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**Global Facilitation Partnership for Transport & Trade
Moving Forward with the WTO and Beyond?**

Brussels, Belgium 26 January, 2005



Over 100 participants from industry, the public and private sector and academia attended a meeting on **Trade and Transport Facilitation: Moving Forward with the WTO and Beyond** organized by the **Global Facilitation Partnership for Transportation and Trade** at World Customs Organization Headquarters (WCO), Brussels, Belgium on 26 January, 2005. WCO Deputy Secretary General, Kunio Mikuriya gave the welcome address, followed by introductory remarks by Marc Juhel, Transport and Logistics Adviser, World Bank. The guest speaker at the event was Richard Eglin, Director, WTO.

In a nutshell, [Trade and Transport Facilitation](#) is about trade logistics (transport, warehousing, distribution, information management). Trade and Transport Facilitation activities aim at minimising the losses that business suffers through delays at borders, complicated and unnecessary documentation requirements and lack of automation of government-mandated trade procedures. There are figures to show that in many cases these losses exceed the costs of tariffs.

The Brussels meeting was broken into morning and afternoon sessions: *Assessing Needs: Perspectives and Tools*; and *Mobilizing Institutional Support: An Exercise in International Cooperation*, respectively. [Presentations made in both sessions are available for downloading \(some in English & French\) from the GFP site.](#) Each of the sessions was followed by panel discussions.

In the morning session, on *Assessing Needs: Perspectives and Tools* presentations were made on: *Trade Facilitation Needs and Priorities of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States* by [ACP Secretariat](#) experts on multilateral trade issues, Karinge Githinji and Hélène Fiagan; *The view from Private Sector on Trade Facilitation* by Sandy Merber, Chairman, Customs Committee, International Chamber of Commerce ([ICC](#)); *Cost Analysis of Trade Facilitation*; by Evdokia Moise, Trade Directorate, [OECD](#); *The Customs Self Assessment Tool and Time Release Study*; by Ray McDonagh, Deputy Director, World Customs Organization ([WCO](#)); *TF Capacity Building*, by John Clarke, Head of [WTO Division](#), European Commission.

UNIDO was among the presenters in the afternoon session, *Mobilizing Institutional Support: An*

Exercise in International Cooperation, with Trade Capacity Building, The Role of UNIDO by Ouseph Padickakudi, Programme Manager. (The representative of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States particularly welcomed the UNIDO approach on trade capacity building because of its attention to improving manufacturing competitiveness.) The afternoon session began with a presentation on [UN/CEFACT TF Strategy](#) by Tom Butterly, Team Leader, [UNECE](#); followed by presentations on: *UNCTAD Capacity Building Activities in Trade Facilitation* by Maxence Orthlieb, Chief, [UNCTAD](#); and the *World Bank Trade Logistics and Facilitation Agenda*, by Marc Juhel, Transport and Logistics Adviser, [World Bank](#).

The panel discussion on the afternoon session was followed by a Technical Session by Robert Struthers, Technical Officer, WCO, demonstrating the Time Release Study (TRS) software being produced by the World Customs Organization and the World Bank. The TRS software measures the average time between the arrival and the release of goods – and each intervening agency to determine the efficiency of customs clearance and identify delays and reasons for delays.

The Global Facilitation Partnership for Transportation and Trade (GFP) was initiated in 1999 by the World Bank and includes more than 100 partners. The GFP aims at pulling together all interested parties, public and private, national and international, who want to help achieve significant improvements in transport and trade facilitation in World Bank member countries. The Partners have together agreed to design and undertake specific programmes towards meeting this objective, making use of their respective comparative advantage in the subject matter in a coordinated fashion ([see the GFP Memorandum of Understanding](#)).

Since November 2003, the Global Facilitation Partnership and the UN Trade Facilitation network have a joint web site at <http://www.gfptt.org> (doesn't like Netscape 4.76). Officially launched on 7 July 2003 during a GFP meeting in Washington, the joint GFP/UNTF site is a collaborative tool for practitioners and policy makers involved in trade and transport facilitation, containing over 320 publications, 250 recommendations, and a wealth of structured information. The United Nations Trade Facilitation network is a common platform for UN agencies involved in trade facilitation activities.

The joint GFP/UNTF web site was created and is being maintained by professionals from [BULPRO](#), the national trade facilitation body of Bulgaria, and seven leading international organizations that deal with trade facilitation: the International Road Transport Union ([IRU](#)); the International Air Cargo Association ([TIACA](#)); the UN Conference on Trade and Development ([UNCTAD](#)); the UN Economic Commission for Europe ([UNECE](#)); UNIDO; [the World Bank](#) and the World Customs Organization ([WCO](#)).

