

Guidelines to Improve the Efficiency and Effectiveness of the Permanent Technical Committee

Introduction

The function of the Permanent Technical Committee (PTC) is to initiate technical studies enabling the Council to discharge the obligations of the Convention establishing the Customs Cooperation Council.

With the ongoing evolution of the WCO Committee structure and the broadening of the matters now covered within the WCO, the work of PTC has gradually changed as new committees, sub-committees and reporting lines have been agreed and implemented. There is an opportunity to refresh the PTC to ensure that it still plays the pre-eminent role as envisaged by the Convention Establishing a Customs Cooperation Council.

At its 199th/200th Sessions in March 2013, the PTC decided to take steps to reinvigorate the work of this key technical committee, make it more dynamic and responsive to the challenges of today. In that regard, a Correspondence Group on the Future of the PTC was established to develop a proposal for the way forward.

The Guidelines to Improve the Efficiency and Effectiveness of the PTC have been produced to provide guidance to the PTC in its future work. The Guidelines are a supplement to the Terms of Reference (ToR) in Annex 1 and the Rules of Procedure of the PTC (Annex 2) and are in line with the Guidelines supplementing the Council Decision on structures and working methods (June 2002)¹.

Role of the PTC

The PTC has both a strategic and technical role to play in the structure of the WCO Working Bodies. Its role is to take a clear position regarding technical matters, to be submitted to the Policy Commission and Council for further deliberation. In order to remain relevant, the PTC needs to provide the technical assurance, advice and guidance that the Policy Commission needs, but also to be able to contribute to its strategic agenda. The PTC requires a disciplined focus in managing the agenda to allow the time necessary to discuss key issues and make progress in implementing the Work Programme.

The Secretariat and the Members should also ensure that the proper linkages are made with the other key technical committees, such as the Enforcement Committee and the Capacity Building Committee.

Apart from developing instruments and tools, where the PTC has proved its strength and delivered significantly in the past years, fostering and actively encouraging implementation, including implementation of recommendations, is considered as another important role of the PTC on which it should concentrate more in the future. In that context, the Secretariat will

¹ Council Decision no. 308 (June 2002) on structures and working methods, and accompanying Guidelines, can be found on the WCO Members' web site under "About Us"/"WCO Secretariat"/"Administrative Documents"/"Documents related to WCO bodies"/"Structures and Working Methods" (http://www.wcoomd.org/en/about-us/wco-secretariat/administrative_documents/documents-related-to-wco-working-bodies.aspx).

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periodically update the PTC on the situation regarding the number of accessions to conventions and acceptances of recommendations.

Reporting mechanism

The Permanent Technical Committee (PTC) acts under the overall direction of the WCO Council and Policy Commission, and reports and makes recommendations to the Council on matters within its area of responsibility.

In terms of how WCO bodies report to or inform the PTC, we observe the following patterns:

1. Direct reporting –The ToR for the subject working body requires it to report directly to the PTC. This requirement can occur in a number of ways. In the case of the *Information Management Sub-Committee (IMSC)*, this includes submitting its meeting reports and proposals or recommendations to the PTC for action. The *WCO/UPU Contact Committee* is required to submit its conclusions and meeting report to the PTC for approval. The *Contact Committee on the WCO/IATA/ICAO Guidelines on Advance Passenger Information* needs to submit to the PTC the details of any proposed changes to the API Guidelines and the Appendices thereto. The *Counterfeiting and Piracy Group (CAP)* is required to deliver a factual report to the PTC.

2. Reporting of technical issues: The *SAFE Working Group* is under its ToR required to report to the PTC technical amendments to the SAFE Framework of Standards (SAFE). For policy matters the Working Group is guided by and reports to the Policy Commission. The SAFE Working Group also has dual reporting line to both Policy Commission and PTC on progress and the issues relating to implementation, maintenance and/or amendment of the SAFE and implementation of the Columbus Programme.

3. Informing – Committees that are responsible for managing conventions of which WCO Members are Contracting Parties and that are administered by the WCO Secretariat, are independent in their nature and are not required to report to the PTC. However, those that deal with areas of interest to the PTC will usually inform the PTC regularly on the outcomes of their meetings and actions. These include: the *Revised Kyoto Convention Management Committee*, the *Administrative Committee for the Customs Convention on Containers (1972)*, the *Administrative Committee for the Istanbul Convention* and the *Meeting of Contracting Parties to the ATA Convention*.

4. Reporting after tasking - This refers to, for example, the Scientific Sub-Committee which in practice acts under the instruction of the Council, but it can also act under the instruction of any of its Committees (including the PTC) or Sub-Committees (including the IMSC) and it then needs to report back to these WCO bodies.

Furthermore, any working body established by the PTC, usually with the objective of carrying out a particular task, also needs to report directly to the PTC.

A diagram illustrating the reporting lines is attached in Annex 3.

Work Programme

The PTC will work in line with a long-term Work Programme that is directly linked to the WCO Strategic Plan. It will be updated in accordance with the decisions taken by the Committee and the governing bodies of the WCO. Namely, the PTC would need to agree upon any Member's or ideally a group of Members' proposal for a new action to be included, or a current one to be excluded from the Work Programme. The updated Programme would be

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submitted to the Policy Commission for deliberation. It would then need to be accepted by the Council in the usual manner (adoption of the PTC Chair's report to Council).

