



WORLD TRADE
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WTO
Trade Facilitation
Agreement

TRADE FACILITATION: EXPERIENCE SHARING SERIES

NATIONAL COMMITTEES ON TRADE FACILITATION: CURRENT PRACTICES AND CHALLENGES



Summary of the experience sharing workshop of 8 June 2016
and results of E-Survey

WHAT IS A NATIONAL COMMITTEE ON TRADE FACILITATION?



The Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) entered into force on 22 February 2017 upon ratification by two-thirds of the WTO membership. Article 23.2 of the TFA requires WTO members to establish a National Committee on Trade Facilitation (NCTF) or to designate an existing mechanism that can facilitate the domestic coordination and implementation of the TFA's provisions. The TFA does not provide guidance on how such committees should be established.

WHAT IS THE OBJECTIVE OF THIS PUBLICATION?



The purpose of this publication is to disseminate information on national experiences, best practices and recommendations with respect to the establishment and functioning of NCTFs. It is based on the experiences shared by more than 35 speakers during a workshop that took place on 8 June 2016 at the WTO and on the results of an electronic survey by the WTO Secretariat, which collected information on the practices of and challenges faced by more than 100 WTO members.

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The Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility (TFAF)
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The Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) entered into force on 22 February 2017, following ratification by two-thirds of the WTO membership. A groundbreaking agreement, the TFA promises to streamline and substantially reduce the red tape that slows and impedes international trade, thereby significantly reducing both the cost of and time needed for doing business across borders.

Expectations for the agreement are high. It is well known that the implementation of a large trade facilitation agenda can contribute to bettering the ways in which government revenues are collected, as well as to enhancing conditions for foreign investors, thereby contributing to improving national competitiveness.

It is also a well-known fact that those new benefits largely depend on the current status of the country, and the extent and manner in which the TFA is implemented. WTO members are currently in the process of developing national strategies and plans in order to maximize the benefits resulting from the TFA. For this reason, it is essential for each member to have a well-functioning national body that will coordinate the individual actions of a broad range of stakeholders and work to ensure implementation of the Agreement.

Many members have already established, or are about to establish, national committees, as required under the TFA. Other members, however, have faced a number of challenges in trying to determine how best to do so in light of their specific needs and challenges. This publication seeks to provide support to these members by summarizing the results of a WTO experience-sharing workshop that took place in June 2016, as well as the results of an electronic survey undertaken by the WTO Secretariat, in which almost two-thirds of WTO members participated.

Both the workshop and the electronic survey results underlined that before designing a national committee, one must understand one's own reality. Several useful ideas were presented on how to ensure the proper functioning of the committee and, especially, how to sustain it in the long term – which appears to be a particularly big challenge. Reference was made to the fact that it was often easier to set up a body than to make sure it continues to work well. Keeping the momentum and engaging all relevant parties are equally important, as is measuring performance.

A very positive message that emerged from the workshop is that there is a great deal of support available for the establishment of national trade facilitation committees. In addition, many members already have existing structures on which they can build their committees, and therefore they do not have to start from zero.

Implementing the TFA requires hard work and tough decisions. The WTO Secretariat is committed to continuing to provide members with the assistance and support they need in order to reap the benefits of the TFA.

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DISCLAIMER

Any opinions reflected in this publication are the sole responsibility of the authors. They do not purport to reflect the opinions or views of members of the WTO. WTO members are occasionally referred to as “countries” in this publication, although some of them are not countries in the usual sense of the word, but are officially “separate customs territories”. Geographical and other groupings do not imply any expression of opinion by the authors concerning the status of any country or territory, the delimitation of its frontiers

or the rights or obligations of any WTO member in respect of WTO agreements. The colours, boundaries, denominations and classifications that feature in this publication do not imply any judgement of legal or other status of any territory, nor any endorsement or acceptance of boundary.

INTRODUCTION

Background

The Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) is universally hailed as a breakthrough for global facilitation reforms, and it has been predicted that it will generate substantial economic and welfare gains for all. Notwithstanding the significant benefits that national economies as a whole can expect from implementing the TFA, the challenges for some members are considerable. With almost 40 technical provisions to be implemented, some of which require the coordination of up to 50 national agencies, members need to build domestic consensus around a detailed roadmap that will plan and prioritize the necessary steps towards implementation.

Given the importance of effective coordination at the national level, Article 23.2 of the TFA requires members to establish a national committee on trade facilitation (NCTF) to take charge of facilitating both domestic coordination and implementation of the provisions of the agreement. The TFA does not prescribe a specific structure or functions for these committees, nor does it provide guidelines for their establishment. This has resulted in confusion on the part of some members as they attempt to identify the key issues that need to be taken into account when structuring an NCTF.

Article 23.2: Each Member shall establish and/or maintain a national committee on trade facilitation or designate an existing mechanism to facilitate both domestic coordination and implementation of the provisions of this Agreement.

With a view to assisting members in this task, the WTO Secretariat held an experience-sharing workshop on 8 June 2016 to provide a platform for members to share their individual experiences in establishing a NCTF and highlight the challenges they had faced and the success factors that they had identified.

In conjunction with the workshop, the WTO Secretariat undertook an extensive electronic survey to gather information on what was happening on the ground in relation to NCTFs, particularly with regard to the challenges being faced and any issues that had arisen regarding the identification and sourcing of technical assistance.

Structure of the publication

This publication is divided into five sections that highlight the main issues discussed during the workshop and incorporate the results of the electronic survey.

Section 1 relates to the mandate of NCTFs. Section 2 covers the institutional framework for NCTFs, including their composition, the participation of the private sector and the role of the chairperson. Section 3 covers the NCTF roadmap. Section 4 covers the proper functioning and long-term adaptability of the

NCTF. Finally, Section 5 deals with the main challenges in establishing and maintaining a durable NCTF and highlights sources of technical assistance and capacity-building support for the implementation of the TFA. Whenever appropriate, the publication highlights the experiences of members participating in the workshop in order to provide examples of differing approaches to the composition and functioning of NCTFs (Workshop examples).

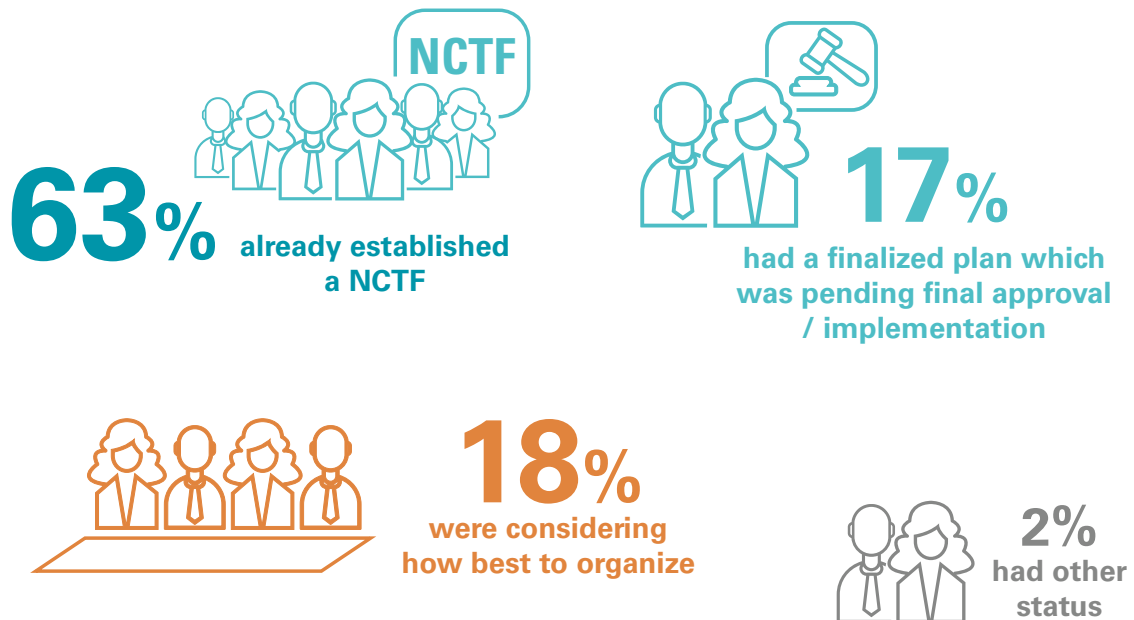
INTRODUCTION

Current status of NCTFs

Most members have already established a NCTF or have finalized their plans to do so. The results of the electronic survey show that 60 per cent of WTO members who responded had already established a NCTF, while 17 per cent of respondents had finalized their plan and were waiting to receive final approval

and/or to begin implementation. In addition, 2 per cent of respondents indicated that they had a mechanism other than a NCTF to implement the provisions of the TFA. The remaining 18 per cent of respondents were actively considering how best to set up a NCTF (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 Status of National Committees on Trade Facilitation (May-November 2016)



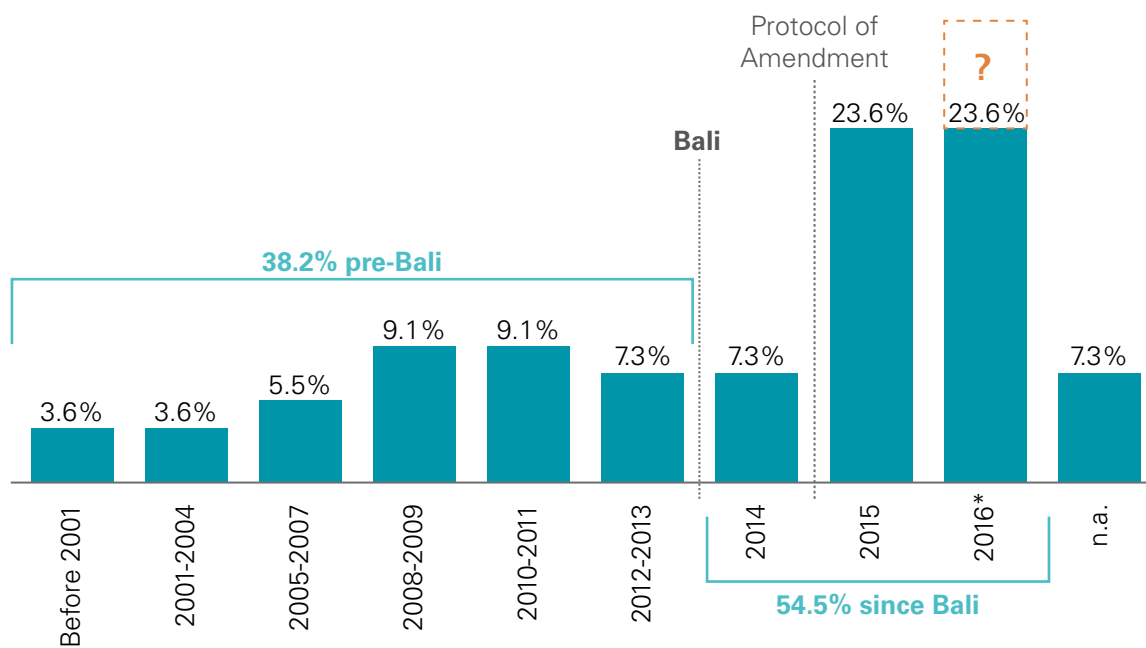
Note: Respondents provided data between May and November 2016, so the status could have changed by the time of calculation in December 2016. Source: WTO Secretariat based on the e-survey on National Committees on Trade Facilitation, 2016.

INTRODUCTION

A number of national committees, either new, or revised, have been established since the Ninth WTO Ministerial Conference, held in Bali in 2013, and in particular since the adoption of the Protocol of Amendment of the Marrakesh Agreement Establishing

the WTO, on 27 November 2014. Many of these committees were established autonomously or as part of programmes for the modernization of customs or transport procedures (see Figure 2).

Figure 2 When was the National Committee established?



Note: The chart only takes account of the latest version of the NTFC for each Member.

