</sup>*

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Prepared by



In collaboration with the

**Oceania Customs Organization**

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### Disclaimers:

**This note is a complement to the more elaborate Regional (Asia-Pacific) Report. It should best be read in conjunction with it, as well as the associated Country Notes, which can be found at: <http://unnex.unescap.org/UNTFSurvey2015.asp>**

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## 1. Introduction

It is well understood that reducing trade costs is essential in enabling economies to effectively participate in regional and global value chains and continue to use trade as a main engine of growth and sustainable development. Recent studies suggest that much of the trade cost reductions achieved over the past decade have been through elimination or lowering of tariffs.<sup>2</sup> 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. Indeed, trade facilitation – the simplification and harmonization of import, export and transit procedures –, including paperless trade – the use and exchange of electronic data and documents to support the trade transaction process –, has taken increasing importance, as evidenced by the successful conclusion of the negotiations on a WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement in December 2013, and the progress made at ESCAP on developing a complementary regional arrangement for the facilitation of cross-border paperless trade since 2012.

This note is part of a new global effort by all United Nations Regional Commissions (UNRCs), in cooperation with other interested international organizations<sup>3</sup>, to provide reliable and sufficiently detailed data on the implementation of trade facilitation in general - and single window and paperless trade in particular at the global level. It features the results of the 2015 UNRCs Joint Survey on Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade implementation for the Pacific Island Developing Economies (PIDEs) sub-region, covering Fiji, Kiribati, Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu. This report is a complement to the more elaborate Regional (Asia-Pacific) Report. It should best be read in conjunction with it, as well as the associated Country Notes.<sup>4</sup>

The survey was prepared taking into account the final list of provisions included in the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) as well as the content of the draft text of the regional UN treaty on cross-border paperless trade facilitation under negotiation at ESCAP. It covers 38 trade facilitation measures divided into four groups, namely, *General trade facilitation measures*, *Paperless trade*, *Cross-border paperless trade* and *Transit facilitation*.<sup>5</sup> The *General trade facilitation measures* – as well as *Transit facilitation* measures - are essentially measures featured in the WTO TFA. In contrast, most paperless trade and, in particular, cross-border paperless trade measures, are not specifically featured in the WTO TFA, although their implementation in many cases would support the better implementation of many of the *General trade facilitation measures*. Survey results for Pacific Island Developing Economies are presented below.

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<sup>2</sup> For example, see ESCAP (2011), Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report 2011, United Nations.

<sup>3</sup> The survey has been conducted in close collaboration with OECD, ITC and UNCTAD, as well as several sub-regional organizations, such as SELA in Latin America, and OCO in the South Pacific.

<sup>4</sup> More information is available in the regional, other sub-regional and national reports at:

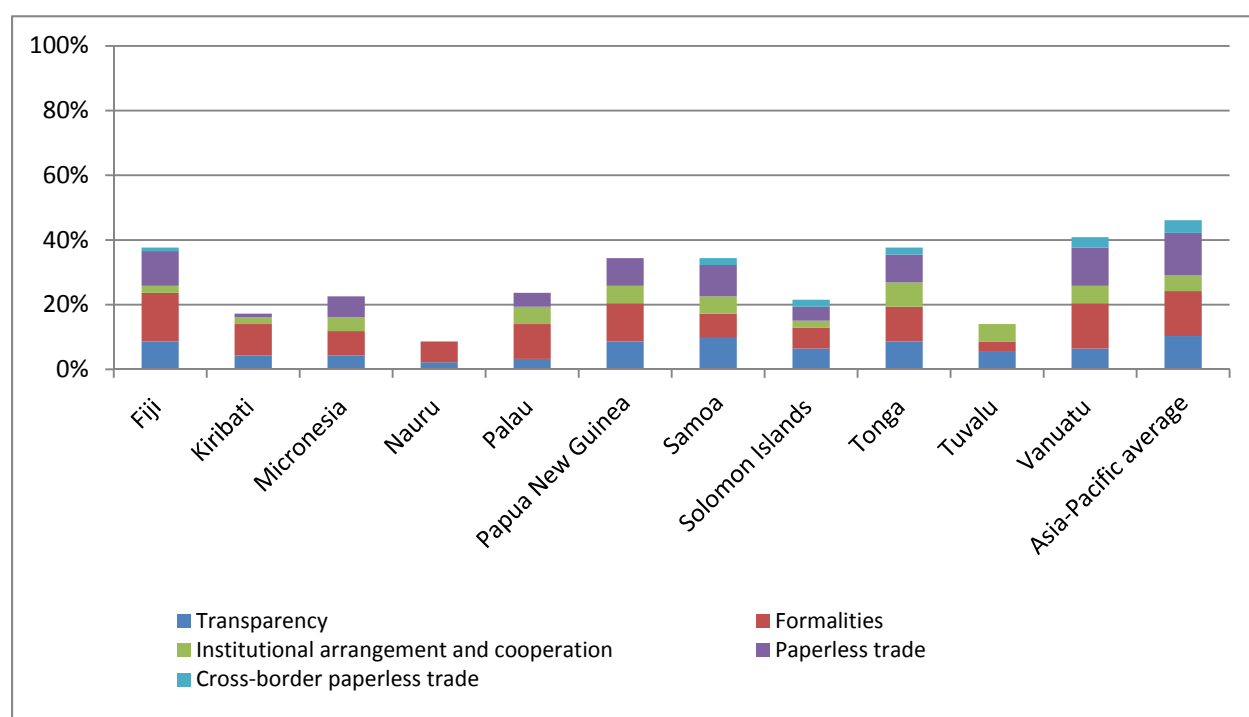
<http://unnex.unescap.org/UNTFSurvey2015.asp>

