



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COUNCIL

Distr.
LIMITED
E/ESCWA/EDID/2015/IG.2/9/Report
21 June 2016
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: ARABIC

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Report

Tenth Session of the Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade, Economic Globalization and Financing for Development Cairo, 22-23 November 2015

Summary

The tenth session of the Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade, Economic Globalization and Financing for Development was held on 22 and 23 November 2015. Its purpose was to highlight the importance of completing the Greater Arab Free Trade Area (GAFTA), and to review opportunities and challenges related to the establishment of the Arab Customs Union.

The present report contains a set of recommendations issued by the Committee on the session's agenda items and a brief review of the main points raised during the discussions.

CONTENTS

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
Introduction	1-2	4
<i>Chapter</i>		
I. RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE ON LIBERALIZATION OF FOREIGN TRADE, ECONOMIC GLOBALIZATION AND FINANCING FOR DEVELOPMENT IN THE COUNTRIES OF THE ESCWA REGION AT ITS TENTH SESSION	3-5	4
A. Recommendations to governments.....	4	4
B. Recommendations to ESCWA	5	4
II. TOPICS OF DISCUSSION	6-71	6
A. Review of actions taken in the field of foreign trade liberalization since the seventh session of the Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade, Economic Globalization and Financing for Development	6-11	6
B. Non-tariff measures related to foreign trade liberalization in selected Arab countries	12-25	7
C. Presentation by the League of Arab States on progress achieved in negotiations on the establishment of the Arab Customs Union	26-33	9
D. Institutional framework of the Arab Customs Union	34-37	10
E. Fiscal challenges facing Arab countries in the establishment of the Arab Customs Union.....	38-44	11
F. Scenarios for an Arab Customs Union	45-52	12
G. Presentation by the World Trade Organization on mechanisms for dealing with trade agreements between Arab and foreign States after the establishment of the Arab Customs Union	53-56	14
H. Roundtable dialogue on completing GAFTA and establishing an Arab Customs Union: opportunities and challenges	57-66	14
I. Proposed programme of work for the biennium 2016-2017 in the field of foreign trade liberalization.....	67-69	16
J. Date and venue of the eleventh session of the Committee.....	70	16
K. Other matters.....	71	17

CONTENTS *(continued)*

III. ADOPTION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE COMMITTEE AT ITS TENTH SESSION	72	17
IV. JOINT MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE ON TRADE, GLOBALIZATION AND FINANCING AND THE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT TO LAUNCH THE ESCWA REPORT ENTITLED “ASSESSING ARAB ECONOMIC INTEGRATION: TOWARDS THE ARAB CUSTOMS UNION	73-75	17
V. ORGANIZATION OF WORK.....	76-84	18
A. Date and venue of the session	76	18
B. Opening of the session.....	77-79	18
C. Participants.....	80	18
D. Election of officers	81	19
E. Agenda and organization of work	82-83	19
F. Documents	84	20

ANNEXES

I. List of participants.....	21
II. List of documents	23

Introduction

1. The Technical Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade, Economic Globalization and Financing for Development in the Countries of the ESCWA Region held its tenth session on 22 and 23 November 2015, pursuant to Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) resolution 214 (XIX) of 7 May 1997, concerning the establishment of a technical committee on the liberalization of foreign trade and economic globalization in the countries of the ESCWA region, and in implementation of the recommendations issued by the Committee at its sixth session, held in Beirut on 6 and 7 July 2009, and adopted by ESCWA at its twenty-sixth session, held in Beirut from 17 to 20 May 2010.
2. The present report, which reviews the recommendations issued by the Committee and the main points raised during the discussions under each agenda item, was adopted by the Committee during its closing session on 22 November 2015.

I. RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE ON LIBERALIZATION OF FOREIGN TRADE, ECONOMIC GLOBALIZATION AND FINANCING FOR DEVELOPMENT IN THE COUNTRIES OF THE ESCWA REGION AT ITS TENTH SESSION

3. At the closing of its tenth session, the Committee issued the following recommendations to Governments of member States and the ESCWA secretariat.

A. RECOMMENDATIONS TO GOVERNMENTS

4. The Committee recommended that the Governments of ESCWA member States:
 - (a) Lift the remaining restrictions on trade flow within the Greater Arab Free Trade Area (GAFTA), especially non-tariff barriers, given that the completion of GAFTA was paramount for the establishment of the Arab Customs Union;
 - (b) Reap the benefits of the regional economic integration conventions and foreign trade agreements to support economic transformation programmes that focused on diversifying productive capacities and on improving the contribution of the services sector in strengthening competitiveness;
 - (c) Emphasize the importance of mainstreaming appropriate trade policies in national development plans to achieve sustainable development.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS TO ESCWA

5. The Committee recommended that the ESCWA secretariat:
 - (a) Provide member States with support to prepare for the establishment of the Customs Union by:
 - (1) Developing scenarios, based on the implementation programme adopted by the League of Arab States, with a view to reaching operational perceptions to lead negotiations on the establishment of the Customs Union;
 - (2) Developing economic models to identify the macroeconomic and sectoral implications of the Union's establishment, in accordance with the proposed scenarios, with a view to preparing a clear road map for its launch;
 - (3) Assessing the financial implications of the Union's establishment in accordance with the proposed scenarios, and examining alternative mechanisms to compensate for the decrease in customs revenues and to mitigate its impact on public finances;

- (4) Strengthening the capacities of member States through technical cooperation and awareness-raising activities on the role of the Union as an effective and efficient driver of economic and social development in the Arab region;
- (5) Conducting a detailed study on the institutional structure required to implement, monitor and assess the Arab Customs Union, in line with best practices;

(b) Support the efforts of member States in assessing trade infrastructure and boosting intraregional Arab integration;

(c) Examine the implications of non-tariff measures that impede trade, and coordinate with relevant organizations, namely the League of Arab States and the World Trade Centre, to identify, assess and address non-tariff barriers in Arab countries;

(d) Cooperate with relevant organizations to develop training programmes on mathematical and economic models for State representatives to measure the impacts of trade agreements on development;

(e) Coordinate with the League of Arab States to develop technical cooperation activities, conduct technical studies on trade in services at the regional level, and examine obstacles hindering the implementation of the outcomes of the Beirut negotiations to liberalize trade in services;

(f) Develop the set of indicators on economic integration prepared by ESCWA to assist countries in monitoring and assessing their regional and global integration;

(g) Assess economic and commercial implications for the Arab region arising from new cross-regional trade agreements, such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership between the European Union and the United States of America (under negotiation);

(h) Assess and follow up on the outcomes of the tenth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization, and conduct preparatory workshops for the Doha round of negotiations that should be concluded at the eleventh Ministerial Conference to be held in late 2017;

(i) Follow up on the work and meetings of the Committee on Trade;

(j) Take note of trade-related activities included in the proposed ESCWA programme of work for the biennium 2016-2017, focusing on the operationalization of the Arab Customs Union, trade in services and the importance of showing sufficient flexibility in redeveloping outputs in line with regional and international developments;

(k) Update the ESCWA website periodically by uploading reports of expert group meetings and studies prepared by ESCWA; and provide member States with the results of studies carried out by the secretariat through official channels, especially studies that member States providing data for;

(l) Provide technical assistance to member States that are members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) to facilitate the implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement, and conduct an evaluation on implementing the Agreement in Palestine, in the light of the outcomes of the ninth Ministerial Session;

(m) Broaden the scope of the ESCWA study on non-tariff measures to include qualitative technical analysis, and to determine its compliance with international standards and guidelines and the consistency of its application between Arab States.

II. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

A. REVIEW OF ACTIONS TAKEN IN THE FIELD OF FOREIGN TRADE LIBERALIZATION SINCE THE SEVENTH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON LIBERALIZATION OF FOREIGN TRADE, ECONOMIC GLOBALIZATION AND FINANCING FOR DEVELOPMENT (Agenda item 4)

6. The Committee considered this item, on the basis of the following two reports:

1. *Implementation of the recommendations made by the Committee at its seventh session*

7. Referring to document E/ESCWA/EDID/2015/IG.2/3(Part I), the Committee considered the activities undertaken by ESCWA pursuant to the recommendations issued at its seventh session. The Committee reviewed progress in implementing the recommendations, such as including in ESCWA reports the economic implications of recent security and political developments in the Arab region; coordinating with relevant regional trade organizations to promote cooperation and provide support for Arab countries; and preparing a manual on legislation for trade in services in member States and other specialized reports, technical papers and mathematical models as a basis for macro and sectoral policymaking in Arab countries to strengthen regional integration.

2. *Implementation of activities related to the foreign trade liberalization under the ESCWA programme of work for the period 2012-2015*

8. Referring to document E/ESCWA/EDID/2015/IG.2/3(Part II), the Committee reviewed activities related to the field of foreign trade liberalization under the ESCWA programme of work for the period 2012-2015, and those relevant to implementing the recommendations made by the Committee at its seventh session. It also reviewed the activities related to foreign trade liberalization implemented between October 2011 and November 2015, including preparing studies; organizing expert group meetings and workshops; building the capacity of member States regarding trade in services; negotiating trade and investment agreements; promoting trade; building partnerships; strengthening integration between Arab States; and promoting the Arab Customs Union. The Committee also reviewed progress made in implementing the recommendations made at its seventh session.

9. The ensuing discussion focused on the obstacles encountered by State representatives and experts in obtaining technical papers and studies prepared by ESCWA. The representative of Egypt welcomed ESCWA and the participants on behalf of the Minister of Commerce and Industry, Mr. Tariq Qabil. Commenting on this item, he noted that State representatives and experts faced difficulty in obtaining studies and reports published by ESCWA, including a comprehensive survey on trade prepared in coordination with Egypt. He expressed his hope to be provided with reports on a periodical basis.

10. The representative of Tunisia requested ESCWA to build upon technical studies conducted by the secretariat, focusing on forming specialized technical cadres in the area of economic modelling to strengthen national capacities, and to benefit from expertise and knowledge while taking into account country specificities.

11. The ESCWA secretariat clarified that all reports were published on the ESCWA website, which would soon be updated and modernized to facilitate and improve access. The Committee also took note of procedures for requesting advice and technical assistance from ESCWA in the areas of trade liberalization. In this regard, the ESCWA secretariat reaffirmed that it would respond to member States' requests, in line with available resources.

B. NON-TARIFF MEASURES RELATED TO FOREIGN TRADE LIBERALIZATION
IN SELECTED ARAB COUNTRIES
(Agenda item 5)

12. The representative of the secretariat made a brief presentation on a study related to non-tariff measures (NTMs) in selected Arab countries, based on document E/ESCWA/EDID/2015/IG.2/4. Non-tariff trade measures are generally related to trade policies, which differ from ordinary customs tariffs. He said that these measures affected the cost and flow of international trade in goods. The document focused on the structure and size of NTMs in four countries, namely Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia, where detailed data on NTMs were available to measure their role in restricting imports and exports. The study monitored all legal procedures related to customs clearance processes, unlike other studies carried out by the International Centre for Trade that relied on assessing the views of exporter companies on the extent to which tariff measures hindered their business operations. NTMs were often used as legislative procedures to ensure quality, protect consumer health or for security reasons. They were also used as protectionist measures as they required particular attention to reduce their impact on the flow of foreign trade. He noted that, since the launch of the multilateral trade negotiations under GATS, most countries had focused on lowering tariff barriers to stimulate trade, while NTMs significantly evolved in terms of diversification and goods coverage. He said that NTMs were usually applied regardless of the country of origin and foreign trade trends, except in special cases. However, since most NTMs were usually associated with certain goods, they had various impacts on trade according to their source.

13. Findings indicated varying rates of Arab intraregional imports in the four countries under GAFTA, ranging from 14.7 per cent for Lebanon to 4.8 per cent for Tunisia. Overall, Egypt, Morocco and Lebanon imposed NTMs on the total value of imports, ranging between 37.6 per cent of the total value of Tunisian imports and 100 per cent of Lebanese imports. Figures fluctuated between 26.9 per cent for Tunisia and 100 per cent for Lebanon, depending on the origin of imports from Arab States in GAFTA. The study showed that Moroccan and Tunisian exports to the European market significantly outweighed their exports to GAFTA, indicating difficulties faced by those two countries in sending goods to Arab markets. Arab markets absorbed a large part of Egyptian and Lebanese total exports, ranging between 29 per cent for Egypt and 38 per cent for Lebanon. These figures reflected well-established trade connections between those two countries and other Arab countries, especially GAFTA members. As is the case for intraregional imports, Arab countries imposed NTMs on some of their own exports, which often negatively affected their growth and diversification. Data on the distribution of NTMs were reviewed according to their categories (technical measures, non-technical measures and export measures) and type (sanitary and phytosanitary measures), on the one hand, and the outputs they covered, on the other.

14. The document also covered the outcomes of measuring the average of ad-valorem equivalents of those measures at the export macro level and according to the categories of goods in the four countries. Average ad-valorem equivalents ranged between 22 per cent for Egypt and 45 per cent for Tunisia, which sometimes significantly exceeded the levels of tariff protection applied to the imports of those four countries.