Trade and transport facilitation is very broad in nature and a very important item on the international development agenda when building the capacity of developing countries to participate in international trade. [According to UNECE](#), trade facilitation, in practical terms, "focuses on creating efficiency and reducing costs across the entire trade transaction process, a process that involves a series of activities including: agreement of sale between the buyer and the seller; processing of the agreed commercial documentation; compliance with health, safety and other regulations and standards; fulfilment of the required Customs and any other documents and procedures at the time of border crossing; the efficient movement of the goods from the seller's to the buyer's premises; compliance of goods with the buyer's requirements; payment for the goods; and disposal of goods and end products."

Some idea of the complexity and diversity of issues involved in trade and transport facilitation can be gleaned from [the "topics" list on the GFP/UNTF website](#), based on the inputs of GFP partners. At the moment the topics list looks like this: [Border Agency Modernization](#) ([Border performance monitoring systems](#) - [Joint border posts](#) - [Single window environment](#)); [Building TTF Partnerships](#) ([Regional Partnerships](#) - [TTF promotion](#)); [Customs Issues](#) ([Customs audit based controls](#) - [Customs modernisation](#) - [Customs procedures](#) - [Customs valuation](#) - [Harmonized System](#) - [Integrity within Customs](#) - [Revised Kyoto Convention](#) - [Risk assessment methods](#) - [Rules of origin](#) - [Security and](#)

facilitation of the international trade supply chain); **Economic Development and Trade Facilitation** ([Measuring the economic impact of trade facilitation](#) - [The problem of landlocked countries](#) - [Trade Facilitation and competitiveness](#) - [Trade Facilitation and SME development](#) - [Trade facilitation, income distribution and poverty reduction](#)); **Electronic commerce and business** ([Electronic Documents](#) | [Electronic standards/EDI](#)); **Other Trade Facilitation Aspects** ([Standards and Conformity Assessment](#)); **Regional transport integration** ([Dangerous goods](#) | [Vehicle standards](#)); **Trade Liberalization and Facilitation** ([Free trade agreements](#) - [Trade Policies and Non-Tariff Barriers](#)); **Trade Logistics and Facilitation** ([Facilitation and supply chain management](#) - [Trade facilitation audits](#) - [Trade logistics' statistics](#) - [TTF performance measurement](#)); **Transit** ([Bilateral and regional transit agreements](#) - [Economic importance of transit for destination and transit countries](#) - [Landlocked countries access : corridor arrangements](#) - [Transit facilitation and logistics](#) - [Transit guarantee systems](#)) and; **Transport Operations** ([Air Transport and Airport Operations](#) - [Maritime transport and Port Operations](#)).

Each topic presents recommendations / standards / legal framework, existing working / discussion groups, reference documents, activities, and training opportunities. Anyone involved in the field of trade and transport facilitation is encouraged to take ownership of a topic that fits with their mandate and undertake the management of that section of the website. UNIDO is the GFP topic manager for Standards and Conformity Assessment which along with the development of competitive productive capacities, constitutes [UNIDO's Trade Capacity Building Initiative](#).

Trade facilitation is one of the so-called "Singapore issues", along with investment, competition policy, and transparency in government procurement, which many developing countries did not want on the agenda for negotiation ([see Zanzibar Declaration](#)) at the 5th WTO Ministerial Conference (Cancún, Mexico, September 2003), until more progress had been made on the key areas of the [Doha agenda](#). Trade Facilitation was added to the WTO agenda in December 1996, when the Singapore Ministerial Declaration directed the Council for Trade in Goods "to undertake exploratory and analytical work, drawing on the work of other relevant organizations, on the simplification of trade procedures in order to assess the scope for WTO rules in this area."

Specific elements connected with the simplification and harmonization of trade procedures are already contained in the WTO legal framework, e.g., in Articles V, VII, VIII, and X of the GATT 1947 as well as the in [Agreements on Customs Valuation](#), [Import Licensing](#), [Preshipment Inspection](#), [Rules of Origin](#), [Technical Barriers to Trade](#), and the [Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures](#). However, only the Singapore Ministerial Conference gave the WTO the mandate to take a more comprehensive look at trade facilitation.

The next Global Facilitation Partnership meeting will take place at UNCTAD HQ in Geneva in September.

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