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Economic Commission for Europe

Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards

Ninth session

Geneva, 26(pm)–28 June 2024

Item 1 of the provisional agenda

Adoption of the agenda

Annotated provisional agenda

Palais des Nations, Geneva, Salle V,
starting at 3 p.m. on Wednesday, 26 June 2024*

I. Provisional agenda

1. Adoption of the agenda.

A. High-level substantive segment

2. Regional Conference on the Circular Economy.

B. General segment

3. Programme of work:
 - (a) Status of implementation of the Trade subprogramme's programme of work for 2024; and
 - (b) Draft programme of work of the Trade subprogramme for 2025 and outline of key components of the programme of work for 2026.
4. Capacity-building and technical assistance activities.
5. Cooperation with other organizations and Economic Commission for Europe bodies.
6. Follow-up to the evaluation of the Trade subprogramme and the Economic Cooperation and Integration subprogramme by the Office of Internal Oversight Services.

* Delegates are invited to register online at <https://indico.un.org/event/1007144/>. The session documents will be made available progressively at <https://unece.org/info/Trade/events/389443>. Please note that as part of its move to paperless meetings, the secretariat does not distribute paper copies of meeting documents. Additional information for delegates, including a map of the Palais des Nations meeting rooms, is available at <http://www.unece.org/meetings/practical.html>.



C. Substantive segment

7. Removing regulatory and procedural barriers to trade in the Economic Commission for Europe region, country studies: Armenia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.
8. Updates from the Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies and roundtable discussion.
9. Updates from the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards.
10. Removing regulatory and procedural barriers to trade in the Economic Commission for Europe region, forthcoming country studies: Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan.

D. Continuation of the general segment

11. Other business.
12. Modalities for the adoption of the report.

II. Annotations

Item 1. Adoption of the agenda

1. The Steering Committee is invited to adopt the provisional agenda.

<i>Title of document</i>	<i>Document symbol</i>	<i>For information/decision</i>
Annotated provisional agenda	ECE/CTCS/2024/1	Decision

A. High-level substantive segment

Item 2. Regional Conference on the Circular Economy

2. Following the decision of the sixty-ninth session of Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) in 2021, ECE has been working on accelerating the transition to a more circular economy in the region. Among others, ECE set up Circular STEP, a unique, ECE-hosted stakeholder engagement platform. Circular STEP aims to fill gaps and create synergies among the many practical and value-creating initiatives in the sphere of the circular economy. The platform focuses on selected substantive areas of relevance to the Economic Cooperation and Integration and Trade subprogrammes: trade, innovation-enhancing procurement, waste management, small- and medium-sized enterprises, traceability of value chains, financing, digital solutions, and institutional arrangements.

3. Agenda item 2 of the ninth session of the Steering Committee will consist of the Regional Conference on the Circular Economy.¹ Delegations from member States and leading international experts will take stock of the work on the circular economy transition that has been done in the areas of relevance to the Steering Committee and the Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships (CICPPP) and the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT). Activities were undertaken, among others, as part of the United Nations Development Account (UNDA) project on “Accelerating the Transition towards a Circular Economy in the ECE region”.

¹ The Regional Conference will start at 10 am and it is held jointly by two ECE committees on the occasion of their annual sessions: the Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships (24–26 June 2024) and the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards (26–28 June 2024).

4. The afternoon session will feature two panels. The first panel will discuss advancing circular economy in agri-food value chains, focusing on food loss and waste reduction and management. The second panel will be dedicated to improving the traceability of products along international value chains for the circular economy. It will discuss how enhancing traceability and transparency can uncover barriers to repair, reuse, and recycling.