15. To clarify the impact of tariff measures on Arab economies, the representative of the secretariat cited a study conducted in the Syrian Arab Republic aimed at assessing the impact of the full elimination of tariffs compared to the full elimination of non-tariff measures, particularly quantitative restrictions on imports. Outcomes showed that the economic benefits resulting from the elimination of non-tariff measures were significantly greater than those resulting from the elimination of tariffs. Another ESCWA study indicated that the elimination of non-tariff measures on selected commodities in Morocco and Tunisia would lead to a gross domestic product growth (GDP) of 0.3 per cent and 0.6 per cent, respectively, highlighting a clear improvement in the well-being of the two countries as a result of reduced investment costs and improved domestic demand on imported goods.

16. The ensuing discussion focused on whether all NTMs constituted an obstacle to the movement of goods, since many of them fell under procedures adopted according to regional and international agreements. The representative of the secretariat noted that, according to the international classification of such measures, most of them did not originally intend to impede trade flow, but the methods adopted in applying them could be used as protectionist measures. At the same time, many NTMs were used for protection purposes, such as import licenses and quotas. Several representatives stressed that the mechanisms adopted for the application of most measures represented a serious impediment to trade flow, in particular in view of the weak potential of countries with regard to the efficient application of those procedures. Participants expressed their hope that future studies would focus on identifying shortfalls in applying non-tariff measures so as to introduce appropriate reforms. The representative of the secretariat highlighted the approach followed by European countries that, despite developed human and material resources, relied on a sampling approach in applying advanced security and health measures, allowing a more transparent process that did not affect the movement of goods. The European experience, adopted in many Arab countries, highlighted the possibility of applying most non-tariff measures by adopting simpler enforcement mechanisms.

17. Some representatives expressed their willingness to further elaborate the study by differentiating between NTMs applied at the national level and those related to complex international and regional agreements. The representative of the secretariat explained that NTMs had been classified according to universal categories developed by international trade organizations. The representative of Egypt requested ESCWA to provide a detailed analysis on the quality of NTMs, especially those related to technical barriers, and sanitary and phytosanitary. She stressed that the study conducted by ESCWA was limited to a quantitative analysis and did not consider the compliance of such measures with international guidelines, or the consistency of their application between Arab States.

18. Reference was also made to the importance of the geographical situation of companies and customs points in facilitating customs clearing processes, including NMTs, in areas that contained the necessary infrastructure and departments, such as major cities.

19. The representative of the Sudan considered NMTs and their impact on trade flow between Arab countries and on intraregional trade integration. She proposed conducting a detailed study to identify the effects of tariff measures on intraregional trade and to determine possible solutions regarding coordination mechanisms between Arab countries to overcome obstacles resulting from NTMs, although those solutions were limited to some commodities but encouraged investment in their production.

20. The representative of Egypt sought clarification on the issue of preferential quotas within GAFTA and their application in Arab countries. It was clarified that those quotas were applied furtively on certain goods in some countries.

21. The representative of Iraq requested that the study also include trade measures applied between Iraq and its trading partners from outside the Arab region.

22. The representative of the World Trade Centre said that the Centre had extensive expertise in the field of NTMs, and that such measures had been examined in various Arab countries by focusing on the private sector's perspective. She invited ESCWA to discuss cooperation procedures in that field. The representative of the secretariat explained that the ESCWA study covered the legislative procedures of NTMs and their implementation mechanisms, and was therefore considered complementary to the study conducted by the World Trade Centre as it clarified the impact of such measures on the business environment and international trade movements in the region.

23. The representative of Tunisia noted that an Arab convention was being drafted on the mutual recognition of certificates of conformity, given their considerable contribution to reducing the effects of non-tariff measures.

24. The representative of the Swedish Development Agency, participating as an observer, said that although many regional and international organizations were preparing studies and analyses on NTMs, most lacked proper coordination between themselves and with relevant countries. She emphasized that one of the most fundamental conditions for fostering Arab economic integration was the implementation of WTO conventions, particularly those related to technical barriers, and sanitary and phytosanitary measures in the Arab region, requiring the development of a common mechanism for dealing with those measures and reducing their impact on the flow of foreign trade. The representative of the secretariat noted that ESCWA was aware of most studies published by relevant global and regional bodies, and sought to examine certain aspects of NTMs, particularly those related to trade facilitation conventions and the avoidance of duplicate activities.

25. Representatives agreed on the importance of strengthening transparency with regard to NTMs by disseminating them and sharing relevant information with all foreign trade stakeholders.

C. PRESENTATION BY THE LEAGUE OF ARAB STATES ON PROGRESS ACHIEVED IN NEGOTIATIONS
ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ARAB CUSTOMS UNION
(Agenda item 6)

26. The representative of the League of Arab States reviewed progress made in the strategic plan for the economic sector, in negotiations for the establishment of the Customs Union, functions performed and the programme of work for the coming biennium in preparation for the negotiations for the establishment of the Union. He said that the negotiations had made progress in recent years and general agreements had been reached on some issues, while others needed more consideration. He reviewed the strategic plan for the economic sector for the establishment of the Arab Customs Union and the Vision 2015-2020, including the following four key pillars for establishing the Union: full liberalization of trade in goods from tariff and non-tariff barriers, full liberalization of trade in services, full freedom of movement of Arab capital and businessmen without restrictions, and increased efficiency of intraregional trade and trade facilitation at customs points. Those steps required commitment from Arab States to the resolutions of Arabic summits, economic summits and the Economic and Social Council, and the adoption of national policies for Arab economic integration.

27. He also considered incomplete issues and entrance into the Arab Customs Union in preparation for an Arab common market and economic and monetary union, noting that the issues being completed under GAFTA related to the elimination of the Algerian exceptions, completing customs reductions in Yemen, finalizing customs rules of origin, determining special treatment for least developed countries, developing quality infrastructure in Arab countries in line with international standards, strengthening competitiveness and prohibiting monopoly. He added that achieving merchandise trade efficiency required fully implementing relevant conventions that affected all operations, including logistical and information structures, operating systems, human resources, aircraft, trucks, containers, vessels, pipelines, railways and infrastructure.

28. He noted that the tasks required to expedite the establishment of the Union, notably implementing the Unified Arab Customs Law and the unified guide for customs procedures, in addition to developing common customs tariff structures in Arab countries and forming national teams endorsed at the last Summit held in Sharam el Sheikh, Egypt. He added that it was also necessary to select an international advisory panel and prepare for the upcoming round of negotiation. He said that negotiations on trade in services had stalled and efforts were being made to relaunch them using a more systematic approach. Efforts were also being made to amend some provisions of the Unified Agreement for the Investment of Arab Capital in the Arab States, following requests from some countries.

29. The representative of Egypt said that it was unnecessary to discuss the Agreement, given that it had already been adopted by Arab leaders and ratified by several States, and that the issue of its amendment had not been officially referred to the League of Arab States. The representative of the League clarified that a memorandum had been sent to the League's secretariat from some member States and private sector representatives containing reservations regarding several provisions of the Agreement, which should be considered by all member States.

