

Trade Obstacles Alert Mechanism:

Tackling Non-Tariff Measures

Trade facilitation has thus developed into a key measure of a country's competitiveness. In Mauritius, a survey conducted by the International Trade Centre (ITC) revealed that 27% of exporters and 36% of importers were adversely affected by barriers such as technical regulations, conformity assessments and rules of origin amongst others. With the erosion of trade preferences and increased competition in global markets, it is imperative for Mauritius to tackle the hurdles that increase the cost of doing business.

The Trade Obstacles Alert Mechanism (TOAM), which is a new online tool developed to facilitate the identification and elimination of trade obstacles faced by companies, aims to contribute towards this objective. Officially launched in September 2015, TOAM is a joint initiative of the International Trade Centre, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration & International Trade and the MCCI and is the first platform that brings together all agencies involved in trade regulations and procedures in the country.

TOAM gives a voice to the business operators, especially to

small and medium sized enterprises, as it provides a single channel towards which firms can immediately report the obstacles they face when importing or exporting. Agencies are then alerted of the reported trade barrier so that they can post online updates on actions being taken to resolve the obstacle. The mechanism is transparent and thus presents major benefits to the business community. It is worth noting that

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Mauritius is the second country in the world to be implementing such a business-friendly platform that also allows operators to receive email alerts on barriers that other traders encounter with regards to specific products or markets. Moreover, TOAM can help to enhance the local regulatory environment by providing real-time information on bottlenecks and on specific areas of intervention to policy-makers.

Appointed as the National Focal Point for the TOAM project, the MCCI is responsible for managing

In a global context of increasing economic liberalization and declining tariffs, non-tariff measures (NTMs) have emerged as new barriers to trade. Whilst NTMs may be implemented to address legitimate market failures, their restrictive and distortionary effects on local, regional and international trade cannot be ignored.

the platform and ensuring prompt transmission of information between public and private actors whilst maintaining confidentiality. The mechanism is overseen by a National Monitoring Committee, which is chaired by the International Trade Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, and comprises all public agencies involved in regulating trade. It is important to note that an Inter-Agency Cooperation Protocol has been signed by all the agencies registered on the TOAM platform, highlighting the commitment of the different institutions to foster public-private dialogue for improving the business environment. The successful implementation of TOAM provides a unique opportunity to focus on concrete actions that will impact positively on the competitiveness of our firms and our country – an opportunity that is not to be missed if Mauritius is to aim for better national trade performance and higher economic growth.

Smita BHIRGOO
Analyst - Trade Division

The Official Launch

The mechanism was officially launched in September 2015 by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, Hon. Étienne Sinatambou, at a workshop held at the Westin Turtle Bay Resort and Spa in Balaclava.

All agencies signed the Inter-Agency Cooperation Protocol to reiterate their commitment for achieving an improved business environment. Furthermore, Mathieu Loridan, Associate Market Analyst from ITC, held a training session for familiarising public officials with the alert system used to respond to queries posted by operators. Rooma Narrainen, Manager of the Trade Division at the MCCI, made a presentation on the achievements and challenges encountered during the pilot phase that was led by the MCCI.



Mathieu Loridan, Associate Market Analyst from ITC, delivering his speech during the launching ceremony



Signing of Inter-Agency Cooperation Protocol by Raju Jaddoo, Secretary-General of MCCI

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, Étienne Sinatambou and Azim Currimjee, Vice-President of MCCI, during the launching of TOAM