* Respondents provided data to this survey between May and November 2016.

Therefore, additional NCTFs could have been established in 2016 that are not captured in this data.

SECTION 1:

DEFINING A MANDATE AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

1.1 Defining a mandate

It appears that members frequently face problems with defining the mandate and composition of the national committees. Competing priorities and internal rivalries can make it difficult to get off to a good start, and it is often in the initial phase that these problems are most pronounced.

Having a clear mandate from the outset, which establishes the NCTF as the coordinating body for the implementation of the TFA and clearly identifies its objectives, saves the NCTF time and effort by creating understanding among the members of the committee as to its purpose. This, in turn, can assist committee members when articulating the objectives of the NCTF to their own constituencies. Once a clear mandate is in place and all actors coalesce their efforts around it, devising a clear structure and roadmap becomes easier, which in turn contributes to a well-functioning NCTF.

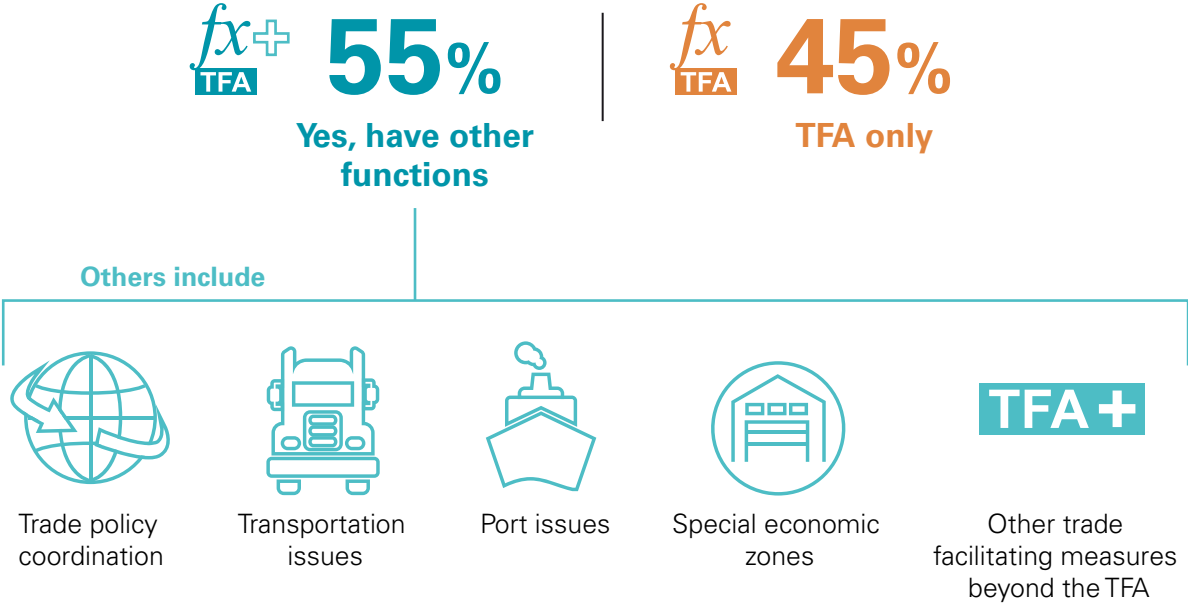
For workshop discussants, the mandate, to a large extent, sets out the expectations for the NCTF's achievements. Unreasonable expectations can easily lead to disappointment and consequently can compromise the future work and possible support of the committee. Therefore, this part of the process needs to be managed carefully. The NCTF needs to set realistic expectations and achieve results quickly in order to reinforce support for it, based on its performance, organizational structure and mission.

One of the major elements in defining the mandate and resulting terms of reference of a NCTF is whether it should limit itself to the implementation of the TFA or whether it should pursue a broader trade facilitation agenda that exceeds the TFA requirements. The workshop and electronic survey results indicate that this decision appears to depend on a member's priorities, preferences and long-term development goals, as well as on the degree to which it already implements the TFA provisions. It is easier for a member that already implements most of the provisions to engage in planning additional undertakings and focus on how best to accommodate the new tasks arising from the TFA. Meanwhile, members that are just beginning to implement the TFA measures may find themselves overwhelmed if they also decide to implement trade facilitation measures that go beyond the TFA.

According to the electronic survey, 55 per cent of respondents with an established NCTF developed terms of reference that go beyond the implementation of the TFA. In such cases, the committees' additional functions are quite varied. They can include the coordination and implementation of TFA-plus measures or coordinating areas such as trade policy in general, transport or port initiatives, or even the administration of special economic zones. Figure 3 shows the breakdown of the scope of NCTFs' terms of reference.

SECTION 1: DEFINING A MANDATE AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

Figure 3 Does the NCTF have functions beyond the implementation of the TFA?



Source: WTO Secretariat based on the e-survey on National Committees on Trade Facilitation, 2016.

Workshop example 1: Terms of reference that go beyond implementing the TFA

In the case of Brazil, they considered that the mandate of the Trade Facilitation Technical Group should not be limited to the implementation of the TFA. The NCTF is an important tool for facilitating permanent trade facilitation efforts, as while implementation of the TFA is its priority, it also recognizes that the committee will be able to go beyond that point.

For Paraguay, implementation of the TFA is part of a broader trade facilitation and competitiveness agenda which derives directly from a «Paraguay 2030» development strategy. Such linkages expand the terms of reference of the NCTF beyond the strict implementation of the TFA.

In Tajikistan, trade facilitation reforms have been defined as part of a broad agenda to enhance national competitiveness, foster economic growth, create job opportunities and reduce poverty.

1.2 Is the NCTF the only national body with a mandate on trade facilitation?

Workshop discussants highlighted the challenges that can occur when more than one national body is responsible for overseeing trade facilitation, and they particularly mentioned the challenge of maintaining coordination between national bodies. Another important challenge is how to define a clear mandate for NCTFs among existing bodies that are already dealing with trade facilitation issues.

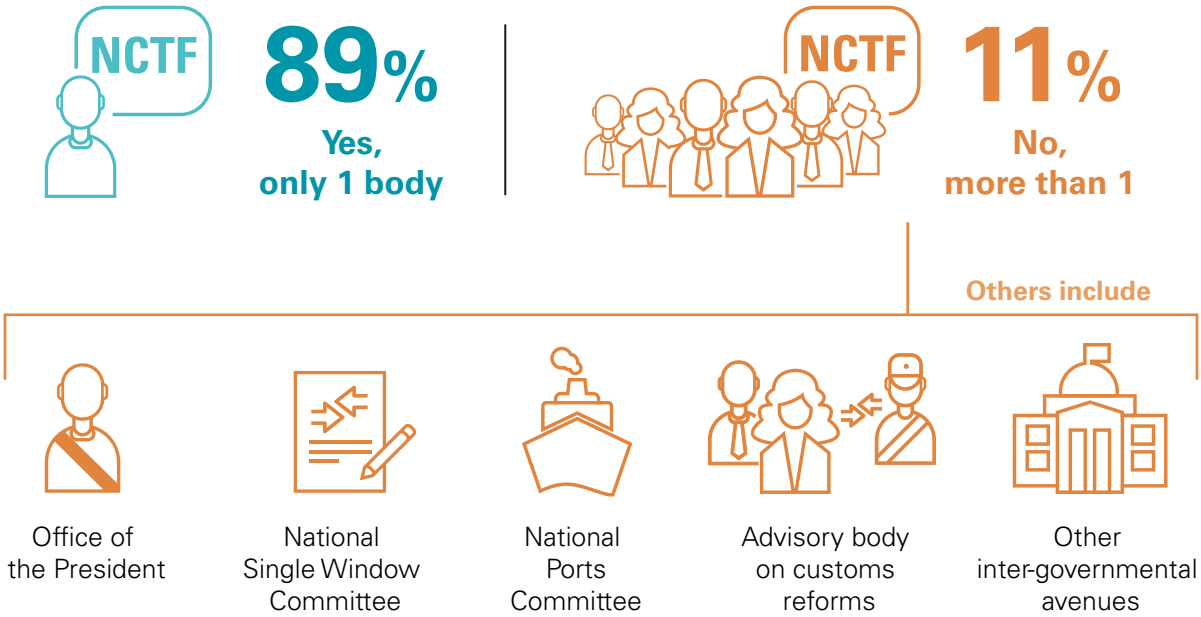
The electronic survey results show that 89 per cent of respondents with an established NCTF centralize all functions in a single national committee, with some of the pre-existing bodies being transformed into sub-committees or bodies that report to the central NCTF. In the remaining 11 per cent of cases, NCTFs co-exist with other bodies with related mandates. Examples of such bodies include the office of the president,

SECTION 1: DEFINING A MANDATE AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

specialized national single window or national ports committees, advisory bodies on customs reforms, or other intergovernmental platforms (see Figure 4).

Workshop example 2 highlights the example of Fiji which has more than one body responsible for trade facilitation.

Figure 4 Is the NCTF the only national body on trade facilitation?



Source: WTO Secretariat based on e-survey on National Committees on Trade Facilitation, 2016.

Workshop example 2: Members with more than one body responsible for trade facilitation

Fiji’s Trade Facilitation Sub-Committee is one of the technical sub-committees of Fiji’s trade development committee responsible for border-related issues. It comprises border agencies, port operators and brokers, and it is co-chaired by the private sector. The Ministry for Industry, Trade and Tourism acts as the secretariat for the sub-committee. The Fiji Revenue and Customs Authority (FRCA) has established a separate trade facilitation committee which is chaired by the CEO of the FRCA. Its membership is made up of border agencies, port and airport authorities, brokers, shipping and airline agents, and freight forwarders. The FRCA Trade Facilitation Committee addresses border-related issues.

SECTION 2: INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 The importance of an institutional framework

According to workshop discussants, the institutional framework of a NCTF, including the formal organizational structures and committee rules, is the vital element in ensuring the long-term effectiveness of a NCTF. Such a framework is necessary to ensure that the national committee maximizes its capacity to achieve its goals and minimizes the possibility that the NCTF may simply become a discussion forum. Based on discussants' experience, the final design of the institutional framework can be as important as the manner in which the committee is established,

particularly since an optimal framework can help to broaden the resource base necessary to implement TFA provisions.

The workshop discussions also highlighted that one country's institutional framework model cannot simply be transplanted to another country. This is because the appropriate mechanism needed to improve coordination among national stakeholders varies depending on domestic circumstances.

2.2 Institutional basis and legal framework

The workshop highlighted two differing approaches to defining an institutional basis for establishing a NCTF: either to develop a committee from a pre-existing body, through possible re-structuring, or to establish a completely new committee.

Some members have existing structures, as a result of their domestic and regional experiences, and they consider it important to take maximum benefit

from those structures. Other members either do not have a pre-existing structure or consider that the structures they have are not appropriate for the task of implementing the TFA. The results of the electronic survey suggest that there is an almost equal occurrence of both approaches among members. Just over 50 per cent of existing committees have been established on the basis of a pre-existing body (see Figure 5).

Figure 5

What has been the basis for establishing NCTFs

1. Is the NCTF based on a pre-existing body?



2. What type of legal instrument was used?



Source: WTO Secretariat based on e-survey on National Committees on Trade Facilitation, 2016.

SECTION 2: INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Workshop example 3: NCTFs based on pre-existing bodies

Pakistan's NCTF traces its links back to the National Trade and Transport Facilitation Committee (NTTFC), which was constituted in 1998 and was initially designed to help coordinate trade and transport facilitation for Pakistan's accession to TIR (i.e. "Transports Internationaux Routiers"; or International Road Transport, an international harmonized system of customs control) and CAREC (Central Asian Regional Economic Cooperation Programme). The NTTFC was also mandated to coordinate the implementation of regional initiatives such as the Afghan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement.

Although Guyana's NCTF was established and approved by the government in March 2015, it is in fact the product of pre-existing committees which had shared similar goals and objectives to those of the NCTF.

