

Global Trade Facilitation Conference 2013

"Beyond Single Window: Paperless Supply Chains for Trade Facilitation and Inclusive Development"

United Nations Conference Centre, Bangkok, Thailand 18-19 November 2013,

Conference Report

I. Introduction and Background

The UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) hosted the second Global Trade Facilitation Conference (GTFC) in Bangkok on 18-19 November 2013, with support from the other United Nations Regional Commissions (UNRC), namely Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Economic Commission for Latin America and Caribbean (ECLAC) and Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). This Conference was part of the UNESCAP *Asia Pacific Trade and Investment Week* (18-22 November 2013). The first GTFC was held in 2011 and was hosted by the UN Economic Commission for Europe in Geneva.

The GTFC is a part of the implementation of the United Nations Development Account project on “Strengthening the Capacity of Developing and Transition Economies to Link to Global Supply Chains through the Reduction of Trade Obstacles.”¹ The United Nations Network of Experts for Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific (UNNExT)² also supports this Conference.

Building on the work of the first GTFC,³ The theme of this Conference, “Beyond Single Window: Paperless Supply Chains for Trade Facilitation and Inclusive Development,” was particularly timely given the rapidly expanding international efforts to enhance trade facilitation. As noted during the UNESCAP Secretariat’s introductory comments, for example, the World

¹ See, United Nations Development Account at <http://www.un.org/esa/devaccount/projects/2010/10-11AO.html>.

² UNNExT is a community of knowledge and practice for experts in developing countries in paperless trade and trade facilitation. More information on UNNExT is available at: <http://www.unescap.org/unnext/unnext.asp>.

³ Global Trade Facilitation Conference 2011 – Connecting International Trade: Single Windows and Supply Chains in the Next Decade. The Program, the Proceedings of the Conference, and related materials are available at <http://www.unece.org/tradewelcome/capacity-building-for-trade-facilitation/global-trade-facilitation-conference/swglobalconference2011.html>.

Trade Organization (WTO) was nearing the completion of its Trade Facilitation Agreement at the time of this Conference.⁴

Further, the Conference theme puts important emphasis on “inclusive development.” It has been noted that non-tariff barriers to trade, “... such as cumbersome and unpredictable export/import regulatory procedures, also significantly affect trade costs and the ability of firms in developing countries to participate in international production networks.” And “[t]he lack of participation of domestic enterprises in regional and global markets is one of the main causes of slow growth observed in some developing and transition economies.”⁵

The UNECE Secretariat, in introductory comments, noted that the importance of the Regional Commissions’ approach in addressing the new challenges for globally networked trade and inclusive development. Those challenges continue to be significant and an important question is how the Single Window will enhance the development of globally networked supply and value chains moving forward.

Through five Sessions focused on key topics relating to the primary theme of the Conference, many critical aspects of paperless trade and inclusive development were addressed by the presenters and in several substantial background papers prepared for the GTFC. The Sessions were:

1. *Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade as a Priority for Inclusive Development*
2. *Initiatives on Inter-connectivity of Paperless Systems : Learning from Practices*
3. *Paperless Solutions for Facilitation of Supply Chain Finance and Payment Settlements*
4. *Legal Framework Towards Cross-border Paperless Trade Systems*
5. *Capacity Building towards Paperless Supply Chains in Developing Countries*

The Regional Commissions presented a Closing Session, *Paperless Supply Chain for Trade Facilitation and Inclusive Development: Way Forward*. This Session identified the key results of the GTFC and included the key recommendations that had emerged, including those related to the ongoing work that needs to be done going forward.

II. Conference Presentation⁶ Sessions

Each of the presentations at the GTFC focused on important issues related to paperless trade. Many included examples of the lessons learned and the continuing challenges facing the development of paperless trade in developing and transition economies as well as in developed

⁴ At the December 2013 WTO Ministerial Meeting in Bali, Indonesia, the Ministers adopted an Agreement on Trade Facilitation (WT/MIN(13)/36WT/L/911.) The text of the Ministerial decision and the Agreement are available at <https://docs.wto.org/dol2fe/Pages/SS/directdoc.aspx?filename=q:/WT/MIN13/36.pdf>.

