



SITPRO

Trade Policy Guides



The WTO Trade Facilitation Negotiations



Guide to the WTO Trade Facilitation Negotiations

Ministers from the 150 member countries of the World Trade Organisation decided, in December 2005 at the Ministerial Conference in Hong Kong, to start drafting the text of a WTO trade facilitation agreement, which should be prepared by July 2006.

Timetable

These negotiations are part of the WTO Doha Development Agenda (DDA), which also include negotiations on agriculture, industrial tariffs and trade in services. The aim is to complete all negotiations by the end of 2006.

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What the WTO Negotiations are About

What is Trade Facilitation?

Trade facilitation aims to improve procedures and controls governing the movement of goods across national borders in order to reduce associated costs and burdens, maximise efficiency and safeguard legitimate regulatory objectives.

The WTO definition of trade facilitation is "the simplification and harmonisation of international trade procedures" with trade procedures defined as "activities, practices and formalities involved in collecting, presenting, communicating and processing data required for the movement of goods in international trade".

The Mandate for the Negotiations

The negotiation mandate is laid out in Annex D of the WTO General Council's decision on the DDA work programme (the "July package"), agreed on 1 August 2004. Paragraph 1 states:

*Negotiations shall aim to clarify and improve relevant aspects of Articles V, VIII and X of the GATT [General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade] 1994 with a view to **further expediting the movement, release and clearance of goods, including goods in transit**. Negotiations shall also aim at enhancing technical assistance and support for capacity building in this area. The negotiations shall further aim at provisions for effective cooperation between customs or any other appropriate authorities on trade facilitation and customs compliance issues.*

The negotiations aim at:

- Improving and clarifying relevant aspects of GATT Articles V (Freedom of Transit), VIII (Fees and Formalities connected with Importation and Exportation) and X (Publication and Administration of Trade Regulations)
- Reducing the vast amounts of red tape that exist in moving goods across borders
- Creating provisions for effective cooperation between customs and other appropriate authorities on trade facilitation and customs compliance issues

The Key Negotiating Issues

Negotiations are based on proposals tabled by WTO Members. Broadly speaking, those tabled largely reflect the provisions of the revised Kyoto Convention of the World Customs Organisation which is expected to come into force in February 2006. A WTO agreement would give these provisions better enforceability, as well as provide an opportunity for poorer countries to gain technical assistance to help their implementation.

To date there have been 70 proposals, sponsored by more than 100 delegations, almost half from developing countries. They cover:

- A. Publication and Availability of Information
- B. Time Periods Between Publication and Implementation
- C. Consultation and Comments on New and Amended Rules
- D. Advance Rulings
- E. Appeal Procedures
- F. Other Measures to Enhance Impartiality and Non-Discrimination
- G. Fees and Charges Connected with Importation and Exportation
- H. Formalities Connected with Importation and Exportation
- I. Consularisation
- J. Border Agency Cooperation
- K. Release and Clearance of Goods
- L. Tariff Classification
- M. Matters Related to Goods Transit

Potential Benefits Include

- Creating a common framework of international rules and regulations
- Eliminating uncertainty in and simplifying trade transactions
- Improving transparency and ensuring predictability and good regulation
- Reducing unnecessary delays at international borders by streamlining the customs process
- Eliminating unnecessary, repetitive and time-consuming procedures
- Significantly enhancing trader compliance while facilitating legitimate trade

Freedom of Transit

GATT Article V provides for: freedom of transit; requirements for traffic in transit; charges and regulations; MFN (most favoured nation treatment) and non-discrimination; and non-application to aircraft. It regulates the conditions a Member may impose on goods transported through its territory by another party to a foreign destination.

Aims:

- To allow freedom of transit through the territory of each Member for goods transported to or from the territory of other Members
- To ensure traffic in transit is not hindered by the imposition of unnecessary delays or restrictions, by the imposition of unreasonable charges or by discriminatory treatment

Potential results:

- Reduced costs
- Increased efficiency and ease of movement
- Fairer rules
- Greater access to overseas markets for landlocked Members

Fees and Formalities Connected with Importation and Exportation

GATT Article VIII provides for: fees and charges in connection with importation and exportation; reviewing the operation of laws and regulations on request; and penalties for minor breaches of customs regulations and procedural requirements.

