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**Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific****Seventy-eighth session**

Bangkok and online, 23–27 May 2022

Item 4 (h) of the provisional agenda\*

**Review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda  
for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific:  
trade and investment****Report on the 7th meeting of the Interim Intergovernmental  
Steering Group on Cross-border Paperless Trade  
Facilitation****Note by the secretariat***Summary*

The 7th meeting of the Interim Intergovernmental Steering Group on Cross-border Paperless Trade Facilitation was held in Bangkok and online on 25 and 26 April 2022. At the meeting, the Steering Group noted the progress made by member States in ratifying or acceding to the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific and requested the secretariat to promote accession to and ratification of the Framework Agreement by as many member States as possible and to provide technical assistance to developing member States in their completion of domestic ratification/accession procedures. The Steering Group decided to terminate its operation, as it had completed all its core mandated tasks.

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific may wish to take note of the decisions made by the Steering Group and provide the secretariat with additional guidance on any other matters raised in the present report.

**I. Matters calling for action by the Commission or brought to its attention****A. Facilitating implementation of the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific**

1. The Interim Intergovernmental Steering Group on Cross-border Paperless Trade Facilitation decides to encourage its members to proactively support their Governments in becoming parties to the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific as soon as possible. The Steering Group requests the secretariat to promote accession to and ratification of the Framework Agreement by as many member States as

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\* ESCAP/78/L.1/Rev.2.

possible, so as to maximize its benefits and impact, and to provide technical assistance to developing member States in their completion of domestic ratification/accession procedures.

## **B. Operation of the Interim Intergovernmental Steering Group on Cross-border Paperless Trade Facilitation**

2. The Steering Group decides to terminate its operation, including its Legal and Technical Working Groups, as the Paperless Trade Council of the Framework Agreement will start implementation of the Agreement starting at its first session, to be held from 27 to 29 April 2022.

## **II. Organization**

### **A. Opening, duration and organization of the meeting**

3. The 7th meeting of the Steering Group was held in Bangkok and online on 25 and 26 April 2022.

4. The Director of the Trade, Investment and Innovation Division of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) delivered an opening statement.

### **B. Attendance**

5. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following members and associate members of ESCAP: Azerbaijan; Bangladesh; Cambodia; China; Indonesia; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Japan; Malaysia; Mongolia; Netherlands; Philippines; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; Singapore; Sri Lanka; Tajikistan; Thailand; Timor-Leste; United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; and Viet Nam.

6. Representatives of the following offices of the Secretariat attended: United Nations Commission on International Trade Law; United Nations Conference on Trade and Development; and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

7. Representatives of the following United Nations bodies, specialized agencies and funds attended: International Civil Aviation Organization; and United Nations Industrial Development Organization.

8. Representatives of the following intergovernmental organizations attended: Asian Development Bank; Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation; Association of Southeast Asian Nations; Eurasian Economic Commission; Islamic Development Bank; Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat; South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation; and Standards and Trade Development Facility.

9. A representative of the International Chamber of Commerce attended.

### **C. Election of officers**

10. The following officers were elected:

Chair:	Mr. Tumur Amarsanaa (Mongolia)
Vice-Chair:	Mr. Dilshod Sharifi (Tajikistan)

**D. Agenda**

11. The Steering Group adopted the following agenda:
  1. Opening of the meeting:
    - (a) Opening statements;
    - (b) Election of officers;
    - (c) Adoption of the agenda.
  2. Review of regional progress in cross-border paperless trade.
  3. Report on progress made in the implementation of the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific.
  4. Discussion on the future operation of the Steering Group.
  5. Other matters.
  6. Adoption of the report of the Steering Group on its 7th meeting.

# Annex I

## List of documents

<i>Document symbol</i>	<i>Document title</i>	<i>Agenda item</i>
<i>General series</i>		
ESCAP/PTA/IISG/2022/1	Results and implications of the United Nations Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2021 for Asia and the Pacific	2
ESCAP/PTA/IISG/2022/2	Report on progress made in the implementation of the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific	3
ESCAP/PTA/IISG/2022/3	Report on the 7th meeting of the Interim Intergovernmental Steering Group on Cross-border Paperless Trade Facilitation	
<i>Limited series</i>		
ESCAP/PTA/IISG/2022/L.1	Annotated provisional agenda	1 (c)
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## Annex II

### **Chair's summary of the proceedings of the 7th meeting of the Interim Intergovernmental Steering Group on Cross-border Paperless Trade Facilitation**

#### **I. Introduction**

1. Owing to the restrictions imposed in response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the 7th meeting of the Interim Intergovernmental Steering Group on Cross-border Paperless Trade Facilitation was held in Bangkok and online on 25 and 26 April 2022. Because of time constraints linked to the fact that the meeting was held online, and to facilitate an exchange of views on the substantive items of the agenda, State interventions focused on items 2–5 of the agenda. In the present summary, the Chair does not provide details of any individual statement made, but only succinctly summarizes the consensus views of the participants in the meeting on the topics raised under items 2–5 of the agenda.

#### **II. Summary of discussions under items 2–5 of the agenda**

##### **A. Review of regional progress in cross-border paperless trade** (Agenda item 2)

2. The Steering Group had before it the note by the secretariat on the results and implications of the United Nations Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2021 for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP/PTA/IISG/2022/1). The Chief of the Trade Policy and Facilitation Section of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) made a presentation on key findings from the Survey.