⁵ See e.g., <http://www.unescap.org/tid/projects/gtfc13.asp>.

⁶ The PowerPoint slide presentations for each Session are available at <http://www.unescap.org/tid/projects/gtfc13-presentation.asp>.

countries. The presentations were designed to be relatively brief in order to maximize the opportunities for questions, comments, and discussion in each session. The following sections of this Report provide only brief highlights from each of the Sessions and everyone is encouraged to review the presentations for a fully understanding of the concepts, experiences, and recommendations provided.

A. Session 1: Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade as a Priority for Inclusive Development

The first session of the Conference examined the key global trends in trade facilitation and paperless trade. It looked at issues that included resources, performance monitoring and cooperation among developing countries with a view towards achieving sustainable growth. It also set the remaining Sessions in the Program.

1. Trade Costs and Paperless Trade: Global Trends and Traits

Yann Duval, UNESCAP

Dr. Duval provided considerable data related to international trade costs in developing countries. He focused on the results of the UNESCAP-World Bank International Trade Costs Database, which was launched in January 2013. The presentation looked at trade costs, paperless trade implementation and the cross-border aspects of trade. Among the key findings were that all inclusive trade costs are ten times higher than tariff rates and that trade costs in developing countries are much higher than those in developed countries and they tend to fall much slower.

The presentation also focused on paperless trade survey results that provided important insights into those approaches that can enhance trade efficiencies. Among the key conclusions regarding the critical nature of paperless trade development were:

- Trade and supply-chain security initiatives in major export markets make it necessary for all actors to exchange data and documents electronically
- Benefits from implementing national electronic single window or related paperless systems would be greatly enhanced if the electronic documents generated by them could be used across borders
- Countries of the Asia Pacific region increasingly include provisions for electronic exchange of information in their trade agreements
- Cross-border electronic exchange and recognition of documents between landlocked and transit countries would significantly reduce transit time and costs.
- Streamlined documentation procedures would make it easier for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) to more effectively participate in regional and global production networks

2. Aid for Trade Facilitation: The Potential Impact on Developing Countries' Trade

Trudy Witbreuk, OECD

Ms. Witbreuk reviewed the research that the OECD has work done on trade facilitation and how that has been encompassed in the WTO trade negotiations. The OECD wanted to measure cost gains that could be achieved at the border. A key conclusion reached was that a 1% reduction in trade costs would get \$30 Billion benefit and that most of this benefit could accrue to developing countries.

The focus at the OECD has been on measuring trade automation and in particular for streamlining and automating processes at the border. These issues were studied on a regional basis providing an important set of baseline criteria. Additionally, they examined different types of costs in trade facilitation measures. For example, equipment and infrastructure (including IT systems and Single Window mechanisms) were highlighted as the most expensive elements of trade facilitation as such required more financial commitment. On the other hand, relatively inexpensive were those involving simplification and harmonisation of documents, increasing information availability to traders.

3. Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade: Customs' Role in enhancing Trade Competitiveness

S P Sahu, World Customs Organization

Mr. Sahu focused on the role of Customs in Trade Facilitation and paperless trade through a wide variety of strategy activities, tools, international instruments, and programs. For example, the Revised Kyoto Convention (RKC), which has 95 Contracting Parties, is the centerpiece for all WCO projects related to trade facilitation. As reflected in the WCO's Economic Competitiveness Package, this work reflects the large overlap between the Revised Kyoto Convention and the WTO's Trade Facilitation Agreement.

Building on the RKC, the WCO has initiated activities including its overarching Customs in the 21st Century vision, the WCO Single Window Compendium, Globally Networked Customs (focused on Inter-Operability and Sharing of Data), Coordinated Border Management, the WCO Data Model, and the WCO's Recommendation on the Dematerialization of Supporting Documents. All of these efforts focus on the importance the WCO places on service outcomes for its 179 Member States.