30. The representative of the League's secretariat said that the Unified Arab Customs Law and its unified guide for customs procedures would be finalized shortly. The united customs declaration form was also being completed, following the finalization of the international standard classification of goods. The representative of Egypt raised the issue of the capacity of customs points. In response, the representative of the League said that the latest information showed that many points were ready to receive goods from Arab countries, but several improvements could be made. In that regard, it was possible to benefit from other experiences, including those of the Gulf Cooperation Council. Lastly, he affirmed the importance of compiling a list of standardized conditions to equip customs points, which all members of the Union must comply with.

31. With regard to building the technical capacity of member States on issues related to the Union, the representative of the League said that Arab countries had decided at the Summit to form national teams to consider issues related to the Union at the national level. He added that the League's secretariat was currently forming an international advisory panel comprising representatives of international organizations to study country specificities and assist them in facilitating their accession to the Union. He said that, within the framework of negotiations to establish the Union, talks were underway on determining a common external tariff for commodity groups in each Arab State in GAFTA, which was a sensitive and complex issue.

32. The representative of Tunisia said that the Arab region was one of the richest globally, and should therefore be an example of successful regional cooperation. Variations in levels of development and competitiveness between countries should be taken into account, thus requiring coordination between domestic economic policies at the start of the implementation process. The representative of the Sudan concurred. The representative of Egypt stressed the need for ESCWA assistance in determining a unified customs tariff, given those variations between countries.

33. Many representatives requested information on ESCWA support to identify commodity groups/tariff lines to facilitate their adoption with regard to a common external tariff and mechanisms for identifying provisions for sensitive goods. The representative of the secretariat said that ESCWA and the League of Arab States were participating in the formation of a working group to revive efforts in that regard, but political decisions were at the discretion of member States.

D. INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK OF THE ARAB CUSTOMS UNION (Agenda item 7)

34. The Committee considered this item, referring to document E/ESCWA/EDID/2015/IG.2/3(Part I). The representative of the secretariat explained that the establishment of a Customs Union would strengthen Arab economic integration, and emphasized the importance of establishing institutions to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of the Union and of benefiting from previous regional and international experiences. He addressed the two most common approaches used in trade policy coordination among member States in customs unions: the establishment of joint regional institutions and coordination among national institutions of member States. He presented the experience of the European Customs Union, considered as one of the most successful experiences at the global level, which established regional institutions to deal with various issues relating to the Union. He added that most customs unions in economic blocs comprised institutions such as a secretariat, a commission, a tribunal and a central bank, among others, depending on the union. He suggested the formation of an institutional entity to manage the Arab Customs Union in the initial stages of its

establishment, under the League of Arab States. The expected role of that entity would be to compile experiences related to the Union and to strengthen the negotiations process by providing technical support.

35. He explained that the completion of technical texts was not a precondition for initiating the establishment of institutional structures. He stressed the importance of expediting their establishment so as to support the negotiations process, overcome obstacles and build capacities for the effective operationalization of the Union.

36. Representatives discussed Arab countries' accession to several other free trade areas and its impact on the launch and success of the Arab Customs Union. In that regard, the representative of the secretariat said that it was important to take into account Arab States' trade commitments to other countries, but they did not necessarily constitute an obstacle to the launching of the Arab Customs Union. However, they may reduce its effectiveness given that member States would have to maintain border controls to verify the source of intraregionally traded goods from members of the Arab Customs Union.

37. Some representatives inquired about mechanisms for determining a common external tariff. The representative of the secretariat explained that countries may face some difficulties in agreeing on a common customs tariff, especially in view of Arab States' commitments to parties from outside the region. He added that the successful experiences of other customs unions in other regions may be of use. He also noted that the issue would be addressed in subsequent presentations.

E. FISCAL CHALLENGES FACING ARAB COUNTRIES IN THE ESTABLISHMENT
OF THE ARAB CUSTOMS UNION
(Agenda item 8)

38. The representative of the secretariat reviewed document E/ESCWA/EDID/2015/IG.2/6 on the fiscal challenges facing Arab countries in the establishment of an Arab Customs Union, which set out the main objectives for the establishment of the Union, notably the creation of a large internal market contributing to the development of local productive capacities and to driving intraregional trade. Analysing the fiscal implications for member States of establishing the Union, the representative of the secretariat stressed that the effects at the national level depended largely on the chosen common external tariff, on the one hand, and on the contribution of direct trade taxes to government revenues, on the other. He stressed the role of fiscal tools, such as indirect taxes, in mitigating the potential loss of government revenue resulting from acceding to the Union.

39. He highlighted key elements related to the establishment of the Union, including selecting common external tariffs, and adopting mechanisms for the collection and allocation of customs revenues and for compensating revenue losses, particularly in the case of low-income countries that lacked proper taxation systems and administrative capacity. He stressed that the Union was a good opportunity to improve regional economic integration. Despite the potential decline in direct customs tax revenues in some countries, it was anticipated that net government revenues would increase as a result of low customs tariffs leading to an increase in customs revenues.

40. The Committee took note of the fiscal challenges arising from the establishment of the Union and of the options for selecting an optimal common external tariff and for determining appropriate compensation mechanisms. The Committee emphasized the importance of analysing the fiscal implications of the establishment of the Union in line with negotiation scenarios and of considering alternative mechanisms to address the potential repercussions of the Union on the public finances of some States.

41. The representative of Egypt highlighted the lack of estimates in the document on possible increases in trade flow due to the establishment of the Union, especially given that Arab intraregional trade was expected to improve according to "cumulative rules of origins" and as a result of increases in investments following the establishment of the Union. The representative of the secretariat explained that the document did not go into

details on that subject; however, it gave a qualitative analysis of the impact of the Union on fiscal policies without covering other economic implications. Those aspects would be tackled in another paper. He added that expectations were generally positive, but figures did not show any significant changes.

42. The representative of Mauritania inquired about the sources of information and data used in the document. The representative of the secretariat said that data were mainly from two sources: the International Monetary Fund and the Arab Monetary Fund, in addition to official sources from countries concerned. He added that ESCWA gathered information primarily from statistical and customs authorities in member States and from international and regional institutions. In that regard, the representative of the World Trade Centre pointed out that the Centre was collaborating with ESCWA and drew information from countries based on agreements endorsed by them. She called on countries not involved in such agreements to join so as to provide up-to-date data. The representative of the secretariat welcomed Mauritania, which had recently joined ESCWA.

43. The representative of Egypt said that the rules of origin for Arab goods had been adopted, excluding those of 10 goods that would be adopted shortly, along with their standard ratios, and that they would be announced after the next meeting of the Economic and Social Council of the League of Arab States.

