



HIGH-LEVEL REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON TRADE AND REGIONAL INTEGRATION IN THE ARAB STATES

TERMS OF REFERENCE

MARRAKESH, MOROCCO

11 - 12 DECEMBER 2018

I. Context

In today's global trade landscape, deeper regional integration is an important policy choice that governments can make to ensure the creation of markets for their small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The Arab region has made integration and better connection of its markets a priority, and which is on an upward trajectory, but the figures show that compared with other regions, intra-Arab trade remains low, despite a number of existing regional trade agreements.

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 countries, least developed countries and transition economies.

Non-tariff measures (NTMs) however remain a major impediment to international trade in general and intra-Arab trade integration in particular. 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.

In response, the International Trade Centre (ITC) launched in 2010 a programme to survey enterprises on their experiences with NTMs and related trade obstacles. These business surveys have been implemented in over 70 countries worldwide, including several Arab States. Based on the first results, in April 2014, a high-level regional roundtable on NTMs was held in Tunis, Tunisia, where participants formulated recommendations on reducing NTM-related trade cost to foster regional integration. Survey findings and recommendations are summarized in the ITC publication *"Making regional integration work – Companies perspectives on NTMs in Arab States"*.¹

These recommendations have helped inform national and regional initiatives, including technical assistance projects, such as the USAID-funded project on regional Integration in MENA countries as well as the Aid for Trade Initiative for the Arab States.

II. Justification

ITC, with support from USAID and ITFC, is taking the initiative to organize an interactive High-Level Regional Workshop where delegates from the Arab countries and relevant regional organizations will have the opportunity to take stock of progress made over the past years in tackling impediments to regional trade integration and to define the next steps. The workshop will allow exchanging views, learning from experiences, and sharing of ideas new initiatives at the national and regional level aimed at reducing trade cost. ITC will use the results of the workshop to inform its technical assistance and define its priorities for the region for the years to come.

This workshop is intended for high-level representatives from the Ministry of Trade, the Customs Authority and Standards and Quality Management institutions. The deliverables of the workshop include an action plan for further reducing NTM-related trade obstacles within the Arab region through concrete projects and implementation of such action at the regional level.

III. Objectives

1. Present the work undertaken by ITC and by national governments over the past years aimed at reducing trade cost and increasing regional integration;

¹ Available for download in English and Arabic at: www.ntmsurvey.org/arabstates.

2. Agree on the implementation of action plans for the way forward to address NTMs of mutual interest to the Arab countries, particularly with regard to quality requirements, customs procedures and the implementation of GAFTA.

IV. Participants

Invitations are extended to:

- A High-level official to represent the **Ministry of Trade / Commerce**. The nominated person should be well acquainted with the Multilateral Trading System (MTS) and work on regional integration issues.
- A High-level official to represent **Customs Authority**. The nominated person should be well acquainted with the Multilateral Trading System (MTS) and work on regional integration issues.
- A High-level official to represent the **Organization for Standardization and Quality**. The nominated person should be well acquainted with the Multilateral Trading System (MTS) and work on regional integration issues.
- The head of the regional integration organizations that cover the participating countries: Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), League of Arab States (LAS), Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the Agadir Technical Unit (ATU), and the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM).

V. Resource persons

Experts from ITC will contribute as resource persons, together with experts from the countries and the regional organizations.

VI. Documentation

Documentation will include:

- Presentations by selected countries and regional organizations
- Technical papers from ITC.

VII. Venue and language

The workshop will be held at a Hotel in Marrakesh, Morocco. The name of the Hotel will be communicated to nominated participants. The Workshop languages are Arabic, French and English. Simultaneous translation will be provided for these three languages.

VIII. Financial conditions

ITC will cover the cost of participation of three (3) participants by country as per United Nations rules and procedures. The participation of representatives from donor organizations, regional integration organizations are welcome on a self-financed basis.

Nomination Forms have to be communicated to ITC (Mr. Mehdi Chaker at the following e-mail chaker@intracen.org) at your earliest convenience, but **not later than 25 November 2018**.

TUESDAY 11 DECEMBER 2018, 8.30– 17.00
TRADE AND REGIONAL INTEGRATION IN THE ARAB STATES

Tentative Programme:

- 08:30 Registration**
- 09:00 Opening Ceremony**
- Welcome address by ITFC, USAID and ITC
 - Adoption of the agenda and organization of work
 - Group picture
- 10:00 Coffee Break**
- 10:20 Item 1: Tackling NTMs and promoting regional integration: Where do we stand?**
- ITC's work and key achievements
 - Efforts made by national governments and development partners.
- Questions and Answers**
Open discussion
- 12:15 Lunch**
- 13.45 Item 2: Where do we go from here? Thematic roundtables to establish next steps to achieve greater trade integration**
- Round table 1: NTMs and regional integration: rules of origin, trade information and implementation of existing trade agreements
 - Round table 2: Customs procedures: efficient risk management and trade facilitation at the border.
 - Round table 3: Quality requirements and management: standards, harmonization, mutual recognition and conformity assessment
- 16:15 Coffee break**
- 16:30 Item 3: Summary of discussions by the rapporteurs of each roundtable**
- 17:00 Closing of Day 1**

WEDNESDAY 12 DECEMBER 2018, 8.30–12.30

- 09:00 Item 4: Presentation of action plans and proposed projects to further enhance regional trade integration of each roundtable**
- NTMs and regional integration
 - Customs procedures
 - Quality requirements and management
- 10:30 Coffee break**
- 10:45 Open discussion**
- 12:00 Closing**