<i>Title of document</i>	<i>Document symbol</i>	<i>For information/decision</i>
Accelerating the transition towards a circular economy in the Economic Commission for Europe region: focus on reducing food loss and waste	ECE/CTCS/2024/9	Decision
Accelerating the transition towards a circular economy in the Economic Commission for Europe region: focus on harnessing digital solutions	ECE/CTCS/2024/10	Decision

B. General segment

Item 3. Programme of work

(a) Status of implementation of the Trade subprogramme's programme of work for 2024

5. The secretariat will report on the status of the implementation of the programme of work currently underway.

(b) Draft programme of work of the Trade subprogramme for 2025 and outline of key components of the programme of work for 2026

<i>Title of document</i>	<i>Document symbol</i>	<i>For information/decision</i>
Draft programme of work of the Trade subprogramme for 2025	ECE/CTCS/2024/13	Decision
Outline of key components of the programme of work of Trade subprogramme for 2026	ECE/CTCS/2024/INF.1	Decision

6. The secretariat will present the Trade subprogramme's draft programme of work for 2025. This document is based on the Trade subprogramme's proposed programme plan for 2025, reviewed by the ECE Executive Committee (EXCOM) in December 2023 as part of the ECE proposed programme budget for 2025, and submitted for consideration by the seventy-ninth session of the United Nations General Assembly. The draft programme of work document reflects the annual budget format approved by the General Assembly in resolution 77/267, adopted on 30 December 2022. Delegates will be invited to review the programme of work and recommend it to EXCOM for approval. Sections on UN/CEFACT are for information only.

7. At its meeting on 5 March 2021, EXCOM adopted a document entitled "Sequential review of the proposed programmes of work of ECE subprogrammes" (INF. doc. 2021/8). In line with the sequential review procedure, the Committee will also be invited to consider the "Outline of key components of the programme of work of the Trade subprogramme for 2026" (ECE/CTCS/2024/INF.1) and provide recommendations on these components, as necessary. Recommendations agreed by the Committee and included in its decisions will be reflected in the proposed programme plan of the Trade subprogramme for 2026.

Item 4. Capacity-building and technical assistance activities

<i>Title of document</i>	<i>Document symbol</i>	<i>For information/decision</i>
Report on capacity-building and technical assistance activities	ECE/CTCS/2024/11	Decision

8. Delegates will be invited to endorse the relevant sections of the Trade subprogramme's report on capacity-building and technical assistance activities implemented since the previous session. The activities related to UN/CEFACT are reported for information only.

9. Delegates will also be invited to present their capacity-building needs for ECE technical assistance activities, including for conducting ECE studies on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade and follow-up activities. The discussion will focus on member States' priorities and explore how the Trade subprogramme might assist in addressing these needs by drawing on its experience and potential extra-budgetary funding. Delegations, donor and development partners are also invited to offer insights on opportunities for resource mobilization.

Item 5. Cooperation with other organizations and Economic Commission for Europe bodies

<i>Title of document</i>	<i>Document symbol</i>	<i>For information/decision</i>
Report on cooperation with other organizations and Economic Commission for Europe bodies	ECE/CTCS/2024/12	Decision

10. The secretariat will report on the ongoing cooperation with other international organizations.

11. Representatives from other international organizations will be invited to highlight areas for potential cooperation with the Steering Committee and current and future activities relevant to delegates.

12. A discussion will take place on potential areas for cooperation between the Steering Committee, other ECE bodies, and international organizations.

Item 6. Follow-up to the evaluation of the Trade subprogramme and the Economic Cooperation and Integration subprogramme by the Office of Internal Oversight Services

13. In 2022, the United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) evaluated the relevance, effectiveness, coherence, sustainability, and integration of cross-cutting issues in subprogramme 4: Economic Cooperation and Integration, and subprogramme 6: Trade of the ECE for the period 2018–2021. The evaluation was part of the United Nations secretariat's regular program periodically evaluating selected aspects of its operations. Delegates will be briefed on the progress of implementing the recommendations of the evaluation as they pertain to subprogramme 6.

