

Trade Facilitation actual situation of the negotiations

- The Negotiating Group on Trade Facilitation (NGTF) intensified its work during the last period, discussions focus on both (i) textual proposals and (ii) Special and differential treatment for developing countries and least-developed countries. One could say that progress has been made. Indeed, Members submitted their newly revised contributions on almost all elements of the mandate. However, the new package of textual proposals contains many elements which still require further discussions towards a consensus.
- The negotiations aims at establishing a new agreement through the clarification of 3 articles from the GATT , (1) GATT Article VIII: on Fees and charges connected with imports and exports, release and clearance of goods, consularization, border Agency Cooperation, (2) GATT Article X on advance rulings, other measures to enhance impartiality, non –discrimination and transparency, (3) GATT article on freedom of Transit: scope; exceptions, regulations and non-discrimination.
- Recent discussions converged towards dividing all negotiated trade facilitation measures into three categories as follows:
 - (1) Category A containing measures that countries are currently implementing (i.e. easy to implement).
 - (2) Category B containing measures which require only transitional period for internal regulatory process but without requiring neither technical nor financial assistance.
 - (3) Category C, which require financial and technical assistance for their implementation.
- Main divergences among members reside in the categorization of the trade facilitation measures and the scheduling of members obligations, as developed countries are of the view that scheduling should be made upon signature, while developing countries are of the view that it should be made upon entry into force as they will be needing time to set the implementation plan of those commitments that need a transition period and technical assistance to be convened with the donors.
- Compared to other negotiating files, the Trade Facilitation negotiations are rather advanced, and some members mainly EC are implicitly calling for the acceleration of the pace of the negotiations in view of a possible early harvest by establishing a "Trade Facilitation Agreement".

The main position of Egypt along with the majority of developing countries could be resumed as follows:

- S&D and Developmental needs: Clarification for the scope of S&D, and recognize the principles of flexibility and gradual and selective progressivity for developing countries according to their economic developmental needs.
- Technical assistance and Capacity Building: should be a long-term, gradual, and non-time-bound exercise focused on creating knowledge, skills, experiential, and institutional foundation.
- Flexibility: Any new disciplines or commitments should not adversely impact on the existing policy space and flexibility of developing countries in adopting trade facilitation measures.
- Evaluation of the costs from any new obligation in this context.
- Results of the negotiations: Clarifications concerning the legal status of any expected results or outcome of the negotiations, and whether or not dispute settlement mechanism will apply on it.
- The early harvest to establish a Trade Facilitation agreement, should not be the only option, as it depends on the maturity of these negotiations along with the overall assessment the remaining negotiating files.

Results of the meetings of senior officials

- There was no senior officials meetings held for trade facilitation during the last cluster.