REPORT ON THE FIRST LATIN AMERICAN MEETING OF NATIONAL TRADE FACILITATION COMMITTEES

BORDER AGENCY COOPERATION

The following communication, dated 16 March 2020, is being circulated at the request of the delegation of Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay for Members' information.
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REPORT ON THE FIRST LATIN AMERICAN MEETING OF NATIONAL TRADE FACILITATION COMMITTEES

1 INTRODUCTION

The First Latin American Meeting of National Trade Facilitation Committees (the Meeting) was organized by the secretariats of the Latin American Integration Association (LAIA – Spanish acronym: ALADI) and the World Trade Organization (WTO), with funding from the Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility (TFAF). The meeting was attended by 74 participants from 17 Latin American countries: Argentina, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay. More than 25 participants made presentations, in which they shared national experiences in relation to the subjects covered by the Meeting.

The Meeting was also attended and supported by speakers from the WTO and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the International Trade Centre (ITC), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), the World Customs Organization (WCO) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

The purpose of this report is to summarize the main points discussed during the Meeting and has been prepared by the WTO Secretariat on the basis of daily summaries prepared by the participants. It also includes participants’ comments on a preliminary draft of 2 December 2019. All documents used during the Meeting, including the agenda, list of participants, presentations, etc., can be found at the following web address: https://tfafacility.org/event/aladi2019.

This report is without prejudice to the rights and obligations of WTO Members.

2 OBJECTIVES OF THE MEETING

The objectives of the First Latin American Meeting of National Trade Facilitation Committees were as follows:

1. To promote experience sharing between the members of National Trade Facilitation Committees (NTFCs) with a view to identifying common areas of learning and possible areas of cooperation.
2. To create a space for the exchange of national experiences regarding cooperation between border agencies.
3. Capacity-building for participants concerning better supervision and evaluation of national reforms in trade facilitation.
4. Capacity-building for participants regarding the formulation of needs relating to technical assistance and cooperation and the drafting of proposals.

3 SUBJECTS DISCUSSED

This section includes a general summary of each subject discussed during the Meeting based on comments made by delegations at the end of each working day. It also includes a "word cloud" that summarizes participants’ replies to a survey conducted by the WTO prior to the Meeting on the main topics addressed in it.

3.1 Public-private partnership

The participants identified the following main subjects:

- Trade facilitation gives rise to responsibility and shared benefits.
- Best practices:
  - Having an interinstitutional group (for example, the NTFC) that facilitates dialogue with the private sector. Using more than one forum might reduce the effectiveness of these efforts and mean that the benefits of that relationship are not maximized.
  - Adopting public policies that generate benefits for all stakeholders in foreign trade and also for the general public.
- The main benefits of a good public-private partnership include:
o Developing a clearer roadmap for meeting the obligations arising from the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA).
o Establishing a mechanism for feedback and complementarity between the government regulatory body and the particular needs of the private sector.
o Identifying at-risk sectors that the Government should prioritize, in order to address individual operational issues that might arise in the foreign trade supply chain.
o Should an issue arise, the private sector usually inputs the necessary information to understand the main questions to be resolved, what impact improvements would have, and any possible solution.
o Facilitating the coordination of national efforts (informed decisions), through feedback of their experience in the implementation of trade facilitation procedures and prior consultation of foreign trade regulations.

• The main challenges include:
o Implementing a paradigm shift in the existing public-private partnership so that cooperation is improved.
o Developing more inclusive and cooperative interaction with the private sector.
o Achieving the necessary balance between control and facilitation, which can be reinforced by the use of technology and an efficient risk management system. At the same time, regulations are not being updated at the pace required by the dynamism of trade.
o Developing effective control mechanisms that are as unintrusive as possible, even unnoticeable.
o Securing commitments and benefits for both parties.
o Ensuring that a single group does not benefit at the expense of the majority.
o Identifying whether private sector partners are really conveying the concerns and interests of the sector that they represent or individual interests.
o Achieving greater openness on the part of border agencies with regard to working together with the private sector and promoting capacity-building projects.
o Identifying a mechanism that enables consultations with the private sector regarding regulatory changes prior to their adoption, including a regulatory impact study.
o The private sector must be prepared (in terms of systems and processes) to contribute to implementation as well as to proposing solutions.