Also, in exceptional cases, the Work Programme may cover topics directed by the Policy Commission, Council, or requested by Members and the Secretariat in a timely and flexible manner.

The Work Programme will be available to Members on the WCO website.

Management of Meetings

In accordance with the Convention establishing the Customs Cooperation Council, the PTC holds four sessions a year, usually combining two sessions into one meeting. It may meet more frequently, if needed. One meeting is usually held in spring and one in fall. It meets at Brussels Headquarters, but could meet elsewhere, if the Council so decides. The meetings would last four to five days, depending on a needs assessment prior to the meeting.

Since 2009, the PTC holds a one-day joint session with the Enforcement Committee, with a view to discussing cross-cutting issues involving experts from both Committees. Some Members have raised the question whether it was possible to have for example subsequent sessions of the Committees to ensure that joint discussions are taking place; holding PTC and EC in the same week would pose a problem for participants who should participate in both meetings, which was the case of many customs attachés. This question remains open. At its 201st/202nd Sessions, the PTC asked that an evaluation be carried out on the possible solutions and in consultation with the EC. It is also important to construct the Joint meeting in a manner that both the PTC and EC delegates can equally contribute to.

Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson

The PTC elects a Chairperson and a Vice-Chairperson each year, from among the representatives of its Members. The Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson are elected for a period of one year, and are eligible for re-election. If the Chairperson is absent from any meeting or part thereof the Vice-Chairperson shall preside. In that event, the latter shall have the same powers and duties as the Chairperson. The Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson are responsible for encouraging debate, advancing the discussion and bringing the discussion to a conclusion, aiming for consensus where possible.

Agenda and working documents

The Secretariat shall, in co-operation with the Chairperson/Vice-Chairperson, produce the Agenda. The Agenda should be balanced in order to allow it to cover a broad range of activities while ensuring sufficient time for the productive discussion on topics of strategic importance. Therefore, it is desirable that the agenda for each meeting has a few areas of strategic focus. The agenda needs to satisfy the requirements of both the developing and the developed Members.

Agenda items will be split into four categories: 1. Report Back on Work in Progress; 2. Decision and Guidance; 3. Exploration and progress of Key Technical Issues; and 4. Sharing Customs Practice and Innovation. Report back items should take a limited amount of time, ideally one morning or afternoon session, and would require endorsement or taking note by the PTC.

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The Members should be given an opportunity to submit proposals for agenda items for the next meeting, based on national/regional priorities. Members are encouraged to work together in submitting such proposals and should take greater ownership of the Agenda. The Agenda Setting Guidelines give more details on how the Agenda is to be developed (Annex 4).

The Agenda and working documents should be available to Members at least 30 days prior to the beginning of the meeting, except in urgent cases.

Summary Document

The Secretariat will develop a Summary Document for each meeting, to provide delegates with clear and concise information on the substance of agenda items and guidance on the actions required from the PTC. The Summary Document should be available to Members 20 days prior to the beginning of the meeting, except in urgent cases.

Break-out sessions and Panels

Break-out sessions and panels may be organized as a means to achieve more focus on topics of strategic importance and to invigorate discussions and reach sustainable outputs. Guidelines on Break-out Sessions and Panels are attached in Annex 5.

Presentations

Presentations by Members, Observers and the Secretariat should be kept as short as possible and ideally will last no more than 15 minutes. It is recommended that they be carried out as an illustration under an item for discussion and rarely be a stand-alone item.

Presenters are encouraged, wherever possible, to submit their PowerPoint presentations (or other format) in both English and French. If submitted to the Secretariat less than 15 days in advance of the meeting, translation into the other language cannot be guaranteed.

In cases where the presentation will serve as a basis for discussion, inputs and/or decision are expected, and no relevant document is prepared, it should be made available on WCO Members' web site at least 30 days prior to the meeting, except in urgent cases.

Availability of documents

The availability of WCO technical Committees' working documents and reports to the public falls under the policy of transparency and accountability of the Organization. At its 199th/200th Sessions in March 2013, the PTC in general agreed with the Secretariat's proposal to have the Committee's documents and reports available to the public in a responsible manner and only after the meeting, taking into account that confidential documents should be restricted to Membership only. It was also noted that a single policy for availability of WCO documents should be developed and that the PTC should take a leading role in putting such a proposal forward to the Policy Commission.

More guidance is provided in Annex 6.

Members

Selection of experts

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The Customs administrations should select a decision-making level delegate(s) for the meeting, or delegate(s) mandated to take a position at the PTC in order to allow the PTC to reach a decision and move forward more quickly. All delegates should be prepared and be able to actively participate in the meeting. In some circumstances the administration may wish additionally to send subject matter experts with responsibility for an area which the PTC will focus on during the meeting.

Achieving continuity in attendance is also important for the quality of PTC discussions. Delegates attending the meetings for the first time would need to be briefed, within their Administrations, on their role in the work of the PTC.

Preparation for meetings

The PTC delegates should prepare for the Sessions and recognize the potential implications of their discussions in a timely manner. The PTC represents “the first and last” opportunity to prepare and make decisions prior to Policy Commission and Council, after which it is usually not possible to make last minute changes to proposed instruments/tools.

