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ACTIVITIES DIRECTLY UNDER THE COMMITTEE

Report on activities directly under the Committee

Note by the secretariat

Summary

The Committee on Trade, at its first session, requested that its programme of work, and that of its subsidiary bodies, be reviewed regularly “to ensure coherence of its activities with the overall objectives of the UNECE.” (see ECE/TRADE/C72006/10, para. 3(e))

This document summarizes the activities that were carried out directly under the Committee (i.e., as opposed to those carried out by its subsidiary bodies) since its first session. This document is for information and noting.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. This report covers the following areas of work that are carried out directly under the Committee:

- (a) Trade policy-related work
- (b) Multiplier Point information dissemination programme
- (c) CD-ROM on Norms, Standards and Practices for Trade Facilitation and International Business

II. TRADE POLICY-RELATED WORK

2. Activities and events in support of the Committee's trade policy discussions, which took place in the reported period, include:

- (a) Participation in the activities of the United Nations Trade Cluster and Working Group;
- (b) Preliminary discussions on the interagency report – to be jointly coordinated by UNCTAD and the United Nations University Centre for Regional Integration Studies (UNU-CRIS) - on Aid for Trade;
- (c) Organization of a workshop on “International standards in the multilateral trading system: a stakeholders’ discussion” within the World Trade Organization “Public Symposium”.

A. Participation in the activities of the “United Nations Trade Cluster and Working Group”

3. The Trade Cluster is a working group under the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs (EC-ESA). It was established to facilitate joint strategic planning and decision-making among the United Nations agencies that are active in trade. In particular, it fosters joint activities between the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the regional commissions.

4. The Group shares a common objective of strengthening the contribution of trade to the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, especially the Millennium Development Goals, and promoting beneficial integration of developing countries and countries with economies in transition in international trade and the trading system.

5. Since the last Committee session, the Group:

- (a) Shared the budget narratives of their respective entities with the aim of improving programme coherence and identifying areas for greater collaboration or joint activities;
- (b) Drafted a progress report on the Cluster's implementation of the Decision by the United Nations Secretary-General's Policy Committee regarding international trade and sustainable development;

- (c) Drafted the EC-ESA Trade Cluster 2006 Annual Report in which all entities in the Cluster reviewed their work and the challenges ahead;
- (d) Contributed to several joint technical assistance projects and activities.

B. Preliminary discussion on an interagency report on Aid for Trade

6. The EC-ESA Cluster also decided to jointly draft an interagency report on Aid for Trade (AfT). The report will offer a United Nations common perspective and a comprehensive contribution to the international policy debate on how to make the AfT initiative work. It will contain both a discussion on global issues and a section focused on regional perspectives.

7. The report could be launched during a high-level UNCTAD XII pre-event, which would endorse its main conclusions and provide a common United Nations platform where all EC-ESA entities could participate in the future of AfT. As a result, the report should lead to a greater profile of EC-ESA agencies vis-à-vis donors and developing countries, as major partners in Aid for Trade. Stronger partnership and future collaboration is also expected between partner agencies, including the future implementation phase of Aid for Trade. The report could also be submitted as a background document to UNCTAD XII.

8. The report will be published both by the EC-ESA cluster – using UNCTAD printing facilities – and by the commercial publishing house Springer, in collaboration with UNU-CRIS.

C. Workshop on “International standards in the multilateral trading system: a stakeholders’ discussion”, within the World Trade Organization Public Symposium (25 September 2006)

9. The workshop was organized as part of the WTO Public Forum, which featured an opening plenary session followed by short working sessions - each organized by international organizations, Governments and non-governmental organizations - on key subjects around the theme of “What WTO for the 21st century”.

10. The UNECE event discussed how international standards can ensure that industrial products and agricultural produce crossing national borders are safe and reliable, without unnecessarily distorting trade and the respective roles of Governments, civil society and the private sector in developing or implementing international standards. A key focus of the discussion was on what actions can be undertaken to ensure that developing countries and countries with economies in transition fully participate in the development of international standards.

II. INFORMATION DISSEMINATION PROGRAMME: MULTIPLIER POINT NETWORK

11. The UNECE Multiplier Point information dissemination programme is aimed at facilitating trade within the UNECE region. It distributes information on UNECE activities and, particularly, those of the Committee on Trade to enterprises and organizations in the private and public sectors.

12. The purpose of the programme is to reach out to a wider audience, particularly in countries in transition, to support and promote practices and methods that help member States diversify and expand trade and investments.

13. The network of Multiplier Points consists of private and governmental organizations, as well as not-for-profit organizations at national, regional and local levels that specialize in trade and enterprise development. The secretariat sends these organizations information on the Committee's work. The Multiplier Points are expected to translate into local and national languages UNECE publications, recommendations, norms, guidelines, documents and other sources of information, and distribute them to potential users.

14. Since the last CT session, several organizations were added to the network.

- (a) Moldova: Youth Business Centre of Moldova
- (b) Ukraine: Vinnitsa Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Cherkassy Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- (c) Russia: Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Republic of Tatarstan, Udmurtiya Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Nizhegorodskaya Region, Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Chuvash Republic

15. Several potential Multiplier Points were contacted and several more organizations, especially from Central Asia and Caucasus, were expected to be contacted by the end of 2007.

16. The Multiplier Point programme web pages were continuously updated. The website can be found at: <http://www.unece.org/trade/ctied/multiplier/welcome.htm>

17. The programme continued its close cooperation with United Nations Development Programme, inviting its local offices to participate in the information dissemination activities in their country and to recommend local organizations as potential new Multiplier Points.

III. PUBLICATION OF THE NEW EDITION OF THE CD-ROM ON "NORMS, STANDARDS AND PRACTICES FOR TRADE FACILITATION AND INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS"

18. In June 2006, the third edition of the CD-ROM "Norms, Standards and Practices for Trade Facilitation and International Business" was released. The CD-ROM offers an overview of all the recommendations, norms and standards, together with related information, developed by the Committee on Trade. In February, this CD-ROM was sent to all of the Multiplier Points.

19. The CD-ROM is intended to serve as a reference tool for a wide audience from both the public and the private sector. It provides an overview of the activities, best practice recommendations, norms and standards drawn up under the Committee in the following areas:

- (a) Trade promotion and trade finance
- (b) Trade facilitation recommendations
- (c) Industry and enterprise development

- (d) International legal and commercial practice
- (e) Arbitration
- (f) Technical harmonization and standardization policy
- (g) Agricultural standards

20. The new edition contains close to 700 documents in English, French and Russian. It features a new visual interface that allows the content of future revisions to be transferred directly to the UNECE website. The CD-ROM is a valuable tool for distributing and promoting the Committee's work and is also distributed as a reference source to participants in capacity-building workshops.