• With regard to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs):
o Account must be taken of the interests of all enterprises, including SMEs; possibility of including representatives in the NTFC or its working groups.
o The NTFC should identify the opportunities and benefits of implementation of the TFA for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs).
o Open a working group on electronic commerce (e-commerce).
o Discussion should be promoted in the NTFC regarding the costs and benefits of increasing de minimis and its impact on SMEs.
o Define support with the private sector on self-certification; the same parties should give support to MSMEs.

• It was useful to discover:
o Cases of enterprises, in particular SMEs, that have been able to benefit from opportunities in the international markets thanks to trade facilitation measures (success stories).
o The purpose-driven and cooperative approach adopted by the Uruguay Exporters’ Union, and in particular the preparation of an in-depth study on the costs of services by the authorities of other countries.
3.2 National Trade Facilitation Committees (NTFCs)

The participants identified the following main subjects:

- **Best practices for structuring the NTFC:**
  - Seeking to ensure that it incorporates both the public and private sectors. In addition, aiming for inclusivity in such a way that the participation of various private sector interest groups contributes to the smooth functioning of the NTFC.
  - Ensuring the participation of agencies that regulate sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures.
  - Wherever possible, and if the public-private partnership is sufficiently mature, it is desirable for the private sector to have a voice and a vote within the NTFC.
  - The Customs Service or another relevant agency can function as the technical secretariat of the NTFC.
  - Gender balance should be taken into account in NTFC membership.

- **The main challenges include:**
  - Managing to implement all measures agreed on for the implementation of the TFA.
  - Effective coordination of the various component entities of the NTFC.
  - The need for the relevant public institutions to establish regulations, standards and procedures that are in line with international standards.
  - Developing the NTFC on the basis of internal rules that are adequate for meeting internal administrative needs (e.g. with regard to the share of financial resources).

- **The NTFC should:**
  - Ensure the existence of political will.
  - Work on the basis of a strategic plan.
  - Ensure that the number of meetings and scale of efforts are proportional to the expected outcomes.
  - Develop both the technical knowledge and soft skills of NTFC members.
  - Establish local or regional committees to disseminate the work of the NTFC; give local committees the possibility to send contributions and proposals for discussion in the NTFC.
  - Make its work more visible through a communication plan that includes attractive institutional materials, such as infographics and videos providing information on progress made by the NTFC.

**Source:** WTO survey for the workshop, 2020
o Maintain an active role in donor identification and relations so as to ensure adequate coordination with international cooperation.
o Take account of the experiences of other NTFCs and other good practices with a view to avoiding repetition of errors.
o Link the NTFC to national involvement in the World Bank's "Doing Business" project and the WTO trade policy review.
o Include the topic of e-commerce and postal package management in the committee’s agenda.

• It was interesting to discover:
o The experiences of other NTFCs.
o The concept of the "border coordinator", i.e. an official who works at a border post in order to keep the NTFC informed of events on the ground and helps to resolve issues related to the functioning of that particular border post.¹
o The support available from various organizations (UNCTAD, USAID, World Bank, etc.) for establishing and operating NTFCs.

Figure 2: Survey results – National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC)

3.3 Article 5 TFA: Other measures to enhance impartiality, non-discrimination and transparency

The participants identified the following main subjects:

• Best practices:
  Notifications
  o Notifications must be made as promptly as possible, so that commercial operators can take the correct decisions.
  o Transparency and availability of information is fundamental to ensure private sector compliance with the necessary requirements.
  o Notifications must be addressed directly to users connected with controls, and also to any relevant officials at border control points. Training should focus on officials operating here.