<sup>5</sup> The survey questionnaire is available in full at: <http://unnex.unescap.org/tfforum14-survey.asp>

## 2. Trade facilitation implementation in Pacific Island Developing Economies: Overview

Figure 1 shows the overall implementation levels of 11 Pacific Island Developing Economies based on a common set of 31 trade facilitation and paperless trade measures included in the survey<sup>6</sup>. The sub-regional average implementation of this comprehensive set of trade facilitation measures stands at 25.2%, which is below the regional average (46.5%) and consistent with known capacity and resource gaps in the Pacific. The implementation of trade facilitation measures across PIDEs is quite homogeneous when compared to other sub-regions.

**Figure 1: Overall implementation of trade facilitation measures in Pacific Island Developing Economies**



Source: ESCAP, UNRCs TF Survey 2015

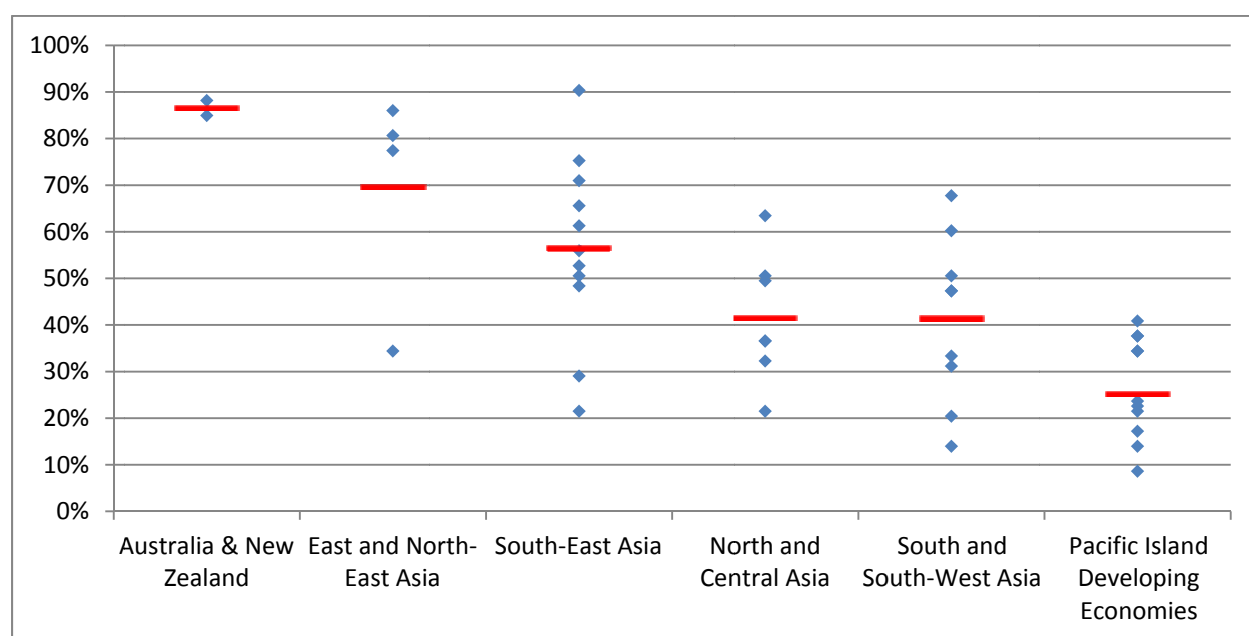
Figure 2 presents an overview of the implementation of trade facilitation measures (measured by percentage) in the different Asia-Pacific sub-regions as well as the average level of implementation of countries within each group. Pacific Island Developing Economies have the lowest average level of implementation (25.2%) after South and South-West Asia. In general, more advanced or larger

