

**ASSESSMENT OF THE FIRST SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE
ON TRADE AND INVESTMENT**

Bangkok, Thailand
4-6 November 2009

Summary Assessment

The first session of the Committee on Trade and Investment was held in Bangkok, Thailand, from 4 to 6 November 2009. A questionnaire was distributed towards the end of the session to obtain feedback from participants on its relevance, efficiency and effectiveness. The response rate to the questionnaire was high as 70% or 16 of 23 participating delegations responded.

The present assessment has been conducted on the basis of the feed-back received from delegations together with a qualitative analysis of the draft report of the session, bearing in mind the terms of reference for the Committee on Trade and Investment, as contained in resolution 64/1 on the restructuring of the conference structure of the Commission.

I. Attendance

The Committee session was fairly well attended, with 37% (N=23/62) of ESCAP members and associate members participating.

More than half of delegations that attended the Committee on Trade and Investment were comprised of representatives from the Capital – Line Ministry (56%, N=9/16), three (19%N=3/16) were comprised of representatives from the Embassies in Bangkok, one was comprised of representatives mainly from the Capital – Ministry of Foreign Affairs, two were a combination of Capital and Bangkok representatives, and one marked “other” for its composition. This level of participation from the Capital indicates a high level of commitment to the work of the Committee by the participating member States.

Some delegations provided suggestions on how to encourage even higher and wider representation from their countries at committee sessions, including: (a) financial support; (b) better coordination within the country, including obtaining inputs from Ministries prior to the Committee session; and (c) addressing the budget constraints faced by some participating member States by making ESCAP sponsorship more flexible.

II. Ownership

The sense of ownership by participants of the Committee was strong, as demonstrated by 38% (N=6/16) of respondents indicating that the session was owned and driven by member States to a great extent and 50% (N=8/16) to a good extent, and 44% (N=7/16) responding that the overall outcome of the deliberations was a result of a collaborative effort to a great extent and 50% (N=8/16) to a good extent. Further, 44% (N=7/16) responded that the draft report adequately reflected the discussions, decisions and recommendations of the Committee to a great extent and 44% to a good extent.

III. Relevance

The feed-back indicates that participants were of the view that the Committee on Trade and Investment is a relevant mechanism for discussing trade and investment in the region. More than half of respondents agreed that the Committee session was relevant to issues and trends regarding trade and investment in the Asian and Pacific region (63% N=10/16), and that the benefits of their delegation’s attendance outweighed the costs (56%, N=9/16). However, there was more variation in responses regarding the agenda

items, indicating room for improvement in terms of ensuring that the agenda reflects the needs and priorities of the member States.

The most relevant agenda items for the delegations in attendance included (in order):

(1) Facilitating trade and investment; (2) Looking beyond the crisis: trade and investment for achieving inclusive and sustainable development; and (3) Developing coherent and consistent policies for trade and investment.

IV. Efficiency

The feed-back indicated that member States were satisfied to a good extent with the efficiency of organization and conduct of the Committee session. Just under half of respondents agreed to a great extent that the pre-session documents conveyed clear messages, were issued in a timely manner, and that the conference services provided by the secretariat were efficient (44%, N=7/16), similar numbers of respondents agreed that this was achieved to a good extent. However, only 25% (N=4/16) agreed to a great extent that the Committee used efficiently the time provided, while the majority (63% N=10/16) agreed that this was met to a good extent, indicating room for improvement.

V. Outcomes in light of ESCAP resolution 64/1

The respondents indicated that the first session of the Committee addressed to a good extent the issues outlined in resolution 64/1: the majority of respondents agreed to a great extent that the Committee session was able to review and analyze regional trends (56%, N=9/16) and 44% agreed to a good extent (N= 7/16). While 38% (N=6/16) agreed to a great extent that the Committee identified priorities and emerging issues and 63% agreed to a good extent (N=10/16). Responses on the issues regarding whether the Committee session was able to promote dialogue and a collaborative approach to addressing development challenges at the regional and subregional levels were more varied, indicating that this is an area with room for improvement.

VI. Most and least successful

The majority of the participants that provided responses on the most successful feature of the Committee session focused on the overall organization and conduct of the meeting, including the efficiency of the conduct, the ample time allowed for deliberations among member States, the keynote speakers and roundtable discussions, and the high quality of the background papers. One participant responded that the adoption of the report was the least successful feature of the meeting and indicated that there was too much deliberation on the grammar rather than the substance. Another participant responded that there was not enough emphasis on investment issues.