¹ This mechanism has been implemented in Colombia and Costa Rica.
Second test:
- Second tests that show the same result as the first one help to increase confidence in government controls, because they confirm that the first test was taken and handled properly.
- It should be seen as an option, not as an obligation.
- If a second test is permitted, this should be specified clearly in domestic regulations so that consistent practical application is ensured, including with regard to exceptions (e.g., unique species) and what happens in the event of different results.
- Regulations should be established both for SPS cases and cases in other areas (for example, technical barriers to trade (TBT) and customs classification).
- Allow/work on accreditation of international, regional and/or national laboratories, as appropriate; organize and disseminate this system enabling consultation for more specific cases.

Detention
- In cases of detention of goods, traders should be notified promptly.
- The main challenges include ensuring that:
  - The necessary capacity for proper application of the regulations can be acquired.
  - Measures are taken on the basis of risks and not merely obstacles, which implies having adequate scientific information.
  - A risk-based SPS inspection system is developed; creation of an SPS risk profile.
  - Any measures taken are proportional to the seriousness of the problem, targeted and not generalized.
  - Measures are adjusted or suspended quickly once scientific data is available indicating that there is no risk.
  - SPS measures are based on international standards of the OIE, CIPP and Codex Alimentarius.
  - Inspection and testing procedures are improved.
- It was interesting to discover:
  - The operation of SPS measures, including certification systems.
  - Points of convergence and difference between SPS systems and customs systems.

Figure 3: Survey results – Other measures to enhance impartiality, non-discrimination and transparency

3.4 Article 8 TFA: Border agency cooperation

The participants identified the following main subjects:
• Good practices:
  o Establishing mechanisms to promote the strengthening of trust.
  o Promoting the identification of simple, low-cost solutions (e.g. WhatsApp groups to improve communication).
  o Improving private sector participation in this area, so as to facilitate prompt identification of bottlenecks.
  o Promoting integrated control mechanisms (e.g. single physical inspections) at the national level, and also implementing integrated controls between countries that share a border.
  o Developing risk management systems based on early sharing of information between agencies, including the use of centralized IT platforms, e.g. the single window system [Spanish acronym: VUCE], which, together with other advanced systems (high-resolution scanners, etc.), minimize invasive interventions of the goods. The platform indicates which institutions will intervene and according to which procedures.
  o Developing inter-institutional training mechanisms for public officials and the private sector, if possible, on a joint basis, with regard to topics where this is possible.
  o Developing indicators to monitor reforms in this area.
  o Incorporation of health authorities in the recognition of authorized economic operators (AEOs).
  o Interoperability of systems and procedures of control bodies.
  o Establishing local committees at borders so that they can seek quick solutions to issues.

• Main challenges include:
  o Maintaining political will with regard to this subject.
  o Lack of interinstitutional coordination on account of rivalry and distrust, for which possible remedies might include: (1) seeking to restore confidence informally (including before adopting regulations); (2) establishing standing committees on border management; and (3) organizing joint training courses so as to understand the functioning of other parties and ensure mutual acquaintance to create trust. Additional actions include promoting transparency, and also mechanisms that restrict any misuse of authority or powers of discretion.
  o Resistance to change that usually stems from many years of independent action on the part of institutions. Here it is important to: (1) develop regulations in a way that takes account of the views of officials involved in the day-to-day operations and the issues that they face; and (2) develop systems of ongoing training.
  o Lack of harmonized processes and of a clear definition of competencies, which has an impact on: (1) the manner in which inspections are undertaken and the time that they take; (2) working hours; (3) the procedures of control bodies. This might be remedied through institutional agreements that formalize the competencies of the agencies concerned, the creation of border committees or other mechanisms (e.g. standards and procedures) with a view to integrating actions.
  o Inadequate infrastructure, mainly in control centers at the border, which limits the capacity of agencies to perform their duties efficiently. This could be resolved through projects that highlight needs at the border points or IT projects that enable comprehensive inter-institutional risk management.
  o Lack of human resource capacity, which often stems from high staff rotation. This could be remedied through ongoing training mechanisms, the provision of adequate training and knowledge management mechanisms.
  o Lack of interoperability of systems used by different agencies, which makes interconnection between them and the development of integrated risk systems more difficult. Implementation of a single window system would be an appropriate solution.
  o Develop a constant measurement mechanism on the basis of appropriate indicators.
  o Financing.