##### **B. Report on progress made in the implementation of the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific** (Agenda item 3)

3. The Steering Group had before it the note by the secretariat on the report on progress made in the implementation of the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP/PTA/IISG/2022/2). The Chief of the Trade Policy and Facilitation Section of ESCAP made a presentation on the progress made, including the technical assistance and capacity-building support provided, and the current status of ratification of and accession to the Framework Agreement by member States. Also, a member of the secretariat made a presentation on the update to the cross-border paperless trade database, including the interactive mapping of projects and services.

4. In relation to the capacity-building support provided, the representatives of some States members of ESCAP shared their experiences on conducting readiness assessments for cross-border paperless trade. Azerbaijan stressed that conducting a readiness assessment had helped that country to advance further in cross-border paperless trade, building upon the significant progress that had already been made. Kazakhstan shared key findings from the study, which included the need to harmonize legal regulations to support electronic data and document exchange and join the Framework Agreement. The Philippines stressed its intention to refer to the recommendations from the readiness assessment study to develop activities at the national and agency

levels. Also, the Philippines urged the other member States to accede to and support the implementation of the Framework Agreement.

5. The Chair invited the representatives of participating member States to report on their status with respect to becoming parties to the Framework Agreement and on their work on cross-border paperless trade.

6. Representatives of the following members and associate members of ESCAP made statements: China; Mongolia; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; Tajikistan; and Thailand.

7. China informed the Steering Group of ongoing developments towards achieving cross-border paperless trade, including improvements in terms of single window connectivity in all ports, the digitalization of most declaration forms for customs clearance and the use of emerging technologies for e-commerce developments. China also informed the Steering Group of its intention to further strengthen support to countries in the region with a view to advancing cross-border paperless trade and urged all member States to become parties to the Framework Agreement.

8. Mongolia informed the Steering Group that its process of ratifying the Framework Agreement was at the very final stages. Ratification had been discussed at a Cabinet meeting in January 2022 and the relevant standing committee had considered it and had agreed that the Framework Agreement would be discussed by parliament in April 2022.

9. The Republic of Korea said that it hoped that the contributions it made through the trust fund it had established with ESCAP for a project to build capacity for trade facilitation and the implementation of the Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement could advance cross-border paperless trade in the region. The accession process was expected to be completed by the end of 2022.

10. The Russian Federation informed the Steering Group that the Ministry of Economic Development had prepared a draft federal law on accession to the Framework Agreement and was currently coordinating with the responsible federal executive authorities.

11. Tajikistan informed the Steering Group that it had made substantial progress in joining the Framework Agreement. It hoped that the government decree for accession to the Framework Agreement would be issued soon.

12. Thailand informed the Steering Group that it was conducting a review of its domestic law as part of the process of acceding to the Framework Agreement and was currently considering relevant laws, particularly those on information exchange and on sharing information related to confidential trade matters.

13. Representatives of the following United Nations entities and intergovernmental organizations made statements: Asian Development Bank (ADB); Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN); International Chamber of Commerce; Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat; United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL); and United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

14. ADB expressed its support for the Framework Agreement, which in its view contributed to efficient and resilient cross-border trade and supply chain management by leveraging digital technologies and improving the efficiency of trade value chain linkages.

15. ASEAN informed the Steering Group that, in its workplan on the implementation of the ASEAN Agreement on Electronic Commerce, accession to the Framework Agreement had been identified as one of the key priorities to facilitate e-commerce across the region. In that regard, it acknowledged the active engagement of and the technical support provided by ESCAP to ASEAN countries, particularly for conducting readiness assessments, and urged all ASEAN countries to conduct such assessments.

16. The International Chamber of Commerce informed the Steering Group of its complementary and collaborative work to implement the Framework Agreement, specifically its articles 9 and 10, through its Digital Standards Initiative and other activities. It encouraged ESCAP member States to expedite domestic procedures for joining the Framework Agreement and to consider adopting the Model Law on Electronic Transferable Records legal framework as a means of implementing article 10 of the Framework Agreement.

17. The Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat informed the Steering Group of its e-commerce and trade facilitation initiatives. It reported that accession to the Framework Agreement was recommended in the Pacific Regional E-commerce Strategy and Roadmap, as it supported efforts to enable the exchange and mutual recognition of trade-related data and documents.

18. UNCITRAL told the Steering Group that support to ESCAP member States on the legal dimensions of cross-border paperless trade could be provided for modernizing and harmonizing international trade law and international commercial law.

19. UNCTAD informed the Steering Group of the Automated System for Customs Data, which provided solutions for the electronic exchange of trade-related data and documents in the region and beyond.

**C. Discussion on the future operation of the Steering Group**  
(Agenda item 4)

20. The Steering Group decided to terminate its operation, as it had completed all its core mandated tasks.

21. The Russian Federation urged the Paperless Trade Council to explore options for opening its meetings to non-parties to the Framework Agreement. It requested that the secretariat review the accession status of ESCAP member States to the Framework Agreement on a quarterly basis in order to keep national focal points aware of developments.

22. UNCITRAL drew the Steering Group's attention to the draft rules of procedure of the Paperless Trade Council and expressed support for allowing non-parties to the Framework Agreement and observers to participate in the meetings of the Council.

**D. Other matters**  
(Agenda item 5)

23. The Steering Group had no other matters to discuss.