



WORLD TRADE
ORGANIZATION

Advancing Trade in Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) Through Transit Corridors

Preview of Findings from the WTO Secretariat Report

Initial considerations

This presentation and the corresponding report has been prepared under the WTO Secretariat's own responsibility and without prejudice to the position of WTO members and to their rights and obligations under the WTO.

The designations employed in the presentation, report and in the material therein do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the WTO concerning the legal status of any country, area or territory or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers.

The report is currently at a draft stage; it has not been finalized as further inputs are yet to be received and incorporated.

Consultations with the LLDC Group on the methodology and direction of the report were held at meetings with the group during 2024 and in discussions with the LLDC Coordinator.

Key Message

Transit corridors are the most efficient vehicle for implementing trade facilitation measures for LLDCs.



They operationalize the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) by:

Reducing trade costs

Streamlining border processes

Increasing reliability for LLDC traders

Why Transit Corridors Matter

LLDCs encounter distinct obstacles:

- Trade costs that are 1.4 times greater than those of coastal economies (UNCTAD, 2019).
- Reliance on ineffective transit processes, infrastructural deficiencies, and regulatory inconsistencies.

Transit corridors mitigate these obstacles by:

- Connecting various jurisdictions through streamlined procedures.
- Establishing institutional frameworks (customs, logistics, regional cooperation).

Key Findings from the Report

1. Corridors implement the TFA and even go beyond:

- Measures such as pre-arrival processing, risk-based inspections, single windows and electronic documentation are currently being executed.

2. Top-performing corridors combine:

- Legal integration through binding agreements.
- Institutional coordination via established bodies.
- Digital innovation through data-sharing platforms.

3. Quantifiable improvements:

- Transit times have decreased by **20–40%** across various corridors (2020–2022).

Digital Systems Driving Efficiency

- **Common Tools Across Corridors:**
 - Electronic single windows (such as EAC's RADDEx system).
 - GPS-enabled cargo tracking (for example, Northern Corridor's ECTS).
 - Corridor performance dashboards (providing real-time data on congestion points).
 - Digitalized customs systems (for example ASYCUDA)
- **Obstacles:**
 - Insufficient cross-border interoperability.
 - Gaps in infrastructure (including electricity and internet access).

What the Mapping Captures – Legal and Operational Setup

Annex to the report

Encompasses **19 corridors** throughout Africa, Asia, and Eurasia.

These corridors include **various LLDCs and transit nations** with diverse legal and institutional frameworks.

Transport modes identified:

- Road, rail, inland waterways, and intermodal terminals.
- Maritime access points designated for landlocked nations.

Trade facilitation initiatives:

- One-Stop Border Posts (OSBPs).
- Electronic cargo tracking and digital customs processes.
- Risk-based inspections alongside regional transit assurances.
- Mechanisms for the exchange of transit-related data.

The mapping emphasizes **coordinated operational efforts among countries**, rather than merely indicating where legislative reforms have taken place.

Performance, Impact, and the Data Challenge

Performance indicators at the corridor level include:

- Overall **transit time**
- **Traffic volume** (including tonnage and container movements)
- **Trade value** within the corridor (annual projections)

Economic effects :

- Job creation
- Increased GDP

HOWEVER:

Data is often **fragmented, inconsistent, or outdated**, particularly concerning performance.

- National statistics seldom capture the complete **journey through the corridor**
- There is a lack of standardized reporting mechanisms across borders.

This mapping highlights the necessity for **consistent, corridor-level data gathering** to inform implementation and investment strategies.

Northern Corridor (East Africa)



Countries: Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan

Main trade route linking **Port of Mombasa** to inland LLDCs in East and Central Africa

Modes of transport: Primarily road and rail, with inland container depots and dry ports

Trade Facilitation Measures:

- **One-Stop Border Posts (OSBPs)** (e.g., Busia, Malaba)
- **Electronic cargo tracking** (Regional Electronic Cargo Tracking System – RECTS)
- **Single Customs Territory (SCT)** across East African Community
- **Regional bond scheme** and streamlined clearance

Performance and impact:

- Transit time: **Mombasa to Kampala reduced from 11 to ~5 days**
- **Advance clearance and pre-arrival processing** integrated
- Corridor handles **millions of tonnes in regional trade annually**

The Northern Corridor shows how **regional institutions and joint implementation mechanisms** can drive measurable improvements in trade facilitation.

Africa

African Northern Corridor Empowering Trade Across Northern Africa



Overview

The Northern Corridor is a vital multimodal trade route in East and Central Africa, facilitating the movement of goods between the Port of Mombasa in Kenya and the landlocked countries of Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). It encompasses road networks, railways, inland waterways, and pipelines, playing a crucial role in regional trade and economic integration.