• The NTFC should:
  o Focus its efforts on improving coordination and communication between border agencies, including joint inspections; promote synergies between all control entities.
  o Have a work plan for ongoing improvement, including the provisions that were notified in Category A.
  o Promote the continuous study and diagnosis of problems in this area with a view to drawing up an action plan and performance indicators.
  o Promote a sense of teamwork aimed at improving efficiency in border controls.
  o Develop projects for improving risk management in all control bodies.
- Work in conjunction with the private sector.
- Establish specialized border subcommittees.
- Ensure standardization of different sets of institutional regulations on the basis of international standards (e.g. the WCO data model).
- Take account of the social costs of reforms.
- Establish ongoing training mechanisms.
- Develop concrete projects to seek funding.
- Seek to take account of changes that could affect international trade in the medium and long term (e.g. the growing importance of e-commerce).
- Develop standards on the basis of consensus between the various stakeholders.

It was interesting to discover:
- The group exercise for sharing experiences on joint border inspections and the type of controls carried out by different agencies.
- The experiences of other countries with regard to improving coordination.
- The SECO-WCO Global Trade Facilitation Programme.
- The USAID Border Management Academy project, which provides joint training for border officers from different countries.

Figure 4: Survey results – Border agency cooperation

3.5 Article 7.4 TFA: Risk management

The participants identified the following main subjects:

- Good practices:
  - Using existing instruments (e.g. single window system) to exchange information and trying to integrate the different institutional risk management systems.
  - Unifying control agencies’ requirements for information that operators must submit in advance, providing each agency with the information it needs so that each one can undertake risk management; develop risk management systems based on appropriate international standards for the work of each institution.
  - Developing a communication mechanism in which the different border agencies can understand the goals and working methods of the other institutions, so at least basic knowledge of other activities exists and trust increases.
  - Exchanging information and practices between import and export agencies.
  - Establishing risk assessment units that are independent from the risk management units, to avoid any conflicts of interests.
o Developing risk management systems based on appropriate international standards for the work of each institution.
 o Working with mechanisms that not only inform but also train the economic operators.
 o Holding consultations on proposed changes with officials involved in border operations before implementing them, preferably at the initial stages of planning.
 o Holding ongoing dialogue between the export and import spheres.

• The main challenges include:
 o Implementing risk management beyond the customs administration and in the context of other control agencies.
 o Achieving better cooperation among the various institutions involved with a view to integrating risk management processes.
 o Developing the coordination system and a single information system that takes account of the needs of all agencies.
 o Establishing mechanisms (e.g. audits) for the evaluation of risk assessment and management systems.
 o Determining whether usual practices implemented in the exporting country could help with national risk assessment (e.g. through systems that meet the control requirements of the destination country).
 o Staff training.
 o Limited use of information technology (IT) applications.

• The NTFC should:
 o Set up a working group or subgroup responsible for improving risk management with all of the relevant stakeholders.
 o Establish some form of mechanism for monitoring and measuring progress.
 o Attempt to improve communication on this issue and raise awareness among committee members and other stakeholders of the objectives and how each agency analyses and manages risk; a field visit could help with this.
 o Encourage all border agencies to develop risk management mechanisms to identify a model enabling their future inclusion.
 o Promote the mapping of risk factors for each border agency and prioritize the identification of shared information needed by all interested agencies for risk management purposes; identify what shared information is genuinely needed.
 o Encourage the development of electronic systems for information sharing between the various agencies (preferably based on international standards) so that each can improve its risk management.
 o Identify which activity truly requires the use of advanced technology solutions and which ones could be achieved using alternative, low-cost methods.
 o Look into how regional initiatives could be used to improve national risk management; identify international best practices.
 o Include this issue in discussions on the authorized economic operator and single window.

