

**Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)**

Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade, Economic Globalization
and Financing for Development
Eleventh session (Liberalization of foreign trade)
Beirut, 27-28 November 2017



Item 3 of the provisional agenda

Provisional agenda and annotations

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 - (b) Implementation of foreign trade liberalization activities under the ESCWA programme of work and technical cooperation since the tenth session of the Committee.
5. Transport and connectivity to global value chains.
6. Trade and the Sustainable Development Goals.
7. Implementation of trade facilitation measures in the Arab region.
8. The cost of the lack of Arab-African trade integration.
9. Progress in the process of establishing an Arab customs union.
10. The role of trade in economic transformation policies: the case of Jordan.
11. Mega international trade agreements and their implications on Arab States.
12. Arab regional integration: regionalism and multilateralism (panel discussion).
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14. Date and venue of the next session of the Committee.
15. Other matters.
16. Adoption of the recommendations made by the Committee at its eleventh session.

ANNOTATIONS

1. Opening of the session

The eleventh session of the Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade, Economic Globalization and Financing for Development will begin at 10 a.m. on Monday, 27 November 2017, in the Conference Hall of the United Nations House in Beirut. The representative of Bahrain, the country which chaired the tenth session of the Committee, will make a welcome statement. The representative of the ESCWA executive secretariat will then deliver the inaugural speech.

2. Election of officers

Rule 18 of the Rules of Procedure of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia states: "Member States shall chair the sessions of the subsidiary bodies of the Commission on a rotating basis, in the Arabic alphabetical order employed by the United Nations. Unless the Commission decides otherwise, those bodies shall elect all their other officers".* Pursuant to that rule, Tunisia shall chair the eleventh session of the Committee, succeeding Bahrain, which chaired the tenth session, from 23 November 2015 to 26 November 2017. The Committee shall elect the two vice-chairs and the rapporteur from among its member States representatives.

3. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

Rule 8 of the Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, which applies to subsidiary bodies, states: "At the beginning of each session, once the Chair has assumed his/her duties in accordance with rule 12, the Commission shall adopt the agenda for that session on the basis of the provisional agenda". Pursuant to that rule, the Committee will be presented with the provisional agenda and annotations for this session in document E/ESCWA/EDID/2017/IG.3/L.1 and the organization of work in document E/ESCWA/EDID/2017/IG.3/L.2. The Committee shall adopt the agenda and the organization of work in that or an amended form.

4. Progress achieved in the liberalization of foreign trade (E/ESCWA/EDID/2017/IG.3/3)

The secretariat will present the following reports:

(a) Implementation of recommendations made by the Committee at its tenth session (E/ESCWA/EDID/2017/IG.3/3(Part I))

This report presents the activities implemented by the ESCWA executive secretariat in the field of foreign trade liberalization pursuant to the recommendations made by the Committee at its tenth session. The document lists each recommendation and the related implementation actions.

Representatives of member States are invited to take note of the report and make comments and suggestions.

* ESCWA member States in the Arabic alphabetical order are as follows: Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Tunisia, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Sudan, Iraq, Oman, the State of Palestine, Qatar, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Egypt, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Mauritania and Yemen.

- (b) Implementation of foreign trade liberalization activities under the ESCWA programme of work and technical cooperation since the tenth session of the Committee
(E/ESCWA/EDID/2017/IG.3/3(Part II))

This report contains an overview of the activities carried out by the executive secretariat in the area of foreign trade liberalization under the ESCWA programme of work since the tenth session of the Committee, during the period from November 2015 until November 2017. It also reviews technical cooperation activities undertaken within the ESCWA regular programme for technical cooperation which includes advisory services, training activities and field projects, delivered at the request of member States.

Representatives of member States are invited to take note of those activities and make comments and suggestions thereon.

5. Transport and connectivity to global value chains
(E/ESCWA/EDID/2016/IG.1/4(Part I)/Rev.1)

This report explores the impact of transport and logistics infrastructure and services availability and efficiency on the connectivity to global value chains. Using available international indicators, the report assesses the capacity of transport infrastructure and services to facilitate economic transformation in the Arab region, and their suitability in enabling connectivity to global value chains. It presents an overview of the Trade in Value Added (TiVA) database which was developed by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in partnership with the World Trade Organization (WTO) as a tool to assess the contribution of transport services in the global value chains integration. It also offers recommendations to strengthen the performance of transport and trade sectors in the Arab countries.

Representatives of member States are invited to take note of the document and make comments and suggestions thereon.

