

## **ESCAP-GTI International Seminar on Trade Facilitation in North-East Asia**

### *Cross-border Paperless Trade:*

### *Recent Developments and Opportunities for Cooperation in North-East Asia*

8 February 2023 (Online)

9:30 am (Moscow) / 2:30 pm (Beijing/Ulaanbaatar) / 3:30 pm (Seoul)

## **CONCEPT NOTE**

The COVID-19 pandemic not only had huge disruptions on international trade and supply chain, but it also underscored the importance of digital technology and of finding new ways of doing business with almost all international trade today being facilitated and enabled by digital and communication technologies.<sup>1</sup> To this end, the expansion of countries (currently at 11) as Parties to the *Agreement on the Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific* is a welcome development. The agreement, an ESCAP-facilitated initiative which entered into force in February 2021, is the first UN treaty dedicated entirely to accelerating the implementation of digital trade facilitation measures for trade and development and demonstrates the Asia-Pacific region's strong political will and leadership in digitalizing trade procedures. The Standing Committee met for the first time in December 2022 to initiate the agreement's implementation, including discussions on a comprehensive action plan and areas for collaboration among partner countries.<sup>2</sup>

Notably, these recent developments are most relevant to East and North-East Asia especially to the Greater Tumen Initiative (GTI) platform with three GTI member countries as Parties to the agreement.<sup>3</sup> China ratified the agreement in November 2020 and Mongolia and the Republic of Korea acceded in July and November 2022, respectively. Russian Federation is well advanced in its domestic consultations to accede to the agreement. Membership in the treaty is diverse and inclusive, covering least developed countries (e.g., Timor-Leste) landlocked developing countries (e.g., Mongolia), and leading economies (e.g., China, Republic of Korea). As such, opportunities for collaborations abound. Leading economies can support implementation through promoting practices and setting up regional norms in cross-border paperless trade. At the same time, less developed economies will get much needed support in advancing paperless, including cross-border paperless, trade.

## **Objectives and Scope**

<sup>1</sup> *More countries join UN treaty to advance cross-border paperless trade in Asia and the Pacific* (12 December ESCAP News, <https://www.unescap.org/news/more-countries-join-un-treaty-advance-cross-border-paperless-trade-asia-and-pacific#>).

<sup>2</sup> Meeting report of the first session of the Standing Committee (<https://www.unescap.org/events/2022/first-session-standing-committee-framework-agreement-facilitation-cross-border>).

<sup>3</sup> [https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg\\_no=X-20&chapter=10&clang=\\_en](https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=X-20&chapter=10&clang=_en)

To this end, the 2023 ESCAP-GTI International Seminar on Trade Facilitation will provide a platform to engage GTI member countries and other stakeholders on cross-border paperless trade and aim to:

- a. inform on latest developments on digital trade facilitation, including cross-border paperless trade;
- b. share updates on policies and initiatives related to digital trade facilitation, including cross-border paperless trade among GTI member countries; and
- c. identify areas of possible collaborations on digital trade facilitation( including cross-border paperless trade) in line with the strategies and action/work plans of GTI sectoral bodies on trade (i.e., Customs Sub-Committee; Trade and Investment Committee).

## Participants and Organization

The Seminar, organized annually, is held in conjunction with the meetings of GTI sectoral bodies on trade (i.e., Customs Sub-Committee; Trade and Investment Committee) with the participation of officials from these Committees, other GTI sectoral bodies and stakeholders. The Seminar will be held on a virtual platform using MS Teams with technical support provided by ESCAP ENEA Office and GTI Secretariat. The Seminar will be conducted in English.

Indicative Programme: 8 February 2023 (Republic of Korea time)	
3:30-3:40 [10 mins]	<b>Opening Session</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr. Ganbold Baasanjav (Head, ESCAP East and North-East Asia Office)</li> <li>• Mr. Andrey Smorodin (Director, GTI Secretariat)</li> <li>• Mr. LEE Jaeyong (Director, Ministry of Economy and Finance, Republic of Korea, Country Chair of 5<sup>th</sup> GTI Trade and Investment Committee)</li> </ul>
3:40-5:20 [100 mins]	<b>Cross-border Paperless Trade: Recent Developments and Opportunities for Cooperation in North-East Asia</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Setting the scene: Developments on advancing cross-border paperless trade in the Asia-Pacific region</i> (Mr. Tengfei Wang, Economic Affairs Officer, ESCAP) 15 mins</li> <li>• <i>Opportunities for collaboration: GTI member countries' developments on digital trade facilitation</i> (10 mins each presentation) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ms. YANG Liu (Senior Programme Officer, General Administration of Customs, China)</li> <li>- Ms. Ts. Tsendsuren (Customs Officer, Human Resource Division, Customs General Administration, Mongolia)</li> <li>Ms. N. Munkhzul (Customs Senior Officer, Customs General Administration, Mongolia)</li> <li>- Ms. Jisoo Yi (Assistant Professor, Dankook University, Republic of Korea)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ms. Yana Kirichenko (Unit for Cooperation with International Organizations, Customs Cooperation Department, Federal Customs Service of Russia)</li> <li>• <i>Amplifying the benefits: Cross-sectoral linkages with the digitalization of transport and other sectors</i> (Mr. Christian Lembke, Technical Attaché, World Customs Organization) 15 mins</li> <li>• <i>Role of private sector and development partners</i> (Mr. Sung Heun Ha, Korea Trade Network) 15 mins</li> <li>• <i>Busan World Expo (video presentation)</i> (Mr. Jangho Choi, Korea Institute for International Economic Policy)</li> <li>• <i>Interactive Discussions and Q&amp;A</i> (15 mins)</li> </ul>
5:20-5:30 [10 mins]	<p><b>Closing Session</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr. Ganbold Baasanjav (Head, ESCAP East and North-East Asia Office)</li> <li>• Mr. Andrey Smorodin (Director, GTI Secretariat)</li> <li>• Mr. LEE Jaeyong (Director, Ministry of Economy and Finance, Republic of Korea, Country Chair of 5<sup>th</sup> GTI Trade and Investment Committee)</li> </ul>