Members should ensure that there is a correct balance between necessity and reasonableness, border security and expeditious clearance of goods, minimisation of customs intervention and a more cooperative relationship between customs authorities and other interested agencies or departments.

Proposed improvements based on this Article focus on increasing transparency by reducing the complexity of import and export formalities and administrative procedures, achieved through clarifying of the parameters for their use and application.

Aims:

- To avoid unnecessary barriers to trade in the design, application and effect of import and export procedures
- To minimise the number and complexity of documents and formalities, thus ensuring that procedures do not unduly slow down the movement or release of goods

Potential results:

- Avoiding the imposition of unwarranted and disproportionate fees and charges
- Eliminating unnecessary documents and procedures
- Reducing the number and variety of documents that have to be used
- Eradicating multiple and time-consuming procedures
- Quicker release of goods and reductions in delivery delays and transaction costs

Publication and Administration of Trade Regulations

GATT Article X provides for: transparency of trade related laws; regulations and decisions; and predictability of the application and enforcement of these rules including review and appeals.

Proposed improvements based on this Article focus on greater transparency, better governance and improvement in predictability of trade measures.

Aim:

- To assist traders by making accurate information easily available, readily accessible and in a timely manner on a more efficient and non-discriminatory basis

Potential results:

- Further expediting the movement, release and clearance of goods
- Reducing logistical costs and time
- Improving traders' legal stability
- Providing for directly available access to up-to-date information on measures
- Prohibiting the imposition of unpublished penalties

Trade Facilitation and the Principles of the WTO

WTO Member countries have applied the fundamental principles of the World Trade Organisation, outlined below, in their proposals on trade facilitation. In addition, suggested measures have considered the adaptation of and adherence to international standards to simplify trade transactions and the modernisation and simplification of government procedures.

Freer trade

The substantial reduction in barriers to trade, both tariff and non-tariff

- "Progressive liberalisation" of trade (i.e. in line with levels of economic development) - not to be confused with universal free trade
- Proportionality - ensuring control measures are for legitimate purposes and no more trade-restrictive than necessary

Trade without discrimination

There are two key principles designed to secure fair conditions of trade:

Most-favoured nation (MFN)

- A country should not discriminate between its trading partners. If a special favour is granted to one WTO Member, it should be granted to all Members
- Exception: developing countries are given special access to markets

National treatment

- Member countries should not discriminate between their own and "like" foreign products, services or nationals - applicable only after the foreign commodities have entered the market

Predictability and Transparency

Foreign investors, companies and governments should be confident that trade barriers will not be raised arbitrarily

Predictability and stability encourages investment, creates jobs and consumers can enjoy the benefits of greater competition

Promoting fairer trade

Open, fair and undistorted competition through:

- Discouraging "unfair" trade practices - e.g. export subsidies and dumping products at below cost price to gain market share
- Securing fair conditions for trade through MFN and national treatment
- Supporting fair competition - through WTO agreements

Encouraging development

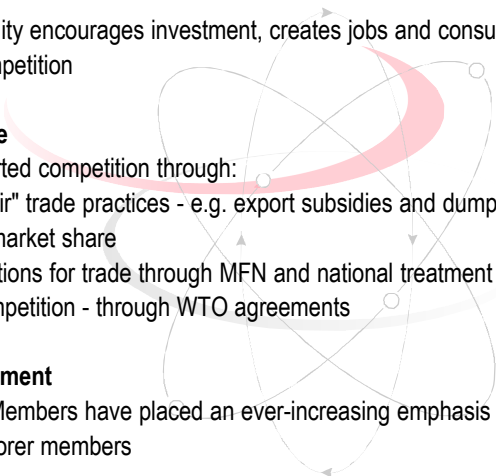
In recent years WTO Members have placed an ever-increasing emphasis on development issues and the interests of poorer members

A growing proportion of Members are developing countries (currently over two-thirds) and their participation is getting stronger. For example:

- G20: a group representing important industrialised and developing economies, including India, Brazil and South Africa

Certain developing countries may receive:

- Longer transition periods before they are required to implement agreements fully
- Greater flexibility
- Technical assistance



The Negotiating Issues

A. Publication and Availability of Information

Providing a reasonable time period between publication of new or amended measures and their implementation is necessary to give a fair opportunity to all traders to adjust smoothly to new trading measures. Overall, this will enhance predictability for traders and encourage compliance.

