



**Asia-Pacific
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Agenda Item: VI vi

Sub-Committee on Customs Procedures Convenor's Report

Purpose: Information
Submitted by: SCCP Convenor



**Third Committee on Trade and Investment
Meeting
24-26 August 2021**

SUB-COMMITTEE ON CUSTOMS PROCEDURES (SCCP) CONVENOR'S SUMMARY REPORT TO CTI 3
2021

1. During 2021, how has the forum's work contributed to CTI's objectives of:

Please provide a brief list of the forum's work under each sub-heading. Please refer to Appendix A for further detail on CTI's objectives.

a. Support for the Multilateral Trading System

Strategic Plan

On 21 August 2021 the SCCP endorsed the Strategic Plan 2022-2025. It is focused on cooperation, harmonization and promoting inclusive growth. It contains SCCP's Mission to increase cooperation on projects, initiatives and outputs, which focus on all member economies' implementation of customs elements of the WTO TFA. It is a priority for the SCCP to accelerate implementation of the WTO TFA. Two indicators can be used to assess whether the SCCP is meeting its objectives relating to TFA implementation: 1. commitment and willingness of SCCP members to implement customs elements of the WTO TFA; and 2. APEC economies meeting their obligations under the WTO TFA.

Projects/initiatives

All projects and initiatives currently underway in SCCP are founded in and support the multilateral trading system, by promoting harmonization and cooperation based on existing multilateral rules and standards. These projects are:

- *Guidelines for Paperless Trade:* New Zealand is undertaking a self-funded project, in which the project proposal was endorsed at the first plenary meeting. The project supports the WTO TFA as it encourages economies to facilitate and streamline trade through enabling infrastructure, legislative frameworks and procedures. New Zealand is currently drafting the guidelines and will circulate a draft to SCCP members shortly after SCCP2 2021.
- *Best Practice Guidelines for APEC Customs Administrations to Facilitate the Distribution of COVID-19 Vaccines and Related Goods:* The Guidelines were endorsed by both the SCCP and the CTI to facilitate the trade of COVID-19 vaccines and other related goods, such as dry ice, syringes, and testing kits. The SCCP is advancing the implementation of these Guidelines to reflect the APEC Ministers Responsible Trade's commitments.
- *Future of Trade and Border Management – to 2030:* This is a project led by Australia that builds a digital dashboard, containing building blocks for the SCCP to use on Policy and Regulations, Technology and ICT, Industry and COVID-19 categories. This will be an excellent tool for recording and accessing measures relating to trade facilitation and customs procedures in the APEC region.
- *Questionnaire on the Customs Management in the New Normal after COVID-19:* Led by Japan and Mexico, the results from this questionnaire showed how customs administrations across

the APEC region responded to COVID-19, particularly in relation to internal management of customs activities and operations.

SCCP2

At the SCCP2 meeting on 19 August, the SCCP held a policy discussion on digitalization of border processes under the WTO TFA. We discussed the importance of digitalization of border processes and how customs agencies could implement digital measures to make border processes more efficient.

b. Regional Economic Integration, including taking forward the Putrajaya Vision 2040 and contributing to the development of the Implementation Plan in 2021

Strategic Plan

The SCCP endorsed the Strategic Plan 2022-2025 that contains SCCP's commitment to support, and be guided by, the APEC Putrajaya Vision 2040.

Projects/initiatives

The *Guidelines for Paperless Trade* project responds to changes in the trade environment, supports the driver "Innovation and Digitalization" in the Putrajaya Vision 2040, and fosters an enabling environment for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to participate in global trade.

c. Trade Facilitation and Connectivity

Strategic Plan

The SCCP has committed to create more connected, secure and resilient global supply chains across the APEC region, as stated in the Strategic Plan 2022-2025.

Projects/initiatives

The SCCP endorsed the *Best Practice Guidelines for APEC Customs Administrations to facilitate the distribution of COVID-19 vaccines and related goods* in April 2021. These Guidelines are focused on facilitation measures for COVID-19 vaccines and related goods, including cooperation among APEC economies.

New Zealand is undertaking a self-funded project *Customs Response to COVID-19 Trade Recovery in the APEC Region: lessons learnt and future opportunities*. The purpose of this project is to develop a toolkit containing a set of best practices to help minimize future disruptions to supply chains in the event of a global crisis. New Zealand hosted a workshop in June 2021 to deepen their understanding of trade facilitation measures that APEC could adopt as the new standard. New Zealand is developing the toolkit and will circulate a draft to members the week following SCCP2.

SCCP2

The SCCP2 meeting held a policy discussion on trade facilitation of medical supplies and essential goods throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. The SCCP discussed how customs can improve trade facilitation measures and remove barriers to trade in medical supplies and essential goods.

The meeting also held a policy discussion on digitalization of border processes under the WTO TFA. The SCCP discussed the importance of digitalization of border processes. They also discussed how customs agencies could implement digital measures to make border processes more efficient.

The SCCP will continue to look for opportunities to advance trade facilitation and connectivity measures within our economies. The SCCP's report to the November APEC Ministerial Meeting will contain our work to date on fulfilling the MRT's commitment to facilitate trade in the APEC region.

