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Inter-regional Expert Group Meeting
of the United Nations Development Accounts Project 1213AA -
Strengthening the capacities of developing countries
and countries with economies in transition
to facilitate legitimate border crossing,
regional cooperation and integration

Second session
Geneva, 22 June 2016

Report of Inter-regional Expert Group of the United Nations Development Accounts Project 1213AA on its second session

Contents

I. Attendance

1.   The Inter-regional Expert Group of the United Nations Development Accounts (UNDA) project 1213AA - "*Strengthening the capacities of developing countries and countries with economies in transition to facilitate legitimate border crossing, regional cooperation and integration*", further referred to as the "Expert Group", held its second session on 22 June 2016 in Geneva (Switzerland).

2.   The session was attended by experts (consultants and representatives of customs administrations) from Argentina, Costa Rica, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Morocco and Tunisia. Officials from the Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNECLAC), the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA), the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). A representative from the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) also attended the session.

II. Election of officers

3.   The Expert Group elected Mr. Nanno Mulder (UNECLAC) to chair the session.

III. Adoption of the agenda (agenda item 1)

Documentation: Informal document UNDA1213AA/No. 1 (2016)

4.   The Expert Group adopted its provisional agenda as contained in Informal document UNDA1213AA/No. 1 (2016).

IV. Status of the project (agenda item 2)

5.   The Expert Group took note of the status of the project and recalled that, in order to provide sufficient time for the independent evaluation of the project, all remaining activities should be completed by 30 June 2016.

6.   The Expert Group, recalled the objective of the meeting, i.e. review the results achieved in the pilot countries and take stock of the action plans to enhance the electronic exchange of data between customs administrations.

V. Regional sub-projects (agenda item 3)

A. Economic Commission for and Latin America and the Caribbean

7.   The Expert Group considered and discussed the oral presentation made by the consultant hired by UNECLAC on the outcomes of the gap-analysis for Costa-Rica and the results of the technical assistance provided to Costa Rica Customs.

8.   The Expert Group noted that Costa Rica, together with other Central American countries, greatly benefitted from the capacity building activities organized in the framework of the project, in particular the technical workshop organized in San Jose on 16-17 June 2015. Those capacity building activities have led to a follow-up initiative by the Support Program for Central American Integration and Implementation of the Association Agreement between this sub-region and the European Union (PRAIAA), UNECLAC and WCO's Latin America training office to implement jointly a series of eight capacity building activities for customs officers in these countries between May 2016 and July 2017

9.   The Expert group welcomed the results of the technical assistance to Costa Rica customs, in particular the assistance with regard to electronic import invoices and the application of business intelligence to risk and valuation to reduce under invoicing.

B.   Economic Commission for Europe

Documentation: Informal document UNDA1213AA/No. 3 (2014)

10.   The Expert Group considered and discussed Informal document UNDA1213AA/No. 3 (2016), containing the results of the technical assistance to Georgia customs, as well as the presentation made by the consultant hired by UNECE. It noted that Georgia and Turkey started an eTIR pilot projects and that a protocol on electronic data exchange in the framework of a joint eTIR Pilot Project, had been signed by Mr. Nodar Khaduri, Minister of Finance of Georgia, and Mr. Bülent Tüfenkci, Minister of Customs and Trade of the Republic of Turkey, on 26 January 2016. Furthermore, the Expert Group noted that the technical assistance provided to Georgia customs allowed the development of an interface between the customs IT system and the CEP.

11.   Finally, the Expert Group welcomed the positive results achieved at the technical workshop organised in Tbilisi on 22-23 June 2015.

C.   Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

12.   The Expert Group considered and discussed the oral presentation made by UNESCAP on the outcomes of the gap-analysis for Kyrgyzstan, the capacity building activities in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan as wells as the comparative analysis undertaken between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. It also welcomed the proposed road map aimed at enabling the electronic exchange of transit data between both countries, possibly via the CEP.

13.   Finally, the Expert Group welcomed the positive results achieved at the technical workshops organised in Issyk Kul on 7-8 September 2015 and in Dushanbe on 24 May 2016.

D.   Economic Commission for Africa and Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

Documentation: Informal document UNDA1213AA/No. 4 (2014)

14.   The Expert Group considered and discussed the presentation made by the consultant hired by UNECA and UNESCWA. The consultant recalled the results of the Gap analysis and highlighted some of the recommendations made by the participants of the workshop organize jointly by UNECA and UNESWA in Casablanca on 2-4 Dec. 2015. The expert group noted that technical assistance contributed to the evaluation of a platform to exchange data called Tunisia Trade Net. The platform is available and its concrete application will depends on the decision of the member countries of the Agadir declaration and of the AMU. Alternatively, the Expert Group noted that the CEP could also be used.

VI.   Evaluation (agenda item 4)

15.   The Expert Group reviewed all the activities conducted in the framework of the project. In view of the very positive evaluations from the participants, it congratulated the participating organizations for all capacity building events funded by the project. All events allowed participants to gain capacity with regard to the relevant standards to be used or B2C and C2C data exchange as well as best practices on the conventions, methodologies and tools to be used.

16.   The expert group also considered that, in the UNECE region, the technical assistance funds significantly contributed to kick start the eTIR pilot project between Georgia and Turkey. It also recognized that in the other regions it helped customs administration in pilot countries reducing the identified gaps and having a clearer strategy toward enabling C2C data exchange for transit data.

VII.   Conclusions and next steps (agenda item 5)

17.   The Expert Group concluded that workshops, technical assistance and the Seminar have greatly contributed to increase the capacity of Customs officials, in pilot countries and all countries that took part in the events, to exchange secure electronic C2C transit information and to utilize international standard electronic messages. Moreover, it stressed that the project provided multiple opportunities to globally share knowledge about best practices related to C2C electronic data exchange and the relevant international standards. Furthermore, the Expert Group was of the view that the project was successfully conducted thanks to an excellent collaboration between all Regional Commissions (RC). Finally, the Expert Group acknowledged that the Inter-regional Expert Group meetings have provided a platform for RC to constructively discuss the project objectives by region and assess the achieved results.

18.   In order to ensure the sustainability of the project results, the Expert Group identified the following next steps:

- Finalize the technical assistance reports and the Central Exchange Platform (CEP) documentation;

- Upload the project results on the project website;

- Assist the international consultant to conduct the external evaluation;

- Maintain the CEP;

- Seek funds to follow up on the action plans and continue to assist countries undertaking transit data exchange projects;

- Create and maintain a inter-regional group on the topic of C2C data exchange, inter alia for joint fund raising;

- Prepare and submit the final project report.

Annex

Evaluation of the second session of Inter-regional Expert Group on the United Nations Development Accounts Project 1213AA

Participants replied to the following questions indicating if they were very satisfied (5), satisfied (4), neutral (3), unsatisfied (2) or very unsatisfied (1).

Questions		Average score
How satisfied are you…	with the organization of the event?	4.6
	with the topic of the event?	4.4
	with the usefulness/scope of the information presented?	4.4
	with the quality of the presentations/speaker?	4.2
	with the overall meeting format?	4.1
	that you had sufficient time to network and share ideas with your peers?	4.1
	with the meetings' overall value in helping you improve your professional capacity?	4.2
	with the conclusions and recommendations	4.1
	that you and your peers received appropriate recognition and appreciation at the meeting for your contributions?	4.2

The overall level of satisfaction averaged 4.3. Some participants felt that some presentations were too similar to those made during the Seminar. One participant was unsatisfied because the meeting was in English only.