C. Substantive segment

Item 7. Removing regulatory and procedural barriers to trade in the Economic Commission for Europe region, country studies: Armenia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan

<i>Title of document</i>	<i>Document symbol</i>	<i>For information/decision</i>
Assessing regulatory and procedural barriers to trade in the context of integration into value chains: study of Armenia	ECE/CTCS/2024/3	Decision
Assessing regulatory and procedural barriers to trade in the context of integration into value chains: study of Kazakhstan	ECE/CTCS/2024/4	Decision
Assessing regulatory and procedural barriers to trade in the context of integration into value chains: study of Kyrgyzstan	ECE/CTCS/2024/5	Decision

14. Delegates will be briefed about the findings and recommendations emerging from the ECE studies on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade in Armenia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

15. Each of the three ECE studies assesses current and potential export markets and undertakes a business process analysis and assessment of the quality infrastructure for exports of selected products to specific destinations. The studies also highlight the implications of regulatory and procedural barriers to trade for achieving sustainable development goals and provide action-oriented recommendations to improve integration in global and regional value chains. The studies respectively aim to enhance export opportunities for fish products (Armenia), vegetable oil (Kazakhstan) and dried apricots and prunes (Kyrgyzstan).

Item 8. Updates from the Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies and roundtable discussion

16. The Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies (WP.6) reports its activities and deliverables to the Steering Committee for endorsement. Delegates will have an opportunity to clarify questions and provide comments on the work of WP.6. The Steering Committee is requested to endorse the Report of the thirty-third session of the Working Party, as well as review and endorse the work plan of WP.6 and recommend it to EXCOM for approval. Recognizing the efforts of the Bureau of WP.6 to streamline and clarify internal procedures, the Steering Committee requested at its eighth session that WP.6 present an internal draft working procedures document to the 2024 session. The summaries of working practices for the Working Party (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2023/12) and of practices for representation of and the use of titles within the Working Party (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2023/13) are presented to the Steering Committee for information.

17. WP.6 has made efforts to disseminate better the base guidance of the topics it covers. Two conferences were held on “Back to basics of quality infrastructure for trade” in November 2022 and May 2023. These informative presentations have been transformed into the publication *Basics of Quality Infrastructure for Trade*. Furthermore, in line with the themes of the high-level segment of the seventieth session of the Commission in 2023, the Working Party has undertaken work on the regulatory compliance of products with embedded artificial intelligence or other digital technologies (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2023/9). During this session, a roundtable discussion will be held where WP.6 experts will highlight some of the key elements of this publication and the WP.6 mandate. Another publication on the *Basics of*

Risk Management in Regulatory Systems is expected to be published during the summer of 2024.

<i>Title of document</i>	<i>Document symbol</i>	<i>For information/decision</i>
Report on the thirty-third session of the Working Party on Regulation Cooperation and Standardization Policies	ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2023/2	Decision
Programme of work of the Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies for 2024	ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2023/14	Decision
Summary of working practices for the Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies	ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2023/12	Information
Summary of practices for representation of and the use of titles within the Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies	ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2023/13	Information
The Basics of Quality Infrastructure for Trade	ECE/TRADE/478	Information
Regulatory compliance of products with embedded artificial intelligence or other digital technologies	ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2023/9	Information

Item 9. Updates from the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards

18. The Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (WP.7) reports its activities and deliverables to the Steering Committee for endorsement. Delegates will have an opportunity to clarify questions and provide comments on the work of WP.7. The Steering Committee is requested to endorse the Report of the seventy-eighth session of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards, as well as review and endorse the programme of work of the Working Party for 2024 and recommend it to EXCOM for approval.

19. As per its terms of reference, the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards shall review its terms of reference every five years and submit them for approval to the Steering Committee and the EXCOM. The current terms of reference of the Working Party were approved in 2019. In preparation for the review, the Working Party set up an open working group which prepared updated terms of reference for consideration of the Working Party at its seventy-eighth session in 2023. The Working Party agreed on the revised terms of reference of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards as reflected in Its ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2023/3/Rev.1, and recommended the renewal of its mandate until the end of 2028. The revised terms of reference are submitted to the Steering Committee for approval.

20. At its seventy-eighth session in 2023, the Working Party adopted three new standards for certain small fruits, inshell pecans, and pecan kernels, and one new recommendation (standard on trial) for sweet potatoes. It also adopted eight revised standards for asparagus, broccoli, kiwifruit, onions, peas, sweet chestnuts, cashew kernels, and bovine meat - carcasses and cuts, in addition to revised minimum quality specifications for fresh fruit and vegetables, revised Standard layout for ECE standards on fresh fruit and vegetables, and revised position papers of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Seed Potatoes.