It is also necessary to decide upon the type of legal instrument that will be used to operationalize the NCTF, bearing in mind that the form of instrument used defines a number of important elements, including the extent of the committee's decision-making power. For example, national committees established via a ministerial decree tend to adopt non-binding advisory opinions, while national committees established through laws have the power to edict binding decisions.

The type of legal instrument also has an impact on the stability of the committee over time, as well as its possible subsequent modification.

2.3 Securing the right membership

An inclusive approach to the composition of the NCTF, which allows all stakeholders, including government officials, private sector stakeholders, and customs and border agencies, to take part in the definition of the institutional framework, appears to be an important success factor. It increases the ownership and active involvement of the different stakeholders and facilitates coordination amongst all stakeholders with a role in TFA implementation.

Workshop discussants highlighted that the implementation of the TFA, including the establishment of the NCTF itself, can result in the redefinition of the stakeholders' roles and the active transfer of responsibilities and authority among institutions, a challenging undertaking in itself. Not all government agencies participate in the operation of the NCTF and this can add to the confused understanding regarding the roles and responsibilities of the various agencies. It is important that the process for defining these changes is carried out in a transparent and inclusive manner that promotes ownership in the different

For example, it is usually more difficult to change a law than to change a decree, because it requires parliamentary approval. This can have advantages and disadvantages that are linked to the national environment in which the NCTF operates.

The survey results suggest that a large majority of members chose an action by the executive branch, i.e. a ministerial decree or a high-level order, to operationalize the committee. Only 5 per cent of respondents chose to establish the NCTF via a national law, i.e. following discussion and approval by the legislative branch (see Figure 5).

stakeholders.

In its workshop intervention, the representative of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) pointed out ways of promoting transparency and inclusiveness when establishing an NCTF. For example, while the national committee may be made up of a group of senior figures providing the political mandate and direction, it is also necessary to have other layers (i.e. sub-committees or task forces) which involve actors with the appropriate technical skills and know-how. Other speakers at that session suggested that it would be beneficial for NCTFs to devise a rotation or succession plan for membership of the committee. According to one discussant, it is beneficial for NCTFs to have executive-level members who are able to make decisions on trade facilitation issues.

On the other hand, workshop discussions also highlighted that committees need to be aware of the resulting trade-off between having fully inclusive membership and the possible impact on

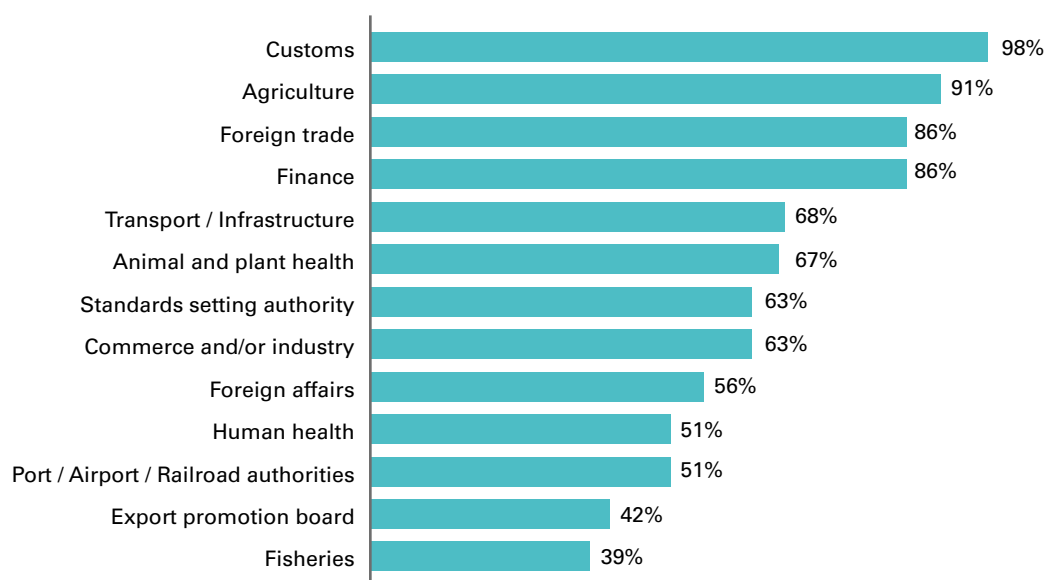
SECTION 2: INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

the committee's level of efficiency. For example, an NCTF that is designed to be extremely inclusive and incorporate a large number of stakeholders can become inherently unwieldy to coordinate and, as a result, find it difficult to adopt decisions.

The electronic survey tried to identify the government agencies most frequently represented in the NCTFs, but faced terminology problems (i.e. the names of government agencies change considerably from one country to another), further complicated by the fact that government agencies in certain countries merge two or more functions, whereas in other countries

they may only be responsible for one function. Notwithstanding these difficulties, the survey results present a picture of the extent to which various organizations are included in NCTFs. Customs are included in 98 per cent of NCTFs; agriculture (91 per cent); foreign trade (86 per cent); finance (86 per cent); transport/infrastructure (68 per cent); animal and plant health (67 per cent); standards-setting authorities (63 per cent); commerce and/or industry (63 per cent); foreign affairs (56 per cent); human health (51 per cent); and port/airport/railroad authorities (51 per cent) (see Figure 6).

Figure 6 Agencies most frequently included in the NCTFs



Note: Calculations are based on the functions of the agency and not its formal name.
Source: WTO Secretariat based on the e-survey on National Committees on Trade Facilitation, 2016.

2.4 Private sector participation

For many workshop discussants, the active involvement of the private sector in the work of the NCTF, including its participation in the committee, is very important. While involving all stakeholders can be a challenge for countries that may not be used to this approach, engaging the business community is crucial. Businesses are directly affected by customs bottlenecks and red tape, which means that, as a group, they are particularly well-positioned to understand the problems that the TFA seeks to address. In particular, the involvement of representatives from small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) is extremely

important, since these are the businesses that are most vulnerable to trading difficulties.

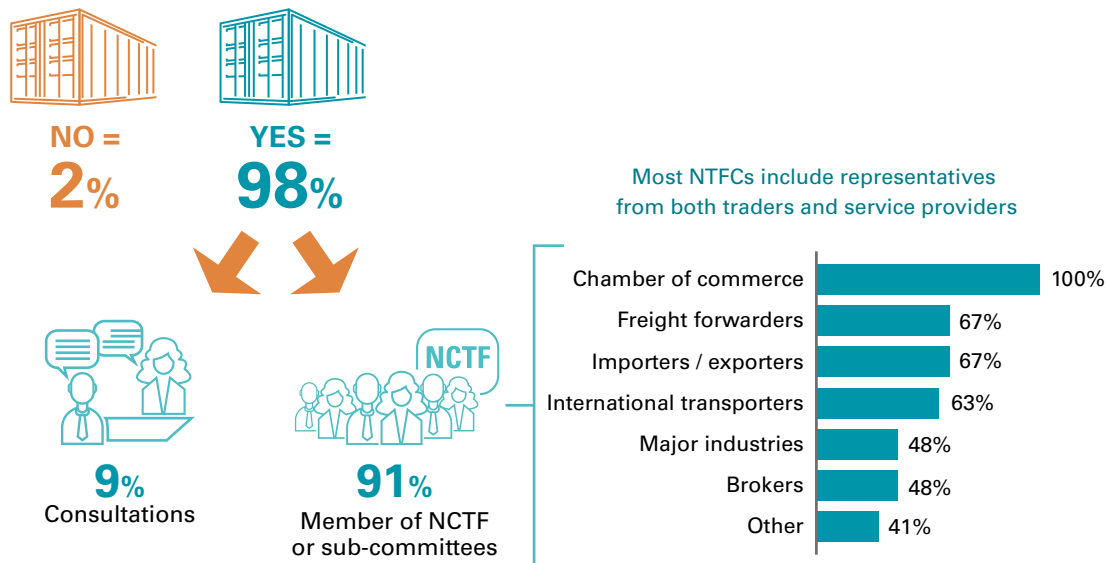
For some discussants, the private sector's participation is a critical factor in determining the success level of national committees, particularly as they can help to bolster a committee's credibility, as well as its ability to deliver results. Active participation allows the private sector not only to contribute to the identification of solutions, thereby increasing its sense of ownership of the new measures, but also to understand and support the proposed changes to be implemented.

SECTION 2: INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

One issue raised in the workshops was that the private sector needs to be fully inclusive within its own representation in the NCTF. There are many competing interests within the private sector, not only among traders themselves, but also among companies that provide services to traders (e.g. customs brokers, transport companies, freight forwarders, banks, logistics companies, etc.) and it is important that all aspects of the private sector are taken on board. It is important to have a good-quality, organized, informed private sector that can make its case to government and therefore, it is beneficial for NCTFs to work with a wide range of organizations, including business organizations, business councils, SME associations, cross-border associations, customs brokers, transporters and freight-forward companies. In addition, these sectors are on the front line of trade and consequently are the most familiar with the problems being confronted.

The results of the electronic survey show that the overwhelming majority of respondents (98 per cent) involve the private sector in the work of their NCTFs, though the manner of its involvement varies across countries. For 9 per cent of respondents, the private sector is involved through consultations (i.e. they are not part of the committee, but they engage in dialogue), while in 91 per cent of cases, the private sector sits on the NCTF or on a relevant sub-committee. Representation of the private sector in NCTFs includes the chamber of commerce in 100 per cent of cases; freight forwarders associations in 67 per cent of cases; importer or exporter associations in 67 per cent of cases; shippers/carrier associations in 65 per cent of cases; and major industries in 50 per cent of NCTFs (see Figure 7).

Figure 7 Is the private sector involved?



Source: WTO Secretariat based on the e-survey on National Committees on Trade Facilitation, 2016.

Workshop example 4: Involving the private sector

According to the UN survey on NCTFs (Transport and Trade Facilitation Series No. 6), the active and effective participation of the private sector was considered to be the single biggest factor in ensuring the success of a NCTF. According to responses, the TFA implementation process should be driven by commercially meaningful reforms, which, in turn, would provide increased business community support for the work of the national committees. It used to be the case that most committees did not include private sector membership, and even where there were business members, the role of the private sector was unclear, and therefore active participation was limited.

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For the UNECE representative who was present at the workshop, it is important to have a good-quality, organized, informed private sector that can make its case to government. In this context, UNECE is working on publishing an official recommendation on private/public partnerships in trade facilitation. According to Europro, the umbrella body for European trade facilitation committees aimed at removing red tape in international trade, it is important for NCTFs to undertake meaningful consultations that are well prepared in a professional manner (being of particular importance to the private sector), and that these consultations would include rigorous follow-up. All of the parties should be involved in the agenda-setting, particularly as this would make them feel committed to the work of the NCTF. Most importantly, the meetings should be a «safe environment» where the parties can exchange ideas, stimulate each other to be ambitious, build trust and understand and respect each other's positions.

The representative of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) noted that, in its experience of working with NCTFs, the engagement of the private sector was a definite success factor. The private sector should be considered as two different groups: on the one hand, the exporters and importers and, on the other hand, private sector actors which provide services such as logistic suppliers, to facilitate trade.

2.5 Choosing a chairperson for the national committee

Workshop discussions suggested that the selection of a chairperson has often led to rivalries and disagreements amongst committee members. Differing domestic situations means that the identification of the most appropriate institution or person to chair the NCTF varies from country to country, a fact that was reaffirmed by the results of the electronic-survey. There are many instances in which the institution in charge of coordinating trade facilitation at the national level, and which represented the member during the TFA negotiations, continued in that lead role. In other cases, a different institution was considered to be more appropriate.

It was the view of some workshop discussants that the ministry of foreign trade or customs should take charge of the NCTF. In other cases, according to the workshop and the electronic survey, some members have introduced a system of rotation whereby the institution in charge of chairing the NCTF changes periodically. In any case, workshop discussants agreed that the leading agency needs to remain proactive and to continually drive the process forward.