44. The representative of Jordan inquired about financing sources for the compensation fund for affected States and about the allocation of such funds. The representative of the secretariat explained that the establishment of a compensation fund was not mandatory but was presented as a possible scenario, as was the case with customs unions in other regional blocs that collected customs revenues for distribution to members. She said that there was no specific model, stressing flexibility in choosing an arrangement commensurate with the specificities of the Arab region. She also noted that one of the aims of ESCWA was to further study mechanisms for the establishment of the Arab Customs Union over the next two years, including the use of customs revenues.

F. SCENARIOS FOR AN ARAB CUSTOMS UNION (Agenda item 9)

45. The Committee considered this item with reference to document E/ESCWA/EDID/2015/IG.2/7. The representative of the secretariat said that, based on the experiences of many countries in establishing economic blocs, the promotion of regional economic integration required four fundamental stages; the establishment of an Arab Customs Union constituted the second phase after the completion of GAFTA. He added that the Economic and Social Council of the League of Arab States had approved, in 2011, a draft implementation programme for the Arab Customs Union containing six sections: the general framework of the Union, an Arab customs law, a common external tariff, financial resource mechanisms, an institutional framework, and general provisions related to the implementation of the Union.

46. The representative of the secretariat proposed a simulation scenario comprising the following practical steps to launch the Union and its applied mechanisms: completing GAFTA, developing a pilot structure for a common external tariff and a timetable for its application using flexible mechanisms, proposing an approach to address trade agreements that linked Arab countries with those outside the region, establishing a mechanism to compensate countries for losses in customs revenues following the introduction of a common external tariff, and agreeing on an approach to coordinate economic policies related to foreign trade. The document estimated macroeconomic and sectoral changes following the introduction of a common external tariff under three sub-scenarios. The first assumed no change in preferential trade agreements between some Arab countries and other economic blocs. The second anticipated accession to those agreements by all Arab countries in the Union. The third presupposed the abolition of those agreements to be replaced by a common Arab trade policy.

47. The study concluded that the highest Arab import and export rates would be reached following the introduction of a common external tariff coupled with coordinated foreign trade policies between Arab countries, through the propagation of preferential trade agreements. However, securing the desired benefits from the Arab Customs Union was dependent on several other factors, including the following:

- (a) The structural diversification policies of Arab economies;
- (b) Liberalizing trade in services and lifting restrictions on the movement of capital and workers;
- (c) Trade facilitation;
- (d) Improving coordination of macro and sectoral policies related to competitiveness;
- (e) Standardizing Arab trade policies;
- (f) Restructuring taxation policies to encourage intraregional investment and trade.

48. Participants agreed on the importance of preparing technical studies on scenarios for the establishment of the Union to assess its macroeconomic and sectoral implications, thus advancing negotiations to meet State aspirations.

49. A representative inquired whether ESCWA had prepared studies on the effects of Union negotiations on the World Trade Organization, given that some Arab countries would be obliged to raise pegged tariffs and renegotiate with WTO members, thus requiring members of the Union to offer compensation to WTO members. The representative of the secretariat said that the study presumed that Arab countries would maintain their commitments to WTO agreements, given that common external tariff scenarios did not conflict with Arab countries' commitments to WTO since pegged and peak tariffs would not be exceeded. He added that the establishment of the Union might benefit regional blocs which have agreements with some Arab countries, such as the European Union, because of wider access to Arab markets.

50. The representative of Egypt expressed his hope that future ESCWA studies would include implementation programmes or scenarios for Arab countries to conduct specific activities within a set timeframe, such as forming standardization committees, and that explain the negotiations process between WTO and member States regarding compensation for WTO following Arab countries' accession to the Customs Union. The representative of the secretariat said that the document focused on assessing the impact of some options to determine the most beneficial for Arab economies, on the one hand, and those that are the easiest to implement, on the other. ESCWA, in collaboration with the League of Arab States, would provide support to identify application mechanisms at all levels. He added that ESCWA was completing implementation procedures to provide technical support to member States so as to facilitate the launch of the Arab Customs Union.

51. In the ensuing discussion, representatives raised the issue of Arab countries reviewing their commitments under bilateral and multilateral frameworks with countries and blocs outside the region, especially given that intraregional trade only accounted for 10 per cent of total Arab trade. They said that agreements with parties outside the region were not only limited to trade agreements, but also contained financial commitments for strengthening productive sectors, such as manufacturing in member States. The representative of Tunisia said that it was important for countries to weigh up gains and losses when reviewing their agreements with other countries. He stressed the importance of Arab regional integration to trade, through investments, partnerships and support for Governments in foreign negotiations. Some representatives emphasized the need to encourage Arab economic integration by strengthening intraregional investment in various economic sectors and building partnerships to support Governments in foreign negotiations. The representative of the secretariat said that the Arab Customs Union was an opportunity to advance Arab economic integration, aimed at developing intraregional trade to improve trade exchanges, making it beneficial for Arab countries to adopt preferential agreements with various regional blocs to create new markets and support inclusive and sustainable economic and social development.

52. The representative of Egypt said that the upcoming stages of the Union negotiations would focus on mechanisms to coordinate Arab trade policies, notably identifying a structure for a common external tariff within boundaries that did not conflict with the commitments of Arab countries that were WTO members. He added that the situation would become much clearer in the coming months regarding countries' technical support needs.

G. PRESENTATION BY THE WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION ON MECHANISMS FOR DEALING
WITH TRADE AGREEMENTS BETWEEN ARAB AND FOREIGN STATES AFTER
THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ARAB CUSTOMS UNION
(Agenda item 10)

53. The representative of the secretariat, on behalf of the World Trade Organization, made a presentation on the mechanisms adopted by the Organization in dealing with bilateral and regional trade agreements involving States willing to join the Arab Customs Union. He reviewed the trade agreements between Arab States and some foreign parties. Since Arab countries were committed to trade relations with countries outside the region, their accession to an Arab Customs Union would require a review of those relations in the light of the Union, which shall be the basis for all foreign trade relations of its members.

54. He considered the guidance provided in WTO agreements for amending members' commitments, through renegotiation and compensation. He highlighted the status of Arab countries that could benefit the Union negotiations. He affirmed the possibility of amending Arab countries' commitments in accordance with WTO regulation, in line with other similar cases within the Organization. If a compromise was not reached with partners, countries could unilaterally change their trade commitments. Affected countries could then take appropriate countermeasures.

55. In the ensuing discussion, the representative of Lebanon inquired about managing trade relations if a country was a member of two customs unions. The representative of the secretariat said that a country could not be a member of two unions and would have to choose between them, but this did not preclude countries from building trade relations with more than one free trade area, which would not lead to goods smuggling between customs unions because goods would have customs numbers specifying their source, thus highlighting the importance of identifying rules of origin.