21. The Working Party continued focusing on food loss, waste, and sustainability. This included the organization of a roundtable on “Sustainable Food Systems – Digitalization and Food Loss and Waste Reduction” (14 November 2023) through an ad-hoc working group under the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables, which is reviewing standards from a food loss and waste perspective. The secretariat also organized a seminar on “Sustainable Meat and Livestock” (29 August 2023) through an ad-hoc working group under the Specialized Section on Standardization of Dry and Dried Produce, which is preparing a code of good practice for food loss and waste reduction for dried fruits and nuts.

<i>Title of document</i>	<i>Document symbol</i>	<i>For information/decision</i>
Report of the seventy-eighth session of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards	ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2023/2	Decision
Programme of work of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards for 2024	ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2023/25	Decision
Revised Terms of Reference of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards	ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2023/3/R ev.1	Decision

Item 10. Removing regulatory and procedural barriers to trade in the Economic Commission for Europe region, forthcoming country studies: Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan

22. In 2023, the EXCOM approved two extra-budgetary projects (i.e. “Removing regulatory and procedural barriers to trade in Turkmenistan” (Informal document no. 2023/39) and “Strengthening capacity of Azerbaijan to reduce regulatory and procedural barriers to trade” (Informal Document no. 2023/44)). The secretariat will present the initial outlines proposed under these projects.

<i>Title of document</i>	<i>Document symbol</i>	<i>For information/decision</i>
Economic Commission for Europe study on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade in Azerbaijan: project outline	ECE/CTCS/2024/6	Decision
Economic Commission for Europe study on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade in Turkmenistan: project outline	ECE/CTCS/2024/7	Decision

D. Continuation of the general segment

Item 11. Other business

23. Delegates will decide on the dates of the next session, to be confirmed subject to the availability of conference services.

Item 12. Modalities for the adoption of the report

<i>Title of document</i>	<i>Document symbol</i>	<i>For information/decision</i>
Report of the session	ECE/CTCS/2024/2	Decision

24. After the conclusion of the session, the secretariat will prepare a draft report and distribute it to the Geneva Permanent Missions for subsequent approval by silence procedure in accordance with paragraph 21 of appendix of document E/ECE/1464 (Guidelines on procedures and practices for ECE bodies). Once the report is adopted, it will be published in English, French and Russian.

III. Tentative timetable

<i>Time</i>	<i>Agenda item</i>	<i>Description</i>
26 June 2024		
3 p.m.–3.10 p.m.	1	Adoption of the agenda
	A	High-level substantive segment
3.10 p.m.–6 p.m.	2	Regional Conference on the Circular Economy
27 June 2024		
	B	General segment
10 a.m.–10.30 a.m.	3	Programme of work
	(a)	Status of implementation of the Trade subprogramme's programme of work for 2024
	(b)	Draft programme of work of the Trade subprogramme for 2025 and outline of key components of the programme of work for 2026
10.30 a.m.–11.30 a.m.	4	Capacity-building and technical assistance activities
11.30 a.m.–12.45 a.m.	5	Cooperation with other organizations and Economic Commission for Europe bodies
12.45 a.m.–1 p.m.	6	Follow-up to the evaluation of the Trade subprogramme and the Economic Cooperation and Integration subprogramme by the Office of Internal Oversight Services
	C	Substantive segment
3 p.m.–6 p.m.	7	Removing regulatory and procedural barriers to trade in the Economic Commission for Europe region, country studies: Armenia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan
28 June 2024		
10 a.m.–12 a.m.	8	Updates from the Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies and roundtable discussion
12 p.m.–1 p.m.	9	Updates from the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards
3 p.m.–4.30 p.m.	10	Removing regulatory and procedural barriers to trade in the Economic Commission for Europe region, forthcoming country studies: Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan

	D	Continuation of the general segment
4.30 p.m.–5 p.m.	11	Other business
5 p.m.–6 p.m.	12	Modalities for the adoption of the report