Aims:

- To make information easily available and readily accessible on a non-discriminatory basis
- To improve legal stability for traders
- To improve transparency in trade regulations
- To enhance the efficiency of obtaining necessary information

Proposals include:

- Each member should provide the WTO with a list of websites containing relevant detailed information, to which the Secretariat would provide links from the official WTO Trade Facilitation web page
- Information to be written in one of the main WTO languages (English, French or Spanish)
- Publication of Trade Regulations and Penalty Provisions:
 - New, or amendments to, "core measures" that may have significant effect on the trade of other Members
 - All trade-related laws, regulations, judicial decisions, advance rulings, administrative rulings and guidelines, etc of general application
 - Information regarding customs and other border-related agencies' processes, rules, fees and charges
 - Details of inspection practices
 - Appeals procedures
 - Penalty provisions for breaches of import and export formalities
 - Relevant bilateral agreements between Members
- Notification of Trade Regulations and Penalty Provisions:
 - Members to notify the WTO Secretariat who would then disseminate the information to other Members and interested parties
 - Members to provide the WTO with a list of websites that contain relevant detailed information, to which - from the official Trade Facilitation web page - the Secretariat would have links
 - Publication of notification on the WTO website
 - Notices to be published by national governments via official media including gazettes and websites

- Establishment of Enquiry Points, Single National Focal Points (SNFP), etc. for traders
 - Enquiry points to provide relevant documents, information on all measures, etc
 - SNFPs to act as centres for communication with other domestic authorities
 - SNFPs to supply not only requested information but also any other pertinent information of which they consider the interested party should be aware of

These proposals address GATT Article X and refer to Paragraph 1: Publishing laws, etc; and Paragraph 2: Measures are unenforceable prior to being published

B. Time Period Between Publication and Implementation

Allow traders to obtain accurate and timely information on trade procedures, which would avoid unnecessary documentation and procedures, thus reducing their logistical costs and time.

Aim:

- To provide traders with the time to become aware of and implement new measures

Proposals include:

- There should be a reasonable/adequate interval between publication and implementation
- Minimum time periods should be established

These proposals are new issues that are related to the existing provisions in GATT Articles VIII and X

C. Consultation and Comments on New and Amended Rules

Early consultation with affected traders can help governments avoid mistakes and/or the introduction of excessive regulation not tailored to business needs as well as encouraging better regulation in general.

Aim:

- To provide opportunities for interested parties including the private sector to comment on prospective trade-related laws and regulations

Proposals include:

- A provision requiring consultation between interested parties - notably governments and the private sector - on proposed new trade-related laws and regulations at a stage when their views can be taken into account
- Interested parties should be provided with the opportunity to submit comments in writing, which should be given due consideration, before the proposed measures are finalised
- Each Member should establish effective mechanisms for exchanges with traders
- Opportunities should be provided for consultation with traders if substantial trade interests or major changes to existing measures are involved
- Proposed rules or procedures should either be amended or, if not, an explanation should be given to traders and other WTO members on why their comments have not been taken into account
- There should be adequate time periods for comment
- Establishment of a regular consultative mechanism
- A single or multiple mechanism(s), taking different forms for different Members depending on their circumstances: it can be a customer liaison group; an advisory body; or a consultative council - with the participation of the business sector, consumer organisations, academics, professional bodies or any interested parties as a Member deems appropriate. Each Member may draw up broad and reasonable guidelines to suit its own domestic situation and examine each case accordingly
- Information concerning the policy objectives sought should be provided

These proposals address GATT Article X and refer to Paragraph 3(b): Review and correction of Customs decisions

D. Advance Rulings

Provision by a Customs administration (or any other competent authority), upon application by a trader, of a written binding ruling on key elements of import transactions, in advance of trade commencing.