Countries and Modes of Transport

- Kenya: Roads, railways, seaports, pipelines.
- Uganda: Roads, railways, inland waterways.
- Rwanda: Roads.
- Burundi: Roads.
- South Sudan: Roads.
- Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC): Roads, inland waterways.

Trade Facilitation Measures Implemented:

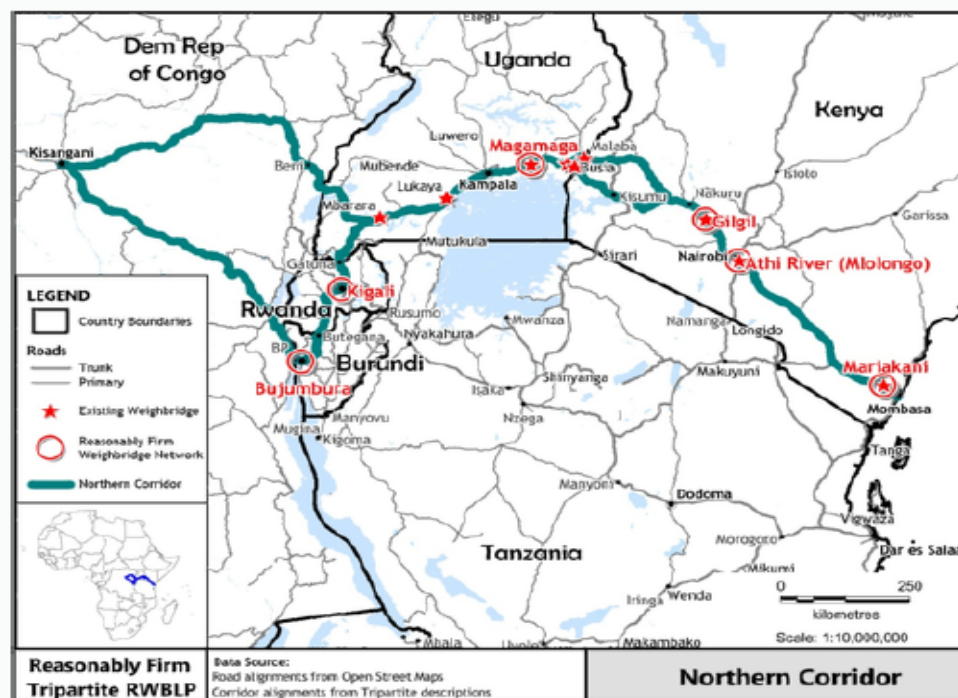
- Data Sharing
- Mutual Recognition
- Joint Inspection
- Regional Transit Guarantees
- One-Stop Border Posts
- Digitalised Customs
- Seals
- Tracking
- Single Window.

References

- Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA) Reports.
- World Bank Trade and Transport Studies.
- UNECA Corridor Analysis Reports.
- East African Community (EAC) Development Plans.

Contact Info

- Managing Agency: Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA)
- Website: www.ttcanc.org
- Email: ttca@ttcanc.org
- Phone: +254 733 532485 / +254 729 923574



Trade Volume

- In 2022, the Port of Mombasa handled over 34 million tons of cargo, with a substantial percentage destined for or originating from the landlocked countries served by the corridor.

Average Transit Times:

- As of 2022, the average transit time from Mombasa to Kampala was approximately 5 days, down from 11 days in 2011.

Economic Impact

- Supports thousands of jobs in logistics, trade, and related sectors across the member countries.

Paraguay-Paraná Waterway (Hidrovía)



Corridor scope: Paraguay, Bolivia, Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay

Over **3,400 km** of navigable waterways – a **critical artery for bulk trade** in South America

Modes of transport: Inland waterway with multimodal integration at port hubs (road, rail, river)

Trade Facilitation Measures:

- Bilateral and regional **agreements on river navigation**
- **Customs and phytosanitary inspections** at river ports
- Use of **electronic cargo manifests**
- Ongoing digitalization of customs procedures

Performance and impact:

- Annual trade volume: **~16 million tonnes** (soybeans, fuels, fertilizers)
- Cost-effective and low-emission alternative to road transport
- Water level variations and port congestion impact predictability

The waterway illustrates the complexity of facilitating trade along a **natural corridor** governed by multiple bilateral and basin-wide agreements.



