WTO | 2016 News items - El Salvador ratifies Trade Facilitation Agreement

El Salvador has ratified the WTO's Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), becoming the fourth Central American nation to accept the new accord. Mr. Francisco Alberto Lima Mena, El Salvador's ambassador to the WTO, presented his country's instrument of ratification to WTO Director-General Roberto Azevêdo on 4 July.

Concluded at the WTO's 2013 Bali Ministerial Conference, the TFA contains provisions for expediting the movement, release and clearance of goods, including goods in transit. It also sets out measures for effective cooperation between customs and other appropriate authorities on trade facilitation and customs compliance issues. It further contains provisions for technical assistance and capacity building in this area.

The TFA will enter into force once two-thirds of the WTO membership has formally accepted the Agreement. With the acceptance by El Salvador, the number of TFA ratifications now stands at 85, representing more than three-quarters of the ratifications needed to bring the Agreement into force.

On 25 July 2014 El Salvador submitted its Category A notification to the WTO indicating which provisions of the TFA it intends to implement upon entry into force of the agreement.

In addition to El Salvador, the following WTO members have also accepted the TFA: Hong Kong China, Singapore, the United States, Mauritius, Malaysia, Japan, Australia, Botswana, Trinidad and Tobago, the Republic of Korea, Nicaragua, Niger, Belize, Switzerland, Chinese Taipei, China, Liechtenstein, Lao PDR, New Zealand, Togo, Thailand, the European Union (on behalf of its 28 member states), the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Pakistan, Panama, Guyana, Côte d'Ivoire, Grenada, Saint Lucia, Kenya, Myanmar, Norway, Viet Nam, Brunei, Ukraine, Zambia, Lesotho, Georgia, Seychelles, Jamaica, Mali, Cambodia, Paraguay, Turkey, Brazil, Macao China, the United Arab Emirates, Samoa, India and the Russian Federation, Montenegro, Albania, Kazakhstan, Sri Lanka, St. Kitts and Nevis, Madagascar, and the Republic of Moldova.

The TFA broke new ground for developing countries and LDCs in the way it will be implemented. For the first time in WTO history, the requirement to implement the Agreement was directly linked to the capacity of the country to do so. In addition, the Agreement states that assistance and support should be provided to help them achieve that capacity.

A Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility (TFAF) was also created at the request of developing and least-developed country members to help ensure that they receive the assistance needed to reap the full benefits of the TFA and to support the ultimate goal of full implementation of the new agreement by all members. Further information on TFAF is available at www.TFAFacility.org.

On 8 June the WTO hosted an experience-sharing event to help members identify best practices and the challenges faced by WTO members in establishing or maintaining national trade facilitation committees. It was the first such event to discuss how best to implement specific commitments under the TFA. Experts from more than 20 countries and five international organizations made presentations at the workshop; the presentations and other information on the event are available here.

Implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) has the potential to increase global merchandise exports by up to $1 trillion per annum, according to the WTO's flagship World Trade Report released on 26 October 2015. Significantly, the Report also found that developing countries will benefit significantly from the TFA, capturing more than half of the available gains.

The World Trade Report 2015 is available here. More information on the WTO and trade facilitation is available at www.wto.org/**tradefacilitation**.

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Amb. Francisco Alberto Lima Mena of El Salvador presents his country's instrument of ratification to WTO Director-General Roberto Azevêdo