



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: Limited
23 March 2017

Original: English

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

3rd meeting of the Interim Intergovernmental Steering Group
on Cross-border Paperless Trade Facilitation

Bangkok, 23-24 March 2017

Agenda item 6

Adoption of the report of the meeting

Draft report

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I. Matters calling for action by the Commission or brought to its attention

A. Facilitating implementation of the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific

1. The meeting decides to organize a signing ceremony in Bangkok on 29 August 2017 for member States of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (ESCAP) that wish to become parties to the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific. The meeting requests the secretariat to arrange logistics for the ceremony, including inviting ESCAP member States.

B. Preparation of a draft road map for the implementation of the substantive provisions in the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific

2. The meeting notes the progress made by the Legal and Technical Working Groups and requests them to continue improving the draft road map for the implementation of the substantive provisions in the Framework Agreement and its supporting documents for further review at the 4th meeting of the Interim Intergovernmental Steering Group on Cross-border Paperless Trade Facilitation.

C. Operation of the Interim Intergovernmental Steering Group on Cross-border Paperless Trade Facilitation

3. The Steering Group decides to continue its operation until the Framework Agreement enters into force, focusing on improving the draft road map and its supporting documents.

II. Proceedings

A. Report on progress made as a result of the decision taken by the Commission on the recommendation made by the Interim Intergovernmental Steering Group on Cross-border Paperless Trade Facilitation at its 2nd meeting

(Agenda item 2)

4. The meeting had before it the document entitled “Report on progress made as a result of the decision taken by the Commission on the recommendation made by the Interim Intergovernmental Steering Group on Cross-border Paperless Trade Facilitation at its 2nd meeting” (E/ESCAP/PTA/IISG(3)/1). The Chief of the Trade Facilitation Unit introduced the document. The Chair invited representatives of participating delegations to report on their status with respect to becoming parties to the Framework Agreement.

5. Representatives of the following members and associate members of the Commission made status reports: Armenia; Azerbaijan; Bangladesh; Bhutan; Cambodia; China; France; India; Indonesia; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Kyrgyzstan; Lao People’s Democratic Republic; Maldives; Mongolia; Myanmar; Pakistan; Papua New Guinea; Philippines; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; Samoa; Sri Lanka; Thailand; Timor-Leste; Uzbekistan; and Viet Nam.

6. Armenia informed the meeting that it was in the process of translating the text of the Framework Agreement into its national language as a first step in the ratification process. It had completed inter-agency consultations and had already submitted to the Cabinet for approval a motion to sign the Framework Agreement.
7. Bangladesh informed the meeting that it was currently conducting inter-agency consultations and expected a submission to the Cabinet for approval in May 2017. Bhutan informed the meeting that it had started securing administrative approvals as part of the stakeholder consultation process. Cambodia informed the meeting that it was currently conducting inter-agency consultations.
8. China informed the meeting that it had reached agreement to sign the Framework Agreement at the Administration level and was now in the process of seeking a letter of authority to do so from the Cabinet; it expected that the procedure would be completed on time. France informed the meeting that discussions were taking place in the various ministries involved and that there was a strong interest in signing the Framework Agreement. India informed the meeting that it was at an early stage of the national consultation process.
9. Indonesia informed the meeting that it was conducting inter-agency consultations and had engaged with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Cabinet Secretary on the signature process. The Islamic Republic of Iran informed the meeting that it was conducting inter-agency consultations, led by the Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade. Kyrgyzstan informed the meeting that it had completed the translation process and was conducting inter-agency consultations. The Lao People's Democratic Republic informed the meeting that it was conducting inter-agency consultations and that it had included participation in the Framework Agreement as one of the priorities in its national trade facilitation road map for 2017-2023.
10. Maldives informed the meeting that it was conducting inter-agency consultations through its national trade facilitation committee. Mongolia informed the meeting that it had completed the translation process and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was currently reviewing the Framework Agreement before submission to the Cabinet for approval, with the process expected to take two to three months. Myanmar informed the meeting that it had completed the translation process and the relevant ministry was conducting a review.
11. Pakistan informed the meeting that it was at the final stage of inter-agency consultations and shared information on its activities related to trade facilitation. Papua New Guinea informed the meeting that it needed to increase awareness among domestic stakeholders of the Framework Agreement and requested the secretariat to provide assistance in organizing inter-agency consultations. The Philippines informed the meeting that the Framework Agreement was being reviewed by the Department of Foreign Affairs, which was also holding consultations with the relevant agencies.
12. The Republic of Korea informed the meeting that it had completed inter-agency consultations and was working on the signing procedure with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Russian Federation informed the meeting that it was conducting inter-agency consultations and shared information on its support for building capacity with respect to cross-border paperless trade in the region through two ongoing ESCAP projects.

13. Samoa informed the meeting that it was conducting inter-agency consultations and shared information on its activities related to trade facilitation. Sri Lanka informed the meeting of its plan to discuss the Framework Agreement at the next meeting of the National Committee on Trade Facilitation, to be held in either late April or early May 2017. Thailand informed the meeting that it was at the stage of considering the Framework Agreement.

14. Timor-Leste informed the meeting that it was conducting inter-agency consultations. Uzbekistan informed the meeting that it was at the stage of considering the Framework Agreement and that it was at the early stages of implementing e-commerce. Viet Nam informed the meeting that it had completed the translation process and was conducting inter-agency consultations led by the Ministry of Industry and Trade.