Workshop discussants had different views on whether the committee would automatically be chaired by the lead institution or whether the choice should be made on the basis of choosing someone who would be a robust champion for the committee, regardless of the institution represented by that person. According to experiences shared at the workshop, competing priorities and rivalries can have an extremely negative

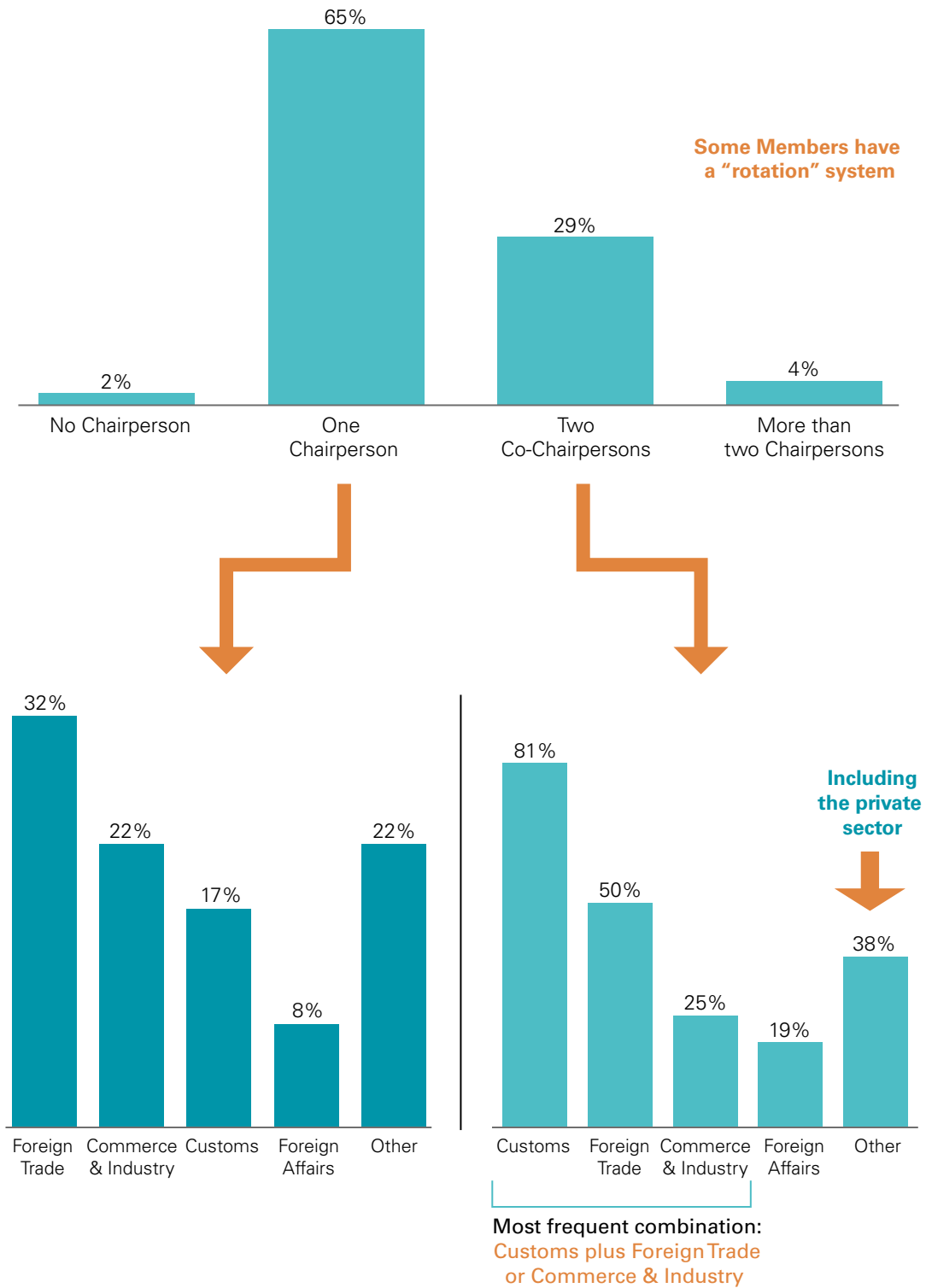
impact on a committee, paralysing its work and diminishing the chances of generating the cross-agency cooperation necessary for the implementation of the TFA. The chairperson plays a vital role in bridging those differences in an inclusive way, while ensuring that all stakeholders contribute to fulfilling the mandate in an active and consistent manner. In addition, NCTFs also need a champion to promote them, to ensure that they form strong linkages with international institutions and trade bodies, and to ensure visibility and public awareness of the NCTF's role, both nationally and internationally.

The lead agency and the chosen number of chairpersons vary considerably across respondents to the electronic survey. In terms of the number of chairpersons, the survey indicates that the majority of NCTFs appointed a single chairperson (65 per cent), while almost one-third of the established NCTFs had two or more chairpersons. More than half of those committees with one chairperson were led by the ministry of foreign trade (31 per cent) or the ministry of commerce and industry (22 per cent), followed by customs (17 per cent) and foreign affairs (8 per cent). Other NCTFs appointed a representative of the private sector as their chairpersons, while one member did not appoint any chairperson, in order to reflect the egalitarian nature of the high-level members in its committee. For those committees with two co-chairpersons, in more than 75 per cent of cases, the committee was led by a combination of customs plus foreign trade or commerce and industry (see Figure 8).

SECTION 2: INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Figure 8

How many Chairpersons and who leads the NCTFs?



Source: WTO Secretariat based on e-survey on National Committees on Trade Facilitation, 2016.

SECTION 2: INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

2.6 NCTFs and relevant regional integration efforts

Workshop discussants highlighted that a large number of economies are involved in broader regional integration efforts that are actively playing a role in trade facilitation. In the case of economies located in the same region, which share similar legal and cultural backgrounds, and sometimes the same border, it is likely that their NCTFs may face similar challenges.

Regional cooperation among such committees can play a positive role in strengthening their individual activities through information-sharing. For NCTFs from similar backgrounds and facing similar problems, it is possible that solutions found by one NCTF may be applicable to the others in the region (see Workshop example 5).

Workshop example 5: NCTF regional coordination efforts

Uganda has taken a regional approach to its trade facilitation implementation. It is a member of the East African Community (EAC) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and has concluded trade agreements under the Tripartite Free Trade Area, which encompasses members of the EAC, COMESA and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), plus it also has an economic partnership agreement with the European Union. All of these agreements have trade facilitation provisions that create both rights and obligations for Uganda. The Ministry of Trade, Industry and Cooperatives has designated the Inter-institutional Trade Committee as the mechanism to facilitate both domestic coordination and implementation of the provisions of the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation, as well as other TF provisions.

Similarly for Botswana, as a member of SADC and the Southern African Customs Union (SACU), the NCTF has also been entrusted to cover issues relating to regional integration.

In the case of Albania, the main proposed functions of the NCTF are proposed measures to facilitate trade, including supervising trade facilitation activities under CEFTA.

However, while discussants agreed on the benefits of taking a coordinated regional approach to the implementation of some TFA provisions, for example by leveraging additional funding from donors when

appropriate, this approach is not without its challenges, particularly for national committees that are still struggling to define their own terms of reference

2.7 Funding of NCTFs

Workshop discussions highlighted that the amount of funding required to ensure that NCTFs can carry out their necessary functions is largely influenced by institutional factors as well as the committee's work plan. In all cases, funding arrangements have to be sustainable in order to ensure the long-term effectiveness of the committee. During the workshop, frequent reference was made to the need for a cooperative environment and for sound – and sustained – resources to allow a committee to work well.

Workshop discussants highlighted the various ways in which a NCTF can be funded, which include full financing from the government's budget, in-kind or financial contributions from the private sector,

public-private partnerships, or the creation of revenue streams from activities or services provided by the NCTF (e.g. publications, courses, etc.).

There are other issues to be considered when pursuing any avenue of funding. For example, some participants at the workshop warned about the risk of relying exclusively on government funding, since the committee's long-term operation, or even its existence, can be compromised by future budget cuts. When it comes to receiving financial support from donors, in some cases, conditions can be imposed on the use of such funding and this can have an impact on the committee's operations. A practical example described in the workshop relates to the issue of «sitting allowances», whereby committee

SECTION 2: INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

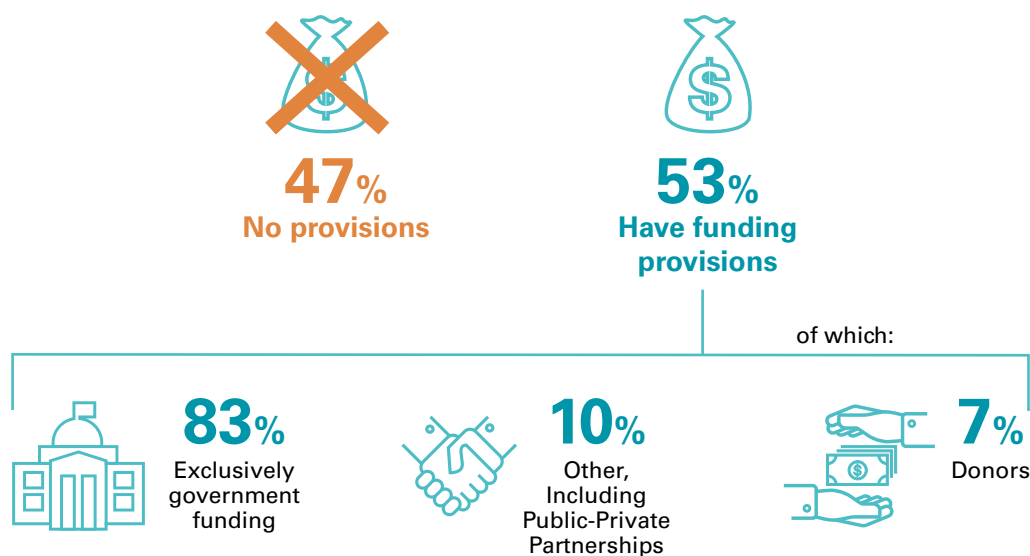
members are provided with an allowance for attending committee meetings. Although such payments can help secure the participation in committee meetings, particularly in the early phases, they may also create the wrong incentives, which can lead to meeting more than necessary, or not being able to meet as required because of insufficient funds. Therefore, for such reasons, donors typically resist financing these types of expenditure.

Workshop discussants agreed that NCTFs need to include in their operational procedures the task of ensuring that the committee has the financial resources necessary to carry out its work. And as much as possible, from the outset, the committee

needs to receive assurance of public financial support for operational and overhead expenses.

In general, according to the workshop discussions and the electronic survey results, NCTFs operate with minimal financial and human resources. Approximately 47 per cent of respondents with an NCTF do not have special provisions concerning funding, as the committee is housed within an institution that fully staffs and funds its operations. For the remaining 53 per cent of respondents, the overwhelming majority (83 per cent) of NCTFs are fully funded by governments, 10 per cent are funded through public-private partnerships, and 7 per cent are funded by donors (see Figure 9).

Figure 9 Does the NCTF have funding provisions?



Source: WTO Secretariat based on the e-survey on National Committees on Trade Facilitation, 2016.

2.8 Technical secretariat

NCTFs often make use of a permanent technical secretariat to take charge of handling the day-to-day activities, such as organizing meetings, keeping a record of decisions made and following up on actions to be taken. The main advantage of a technical secretariat, according to workshop discussants, is that it ensures that a group of people specialized in the work of the NCTF can focus exclusively on that task. It was also pointed out that intra-governmental cooperation can only be fostered when there are sufficient human

and financial resources available to support the efforts of complex and challenging reforms.

