



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE ON TRADE FACILITATION
30 JUNE 2022**

CHAIRPERSON: H.E. MR. ADAMU MOHAMMED ABDULHAMID (NIGERIA)

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1 MATTERS RELATING TO THE IMPLEMENTATION AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE TRADE FACILITATION AGREEMENT (TFA)

1.1. The Chair welcomed delegations and recalled that the agenda for the meeting had been circulated in documents WTO/AIR/TFA/22/Rev.1 and WTO/AIR/TFA/22/Rev.1/Add.1.

1.2. As this was his first time chairing the meeting, the Chair appreciated the Membership for the confidence in his selection. He would continue to solicit support from Members to achieve the desired objectives in the Trade Facilitation Committee (CTF, the Committee).

1.3. The Committee agreed to continue the practice of holding Item 2 of the agenda "Experience sharing/thematic discussions" in informal mode, to allow for frank and interactive exchanges. The Committee also agreed that observers to the meeting could remain throughout the informal session.

1.4. The Chair added two items to the agenda under "Other Business": (1) the date of the remaining Committee meetings in 2022; and (2) the invitation to the Annex D partners and the Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation to the next Committee meeting.

1.5. The agenda was adopted with the proposed changes.

1.1 Notifications from Members

1.6. The Chair drew the Committee's attention to the first group of notifications, namely those under Article 16 of the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA, the Agreement). Since the last meeting of the Committee, notifications on definitive dates of implementation had been recently received from Central African Republic and Mauritania. They would be taken up at the next meeting of the Committee.

A. Notifications under Article 16 of the Trade Facilitation Agreement

1.7. Three notifications have been circulated under this article.

1.8. The first notification was from Mali, circulated in document G/TFA/N/MLI/1/Add.3. Mali notified the definitive implementation dates for its category C commitments.

1.9. The delegate of the United States indicated the following:

1.10. Before I begin, I would like to congratulate you, Ambassador, on your appointment as Chair of the CTF. We thank Mali for its notification of Category C definitive implementation dates and communication regarding technical assistance requirements.

1.11. We encourage a reach-out to donors that are active on the ground and would be open to engage in a dialogue on Mali's technical assistance and implementation needs for the remaining Articles (1.3, 5.3, 7.2, 7.9, 10.5) as appropriate.

1.12. The delegate of Japan indicated the following:

1.13. First of all, let me express our congratulations for your taking the chairmanship of this committee. Japan welcomes Mali's timely notification on definitive date for implementation of Category C provisions. Japan would like to make use of this opportunity to remind Members that 22 August this year is the day by which LDC Members are required to notify their definitive dates for implementation of Category C provisions. Japan expects all remaining notifications be done in a timely manner.

1.14. The delegate of the European Union indicated the following:

1.15. Let me first congratulate you, Ambassador, on behalf of the EU on your appointment. We welcome Mali's notification of its situation regarding assistance provided and gaps that remain, in particular regarding three category C commitments.

1.16. The second notification was from Tonga in document G/TFA/N/TON/4. Tonga notified information on arrangements and progress made in the provision of technical assistance and capacity building support for its category C designations.

1.17. The delegate of the United States indicated the following:

1.18. We thank Tonga for its notification on arrangements and progress in the provision of technical assistance.

1.19. We encourage a reach-out to donors that are active in Tonga and would be open to engage in a dialogue on the country's technical assistance and implementation needs for the remaining Articles (2.1; 5.3; 10.2.) as appropriate.

1.20. The delegate of Australia indicated the following:

1.21. Australia would like to congratulate you on your appointment as Chair and we look forward to working with you in taking forward the progress of this Committee. Australia would like to commend Tonga on its notification and also express our appreciation of being able to support Tonga in conjunction with New Zealand and UNCTAD through the PACER Plus Regional Trade Agreement transitional arrangements. The arrangements have funded the PACER Plus Implementation Unit which is based in Apia, Samoa and the work programme which includes the Pacific trade portals, transparency and ASYCUDA World as well as aid for trade assistance, and also core funding to the Oceania Customs Organization. We wish Tonga all the best with its future implementation.

1.22. The delegate of the European Union indicated the following:

1.23. The EU appreciates Tonga's reporting on assistance received and on the gaps in assistance needs, mainly for testing procedures.

1.24. The third notification taken up was from Djibouti in document G/TFA/N/DJI/1/Add.2. Djibouti requested an extension to the deadline of 22 August 2022 for the notification of the definitive implementation dates for their category C provisions.

1.25. The delegate of Djibouti indicated the following:

1.26. May I first congratulate you Chairman on your appointment. Djibouti extends a welcome to you and wishes you the best of success.

1.27. On 17 June 2022, Djibouti communicated to the CTF a request for an extension to the notification date for the implementation of category C provisions in line with Article 16.3 of the TFA. Djibouti is suffering setbacks in notifying the dates given the domestic difficulties that it faces as well as the lack of institutional and organizational capacities.

1.28. The extra time is needed for the implementation for not just category C provisions but also category B. Therefore, Djibouti is requesting that the TFA Committee consider an extension of the deadline for notifications under category B and C to 31 December 2023. Djibouti hopes that its request will be accepted under the flexibilities provided for in Section 2 of the Agreement. We stand ready to implement these measures in line with our institutional capacity and appropriate timeline.

1.29. Furthermore, we request technical assistance for countries such as mine that are facing these difficulties, and this is why Djibouti is for the first time applying to the TFA Facility (TFAF) and its mechanism for technical support so as to conduct a needs assessment as well as understand the time that will be needed to fully comply with the Agreement. We count on the understanding and the cooperation of the CTF to respond favourably to this request.

1.30. In closing Mr Chairman, I wish to extend our thanks to the WTO CTF Secretariat team. Their effort is really a great help to support us and to make progress.

1.31. The delegate of Japan indicated the following:

1.32. Thank you Djibouti for your explanation. Japan thanks Djibouti for its timely notification to extend the implementation date of category C provisions. Japan encourages all developing and LDC Members which consider themselves to be experiencing difficulty to follow Djibouti and to notify in a timely manner. Thank you.

1.33. The delegate of Nepal indicated the following:

1.34. The LDC Group congratulates you Chair for this new assignment and welcomes you to this Committee. The LDC group wishes you a successful tenure. You can count on LDCs' support while exercising your responsibilities as Chair of the Committee.

1.35. The LDC group thanks Mali, Tonga, and Djibouti for their notification. Regarding the notification from Djibouti, the LDC Group supports the request made for the extension of the deadline and requests all Members to consider the request positively.

1.36. The delegate of the United States indicated the following:

1.37. We thank Djibouti for its request for additional time to submit definitive implementation dates for category C measures and support the extension, noting the timeliness of the request ahead of the August 2022 deadline. We also note Djibouti requested additional time to submit category B definitive dates, which were due 21 February 2021, and we urge Djibouti to submit as soon as possible.

1.38. Additionally, we thank the LDC Members who already submitted their category C definitive dates ahead of the August 2022 deadline. We call on the remaining 24 LDC Members to submit their definitive implementation dates as soon as possible to preserve access to the TFA flexibilities including additional time and technical assistance. It is imperative Members self-identify when they will fully implement the TFA. Failing to meet the notification commitments means all provisions identified as category B or C shift to immediate implementation. We encourage ASEAN, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Central African Republic, Chad, Djibouti, Gambia, Guinea, Lao PDR, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Mauritania, Myanmar, Nepal, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, Tanzania, Togo and Uganda to reach out to the Secretariat for assistance in submitting the notification.

1.39. The delegate of the European Union indicated the following:

1.40. The EU is concerned with Djibouti's situation where assistance needs have not yet been notified to the WTO. This has triggered a request for an extension of the deadline to notify category C commitments until December 2023. We appreciate the update by Djibouti on their problems and on the steps they have taken to be able to notify us on their commitments within the new deadline.