Aim:

- To provide traders with predictable information in advance of the movement of goods in order to facilitate compliance with Customs requirements

Proposals include:

- Advance rulings to be issued on tariff classification (including any applicable rate of duty or tax applicable upon importation)
- Advance rulings to be issued at the written request of domestic importers, or foreign exporters or producers, and issued within a defined period of time
- Advance rulings to be in the form of written statements
- Advance rulings to be binding on Customs authorities (or any other competent authority) for a specified period of time
- Advance rulings to be applied to importations without regard to the identity of the importer, exporter or producer, provided the facts and circumstances are identical in all material aspects
- Advance ruling decisions to be made public to ensure transparency and equality of treatment
- Customs administrations to maintain the option to modify or revoke an advance ruling at any time, should factual or legal circumstances change and/or when inaccurate or false information has been provided
- Notification of any revocation or modification of an advance ruling - and the effective date thereof - to be in writing

These proposals address GATT Article X and refer to Paragraph 3: The administration of laws, etc and the institution/maintenance of tribunals for the review and correction of administrative action

E. Appeal Procedures

The establishment of an appeal system as a relief measure for traders against unfair administration of trade-related procedures is crucial for traders to recover appropriately damages caused by such actions.

Aim:

- To clarify GATT Article X concerning the right of appeal against Customs and other agencies' rulings

Proposals include:

- For imports, exports and goods in transit there should be an obligation to provide a non-discriminatory legal right of appeal against Customs and other border agencies rulings and decisions
- The development of a legal and administrative appeal system for lodging objections against unfair trade-related procedures
- Major judicial and administrative decisions against lodged appeals should be published
- Goods should be released in the event of an appeal, subject to the provision of a guarantee such as a surety or deposit

These proposals address GATT Article X and refer to Paragraph 3(b): Review and correction of Customs decisions



F. Other Measures to Enhance Impartiality and Non-Discrimination

Strengthening the integrity of customs administrations through the introduction of legal rules and regulations governing the conduct of officials and employees helps to uphold best practices while contributing to the enforcement of domestic laws and procedures in the countries concerned. Ensuring impartial administration and strict compliance with international commitments.

Aims:

- To ensure the ethical conduct of public servants in Customs administrations
- The implementation of provisions aimed at reducing transaction costs and combating the negative symptoms that could be reflected in the trading system
- To eliminate secret and unlawful arrangements and established procedures that distort market competition

Proposals include:

- Uniform administration of trade regulations throughout a Member's territory:
 - Establishment of a central function within the government which has the primary responsibility to interpret trade regulations
 - Compilation and distribution of casebooks containing cases and examples of customs classification and valuation
 - Provision of staff training based on casebooks on customs classification and customs valuation
- Maintenance and reinforcement of integrity and ethical conduct among officials:
 - Establishment of a code of conduct in the customs services, spelling out the rights and obligations of the public servants
 - Appointment of officials in charge of providing education and provision of adequate training to relevant officials
 - The outcome of post-clearance audits should be fed back to Customs officers involved in clearance procedures in order to take further action
 - Establishment of coordination and control mechanisms between Customs administrations and the organisations involved in devising ethics policies in Customs services
 - Introduction of computerised systems to reduce (or eliminate) the discretion exercised by officials and employees with respect to basic Customs decisions
 - Establishment of a system of penalties, to be directly incorporated into the country's Customs legislation - offences by customs officials should be considered as criminal acts

These proposals are new issues that are related to the existing provisions in GATT Article X

G. Fees and Charges Connected with Importation and Exportation

Reducing the complexities of import and export formalities by clarifying the parameters for their use and application, further ensuring that such fees are "limited in amount to the approximate cost of services rendered".