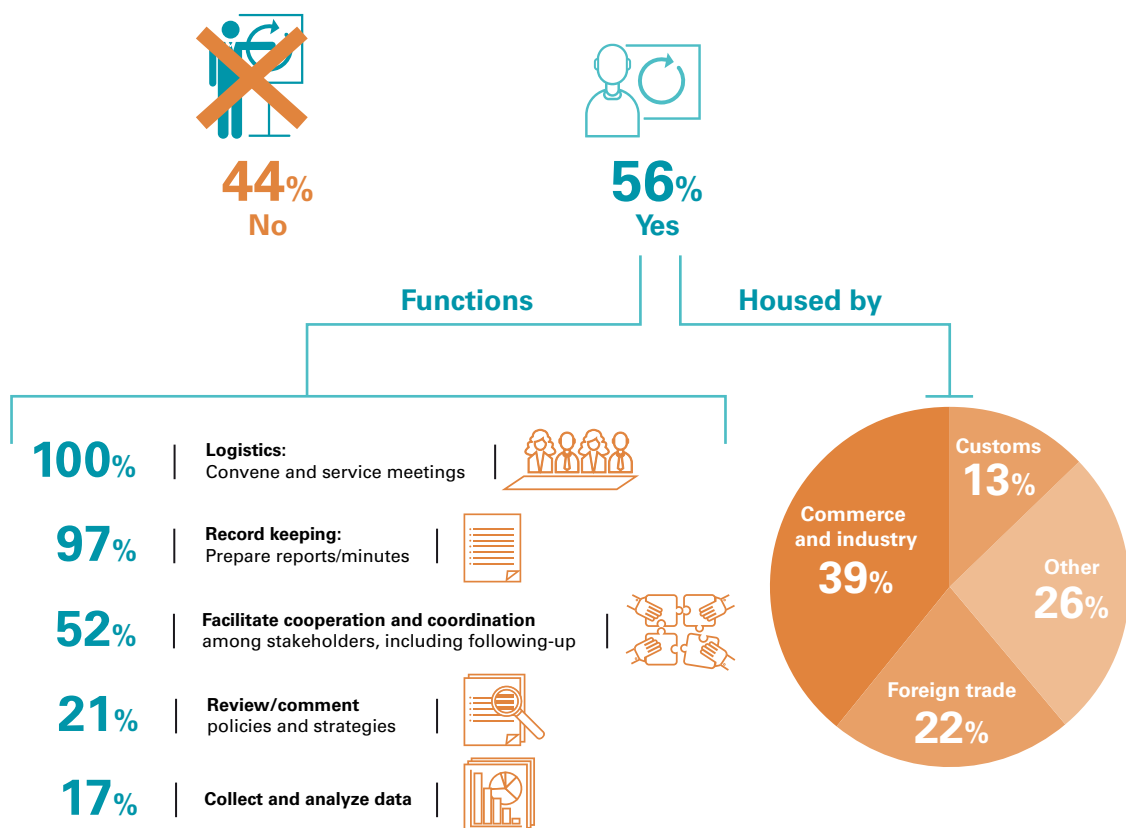
Issues to be considered when establishing a technical secretariat include deciding where it will be housed, what financial and human resources are required, how the secretariat is to be funded, and what functions it will carry out. It can be directly housed and staffed by one or more of the partner institutions in the NCTF, or it can be housed separately, as an independent body.

SECTION 2: INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

The results of the electronic survey show that 56 per cent of respondents had established a technical secretariat, while the remaining 44 per cent had not done so. The secretariat is typically housed by the ministry of commerce and industry (39 per cent), the ministry of foreign trade (22 per cent), the ministry for customs (13 per cent), or another body (26 per cent). There is considerable divergence among respondents in terms of the functions of the technical secretariat, though practically all of them are in charge of basic

functions, such as taking care of logistics (e.g. convening and servicing the meetings of the NCTF) and keeping appropriate records. Fifty per cent of technical secretariats assist in facilitating cooperation and coordination among stakeholders, including following up on the actions to be taken, while only 21 per cent of technical secretariats are entrusted with reviewing or providing comments on the proposed policies and strategies (21 per cent) or with collecting and analysing data (17 per cent) (see Figure 10).

Figure 10 Does the NTFC have a technical secretariat?



Source: WTO Secretariat based on the e-survey on National Committees on Trade Facilitation, 2016.

Workshop example 6: Technical secretariats

Lao PDR's National Trade Facilitation Secretariat coordinates the work of its NCTF. The secretariat's main functions are to facilitate discussions, set the priorities of the trade facilitation agenda, arrange meetings and report back to review progress, and coordinate with businesses before the submission of proposals on new policies and practices for discussion. The secretariat is hosted by the National Steering Committee for Economic Integration and calls for ordinary meetings twice a year. Additional meetings can be convened on an *ad-hoc* basis.

SECTION 3:

DEFINING A ROADMAP FOR THE NCTF

3.1 What is a trade facilitation roadmap?

During the workshop, a trade facilitation roadmap was described as an action plan containing clear goals and describing the tasks, timeframes, allocation of responsibilities, necessary resources and associated risks involved in achieving those goals within a given period of time. It may also indicate the performance indicators that will be used to measure progress.

According to the representative of UNCTAD, if implementation of the TFA were compared to a journey, then a national trade facilitation roadmap would be a guide or reference point to clearly state the destination.

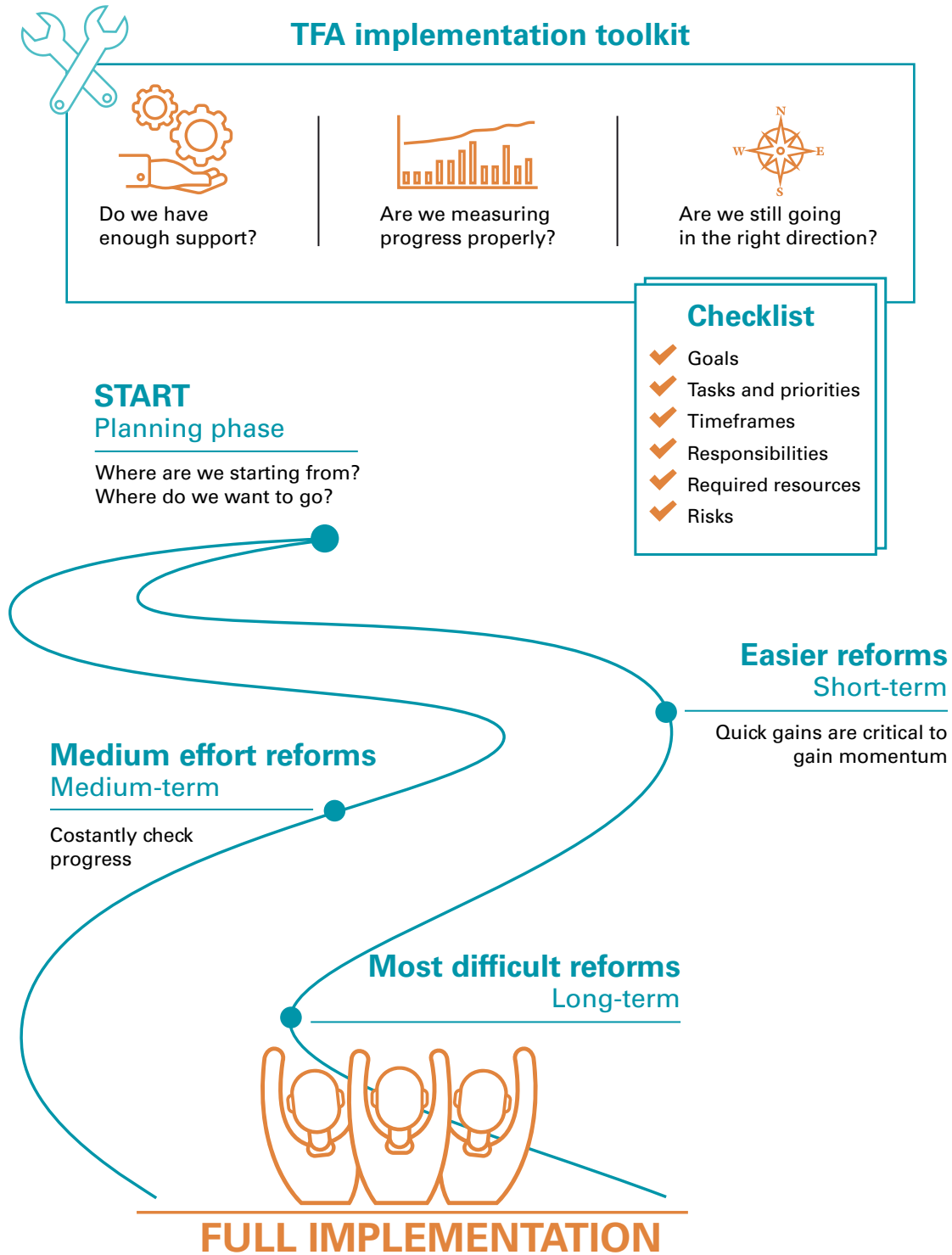
The assessment from several workshop discussants was that the roadmap should list the specific steps, projects and activities to be undertaken by the NCTF, together with an assessment of the difficulties, costs and benefits of each one, to enable the committee to establish its priorities. Part of the prioritization process includes articulating both the short-term and long-term objectives that will allow the committee to achieve tangible results. Some discussants suggested that it is vital to set achievable, realistic targets that

will result in success, rather than setting high targets that, realistically speaking, cannot be achieved. It is also important that the resulting achievements are meaningful for both the public and private sectors.

According to workshop discussions, the involvement of all relevant stakeholders in establishing clear objectives can help to secure full buy-in from participants. Quick wins are also important to retain the commitment of committee members and to maintain the national committee's focus and credibility. This is particularly important for the private sector, which typically operates within shorter timelines than governments and, therefore, usually needs to see immediate gains in order to remain committed to the process. Accordingly, appropriate and credible measurements of progress are important elements of a roadmap, allowing the committee to demonstrate that its work is resulting in concrete gains. These gains, in turn, can help unlock additional financial and political support for a committee's more complex objectives (see Figure 11).

SECTION 3: DEFINING A ROADMAP FOR THE NCTF

Figure 11 A road map to implement the TFA



Source: WTO Secretariat based on the e-survey on National Committees on Trade Facilitation, 2016.

SECTION 3: DEFINING A ROADMAP FOR THE NCTF

3.2 Sequential versus parallel strategy

As part of the process of establishing their priorities, NCTFs have to identify the strategic approach that is most appropriate to address the challenges of trade facilitation reform, particularly in light of limited available funds and resources. Workshop discussants described their experiences with two particular strategies – sequential and parallel strategies – and gave examples of each. While both approaches have their advantages, the parallel strategy can be overly demanding in cases where resources are scarce. On the other hand, while a strategy based on small steps, i.e. a sequential implementation of reforms, may allow for better management of resources, it can be draining if the momentum cannot be sustained.

It is up to each NCTF to assess carefully when to use one strategy or the other, as the choice largely depends on the national context. In order for a NCTF to remain relevant, it is important to strike a balance between strategical and operational issues, and to adapt the modus operandi of the NCTF to new challenges, thereby continuing to achieve results in the long term. One workshop discussant highlighted that prioritizing and identifying deliverables is a moving and evolving task.

Workshop example 7: National trade facilitation roadmaps

Greece's roadmap is an elaborate 45-page document which, according to a speaker at the workshop, sets out ambitious but realistic goals. The tasks are divided into three phases: the short term, the medium term and the long term. In the short term (up to one year), the priority was to deliver early and visible improvements for both the administration and economic operators, to convince stakeholders of the government's determination and commitment to reform. In the medium term (one to four years), the main reforms would be conducted, and in the long term (one year), the reforms would be evaluated and consolidated. As a result, since 2012, Greece has improved its ranking in the World Bank's "Doing Business" study by 39 positions, passing from position 100 to 61 with particularly noticeable improvements in the efficiency of customs and reduced times to export and import (25 per cent and 44 per cent, respectively).