1.41. In addition, the EU notes that the transparency notification regarding Article 10.6.2 is still missing.

1.42. The Committee agreed to the request made by Djibouti.

1.43. The Committee took note of the notifications and the statements made.

B. Notifications under Article 17 of the Trade Facilitation Agreement

1.44. The Chair drew the Committee's attention to notifications under Article 17 of the TFA which cover the Early Warning Mechanism and the extension of implementation dates for provisions in categories B and C.

1.45. The first notification was from Ghana and was circulated in document G/TFA/N/GHA/1/Add.2. Ghana notified extensions to the definitive dates for implementation of a number of provisions.

1.46. The delegate of the United States indicated the following:

1.47. We thank Ghana for its notification. The United States supports Ghana's extension request, noting their timely notification to delay implementation of Articles on enhanced controls; test procedures; risk management; publication of average release times; expedited shipments; perishable goods; and formalities.

1.48. The delegate of the European Union indicated the following:

1.49. The EU takes note of Ghana's request for an extension for the implementation of several provisions in compliance with the provisions of the Agreement.

1.50. The delegate of Japan indicated the following:

1.51. Japan thanks Ghana's for its timely notification of extending the definitive date.

1.52. The second notification was from Viet Nam and had been circulated in document G/TFA/N/VNM/1/Add.1. Viet Nam notified shifting categories and accelerated implementation of a number of provisions.

1.53. The delegate of the United States indicated the following:

1.54. We thank Viet Nam for its notification of implementing Articles 3; 7.1; 7.3; 7.9; 10.8; 10.9; 11; and 12. We congratulate Viet Nam on their efforts to fully implement TFA provisions ahead of their initially notified deadline.

1.55. The delegate of Japan indicated the following:

1.56. Japan welcomes Viet Nam's efforts to implement the provisions designated in category C before the notified definitive date and notification to shift provisions from category C to category B. This contributes to improving transparency. It is therefore encouraged that Members follow Viet Nam's notification.

1.57. The delegate of the European Union indicated the following:

1.58. The EU would like to congratulate Viet Nam on the early implementation of several provisions, well before the time notified and for switching several provisions from category C to B, which showed Viet Nam's dedication to implementing the Agreement.

1.59. The delegate of the United Kingdom indicated the following:

1.60. On behalf of the UK, I would like to take this opportunity to offer our warmest congratulations on your appointment. The UK would like to thank Viet Nam for notifying the Committee of changes to their definitive dates and categorization of obligations.

1.61. We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Viet Nam in achieving early implementation of 10 TFA provisions and moving four TFA provisions from category C to category B. This is a commendable achievement especially given the challenges Members have faced over the past few years in responding to the global pandemic. We encourage any experience sharing items from Viet Nam that would provide Members who are still implementing some or all of those provisions, the highlights and the best practice insights or examples of overcoming common challenges to this implementation.

1.62. The delegate of Australia indicated the following:

1.63. Australia would like to join colleagues in thanking Viet Nam for its Article 17 notification and also to express credit for Viet Nam's efforts in bringing forward relevant definitive implementation dates.

1.64. The delegate of Viet Nam indicated the following:

1.65. First of all, I would like to congratulate you on your new position and hope you will have success. Viet Nam would like to update the figures with the notification on category shifting and new definitive implementation dates. The current rate of implementation is more than 80% compared with the earlier rate of 41.2%. Four articles are being shifted from C to B. In addition, we have articles with anticipated implementation dates in 2022, instead of 2024 and 2023.

1.66. With this updated implementation plan, Viet Nam is expected to deliver 94.5% of TFA implementation by 31 December 2023 and 100% of implementation by 31 December 2024. I would like to thank all of the development sponsors, including USAID for their TFA implementation support to Viet Nam. Thank you for that.

1.67. The Committee took note of the notifications and the statements made.

C. Notifications under Article 1:4, 10:4:3, 10:6:2 et 12:2:2 of the Trade Facilitation Agreement

1.68. The Chair drew the Committee's attention to transparency notifications under Articles 1:4, 10:4:3, 10:6:2 and 12:2:2 of the TFA. They have the objective of providing transparency, either in a broader context – providing information on publication sources – or providing information on the specific items, such as a single window operation, the use of customs brokers, and customs cooperation. A notification from Cuba had been recently submitted and would be taken up at the next Committee meeting.

1.69. The first notification was from Egypt and had been circulated in document G/TFA/N/EGY/2/Rev.1.

1.70. The delegate of the United States indicated the following:

1.71. We thank Egypt for the updated notification on use of customs brokers.

1.72. The next notification was from Kenya and had been circulated in document G/TFA/N/KEN/3/Rev.1.

1.73. The delegate of the United States indicated the following:

1.74. We thank Kenya for providing an updated enquiry point contact information which will be helpful for traders.

1.75. The third and final transparency notification was from India and had been circulated in document G/TFA/N/IND/2/Add.1.

1.76. The delegate of India indicated the following:

1.77. First of all, I would like to welcome your appointment to the chairmanship of this Committee on behalf of my delegation. We look forward to working closely with you. I would also like to place on record our appreciation for the work done by Mr. Christopher O'Toole the outgoing Chair of this Committee.

1.78. India submitted this notification in March updating the contact information of the enquiry points referred to in Article 3.1 of the Agreement.

1.79. The delegate of the United States indicated the following:

1.80. We thank India for providing an updated enquiry point contact information which is critical for all traders.

1.81. The delegate of the European Union indicated the following:

1.82. The EU would like to thank Egypt, Kenya and India who notified their updates of weblinks and information on their customs procedures and legislation.

1.83. The EU recalls the importance of such information, in particular on legislation applied, fees and charges, customs brokers, and contact points for customs cooperation.

1.84. We regret that there are still several Members that have committed to such notifications as category A or B with a final date for implementation that has already passed – and that have not yet provided the information to the WTO. The situation does not seem to have improved since our last meeting. Regarding Article 12.2.2, to our knowledge, there are still 15 Members that have committed to providing contact points for customs cooperation as category A but have not yet done so – despite the fact that more than 5 years have passed since the entry into force of the Agreement.

1.85. The Committee took note of the notifications and the statements made.

D. Notifications under Article 22 of the TFA

1.86. The Chair drew the Committee's attention to the notifications under Article 22 of the TFA. There were three separate notification obligations identified under Article 22 – Article 22:1, notifications by donor Members on their recent capacity building activities; and Articles 22:2 and 22:3, information on contact points.

1.87. The first notification was from the United States and had been circulated in document G/TFA/N/USA/6.

1.88. The delegate of the United States indicated the following:

1.89. Approximately USD 70.4 million was committed and disbursed in 2020 to support U.S. capacity building initiatives on post-clearance audits and risk analysis; advance rulings; border agency coordination; private sector engagement; public consultations, administrative procedures; and trade promotion in third party beneficiary countries around the world.

1.90. Most recently, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), led the development of a new Border Academy for Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. This collaborative capacity building effort is increasing the flow of goods and border cooperation.

1.91. USAID also supported an Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) programme in Paraguay, building on initial work undertaken by the Organization of American States (OAS). The Paraguay AEO programme was recognized by the Paraguayan American Chamber of Commerce for its innovative trade facilitation work in 2019. The programme, with the continued support of other donors, continues to make strides forward, recently signing along with seven other regional customs administrations a regional mutual recognition agreement that should help improve trade facilitation in the LAC region. Paraguay also was highlighted as making excellent progress in signing other border agencies to their AEO programme, thus offering their private sector a more seamless movement of goods.

1.92. As Viet Nam already noted and which we appreciate, USAID contributed to efforts to diminish customs wait times in Viet Nam. USAID and US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) worked to support the General Directorate of Vietnam Customs (GDVC) with training on trade compliance, specialized inspections, and leadership training. With USAID support, CBP will be sending a US CBP Officer for a six-month detail to provide support to USAID's Trade Facilitation Project and in person support for the Vietnamese private sector.