Communication Campaign

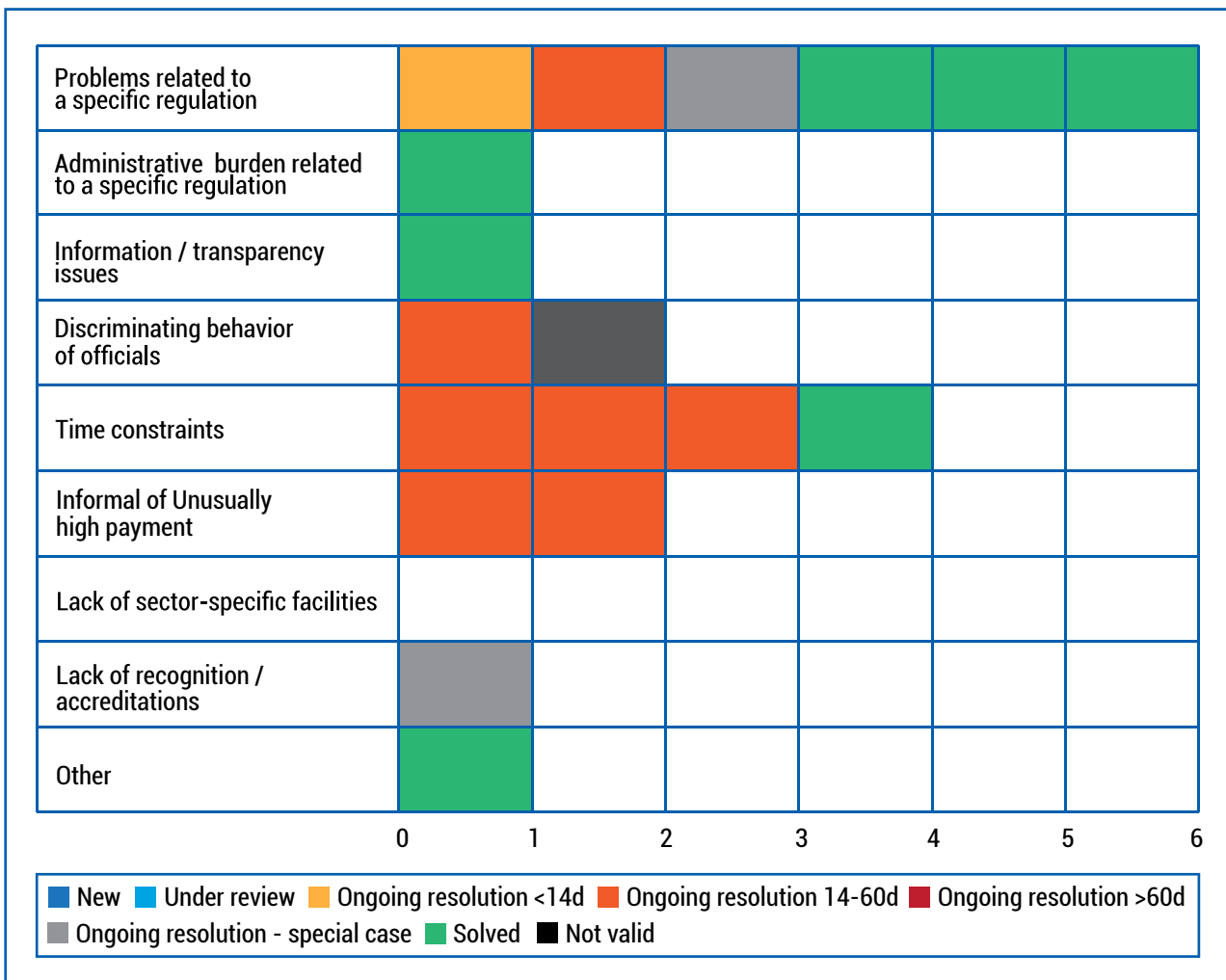
As part of its mandate to facilitate trade, the MCCI has been actively sensitising and training business operators on the TOAM platform through workshops. The response from the private sector has been positive and the main advantages of using the platform have been stated as: (i) having access to a single platform to report all trade-related obstacles and (ii) being able to regularly monitor the status of complaints online.



Rooma Narrainen, Manager - Trade Division at MCCI, delivering a presentation during a workshop organised to sensitise operators on the TOAM platform

Results in Figures

As at January 2016, more than 100 users were registered on the platform. 17 obstacles, out of which 12 were encountered when importing into Mauritius, have been validated and published. As shown in the chart, 7 obstacles have been resolved whilst the remaining are currently being looked into by the relevant authorities.



* The International Trade Centre, which is a joint agency of the World Trade Organisation and the United Nations, helps to foster sustainable economic development in developing countries and transition economies through trade and international business development.