• It was interesting to discover:
 o That the emphasis should be on facilitating safe trade and not on abandoning supervisory mechanisms; an efficient way of implementing them must be found.
 o How sanitary and phytosanitary authorities conduct risk assessment and management in their area.
 o The importance of separating risk assessment from risk management.
 o How the Uruguayan Customs Service is using artificial intelligence and statistical modelling in customs risk management.
3.6 Article 10.4 TFA: Single window (VUCE)

The participants identified the following main subjects:

- Good practices:
  - Ensuring that the single window (VUCE) remains highly reliable.
  - Developing a framework that is self-sustaining and does not become burdensome.
  - Establishing inter-agency agreements to formalize the agencies' commitment.
  - Including the private sector in the initial design of the single window so that its concerns and priorities are taken into account; once the single window is established, maintaining a dialogue with the private sector to improve it.
  - Setting up a working group that focuses exclusively on this issue, supervised by the NTFC.
  - Establishing a continuous monitoring plan for the single window and informing the public (transparency) to identify areas for improvement.
  - Developing single window systems that feed into the risk management.
  - Adapting the single window to the various agencies' situations by simplifying and automating as many procedures as possible.
  - Developing the single windows in accordance with international standards so as to facilitate the interoperability of national agencies and eventually with other systems outside the country.
  - Setting up training programmes for officials working in the various public agencies as well as from the private sector; using technological solutions including e-learning.

- The main challenges include:
  - Ensuring political support for the development of the single window and that it is self-sustaining.
  - Engaging all agencies involved in foreign trade, including inspection, migratory and domestic security authorities, so that they also include their procedures in the single window.
  - Conducting first a reengineering and simplification of the procedures, so it can serve as the basis their integration into the single window.
  - Achieving interoperability of systems and processes.
  - Develop a single window that can serve as the main mechanism for agency interoperability and using it to conduct end-to-end foreign trade operations.
  - Providing ongoing training for the public and private sector staff involved.
  - Developing a single window that preserves the autonomy of the different agencies.
  - Integrating the risk management systems into the single window.
- Achieving interoperability of the national single window with other systems in the country.
- Ensuring data security.
- Integrating digital payments.
- Increasing private sector involvement in the single window.

- The NTFC should:
  - Establish a technical committee or working group to work directly on developing and maintaining the single window.
  - Assist with the single window's design, launch and/or maintenance.
  - Ensure coordination among agencies and periodically review their memorandums of understanding to simplify procedures and strengthen their coordination.
  - Develop a monitoring and evaluation plan for the single window's operations in order to identify bottlenecks and areas for improvement.
  - Help the single window technical committee or working group to reduce resistance to change.
  - Channel operational problems faced by the private sector.

- It was interesting to discover:
  - The experiences of a group of countries that already have operational single windows.
  - That there are successful cases in Latin America and that they are willing to share their good practices with others.
  - That a large number of single windows have been developed in Latin America, although each is very different, which limits their interoperability.
  - That countries have each chosen different agencies to run their single windows.
  - The possible risk of technological flaws and the need to develop a contingency plan.
  - That some single windows have used a model to become financially self-supporting, thus minimizing political risk, including changes in government.
  - That some single windows have established a strategy to make agencies feel data ownership; i.e. that the information "is still theirs".
  - The attempts to develop a project in which the single window acts as a single risk management system.
  - The importance of knowing how to manage conflict and the stages at which the NTFC should intervene with respect to the single window.
  - That some countries' processes have been redesigned based on feedback from the private sector.

**Figure 6: Survey results – Single window**
3.7 Supervision and monitoring of domestic trade facilitation reforms, including WCO Time Release Study (TRS) (Article 7.6 TFA)

The participants identified the following main subjects:

- **Good practices:**
  - The private sector is involved and has a say in the monitoring of reforms.
  - Developing appropriate measurement mechanisms to evaluate the reforms resulting from the TFA, including the WCO’s Time Release Study (TRS). These mechanisms should focus on adequately measuring objectives that are a national priority and not foreign objectives.
  - Applying the WCO’s TRS methodology correctly and regularly to identify bottlenecks and help improve clearance times.
  - Time measurement can be used as a baseline to evaluate outcomes of NTFC action.
  - Adequately publicizing successes and improvements; alongside the results, indicating the methodology used.
  - Inter-agency coordination to avoid duplicating efforts with donors.