1.93. I would like to introduce a colleague who is attending today's meeting, Ms. Emmanuela Montenari-Stephens from Washington, Director for Trade and Development at USTR who will be taking a much more active role in the Committee working with TFAF as we continue working through the needs expressed by developing country and LDC members for remaining needs. Please feel free to reach out to her. We will try to put a face to the name and personalize the engagement.

1.94. The next notifications were from Cuba contained in document G/TFA/N/CUB/3/Rev.1 and from Japan in document G/TFA/N/JPN/7.

1.95. The delegate of Japan indicated the following:

1.96. Japan has long been implementing technical assistance for developing countries including LDCs, through the Customs Cooperation Fund established in the WCO multilaterally, and through accepting trainees and dispatching experts bilaterally.

1.97. Japan has continued this cooperation under the pandemic, utilizing online trainings. We continue to support the implementation of the TFA in developing and LDC Members.

1.98. The delegate of the European Union indicated the following:

1.99. The EU would like to thank the US and Japan for their notifications. Such information is crucial for the success of the implementation of category C commitments, even if it is often retroactive.

1.100. We also appreciate Cuba's information regarding their contact point for aid.

1.101. The Committee took note of the notifications and of the statements made.

1.102. The delegate of Nepal indicated the following:

1.103. The LDC Group would like to share with Members that LDC Members who are yet to notify the definitive dates of Category C measures are working intensively to meet the deadline. However, some Members may need additional time to notify their definitive dates. This is just an indication that the LDC Group wishes to share in advance with Members. The LDC Group commends all donor Members for their continued support extended to the LDCs in implementation and during the process of notification after the trade facilitation review.

1.104. The delegate of the European Union indicated the following:

1.105. In response to the comment from Nepal we would highlight that the TFA does allow Members to ask for an extension to notify the definitive dates for category C commitments.

1.2 Status of Ratification and Notification Process

i. Update by the WTO Secretariat

1.106. The representative of the WTO Secretariat presented an update since the Committee meeting held on 4-5 April 2022. The presentation is available at <https://tfadatabase.org/en/trade-facilitation-committee/meeting/2022-06-30>.

1.107. The Chair thanked and commended the WTO Secretariat.

1.108. The delegate of the United States indicated the following:

1.109. I want to thank the Secretariat for its outstanding work on the presentation and the information you provide us which is so helpful. Efforts to provide us more useful information are always welcome. Thank you Chair for your outreach to the other Members in the Committee to remind them of the upcoming dates. Based on the Secretariat's report, we will just reiterate again that there are 23 LDC notifications due in August, and Nepal's statement puts us on notice that there could be some LDCs that will seeking additional time. The Agreement certainly allows for that and we just ask those that are going to utilize that flexibility to be mindful of the deadlines in the Agreement.

1.110. I wanted to recognize Mr. Helge Lindrup, our colleague from Norway, who is here today. Helge has been involved since the TFA negotiations were undertaken over a decade ago and has helped us since then and worked on the negotiations of the Trade Facilitation Agreement. Because he cared and was a very knowledgeable and helpful Norwegian Customs expert, he shared that

expertise during the negotiations. It is an agreement that we are all proud of and is validated by the companies and traders. The Agreement speaks to the issues that they face on the ground and that is a testament to the work and dedication of the capital-based officials that participated in the TFA negotiations. Helge was a big part of that, so on his retirement and journey into the next stage that leaves work behind we wish you fair wind, my friend and best wishes in your retirement.

1.111. The delegate of the European Union indicated the following:

1.112. I cannot help but echo the previous statement, particularly, thanking Helge for his commitment and being here basically from the start of the negotiations and continuing to dedicate his time to the TFA. I think he deserves a good rest but at the same time hope that he continues working on Customs on the margins. Besides that, I would also like to join in what the Chair and the US have said in thanking the Secretariat. They made a comprehensive and very useful report on the situation. These updates are always interesting and useful as well. I also think that on our side the update to the presentation including references to donor Members and development partners could in our view be useful so having that information would definitively be interesting.

1.113. The delegate of Norway indicated the following:

1.114. Thank you so much for these kind words. It has been a very big pleasure to work here. It is true that it has been a lot of work but I think that the Agreement works very well and especially on the transparency issues. The country profiles are very useful too and updates of the links are very important so also a big thanks to the Secretariat and congratulations also to the new Chair.

1.115. The delegate of Angola indicated the following:

1.116. My delegation congratulates the Secretariat for the excellent update on the current status of implementation of the TFA.

1.117. The delegate of Nigeria indicated the following:

1.118. Nigeria also wishes to thank the Secretariat for their excellent presentation on the status of the implementation of the TFA. This Agreement is one that benefits the private sector, and we should all work towards ensuring the effective implementation of the Agreement. I also want to join colleagues from the US and the EU in thanking the colleague from Norway for his excellent work, for his service and wish him well as he moves on in his future endeavours. Thank you for what you have done for this Committee and for the TFA.

1.119. The delegate of Nepal indicated the following:

1.120. The LDC Group commends the Secretariat for its comprehensive report. That is very helpful for all Members and the LDC Group also wishes to bid farewell to the Norwegian colleague and thank him for his contribution and wish him all the best.

1.121. The Chair joined previous interventions to recognize the good work of Mr. Lindrup and wished him well on his retirement. He also reminded delegations of the importance of the 22 August deadline for notification of the definitive dates for implementation of their category C provisions. He urged any Member that required assistance with the notification process to reach out to the Secretariat. The Secretariat, together with the Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility (TFAF, the Facility), had met with 9 LDCs in response to requests for assistance. They remained available for any other Member that would also like some assistance.

1.122. The Committee took note of the information and the statements made.

ii. Updates by Members on Overdue Section I and Section II notifications (G/TFA/2, para. 9.3(ii))

1.123. The Chair recalled that according to the update provided by the Secretariat, there were 91 overdue transparency notifications under Section I and 25 overdue notifications under Section II.

1.124. The delegate of the United States indicated the following:

1.125. Transparency is critical to all traders for understanding what customs formalities are required and providing certainty at the border.

1.126. Thirty-four Members self-identified a definitive implementation deadline prior to this meeting for one of the TFA transparency provisions yet have not submitted the necessary notification to the WTO Secretariat. Each of these Members identified one or more of TFA Articles 1.4, 10.4.3, 10.6.2, and 12.2 as Category A or Category B.