<sup>6</sup> Among 38 trade facilitation measures surveyed, three measures including 20. *Electronic Submission of Sea Cargo Manifests*, 33. *Alignment of working days and hours with neighbouring countries at border crossings*, and 34. *Alignment of formalities and procedures with neighbouring countries at border crossings* are excluded for calculating the overall score as they are not relevant to all countries surveyed. Similarly, four transit facilitation measures are also excluded. The overall score of each country is simply a summation of the scores of implementation (3,2,1 or 0) it receives for each trade facilitation measure. The maximum possible (full) score of a country is 93 and the average score across all 44 countries is 43.3 (or 46.5% in percentage term).

economies are at a higher level of trade facilitation than many other countries in the region, while small or less developed countries, such as LDCs or small Pacific countries, lag behind in the implementation of trade facilitation measures, particularly those related to paperless trade.

Although trade facilitation implementation varies widely within each sub-regional grouping, differences in trade facilitation implementation levels are smallest in PIDEs. This can be explained by the strong emphasis on on-going economic cooperation initiatives in this sub-region on trade facilitation – but arguably more likely by the fact that these small and generally isolated economies all face relatively similar implementation constraints. Countries with special needs in the Asia-Pacific region face particular challenges in implementation of trade facilitation, in particular paperless trade and cross-border paperless trade measures. This is reflected in the average implementation level of these countries, which varies between 25 and 35% (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Trade facilitation implementation in Asia-Pacific sub-regions**



◆ Trade Facilitation Implementation of individual economies (%)

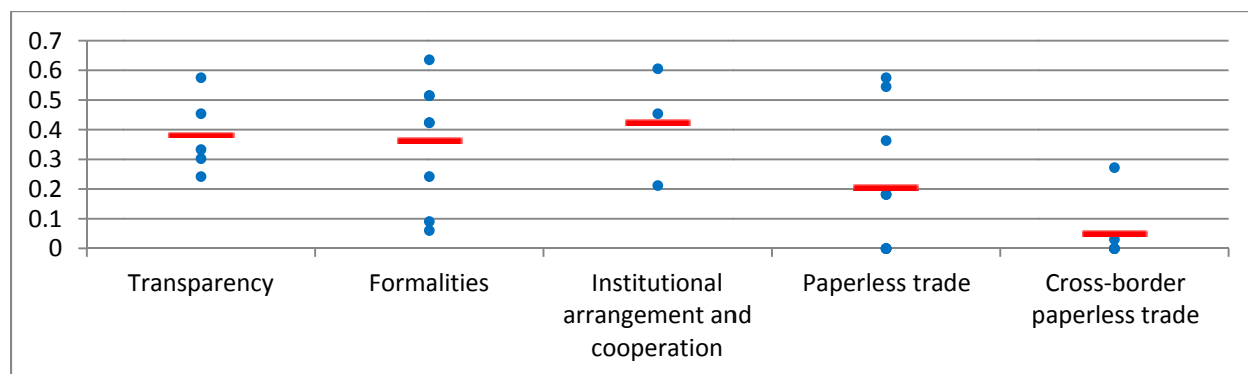
— Average Trade Facilitation Implementation of the group (%)

Source: ESCAP, UNRCs TF Survey 2015

## 2.1 Most and least implemented trade facilitation measures

In PIDEs, the most implemented trade facilitation measures are *Transparency*, *Institutional arrangement and cooperation*, and *Formalities*, while the least implemented are *Paperless trade* and *Cross-border paperless trade*. Specific measures under each category are discussed in Table 2.

