**Committee on Trade Facilitation – Dedicated Session on Assistance and Capacity-Building**

**Agenda item 2.II**

**WTO, 1 December 2022**

**European Union to raise its flag, followed by:**

1. **Czech Republic**

First of all, on behalf of the Czech Republic, I would like to thank the European Commission for coordinating the statements made by some of the EU Member States as well as the Chair for giving us the unique opportunity to speak here today.

Let me start by highlighting that the Czech Republic is a medium-sized open market and export-driven economy that has experienced its large-scale transformation in 1990s. Hence, we understand the need for integration into global value chains, and multilateralism and a rules-based order are essential for us. Therefore, we continuously strive to strengthen the resilience of supply chains and simultaneously, we support the integration of developing and least-developed countries into the international trading system.

For the aforementioned reasons, we attach great importance to trade facilitation and the facilitation of customs procedures that contribute to reducing trading costs, especially for developing countries and vulnerable groups such as MSMEs and women in international trade. We realize that those groups have been facing even greater challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The pandemic has further underlined the importance of the WTO’s Trade Facilitation Agreement and the related need to ensure a smooth supply of production inputs and subsequent distribution, especially of health products, including vaccines, to all countries of the world.

As a result, we decided to become a donor to the Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility (TFAF) grant programme to help developing and least-developed countries in assessing their specific needs in implementing the TFA and in identifying appropriate partners to provide the necessary assistance.

The Czech Republic contributed CZK 550,000 (which is approximately CHF 22,000) to TFAF in 2020 and again in 2021.

In conclusion, although the Czech Republic does not have any specific trade facilitation projects except for some local Aid for Trade initiatives, we believe this contributing channel is the right one to fund capacity-building activities in developing countries to assist them in implementing the TFA.

Thank you.

1. **Finland**

Finland is an active donor in the field of trade facilitation. We have been funding a number of regional and multilateral trade development projects. We channel our support mainly through Multilateral Agencies that have the required expertise to deliver technical assistance in trade facilitation. Finland believes that the combination of supporting increased regional trade and assistance to the private sector will accelerate economic growth and jobs, with the ultimate goal of poverty reduction.

Today I would like to highlight our longstanding support to the TradeMark East Africa (TMEA). Finland's support for the project in 2021-2023 totals 10, 5 million euros. The cooperation aims at advancing trade and supporting regional trade integration by reducing the time and cost of transiting and transporting goods. In addition to creating economic opportunities for women, Finland also emphasizes the importance of environment and climate friendly economic growth. TMEA considers these aspects in its infrastructure projects by, for example, advancing transition of goods trade to railways. We are also pleased that TMEA´s work is now expanding regionally and look forward to productive cooperation with the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

1. **Lithuania (draft)**

Thank you, Chair,

Lithuania is a consistent donor to the WTO Global Trust Fund and active in providing bilateral Aid for Trade. We have engaged in WTO Trade Facilitation acitvities as from 2007 when Lithuania organized a regional workshop on trade facilitation for Central, Eastern European countries as well as Central Asian countries which took place in Vilnius, Lithuania.

Geographically, Lithuania‘s support to facilitating trade programmes mostly target Eastern Partnership countries, but today I would like to present a bilateral assistance programe in which Lithuania has promoted women’s social and economic empowerment to develop skills in the areas of digital and financial technology through trade facilitation project in Viet Nam.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Lithuanian ICT Association INFOBALT in partnership with Viet Nam‘s „Women‘s Initiative for Startups and Enterpreneurship (WISE)“ in September 2021 initiated a project to empower women and girls in Viet Nam to strenghten their digital skills and knowledge of creating online businesses.

The pandemic has moved many businesses online, and women have become more vulnerable. The project aimed to introduce new challenges and opportunities that the Internet provides. These include new applications, platforms and services that are making online trade more accessible and easier to navigate thereby lowering the entry barriers into this type of business model.

The project helped participants to strenghten their digital skills to become independent online business creators, establish themselves and compete in international trade. Our ICT experts organised series of interactive workshops and discussions online. A special attention was paid to explain relevant parts of EU-Viet Nam FTA which was signed in 2020 and to explain the specifics of EU digital business, taxation, customs clearance procedures, consumer rights and data protection, as well as other regulatory issues that were relevant for the participants in order to successfully carry out business activities focused on the EU markets.

In concluding, I would like to thank for the possibility to share this information and we think it is a very useful excersise in the trade facilitation context.

1. **The Netherlands (see PowerPoint)**

Thank you chair. I am very happy to have the opportunity to inform this meeting on the activities of one of the instruments of the Netherlands government in the field of Aid for Trade. My name is Peter van Gilst, I am the Chief Technical Advisor at CBI.

The Netherlands Centre for the Promotion of Imports from developing countries (CBI) contributes to the transition to more sustainable and inclusive sectors in developing countries by strengthening the economic, social and environmental sustainability of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises through export of value-added or niche products to European and regional markets.