- **The main challenges include:**
  - Selecting an appropriate methodology and standards to measure the progress of NTFC activities.
  - Developing a strategic plan in order to design a roadmap that coordinates the various government agencies and the private sector.
  - Continuously improving trade facilitation measures.
  - Building national capacity in project management and strategic planning.
  - Raising awareness among all authorities of the importance of measuring the efficiency of trade facilitation measures.
  - Identifying the priority reforms.
  - Developing rapid alert mechanisms to detect operational problems, for example by using computer systems that ensure adequate data collection for subsequent analysis.
  - Adequately communicating the outcomes and achievements of the reforms promoted by the Committee, in order to achieve a positive impact and to strengthen support for the national committee.

- **The NTFC should:**
  - Develop appropriate measurement and monitoring indicators; maintain the methodology over time so that appropriate comparisons can be made.
  - Decide which methodology will be used to measure the average release time (e.g. WCO methodology or an alternative).
  - Endeavour to centralize information so that periodic measurements can be performed.
  - Be the main communicator and adequately promote the successes of the reforms, in order to foster internal support and external funding.
  - To remove the bottlenecks, create corrective activities that identify the chosen measuring methodology and monitor the corrective activities.

- **It was interesting to discover:**
  - Ideas about projects that successfully attracted funding.
  - The details of how the TRS of the WCO works in practice.
  - The SECO-WCO Global Trade Facilitation Programme.
  - A number of relevant initiatives by other countries.
  - The comparison between the different countries of the region.
3.8 Regional strategies for TFA implementation

The participants identified the following main subjects:

- **Good practices:**
  - Establishing indicators for measuring and evaluating regional projects.
  - Establishing coordination mechanisms between the existing national committees.
  - Harmonizing the national strategy with regional efforts.
  - Developing regional systems based on international standards to facilitate future coordination with other regions.

- **The main challenges include:**
  - Coordinating the NTFC’s functions at regional level.
  - A lack of specific plans to design a roadmap for the NTFC.
  - Developing integrated border management.
  - Achieving interoperability of systems and processes.
  - Raising awareness among border agencies of the importance of standardizing procedures and, where possible, unifying trade facilitation policies.
  - A lack of follow-up plans for the projects that have been completed, which could compromise their sustainability.
  - Coordinating trade facilitation policies and plans with policies in other areas.
  - Training the various stakeholders on these issues.
  - Building and maintaining private sector confidence.

- **The NTFC should:**
  - Encourage information-sharing among regional NTFCs to facilitate the use of international standards regarding formats, systems and procedures.
  - Identify areas of common interest to develop work with regional partners.
  - Create mechanisms for ongoing training on trade facilitation for all stakeholders.
  - Identify other regions with which they could collaborate in specific areas, including on improving the efficiency of the national committees.
  - Establish a communication strategy to adequately disseminate regional achievements and progress.

- **It was interesting:**
  - To discover other regions’ experiences and working methods.
o To learn that radio frequency identification (RFID) systems can be used not only for measurement, but also for risk management and cargo tracking.
o To see that many regional approaches appear to be highly bureaucratic, which could reduce their dynamism.

3.9 Identifying priorities regarding technical assistance and donor relationships

The participants identified the following main subjects:

- Good practices:
o Centralizing projects through the NTFC and adopting a strategic approach to project design, taking into account how the different projects will interact among them.
o Creating synergies within the country and ensuring that the Committee is aware about the existing projects before submitting a new project to a donor, to avoid duplication or that different agencies request the same thing.
o Before developing a project, studying the practices and priorities of the donor from whom assistance will be sought.
o Documenting and lessons learned from previous project designs, applications and management to avoid repeating the same mistakes in the future.
o Coordinating national projects with regional projects.
o Exploring the possibility of public-private initiatives that could finance some of the projects.
o Exploring whether any other Latin American countries could assist with the project; supporting other countries in the region with their projects as far as possible.

- The main challenges include:
o Learning to work together at country level rather than at the organization or agency levels.
o Identifying priorities when requesting technical trade facilitation assistance.
o Establishing methodologies for the preparation and implementation of projects.
o Adequately including all relevant stakeholders.
o Establishing a system to monitor completed projects, to be able to identify possible improvements, new goals and updates for them.
o Not duplicating projects indiscriminately without considering how they could be customized to the country’s needs and objectives.