56. The representative of Egypt said that two agreements were currently being finalized: the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership between the European Union and the United States, to be completed by the end of 2016. Both would have great implications for developing countries, especially Arab countries. He requested ESCWA to assist member States in studying those agreements and determining their impact on Arab countries, especially least developed countries. He also proposed methods of addressing their negative effects on Arab economies.

H. ROUNDTABLE DIALOGUE ON COMPLETING GAFTA AND ESTABLISHING AN ARAB CUSTOMS
UNION: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES
(Agenda item 11)

57. The representative of the secretariat reviewed the role of regional integration in boosting economic and social development and promoting political stability in the region. He mentioned national factors that could strengthen integration, noting obstacles that could limit integration success. He identified primary issues as a basis for negotiations, so as to determine major obstacles facing Arab intraregional exports and to benefit from GAFTA; outlined proposed mechanisms to overcome those obstacles; and determined priority technical assistance from ESCWA for member States to drive negotiations forward. He also considered countries' concerns regarding the Union negotiations.

58. The representative of Egypt identified obstacles related to technical factors, such as rises in trade costs and trading fees on goods, long transport times for goods in trucks, variations in trade legislation, non-tariff measures, and strict sanitary regulations. He added that all these challenges could be resolved, but difficulties lay in influencing political will between Arab countries and limiting bureaucracy. He said that, in view of those factors, ESCWA should prepare a draft questionnaire requesting countries to state their concerns regarding Union negotiations. ESCWA should also organize awareness-raising programmes for stakeholders, focusing on increasing knowledge of the impact of agreements on their countries and on building their capacity for the negotiations.

59. He said that the main concern of Egypt was bilateral renegotiations, given that Egypt had agreements with several regional blocs. Imposing the commitments arising from the Union on all partners would therefore be complicated. He added that many countries greatly depended on customs revenues to fund their development plans, and their concerns to preserve that revenue should be taken into account.

60. The representative of Palestine outlined challenges to Palestinian exports in the absence of appropriate infrastructure for the transport of goods and suitable storage spaces, causing goods to perish during the long and complex screening process that was further complicated by the occupation. Moreover, many trading partners did not recognize transport documents, and procedures would sometimes change without prior notice. Some Arab countries imposed prior coordination processes to place the country of origin on goods, which required the authorization of documents by many parties thus lengthening the customs clearance process and increasing costs. She stressed the need to facilitate Arab intraregional trade, including the movement of goods, persons and services, lifting restrictions on export processes and resolving challenges faced by businessmen in acquiring visas. She requested ESCWA to prepare studies on trade in services.

61. The representative of Yemen said that the main obstacles facing trade facilitation in the Arab region revolved around political will, variations in tax legislation, disparities in economic and social levels, an unattractive investment climate that was affected by security and political problems in the region, and weak infrastructure. He added that the conflicts affecting some Arab countries were impacting Arab intraregional trade, in particular, and economic integration, in general. He proposed identifying priorities for joint efforts by adopting an ESCWA proposal to remove key obstacles facing Arab economic integration. He stressed the need of Yemen for technical programmes to tackle those obstacles.

62. The representative of Morocco said that there was political will in her country regarding joining the Arab Customs Union. Technical challenges to Arab intraregional trade included weak infrastructure and high transport costs that needed to be discussed in detail to establish an effective system to resolve conflicts, identify mechanisms to protect national products, and build the capacity of negotiators. She added that numerous competitive laws or their absence in many member States limited trade exchanges between Arab countries. The lack of mechanisms for conflict-resolution and adopting free trade agreements with foreign countries had led to complex policies and difficulties in assessing Arab countries' commitments to GAFTA. She noted that Maghreb countries were finalizing the Arab Maghreb Union.

63. She said that potential mechanisms for establishing the Arab Customs Union included protectionist measures and support for national goods, and clear mechanisms for the distribution of customs revenues. Regarding the role of ESCWA, she stressed the importance of focusing on strengthening existing mechanisms, such as preparing reports and studies, providing technical assistance related to mitigating the impact of the Union, building negotiators' capacities, and enriching the relevant information database. She outlined several concerns that could impede the launch of the Union, including variations in trade and sectoral policies, competitiveness, national tariffs and bilateral commitments, which necessitated a transitional period towards the Union.

64. The representative of Tunisia said that there was insufficient information on Arab countries' export capacities, necessitating efforts to increase information on available opportunities in each country. He added

that current mechanisms obliged Arab countries to meet their needs from outside the region. A key mechanism to strengthen Arab intraregional trade and integration was rules of origin, which required special attention as an effective tool for modern trade policies. He emphasized the role of Arab development funds in promoting investments in the region, and building productive partnerships and the competitive capacity of Arab goods. Regarding the role of ESCWA, he said that it should focus on developing and facilitating trade procedures and support Arab good competitiveness in terms of quality and the mutual recognition of standards.

65. The representative of Lebanon indicated the weak political will in countries, whereby decisions were taken at meetings but very few were implemented. Weak economic integration in the region was limiting intraregional trade, which was below 10 per cent of total trade. He added that many decisions were taken quickly without detailed technical consideration, causing many member States to unilaterally adopt negative stances. He requested ESCWA to provide technical support to build the capacity of countries to develop national economic structures and related policies.

66. In response, the representative of the secretariat stressed the need to continue exchanging expertise between countries through open, candid and objective discussions. He added that some components of Arab economies impeded the establishment of the Customs Union, stressing that ESCWA would continue to work with the League of Arab States to provide technical support and guidance on the proposed scenarios related to non-tariff measures and their challenges. It would also prepare studies to adopt laws and procedures at the national level.

I. PROPOSED PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR THE BIENNIUM 2016-2017 IN THE FIELD
OF FOREIGN TRADE LIBERALIZATION
(Agenda item 12)

67. The Committee discussed the proposed ESCWA programme of work, set out in document E/ESCWA/EDID/2015/IG.2/8, including a set of activities and outputs in the field of liberalization of foreign trade over the period 2016-2017 under subprogramme 3 on economic development and integration implemented by the ESCWA Economic Development and Integration Division. The programme of work was prepared in accordance with the revised strategic framework for the biennium 2016-2017 adopted by ESCWA at its twenty-eighth session, held in Tunis from 15 to 18 September 2014.

68. The representative of the secretariat took into account comments by member State representatives when formulating the final recommendations to ESCWA and Governments.

69. The representative of Palestine requested adding the issue of trade in services to ESCWA programmes, including training cadres to improve negotiating skills, and establishing an electronic portal containing all information, laws and procedures on trade for each Arab country, as in the case of the European Union. The representative of the secretariat said that trade in services was an ESCWA priority. A comprehensive draft document was being prepared on the issue, aimed at supporting the trade in services sector. ESCWA was currently awaiting funding to begin implementation.