6. Trade and the Sustainable Development Goals
(E/ESCWA/EDID/2017/IG.3/4)

This report sets out the relation between trade and many of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and presents the results of a survey of trade officials in the Arab region on trade liberalization and its role in achieving sustainable development by 2030. It also provides recommendations for the Arab countries on how to enhance the role of trade in promoting development and achieving the SDGs.

Representatives of member States are invited to take note of the document and make comments and suggestions thereon.

7. Implementation of trade facilitation measures in the Arab region
(E/ESCWA/EDID/2017/IG.3/5)

This document provides a snap-shot of the status of implementation of trade facilitation measures by Arab countries, as a baseline for measuring the progress that will be made over the coming years in the implementation of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on Trade Facilitation (TFA). It defines trade facilitation and summarizes its benefits and costs. It then briefly presents the TFA and provides data on implementation of its measures by Arab countries, based on the notifications they have made to the WTO in that regard.

Representatives of member States are invited to take note of the document and make comments and suggestions thereon.

8. The cost of the lack of Arab-African trade integration
(E/ESCWA/EDID/2017/IG.3/6)

This paper provides an estimate of the cost of the lack of economic integration between the Arab region and sub-Saharan Africa. It looks at scenarios for improved integration and its potential impact while taking into consideration the prospects for the implementation of other regional integration agreements by each of the two regions. The report emphasizes that deeper trade integration between the Arab region and sub-Saharan Africa does not need to come at the expense of, but rather should complement efforts by Arab countries to take advantage of export opportunities throughout the world.

Representatives of member States are invited to take note of the document and make comments and suggestions thereon.

9. Progress in the process of establishing an Arab customs union
(E/ESCWA/EDID/2017/IG.3/7)

This report reviews progress made and outstanding issues in the negotiations on the establishment of an Arab customs union. It offers practical recommendations to accelerate the negotiation process based on experiences of other customs unions and the characteristics of Arab economies. The aim is to reinvigorate the negotiations and enable Arab States to identify appropriate economic policies and direct the negotiations in a manner consistent with their economic characteristics and their strategies for economic and social development.

Representatives of member States are invited to take note of the document and make comments and suggestions thereon.

10. The role of trade in economic transformation policies: the case of Jordan
(E/ESCWA/EDID/2017/IG.3/8)

This document examines the evolution of Jordan's regional integration policies through the international free trade agreements it has participated in, and their implications on the future economic development strategies of the country. Using front-line quantitative and statistical analysis of several economic indicators and indexes, it provides policy choices for the Government of Jordan related to selecting trade partners, recognizing strategic sectors and exploiting comparative advantages. The case study on Jordan will give other Arab countries an overview of the effects of bilateral and subregional trade arrangements on economic efficiency, productivity and competitiveness.

Representatives of member States are invited to take note of the document and make comments and suggestions thereon.

11. Mega international trade agreements and their implications on Arab States
(E/ESCWA/EDID/2017/IG.3/9)

This document provides an overview and analysis of the main clauses of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) between the United States and eleven developed and developing States on the Pacific coast, and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) between the United States and the European Union). It highlights the challenges and opportunities that may result from these partnerships if adopted and their repercussions on Arab economies in particular.

Representatives of member States are invited to take note of those activities and make comments and suggestions thereon.

12. Arab regional integration: regionalism and multilateralism
(Panel discussion)

The executive secretariat will moderate a panel discussion on the theme of Arab regional integration and options at the regional and multilateral levels. The panel aims to identify possible scenarios and their advantages for the region. Discussions will focus on points set out by the executive secretariat for that purpose.

Representatives of member States are invited to participate in the panel discussions and/or make comments thereon.

13. Proposed programme of work for the biennium 2018-2019 in the field of foreign trade liberalization
(E/ESCWA/EDID/2017/IG.3/10)

This document presents the proposed outputs and activities to be undertaken by ESCWA in the area of foreign trade liberalization during the biennium 2016-2017, under subprogramme 3 on economic development and integration, which falls under the responsibility of the Economic Development and Integration Division of ESCWA. The programme of work was prepared in line with the revised strategic framework for the biennium 2018-2019 which was adopted by ESCWA at its twenty-ninth session (Doha, 13-15 December 2016).

Representatives of member States are invited to take note of the content of this document and make comments thereon.

14. Date and venue of the next session of the Committee

The Committee will discuss the date and venue of its next session which will focus on foreign trade liberalization to be convened in 2019.

15. Other matters

This item shall cover any other matters that the members of the Committee may decide to discuss.

16. Adoption of the recommendations made by the Committee at its eleventh session

The Committee will consider the draft recommendations for discussion and adoption.