4. Roadmap for Enhancing Information Exchange in International Supply Chains

Tom Butterly, UNECE

Mr. Butterly discussed the importance of developing and implementing a Roadmap for international supply chains and the challenges that exist in the cross-border trade environment. For example, he noted that as a result of the complexity and resulting costs of cross-border trade,

it is often difficult for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to participate in global supply chains and, of course, increases overall costs for everyone.

He reviewed the outcomes of the 2011 Global Trade Facilitation Conference and noted that after 10 years of Single Window development, the Single Window had become "...strategic national instruments to facilitate trade, enhance collaboration between trade related government agencies, and increase export competitiveness." Finally, he noted that a major conclusion from that 2011 Conference was the call for development of a new Roadmap to move forward and overcome the major obstacles that still exist in the trade facilitation arena. As part of the new work, he introduced the use of "maturity grids" as well as the idea of "Interoperability of Inter Organisational Information Systems" that would be discussed later in the Conference.

Mr. Butterly concluded his presentation by making a number of key comments:

- Need an intensely information driven approach to modern Supply Chain development
- Use the Maturity Analysis to determine the current and "to be" state of your supply chains.
- Consider all 3 areas: Trust, Technology and Level of Regulatory Simplification
- Actively engage in the discussions around the 2nd phase of Single Window implementation – Integration and exchange between Inter Organizational Information Systems

B. Session 2: Initiatives on Inter-connectivity of Paperless Systems: Learning from Practices

Trade transactions involve multiple agencies and require them to exchange information and documents. That is why, in a paperless environment, interconnectivity of regulatory systems is crucial to allow faster and smoother trade transaction. Other government agencies (OGAs) tend to be less ready for paperless systems and connectivity with Customs when it comes to paperless trade. This session will discuss some cases of interconnectivity between regulatory systems and focus on key lessons that can be drawn from the cases.

1. Building a Network of Inter-organization Information Systems

Markus Pikart, UNECE and Somnuk Keretho, Kasetsart University

Based on substantial new research, Mr. Pikart focused on a number of key issues that in building an open Single Window environment for the end-to-end global supply chain. He noted that there could be as many as 100 Single Windows operating by 2015 and that in the Single Window environment, no one model fits all situations. Different systems evolve towards a Single Window and it tends to be an evolutionary process. He points to the UNESCAP efforts to develop a

Regional Paperless Trade Agreement⁷ in order to achieve harmonization among many different Single Window approaches used in the region.

Looking at the European Union, he noted the variety of different Inter-Organizational Information Systems (IOS) including Port Community Systems, e-customs systems, e-freight freight systems, etc. One limitation that has been observed in this array of IOS approaches in the EU is the difficulty in achieving collaboration amongst these approaches. This problem is beginning to be addressed and there is a growing interconnection between IOS and connectivity to Customs. A vision for the multiple varieties of “Single Windows” or IOS in the EU appears to be in developing networks of IOS to achieve efficient cross-border trade. Currently, however, there is no specific framework in place to accomplish this although it may be possible for governments to develop an agreed upon template through which negotiations could be undertaken.

In conclusion, Mr. Pikart provided a series of key recommendations in this area:

- Governments should continue to simplify and automate trade procedures under a national Trade Facilitation & Single Window Strategy
- Governments should assess possible gaps in the development of IOS systems in their countries, in particular with regard to transport infrastructure management and transport regulations
- Governments should encourage collaboration of IOS and Single Window systems with the objective to
- ... create a Open Single Window environment that delivers integrated and high value added services to trade
- To this end, Governments should develop a framework agreement for IOS collaboration in international trade.

