



# **UNITED NATIONS**

## **Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)**

**Expert Group Meeting on Monitoring and Evaluation  
Tools for Implementing AfT Projects in the Arab Region  
Hammamet, Tunisia, 12-13 December 2013**

### **Information Note**

#### **I. Introduction and background**

The Aid for Trade (AfT) initiative was launched in 2005 during the Hong Kong WTO Ministerial Conference with the aim of placing trade at the core of the development agenda and mainstreaming trade related issues into development plans and programmes. While the trade and development context has evolved tremendously since the launch of the initiative, it has so far succeeded in raising awareness about the positive role trade can play in development through enhancing economic growth and contributing to the reduction of poverty. The initiative yielded substantial results that led to an improvement in trade performance, which has been attributed to the increase in the mainstreaming of trade-related priorities in national development strategies. Nevertheless, despite the positive impact of the initiative, many developing countries, and in particular in the Arab region, have not been able to mark an impression in global trade due to their limited supplies of goods and services and have not succeeded in attracting trade related investment, be it foreign or domestic.

Since the launch of the initiative, four Global reviews have been organized by the World Trade Organization, with the participation of the regional development banks and UN regional commissions to assess progress made in trade related development assistance and strengthen the monitoring and evaluation of AfT.

While development partners and donors have been mobilizing additional resources for AfT projects/initiatives that improve trade policy and regulation, and try to overcome supply side constraints, trade related infrastructure obstacles and adjustment costs faced by developing countries, a large number of potential projects both at national and regional levels still lack the requisite financing as they are not formulated in conformity with AfT funding criteria. This was mainly attributed to limited knowledge and skills of concerned stakeholders in developing bankable AfT projects.

As such, the United Nations Development Account (DA) Project on “Facilitating the Effective Integration of Developing Countries in the Global Economy through Aid for Trade (AfT) Schemes” is being implemented with the aim of strengthening the capacity of selected developing countries and countries with economies in transition to formulate projects and programmes that are eligible for AfT funding. It also intends to establish a network at the global, regional and national levels to strengthen collaboration and provide support in AfT delivery. It is expected to build on available expertise, resources, institutions and networks within the five collaborating regional commissions and UN entities and other agencies with interest in capacity-building in the field of AfT. The project also relies on the active participation of regional development banks, trade ministries and existing private sector umbrella organizations and networks at regional and country level.

#### **II. Objectives of the meeting**

Within the framework of implementing this United Nations Development Account project, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) convened a “Workshop on the Formulation of Bankable Aid for Trade Projects in the Arab region” on 22 and 23 October 2013 in Marrakesh, Morocco.

The workshop aimed at ensuring that Arab countries leverage diverse forms of development finance to promote trade and development through an “investment for trade” approach. Participants in this workshop included concerned public sector bodies and government ministries from five ESCWA member countries. In particular, the participants shared knowledge and experiences and presented proposed bankable AfT projects that were developed with a view to enhancing intra-Arab trade and improving participation in the global trading system.

Subsequently, the Economic Development and Globalization Division (EDGD) in ESCWA is organizing an Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on monitoring and evaluation (M&E) tools for implementing AfT projects in the Arab region on 12 and 13 December 2013 in the city of Hammamet in Tunisia.

Following the revision of the AfT projects developed by member countries and presented during the first workshop, the Expert Group Meeting will thus focus on developing appropriate M&E systems, including regionally agreed indicators for M&E of AfT projects. This will ultimately result in improving the formulation of selected AfT projects by including a M&E component.

As such, the aim of this meeting is to promote debate and reach a regional consensus on M&E frameworks that can be used for the region. It will also serve as a forum for disseminating knowledge and information on the fundamental criteria and requirements for receiving AfT from several multilateral funding institutions.

### **III. Participants**

The EGM will be attended by representatives from the five member countries which participated in the workshop held in October (Ministry of Trade, Ministry of Transport and Customs), and which have been facing challenges and obstacles in benefiting from AfT initiatives. In addition, experts and representatives from concerned multilateral financing institutions will be invited to participate and contribute to the meeting by sharing their experiences in relation to AfT projects which they had provided funding for. Representatives of financing institutions will also provide a general overview of the conditions and criteria that must be met for AfT projects to be funded by their respective institutions.

### **IV. Documents and language of the meeting**

All related material and documentation will be placed, once finalized, on the specific web page of the meeting which can be found on the following link at the ESCWA web site:

<http://www.escwa.un.org/divisions/main.asp?division=edgd>.

The EGM shall be conducted in Arabic and/or English and/or French. Accordingly, simultaneous interpretation will be provided to and from each of the three languages.

### **V. Venue and logistical arrangements**

The meeting will be held on 12 & 13 December 2013 at one of the reputable Hotels in the city of Hammamet, the name of which will be communicated to you in due time. Meeting participants are advised to check with the Tunisian Embassy in their country of residence whether or not they would require an entry visa to Tunisia and apply for a visa as necessary, ensuring the provision of a copy of the invitation letter received from ESCWA.

In line with applicable United Nations rules and regulations, ESCWA will cover the travel and accommodation expenses of a maximum of two representatives from each concerned public sector body or Ministry from member countries. All travel arrangements of participants from member countries to Tunis as well as the issuance of economy class tickets will be handled by ESCWA. Daily Subsistence Allowance (DSA) for three nights accommodation in Hammamet (11 to 13 December inclusive) as well as terminal expenses (transportation fees to and from the airport) will also be provided by ESCWA according to applicable rules.

### **VI. Correspondence**

- For any information related to the meeting please contact:

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