- The NTFC should:
o Centralize all information on cooperation and technical assistance; exchange information on the various projects to avoid developing projects in areas already receiving cooperation.
o Involve the national agency responsible for international cooperation in its activities.
o Identify priorities regarding technical assistance and training, and potential donors.
o Ensure continuity in the implementation of cooperation projects.
o Establish an appropriate communication mechanism with the Permanent Mission in Geneva and the country's other diplomatic missions to streamline communication and have a coordinated front with the donors.
o As part of a communication strategy, disseminate national developments at international level.
o Generate political will.

- It was interesting to discover:
o The donors’ different priorities, formalities and practices, and the advice on how to proceed (and what to avoid) when presenting and implementing projects.
o That donors finance the development of processes, not activities.
o That projects need to be adjusted to each country; there is no one-size-fits-all approach so there is no point in copying others’ experiences.
o That Latin American countries are also helping each other in certain areas.
Figure 8: Survey results – Identification of priorities regarding assistance

Technical assistance

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<th>Main difficulties</th>
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<td>Resistance to change</td>
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Source: WTO survey for the workshop, 2020

Figure 9: Survey results – Dialogue with donors

Dialogue with donors

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<th>Main areas of progress</th>
<th>Main difficulties</th>
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<td>Strategic plan</td>
<td>Different approaches</td>
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<td>Multiple needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donor coordination</td>
<td>Coordinating institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTFC</td>
<td>Financial support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finished projects</td>
<td>Adaptation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>Sufficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leading institution</td>
<td>Coordination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receptivity</td>
<td>Continuity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inputs private sector</td>
<td>Lack of knowledge programmes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prompt and timely response</td>
<td>Avoiding duplication</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: WTO survey for the workshop, 2020
4 RECOMMENDATIONS

During the last session of the Meeting, participants discussed possible ways of improving information sharing and the implementation of the TFA in Latin America, and identified the following recommendations:

- To develop an electronic platform that would enable Latin American and Caribbean countries to build a continental network of contacts so that they can establish:

  1. An electronic directory with the contact points of the various NTFCs, with a view to facilitating their direct communication.\(^2\)
  2. A detailed directory of national officers and agents in charge of each of the TFA provisions (for example, by article or for specific provisions). This directory should also include information on the certifications obtained by such experts (for example, WCO accreditations or similar, in the areas covered by the AFC), as well as the international and regional organizations’ technical contact points for those areas. The system could also enable them to discuss specific issues or share information on specific measures.
  3. For each of the different areas covered by the TFA (including specific articles or provisions), a compendium or system to share regional best practices, which would be identified and maintained by the NTFCs.
  4. A forum for capacity building on the various topics covered by the TFA (including specific articles or provisions) and other areas related to the Agreement (for example, on risk management regarding parcels and postal deliveries), which could bring together and facilitate access to existing e-learning programs, webinars, etc. The NTFCs could identify priority issues and coordinate with the various international and regional bodies in order to comprehensively map such programmes to identify areas that have not been covered.
  5. Compile and publicize the specific areas in which each of the region's countries is able to offer technical assistance, including a description of the type of assistance and relevant contact points.

\(^2\) N.B. The WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility includes a section containing some of this information. However, it has not been updated regularly by the countries in the region. See: https://www.tfafacility.org/contact-points-and-profiles
N.B.: The Meeting recognized that the commitment of all NTFCs would be required to establish and update a platform of this type. It was also pleased to note the offer from the secretariat of the Latin American Integration Association (LAIA – Spanish acronym: ALADI) to host and develop such a platform in coordination with the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region’s NTFCs that decide to participate, with the collaboration of other international and regional organizations that wish to support this endeavour.

- Develop a plan that will allow the region to move forward with the accreditation and mutual recognition of national foreign trade laboratories.
- Invite more private sector stakeholders to future meetings of the NTFCs.
- Endeavour to include electronic commerce (e-commerce) in future discussions.