1.127. Definitive date deadlines are binding, and the United States urges the following Members to submit the required information as soon as possible to fulfill these TFA commitments: Armenia, Article 1.4 due 13.12.2020; Bolivia, Article 1.4, 10.6.2, 12.2, due 22.02.2017; Brunei Darussalam, Article 1.4, 10.4.3, 10.6.2, 12.2, due 22.02.2017; Cabo Verde, Article 10.6.2, due 01.01.2022; Cameroon, Article 10.6.2, due 22.02.2017, Article 12.2 due 31.03.2022; Congo, Article 10.6.2 due 22.02.2017; Cuba, Article 1.4, 12.2 due 22.02.2022, Article 10.6.2 due 22.02.2017; Fiji, Article 1.4 due 30.06.2017, Article 10.6.2 and 12.2 due 21.12.2018; Ghana, Article 10.4.2, 10.6.2 due 22.07.2021; Grenada, Article 10.6.2 due 22.02.2017; Jamaica, Article 1.4 due 31.03.2020, Article 10.6.2 due 22.02.2017; Jordan, Article 1.4, 10.6.2, 12.2 due 22.02.2017; Kuwait, Article 1.4, 10.6.2 due 22.02.2017; Nigeria, Article 1.4 due 22.02.2022, Article 10.6.2 due 22.12.2020; Papua New Guinea, Article 1.4 due 31.12.2020, Article 10.6.2 due 22.02.2017; Qatar, Article 1.4, 10.4.3, 10.6.2, 12.2 due 22.02.2017; Seychelles, Article 1.4 due 01.10.2019, Article 10.6.2, 12.2 due 22.02.2017; South Africa, Article 1.4, 10.6.2, 12.2 due 22.02.2017; Tunisia, Article 1.4 and 12.2 due 22.02.2017; United Arab Emirates, Article 1.4, 10.6.2, 12.2 due 22.02.2017, Article 10.4.3 due 31.12.2021; Vanuatu, Article 10.6.2, 12.2 due 22.02.2017; Zimbabwe, Article 1.4 due 31.12.2020, Article 10.6.2 and 12.2 due 22.02.2017; Afghanistan, Article 1.4 due 31.12.2021, Article 10.6.2 due 22.02.2018; Angola, Article 1.4 due 30.06.2021; Benin, Article 1.4 due 30.06.2020, Article 10.4.3 due 31.12.2020, Article 10.6.2 and 12.2 due 22.02.2018; Burkina Faso, Article 10.6.2 due 22.02.2018; Burundi, Article 1.4, 10.6.2 and 12.2 due 22.02.2018; Central African Republic, Article 10.4.3 due 22.02.2018; Chad, Article 1.4, 10.6.2 and 12.2 due 22.02.2018; Djibouti, Article 10.6.2. due 22.02.2018; Mozambique, Article 10.6.2 and 12.2 due 22.02.2018; Sierra Leone, Article 10.6.2 due 31.12.2020; Solomon Islands, Article 1.4 and 10.6.2 due 22.02.2018; and Uganda, Article 1.4 and 10.6.2 due 22.02.2018.

1.128. The Chair reminded Members that Cuba had recently submitted a notification and it was in the process of circulation, as it had been called by the United States as one of the outstanding notifications.

1.129. The delegate of Angola indicated the following:

1.130. Angola will be requesting an extension for its category B provision, Article 1.1.

1.131. The delegate of Japan indicated the following:

1.132. Thank you very much to the Secretariat for informative and very useful presentation.

1.133. Notifications are the fundamental element for proper functioning of the WTO as well as the basic obligation for all the Members. In addition, for developing and LDC Members, they are prerequisite to legitimately enjoying the flexibilities provided for in the TFA.

1.134. Japan, therefore, invites all Members to make notifications in a timely manner, and considers that it may be helpful for Members which are experiencing difficulty which prevents them from timely notifications to share their difficulties with the Committee.

1.135. The delegate of the European Union indicated the following:

1.136. We fully support the statements that have been made and we would like to note again that there are flexibilities in the Agreement for the Members having difficulties to notify their final dates. Those flexibilities should be used, and Members should explain their difficulties. We very much support the statement made by Japan in this regard and also by the United States regarding all the due notifications which sometimes date back to 2018 and 2017 on transparency measures. We would

also very much appreciate hearing the views of the Members that have implementation commitments due by June as indicated in document G/TFA/INF/1/Rev.1. We think it is very important to track Members' committed deadlines, and we would very much welcome feedback from the Members concerned.

1.137. The Committee took note of the information and the statements made.

1.3 Status of Definitive Date Implementation (G/TFA/2, para. 9.3(vi))

i. Review of the effectiveness of G/TFA/INF/1/Rev.1

1.138. The Chair recalled that G/TFA/INF/1 and its subsequent revisions had been created as a reminder document and was meant to be a useful tool to help Members keep track of their implementation dates coming up over the next two years.

1.139. As a result of the TFA Review, the Committee had decided to review the effectiveness of G/TFA/INF/1 and, "as appropriate, improve the list and the methods for circulating it by reflecting feedback from Members in order to promote better self-management by Members of their own implementation status and allow adequate monitoring by the Committee".

1.140. The delegate of Japan indicated the following:

1.141. Japan considers it important not only that developing and LDC Members grasp the status how they have implemented the TFA but also that the TF Committee is able to follow the situation how Members have implemented it. In this regard, the definitive date list prepared by the Secretariat is a helpful reminder for Members.

1.142. It is expected that Members found on the list implement the TFA by the date they themselves notified, with close communication with their capitals. It is also reminded that notification of extending the date for implementation needs to be done in accordance with Article 17 of the TFA.

1.143. The Committee took note of the statement made.

ii. Voluntary update by Members of the status of definitive date implementation (G/TFA/2, para. 9.2(vi))

1.144. The delegate of the Philippines indicated the following:

1.145. Congratulations Chair on your appointment. We look forward to working with the TF Committee under your leadership.

1.146. Following the implementation timeframe of our remaining category C commitment, the Philippines is pleased to notify the Committee that we have now established a functioning national single window in accordance with our definitive implementation date of 30 June 2022 and in fulfilment of our obligations under Article 10.4 of the TFA.

1.147. The delegate of Thailand indicated the following:

1.148. I would like to congratulate you on your appointment. We would like to update the status of our implementation under category B. We are pleased to share that since 27 March 2021, Thailand has completed the regulation process and fully implemented three provisions, Article 11.1, 11.8 and 11.9 regarding freedom of transit, and the completion date falls within the indicated definitive date on 22 February 2022. Therefore, we completed our process ahead of the deadline. Lastly, Thailand would like to share that we remain committed to implement the rest of the Category B within the definitive date which is due in 2024.

1.149. The delegate of the European Union indicated the following:

1.150. We would like to congratulate the Members who have reported their implementation experience. This is extremely useful for everybody, and we thank them.

1.151. The delegate of the United States indicated the following:

1.152. I want to join the EU and congratulate the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam for sharing your experience and for your robust implementation, including ahead of their deadline for Thailand and the Philippines.

1.153. The Committee took note of the statements made.

1.154. That concluded agenda item 1.

2 EXPERIENCE SHARING/THEMATIC DISCUSSIONS

2.1. Members addressed the following issues:

- a. [China's Experience in Improving Trade Facilitation Through "Smart Customs, Smart Borders, and Smart Connectivity - China](#)
- b. [Implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement and Further Steps on Introduction of Electronic Document Processing in Foreign Trade - The Kyrgyz Republic](#)
- c. [Status of the Implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement – Angola](#)

2.2. That concluded agenda item 2.

3 FOLLOW-UP ON THE SECRETARIAT STUDY "EASING TRADE BOTTLENECKS IN LANDLOCKED DEVELOPING COUNTRIES" – REQUEST FROM BOTSWANA

3.1. The Chair recalled that Botswana, as Coordinator of the Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), in a communication dated 15 June, had requested to conduct a follow-up to the Secretariat study "Easing Trade Bottlenecks in Landlocked Developing Countries".

3.2. The delegate of Botswana, on behalf of the Landlocked Developing Countries, indicated the following:

3.3. The LLDCs group wishes to congratulate you, Chair, on your appointment and pledges full support throughout your tenure.

3.4. The 32 LLDCs' share of merchandise exports has continued to be around 1%. Due to the high trade costs and distance to global markets LLDCs are relatively not competitive in attracting foreign direct investment which is fundamental to economic and export diversification. This situation results in narrow production and export bases, leading to limited economic growth and persistent poverty in the LLDCs.

3.5. The COVID-19-related restrictive measures to cross-border and transit freight transportation along with additional inspections has further exposed the transit constraints of LLDCs. This caused supply chains disruptions and worsened LLDC's trade costs and timely delivery of essential goods and services.

3.6. Addressing transit and the associated high trade costs faced by LLDCs is therefore important and the role of the WTO is critical in this process. MC12 underscored "the relevance and critical role of international trade and the WTO in global economic recovery, growth, prosperity, alleviation of poverty, welfare of all people, sustainable development..." It is important that LLDCs are not left behind and are able to harness trade to achieve sustainable COVID-19 recovery.