Other suggested improvements included: (a) focusing on challenges faced by vulnerable groups, in particular the LDC's; and (b) higher participation from member States at future sessions.

VII. Conclusion

This assessment concludes that the first session of the Committee on Trade and Investment was successful. High-level attendance from the Capital and the high quality organization and efficient conduct of the session enabled productive and substantive discussions and agreement on a number of important issues.

Annex I. Questionnaire results**A. Overall relevance of the session**

1. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?	To a great extent (1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	Not at all (5)
a. The agenda items were timely and relevant to issues and trends regarding trade and investment in the Asian and Pacific region.	63% (10)	38% (6)			
b. The agenda items reflected the needs and priorities of my country.	38% (6)	38% (6)	19% (3)	6% (1)	
c. The benefits of my delegation's attendance justified the costs (travel, time, opportunity cost of absence from the office).	56% (9)	31% (5)	13% (2)		

B. Organization

2. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?	To a great extent (1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	Not at all (5)	No Answer
a. The pre-session documents conveyed clear messages concerning the issues placed on the agenda.	44% (7)	44% (7)	13% (2)			
b. The pre-session documents were issued in a timely manner.	44% (7)	38% (6)	13% (2)		6% (1)	
c. The Committee used efficiently the time available for discussions.	25% (4)	63% (10)	6% (1)	6% (1)		
d. The conference services provided by the secretariat were efficient.	44% (7)	44% (7)	6% (1)			6% (1)
e. The organization of work prior to/in between Committee sessions contributed to the effective functioning of the Committee (ACPR, working groups, task forces, communication with the secretariat).	25% (4)	63% (10)	6% (1)	6% (1)		

C. Substantive outcome of the session

3. To what extent did the deliberations on the following substantive agenda items meet the expected outcomes as described below?	To a great extent (1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	Not at all (5)
Agenda item 4 Looking beyond the crises: trade and investment for achieving inclusive and sustainable development					
<i>a. To review and discuss recent trends and developments in trade and investment in the region with particular attention paid to the impact of the current financial and economic crisis;</i>	63% (10)	25% (4)	13% (2)		

Annex I. Questionnaire results

3. To what extent did the deliberations on the following substantive agenda items meet the expected outcomes as described below?	To a great extent (1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	Not at all (5)
<i>b. To discuss national and regional level policies and strategies to increase the trade and investment of countries of the region to overcome the crisis and ensure long-term sustainable and inclusive development;</i>	44% (7)	44% (7)	13% (2)		
<i>c. To discuss the mechanisms and modalities to further regional cooperation and integration in the area of trade, investment and business development;</i>	31% (5)	50% (8)	19% (3)		
Agenda item 5: Developing coherent and consistent policies for trade and investment					
<i>d. To review the contribution of trade and investment to development;</i>	56% (9)	38% (6)	6% (1)		
<i>e. To review the need for mainstreaming trade and investment into overall development policies and strategies;</i>	31% (5)	63% (10)	6% (1)		
<i>f. To review the modalities for ensuring mutually consistent and coherent trade and investment policies.</i>	25% (4)	56% (9)	19% (3)		
Agenda item 6: The role and primacy of the multilateral trading system in governing international trade					
<i>g. To discuss the primacy and essential role of the multilateral trading system (MTS) in managing international trade and the future of MTS in the light of the global financial and economic crisis.</i>	50% (8)	44% (7)	6% (1)		
Agenda item 7: Enhancing intraregional trade and investment					
<i>h. To discuss opportunities and challenges relating to accelerating the trend towards reducing the dependence of regional economies on traditional export markets and to enhancing intraregional trade.</i>	38% (6)	56% (9)	6% (1)		
<i>i. To discuss the impact of regional and bilateral trade agreements on regional trade and the need for their consolidation as a means to promote intraregional trade and regional economic integration</i>	25% (4)	50% (8)	25% (4)		
Agenda item 8: Facilitating trade and investment					
<i>j. To discuss how the countries in the region could strengthen national and regional trade capacities through the facilitation of trade and investment and the promotion of trade efficiency in order to meet the challenges posed by the crisis.</i>	38% (6)	44% (7)	19% (3)		
Agenda item 9: Business survival and development					
<i>k. Issues related to maintaining and developing the competitiveness of the export-oriented business sector, in particular small and medium-sized enterprises, predominantly in response to the global economic and financial crisis.</i>	38% (6)	50% (8)	13% (2)		
Agenda item 10: Programme planning and monitoring					
<i>l. To provide inputs and information that may facilitate preparatory work for the implementation of the proposed work programme for 2010-2011;</i>	38% (6)	44% (7)	13% (2)		
<i>m. To provide inputs on the proposed priorities and key results to be achieved by the secretariat for the biennium 2012-2013.</i>	31% (5)	50% (8)	13% (2)		