Paraguay-Paraná Waterway Corridor

Promoting Regional Integration and Trade across Latin America



Overview

The Paraguay-Paraná Waterway is a critical transport corridor created under the Fluvial Transport Agreement signed in 1992 by Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay and aims to facilitate free navigation in South America. It spans approximately 3,442 kilometers and enables the movement of goods between Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay, Argentina, and Uruguay, supporting trade and enhancing regional connectivity through inland waterways.

Countries and Modes of Transport

- Argentina: Inland waterways.
- Bolivia: Inland waterways.
- Brazil: Inland waterways.
- Paraguay: Inland waterways.
- Uruguay: Inland waterways.

Trade Facilitation Measures

Implemented: None

References

- International Trade Administration Reports.
- NACLA Analysis on the Paraguay-Paraná Waterway.
- Navios Logistics Economic Impact Study.

Contact Info

- Managing Agency: Comisión Permanente de Transporte de la Cuenca del Plata (CPTCP)
- Website: www.cptcp.org
- Email: info@cptcp.org
- Phone: +595 21 452 152

Trade Volume

- The waterway carries nearly 80% of Paraguay's trade, including manufactured products, grains, oilseeds, oils and by-products, ore, minerals, steel, and petroleum.

Average Transit Times:

- Transit times can vary depending on river conditions, vessel type, and cargo, with navigation challenges during periods of low water levels.

Economic Impact

- Projected to contribute \$3 billion in total gross output and create 30,000 new jobs by 2030, emphasising the need for regulatory stability and enhanced cooperation among HPP countries.

Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (TITR/Middle Corridor)

Corridor scope: Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Türkiye (with links to China and EU)

Serves LLDCs: Kazakhstan and other Central Asian countries as an alternative to northern and maritime routes

Modes of transport: Multimodal – rail, road, and **maritime crossings of the Caspian and Black Seas**

Trade Facilitation Measures:

- **Harmonised rail documentation and tariffs**
- Deployment of **electronic customs platforms** (Kazakhstan: ASTANA-1)
- Development of **corridor management institutions** (e.g., TITR Association)
- Investment in **intermodal terminals and dry ports** (e.g., Khorgos, Aktau)

Performance and impact:

- **Transit time:** China–Europe via TITR reduced to ~12–15 days (down from 30+)
- Corridor traffic volume grew by **nearly 30% in 2023**
- Remaining bottlenecks at maritime transfer points (Caspian port handling)

TITR illustrates the potential of **LLDC-led corridor innovation**, supported by institutional coordination and strategic investment.



Asia

Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (TITR) Connecting Europe and Asia

Overview

The Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (TITR), also known as the Middle Corridor, is a critical trade route linking China and Europe through Central Asia and the South Caucasus. It provides a multimodal transport solution via railways, roads, and ferry routes across the Caspian Sea, facilitating efficient trade and connectivity between East and West.

Countries and Modes of Transport

- China: Roads, railways.
- Kazakhstan: Roads, railways, seaports.
- Azerbaijan: Roads, railways, seaports.
- Georgia: Roads, railways, seaports.
- Turkey: Roads, railways, seaports.

Trade Facilitation Measures Implemented:

- Data Sharing
- Mutual Recognition
- Joint Inspection
- Regional Transit Guarantees
- One-Stop Border Posts
- Digitalised Customs
- Seals
- Tracking
- Single Window.

References

- Official TITR Association Reports.
- CAREC Regional Transport Studies.
- Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) Logistics Reports.

Contact Info

- Managing Agency: Trans-Caspian International Transport Route Association
- Website: www.titr.kz
- Email: info@titr.kz
- Phone: +7 7172 20 90 52



Trade Volume

- 2020: 10 million metric tons.
- 2021: 15 million metric tons.
- 2022: 20 million metric tons.

Average Transit Times:

- 2020: 20 days.
- 2021: 18 days.
- 2022: 16 days.

Economic Impact

- Trade Value Facilitated: Estimated at \$75 billion annually.
- Employment: Generated over 100,000 direct and indirect jobs across member states.
- Contribution to GDP: Boosted GDP by 2% across participating countries.

Next Steps

Further Consultations and Feedback from LLDCs

- The draft report has been shared with LLDCs to gather their insights.
- A meeting is scheduled to obtain additional input and remarks.

Input from UNECE

- UNECE will provide a contribution to the report, informed by the UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation.

UN LLDC3 Conference, 5-8 August, Awaza, Turkmenistan

- The WTO will host a high-level side event concentrating on transit corridors.
- A brochure derived from the report will be created for distribution.

An updated version of the report will be circulated to Members before the October CTF meeting.

- Members might consider discussing this at the CTF meeting in October.
- The report will be finalized after incorporating feedback from Members.

Thank You

Questions:

raul.torres@wto.org