



STUDIES IN TRADE AND INVESTMENT

78

**Enhancing Regional Connectivity:
Towards a Regional Arrangement for
the Facilitation of Cross-border
Paperless Trade**



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Regional Arrangement for the Facilitation of
Cross-border Paperless Trade**

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United Nations publication
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Printed in Thailand
ST/ESCAP/2684

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PREFACE

This publication was prepared by the Trade and Investment Division of ESCAP. Its principal aim is to analyse the current status of paperless trade implementation in the region and assess a practical approach to the facilitation of cross-border paperless trade in the Asia-Pacific region, as this will contribute to regional connectivity.

With world-leading paperless trade systems already in place in several countries of Asia and the Pacific, including a few cases of successful cross-border paperless trade data exchange, the region is fast moving towards a paperless trade environment. The intrinsic cross-border nature of international trade has resulted in increasing demand for facilitation of cross-border paperless trade, as more and more countries in the region implement this approach.

However, facilitating cross-border paperless trade poses more challenges than those involved in implementing paperless trade at the national level, mainly because it requires the coordination and harmonization of different legal, regulatory and technical requirements in two or more countries. While the private sector can also facilitate cross-border paperless trade through innovations in business practices, the procedure for coordinating and harmonizing the legal, regulatory and technical requirements ultimately has to rely on an intergovernmental mechanism.

This increasing demand for facilitation of cross-border paperless trade and the necessity for an intergovernmental mechanism resulted in the adoption of ESCAP Resolution 68/3, entitled “Enabling paperless trade and the cross-border recognition of electronic data and documents for inclusive and sustainable intraregional trade facilitation”, by the sixty-eighth session of the ESCAP Commission in May 2012. ESCAP Resolution 68/3 is aimed at developing regional arrangements for the facilitation of cross-border paperless trade.

Despite the strong commitment to, and willingness of the region to develop cross-border paperless trade, limited references and studies exist on how to facilitate its implementation in the region and beyond. Given the current circumstances, the in-depth analysis of existing practices and thorough assessment of regional requirements detailed in this publication will help to lay the foundation for conducting further studies on designing implementation measures. In particular, it supports the development and implementation of practical regional arrangement(s) in the Asia-Pacific region, as mandated by ESCAP Resolution 68/3.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This publication contains a compilation of the outcomes from various projects and other work undertaken in the area of cross-border paperless trade, including the implementation of ESCAP Resolution 68/3 and the United Nations Development Account 7th Tranche Project, entitled "Strengthening the capacity of developing and transition economies to link to global supply chains through the reduction of trade obstacles". The contents were prepared by Mr. Sangwon Lim, under the overall supervision of Mr. Ravi Ratnayake, Director, Trade and Investment Division, and the direct supervision of Mr. Yann Duval, Chief, Trade Facilitation Unit of the Trade and Investment of ESCAP.

We would like to express our gratitude to the following contributors:

Mr. Shashank Priya and Dr. Chittaranjan Satapathy for their preparation of the "Study on Regional Arrangements for Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific," which comprises most of chapters 2, 3 and 4;

Mr. Sung Heun Ha for his preparation of a case analysis on cross-border electronic Certificates of Origin (e-CO), which is included as annex 1;

All the regional experts as well as the national focal points of ESCAP Resolution 68/3 who participated in, and contributed to: (a) the Expert Review Meeting on Regional Arrangements for Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade (1 November 2012, Colombo); (b) the Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on Enhancing Regional Connectivity through Trade and Investment: Towards Regional Arrangements for the Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade (13-14 March 2013, Bangkok,); (c) the second EGM on Enhancing Regional Connectivity through Trade and Investment: Towards Regional Arrangements for the Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade (2-3 May 2013, Bangkok); (d) the Subregional Meeting on Development of Regional Arrangements for the Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade: South-East Asia (9 July 2013, Bangkok); (e) the Subregional Meeting on Development of Regional Arrangements for Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade: South and South-West Asia (12 July 2013, Bangkok); (f) the Subregional Meeting on Development of Regional Arrangements for Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade: East and North-East Asia (24 July 2013, Incheon, Republic of Korea); and (g) the Regional Meeting on Development of Regional Arrangements for Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade (12 September 2013, Beijing). Their contributions were key factors in assisting the above meetings to formulate the Draft Text of Agreement [Framework Agreement] on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade for the Asia Pacific Region (as of 25 October 2013), which is included as annex 3 of this publication.

We also would like to note our appreciation for the editing of the manuscript by Mr. Robert Oliver.

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