Aim:

- To limit fees and charges imposed to those incurred as a result of government regulatory activities performed in connection with importation and customs entry processes

Proposals include:

- Establishment of specific parameters and objective criteria for fees charged
- Members must ensure that fees refer to the approximate cost of the service provided
- Fees/charges should be published (including the amount of fees, when they must be paid, which entity assesses the fee or charge, and how payment can be made) and the WTO notified within an established timeframe before being imposed
- Prohibition on the collection of unpublished fees and charges
- Periodic review of the appropriateness of the amount and number of fees and charges imposed on or in connection with import and export:
 - Members should no longer maintain fees etc. if the circumstances or objectives giving rise to them no longer exist or can be addressed in a less trade-restrictive manner
 - Review should take into account relevant new information, business practices, adoption of modern techniques and new information and communication technology
- Automated payment of fees and other charges
- Members required to review, and if necessary, consolidate or reduce the number and diversity of their fees and charges
- A requirement to establish a list of permissible fees and charges

These proposals address GATT Article VIII and refer to Paragraph 1: Limitations on and reduction of fees and charges



H. Formalities Connected with Importation and Exportation

Formalities, procedures and requirements should be reduced to the least trade restrictive levels possible whilst ensuring that Members' legitimate control objectives are fulfilled.

Through review there should be progressive reduction and limitation of fees, formalities, procedures and requirements.

Aims:

- To avoid unnecessary barriers to trade in the design, application and effect of import and export procedures and in particular to ensure that such procedures do not unduly slow down the movement or release of goods
- To minimise the number and complexity of import and export formalities

Proposals include:

- Non-discrimination in terms of requirements, procedures and formalities imposed
- Periodic review of formalities/procedures and requirements:
 - Review should take into account relevant new information, business practices, adoption of modern techniques and new information and communication technology
 - The review should be based on comments from the private sector and other parties
- Reduction/limitation of formalities/procedures and data/documentation requirements
- Simplification, reduction and standardisation of trade documents
- Abolition of documentation requirements that are unnecessary for the purposes of completing the transaction
- Development and adoption of international standards:
 - Multilateral harmonisation and standardisation of documents and data formats
 - Use of existing examples of standard and aligned documents - e.g. as provided by UN/CEFACT and WCO)
- Introduction of uniform Customs code
- Acceptance of commercially available information and of copies
- Automated payment of duties and other fees and charges
- The use of automated and electronic data exchange (EDI) based electronic systems, replacing paper-based procedures
- Members should establish a 'single window':
 - One-time submission of required information by traders (this information will then go to all relevant parts of government)
 - Providing the function of a clearing house for all documents and data submission
- Elimination of pre-shipment inspections
- Phasing out mandatory use of Customs brokers

These proposals address GATT Article VIII and refer to Paragraph 1(c): Simplifying and decreasing formalities and documents; and Paragraph 2: Reviewing laws and regulations

I. Consularisation

Formalities, procedures and requirements should be reduced to the least trade restrictive levels possible whilst ensuring that Members' legitimate objectives can be fulfilled.

Aim:

- To abolish documentation requirements that are unnecessary for the purposes of completing transactions

Proposals include:

- Discontinuation of the levying of "consular fees" or "consular invoices" etc.
- Prohibition of requiring consular transactions and related fees and charges

These proposals address GATT Article VIII and refer to Paragraph 1(a): Limitations on fees and charges; and Paragraph 1(c): Simplifying and decreasing formalities and documents

J. Border Agency Cooperation

Import and export requirements of various agencies should be made compatible and standardised so as to allow traders to present all of their documentation to one border agency. In conjunction with this, formalities and procedures should be coordinated.

Aims:

- To ensure cooperation between Customs authorities and other interested agencies on coordinating border controls
- To regulate the functioning of integrated border controls

Proposals include:

- Establishment of border control cooperation and coordination mechanisms between the various authorities at Members' entry and exit points
- Where it is necessary for more than one agency to carry out documentary or physical verification of consignments there should be a convergence of official controls in a "one-stop shop"
- Establishment of technical and operational measures to regulate the functioning of integrated border controls

These proposals are new issues that are related to the existing provisions in GATT Article VIII

K. Release and Clearance of Goods

The aim is for advanced release of goods by fulfilling initial, simplified, declaration procedures (e.g. presentation of documentation) prior to formal clearance (which would be granted when all border control requirements have been fulfilled).