In advance of the Meeting, delegates are advised to prepare for the Meeting by examining the Draft Agenda and later reading the working documents. Depending on the action required from the PTC, they would need to take the appropriate actions. This would primarily mean collecting input from colleagues responsible for the different areas and preparing their position/interventions. This would include getting input from colleagues taking part in the bodies responsible for reporting to the PTC or informing the PTC, as well as input from colleagues preparing delegations for Council/Policy Commission sessions. This will allow for a better overview of this Member’s position on all the relevant topics.

The Summary Document should provide the delegates with the appropriate level of guidance in preparing for the PTC meeting.

Information items should be very short and require adoption of reports or taking note of developments. If, however, the Member has still outstanding issues, it can raise any concern during the PTC meeting.

However, the Members should focus more on items under Key Technical Issues and items under Sharing Customs Practice and Innovation. Some Members will have very firm position on many of the items, while others only on a few. However, Members are encouraged to contribute to the discussions by sharing their national practices. This will allow the PTC to make a decision based on a more holistic overview of the current situation.

If a Member is interested in submitting a proposal for an agenda item, the appropriate steps should be taken in that regard, as described in the Agenda Setting Guidelines. Members are encouraged to work together when submitting proposals to the agenda.

Follow-up

Members are advised to carry out proper follow-up after the Sessions within their respective administrations. This refers to i.e. examining compliance with proposals for amendments of guides and other tools and informing the WCO Secretariat of the results; submission of proposals; taking part in ad hoc groups established by the PTC; providing the Secretariat with national practices etc.

Observers

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Cooperation and collaboration with the trade, transport and industry associations, as well with international organizations, has proved to be necessary in matters related both to facilitation and security of the supply chain. Therefore they should be viewed as partners and should be encouraged to more frequently attend PTC meetings and contribute to the PTC Work Programme and Agenda. A relevant agenda is critical for attracting Observers to the PTC meetings.

Conclusion

The Guidelines will serve to both the Members and the Secretariat to better prepare for the PTC meetings, ensuring a harmonized approach. It will further improve the effectiveness and efficiency of its work in order to contribute to achieving WCO's strategic goals. In the long run, it will allow for the Committee to be more accountable for its work and will contribute to raising the profile of the PTC.

The general approach taken in designing these Guidelines would allow for them to be replicated to the work of other Committees.

The Guidelines will be updated, if and when a need arises.

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- Annex 1 – Terms of Reference of the PTC
- Annex 2 – Rules of Procedure of the PTC
- Annex 3 – Diagram illustrating PTC Reporting Lines
- Annex 4 – PTC Agenda Setting Guidelines
- Annex 5 – Guidelines on Break-out Sessions and Panels
- Annex 6 – Public Availability of Documents

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE PERMANENT TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

Confirmed by the Council - June 2005

Established : Article V of the Convention establishing a Customs Cooperation Council (CCC), of 15 December 1950

Duration : Unspecified

1. Mandate

The Permanent Technical Committee (PTC) acts under the overall direction of the WCO Council and Policy Commission, with administrative support provided by the WCO Secretariat.

The role assigned to the PTC at its inception was to initiate technical studies (other than as regards Nomenclature and Valuation) with the object of enabling the Council to discharge the obligations of the Convention establishing the CCC in accordance with the general purposes of the Convention. For this purpose, the powers conferred upon the Council by virtue of Article III of the Convention are, save as regards the provisions of paragraphs (c), (d), (e) and (h) of that Article, delegated to the Committee insofar as they are necessary for the execution of its functions. The Committee does not have the power to make recommendations to Governments of Members or to international organizations without the express authority of the Council.

The Committee also performs such particular tasks as may be assigned to it by the Council or under the terms of Conventions adopted by the Council.

2. Membership

As is specified in Article X (a) of the Convention establishing the CCC, the PTC is composed of representatives of the Members of the Council. Each Member may nominate one delegate and one or more alternates to be its representatives on the Committee.

The representatives should be officials responsible, within their administrations, for matters relating to Customs procedures and trade facilitation.

The Committee may decide to invite representatives of international organizations to attend sessions of the Committee as observers.

3. Purpose and scope

The functions of the Permanent Technical Committee are to:

- contribute to the strategic direction of work done by the WCO in respect of the promotion, development and administration of trade facilitation instruments and tools, in accordance with the WCO Strategic Plan;

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- help to enhance co-operation between Customs administrations and governmental and non-governmental (private sector) organizations in the field of trade facilitation;
- introduce and promote initiatives aimed at improving the effectiveness of Customs through information technology and electronic commerce, Customs co-operation and the establishment of various legal instruments;
- develop various tools designed to enhance efficiency in trade (particularly the Guide to measure the time required for the release of goods), and promote their use by Members;
- contribute to the development of means and methods to facilitate, simplify and harmonize the Customs formalities applicable to postal consignments;
- provide strategic support for the WCO's capacity building programmes for its Members.

4. Key deliverables

The Permanent Technical Committee will:

- report to and make recommendations to the Council on the matters within its area of responsibility;
- take decisions, or initiate or undertake actions in the areas for which it is responsible.