D. Outcome in the light of ESCAP resolution 64/1 and the Committee's general terms of reference

4. All eight ESCAP Committees have common terms of reference. To what extent did the Committee session succeed in performing the following?	To a great extent (1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	Not at all (5)	No answer
a. Review and analyze regional trends.	56% (9)	44% (7)				
b. Identify priorities and emerging issues, particularly those with implications for the work of the secretariat.	38% (6)	63% (10)				
c. Promote dialogue on regional and subregional approaches and an exchange of experiences on policies and programmes.	31% (5)	63% (10)	6% (1)			
d. Promote a collaborative approach to addressing the development challenges at the regional and subregional levels.	25% (4)	44% (7)	25% (4)			6% (1)

E. Participation

5. To what extent do you feel that...	To a great extent (1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	Not at all (5)	No answer
a. the Committee session was owned and driven by member States?	38% (6)	50% (8)	6% (1)		6% (1)	
b. the overall outcome of the deliberations is a result of a collaborative effort by members of the Committee?	44% (7)	50% (8)	6% (1)			
c. the draft report adequately reflects the discussions, decisions and recommendations of the Committee?	44% (7)	44% (7)		6% (1)		6% (1)
d. the secretariat's in-session interventions contributed to effective conduct and outcome of the session?	63% (10)	31% (5)	6% (1)			

6. My delegation's attendance at the Committee session was:

6% (1)	mainly from the Capital - Ministry of Foreign Affairs
56% (9)	mainly from the Capital - Line Ministry
19% (3)	mainly from representatives in Bangkok (Embassy)
13% (2)	a combination of the above
6% (1)	other:

Annex II. Questionnaire comments

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[Verbatim from the completed questionnaires]

Question 4. What was the most relevant agenda item for your delegation?

- Agenda item 4.
- Agenda item no. 4, 6, 8 and 9.
- All agendas are most relevant except agenda item 6.
- Agenda item 8.
- The issues to promote more on South-South Cooperation.
- Agenda Item 6.
- Item 4 and 7.
- Agenda item nos. 4-8
- Agenda item 6.
- Agenda item 5.
- Item 4, 5, 7 and 8.
- Agenda item 5, 7, 8 and 9.
- It would be facilitating Trade & Investment as per Agenda no. 8 but apart from that, the conference highlighting issues relating to Trade and Investment was really relevant and insightful to specifically which I hope to share with others.

Question 6. How can the Committee more effectively address its terms of reference (5 (a-d) above)?

- More dialogue could be arranged to capture larger views of the member States.
- Assessment of performance of each country and do more on analytical works.
- Back to back regional meeting attended by experts in this region can be more effective for the Committee (such as Aid for Trade meeting).
- It is considered necessary if frequent consultations with member governments are held on the forum of reference. This could be on independent process from what is deliberated at the Committee meetings.
- “b” and also “c”.
- Offer assistance to countries who lack resource to tackle the above challenges whether it be capacity building otherwise reports prepared or studies will be of no use in the end or not implemented well re: Policy issues/matters.

Question 9. Is there anything that could have been done to encourage higher and wider representation from your country at the Committee session?

- More delegates could be invited to cover the whole range of issues.
- None. Two representations from each country in our view is fair and adequate for the Committee session.
- Well coordination within the country level and generate more inputs from ministries.

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- The date of the Committee is one of the keys for encouraging wider representation from the Capital.
- FDI in our country is the main responsibility of the Ministry of Planning and Investment. A higher representation is desirable.
- To convene sessions on other dates, e.g. prior to meetings on global level (UN International Conference on Global Economic Crisis, GA, G-20, etc.)
- Budgeting constraints and restricted nature of sponsorship by the ESCAP did in fact prevented in wider representative participation from Capital.
- Increasing the number of delegation, because some issues are related also to other Agencies/Ministries.
- It was not ESCAP problem for me attending the session above because invitation was sent to my government. It was sad that many things were also happening at home so I was sent alone. Funding was a problem.
- Contact point/person should be appointed.