For more information see:

<https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trade/GreeceTradeFacilitationReforms/Documents/NationalTradeFacilitationStrategyRoadmap.pdf>

Ghana opted for a parallel sequencing of tasks. This choice was motivated by the positive experiences in the past with the implementation of the Ghana's Trade Sector Support Programme. Such sequencing was made possible by the establishment of technical sub-committees within the National Committee. The sub-committees meet more frequently than the larger National Committee on their respective specializations, and they keep the National Committee informed as to their projects. After the selection of Category A, B and C commitments, Ghana's NCTF highlighted attainable measures, and separated them from those that required government investments.

According to USAID, some reforms may depend on the prior implementation of other measures or may be more easily implemented once certain tasks have been completed. For example, the simplification and harmonization of procedures in the first instance can make the implementation of automation easier. However, there may be overlap between reforms and the specific sequence depends on the initial trade facilitation situation of each country.

SECTION 3: DEFINING A ROADMAP FOR THE NCTF

3.3 Showing accountability and communicating results

A major challenge for NCTFs is how to generate and maintain momentum over the long term in order to sustain the motivation and commitment of all stakeholders involved in the reforms. An important way of doing this is by concretely demonstrating that the national committee is having a positive impact on trade facilitation reform and delivering benefits for stakeholders. For some workshop discussants, one way of doing this is to instil a results-based ethos into committee members from the outset and to include an effective system of measurement and monitoring as an important part of the committee's operational procedures, such as measuring the committee's success rate in taking action to schedule, and demonstrating in practical ways that it values stakeholders' feedback, such as by preparing consultations in a professional way and pursuing them with a rigorous follow-up.

Some trade facilitation reforms are more easily quantifiable than others. For instance, Paraguay set objectives regarding the number of documents needed with connection to the importation and the exportation of goods. Most NCTFs have also set the submission of Category B and C notifications as one objective. Other reforms may be much more difficult to quantify and may therefore require intermediary steps or country-specific monitoring tools. In this regard, Article 7.6 of the TFA asks members to calculate and publish the World Customs Organization's (WCO) «Time Release Study», which can be a useful tool to measure progress. An alternative is to rely on external

benchmarks or global indicators. Trade facilitation-related rankings and indexes have proliferated over the years and can be used as rough measurements of performance. In Tajikistan, for example, success in the implementation of the TFA was linked to visible improvements in the country's ranking in the World Bank's "Doing Business" report.

According to workshop discussants, a communication strategy is also a vital part of the national committee's operational procedures. Having a communication strategy in place from the outset allows committees to immediately and consistently communicate positive results and showcase the benefits of the committee's work. According to a representative of Ghana's NCTF, a communication strategy is a very useful mechanism to remind the trading community at large and the greater public that they are the main beneficiaries of the implementation of the TFA and of any resulting reforms undertaken. It is also recognition of the public's important role of holding the NCTF accountable. A communication strategy can have a two-track approach that informs the internal constituency of committee members, as well as providing information externally via channels such as television, press releases and publications on dedicated websites when new information becomes available.

SECTION 4: ENSURING THE PROPER FUNCTIONING AND LONG-TERM ADAPTABILITY OF THE NCTF

4.1 The keys for proper functioning over time of NCTFs

NCTFs have to strive to ensure that they operate consistently as effective coordinating bodies over the long term, and do not degenerate into little more than talk-shops. As highlighted in previous sections, workshop discussants considered that the long-term effectiveness of a NCTF is determined by the sustained engagement of all public bodies involved, by sufficient coordination within the committee, and by continued support at the highest political levels. For an NCTF to perform its role effectively, according to workshop discussants, it must identify clear and measurable

tasks and achieve early results, showing that the committee can deliver and thereby securing consistent political support and engagement.

Workshop discussants highlighted several key factors based on their various experiences. In addition to the structure of the NCTF, as outlined in Section 2, a committee's principles and values, its operational procedures, and political support for it are also important elements of success.

4.2 Principles and values

Establishing effective collaboration and trust amongst stakeholders, including relevant government agencies and representatives of the private sector, is vital. For one discussant, establishing and maintaining a positive reputation was the most important guiding principle to functionality and success. Creating a safe and cooperative environment during meetings is important to build trust and allow parties to exchange ideas,

stimulate each other to be ambitious, and understand and respect each other's positions. The NCTF is expected to undertake meaningful consultations, especially in the eye of private companies, and show that it values stakeholders' feedback, including by involving all committee members in setting the agenda, which unifies them around the achievement of the NCTF's objectives.

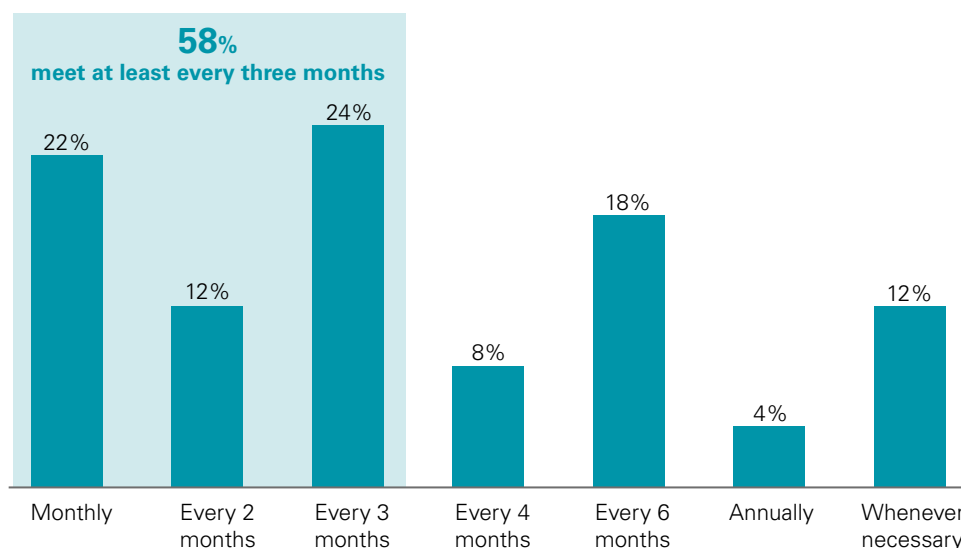
4.3 Operational procedures

The optimum meeting schedule for committees was identified as simply meeting as often as necessary to ensure the proper implementation of its tasks, and to avoid meeting just for the sake of meeting. Because many committee members work full-time, it can be difficult to arrange an appropriate meeting time that suits all. One option, to meet at regular and clearly established intervals (e.g. the first Monday of every month) can substantially facilitate the NCTF's planning. The extent to which an NCTF manages to take decisions and to remain focused on results appears to influence the frequency of its meetings. The more a committee is focused on securing results, the more often it meets to take decisions.

The electronic survey results show that most NCTFs meet at least once every three months, while at least 22 per cent of NCTFs hold monthly meetings. Some committees (18 per cent) meet once every six months, while others (4 per cent) meet once a year, or on an ad hoc basis whenever it is considered necessary (see Figure 12). The long intervals between meetings appear to be explained by the presence of a steering committee or of sub-groups that oversee the day-to-day operation of the NCTF, and these tend to meet more frequently. In these cases, NCTF meetings act like a management board, meeting on a less frequent basis in order to take stock of progress made and to provide direction.

SECTION 4: ENSURING THE PROPER FUNCTIONING AND LONG-TERM ADAPTABILITY OF THE NCTF

Figure 12 How frequently does the NCTF meet?



Source: WTO Secretariat based on the e-survey on National Committees on Trade Facilitation, 2016.

In accordance with the principle of inclusiveness, a well-designed agenda reflecting the input of all committee members is critical to encourage active participation and commitment towards achieving positive results. This is not without its challenges, particularly in committees that have a very large membership with many competing interests. This is where the establishment of sub-groups and or specific taskforces can be helpful, allowing committee members to focus on areas of interest to them. Committee members

can also be tasked with specific actions or reporting responsibilities. Logistically, circulating the agenda sufficiently in advance allows members to be well prepared and thereby better placed to engage fully in meetings. Last-minute meetings without a clear agenda can undermine the usefulness of the meeting and diminish members' trust in the process, which can ultimately lead to disengagement by some stakeholders.

Workshop example 9: Ensuring political support

In Albania, the National Committee was established by order of the Prime Minister and is chaired by the Minister for Trade, who reports periodically to the Prime Minister's office regarding the implementation of the committee's defined objectives.

Lao PDR's NCTF managed to engage the support of senior government officials from the beginning by giving them a prominent role in the committee's structure.

4.4 The keys for long-term adaptability

NCTFs face the ongoing challenge of remaining relevant and results-focused while dealing with changing membership and possible changes in the political environment. The workshop discussions highlighted that planning for rotation and succession in a structured way is important to allow committees' membership to evolve over time and ensure that key people are on board at each point in time. According to workshop discussants, collaboration and longevity in the NCTF can be improved by defining roles, including that of chairperson, based on a member's

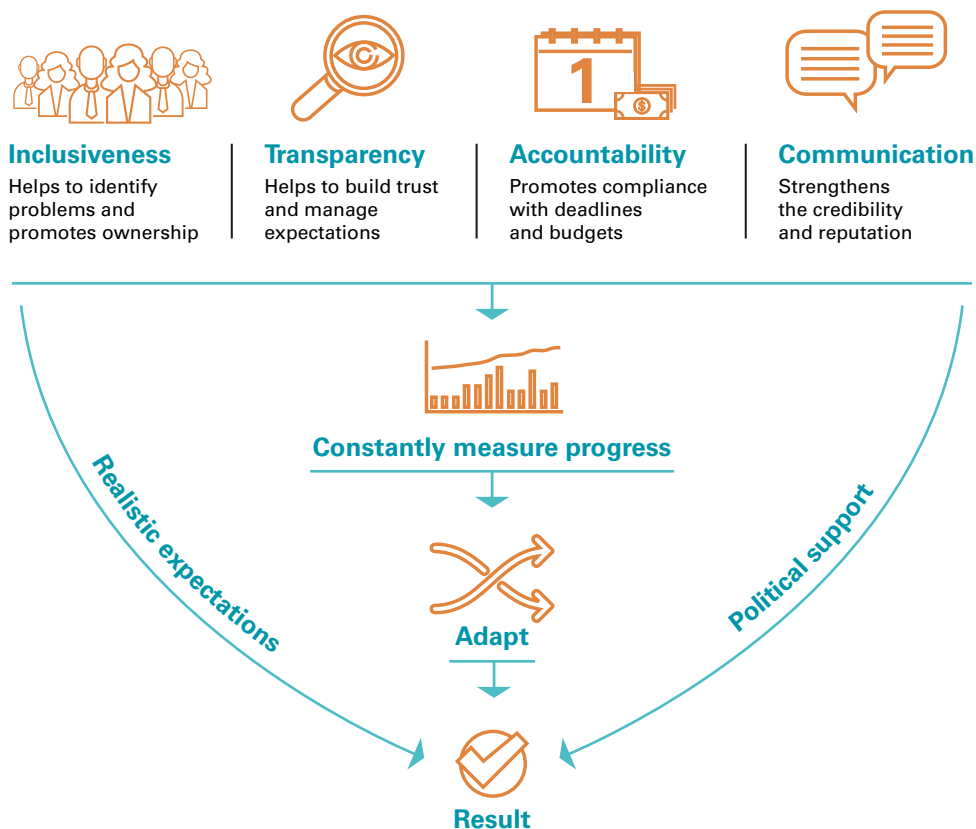
SECTION 4: ENSURING THE PROPER FUNCTIONING AND LONG-TERM ADAPTABILITY OF THE NCTF

position and title within an agency, and not on a personal basis. Such a process can facilitate the turnover of the committee's membership as it progressively changes over the years.