5. Means of operation

Chairperson:

The PTC elects a Chairperson and a Vice-Chairperson each year, from among the representatives of its Members. The Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson are elected for a period of one year, and are eligible for re-election.

Agenda:

The WCO Secretariat, in consultation with the PTC Chairperson, draws up the Agenda for each session and circulates it to the Members of the Committee at least 30 days in advance of the opening day of the session, although this period may be reduced in case of emergency. Working documents, especially those which may require consultation at the national level, should also be made available to the Members in sufficient time.

The Agenda comprises all items whose inclusion has been approved by the Council, and all items whose inclusion has been proposed by the Secretary General, the PTC Chairperson or any WCO Member.

The Committee may also:

- establish such Working Parties as it may deem necessary to assist it in the performance of its functions;
- determine, in accordance with WCO Council guidelines, and direct the activities of the working bodies falling within its competence;

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- co-operate, promote joint projects, and share information and experiences with international, governmental and non-governmental organizations, and business/private sector associations whose activities are related to Customs procedures and trade facilitation. These partners participate as Observers in the Committee.

6. Resources required

Under the terms of Article XII (a) of the Convention establishing the CCC, each Member of the Council bears the expenses of its own delegation to the PTC. Travel and other associated costs are therefore borne by participants' administrations.

The general arrangements for PTC sessions, including in particular the invitations, the dates and duration of each session and the priorities to be fixed for the items on the Committee's Agenda, shall be the responsibility of the WCO Secretariat.

The Committee holds its sessions as and when required and subject to approval by the Council.

**RULES OF PROCEDURE
OF THE PERMANENT TECHNICAL COMMITTEE**

CHAPTER I - FUNCTIONS

Rule 1

The function of the Permanent Technical Committee (hereinafter called "the Committee") is to initiate technical studies (other than as regards Nomenclature and Valuation) with the object of enabling the Council to discharge the obligations of the Convention establishing the Customs Co-operation Council (hereinafter called "the Convention") in accordance with the general purposes of the Convention. The Committee is also to perform such particular tasks as may be assigned to it by the Council or under the terms of Conventions adopted by the Council.

The powers conferred upon the Council by virtue of Article III of the Convention are, save as regards the provision of paragraphs (c), (d), (e) and (h) of that Article, delegated to the committee insofar as they are necessary for the execution of its functions. The Committee does not have the power to make recommendations to Governments of Members or to international organizations without the express authority of the Council.

CHAPTER II - COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Rule 2

Pursuant to the provisions of Article X of the Convention the Committee shall hold at least four sessions a year. Two sessions may be combined and held at a single meeting if the Committee so decides. The date of each meeting shall be fixed by the Committee at its preceding session.

The date of the meeting may be varied either on the request of any Member concurred in by a simple majority of the Members or, in case of emergency, at the request of the Chairman of the Committee.

Rule 3

The meetings of the Committee shall be held at the Headquarters of the Council unless otherwise decided by the Council.

Rule 4

The Secretary General of the Council shall inform all Members, at least 30 days in advance, of the opening date of each session of the Committee, except in case of emergency. He shall at the same time notify that date to each delegate to the Committee and his alternate.

CHAPTER III - AGENDA

Rule 5

A provisional Agenda for each session shall be drawn up by the Secretary General and circulated to the Members and to each delegate to the Committee and his alternate at least 30 days in advance of the session, except in case of emergency.

This Agenda shall comprise all items whose inclusion has been approved by the Committee during its preceding session and all items included by the Chairman on his own initiative and all items whose inclusion has been requested by the Council, by the Secretary General or by any Member.

Rule 6

The Committee shall determine its Agenda at the opening of each session. During the Session, the Agenda may be altered at any time by the Committee.

CHAPTER IV - REPRESENTATION

Rule 7

Members' nominations of delegates and alternates to the Committee shall be made to the Secretary General, and may be made directly by the Departments concerned.

Delegates and alternates shall continue to hold that position until such time as the Secretary General is notified of the termination of their appointment.

The names of advisers assisting delegates shall be notified to the Secretary General.

Rule 8

Subject to the approval of the Chairman of the Committee, the Secretary General may invite representatives of non-Member Governments or of international organizations to attend meetings of the Committee as observers.

CHAPTER V - OFFICERS AND CONDUCT OF BUSINESS

Rule 9

The Committee shall elect a Chairman and a Vice-Chairman from among the delegates to it.

The Chairman and Vice-Chairman shall each hold office for a period of one year. The retiring Chairman and Vice-Chairman are eligible for re-election.

The Chairman or Vice-Chairman who ceases to represent a Member of the Council automatically loses his mandate.

Rule 10

If the Chairman is absent from any meeting or part thereof the Vice-Chairman shall preside. In that event, the latter shall have the same powers and duties as the Chairman.

Rule 11

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The Chairman of a meeting shall participate in the proceedings as such and not as the representative of a Member.

Rule 12

In addition to exercising the powers conferred upon him elsewhere by these Rules, the Chairman shall declare the opening and closing of each meeting, shall direct the discussion, accord the right to speak, put questions to the vote, announce decisions, rule on points of order, and, pursuant to these Rules, have control of the proceedings. The Chairman may also call a speaker to order if his remarks are not relevant.

