



TERMS OF REFERENCE

FACILITATING TRADE INTEGRATION IN ECOWAS

HIGH-LEVEL REGIONAL ROUNDTABLE ON NON-TARIFF MEASURES

Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire
14-15 June 2016

Organized jointly by the
African Development Bank (AfDB) and the
International Trade Centre (ITC)

I. Context

International trade can be a powerful engine for sustained economic growth, generating new job opportunities and stimulating structural transformation towards production activities with higher value added. The general global tendency to reduce tariffs within the context of the World Trade Organization has generated new opportunities for developing, least developed and transition economies.

For some countries, however, non-tariff measures (NTMs) have become a major impediment to international trade. They are of particular concern to exporters seeking access to foreign markets and needing to comply with a range of technical regulations, product standards, customs procedures and other requirements. With NTMs on the rise, private and public sector decision makers are increasingly concerned about their trade impact. In ITC's annual client surveys, NTMs are continuously identified as one of the greatest challenges to developing exports and as a priority area for technical assistance.

In response and with the financial support of the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID), the ITC launched in 2010 a programme to document experiences of exporters and importers in developing countries with NTMs as obstacles to trade. Results from over 60 countries and interviews with over 20,000 companies provide evidence that NTMs are clearly a great challenge to businesses across the world, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) who often lack the information, capacity and facilities to meet the complex requirements and demonstrate compliance at a reasonable cost. At the same time, the survey results document the high potential for reducing trade cost related to regulatory and procedural trade obstacles, without compromising the legitimate objectives of measures that are implemented for example to protect consumer health or the environment.

Unlocking this potential is an important driver for increasing trade – both internationally and regionally – and can therefore contribute to regional trade integration in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), in line with the action plan established by the region. Aware of the importance of removing regulatory and procedural obstacles to trade, the African Development Bank and ITC are assisting the countries in ECOWAS and the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) through various projects in the areas of trade transparency, standards and product quality and trade facilitation.

II. The high-level regional roundtable on NTMs

In this context and with a view to contribute to and build on the various ongoing regional integration processes, the African Development Bank and ITC are taking the initiative to organize a high-level regional roundtable on NTMs where delegates from the participating ECOWAS countries and relevant regional organizations will have the opportunity to exchange views on how to remove regulatory and procedural obstacles to regional trade.

The discussions will be informed among others by the insights on regional trade gained from the national NTM Surveys that ITC carried out in so far six ECOWAS countries, namely in Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali and Senegal.¹ They capture at the product and partner country level the trade challenges encountered by companies, especially SMEs.

The event proposes to use the results of the six surveys in the ECOWAS sub-region, in particular the cross-cutting issues reported in relation to intraregional trade, to identify key challenges and agree on concrete actions to be undertaken at national and regional levels that will help address the identified obstacles – with the objective to further facilitate regional trade integration. The recommendations formulated by WAEMU Member States to promote a regional approach for the implementation of trade facilitation reforms could provide a framework to prioritize ECOWAS-wide reforms of the regulatory and procedural environment.

This workshop is intended for high-level representatives of the Ministry of Trade, the Customs Authority and Standards and Quality Management Institutions as well as representatives of regional organisations and development partners.

The deliverables of the workshop include an action plan on the alleviation of the most critical NTM-related trade obstacles within ECOWAS and a roadmap for implementation in line with and with the support from the various trade-related initiatives in the region. A key objective will be to reduce the cost of compliance

¹ For more information and survey results please refer to www.ntmsurvey.org and www.intracen.org/publication/ntm. Benin and Mali will be added in the course of 2016.

with export, import and transit formalities, which will be of particular benefit to SMEs. The workshop results will feed into ongoing and planned initiatives in the region, including but not limited to the AfDB and ITC work on trade facilitation and ITC's regional integration project for WAEMU, particularly the regionally harmonized and coordinated implementation of the trade facilitation agreement and the planned trade obstacles alert mechanism, which could be extended to ECOWAS at large.

III. Objectives

1. To present and discuss regulatory and procedural obstacles to trade within ECOWAS, among them those highlighted in the six national NTM business surveys in Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali and Senegal;
2. To develop, agree and validate, in collaboration with the participant countries and regional institutions, a concrete action plan to address regional issues of mutual interest, particularly in relation with quality requirements, customs procedures and rules of origin, building on the various initiatives carried out in ECOWAS and WAEMU;
3. To inform ongoing and planned trade integration initiatives in the region and to familiarize development partners with those procedural and regulatory trade obstacles that governments in the region consider the highest priority for increasing intraregional trade, so that these are taken into account in the design of trade-related technical assistance.

IV. Participants

Invitations are extended to

- Delegations from the following countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo. Each delegation will comprise:
 - The Minister of Trade / a high-level official from the Ministry of Trade
 - The head of/a high-level official from institution in charge of standards and harmonization
 - The Chief of/a high-level official from the Customs
- The head of the regional organizations that cover the participating countries
- Experts from international organizations
- Observers from international development partners

V. Resource persons

Experts from the countries, regional as well as international organizations will contribute as resource persons to the different sessions.

VI. Documentation

Documentation will include:

- A technical paper summarizing NTM Survey results for the region.
- Presentations held by speakers

VII. Venue and language

The workshop will be held in Abidjan, Ivory Coast. The precise venue will be confirmed and communicated to participants by 20 May 2016. Workshop languages are French and English; simultaneous translation will be provided for these two languages.

VIII. Financial conditions

The African Development Bank will cover the participation of three (3) participants from each invited country (one from each institution as specified under point IV), including a round-trip air ticket at the standard conditions of the AfDB (travel in economy class), accommodation and daily subsistence allowance at the applicable rate for the 3 days necessary for travel and participation in the workshop, in line with AfDB rules.

The participation of representatives from development partners is welcome on a self-financed basis.

IX. Indicative agenda

FACILITATING TRADE INTEGRATION IN ECOWAS

14 JUNE 2016, 8.30–17.30

- 08:30** **Registration**
- 09:00** **Opening Ceremony**
- 09:45** **Item 1: Presentation of the main findings of and regional insights from the NTM Surveys in ECOWAS countries**
(Each item will be followed by questions and answers)
Background and general results
Quality and conformity assessment
- 10:30** **Break**
- 10:45** **Item 2: Key NTM-related trade obstacles within ECOWAS**
Rules of origin, trade information and implementation of existing trade agreements
Customs procedures and trade facilitation at the border

Open discussion
- 12:15** **Break/Lunch**
- 13:30** **Item 3: Thematic roundtables to discuss and define recommendations to address regulatory and procedural trade obstacles**
- Roundtable 1: Quality requirements and management: standards, harmonization, mutual recognition and conformity assessment procedures
 - Roundtable 2: NTMs and regional integration: rules of origin, trade information and implementation of existing trade agreements
 - Roundtable 3: Customs procedures and trade facilitation at the border
- 16:30** **Break**
- 16:45** **Item 4: Summary of round table discussions by the rapporteurs of each round table**
- 17:00** **Item 5: Presentation by international partners**
- 17:30** **Closing of official programme of day 1**

15 JUNE 2016, 9.00–12.30

- 09:00** **Item 6: Presentation of recommended actions**
- 10:30** **Break**
- 10:45** **Item 7: Validation of an action plan to reduce NTM-related trade cost to boost intra-regional trade**
- 12:00** **Closing**
-