Question 10. What was the most successful feature of the Committee session?

- The most successful feature of the Committee session was taking up the issue of financial crisis and considering way forward.
- Overall the first session of the Committee on Trade and Investment was efficiently organized and issues were adequately addressed.
- The session has invited Mr. Supachai to give his keynote speech.
- Roundtables and other deliberations.
- Background papers and the Committee meeting (presentations and deliberation).
- 1. The keynote address of Dr. Supachai Panitchpakdi, UNCTAD Secretary-General.
2. The intervention of member delegation in Agenda Item Nos. 5-9.
- Speech of UNCTAD Secretary General.
- Relatively short presentations by discussants that allowed ample time for deliberations. The documentation presented by the secretariat relatively shorter than usual more of high quality.
- Exchange of views and useful documents.
- 1. Discussion among the members. 2. All documents concerning first Committee session. 3. Timing.
- The selection of the Chairperson for the Committee on Trade and Investment which hopefully the Committee can work better to address issues raised in this Conference re: the Agenda.
- Enhance collaboration between countries in the region in sharing information.

Question 11. What was the least successful feature of the Committee session?

- No one was the least successful.
- None.
- No idea.
- The adoption of report. There was too much deliberation on the grammar rather than substance.
- Keynote speech by Dr. Supachai, SG of UNCTAD should be informed more earlier.
- All other features were approximately on even level.

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- None.
- I enjoyed most sessions. It was a learning experience and I've learned something more about other countries in their attempt to facilitate Trade and Investment.
- Investment matters were not emphasized yet.

Question 12. Please provide any additional comments you may have on the Committee session and further suggestions on how we may improve on secretariat preparations for and the servicing of future session:

- LDC, the most vulnerable group, issues could be further focused to address special problems and difficulties faced by LDCs.
- The session was organized very efficiently. Having H.E. Dr. Supachai at the session to deliver a special keynote address was another added bonus. ESCAP should have such high-level dignitaries invited to share their experience and knowledge. Excellent arrangement.
- We think it should be better to discuss or consult about the agenda and its outline in advance, such as at ACPR, because some of the agenda at this Committee seemed to be similar to each other.
- No comment.
- Keep on the good work!
- Some duplication could have been avoided, for example items “Enhancing intraregional trade and investment” and “Facilitating trade and investment” substantively are equal.
- It is proposed that in future participants be advised before hand that they could make oral submissions before the Committee, other than presenting Country Statement to facilitate more timely deliberations.
- To assist countries to send short report regarding current problems, initiatives and results and in accordance of this report secretariat may be advises the possible ways for solving problems/assist in preparation of programmes and etc.
- In the future sessions, secretariat needs to set up proper timing in particular on demonstration of online tools for analysis of trade and trade facilitation and encouraging more members for the 2nd session in the future.
- At the moment, the secretariat is doing a good job here. May be more emphasis be placed on Pacific Island countries to attend. It was sad that I was the only one from the Pacific and everyone was from Asia.

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Annex III. Achievement of substantive outcomes

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Agenda Item	Substantive Outcome	Quantitative survey response	Qualitative assessment based on a review of the draft report of the session
<p>Agenda item 4: Looking beyond the crisis: trade and investment for achieving inclusive and sustainable development</p>	<p>To review and discuss recent trends and developments in trade and investment in the region with particular attention paid to the impact of the current financial and economic crisis;</p> <p>To discuss national and regional level policies and strategies to increase the trade and investment of countries of the region to overcome the crisis and ensure long-term sustainable and inclusive development;</p> <p>To discuss the mechanisms and modalities to further regional cooperation and integration in the area of trade, investment and business development;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 63% agree to a great extent and 25% to a good extent that the outcome was achieved • 44% agree to a great extent and 44% to a good extent that the outcome was achieved • 31% agree to a great extent and 50% to a good extent that the outcome was achieved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The expected outcomes were met to a great extent. • Recent trends and developments in trade and investment particularly the impact of the crisis were reviewed and discussed. Presentations were made by the Executive Secretary of ESCAP, the Chief of the Trade and Investment Division, and keynote addresses were given by representatives of Mongolia, Thailand and the National University of Singapore. • National and regional level policies and strategies that were discussed in depth during the first Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Week were presented by representative of India. In particular, trade-led growth was presented as a means for emerging from the crisis. • Mechanisms and modalities to further regional cooperation and integration, in particular in the area of business development were discussed in depth during the first Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment week and presented by representative of Japan. In particular, corporate responsibility was discussed.