Aims:

- To simplify and expedite the release and clearance of goods
- To separate release of goods from clearance procedures

Proposals include:

- Introduction of the practice of pre-arrival clearance:
 - Importers would be able to file their entries prior to the arrival of merchandise
 - Pre-arrival processing of documentation
- Use of risk management analysis and authorised traders:
 - The systematic application of management procedures and practices which provide Customs with necessary information to address movements or consignments which may present a risk
 - Customs officers at the risk management unit should analyse the available clearance data and other relevant information and arrange for the appropriate Customs operation accordingly
 - Introduction of simplified import and export formalities for authorised traders who have high levels of compliance with trade related laws and regulations
- Use of a post-clearance audit system:
 - Customs to release most consignments on arrival and then conduct a thorough review of the documents of selected consignments after release
 - Customs to carry out necessary post-clearance audit on the account books, vouchers, commercial documents, customs declaration forms and other trade-related information of enterprises upon the risk analysis results
 - The outcome of post-clearance audit should be fed back to Customs officers involved in clearance procedures in order to take further action
- Establishment of a system which separates the release of goods from Customs from clearance procedures - including payment of duties
- Establishment of average clearance and release times (utilising the WCO Time Release Study) as well as expedited procedures for express shipments

These proposals address GATT Article VIII and refer to Paragraph 1(c): Simplifying and decreasing formalities and documents

L. Tariff Classification

The use of a unified tariff classification system will further assist traders by harmonising the information required at the borders of Members.

Aim:

- To establish a single tariff classification system

Proposals include:

- Requirement to have and apply an objective criteria for tariff classification of goods

These proposals are new issues that are related to the existing provisions in GATT Article VIII

M. Matters Related to Goods Transit

The issues regarding transit are similar to those raised in regard to Articles VIII and X.

Each Member is required to allow free transition through its territory for traffic in transit to or from the territory of another Member via the most convenient route.

Aim:

- To guarantee that the choice of route and means to transport is left to the operator
- To ensure that the right to require in-transit traffic to enter at the proper Customs house is enforced without unnecessary delays or restrictions to the trader

Proposals include:

- Strengthen non-discrimination
 - Prevention of the application of trade laws that limit the free transit of goods and means of transport due to non-commercial reasons
 - Non-discriminatory, most-favoured-nation treatment is required with respect to all charges, regulations and formalities imposed in connection with transit
- Disciplines on fees and charges:
 - Publication of fees and charges and prohibition of unpublished ones
 - Periodic self-review of the appropriateness of the amount and number of fees, charges and formalities imposed
 - Establishment of a permanent review mechanism, such as a commission formed by representatives of the sectors involved
 - Charges for transportation and for administrative expenses should be reasonable
 - More effective disciplines on charges for transit
 - Periodic exchange between neighbouring authorities
- Disciplines on transit formalities and documentation requirements:
 - Periodic review

- Reduction and/or simplification of Customs formalities and increased use of electronic and interconnection media for the inspection of goods
- Use of international standards
- Simplified and preferential clearance for perishable goods
- Limitation of inspections and controls
- Identification of consignments through sealing (including the use of electronic seals)
- Monitoring
- Introduction of a bonded transport regime, allowing goods to transit without payment of customs or transit duties, or other charges
- Simpler rules, goods declarations and service fees for goods which do not require transshipment
- Improved cooperation and coordination:
 - Amongst authorities
 - Between authorities and the private sector
 - Promotion of regional transit arrangements
 - Cooperation and coordination on document requirements
- Giving effect to any agreement in a clear and transparent way:
 - Ensure that the existing commitments are put into practice, for example by leaving the choice of route and means of transport to the operator
 - Clarify and improve terminology to reduce perceived uncertainty and avoid loopholes

These proposals are new issues that are related to the existing provisions in GATT Article V

Cross-Cutting Submissions

Another area of the negotiations concerns special and differential treatment (S&D) of developing countries. Proposals have been put forward covering the following areas:

- Needs and priorities identification:
 - Members should assess their trade facilitation needs and priorities - with reference to work already done by other international organisations
- Technical assistance and capacity building:
 - Assistance to be provided by the WTO Secretariat, Members and other intergovernmental organisations, including in particular the World Bank, the World Customs Organization and UNCTAD, aiding developing countries to participate more effectively in the negotiations
- Multiple areas:
 - Scope of the negotiations
 - Addressing cost implications
 - Relationship between the rules and the needs and priorities of Members

These are issues not covered by this guide but may be addressed by other organisations.