Rule 13

During the discussion of any matter, a delegation may raise a point of order. In this event the Chairman shall immediately state his ruling. If this ruling is challenged, the Chairman shall submit it to the meeting for decision and it shall stand unless overruled.

Rule 14

The Committee may establish such Working Parties as it considers necessary to assist it in discharging its functions and may elect a Chairman and, if appropriate, a Vice-Chairman, for each meeting of any Working Party so established. The present Rules shall apply, mutatis mutandis, to all Working Parties of the Committee.

CHAPTER VI - QUORUM AND VOTING

Rule 15

- (a) At any plenary meeting of the Committee, the majority of the Members present at the session shall constitute a quorum.
- (b) At any meeting of a Sub-Committee or Working Party, the majority of the Members represented on such Sub-Committee or Working Party shall constitute a quorum.
- (c) Where the quorum required under paragraph (a) or (b) of this Rule is not reached the meeting shall be adjourned for ten minutes, after which the Chairman may call upon the Members present to decide unanimously that the said paragraph (a) or (b) shall cease to apply for that meeting.

Rule 16

Each Member shall have one vote² except that a Member shall not have a vote on any question relating to the interpretation, application or amendment of any of the Conventions referred to in Article III (d) of the Convention which is in force and which does not apply to that Member.

² See Decision No. 245 : "That where any Member has not, by the date of the Council Sessions, paid its contribution in full for the preceding financial year and has not given a reason deemed valid by the Council for the delay in payment,

(A) that Member shall be deprived of its voting rights with effect from those Council Sessions, and
(B) the number of documents dispatched to that Member shall be reduced to one copy of each document in one of the official languages of the Council with effect from the same date."

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Save as provided in Rule 22, decisions shall be taken by a simple majority of the Members present at the meeting and voting and shall require the affirmative vote of at least one-third of the Members present at the meeting and entitled to vote.

For the purposes of the present Rules, the phrase "Members present at the meeting and voting" means Members casting an affirmative or negative vote. Members abstaining from voting are considered as not voting. The phrase "Members present at the meeting and entitled to vote" means Members casting an affirmative or negative vote or abstaining from voting although entitled to cast a vote.

CHAPTER VII - SECRETARIAT

Rule 17

The Secretary General, or officers of the Secretariat designated by him, shall perform the secretarial work at meetings of the Committee.

CHAPTER VIII - LANGUAGES AND RECORDS

Rule 18

The official languages of the Committee shall be English and French. Speeches or statements made in either of these two languages shall be immediately translated into the other official language, unless all delegations agree to dispense with translation. Speeches or statements made in any other language shall be translated into English and French, subject to the same conditions, but in that event the delegation concerned shall provide the translation into English or French.

Only English and French shall be used for the official documents of the Committee. Memoranda and correspondence for the consideration of the Committee must be presented in one or other of the official languages.

Rule 19

The Committee shall draw up a report of all its sessions and, if the Chairman considers it necessary, minutes or summary records of its meetings. The Chairman shall report on the work of the Committee at each Session of the Council.

CHAPTER IX – PUBLICITY

Rule 20

Unless the Council decides otherwise the meetings of the Committee shall be held in private.

CHAPTER X - APPLICATION OF COUNCIL RULES OF PROCEDURE

Rule 21

In the absence of relevant provisions in the present Rules the Rules of Procedure of the Council shall be applicable.