In addition to the rotation factor, the following elements were also identified (see also Figure 13):

- **Inclusiveness:** Ideally, all relevant interests are taken into account in the work of the NCTF. Therefore, communication channels must be kept open to facilitate dialogue and reach common agreement on the projects and programmes to be undertaken. Inclusiveness is also important as a means of encouraging early warning indications of problems in the implementation of new reforms.
- **Transparency:** Transparency is vital to build trust among the stakeholders and secure their ownership of the reforms to be implemented. One of the keys to transparency is for all members to be familiar with the roadmap and to be regularly updated on all aspects of the NCTF's work.
- **Accountability:** Public demand for information and accountability can be a powerful driver of governance. It creates an incentive to meet deadlines and to respect budgets. Greater accountability can also increase support at the highest political level.
- **Communication:** An effective communication strategy can strengthen all of the previous elements. Informing stakeholders about challenges being faced and highlighting successful results can enhance the credibility of the roadmap, which in turn supports the work of the NCTF. The strategic utilization of communication can sustain the reform process by building consensus around difficult or controversial reforms, as well as broadening the array of stakeholders who are committed to reforms.

Figure 13 The keys for long term adaptability of the NCTF



Source: WTO Secretariat based on the e-survey on National Committees on Trade Facilitation, 2016.

SECTION 4: ENSURING THE PROPER FUNCTIONING AND LONG-TERM ADAPTABILITY OF THE NCTF

Workshop example 10: An enduring national committee - SWEPRO: the longest journey

The Swedish Trade Procedures Council (SWEPRO) is Sweden's private-public forum for discussion and information on international work for all issues related to simplification of trade procedures.

The journey of SWEPRO to turn into today's NCTF of Sweden started in 1950 with the establishment of the Wood and Pulp Initiative, which aimed to reduce the number of documents for exports. In 1990, SWEPRO was transferred to the National Board of Trade, under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which today hosts SWEPRO's Secretariat. When Sweden became a member of the European Union in 1995, the role of the committee changed from that of a decision-making body on commercial policy – as this became an exclusive competence of the European Union – to that of a platform for discussions on trade.

The issues dealt with within the NCTF range from safety and security to EU customs legislation, including the multilateral negotiations of the TFA. The capability of SWEPRO to adapt to the new reality of international trade has made it an indispensable driving force for Sweden in the area of trade facilitation. SWEPRO has its own budget, as every participant pays for membership. The public sector has dedicated seats, whereas the others are open to business organizations and private companies on a «first-come-first-served» basis. The agenda is planned by the committee's secretariat (the National Board of Trade) and influenced by participants. SWEPRO has no decision-making power, but the results of discussions feed into the national policy coordination process. The minutes and presentations of the meetings are publicly available on the website of the National Board of Trade.

SECTION 5: CHALLENGES FACED AND HOW TO OBTAIN ASSISTANCE

5.1 What are the main challenges faced by NCTFs?

NCTFs face a number of important challenges to fully implement the provisions of the TFA, which require them to mobilize a large spectrum of stakeholders and to coordinate a significant number of government agencies. Depending on the number of measures already in place and those that remain outstanding, a large number of legislative, regulatory, or institutional adjustments may be needed, as well as capital equipment, human resources and training. In addition, the actual establishment and maintenance of a NCTF presents its own challenges and difficulties. The information in this section, which tries to identify the biggest challenges faced thus far by NCTFs is mostly derived from the results of the electronic survey (see Figure 14). The challenges identified are listed below, together with the percentage of respondents who experience them:

- Implementation of effective coordination among the different stakeholders (28 per cent);
- Achievement of the right membership and participation in the committee (27 per cent);
- Definition of an adequate mandate or description of the NCTF's functions (24 per cent);
- Lack of political support and/or commitment from the stakeholders for the establishment and continuity of the NCTF (17 per cent);
- Lack of human resources or funding to maintain a technical secretariat for the committee (15 per cent);
- A general lack of awareness or understanding of the TFA or the role to be played by the NCTF (11 per cent);
- Problems in securing the formal approval or completing the relevant domestic legal procedures, even after the institutional framework of the NCTF has been designed (10 per cent).

SECTION 5: CHALLENGES FACED AND HOW TO OBTAIN ASSISTANCE

Figure 14

Main challenges faced in establishing or maintaining a NCTF



Source: WTO Secretariat based on the e-survey on National Committees on Trade Facilitation, 2016.

According to the results of the survey, of those members that had already established a NCTF, approximately 27 per cent of respondents indicated that they were receiving, or had received in the past, some form of assistance. This typically comes from a donor (e.g. USAID), international or regional organizations, or other types of programmes (e.g. Trademark East Africa). For respondents in the 73 per cent that have not received assistance, approximately one-third indicated they required support in order to improve their committee, most considered they do not require further support, and 6 per cent did not answer the question (see Figure 15).

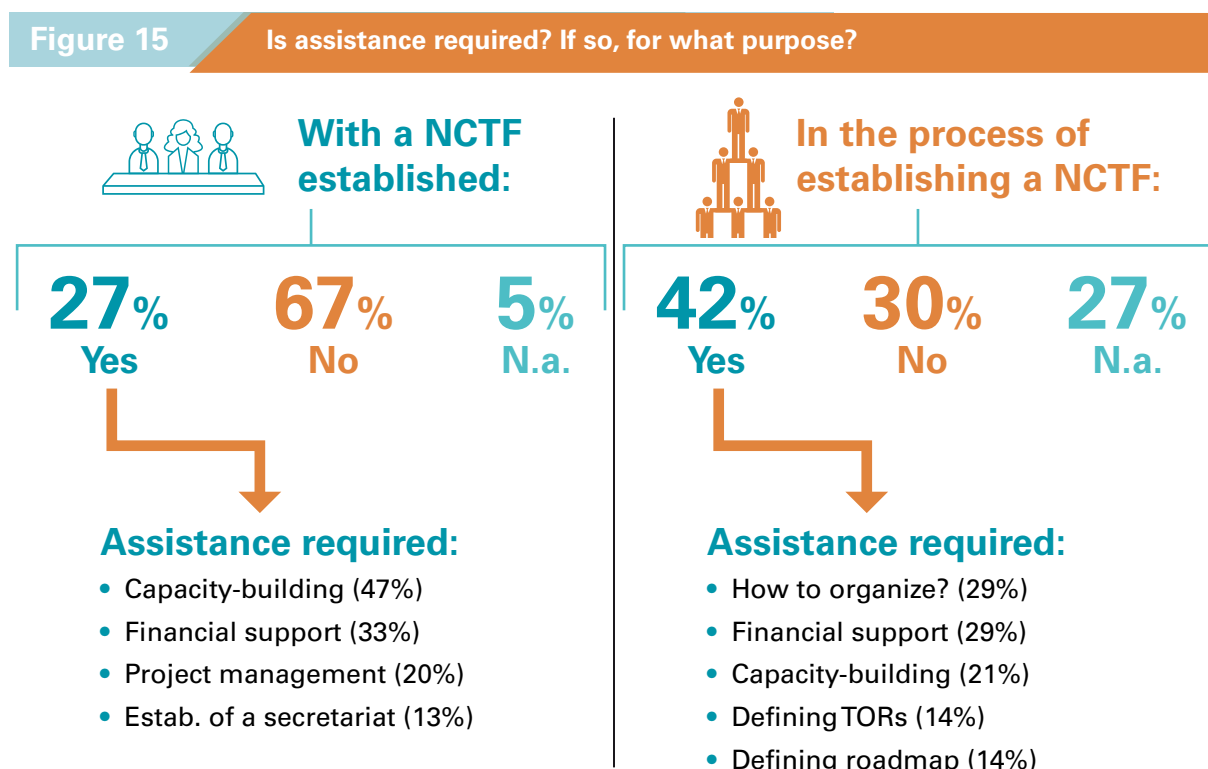
Where WTO members are still in the process of establishing a NCTF, approximately 24 per cent of respondents indicated they had received assistance, identifying the European Union, USAID, the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA – Union Economique et Monétaire Ouest Africaine), the International Trade Centre (ITC), the United Nations Committee on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), UNECE, the World Bank Group, the WCO and the WTO as sources of support. Of the remaining 76 per cent that had not received assistance, the survey shows that 43 per cent require support, 30 per cent do not require support, and for the remaining 27 per cent, the situation is unknown.

SECTION 5: CHALLENGES FACED AND HOW TO OBTAIN ASSISTANCE

5.2 What type of assistance is required?

The type of assistance needed is country-specific and linked to the operational status of the NCTF. However, three categories of assistance were more frequently mentioned overall: 1) capacity-building and training,

including raising awareness about the TFA; 2) funding and other types of financial support; and, 3) to a lesser extent, advice on how to organize and design an appropriate institutional framework (see Figure 15).



Source: WTO Secretariat based on the e-survey on National Committees on Trade Facilitation, 2016.

5.3 How can members get assistance?

This segment of the workshop focused on the presentation by donor institutions of their assistance programmes. They made it very clear that a broad range of technical assistance options are available to assist members to establish and manage their NCTFs in an effective and sustainable manner. The type of assistance required for each member may vary considerably depending on their particular conditions, but most programmes can be adjusted to the needs of the recipients. One speaker suggested that, from the earliest stages, committees should access international technical assistance for initial guidance, the assessment of trade facilitation needs, and the setting of objectives, whenever needed.

SECTION 5: CHALLENGES FACED AND HOW TO OBTAIN ASSISTANCE

One common thread among these programmes is the need to strengthen the capacity of national committee members, who not only need to have a good knowledge of the TFA, but also ample experience in their respective domains. As a general rule, the NCTF will only be as strong as its weakest links. A second common point raised by many speakers is the importance of coordination amongst donors in order to avoid duplication in their efforts. They also highlighted important lessons that had been learnt by donors and beneficiaries with regard to how best to make use of available assistance.

The following is an indicative list of the types of assistance available, as highlighted by donor organizations that participated in the workshop:

- 1. The ITC** has a number of programmes available that include training in best practices and in tools for studying the current trading environment including business analysis. The ITC provides technical assistance with undertaking substantive studies on the requirements for establishing and maintaining a NCTF, as well as reviewing documents and formalities. Study tours can be organized for members experiencing difficulties in constituting strong NCTFs, so that they can what practices are used in other members.
- 2. UNCTAD** As a result of consultations with different countries, UNCTAD put in place empowerment programmes for NCTFs, which focus on providing knowledge and training on trade facilitation. They have been asked to consider extending such empowerment programmes to the private sector.
- 3. USAID** provide support in creating and strengthening relevant committees wherever they are engaged on work related to TFA implementation. For assistance to establish and strengthen NCTFs, governments can contact the bilateral or regional missions established in their countries. The WCO focuses on providing administrations with the necessary organizational development skills for establishing a NCTF, including project management skills and monitoring and evaluation tools, all of which are necessary for a functioning NCTF. NCTFs need to identify what support is available for developing business cases, and how to access that assistance. They need to work more efficiently in order to make the most of stretched resources. National administrations need to take responsibility for the coordination of identifying the assistance needs of NCTFs and how to attain it;
- 4. The World Bank** supports projects to enhance and develop NCTFs, including by working with local consultants on legal issues. The World Bank can offer assistance to NCTFs in early stages to see what, if anything, the Bank can do, and if it not possible for the World Bank to help, it can help members to identify other technical assistance and capacity building agencies that could help. Local World Bank offices can assist NCTFs in this task.
- 5. WTO** The WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility (TFAF) was created at the request of developing and LDC members to help ensure that they receive the assistance they need to reap the full benefits of the TFA and to support its full implementation by all WTO members. The TFAF helps developing and LDC members to assess their specific needs and identify possible development partners to help them meet those needs through a diverse number of activities, including by assisting members in the preparation of their notification of special and differential treatment categories, and helping them to access available implementation assistance from regional and multilateral agencies, bilateral donors and other stakeholders. Where no other funding source is available, the TFAF will offer two types of grants to developing and LDC members notifying Category C commitments: project preparation grants and project implementation grants. The WTO also provides technical assistance to members through its Institute for Training and Technical Cooperation (ITTC).