In order to achieve this we have sector based projects in approximately 25 countries in Africa, the Middle East and Asia. In our projects we work directly with SMEs but also with institutions in the export enabling environment. At the same time we also work on building local capacity in services that are vital for potential exporters in such diverse areas as certification or product design.

As I mentioned CBI aims to contribute to the transition to more sustainable and inclusive sectors. This means that all projects aim to create decent jobs in which workers earn a fair wage and can do their work in safe conditions. Besides that we strive to be inclusive with respect to women and youth not only as employees but also with projects aimed specifically at women and young entrepreneurs. Finally, our projects are not climate-blind. We make an estimate of the effects our work has on Green House Gas emissions and actively promote reduction or the introduction of mitigation measures.

However, today I want to inform you more specifically on the market intelligence at CBI.

Limited access to high quality market intelligence is a major obstacle for SMEs that want to export to Europe. That is why the provision of up-to-date and practical market intelligence is a core service provided by CBI.

We provide market intelligence on 14 different sectors, all of which are relevant for many developing countries, through our website. These sectors cover agricultural and consumer products as well as services such as IT and tourism. Each year we publish 250 new and updated studies. A large part of the information is also disseminated through webinars. The information is easily accessible, not only technically but also because this service is free of charge.

In 2021 we had almost 1.000.000 users that visited our website and their average score for the content was an 8.6.

Here you see an example of a product page, in this case for spices.

The information is easily accessible for any aspiring exporter and offers insights into:

Which countries offer the most opportunities for a product or service?

What channels should you use to enter the market?

What laws and requirements must you follow?

And of course:

How can you find buyers on the European market?

CBI not only provides market information through its own website but we also build capacity at Trade Promotion Organizations and Business Support Organizations such as sector associations to enable them to compile and disseminate their own studies tailored to the needs of their client companies.

Companies that participate in CBI projects are trained to conduct their own market research to enable them to draft their export marketing plan and define their market entry strategy.

An additional service offered to our counterpart organizations in the developing countries is the installation of an affiliate site on their own website. With the installation of an affiliate site or a link through a CBI Market Information partnership an organization can provide access to the entire CBI market information database through its own channels.

 would like to invite all delegates to have a look at the information on our website and please feel free to contact us for further information.

Thank you very much.

1. **Sweden**

Thank you Chair. I am grateful for this opportunity to provide some insights into part of Sweden’s support to facilitating trade.

Sweden is a firm believer of multilateralism, as of free fair and inclusive sustainable trade. Therefore Sweden contribute in various ways to the implementation of the TFA. The provisions on assistance and support for capacity building of developing and least developed country members in the agreement are important and I would like to share a few highlights and some context from a Swedish perspective.

To put the Swedish support into context, the Swedish Policy Framework for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance recognizes free and fair trade including trade facilitation as important aspects. Free and fair trade is a powerful tool for sustainable economic growth, development, employment generation and poverty reduction. However, many people living in low and middle-income countries have limited capacity and possibility to benefit from and contribute to the potential that lies in trade, which is why aid for trade towards trade facilitation is key.

In 2021, Sweden contributed with approximately 365 million USD to the international Aid for Trade agenda to support partner countries in their efforts to use trade as means for development. The aid for trade going *explicitly* towards trade facilitation is currently mainly done at a *regional* level in Sub-Saharan Africa where Sweden, through the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, works together with the World Customs Organization (WCO). We are however also engaged in dealing with trade facilitation, customs and related issues through multilateral partners such as the Enhanced Integrated Framework, the World Bank Umbrella Trust Fund for Trade and the International Trade Centre.

Let me say a few more words about our long and fruitful collaboration with the WCO, targeting countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. This programme on trade facilitation and customs modernization covers approximately 3.4 million USD and the current phase is the third phase of collaboration with the WCO in Sub-Saharan Africa. The focus of this phase is on Trade Facilitation, IT connectivity, green customs, regional harmonisation, gender equality and anti-corruption. The programme contributes to enhanced regional trade while interventions will be implemented at the national level through capacity building support of customs administrations. The work will both target the implementation of the WTO TFA and is also expected to contribute to the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). This third phase has also a more direct link to poverty reduction through a strengthened gender- and SME-perspective compared to previous phases.

Geographically, the third phase targets a total of 12 countries in EAC and SADC; Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania, Burundi, Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Through our support to this programme with the WCO, we have for example been able to contribute to that perishable imports are going straight to stores rather than being held up at the border, resulting in reduced wastage rates and increased sales for companies. This kind of concrete impact can truly make a difference for companies and people in our partner countries.

Let me conclude by mentioning how important the Trade Facilitation Committee at the WTO is for sharing experiences and for us to be able to assess the demand and needs from partner countries in the area of trade facilitation. Sweden remains a committed partner in supporting developing countries in their efforts to integrate into the global economy through trade in general and trade facilitation in particular.

Thank you for your attention.