Conclusions

SITPRO strongly supports a new WTO agreement on trade facilitation and believes that it will benefit developed, developing and least-developed countries alike (a classic win-win outcome). The implementation of a WTO agreement on core trade facilitation principles will lead to an overall simplification of trade procedures. Trade facilitation has "the greatest practical and measurable benefit to developing and least developed countries" [ICC UK, Evidence submitted to the House of Commons Trade and Industry Committee, 30th September 2005]

Many of the proposals put forward by WTO Members reflect SITPRO's work programmes and issues it has long supported.

SITPRO Work programmes and issues include:

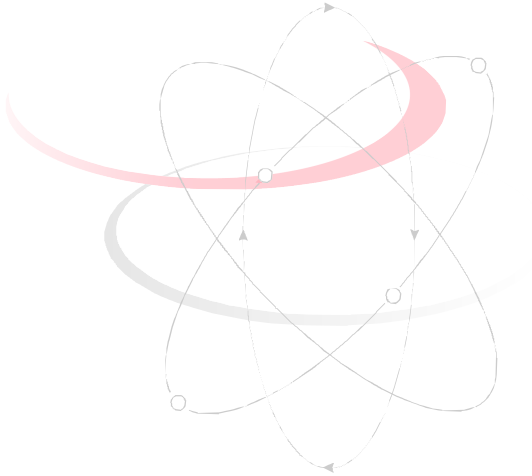
- Document formalities
SITPRO has been involved in the development of international standards
 - Use of the existing UN Layout Key, UN/EDIFACT and the UNeDocs electronic message standards will greatly advance WTO aims
 - SITPRO created the UK aligned series of export documents based on the UN Layout Key and is now producing the first national variant of UNeDocs, UNeDocsUK
- Operational requirements
SITPRO highlights the existing measures already created by other organisations
 - UN Harmonisation Convention
 - UN/CEFACT Recommendation 18, Facilitation Measures Relating to International Trade Procedures
 - UN/CEFACT Code Lists
 - ICC recommendations for commercial practice and the use of international standards
 - ICAO and IMO provisions relating to transportation
[Ref. UNECE doc: TRADE/2005/18 (18th Feb '05);
UNECE & UNCTAD Compendium of Trade Facilitation Recommendations, 2002]
- Establishment of a single window
SITPRO is at the forefront of developments in relation to the establishment of single windows
 - A number of countries already have one - the UK's is currently being built
 - Single windows interacting with each other is a long-term aim
 - Assisting government inter-connectivity
 - Avoiding duplication of effort and information
 - One-time submission is especially beneficial for smaller companies and sole traders
 - Changes in government regulations will not require proliferation of new technical systems
 - Cost of implementation does not have to be high due to the availability of various models

Next Steps for the Negotiations

- Consider what the WTO trade facilitation agreement should say
 - Discuss which proposals are most important and should be included in an agreement
 - Discuss which proposals (if any) should be binding on Members
- Discuss how (if at all) commitments should be linked to technical assistance for implementation
- Promote the likely benefits of a WTO trade facilitation agreement for both developed and developing countries

Further Reading

- WTO website <http://www.wto.org/index.htm>
- WTO Trade Facilitation webpage
http://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/tradfa_e/tradfa_e.htm
- GATT Article V
http://www.wto.org/english/docs_e/legal_e/gatt47_01_e.htm - articleV
- GATT Article VIII
http://www.wto.org/english/docs_e/legal_e/gatt47_01_e.htm - articleVIII
- GATT Article X
http://www.wto.org/english/docs_e/legal_e/gatt47_01_e.htm - articleX
- WTO Negotiations on Trade Facilitation - Compilation of Members' Proposals - Revision #4 (TN/TF/W/43/Rev.4)
<http://www.wcoomd.org/ie/wto/tnTFW43R4.pdf>



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