

**Negotiating Group on Trade Facilitation**

**TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND CAPACITY BUILDING  
ON TRADE FACILITATION**

Note by the Secretariat

*This document has been prepared under the Secretariat's own responsibility and without prejudice to the positions of Members and to their rights and obligations under the WTO*

1. This Note updates information provided in TN/TF/W/54 and describes the Secretariat's planned technical assistance activities in 2006 on Trade Facilitation. The Secretariat continues to collaborate with other relevant intergovernmental organizations, including the IMF, OECD, UNCTAD, WCO and the World Bank, that have programmes of technical assistance and capacity building on trade facilitation with a view to making the programmes more effective and operational and to ensure better coherence.

2. Information on the WTO technical assistance programme is posted on the WTO website on the trade facilitation technical assistance and capacity-building webpage. The webpage contains links to the websites of other intergovernmental organizations that are active in this area, as well as to the WTO/OECD database of trade-related technical assistance and capacity building and to the website of the Global Facilitation Partnership for Transportation and Trade which contains valuable background materials and information on trade facilitation. The WTO webpage also contains information that is provided by WTO Members on their trade facilitation needs and priorities and on their technical assistance and capacity-building activities.

3. Trade Facilitation is one of the priority topics in the WTO Technical Assistance programme, reflecting Members' strong interest in this area. The Secretariat's activities in 2006 will continue to aim to enhance the ability of developing countries and LDCs to participate fully in and benefit from the negotiations, pursuant to paragraph 5 of the Negotiating Group's mandate and paragraph 6 of the Group's report to the TNC in 2005.<sup>1</sup> They will be focused this year on helping officials to deepen their understanding of the issues that are under negotiation and to identify their trade facilitation needs and priorities.

**I. 2006 TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PLAN ON TRADE FACILITATION  
(WT/COMTD/W/142)**

4. The WTO Secretariat is available at all times to delegations in Geneva to provide technical assistance on matters relating to the work of the Negotiating Group.

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<sup>1</sup> WT/L/579, Annex D, and TN/TF/3.

#### A. REGIONAL WORKSHOPS

5. A regional workshop on trade facilitation will be organized in each of the seven WTO regions as defined in the technical assistance plan. Several of the organizations listed in Annex D of the Group's mandate will participate in these workshops, some on a regular basis and others according to the availability of their resources. The workshops will consist of in-depth presentations on the negotiating mandate, legal framework and Members' proposals. Workshop exercises will allow participants to examine in detail the proposed measures, evaluate them in terms of their national and/or regional needs and priorities, and assess what would be required to implement them.

6. WTO Members and Observers from each region will be invited to send two capital-based officials; one from customs and one from the trade ministry. All participants will be provided with manuals and materials that are specifically designed for use in the workshop, as well as CD-Roms that contain comprehensive information on the WTO trade facilitation negotiations and general information on the WTO and on trade facilitation.

7. One of the benefits of regional workshops is that participants learn from each other. Each participating country will be asked to prepare a case-study on the implementation of one of the proposed measures that has already been implemented nationally. In addition, participants will take part in extensive working group activities and discussions where they can share experiences.

8. All activities are funded by the DDA Global Trust Fund. Some will be co-funded by partner organizations. Since June 2005, financing from UNCTAD has enabled a number of Geneva-based delegates from the region concerned to participate in certain of the workshops.

#### WTO Regional Workshops in 2006

<b>Region</b>	<b>Proposed Date</b>	<b>Proposed Venue</b>
Africa (English)	June	Zambia
Africa (French)	May	Senegal
Arab and Middle East	April	Bahrain
Asia and Pacific	May	Singapore
Caribbean	July	Barbados
C. and E. Europe, C. Asia	August	TBC
Latin America	September	TBC

#### B. NATIONAL WORKSHOPS

9. National workshops are organized on an *ad hoc* basis in response to specific requests and according to the requirements set out in the 2006 Technical Assistance Plan (pages 12-14). While there is no deadline for the submission of requests, Members are urged to make them as early as possible so that arrangements can be made by the Secretariat to organize national workshops in a timely way. National workshops last for two days and are presented by the WTO Secretariat. They have the same goal as regional workshops – to enhance effective participation in the negotiations – and the agenda and materials are the same as those used for regional workshops.

10. To date, requests for national workshops on trade facilitation have been received from the delegations of Cuba, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Honduras, Indonesia, Lesotho, Malawi, Morocco, Trinidad and Tobago. Priority will be given to activities meeting the requirements of the WTO Technical Assistance Plan, as noted above.<sup>2</sup>

C. WORKSHOPS IN GENEVA

11. The WTO Secretariat is planning to organize a workshop in Geneva for Geneva-based delegates this spring that will be based on the model of the regional workshops.

D. OTHER WTO ACTIVITIES

12. Trade facilitation is part of the curriculum of other WTO training programmes, such as the regional and Geneva-based Trade Policy Courses, Geneva Week, JITAP activities and special programmes.

E. NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND ESTIMATING COSTS

13. In 2005, at the request of Members, the WTO Secretariat developed a self-assessment questionnaire and inventory to assist Members to identify their trade facilitation needs and priorities. To date the Secretariat has received completed questionnaires from 13 countries. Following the wishes of the Members the completed questionnaires will be kept confidential and will not be circulated.

14. In 2005 the World Bank, with the assistance of the WCO, conducted six pilot projects to assist governments to implement the World Bank Negotiations Support Guide. This Guide was developed to assist governments to organize capital-based support of the WTO trade facilitation negotiations. A report on these pilot projects was made at the WTO Trade Facilitation Negotiating Group meeting on 2-3 May 2005 and can be found in TN/TF/M/5.<sup>3</sup>

15. This year the World Bank will build on this work through a research project on the technical assistance and capacity-building costs associated with implementing trade facilitation reforms. This would involve undertaking six or seven country case studies and then preparing a comprehensive report based on the findings that would be shared with Members. This project is intended to provide information on the probable costs of implementation of the key measures under negotiation.

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<sup>2</sup> Under the WTO Technical Assistance Plan developing countries are granted two priority topics for technical assistance each year while LDC's are allowed to identify three. See WT/COMTD/W/142, National Activities information, Paragraph 59.

<sup>3</sup> Beginning at paragraph 496.