Report on the Pacific WTO TFA Needs Assessment and Implementation Workshop

WTO Trade Facilitation Self-Assessment for Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu

Nadi – Fiji

12 – 15 May 2014

Presentation by Mrs. Mere Falemaka, Permanent Representative – Permanent Delegation of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
Outline

1. Background & Objectives

2. Organization of the Workshop

3. TFA Workshop Outcome

4. Exchanges between development partners and Members

5. Way forward
1. Background

- **Funding** - Australian Government and WTO Secretariat, co-hosted by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. EU funded the non-WTO Pacific Members attendance

- **Participation: Six Pacific Island WTO Members** - Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu.

- Six participants per country from Customs, Biosecurity, Trade, Attorney General private sector, and relevant boarder agencies.

- Six non-WTO Pacific Members attended as observers.

- **International organizations and Donor partners** - WTO, Australia, World Bank, EU, World Customs UNCTAD, New Zealand, EIF, UNESCAP

- Regional organizations – PIFS, Oceania Crganization, Customs Organization, Office of Chief Trade Adviser
2. **Workshop Objectives**

**Three Objectives:**

- (i) enhance better understanding of the WTO TF Agreement
- (ii) review National TF Needs Assessment and
- (iii) facilitate initial dialogue with development partners and International organisations on TF assistance
3. Organization of Workshop

- **Day 1: Presentation on TFA provisions** — by WTO, WCO, UNCTAD, and Australian Government/Customs

- **Days 2 & 3: Review of Needs Assessment** — Six Members reviewed TFNA that was prepared last year using the Bali TF text, TF Needs Assessment Guidelines Rev.7 and the Comparative Guidelines done by the WTO Secretariat on last year Rev.5 and Rev.7. These helped Members to make amendments based on the agreed Bali Text.
  - **TF NA Facilitators** — Six volunteers from the International Organisations and development partners were the Facilitators for six countries to guide them in completing their TF Needs Assessment (TFNA)

- **Day 4: NA Report & Devt Partners** — Members presented summaries of their individual TF Needs Assessment.

- Development partners/international organisations made presentations on the types of assistance they are providing as commitments under the TF Agreement to the Members
Differences among Members:

Significant differences in customs related practices and procedures:

- Laws, practices and documentation requirements – Some have laws that are under different ministries. On the documentations, some countries for example have customs documentations online, while the biosecurity and other boarder agencies procedures and documents are manually completed and processed
- Some plan to move to single window
- Application of ASYCUDA++ and other customs systems
- Different levels of infrastructure and human capacity in the Border agencies, etc
4. TFA Workshop Outcomes

• **Resources requirements:**

  • **Legal and Policy TF Measures** – Was a major concern for many and they required support in this area

  • **Human Resources** – Many rely on few officials from the TF implementing agencies to deal with broad range of issues and expressed strong desire for targeted capacity technical assistance in this area

  • **Information Technology and Communication** – Complying with Article 1 on Publication in terms of sharing and accessing information via internet, electronic payments (Article 7) and enquiry point for many is non-existence. Area that needs targeted technical assistance

  • **Infrastructure, Institutional and Equipment** – effective border institutions and computerised systems etc remain the challenge for many of the Members
Regional Issues: non-exhaustive list:

- Regional harmonization/approximation of customs practices and procedures;
- Standardization of HS codes and documentation requirements;
- Reduction and simplification of customs procedures;
- Cooperation and information sharing between customs authorities
5. Top Four Priorities

Pacific Islands WTO Priorities:

- **Publication and information availability** – All six Members indicated this as the priority. Internet connection and ICT infrastructure at border. Some Members lack legislations and policies.

- **Risk Management** - Many Members require capacity building, and national commitment to improving RM systems

- **Single window** – Some view this as important in improving the movement of goods and enabling them in achieving compliance in some of the other measures such as Formalities and Documentation Requirements (10.2) and Import Alerts/Rapid Alerts (5.1)

- **Advance Ruling** – This the fourth measure of priority for the Members
Development partners presentations:

- **Presenters** - IFC (World Bank Group), EU, WCO, UNCTAD, EIF, WTO, UNESCAP, Australia, New Zealand and UNESCAP

- **Information sharing** – International organisations shared information on the type of assistance available on TF. For example in areas of technical, financial, research, training and other TF related areas.

- **Current TF Assistance** – Donors also presented the type of TF assistance provided to date and in enhancing trade development and growth in the region. For example, support through regional programs such as SPEITT and PHAMA on TF.

- Some development Partners indicated channelling assistance through regional organisations while others prefer to deal directly with Members
Regional and individual Members proposed activities:

- **National consultations** - Individual Members plan to conduct national consultations within six months to finalize the TFNA including draft categories.

- **Alignment with Aid for Trade Strategy** – need for alignment for the TFA regional initiatives with the current Pacific regional Aid for Trade Strategy.

- **Coordination** - Expressed the need for effective coordination, sharing of resources and information among relevant agencies dealing with importation, exportation and transit procedures.

- **Streamlining and coordination of TAs** - donors to coordinate their engagement when supporting Pacific – this is to encourage complementarity and avoid duplications.

- Members proposed that the PIFS-Geneva office will facilitate coordination between Members and Donor partners on TF technical assistance.
Regional and individual Members proposed activities:

- **Regional TF Body** – Members proposed that a TF body at the regional level should be established to provide technical guidance to the National TF Committee on TF Agreement implementations and securing of technical assistance.

- **National Trade Facilitation Committee** - Participants recognised the importance of having in place TF Committee and are committed to establishing the committee or reviewing the trade committees that they currently have to play the lead role in the TFA implementation.
Thank You!

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