J. DATE AND VENUE OF THE ELEVENTH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE
(Agenda item 13)

70. The representative of Tunisia expressed his country's desire to host the eleventh session of the Committee, in principle. The invitation would be confirmed through official channels following discussions with stakeholders, noting that the theme of the eleventh session would be economic globalization and financing for development.

K. OTHER MATTERS
(Agenda item 14)

71. No issues were discussed under this item.

**III. ADOPTION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE COMMITTEE
AT ITS TENTH SESSION**
(Agenda item 15)

72. At its closing session, the Committee adopted the recommendations made at its tenth session, as amended.

**IV. JOINT MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE ON TRADE, GLOBALIZATION AND
FINANCING AND THE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT TO LAUNCH
THE ESCWA REPORT ENTITLED “ASSESSING ARAB ECONOMIC
INTEGRATION: TOWARDS THE ARAB CUSTOMS UNION”**

73. Participants at the joint meeting included ESCWA member State representatives from the Committee on Trade, Globalization and Financing and the Committee on Transport, whose sixteenth session was held on 23 and 24 November 2015. The aim of the joint meeting was to inform committee members of the outcomes of the ESCWA report entitled “Assessing Arab Economic Integration: Towards the Arab Customs Union”, and to launch a discussion on the issue of Arab economic integration from the perspective of those committees.

74. The representative of the secretariat reviewed key outcomes and recommendations contained in the report, which aimed to assess efforts towards regional economic integration and propose mechanisms to drive it. He presented the outcomes at all levels and for all sectors, using a system of indicators to evaluate and monitor Arab regional integration composed of a comprehensive set of indicators that assessed and monitored performance and compared integration levels at the global, regional and bilateral levels. He said that the indicator system focused on key economic integration channels in the Arab region, including trade, direct foreign investment, economic migration and workers’ remittances. The report stressed the importance of creating employment opportunities by building regional value chains across several sectors in the region, so as to develop new and effective comparative advantages for countries, promote strategic diversity, expedite development and facilitate participation in global value chains. He gave examples from Arab countries that had managed to rank high in regional and global value chains, such as Saudi Arabia in processing and refining oil and Egypt in the textile industry. The report also emphasized the need to focus on regional trade in services, because of its role in strengthening the labour market and driving development. He added that the report provided a comprehensive assessment of requirements for the establishment of an Arab Customs Union, and estimated the economic impact of a set of proposed scenarios.

75. Participants discussed the outcomes of the report. The representative of Yemen criticized the impartiality of the regional integration indicator and its ability to clearly reflect a country’s economic capacities, given the varying economic capacities between Arab States. He expressed his concern that such an indicator would always show least developed countries at the bottom of the rankings. He therefore proposed adding a competitiveness indicator to the integration indicator to ensure a more comprehensive picture. The representative of the secretariat affirmed the neutrality of the indicator used by ESCWA in its first report on Arab regional integration, given that it was based on reliable data and up-to-date economic literature in the field. He added that, regarding comprehensiveness, the indicator would be updated and developed biennially to evaluate progress, monitor obstacles and propose policies to promote the role of economic integration in inclusive development, therefore comments from member States on improving the indicator would be taken into account in future reports. He added that there were many mechanisms to improve indicators, such as using data on trade in added value instead of gross exports, and linking the indicator system to the Sustainable

Development Goals. He requested participants to closely review the report and send their comments or inquiries to the relevant ESCWA team so as to improve the indicators.

V. ORGANIZATION OF WORK

A. DATE AND VENUE OF THE SESSION

76. The Committee held its tenth session in Cairo on 22 and 23 November 2015.

B. OPENING OF THE SESSION

77. The opening speech was delivered by the representative of Jordan, Ms. Ghada Issa, in her capacity as the first Vice-Chair of the ninth session, due to the absence of the representative of the United Arab Emirates who assumed the chair of the ninth session of the Committee. She thanked the bureau of the ninth session for its tireless efforts, Egypt for hosting the tenth session, and the ESCWA secretariat for organizing the meeting. She mentioned the challenging circumstances under which the Committee was holding its session, including obstacles facing the economies of the region and the world, notably the volatility of oil prices, the global economic slowdown and the onslaught of terrorism in the region, emphasizing the importance of strengthening cooperation between Arab countries to promote intraregional trade and joint investments. She added that the session would focus on the vital issue of an Arab Customs Union, which required a comprehensive technical assessment. She expressed her hope that the work of the Committee would drive countries towards regional integration, especially in view of efforts made by regional and international organizations in that regard.

78. Mr. Mohamad Moctar El Hacene, Director of the Economic Development and Integration Division, made a speech on behalf of the ESCWA secretariat. He thanked Egypt for hosting the tenth session of the Committee. He welcomed participants, recalling that the present session would focus on trade issues, given that the ninth session had tackled financing for development. He warmly welcomed the Mauritanian delegation, which was participating for the first time in the Committee's sessions since joining ESCWA. He stressed the importance of international trade and its strong role in driving economic growth and sustainable development. The Arab region was entering a phase of economic slowdown because of instability, political and security issues and significant global economic changes, such as the drop in oil prices, weak growth in large economies such as China, and increases in global trade relations.

79. He added that those considerable changes obliged Arab countries to modernize their trade and structural policies to increase competitiveness and improve access to global value chains, so as to strengthen Arab non-oil exports, create regional value chains capable of handling foreign competitiveness and access foreign markets. The service sector required efforts to strengthen regional integration given its role in promoting economic growth, competitiveness and employment opportunities. Consequently, it was necessary to increase joint Arab efforts and strengthen institutions. The establishment of an Arab Customs Union was a key step towards promoting economic integration, but required intense preparations such as appropriate policies to develop a single Arab market. He said that ESCWA, over the previous years, had focused its efforts on trade issues by preparing technical reports and holding several meetings. He thanked the United Arab Emirates for chairing the ninth session of the Committee and wished Bahrain success in chairing the tenth session.

C. PARTICIPANTS

80. The meeting was attended by representatives from 12 ESCWA member States, namely Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Sudan and Yemen. The session was also attended by a representative of the Swedish Embassy in Egypt from non-member States of ESCWA; as well as representatives of a number of international and regional organizations, namely

the League of Arab States, the Islamic Development Bank, the World Trade Centre, the Economic Commission for Africa and the United Nations Development Programme.

D. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

81. Pursuant to rule 18 of the rules of procedure of ESCWA, “member countries shall assume the chairmanship of the sessions of the subsidiary bodies of the Commission on a rotating basis, in the Arabic alphabetical order employed by the United Nations.”* Mr. Fuad Sadeq Al- Baharnar, the representative of Bahrain from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was appointed Chair of the tenth session of the Committee, succeeding the representative of the United Arab Emirates, who assumed the chair of the ninth session from 7 April 2015 to 23 November 2015. As per the procedures followed at previous sessions, the Committee elected the representative of Jordan and the representative of Tunisia as Vice-Chairs. The representative of the Sudan was elected Rapporteur.

E. AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

82. At its opening meeting, the Committee adopted the following agenda, as presented to it and as set out in document E/ESCWA/EDID/2015/IG.2/L.1.

1. Opening of the session.
2. Election of officers.
3. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.
4. Review of action taken in the fields of external trade liberalization:
 - (a) Implementation of the recommendations made by the Committee at its seventh session;
 - (b) Implementation of activities related to foreign trade liberalization under the ESCWA programme of work in the period 2012-2015.
5. Non-tariff measures related to foreign trade liberalization in selected Arab countries.
6. Progress achieved in the negotiations on the establishment of an Arab customs union (presentation by a representative of the League of Arab States).
7. Institutional framework of the Arab Customs Union.
8. Fiscal challenges facing Arab countries in the establishment of an Arab customs union.
9. Scenarios for an Arab customs union.
10. Mechanisms for dealing with trade agreements between Arab and foreign States after the establishment of an Arab customs union (presentation by a representative of the World Trade Organization).
11. Completion of the Greater Arab Free Trade Area and establishment of an Arab customs union: opportunities and challenges (round table dialogue).

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

12. Proposed programme of work for the biennium 2016-2017 in the field of foreign trade liberalization.
13. Date and venue of the eleventh session of the Committee.
14. Other matters.
15. Adoption of the recommendations made by the Committee at its tenth session.
16. Launching of the ESCWA report “Assessing the Arab Economic Integration: Towards the Arab Customs Union” (joint meeting of the Committee on Trade and the Committee on Transport).

83. The Committee also adopted the draft organization of work set out in document E/ESCWA/EDID/2015/IG.2/L.2.

E. DOCUMENTS

84. The documents considered by the Committee at its tenth session are listed in annex II to the present report.

Annex I

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

A. ESCWA MEMBER STATES

Bahrain

Mr. Fuad Sadiq al-Baharnah
Advisor
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Egypt

M. Ashraf Mukhtar
Deputy Minister/head of central administration of
the World Trade Organization
Trade agreements Sector, the Ministry of Trade
and Industry

Ms. Dina Mahmoud Mohammed Mahmoud
General Director, Public Administration of Foreign
Trade
The Central Administration of the WTO Affairs
Trade agreements sector, Ministry of Trade and
Industry

Ms. Iman Rifaat Nasser
General Director, Public Administration of Foreign
Trade
Ministry of Commerce and Industry

Mr. Saeed Abdullah
President of trade agreements and foreign
trade sectors

Mr. Tamir Abdelaziz
General Manager of regional agreements

Jordan

Ms. Ghada Issa
Senior coordinator at the Policies Directorate
Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation

Mr. Mutasem Ahmad al-Bashir
Second Secretary
Embassy of Jordan to Egypt

Lebanon

Mr. Malik Assi
Chief of foreign trade
Ministry of Economy and Trade

Mr. Fouad Mrad

Mr. George N. Khoury
The Minister Advisor
Ministry of Economy and Trade

Morocco

Ms. Meryem Ahoujil.
Director of the Department of Arabic and Islamic
States relations

Palestine

Ms. Manal Desouki
Trade Director-General
Ministry of national economy (MoNE)

Qatar

Mr. Mansour Hamid al-Nuaimi
Expert in international cooperation and trade
agreements
Ministry of Economy and Trade

Saudi Arabia

Mr. Saleh bin Fahid al-Shehri
Urban and regional planning specialist
Research and Studies Department
Undersecretariat for Economic Affairs
Ministry of Economy and Planning

Mr. Saud bin Saeed al-Hammadi
Economic Advisor
Ministry of Commerce and Industry

Sudan

Mr. Abdelaziz Mohammed Mabrouk
Acting Deputy Minister
Ministry of Trade

Ms. Magda Ahmed Mahdi
Director of international organizations
Ministry of Trade

Mr. Yusuf Mohamed al-Dkheri
Executive Office
Ministry of Trade
Iraq

Mr. Haider Noori Jaber
Commercial attache
Embassy of Iraq to Egypt

Tunisia

Mohammed Jamel Elifa
Director of Cooperation with regional and
international organizations
Ministry of Trade

Yemen

Mr. Mohammed al-Hawri
Deputy Minister of Planning and International
Cooperation

B. INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

UN-Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)

Mr. Aushazias Gbagidi
Economic Affairs Officer
Office for North Africa

Mr. Quang Anh Le
Chief Technical Advisor
Arabic States trade initiatives

The United Nations Development Programme

Mr. Walid al-Nozahy
Advisor

C. REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

The League of Arab States

Mr. Khalid Wali
Minister Plenipotentiary
Arab Economic Integration department
Trade in services section

Mr. Mohammed al-Nousour
Director of Arab economic integration department

Mr. Sameh Abdel Karim
Arab Economic Integration department

Mr. Mohammed Badawi
Arab Economic Integration department

Islamic Development Bank

Mr. Nael Taleb Hamdan al-Hajaj
Partnership expert
Cooperation and integration
department/partnership section

International Trade Centre

Ms Lilia Hashim Naas
Director

Embassy of Sweden

Ms. Margarita Davidson Abdelli
Advisor

D. EXPERTS

Mr. Awny Amer
Researcher

Annex II

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

Title	Item	Symbol
Information note		E/ESCWA/EDID/2015/IG.2/INF.1
Provisional agenda and annotations	3	E/ESCWA/EDID/2015/IG.2/L.1
Organization of work	3	E/ESCWA/EDID/2015/IG.2/L.2
Review of actions taken in the field of Liberalization of Foreign Trade	4	E/ESCWA/EDID/2015/IG.2/3
Implementation of the recommendations made by the Committee at its seventh session	4 (a)	E/ESCWA/EDID/2015/IG.2/3(Part I)
Implementation of activities related to foreign trade liberalization under the ESCWA programme of work in the period 2012-2015	4 (b)	E/ESCWA/EDID/2015/IG.2/3(Part II)
Non-tariff measures related to the liberalization of foreign trade in selected ESCWA member States	5	E/ESCWA/EDID/2015/IG.2/4
Institutional frameworks for the Arab Customs Union	7	E/ESCWA/EDID/2015/IG.2/5
Financial challenges facing Arab countries in the establishment of an Arab Customs Union	8	E/ESCWA/EDID/2015/IG.2/6
Scenarios for an Arab customs union	9	E/ESCWA/EDID/2015/IG.2/7
Proposed programme of work for the biennium 2016-2017 in the field of foreign trade liberalization	12	E/ESCWA/EDID/2015/IG.2/8