ANNEX 1:

PROGRAMME OF THE WORKSHOP

Experience-sharing on establishing or maintaining a National Committee on Trade Facilitation

geneva, switzerland, 8 june 2016

10:00 – 10:15

Opening remarks

Ambassador Esteban B. Conejos

10:15 – 11:15

Session 1: Mandate of the national committee and areas of work

The TFA foresees that a national committee should facilitate the domestic coordination and implementation of the provisions of the TFA. What does this cover (and what not)? Should it also have other functions in its terms of reference? If so, which ones?

- 1.1 Mrs. Nevin Omuri (Albania)
- 1.2 Mr. Flavio Augusto Trevisan Scorza (Brazil)
- 1.3 Mr. Festus Nathaniel Williams (St. Vincent and the Grenadines)
- 1.4 Mr Emmanuel Mutahunga (Uganda)
- 1.5 Mr. Harold Tarosa (Vanuatu)

Discussants:

- 1.6 Mr. Jim Williams (World Bank)
- 1.7 Mr. Poul Hansen (UNCTAD)

11:15 – 13:00

Session 2: Defining an institutional framework

Possible elements for discussion include:

- Who should be part of the National Committee?
- Who should lead/chair the National Committee?
- What should be the role of the private sector?
- How should the interests of small and medium-sized enterprises be taken into account?
- Should there be a formal law or decree setting up the national committee or should it be based on informal coordination?
- What should be the organizational structure (e.g. centralized or with working groups/task forces? How many levels? etc.)
- Should there be provisions for financing of the committee? If so, what are the best practices?
- What is the recommended frequency of meetings?
- Relationship with relevant regional integration efforts

- 2.1 Mrs. Kelebogile Maureen Lekaukau (Botswana)
- 2.2 Mrs Laura Escalante Monge (Costa Rica)
- 2.3 Mr. Sharda Naidu (Fiji)
- 2.4 Dr. Richard Brown (Jamaica)
- 2.5 Mr. Frank Heijmann (Netherlands)
- 2.6 Mr. Adamu Mohammed Abdulhamid (Nigeria)
- 2.7 Dr. Mohammad Irfan (Pakistan)
- 2.8 Mr. Nguyen Toan (Viet Nam)

Discussants:

- 2.9 Mr. Mario Apostolov (UNECE)
- 2.10 Dr. Mohammad Saeed (ITC)

13:00 – 15:00

Lunch break

ANNEX 1: PROGRAMME OF THE WORKSHOP

15:00- 16:00

Session 3: Strategies for defining a roadmap for the national committee

Possible elements for discussion include:

- How should the goals and priorities of the national committee be established?
- How to prioritize and identify deliverables?
- Sequencing versus parallel tracks
- Should there be explicit rules for the measurement of progress?
- Best practices for following-up and adapting; accountability
- Is a communication strategy necessary?

3.1 Mr. Anthony Kwasi Nyame-Baafi (Ghana)

3.2 Mr. Hernán Gabriel Muñoz Pérez (Paraguay)

3.3 Mr. John Brian Sam (Papua New Guinea)

3.4 Mr. Dilshod Sharifi (Tajikistan)

Discussants:

3.5 Mrs. Maria Rosaria Ceccarelli (UNECE)

3.6 Ms Arantazu Sanchez (UNCTAD)

16:00 - 17:00

Session 4: How to ensure the proper functioning and long-term adaptability of the national committee

Possible elements of discussion include:

- How to ensure the proper functioning over time of the national committee?
- How to secure long-term political support?
- How to deal with the rotation and replacement of representatives to the national committee?
- What are the common success factors and what the most frequent challenges faced?

4.1 Ms Anneli Wengelin (National Board of Trade of Sweden)

4.2 Mr. Godfried Smit (EuroPro)

4.3 Mr. Omar Chung (Guyana)

4.4 Mr. Khemdeth Sihavong (Lao PDR)

4.5 Mr. Trevor Sichombo (Zambia)

Discussants:

4.6 Ms Ana B. Hinojosa (WCO)

4.7 Mr. Jim Williams (World Bank)

4.8 Mr. Bismark Sitorus (UNCTAD)

17:00 – 17:45

Session 5: Obtaining assistance to establish or maintain a national committee on trade facilitation

Possible elements for discussion include:

- What types of assistance are available?
- Are there lessons to be drawn from Members' experiences?

Total time: 45 minutes

Time allocation: Seven minutes per person

5.1 Mr. Gib Brown (USAID)

5.2 Dr. Mohammad Saeed (ITC)

5.3 Mrs. Virginia Cram-Martos (UNECE)

5.4 Mr. Poul Hansen (UNCTAD)

5.5 Mr. Jim Williams (World Bank)

5.6 Mr. Philip Wood (WCO)

17:45-18:00

Closing remarks

Ambassador Esteban B. Conejos

ANNEX 2:

CONCLUDING REMARKS BY AMB. ESTEBAN CONEJOS

“While I won’t attempt the mission impossible of giving a full summary of all points made, I would like to highlight a few aspects I consider to be recurrent themes and shared experiences that emerged from today’s exchanges.

Designing a committee begins by understanding your own reality. It is clear that what works well in one member may not work well in the context of another member, so it is not an issue of simply copying what has been done by others. It became clear that, while members often face common challenges, they have chosen different ways of approaching the task of establishing or maintaining a national TF committee – and for good reason, as one size will never fit all.

Problems frequently begin with defining the mandate and composition of the committee. Competing priorities and internal rivalries can make it difficult to get off to a good start – and it is often the initial phase, where problems seem most pronounced. This type of mentality is precisely what the TFA seeks to change, and what must change if you want to succeed.

Reference was made to the fact that the focus should be on designing a committee that was capable of achieving its goals. Having clear and measurable tasks, achieving early results to show that the committee can deliver, as well as securing consistent engagement and high political support emerged as important conditions for a committee to well perform its role. An inclusive approach to committee composition, allowing all stakeholders – including different stakeholders in the private sector – to take part, appears to be an important success factor as well. Frequent reference was also made to the need for a cooperative environment and for sound – and sustained – resources for a committee to work well. In terms of who should lead the committee, it became clear that the answer changes a lot from member to member, reflecting the specific needs and ground realities.

Several useful ideas were presented on how to ensure the proper functioning to the committee, and its sustained operation, which often appears to be a particularly big challenge. Reference was made to the fact that it was often easier to set up a body than making sure it continues to work well.

Keeping the momentum and engaging all relevant parties are equally important, as is measuring performance.

A very positive message that emerged from our exchanges was that there is ample support for the establishment of a national trade facilitation committee, and that it does not take a complicated, ten-step programme to set it up. Many countries already have existing structures on which to build their committee on. What matters is to ensure that one has a well-functioning committee that solves problem and responds to actual needs.

It is my hope that you found this exchange as useful as I did, and that we continue the dialogue. Opportunity for that will already be given tomorrow, as I mentioned earlier, when you will be invited to share additional reactions in the course of our PrepCom meeting.

Before closing, I would like to say a few words on the electronic survey you were invited to take part in. Many of you used the opportunity, allowing the Secretariat to gather a solid amount of results. They will be presented in tomorrow’s meeting of the PrepCom, where you will also have time to introduce questions and comments we could not take up today for lack of time.

Thanks and have a nice evening.”

ANNEX 3: METHODOLOGY USED ON THE ELECTRONIC SURVEY

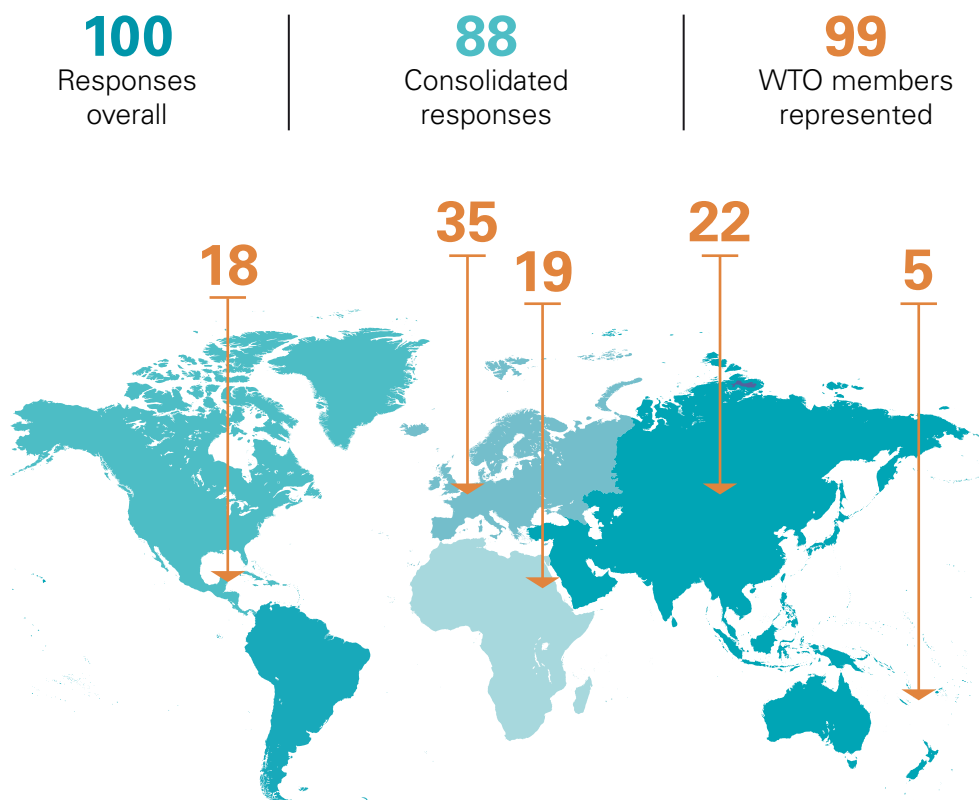
The survey took place between May and November 2016. Members were asked via e-mail to provide information, on a voluntary basis, to a maximum of 12 questions in a web-based survey (June 2016) that was available in the WTO's three official languages. The Secretariat committed not to reveal member-specific information provided through this platform.

More than 81 responses were received by 7 June 2016, including from participants of WTO specialized technical assistance activities on trade facilitation. The deadline was extended on two occasions to allow more members to provide information. By the end of

November 2016, more than 100 responses had been received with information from 99 WTO members across five regions (or approximately 60 per cent of the WTO membership), as well as six countries in the process of acceding to the WTO (see Figure 16).

The data received were consolidated in order to have only one entry per member. Responses were then validated with the members' missions in Geneva. The figures presented in this publication refer exclusively to WTO members and do not take acceding members into account.

Figure 16 How many responses were received in the WTO's e-survey and from where?



Source: WTO Secretariat based on the e-survey on National Committees on Trade Facilitation, 2016.

English: https://wto.formstack.com/forms/e_survey_tradefacilitation_committees

French: https://wto.formstack.com/forms/enquete_electronique_comites_nationaux_facilitation_des_echanges

Spanish: https://wto.formstack.com/forms/encuesta_electronica_comites_nacionales_de_facilitacion_del_comercio

ANNEX 4: INDICATIVE LIST OF INSTITUTIONS THAT CAN PROVIDE ASSISTANCE FOR NCTFS



<http://www.tfafacility.org/>



<http://www.intracen.org/>



<http://www.unctad.org/>



<https://www.unece.org/info>



<https://www.usaid.gov/>



<http://www.wcoomd.org/>



<http://www.worldbank.org/>

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ITC	International Trade Centre
LDCs	Least-developed countries
NCTF	National Committee on Trade Facilitation
TFA	Trade Facilitation Agreement
SMEs	Small and Medium-size Enterprises
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNECE	United Nations Economic Council for Europe
WCO	World Customs Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

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