3.7. LLDCs welcome the historic decision by the 12th Ministerial Conference instructing the TF Committee "to hold a Dedicated Session on transit issues annually until the next review of the Trade Facilitation Agreement is completed". This decision follows the same one by this Committee as part of its review of the TFA. One session was held in Spring this year and we look forward to our continued engagement in the remaining three sessions. It is the LLDCs' expectation that these sessions will identify strategies to achieve efficient transit.

3.8. We are committed to working with you in finding tangible solutions and we count on your support. We also hope that through follow up actions to these sessions we would be able to achieve higher implementation rate of the TFA by both LLDCs and transit countries that can result in a meaningful decrease in trade costs faced by LLDCs.

3.9. The WTO Secretariat undertook a study on "Easing Trade Bottlenecks in Landlocked Developing Countries" in 2021. This report identified some of the areas and issues where targeted steps need to be taken to ease trade bottlenecks – not only by the LLDCs themselves but also transit countries and organizations involved. The report confirms that LLDCs face very high trade costs which are on average almost double the average trade costs faced by coastal countries.

3.10. The study highlights that the development of transit corridors has produced tangible results in reducing delays and reducing trade costs. It also emphasizes the need to enhance implementation of the TFA including digitalization by LLDCs and their transit neighbours. It further recommends that the development of transit corridors should be encouraged.

3.11. The Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs which aims to address the special needs and challenges faced by the LLDCs stresses the importance of reducing travel time along corridors; reducing the time spent at land borders; highlights the importance of implementing the TFA and other legal instruments and conventions aimed at facilitating transit transport and trade; and the development and maintenance of transit transport infrastructure, including corridors, in both LLDCs and transit countries.

3.12. LLDCs attach great importance to addressing transit challenges given the dire impact of inefficient transit systems on trade and overall development. There are corridors that have been identified as being successful in facilitating trade and transit and these can provide a great resource for LLDCs and transit countries to learn from.

3.13. In this regard, we would like that the Committee request the Secretariat to undertake this research, partnering with relevant organizations as required, to conduct a follow-up study on trade corridors operating between LLDCs and transit countries. The study should map corridors in all regions with LLDCs with a view to identify the key corridors that serve the LLDCs and analyze the extent to which the TFA provisions have been implemented on existing corridors and the extent to which they have enhanced trade facilitation for the LLDCs.

3.14. The idea is to identify ways to strengthen corridor performance in enhancing trade facilitation and address delays and high trade costs faced by LLDCs. This would be important in promoting sharing of experiences and lessons learnt across corridors on successful measures of advancing implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement to reduce trade costs. We request that the Secretariat report the progress to the Trade Facilitation Committee at its Dedicated Session on Transit in spring of 2023.

3.15. The LLDCs bank on your usual support as they continue to make efforts to implement the TFA. By supporting these initiatives, we will indeed be keeping with the principles of the WTO, including open trade, predictability, and transparency.

3.16. The delegate of Mongolia indicated the following:

3.17. Let me congratulate you on your appointment, Chair, and assure you of my delegation's full support.

3.18. My delegation wishes to thank the delegation of Botswana for bringing up this agenda item and aligns itself with the statement delivered by the distinguished colleague of Botswana. Indeed, this Committee had a very important first dedicated session on transit issues of landlocked countries this March and conducting a follow-up study on trade corridors operating between LLDCs and transit countries definitely would be a next meaningful step towards the acceleration of full implementation of the TFA by LLDCs, which stands at 55% compared to 75% of global implementation commitments as of today. So Mongolia would like to request the Committee to support this initiative.

3.19. The delegate of Tajikistan indicated the following:

3.20. At the outset, I would like to congratulate you Mr. Chair for your appointment as Chair of this Committee and wish you every success for the year ahead.

3.21. We thank Botswana for bringing this topic to the attention of the Committee and associates ourselves with the statement delivered by Botswana on behalf of the LLDCs. Tajikistan belongs to the group of countries that are considered landlocked and a small economy. Tajikistan being a landlocked country itself is surrounded by landlocked countries and has one of the longest distances to the sea among the LLDCs.

3.22. Tajikistan's landlocked status and remoteness from international maritime routes means that enterprises incur additional costs as they have to use the transport facilities of neighbouring countries to participate in international trade. This makes the situation of Tajikistan enterprises even more challenging. We commend all LLDCs in general and Mongolia in particular as former coordinator of the LLDCs for the paragraph in the outcome document and welcome the decision by the MC12 instructing the CTF to hold a dedicated session on transit issues annually until the next Review of the TFA.

3.23. Tajikistan thanks the Secretariat for undertaking the study on easing trade bottlenecks in landlocked developing countries in 2021. As mentioned by the colleague from Botswana, this study identified some areas that require further actions for easing trade bottlenecks and acknowledge very high costs faced by LLDCs. In this regard, we support the idea of identifying ways to strengthen corridor performance in enhancing trade facilitation and address delays and high trade costs faced by LLDCs, and encourage the WTO in partnership with relevant organizations to carry out a follow-up study on trade corridors operating between LLDCs and transit countries.

3.24. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all donor countries and international organizations for their continued support and technical assistance provided to Tajikistan and encourage them to continue their financial assistance to LLDCs, including Tajikistan, to fully implement the TFA, particularly category C provisions which require technical and financial assistance.

3.25. The delegate of Nepal indicated the following:

3.26. My delegation extends sincere appreciation to the delegation of Botswana for bringing this agenda item to the meeting. Nepal associates with the statement made by Botswana on behalf of the LLDC group. My delegation supports the concerns and the questions raised by Botswana. Nepal urges all Members to consider this request positively.

3.27. The delegate of the United States requested further clarification regarding the request, and whether it was a request for another report.

3.28. The delegate of Botswana indicated the following:

3.29. The request is that we would like this Committee to request the Secretariat to undertake research partnering with relevant organizations as requested to conduct a follow-up study on trade corridors operating between LLDCs and transit countries. This follows the study conducted last year.

3.30. The delegate of the United States indicated the following:

3.31. We definitely are supportive of the need to understand and help landlocked countries. The additional challenges and costs of being landlocked and transiting through multiple countries in order to access the sea is undeniable and we are supportive of the dedicated transit session. I'm a little confused about the additional report to follow up a report from last year that was already 132 pages. I'm very supportive of doing something, maybe if I understood more clearly about how this report would differ to the report from last year and what it would bring to the table, we could move forward. It just seems to me following up a year later on a report with another report may not be the most efficient use of time and resources. I just want to understand what we are trying to drill down to that would really help this discussion and help with implementation. If it is a report that's fine, but there is nothing you said today that makes me think that a report is the right way to go, versus

inviting traders and logistics providers that operate in landlocked countries to come and share their experiences. That may unlock this a little bit more. Happy to talk more with the landlocked countries and the proponents of this request as to the best way forward.

3.32. The delegate of the European Union indicated the following:

3.33. The EU appreciates the agenda item and we appreciated hearing the LLDCs perspective. We agree that accelerating TF implementation is even more important for the landlocked countries. However, we do agree with the US question on the efficiency of preparing a follow-up report to our already existing report.

3.34. The Chair encouraged Botswana to discuss with the United States and revert to the Committee later during the meeting.

3.35. At a later stage in the meeting and following consultations, the delegate of Botswana indicated the following:

3.36. We met with the United States and we had a discussion to iron out on the issues that were not clear. The main issue is that our request reflects that the WTO Secretariat will work with other relevant institutions on the proposed study. We have now agreed that we need to reflect on our submission, we need to revise it to indicate or highlight that LLDCs will be part of the process. This report will be Member-driven, meaning that LLDCs will be in the process of the whole exercise. And with that said, we will revise the text that we had initially submitted to indicate that.

3.37. The Committee took note of the information and the statements made.

3.38. That concluded agenda item 3.

4 GOOD PRACTICES AND BUILDING BLOCKS OF SUCCESSFUL NTFCS (G/TFA/2, PARA 9.3(V))

4.1. The Chair recalled that the drafting of a document containing good practices and building blocks of successful National Trade Facilitation Committees (NTFCs) was another decision arising from the TFA Review (G/TFA/2, para 9.3(v)).