**Figure 3: Implementation of different groups of trade facilitation measures: Pacific Island Developing Economies average**



Notes: Blue dots show regional average implementation level of individual measures within each group.  
 — Average sub-regional implementation level by groups of measures.

Source: ESCAP, UNRCs TF Survey 2015

**Table 1: Most and least implemented measures in Pacific Island Developing Economies (within each group of trade facilitation measures)**

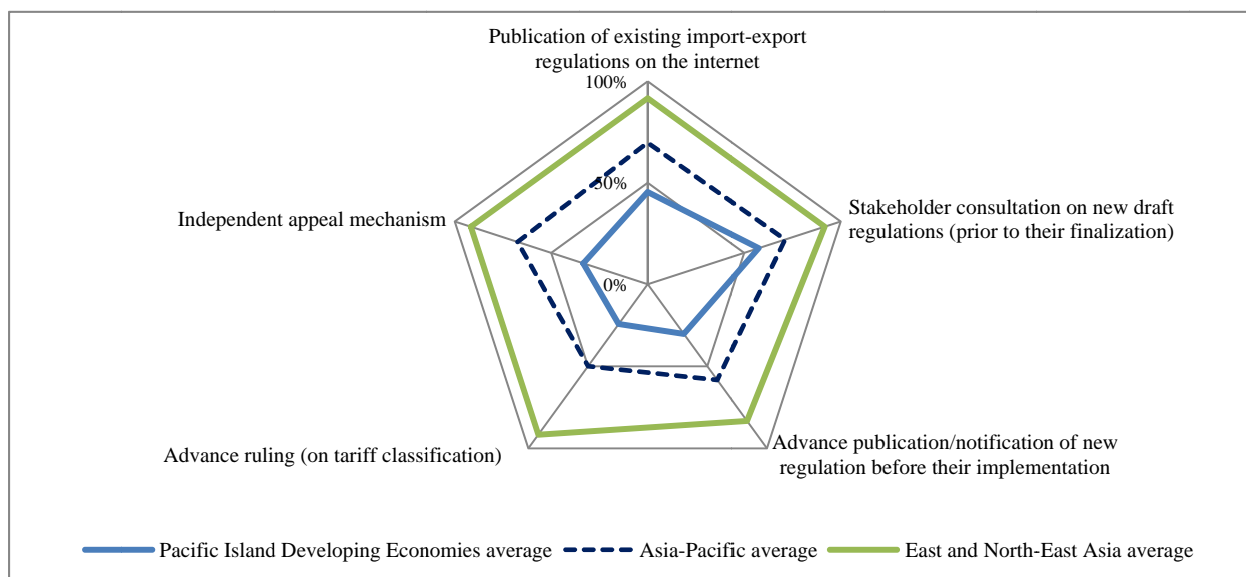
	Most implemented	Least implemented
<b>Transparency</b>	1. Stakeholder consultation on new draft regulations (prior to their finalization) 2. Publication of existing import-export regulations on the internet	1. Independent appeal mechanism 2. Advance publication/notification of new regulation before their implementation 3. Advance ruling (on tariff classification)
<b>Formalities</b>	1. Risk management 2. Pre-arrival processing 3. Acceptance of paper or electronic copies	1. Trade facilitation measures for authorized operators 2. Establishment and publication of average release times
<b>Institutional arrangement and cooperation</b>	1. Cooperation between agencies on the ground at the national level 2. Establishment of National Trade Facilitation Committee	Government agencies delegating controls to Customs authorities
<b>Paperless trade</b>	1. Internet connection available to Customs and other trade control agencies at border-crossings 2. Electronic submission of Customs declarations	1. Electronic Single Window System 2. Electronic Application and Issuance of Trade Licenses 3. Electronic Application for Customs Refunds 4. Electronic Application and Issuance of Preferential Certificate of Origin
<b>Cross-border paperless trade</b>	Laws and regulations for electronic transactions	1. Recognized certification authority 2. Engagement in trade-related cross-border electronic data exchange 3. Electronic exchange of Sanitary & Phyto-Sanitary Certificate 4. Banks and insurers retrieving letters of credit electronically