Annex III. Achievement of substantive outcomes

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Committee recommended that developing countries pursue strategies aimed at the diversification of sources of growth and of export markets and products, amongst other strategies. In terms of regional cooperation, the Committee recommended the effective implementation of existing mechanisms.
<p>Agenda item 5: Developing coherent and consistent policies for trade and investment</p>	<p>To review the contribution of trade and investment to development;</p> <p>To review the need for mainstreaming trade and investment into overall development policies and strategies;</p> <p>To review the modalities for ensuring mutually consistent and coherent trade and investment policies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 56% agree to a great extent and 38% to a good extent that the outcome was achieved • 31% agree to a great extent and 63% to a good extent that the outcome was achieved • 25% agree to a great extent and 56% to a good extent that the outcome was achieved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The expected outcomes were met to a good extent. • The Committee called for maintaining a proper balance between exports and domestic demand as sources of growth to reduce risk and promote economic diversification. • The Committee agreed that trade policies should be pro-poor, contributing towards sustainable development to have a maximum impact on poverty reduction. It was also recommended that trade and investment policies target specific sectors to address specific problems. • The Committee agreed on the need to promote coherent and consistent trade policies and other development policies at the national and regional levels.
<p>Agenda item 6:</p>	<p>To discuss the primacy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% agree to a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The expected outcomes were met to a great extent.

Annex III. Achievement of substantive outcomes

<p>The role and primacy of the multilateral trading system in governing international trade</p>	<p>and essential role of the multilateral trading system (MTS) in managing international trade and the future of MTS in the light of the global financial and economic crisis.</p>	<p>great extent and 44% to a good extent that outcomes were achieved</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Committee called for the continuation and strengthening of the secretariat’s technical assistance activities aimed at helping developing countries, in particular the least developed countries, to participate effectively in the multilateral trading system in close collaboration with partners at the global and regional levels.
<p>Agenda item 7: Enhancing intraregional trade and investment</p>	<p>To discuss opportunities and challenges relating to accelerating the trend towards reducing the dependence of regional economies on traditional export markets and to enhancing intraregional trade.</p> <p>To discuss the impact of regional and bilateral trade agreements on regional trade and the need for their consolidation as a means to promote intraregional trade and regional economic integration.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 38% agree to a great extent and 56% to a good extent that outcomes were achieved • 25% agree to a great extent and 50% to a good extent that outcomes were achieved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The expected outcomes were met to a good extent. • The Committee called upon the secretariat to continue and strengthen its efforts in improving connectivity in support of intraregional trade. • The Committee expressed its appreciation to the secretariat for its activities in support of the strengthening and expansion of the Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement, which were aimed at evolving the Agreement as a force for regional integration.
<p>Agenda item 8: Facilitating trade and investment</p>	<p>To discuss how the countries in the regional could strengthen national and regional trade capacities through the facilitation of trade and investment and the</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 38% agree to a great extent and 44% to a good extent that outcomes were achieved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The expected outcomes were met to a good extent. • The Committee observed that lessons could be learned from trade facilitation measures and integrated border management implemented in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS). The Committee also noted the importance of effective

Annex III. Achievement of substantive outcomes

	promotion of trade efficiency in order to meet the challenges posed by the crisis.		trade finance mechanisms and recommended such mechanisms be strengthened.
Agenda item 9: Business survival and development	Issues related to maintaining and developing the competitiveness of the export-oriented business sector, in particular small and medium-sized enterprises, predominantly in response to the global economic and financial crisis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 38% agree to a great extent and 50% to a good extent that outcomes were achieved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The expected outcomes were met to a good extent. • The Committee requested the secretariat to strengthen its analytical work on enterprise development and regional value chains through the identification of the position of SMEs in those value chains, the compilation of best practices from the region on business competitiveness, and the provision of effective tools and applications for SMEs development.