4.2. The delegate of the United States indicated the following:

4.3. We are working on a draft Committee Decision document in Capital and hope to be able to deliver an updated document before the Fall.

4.4. The delegate of the European Union indicated that the EU very much supported this initiative.

4.5. The Committee took note of the information and the statement made.

4.6. That concluded agenda item 4.

5 REGULARIZED AGENDA TOPICS FOR THE DEDICATED SESSION ON ASSISTANCE AND CAPACITY BUILDING, WITHIN THE PARAMETERS OF ARTICLE 21.4 (G/TFA/2, PARA 9.2(III)) – DRAFT FOR AGREEMENT BY THE COMMITTEE (G/W/78/REV.1)

5.1. The Chair recalled that under the Review of the TFA, the Committee had decided that the Secretariat would lead a process with Members to agree on regularized agenda topics for the dedicated session on assistance and capacity building, within the parameters of Article 21.4 of the TFA. Reference to this decision is contained in document G/TFA/2, para 9.2 sub-paragraph (iii).

5.2. An informal first draft of a potential regularized agenda had been informally circulated on 23 March. Following discussions at the Committee meeting of 4 and 5 April, a draft regularized agenda was circulated in document G/TFA/W/78 dated 25 May, and a revised draft of a regularized agenda was circulated in document G/TFA/W/78/Rev.1 dated 21 June.

5.3. The delegate of the United Kingdom indicated the following:

5.4. The UK would like to thank the Secretariat for circulating the latest draft of the dedicated session agenda, which incorporated the feedback the UK presented at the last Committee. We welcome any thoughts from Members on our suggested changes which include not limiting item 1 of the agenda to the top five category C commitments only, as well as linking the synergies item under item 4 with the ongoing existing section under item 2. We welcome any thoughts on those changes ahead of the structured dedicated session in October.

5.5. The delegate of the United States indicated the following:

5.6. We thank the Chair and the Secretariat for leading the Member-driven process to determine agenda topics for the dedicated session on assistance and capacity building. We are supportive of the revised document.

5.7. The delegate of the European Union indicated the following:

5.8. We thank the United Kingdom for the proposal which is very productive and constructive. We hope that the next dedicated session can be as fruitful and very concrete on the problems faced by the Members having notified category C commitments and the UK proposal is a good avenue to that.

5.9. The Committee agreed to adopt the regularized agenda topics for the dedicated session on assistance and capacity building, within the parameters of Article 21.4 as contained in G/TFA/W/78/Rev.1.

6 FIVE-YEAR TFA ANNIVERSARY EVENT – REPORT BY THE CHAIRPERSON

6.1. The Chair indicated the following:

6.2. I think all those of you who participated can agree that we had a very full day with many examples of impactful implementation of TFA provisions and their advancement of trade facilitation reform.

6.3. The event underlined that while the TFA is making a difference, of course there are also some challenges to be overcome.

6.4. I would like to highlight a number of the major points in particular that came through the discussions yesterday: Digitalization, Resilience, Inclusiveness, and Coordination.

6.5. First, digitalization. There seemed to be a broad recognition that the TFA can accelerate – and yet heavily relies on – the sorts of automated processes that make customs procedures both more efficient and more effective. For instance, various commentators noted how the success of certain technological innovations can be borne out of the introduction of single window systems – electronic documentation, data analytics, the use of blockchain, and artificial intelligence, to name a few. At the same time, there continue to be challenges in the implementation of single window, particularly as it relates to developing better quality data and finding solutions to maximize data interoperability.

6.6. Second, trade facilitation also strengthens resilience. The experience with recent health and geopolitical shocks has confirmed the proof of concept of the Trade Facilitation Agreement. Several commentators noted, for instance, that countries who had implemented TF reforms were better able to adapt to changes in trade volumes and regulatory controls during the pandemic. The TFA helps Members build resilience, and thus efforts to improve TF compliance not only yield the immediate benefits of reduced trading times and costs, but also strengthen Members' ability to respond to the next crisis.

6.7. Third, trade facilitation promotes inclusiveness. There was a spirited discussion about the extent to which benefits extend to all traders, and more work remains to be done to identify the areas of maximum benefit for the world's smallest traders – the micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, and in many cases the women who run them. Several countries identified their efforts to facilitate trade for small businesses and noted how efforts to streamline customs processes and

formalities can only accrue to the benefits of these entities by clarifying the rules and lowering the barriers to participate in global markets.

6.8. Finally, trade facilitation relies on sound coordination within and between countries. We heard common themes from participants about the importance of improving coordination and ownership by various national agencies responsible for border matters, having a sound legal mandate to ensure a strong foundation for that dialogue, and to the critical importance that the private sector plays in informing NTFCs about what is truly happening at the border while also serving as a critical partner in designing and implementing trade facilitation reforms. Yet a host of challenges remain – technical, human, and budgetary – and further cooperation both nationally and internationally is critical to long term NTFC sustainability.

6.9. We also heard the warning from developing and LDC Members and from some international organizations about the gaps in meeting technical assistance and capacity building needs.

6.10. Overall, it has been very encouraging to hear and see how Members are committed to the implementation of the Agreement and how they are committed to trade facilitation reform. I am pleased that Members have had the opportunity to continue the conversation in sharing experiences and exchanging best practices.

6.11. All presentations from the event are available on the event website and will be uploaded to the TFA database website.

6.12. I would like to conclude my report by thanking all those who contributed to the event.

6.13. Firstly, I would like to express my warm appreciation to all speakers, panellists for sharing their experience and insights with us. I would also like to thank the moderators for their great job in ensuring the sessions ran smoothly and efficiently,

6.14. Of course, I would like to thank everyone who intervened and those who joined us in the room and virtually.

6.15. And I would like to finish by thanking the WTO team, across several divisions, who worked hard to provide a very worthy celebration of the first 5 years of the TFA.

6.16. The delegate of the United Kingdom indicated the following:

6.17. The United Kingdom would like to take this opportunity to thank the Chair and the Secretariat for coordinating and facilitating such an interesting event yesterday celebrating the fifth anniversary of the TFA. It was a great day, in which Members and Annex D organizations alike provided a wealth of knowledge and experience to highlight the challenges and benefits of the TFA. As we look forward to the next five years of implementation, we will undoubtedly use these topics and themes raised over the course of the event in this Committee going forward. We would encourage the continued practice of experience sharing in the Committee and look forward to future dialogues with Members on topics such as implementing a single trade window. Finally, it would be remiss of us not to note the significant contribution of the previous Chair, Mr. Christopher O'Toole, in driving the event forward and the United Kingdom would like to extend its thanks to him for his input into the success of the event.

6.18. The delegate of the United States indicated the following:

6.19. I just want to express my appreciation to yourself and to the Secretariat for all work that they put in, and Mr. Christopher O'Toole for his work in helping set up the event. My appreciation to the speakers and all those who took time to put together presentations and share their knowledge. I want to give a particular shout out to Ecuador and Cambodia. I thought their conversations, and India's also, on the NTFCs really very interesting, a wealth of information about the functioning of NTFCs. A lot of work for us to do moving forward to harness those experiences as we think about what the best practices in NTFCs are and share that experience.

6.20. The delegate of Norway indicated the following:

6.21. I want to join you and other Members to show my deep appreciation for the hard work done by Members, this Committee, the Secretariat, and yourself, in getting this event running. It was really a good event and I really appreciated the last part of it where we had a really good discussion. Anniversaries are something that you do once a year but think of a biannual event, where we go a little bit deeper into issues that we just touched upon on the last part yesterday. That would be something that I would really like to take part in.

6.22. The Chair reflected that a celebration of the TFA every year was worth it because trade facilitation was the life of each and every agreement in the WTO today.