2. Next Generatio Paperless Systems for Trade Facilitation: Trends and Way Forward in Developing Countries

Jonathan Koh, CrimsonLogic, Singapore

Mr. Koh’s presentation covered key trends in the Single Widow development currently underway in various world regions. To this he explored the directions in which the next generations of paperless trade systems were moving, particularly those that have the potential to significantly change and update existing models. He first looked at a survey of recent Single Window requests for proposals (RFPs) from 35 countries in Africa, the Middle East, South

⁷ Detailed information regarding UNESCAP’s work towards implementing the Commission’s 2012 Resolution 68/3 and the draft *Agreement [Framework Agreement] on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade for the Asia Pacific Region* is available at <http://www.unescap.org/tid/reso683.asp>.

America and the Caribbean, and Asia/Oceania. In several of these regions, he also pointed to regional Single Window efforts underway.

Developments in the EU were also covered in the presentation. Noting that the EU had a variety of Port Community Systems and Customs Systems, he saw the challenge for Europe as turning long-established existing systems into the interfaced and integrated IOS. He commented on the new regional initiatives in the EU including the EU Directive 2010/65/EU for a Maritime Single Window and the European Port Community Systems Association (EPCSA) work in this area.

He sees future Single Window and paperless trade developments, i.e., the “game changers,” focusing on Inter-organizational Information Systems (IOS.) In particular, the opportunity for developing “Networks of Networks of Inter-Organization collaboration for [the] cross-border supply chain.” In this regard, he suggested that it would be important for this effort to be led by international organizations such as, United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT), the World Customs Organization (WCO), the International Air Transport Association (IATA), the International Maritime Organization (IMO), Organization for the Advancement of Structured Information Standards (OASIS) – all of which have ongoing programs related to these developments and, in particular, to the development of important technical standards in the field.

His concluding view was that the next generation of Single Window and paperless trade systems will result from:

- National Integration & collaboration frameworks for the Inter-organizational Information Systems (IOSs)
- Nation-to-Nation collaborations on data & information exchange among Customs agencies in support bilateral trade agreements and policies
- Develop Global connectivity by adopting international connectivity and data harmonization standards to achieve information exchange in global supply chains.

3. Inter-connecting Customs systems for Transit Facilitation: ASYCUDA Experience

Renaud Massnet, UNCTAD-ASYCUDA

The Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA), developed by the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), makes a significant contribution to trade facilitation, particularly for developing countries and especially for those that are landlocked. Mr. Massnet noted the work that UNCTAD does with Customs Administrations and the tools it has developed to improve transit processes. Additionally, they have seen the need to have ‘open’ systems and provided several examples of the success ASYCUDA has had. He noted ASYCUDA’s Integrated Control and Monitory technology in this regard.

Mr. Massnet gave several examples of how its ASYCUDA Transit technology has been implemented and the benefits achieved. He also provided several key points related to the

lessons learned in the ASYCUDA efforts that implicate important areas for Single Window and paperless trade development including, among others:

- The importance of establishing a legal framework (e.g., ASEAN.)
- Developing a unified transit procedure.
- Adopting a unified data and message structure.
- Providing a secure guaranty mechanism.
- The use of centralized and decentralized operations
- The importance of the communications infrastructure.
- The appropriate and efficient use of technology.

In summarizing the key elements of the first set of presentations in Session 2, the Moderator noted the recurring themes in most discussions of paperless trade including useful notes about the development of standards, the importance of the legal framework for cross-border trade transactions, benchmarking approaches.

C. Session 2 (continued): Initiatives on Inter-connectivity of Paperless Systems: Learning from Practices

4. *Interconnectivity of Paperless Systems in African Developing Countries*

Ibrahima Diagne, GAINDE2000, Senegal

Mr. Diagne's presentation focused on the important and rapidly expanding Single Window and paperless trade experiences emerging in Africa. He offered perspectives from the African Alliance for E-Commerce (AAEC.) He noted that the Single Window represents one concept that has multiple applications. Beyond the Single Window itself, the applications to Customs and trade logistics are central.

The key questions along the way to successful Single Window implementation are important. For example, should one attempt a complete business process re-engineering or simple

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