CHAPTER XI - REVISION

Rule 22

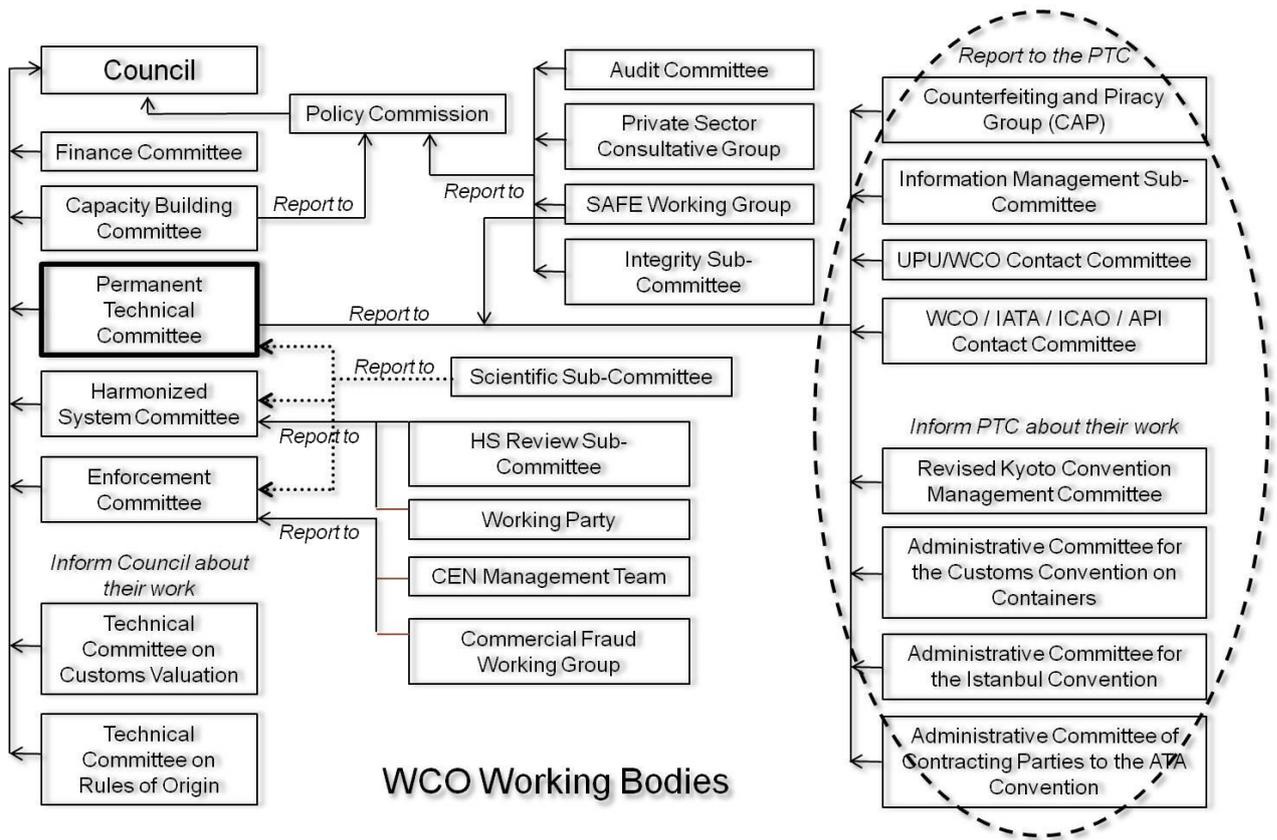
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The present Rules, save insofar as any of them is a requirement of the Convention or of the Rules of Procedure of the Council, may be revised, in whole or in part, by the Committee by a majority of not less than two-thirds of the Members present at the meeting and voting provided that at least one-half of the Members present at the meeting and entitled to vote cast an affirmative vote.

No vote on the amendment of the present Rules at a Committee session shall, however, be taken unless the text of the proposed amendment was submitted in writing to Members at least 60 days before the beginning of that session.

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Diagram illustrating PTC Reporting Lines



Permanent Technical Committee (PTC) Agenda Setting Guidelines

Purpose

The aim of these guidelines is to enable the process of determining an agenda for the PTC meeting that will ensure that PTC is able to:

- contribute to the strategic work plan of the WCO by promoting, developing and administering trade facilitation instruments and tools;
- introduce and promote initiatives aimed at improving the effectiveness of Customs through information technology and electronic commerce, Customs co-operation and the establishment of various necessary legal instruments;
- develop various tools designed to enhance efficiency in trade, and promote their use by Members;
- contribute to the development of means and methods to facilitate, simplify and harmonize the Customs formalities;
- help to enhance co-operation between Customs administrations and governmental and non-governmental (private sector) organizations in the field of trade facilitation; and
- provide strategic support for the WCO's capacity building programmes.

Construction of the Agenda

To enable the PTC to meet this goal the agenda will be divided into four principal blocks:

- Report back of work in Work Progress
- Decision and guidance
- Exploration and progression of Key Technical Issues
- Sharing Customs Practice and Innovation

How each of these blocks will operate is outlined in the table below.

Guiding Principles

The following principles will guide the contributions and participation in relation to items on the PTC agenda:

- Agenda items will be those that make important contribution to the development of means and methods to facilitate, simplify and harmonize Customs procedures or to advance the strategic direction of the WCO within the mandate of PTC.
- Member and Observer suggestion of agenda items will be encouraged in addition to the referral of items from Policy Commission, Council and the Secretariat. Members/Observers will have an opportunity to suggest agenda items to be discussed in the succeeding meeting/meetings.
- Discussion and debate will be actively encouraged and to facilitate that discussion, members will be expected to have read the papers supporting the agenda prior to attending the meeting.
- Sufficient time will be allocated to conclude all the business of the Committee. Wherever possible the time available to be spent on exploring and progressing key technical issues, and sharing Customs practice and innovation, will be maximised.

Agenda Blocks

1. Report Back on Work in Progress

Description of Block	How the Agenda is to be discussed
This will be a discussion of the work of the various sub groups and committees reporting to PTC and work undertaken by the Secretariat.	The Chair ³ will go through each agenda item and seek the endorsement or noting by PTC.
Time on the Agenda	How the discussion on these Agenda items will be supported
The discussion of these items will be a short process.	The agenda item will be supported by the respective papers of the various sub committees, committees and working groups of PTC. Members will be expected to have read through the papers.

2. Decision and Guidance

Description of Block	How the Agenda is to be discussed
This will be a discussion of the work of the various sub groups and committees reporting to PTC, or work undertaken by the Secretariat. The aim of this section will be to facilitate the provision of guidance and or the delivery of decisions that will enable the work of these groups or the Secretariat to progress.	The Chair will progress through each agenda item and seek where appropriate or warranted the input from the appropriate representative of the relevant sub group or committee.
Time on the Agenda	How the discussion on these Agenda items will be supported
The time for discussion of these items will be at the discretion of the Chair in consultation with the representative of the sub-group or committee, with input and/or guidance from the Secretariat.	Agenda items will usually be supported by the respective papers of the various sub groups and committees. If deemed appropriate in assisting the members provide guidance or make decisions, a short focused presentation may be made. Ideally these presentations should not exceed 15 minutes.