6.23. The delegate of India indicated the following:

6.24. I wish to congratulate you, the outgoing Chair, the WTO Secretariat and all the participants here. The Indian delegation here is three strong – I am accompanied by the representative who is based in Geneva plus my junior colleague who is part of the NTFC Secretariat, and I have practice in implementing some of the TFA provisions and performance measurement. The composition of the team itself is a reflection of the fact that India places highest importance on trade facilitation and its implementation which is reflected both in our having fulfilled all the TFA commitments and having reduced the release time which is the performance indicator included in the TFA itself, Article 7.6. During the interaction yesterday, we saw how many other countries have shared their gains and we recognize the challenges. India thinks that it would be an important exercise going forward to work in a collaborative manner where we kind of use the experience and the best practices which have been obtained by some of the countries in different areas and try and implement that so that the world is a more trade facilitative environment.

6.25. The delegate of Ecuador indicated the following:

6.26. As this is my first time taking the floor, I would like to congratulate you for being elected Chair of this Committee and I would assure you of Ecuador's full support in future work. We wanted to also congratulate and thank you for all the work for yesterday's five-year anniversary event and thank the team, the Secretariat, and the work that the preceding Chair. We note it was a significant effort and your efforts did not go unnoticed. We would like to support what other delegations have said, we wish to continue reviewing different matters that were referred to yesterday. It was a very useful exercise, we recognized what we have achieved, and we also recognized the gaps in terms of implementing the TFA. In that respect we would like to also go into more depth and analysis.

6.27. The delegate of China indicated the following:

6.28. China would also like to join other Members to appreciate the great efforts of the Secretariat and you Chair and many other colleagues who contributed a lot to the anniversary. We really find it a very good opportunity for Members to share views and experience and to learn from each other and to sum up what we already achieved in the past five years and what we can do in the future. Especially we appreciate that you give us opportunities to introduce our 3S (Smart Customs, Smart Borders and Smart Connectivity) initiative. Especially, we appreciate the comments from the US, the EU, Nigeria, Kyrgyz Republic, Canada, and yourself Chair, as well as the Director of the Market Access Division. We look forward to close cooperation with all Members on this initiative because we already see that the digitalization and modernization of trade is very important for our further implementation of the TFA.

6.29. The delegate of Nepal indicated the following:

6.30. The LDC Group extends sincere appreciation to you Chair, to the WTO Secretariat, the outgoing Chair, all speakers and panelists, and participants for their valuable contribution to organizing and successfully concluding the event. The LDC Group found the event very useful to learn from each other in the process of implementing the Agreement and benefiting from it. The LDCs are fully committed to the effective implementation of the TFA and stand ready to engage with you and the entire membership in the process of implementation of the Agreement.

6.31. The delegate of Colombia indicated the following:

6.32. First, we would like to congratulate speakers and panelists yesterday for their wonderful presentations. We know how much they put into this topic and their dedication to trade facilitation, and we also wish to especially applaud the work of the Secretariat and the WTO team for putting all their efforts into the success of this event. Many speakers referenced the challenges of trade facilitation, and its implementation above and beyond the Agreement itself. In Colombia we have a policy to simplify formalities called "Estado Simple, Colombia Agil", which has helped us to intervene in more than 4,000 formalities, making them easier for individuals and companies, with particular emphasis in the private sector. We celebrate having a broad view of a wide-ranging problem. This was Colombia's commitment to trade facilitation as a mechanism to improve the quality of life of our citizens.

6.33. The delegate of the European Union indicated the following:

6.34. I would like to join other speakers in congratulating you as the Chair and everyone else involved in the success of this anniversary event. We appreciate all the speakers' contributions as well as the work of the WTO Secretariat and the outgoing Chair. The input received from the various speakers from successes to challenges should be kept in mind when moving forward with this Committee.

6.35. The delegate of Canada (former Chair of the CTF) indicated the following:

6.36. First, thank you Chair and thanks to colleagues for the kind words. I really appreciate it. This was really a team effort amongst both myself, the new Chair, and all of the Secretariat folks. I really appreciate the Members that came forward and actively engaged in pulling together this agenda. It was indeed a lot of work, but it was a very valuable result.

6.37. Speaking on behalf of Canada, I would like to build on a couple of other comments including from Ecuador and from the EU around going into more depth on some of these things. I came away from the discussion yesterday with two tracks in mind. I don't know exactly what they look like at the moment but there is a lot of information there that is very valuable for capital-based people who work on trade facilitation day in, day out, a lot of the NTFC members and ourselves, figuring out a way to share that information, gather it together in some sort of concise report or whatever it looks like. Perhaps Members can work together in an informal process going forward in the coming months. There was a lot of information that the Committee needs to consider as to how the Committee can help ourselves and help our capital-based colleagues support the implementation of the TFA. I am trying to plant a seed here that we can gather together amongst the number of interested Members either on our own or under the guidance of yourself, Chair, in an informal process. I think it would be useful for us to have a fresh look at what was said yesterday and have a discussion or consideration at least of what maybe the Committee can work on in the future. It is not a commitment but I think it bears an extra effort on the part of the Committee members to reflect on what we heard yesterday and try to categorize or create some sort of reference that we can use to help guide us going forward in our work.

6.38. The delegate of Japan indicated the following:

6.39. Japan supports the previous statements made by other Members. I would like to also congratulate and express our gratitude for the very successful event itself and for all the people engaged in that event.

6.40. The delegate of Korea indicated the following:

6.41. As it is the first time I take the floor, I would like to congratulate you on your appointment as Chairperson of this Committee. I thank the Secretariat, the Chairperson, and the former Chairperson for arranging the event. Korea attended this event as a presenter on trade. The event gives us a view into the TFA's lateral implications, as well as its past and future.

6.42. The delegate of Australia indicated the following:

6.43. I would like to join colleagues in congratulating the previous Chair and yourself and the Secretariat. One of my observations is that this year the strength of the presenters and the panelists is a testament to the importance of this Agreement, and its centrality to the work of this organization. I think it was a very good stock-take of challenges and opportunities and an equal measure of looking forward and challenges ahead. The strong message that the TFA helped Members navigate the pandemic was very, very central and very strong.

6.44. The delegate of Switzerland indicated the following:

6.45. As this is the first time I take the floor, let me congratulate you on your appointment as Chairperson of this Committee. We are looking forward to working with you.

6.46. I will continue with congratulations and echo colleagues congratulating you Chair, the previous Chair, and of course also the Secretariat for the excellent event yesterday. I would also like to thank all Members that contributed to the event. I believe it was a good opportunity to celebrate the TFA, its achievements and at the same time also have a forward-looking component on remaining challenges.

6.47. The delegate of Angola indicated the following:

6.48. Thank you to the Secretariat for all the support and hard work that you have been doing during these days. I would also like to echo the support from the delegates, first from the perspective of driving the Members to implement the TFA and for the partners organizations that are still supporting us in doing so.

6.49. The Chair indicated the following:

6.50. Thank you very much for your wonderful comments and commendations of what transpired yesterday. The lessons learned from yesterday need to be emulated and continue to be repeated. The TFA has a huge contribution to help every Member to improve trade performances, in international trade and so many things in life.

6.51. The TFA was agreed at Bali and later we saw the benefit in it. Yesterday's event was encouraging and we shall look into whatever was said and try to brainstorm and look at what would most benefit and enhance the achievements of the TFA. There is a TFA component in all the WTO agreements so therefore the TFA becomes the life of the WTO agreements.

6.52. This concluded agenda item 6.

7 THE TRADE FACILITATION AGREEMENT FACILITY – ITEMS RELATED TO THE FRAMEWORK (G/TFA/3)

i. Annual Report (G/TFA/4)

7.1. The Committee took note of the Report.

ii. Regular Update to the Trade Facilitation Committee (G/TFA/W/79)

7.2. The Committee took note of the Update.

iii. Workplan – Priorities to be Identified by the Committee

7.3. The Chair recalled that a framework for the management and operation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility (TFAF, the Facility), circulated in document G/TFA/3, had been adopted at the Committee meeting of 4 and 5 April 2022. The Framework stated that "the role of the Facility is to support the Committee's work in relation to assisting developing Members and LDCs in implementing the Agreement. Guidance concerning the nature of such support will be provided by the Committee".