### 3. Implementation of trade facilitation measures: A closer look

#### 3.1 “Transparency” measures

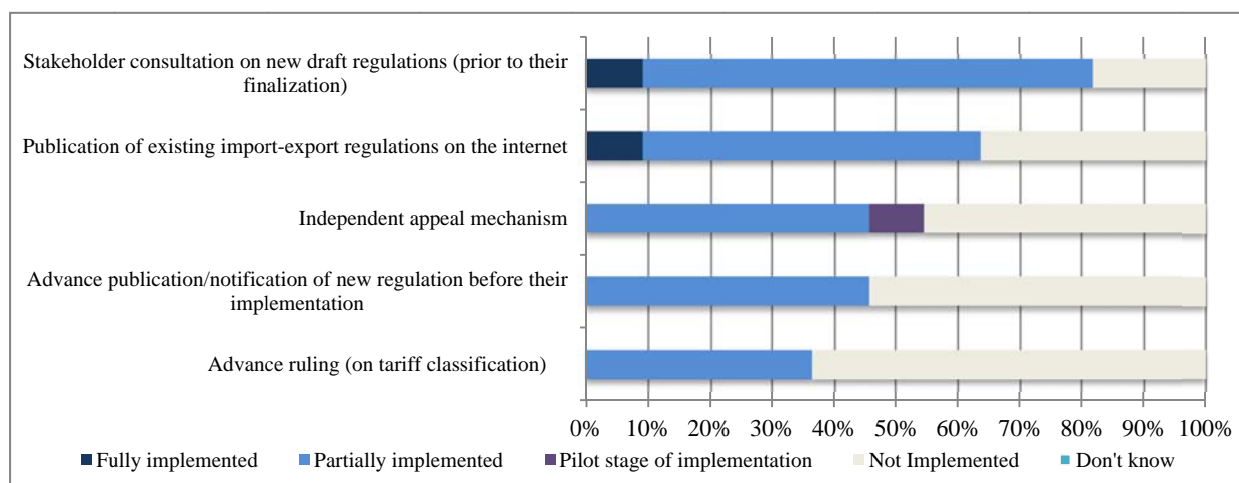
Five trade facilitation measures included in the survey can be categorized as “Transparency” measures. They relate to Articles 1-5 of the WTO TFA and GATT Article X on Publication and Administration of Trade Regulations.

**Figure 4: Implementation of “transparency” measures: Pacific Island Developing Economies average**



Source: ESCAP, UNRCs TF Survey 2015

**Figure 5: State of implementation of “transparency” measures for trade facilitation in Pacific Island Developing Economies (in %)**



Source: ESCAP, UNRCs TF Survey 2015

Figure 4 shows the average level of implementation of all five “transparency” measures across the sub-region, compared to the regional ones and taking the best performer among sub-regions, East and North-East Asia, as the benchmark. The average weighted implementation score of all five “transparency” measures in the PIDEs sub-region is almost 40%, which is lower than both the Asia-Pacific regional average and the East and North-East Asian sub-regional average. Figure 5 highlights that *Stakeholder consultation on new draft regulations* skews the sub-regional average upwards as the most implemented “transparency” measure among PIDEs; it has been at least partially implemented by 80% of countries in this sub-region. On the other hand, *Advance ruling* is the least implemented of the “transparency” measures, with partial implementation of only around 40%.

### 3.2 “Formalities” facilitation measures

Eight of the general trade facilitation measures included in the survey are categorized as “formalities” facilitation measures, aimed at streamlining and/or expediting regulatory trade procedures. They relate to Articles 6-10 of the WTO TFA and GATT Article VIII on “Fees and Formalities connected with Importation and Exportation”.

Figure 6 shows that the average weighted implementation score of “formalities” facilitation measures in this sub-region is almost 40%. It is lower than both the regional average and the level in East and North-East Asia. The implementation rates of “formalities” measures in the sub-region are presented in Figure 7. *Risk management* is the most implemented measure in the sub-region; it has been at least partially implemented by 90% of the countries in this sub-region. The least implemented measure is *Trade facilitation measures for authorized operators*, which has only been partially implemented by less than 10% of all countries. Importantly, this – along with *Post-clearance audits* – has been an area long highlighted as deserving of additional resources and capacity, including through sub-regional supplemental efforts.<sup>7</sup> Meanwhile, *Establishment and publication of average release times* is in the pilot stage of implementation in three countries (Fiji, Papua New Guinea and Samoa).

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[https://www.yunbaogao.cn/report/index/report?reportId=5\\_2864](https://www.yunbaogao.cn/report/index/report?reportId=5_2864)