³ For the purposes of this document “Chair” also includes the Vice Chair of PTC, this is in accordance with the roles of Chair and Vice Chair outlined in the Guidelines to Improve the Efficiency and Effectiveness of the Permanent Technical Committee.

3. Exploration and progress of Key Technical Issues

Description of Block	How the Agenda is to be discussed
<p>This block will allow for discussion of key technical issues facing Members. Ideally these items will be common across a number of members and or regions.</p>	<p>The Chair will progress through each agenda allowing time for a presentation (if required) from the initiators.</p> <p>Members will be then invited to discuss the issue with the aim of PTC, if agreed, progressing this issue as part of its' work.</p> <p>The Chair can utilise such other mechanisms as breakout groups to progress discussion of the issues. What tools are to be utilised to progress the discussion will be a decision of the Chair and Secretariat in consultation with the initiating member/region/observer.</p>

Time on the Agenda	How the discussion on these Agenda items will be supported
<p>The time allotted to these items will be sufficient to allow for active participation by all members in fully exploring the issues raised</p>	<p>Each item for discussion under this block will ideally be supported by a paper (ideally a joint paper from two or more members/observers or regions) from the initiating region/member/observer or in the case of Policy Commission/ Council, the Secretariat.</p> <p>The paper will identify, discuss and analyse the implications for member administrations of the issue.</p> <p>The Chair can utilise such other mechanisms as breakout groups etc., as deemed appropriate to progress discussion of the issue.</p> <p>The tools to be utilised to progress the discussion will be a decision of the Chair and Secretariat in consultation with the initiating member/region/observer.</p>

4. Sharing Customs Practice and Innovation

Description of Block	How the Agenda is to be discussed
<p>This block will allow for discussion of innovative practices in progress within member administrations/regions and observers. The principal aim will be to provide the meeting with information and awareness of innovation within Customs.</p>	<p>The Chair will progress through each agenda allowing time for a presentation (if required) from the initiators.</p> <p>Members will be then invited to discuss the issue with the aim of PTC, if agreed, progressing this as part of its work.</p>

Time on the Agenda	How the discussion on these Agenda items will be supported
<p>The time for discussion of these items will be at the discretion of the Chair in consultation with the Secretariat and where appropriate the member/region/observer.</p>	<p>Each item for discussion under this block will ideally be supported by a paper or a presentation from the initiating region/member/observer.</p> <p>The paper will identify, discuss and analyse the potential implications for member administrations.</p> <p>The Chair can utilise such other mechanisms such as breakout groups etc., as deemed appropriate to progress discussion of the issue.</p> <p>The tools to be utilised to progress the discussion will be a decision of the Chair and Secretariat in consultation with the initiating member/region/observer.</p>

Guidelines for papers on key technical issues

Introduction

The Exploration and Progress of Key Technical Issues Agenda Block is an opportunity for Customs administrations to work together to explore shared emerging and strategic topics that PTC can progress.

Under this Agenda Block issues can be referred for PTC consideration by Policy Commission, Regions (across or within Regions) or by two or more administrations working in concert.

Joint papers would each be prepared by the initiating administration with the supporting member/s (in the case of items from Policy Commission, the Secretariat would assume this responsibility). It is intended that the papers could also be developed by a partnership of members from developed and developing member administrations to ensure the papers have broad relevancy. Trade, transport and industry groups, as well as international organizations may also be invited to participate in drafting or contributing to the papers as necessary.

Each group of administrations would develop a joint paper that identifies, discusses and analyses the implications of their emerging issue. The paper would also explore and scope the options for PTC action.

The aim of these guidelines is not to limit the scope for member administrations but rather to suggest a format and minimum content that would ensure that PTC is sufficiently informed to enable it to have a meaningful discussion of the issues raised.

Suggested outline of issues papers

➤ *Executive Summary*

Briefly outline:

- Who is involved in or instigated the production of this paper and the raising of this issue. Can be of:
 - Policy Commission- the Secretariat is involved on behalf of the Policy Commission;
 - Within a Region- if so what administrations are involved;
 - Across Regions- if so what administrations are involved;
 - Sponsored by a member/members with the support of trade/transport/industry groups or international organization/organizations – If so which administrations and what groups or international organization/organizations.⁴

⁴ As the Permanent Technical Committee is a Committee comprised only of representatives from Member Administrations it is envisaged that trade/transport/industry bodies and international organizations will only be able to have their issues raised with the sponsorship of a member administration/s, the Chair and or the Secretariat.

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- How the Issue was recognised – detail what caused this issue to be raised.
- Outline of the Issue- describe the nature of the issue.
- What is PTC being asked to do- detail what is expected from PTC.

➤ *Background*

In more detail outline:

- How the Issue came to be raised.
- Which administrations/regions have raised the issue or in the case of Policy Commission what set of circumstances was the cause of the issue being referred to PTC.

