

## Summary assessment

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### **Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Meeting on a Regional Arrangement for the Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade**

Bangkok  
22-24 April 2014

#### **I. Introduction**

The Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Meeting on a Regional Arrangement for the Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade was held in Bangkok, Thailand, from 22-24 April 2014.

A questionnaire assessing the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of the meeting was distributed to delegates of ESCAP members and associate members. The total number of submitted individual questionnaires was 21. The overall response rate is therefore 43% (N=21/49). The present assessment was prepared on the basis of these questionnaire responses.

In line with the secretariat's efforts to reduce the use of paper and move towards paper smart meetings, an online version of the questionnaire was offered alongside the traditional paper version.

The main purpose of this assessment is to support the secretariat's ongoing efforts to improve its servicing of intergovernmental meetings.

#### **II. Attendance**

The meeting was attended by 48% (N=30/62) of ESCAP members and associate members, with a total number of 49 participants. The Conference was also attended by 18 participants from the 5 other entities.

The majority of delegations were headed by officials from the respective Capital (83%, N=25/30) – one of which (4%) at ministerial level – whereas the remaining 17% (N=5/30) were represented through their embassies in Bangkok.

### III. Relevance of the session

Respondents felt that the meeting was relevant to the needs of the region. As presented with the aggregated ratings<sup>1</sup> in Table 1, there was high agreement that the agenda items reflected the development trends and issues of the Asian and Pacific region (88), and that they also reflected the needs and priorities of their respective countries (83).

Suggestions on improving the relevance of the meeting included the idea to have more practical sessions to share regional perspectives and experiences; to have some country experiences of LDCs; and to consider country specific cases in drafting laws and regulations related to paperless cross border trade. It was also suggested that the capacity building activities should have included relevant inputs from all attending member States.

**Table 1**

EVALUATED STATEMENT	SCORE (0-100)
The agenda items reflected the development trends/issues of the Asian and Pacific region.	88
The agenda items reflected the needs and priorities of my country/territory.	83

### IV. Effectiveness of the session

Overall, as can be seen from Table 2, respondents found the Meeting to be very effective in enabling discussion and understanding among member States (87), and in enabling improvement of the draft regional arrangement text (88). Delegates responded positively, albeit slightly less so, regarding the two following points: they felt that the meeting successfully promoted dialogue on regional and subregional approaches (82), and found that the session documents were of high quality, concise, and stating the issues clearly (79).

Some suggestions were made to improve the meeting's effectiveness in achieving its mandate. These included, firstly, to encourage more delegates to take the floor and to share their perspective on Cross-border Paperless Trade Agreements/Frameworks; and to encourage governments to send delegates with relevant expertise to the meeting, and who would be able to attend successive meetings on the same topic over time.

<sup>1</sup> The scores presented in this report are indices calculated according to the below formula, (actual value of all aggregated responses - minimum value of all aggregated responses) / (maximum value of all aggregated responses - minimum value of all aggregated responses). This allows transforming a raw variable, e. g.  $x$ , into a unit-free index between 0 and 1, and for the different indices to be added together.  $\text{Min}(x)$  and  $\text{max}(x)$  are the lowest and highest values the variable  $x$  can attain, respectively.

$$x\text{-index} = \frac{x - \text{min}(x)}{\text{max}(x) - \text{min}(x)}$$

**Table 2**

EVALUATED STATEMENT	SCORE (0-100)
The meeting was effective in enabling discussion and understanding among member States.	87
The meeting effectively enabled improvement of the draft regional arrangement text.	88
The meeting successfully promoted dialogue on regional and subregional approaches.	82
The meeting documents were of high quality, concise, and state the issues clearly.	79

## V. Efficiency of the organizational aspects of the session

The efficiency of the organizational aspects of the meeting was rated very positively, as shown in Table 3. In particular, respondents felt that the secretariat's servicing of the meeting, and the communications from the secretariat to the member States on the preparations for the session were efficient and effective (90). Similarly, they indicated that the time available for discussion during the meetings was adequate (87).

**Table 3**

EVALUATED STATEMENT	SCORE (0-100)
The time available for discussion during the meetings was adequate.	87
The servicing by the secretariat was efficient and effective.	90
The communications from the secretariat to the member States on the preparations for the meeting were effective.	90

## VI. Back-To-Back Event: Capacity Building Workshop

As shown in Table 4, the respondents found that organizing relevant capacity building workshops back-to-back with intergovernmental meetings is beneficial to participating member States (89). In the same vein, they supported that ESCAP should therefore continue to organize relevant capacity building activities back-to-back with intergovernmental meetings (87).

Delegates responded positively, albeit slightly less so, when indicating that the theme of the workshop was relevant to their countries (79) and their organizations (81).

There was also common agreement that the workshop increased their knowledge, and that the newly acquired knowledge would be useful to their institutions (88).

There were some suggestions on how the workshop could have been improved, which include: that any constraints encountered in building the systems should be mentioned; that a site visit to the Thai customs and logistics unit could be included; that the delegates submit any relevant comments to the secretariat before the workshop; and that – given the relatively low participation in the workshop – missions and embassies should be requested to encourage delegates to attend the workshop.

**Table 4**

EVALUATED STATEMENT	SCORE (0-100)
Organizing related capacity building workshops back-to-back with intergovernmental meetings is beneficial to participating member States.	89
ESCAP should continue to organize related capacity building activities back-to-back with intergovernmental meetings.	87
The theme of the Workshop was relevant to my country.	79
The theme of the Workshop was of relevant to my organization.	81
The Workshop increased my knowledge of the considered issues.	88
My institution will make use of my newly acquired knowledge.	88

## VII. Most and least successful features

### a. Most successful features

According to respondents, the highlights of the meeting were: the establishment of the steering group; the finalization of the Draft Agreement; the involvement of OLA, UNCITRAL, WCO, WB; and high quality resource persons.

### b. Least successful features

The main features mentioned here were: that the time given for discussion on the draft and the issues related to its possible implementation was too limited; that an introduction on the international laws and regulations on paperless system would have been useful; that the participation of a greater number of delegations would have been beneficial; and that it might be of value for the secretariat to consider requesting

delegations to make clear their concerns and positions with respect to paperless trade in advance of the meeting.

## **VIII. Conclusion**

Overall, in conclusion, responding delegates felt that The Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Meeting on a Regional Arrangement for the Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade was a success.

To summarize the main trends highlighted above, the agenda items of the meeting were seen to very well reflect the development trends and issues of the Asian and Pacific region, and the effectiveness of the meeting in enabling discussion and understanding among member States, and in enabling improvement of the draft regional arrangement text, were also commended. The organizational aspects of the meeting were rated very positively.

Regarding the workshop, participants very much supported the practice of organizing relevant capacity building workshops back-to-back with intergovernmental meetings, indicating that the workshop increased their knowledge, and that the newly acquired knowledge would be useful to their institutions. Highlights noted by delegates were the establishment of the steering group; the finalization of the Draft Agreement; the involvement of OLA, UNCITRAL, WCO, WB; and high quality resource persons.