Under sub-heading 3 "Management and Transparency of the Framework", the framework states that:

"the Facility working jointly with a representative group composed of interested Members shall prepare a work plan for the upcoming calendar year.

This work plan shall be drawn up based on, *inter alia*, the following:

- (i) Priorities identified by the Committee as conveyed during a formal meeting held before mid-year, under a specific agenda item entitled "The Facility Work Plan"; and
- (ii) Trade facilitation needs identified in the biennial ITTC survey of Members' technical assistance needs as well as needs identified in Category C notifications. [...]

The work plan, accompanied by a draft budget based on the activities identified, shall be reviewed by the Committee during its dedicated session on assistance and capacity building."

7.4. The representative of the TFAF indicated the following:

7.5. A first step in the development of the Workplan for 2023 is the identification of volunteers who would like to take part in a representative group. We welcome anyone to volunteer to let us know as soon as possible, but ideally before 15 July. We welcome any suggestions today on what should be in the workplan as well as on how we should proceed. Unless we receive different suggestions based on what has worked well in the past, we will prepare a draft or outline of the workplan that can serve as basis of discussion in the group. The draft or outline will include the needs that the Chair just identified, such as the needs identified in the biennial ITTC survey as well as any suggestions made by Members today and any suggestions that Members want to send us in writing. Again we kindly ask for these suggestions to be sent to TFAF as soon as possible, but no later than 15 July. We will aim at having a meeting of this group soon after 15 July and we will meet with the group as often as necessary to make sure a workplan is ready to be circulated to Members before the Dedicated Session on Technical Assistance and Capacity Building on 1 December.

7.6. The delegate of China indicated the following:

7.7. China appreciates the contribution of the TFAF to supporting the relevant Members to implement the TFA. As a partner of TFAF, China donated USD 1 million to the TFAF and we will try to do our best to support the TFAF to launch the capacity building and technical assistance programme. China is more than happy to take part in the representative group to draft the TFAF work plan of 2023.

7.8. The delegate of the Kyrgyz Republic indicated the following:

7.9. We really appreciate the efforts of TFAF for the support provided to the Kyrgyz Republic. A few months ago, the Kyrgyz Republic completed preparation of a project proposal for financing of a project from international sources through the TFAF. It concerns several important areas, including the development of a feasibility study for the establishment of a national customs laboratory within the context of developing the capacity in the customs service and the creation of an electronic platform for the electronic customs declarations.

7.10. Preparatory work on applying for a grant from TFAF began in 2019. However, due to the pandemic and the subsequent change in the work schedule to online work in the Kyrgyz Republic and in most countries of the world, the Project Preparation Grant (PPG) for drafting a Project Proposal was shifted to January 2022. The PPG was successfully completed in April of this year. The TFAF Secretariat circulated this document to potential interested parties among the WTO Members.

7.11. The project proposal reflects: (1) the tasks and objectives of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic in the implementation of the TFA; (2) the progress in implementing the provisions of the Agreement; (3) an assessment of the level of implementation of the Articles of the Agreement; (4) a description of the need for the project; (5) the project implementation methodology; (6) description of project beneficiaries; (7) an analysis of the risks that pose potential threats to the implementation

of the project; (8) and a detailed project budget, a matrix of activities, a vision of the management structure and the project team.

7.12. Special attention is paid to development programmes and the concept of improvement in the field of customs regulation with a focus on the aspect of digitalization of services that covers international trade in goods, strengthening the coordination of activities between various state bodies involved in the process of foreign trade regulation.

7.13. The application of digital technologies and the gradual transition from traditional paper-based document management to electronic systems are consistent with national programmes and concepts for creating a regionally and internationally competitive economy. Therefore, the delegation of the Kyrgyz Republic appeals to the WTO Secretariat, TFAF and the WTO Member States providing financial and technical assistance, to accept the Kyrgyz application for financing the project, which was submitted to TFAF.

7.14. Dear Mr. Chairperson, dear Members, on behalf of the Kyrgyz delegation participating in the work of the TFA Committee, let me wish you success in your work for the benefit of strengthening trade and economic ties of all participants in the international trading system.

7.15. The delegate of the United States indicated the following:

7.16. We would like to thank TFAF for the excellent work in preparing the Annual Report and the Report to the Committee. This added transparency gives Members' confidence in the TFAF and that we are working together to achieve our common goal of successful implementation of the TFA.

7.17. We appreciate the work TFAF is doing to help those LDCs who have not yet notified their definitive category C dates to do so by the August 22 deadline.

7.18. Finally, we look forward to participating in the representative small group from the Committee that will begin to prepare the TFAF workplan for the 2023.

7.19. The delegate of the European Union indicated the following:

7.20. I too would like to thank TFAF for the update and also the Kyrgyz Republic. I would like to express interest in participating in the representative small group on behalf of the EU.

7.21. The delegate of Nepal indicated the following:

7.22. Again, the LDC group extends its sincere appreciation to the TFAF for its update and for its contribution to the process of notification and implementation of the TFA in LDCs. The LDC group would also like to participate in the representative small group drafting the plan.

7.23. The delegate of Canada indicated the following:

7.24. Just shortly to say thanks to TFAF for the report. And yes, Canada would like to participate in the interested parties' group to help draft the work plan.

7.25. The delegate of Botswana indicated the following:

7.26. On behalf of the Botswana delegation and on behalf of LLDCs, we would like to thank the support of TFAF, and we volunteer to be part of the working group.

7.27. The Chair invited interested delegations to provide suggestions or provide contact information to TFAF by 15 July 2022. Following that deadline, the Facility, working jointly with a representative group composed of interested Members, would prepare the workplan, incorporating the outcome of today's discussion and any additional written input received by the 15 July deadline. In accordance with the framework guidelines, the workplan, accompanied by a draft budget based on the activities identified, will be circulated ahead of the December dedicated session on technical assistance and capacity building, at which time it will be reviewed by the Committee.

7.28. This concluded agenda item 7.

8 RECENT AND UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

8.1. The Committee took note of the Report by Annex D organizations in document G/TFA/W/80.

8.2. This concluded item 8.

9 OTHER BUSINESS

9.1. During the meeting, the Committee bid farewell and extended appreciation and good wishes to a number of delegates who were moving on from the Committee: Mr Helge Lindrup (Norway), Mr Eric Mr Buddhi (Nepal)

9.2. The Chair confirmed that the dates for the next formal meeting in 2022 would be 4-6 October. The Dedicated Session on Technical Assistance and Capacity Building Support would take place on 6 October.

9.3. The Committee agreed to invite the Annex D organizations, as well as the Global Alliance on Trade Facilitation to the next meeting.

9.4. The delegate of China indicated the following:

9.5. Based on the discussion and communication of these two days, I would like to share one observation on the issue of quantitative evaluation of TFA implementation by Members. According to Article 7.6.1 of the TFA, Members are encouraged to measure and publish their average release time of goods. Article 7.6.2 also encourages Members to share with the Committee their experience in measuring average release times. Apart from the time release study, we note that there are also tools developed by other international organizations like the OECD's Trade Facility Exchange Indicators. I also heard that there are some similar tools developed by the different organizations. In China, an NGO named the Beijing Record Trade Security and the Facilitation Research Centre provide an independent quantitative measure of TFA implementation over the past few years. Based on this observation and in accordance with the spirit of Article 7, I think that it would be appropriate for us to look and exchange experiences with such tools to see how they are used. This may help us to get a better understanding of the implementation of the TFA by Members.

9.6. This concluded item 9.

9.7. The meeting was adjourned.