15. Several member States indicated that they expected to complete the inter-agency consultation process within the next three months. In that context, the secretariat proposed that the meeting should consider organizing a signing ceremony in the region so that as many member States as possible could sign the Framework Agreement at the same time. Organization of a high-level dialogue back to back with the signing ceremony was also proposed. The meeting agreed to the proposal and decided to hold the ceremony in Bangkok on 29 August 2017. The meeting requested the secretariat to proceed with arrangements as soon as possible, including issuance of official letters to all member States.

16. The secretariat informed the meeting that it could provide technical assistance to facilitate inter-agency consultations on the Framework Agreement to developing country member States upon receipt of an official support request. Technical assistance would be provided on a first come, first served basis, with priority given to countries with special needs, subject to available time and resources.

17. The meeting also had before it the document entitled “Explanatory note to the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific” (E/ESCAP/PTA/IISG(3)/CRP.1). The secretariat explained that the document had been updated to incorporate additional explanations of the final clauses. The meeting noted the revisions made.

B. Report on progress made by the Legal and Technical Working Groups on the preparation of a draft road map for the implementation of the substantive provisions in the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific
(Agenda item 3)

18. The meeting had before it the documents entitled “Report on progress made by the Legal and Technical Working Groups in their mandated tasks” (E/ESCAP/PTA/IISG(3)/2) and “Draft road map for the implementation of the substantive provisions in the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific” and its addendum (E/ESCAP/PTA/IISG(3)/CRP.2 and Add.1). The Chief of the Trade Facilitation Unit introduced the documents.

19. The interim Chair of the Legal and Technical Working Groups reported on progress made during their 4th meeting, held on 21 and 22 March 2017. In his report, the Chair indicated that the Working Groups had jointly reviewed the draft road map and supporting documents of common interest to both Working Groups. The Legal Working Group elected Mr. A.H.M. Shafiqzaman

of Bangladesh and Mr. Ramezan Ali Sadegh Zadeh of the Islamic Republic of Iran as the new Co-Chair and Vice-Chair respectively. The interim Chair also reported that the Working Groups had decided to continue their operation and that the Technical Working Group had decided to hold its virtual meeting every two months, subject to a decision on its operation by the Steering Group at its current meeting.

20. The meeting noted the progress made by the Legal and Technical Working Groups in their mandated tasks.

C. Discussion on future operations of the Steering Group
(Agenda item 4)

21. The secretariat proposed that the Steering Group and its Working Groups should continue their operation until the Framework Agreement entered into force, focusing on improving the draft road map and its supporting documents. The meeting agreed to the proposal.

D. Other matters
(Agenda item 5)

22. The meeting had no other matters to discuss.

E. Adoption of the report of the meeting
(Agenda item 6)

23. The meeting adopted the present report on 24 March 2017.

III. Organization

A. Opening, duration and organization of the session

24. The 3rd meeting of the Interim Intergovernmental Steering Group on Cross-border Paperless Trade Facilitation was held in Bangkok on 23 and 24 March 2017.

25. The Deputy Executive Secretary of ESCAP delivered an opening statement.

B. Attendance

26. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following ESCAP members and associate members: Armenia; Azerbaijan; Bangladesh; Bhutan; Cambodia; China; France; India; Indonesia; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Kyrgyzstan; Lao People's Democratic Republic; Maldives; Mongolia; Myanmar; Pakistan; Papua New Guinea; Philippines; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; Samoa; Sri Lanka; Thailand; Timor-Leste; Uzbekistan; and Viet Nam.

27. Representatives of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law attended.

28. Representatives of the Eurasian Economic Commission attended.

29. Two observers and six resource persons also attended.¹

¹ See E/ESCAP/PTA/IISG(3)/INF/2.

C. Election of officers

30. The following officers were elected:

Chair: Mr. Sok Sopheak (Cambodia)
Vice-Chairs: Ms. Samar Ihsan (Pakistan)
Mr. Yang Zhengwei (China)

D. Agenda

31. The meeting adopted the following agenda:

1. Opening of the meeting:
 - (a) Opening address;
 - (b) Election of officers;
 - (c) Adoption of the agenda.
2. Report on progress made as a result of the decision taken by the Commission on the recommendation made by the Interim Intergovernmental Steering Group on Cross-border Paperless Trade Facilitation at its 2nd meeting.
3. Report on progress made by the Legal and Technical Working Groups on the preparation of a draft road map for the implementation of the substantive provisions in the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific.
4. Discussion on future operations of the Steering Group.
5. Other matters.
6. Adoption of the report of the meeting.

Annex**List of documents**

<i>Document symbol</i>	<i>Document title</i>	<i>Agenda item</i>
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<i>Information series</i>		
E/ESCAP/PTA/IISG(3)/INF/1	Information for participants	
E/ESCAP/PTA/IISG(3)/INF/2	List of participants	
E/ESCAP/PTA/IISG(3)/INF/3	Tentative programme	
<i>Conference room papers</i>		
E/ESCAP/PTA/IISG(3)/CRP.1	Explanatory note to the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific	2
E/ESCAP/PTA/IISG(3)/CRP.2 and Add.1	Draft road map for the implementation of the substantive provisions in the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific	3