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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Committee on Trade Policies in the States Members of the Economic
and Social Commission for Western Asia

Third session

Tunis, 7–8 March 2023



Item 3 of the provisional agenda

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Annotations

1. Opening of the session

The Committee on Trade Policies in the States Members of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia was established pursuant to ESCWA resolution 332 (XXX) of 28 June 2018. It held its first session in Amman, on 8 and 9 December 2019, and its second session online on 15 and 16 September 2021. The third session of the Committee will be held in Tunis on 7 and 8 March 2023, and will open at 10 a.m.

2. Election of officers

Rule 18 of the rules of procedure of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia states: “Member States shall chair the sessions of the subsidiary bodies of the Commission on a rotating basis, in the Arabic alphabetical order employed by the United Nations. Unless the Commission decides otherwise, those bodies shall elect all their other officers”.*

3. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

Rule 8 of the rules of procedure of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, which apply to subsidiary bodies, states: “At the beginning of each session, once the Chair has assumed his/her duties in accordance with rule 12, the Committee shall adopt the agenda for that session on the basis of the provisional agenda”. Pursuant to that rule, the Committee shall adopt the agenda and the organization of work as submitted in documents E/ESCWA/C.6/2023/L.1 and E/ESCWA/C.6/2023/L.2, respectively, or in amended forms.

Follow-up issues

4. Implementation of trade policy activities under the ESCWA programme plan and of recommendations made by the Committee at its second session to the ESCWA secretariat (E/ESCWA/C.6/2023/3)

The Committee will review activities undertaken in the field of trade policies under the ESCWA programme plan for the period 2021–2022, and pursuant to recommendations it made to the ESCWA secretariat at the close of its second session. These activities include holding meetings, issuing publications, and developing tools to support evidence-based policymaking.

The Committee is invited to take note of those activities and make comments thereon.

5. Technical cooperation activities (E/ESCWA/C.6/2023/4)

The Committee will consider technical cooperation activities carried out by the ESCWA secretariat since its second session, in response to requests from member States and within the framework of projects funded by the United Nations Development Account. Those activities include advisory services

* ESCWA member States in Arabic alphabetical order are as follows: Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Tunisia, Algeria, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Sudan, Somalia, Iraq, Oman, the State of Palestine, Qatar, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Egypt, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Mauritania and Yemen.

and training workshops to support member States in the field of trade policies. This is a standing agenda item for all ESCWA committees, aimed at ensuring follow-up on technical cooperation requests made by member States and informing them of developments in technical cooperation work methods.

The Committee is invited to take note of those activities, and to discuss technical cooperation priorities and needs for the coming period.

6. Implementation of the recommendations made by the Committee at its second session to ESCWA member States (briefings by representatives of ESCWA member States)

Representatives of ESCWA member States will brief the Committee on national actions taken pursuant to recommendations made to them by the Committee at its second session. Those recommendations are set out in the report of the second session of the Committee ([E/ESCWA/C.6/2021/11/Report](#), paragraph 4, pages 3–4).

Representatives of member States are invited to make short interventions on the implementation of those recommendations at the national level.

Emerging issues and the Arab Trade Gateway

7. Business environment legislation and trade policies in the Arab region (E/ESCWA/C.6/2023/5)

The Committee will review databases and tools developed by ESCWA on legislative frameworks for business and trade in Arab countries, including an evaluation of those frameworks, and the Arab Legislation Portal, which is part of the Arab Trade Gateway. The aim of these tools is to support member States in improving trade performance by highlighting strengths and weaknesses, and providing recommendations to bridge gaps in business legislation.

The Committee is invited to take note of ESCWA efforts in this field, and make comments on the way forward.

8. Blockchain for trade facilitation in the Arab region (E/ESCWA/C.6/2023/6-E/ESCWA/C.5/2022/6)

The Committee will discuss the use of new technologies, particularly blockchains, to facilitate the exchange of data and documents, track international shipments, automate the documentation process to avoid time wastage and human error, and provide a secure system that guarantees the protection of transactions across all trade channels. This would reduce trade costs and improve the performance of relevant public institutions.

The Committee is invited to take note of developments worldwide and in the Arab region in this area, and discuss ways to benefit from blockchain technology in the field of trade facilitation.

9. External trade indicators for the Arab region (E/ESCWA/C.6/2023/7)

The Committee will review ESCWA efforts to establish a database of 16 trade indicators for Arab countries, so as to collect information and data from regional and international sources to facilitate the evaluation of trade performance and decision-making.

The Committee is invited to review the database of external trade indicators for the Arab region and to make comments thereon.

10. New release of the Arab Trade Simulator Interface (E/ESCWA/C.6/2023/8)

The Committee will review a new version of the Arab Trade Simulator Interface (ATSI), which was developed by ESCWA in terms of its functionality and ability to analyse policies compared with the first version.

The Committee is invited to take note of the new ATSI release, and to make comments on ways to maximize its benefits.

11. Free trade agreements database (E/ESCWA/C.6/2023/9)

The Committee will review ESCWA efforts to compile the regional and national free trade agreements in the Arab Trade Gateway. Fragmented information and data on Arab economic integration from various regional and international sources impedes the decision-making process. In addition to the original text of each agreement, the ESCWA database of free trade agreements provides a summary of products eligible for lower tariffs, and obligations under each pillar of selected trade agreements: trade in goods, trade in services, and competition.

The Committee is invited to take note of the database and comment thereon.

12. Costs to Trade Platform (E/ESCWA/C.6/2023/10)

The Committee will discuss ways to mitigate the costs of trade based on a platform developed by ESCWA to assess the time and financial costs of trade.

The Committee is invited to take note of the platform, and to make comments on ways to complete its development to serve member States.

13. Date and venue of the fourth session of the Committee

The Committee will agree on the date and venue of its fourth session.

14. Other matters

This item shall cover any other matters that the Committee may wish to raise and discuss.

15. Adoption of recommendations made by the Committee at its third session

The Committee will consider the draft recommendations for discussion and adoption.