➤ *The Issue*

In more detail:

- Outline and identify the Issue.
- Discuss and analyse (in depth) the implications of the Issue.
- Identify in the detail the options (including the identification of the preferred option) for how the issue could be progressed. This may include actions for PTC to consider including:
 - Adding the issue to the PTC Work Programme.
 - How this issue could be progressed by PTC or one of the PTC sub-groups.
 - Directly referring the issue to Policy Commission for consideration.
- If the issue is to be added to the PTC work programme it would be of use to attach a draft of Terms of Reference for PTC or appropriate sub-group for this issue.

➤ *Recommendations*

Detail any recommendations for PTC to consider.

➤ *Supporting Documentation*

Attach any supporting documents.

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Guidelines on Break-out Sessions and Panels

Break Out Sessions

Utilizing smaller, more focused “break out” sessions within the margins or larger meetings and plenary sessions, has been a time-tested approach at the World Customs Organization (WCO) to delving deeper into specific topics that may involve unique subject matter expertise. Often this approach is utilized to develop specific technical guidance and/or to advance the decision making and culmination of certain work products (guidelines, handbooks, terms of reference, etc). Other times it has proven useful at a more basic level to allow for more interactions by a wider number of delegations, because of the more intimate setting and/or number of break out rooms being used.

Through ongoing discussions on the reinvigoration of the Permanent Technical Committee (PTC), the role and possible use of breakout sessions as a means to accomplish this end will be explored. Depending on the subject matter, it may be useful to establish breakout sessions (planned or impromptu) that have one or more Members concisely introduce a theme or topic and then ensuring that all participants have a chance for robust and interactive engagement. Ideally, the setting of the break out session will be well utilized by participants by ensuring that they participate in a very active manner. Normally, the break out session is followed by a summary presentation to the larger plenary body and/or precisely documented.

As new work streams and specific themes emerge from the ongoing PTC deliberations, the strategic use of breakout sessions, including the variety and means of operation of them, can be explored and catalogued if deemed beneficial. Ideally, a Member that has specific skills or experiences (often a Brussels-based Attache) will volunteer to convene or moderate such sessions, with *rapporteur* support from a separate individual as the optimal approach. Coordination on themes of break outs in advance of the meetings, to include consumption of any “read ahead” materials by participants, is encouraged as a means to maximize the productivity of the session.

Panel Discussions

The use of panel discussions as a presentation method can be very effective and well received by the audience when conducted properly. Often we see a panel discussion as an agenda item, but when the time comes, it is no more than multiple speakers taking the podium one at a time to deliver their own presentation about one particular subject. In such cases, the audience often loses interest as the “panel” fails to provide the appropriate stimuli to generate an active environment for a deep discussion on the subject. This document provides recommendations about how panel discussions should be organized and utilized in order to maximize their success.

The optimal length for a panel discussion is between 45 minutes and one hour with no more than 4-5 participants, plus a moderator. It is critical for a panel to be guided by a strong moderator (whose role is vastly different from the role of a panelist). The primary function of

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the moderator is to facilitate the speakers and make sure that they positively connect with the audience. It is a good practice to touch base with panelists at least once prior to the event. Because of other agenda items, many of which are individual presentations utilizing slide decks, it is recommended that panelists refrain from bringing slides to show as part of the panel discussion. The purpose of a panel discussion is to create an environment for positive interaction between the panelists themselves as well as with the audience. Slides typically work against that philosophy as they tend to distract the audience's attention from the panelists. It is very important that the panelists are properly equipped with microphones to ensure that they can be heard clearly. The role of the moderator is critical and it is important to select moderators who can react quickly and naturally to motivate interaction. Just because there is a dedicated Q&A period, that should not limit the moderator from reacting to the room and getting the audience involved with questions earlier if the moment presents itself. A basic rule to follow when determining the time allocation is that for an hour long panel discussion, there should be a minimum of 15 minutes dedicated to post panel Q&A's. The moderator must also be diligent about the time and keep the panel discussion moving at an appropriate pace in order to cover the topic effectively while allowing sufficient time for questions. At the end of the session it is very important to ask the panelists to remain at the event for a period of time, if they can, so that audience members can approach them on the margins.

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Public Availability of Documents

This Annex deals with PTC documents that do not fall under the WCO publication policy according to which certain WCO publications can only be obtained against payment.

At present the WCO does not have an overarching policy of making WCO working documents publicly available. In practice, the availability of WCO working documents varies from one WCO working body to the other, and is decided by the respective working body. Usually the agendas and documents are published after the meeting. The policies of the European Union, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the United Nations and the World Trade Organization that are available at their respective websites, have been consulted and differ in level of transparency but are generally more liberal.

In order to achieve greater transparency, the Permanent Technical Committee agreed to the principle of making all documentation for meetings available via the WCO Public website (agendas, reports (excluding the list of participants), working documents, presentations). As is usual in other working bodies this will be done after the meeting, and subject to consent of the PTC. If no objection is raised to the Secretariat within 10 working days after the termination of the meeting, the documents will be uploaded on the public web site. The Secretariat will, however, have to make an exception for sensitive documents, e.g. documents containing confidential data.

It is recommended, however, to make the Agenda and Summary Document publicly available well in advance of the PTC meeting and publicize the upcoming meeting under "Latest News". This will stimulate wider attendance of Members and Observers. Wider attendance will result in additional perspectives and may lead to more interesting debate and broader based decision making.