The APEC Policy Support Unit (PSU) provided a final review of the Supply Chain Connectivity Framework Action Plan of Phase II (2017-2020). The PSU discussed how APEC economies have addressed the five chokepoints in the Action Plan. Moving forward, economies should focus on improving resilience, promote broader and stronger connectivity, invest in digital technologies, improve reliability of logistics, achieve efficient and green supply chains, and reform regulations affecting digital trade.

d. Inclusion

Strategic Plan

The SCCP has also committed to lead trade facilitation and trade security measures that promote inclusive growth, in accordance with its Vision Statement in the Strategic Plan 2022-2025. One of the SCCP's objectives in the Strategic Plan is to enable a more inclusive customs environment that supports access to trade for all, by addressing barriers that limit inclusion and quality in international trade. It is expected that the SCCP will continue to promote equality and inclusion as we introduce and progress projects and initiatives that are aligned with this Strategic Plan over the next four years.

Projects/Initiatives

The SCCP held the APEC Customs Business Dialogue 2021 virtual meeting on 18 June. The theme for the Dialogue was "enabling greater and inclusive participation of micro, small to medium enterprises (MSMEs) in global trade." MSMEs, which are often led by women and indigenous people, are the engine of growth and innovation in the APEC region. Yet MSMEs have felt the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic most significantly. The Dialogue was an opportunity to listen to the challenges they face in global trade and how customs administrations can better support them. The highlighted challenges and potential solutions will be reflected in the New Zealand-led project, *Guidelines for Paperless Trade*, as paperless trade was identified as a measure to increase the participation of MSMEs and, women and indigenous led businesses in global trade.

SCCP2

At SCCP2 we hosted a policy discussion on women and customs. The SCCP heard from women leaders in various organizations and customs administrations from the APEC region. The Chair of the APEC Policy Partnership on Women and the Economy shared how SCCP can contribute to implementation of the La Serena Roadmap on Women and Inclusive Growth. A representative from the New Zealand Customs Service shared the importance of gender inclusivity in trade and her experience of being a woman working for the New Zealand Customs service. The US Customs and Border Protection shared their recommendations for customs administrations to increase the visibility of women at the border. Peru Customs shared how their administration is promoting gender equality and what challenges are left to be addressed. Lastly, the World Customs Organization (WCO) shared how they are promoting gender equality and diversity and initiatives the WCO have launched to advance women in customs.

Australia suggested that SCCP could come up its own, more APEC specific, statement that echoes the [WCO's Compendium on Gender Equality and Diversity](#) in Customs (2020). We will look at how the SCCP can initiate this work.

e. Any other issues

Project/initiatives

Japan and Mexico provided a report on *Customs Management in the New Normal after COVID-19*. The report was based on results of questionnaires to SCCP members from 2020-2021 on customs internal management during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is a useful tool to look at measures APEC customs administrations have taken to protect and ensure the wellbeing of their people, and ensure the border can continue to run as smoothly as possible to facilitate trade (and travel) while managing risk during the pandemic. As such, it contributes to all of CTI's objectives, as above.

2. How has the forum helped to fulfil the mandate of the [2021 Ministers Responsible for Trade Statement](#) & [2020 Declaration on Facilitating the Movement of Essential Goods by the MRT](#) (see Appendix B)

SCCP held a number of policy discussions during SCCP2 to discuss how the SCCP can help fulfil the mandate of the APEC MRT Joint Statement 2021. The SCCP will provide a report to CTI by 30 September 2021 on how SCCP is contributing to Ministers' expectations, for CTI's consideration and endorsement. This report will then be submitted to the APEC Ministers ahead of the Annual Ministerial Meeting in November 2021. The report will include the outcomes from these policy discussions, as well as other relevant work it has progressed throughout 2021.

Policy discussions

1. Facilitation of trade in medical supplies and essential goods, including expediting their release upon arrival, such as by providing for advance electronic submission and processing of information to enable immediate release of medical supplies and essential goods upon arrival.
 - The CTI Vice Chair, APEC Policy Support Unit, and Singapore Customs were the main speakers for this policy discussion. They shared how the SCCP can implement trade facilitation measures for medical supplies and essential goods throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.
 - The CTI Vice Chair in particular suggested that the SCCP expand the *Best Practice Guidelines for APEC Customs Administrations to Facilitate the Distribution of COVID-19 Vaccines and Related Goods* to cover medical supplies (specifically those referenced in the [WCO/WHO list](#)), and that the SCCP consider how to focus medical supplies and the WTO TFA together.
 - WCO, Australia, Japan, New Zealand, the United States, Chile, and Indonesia also contributed to the discussion by offering their experience of regulating and facilitating the trade of medical supplies and other essential items.
 - It was agreed that SCCP had already contributed to this objective significantly with the *Guidelines*, and SCCP would look to obtain further detail on, and assess how other medical supplies and essential goods could be treated similarly, by adding questions to the survey New Zealand will soon send to members on implementation of the *Guidelines*.

2. Accelerating implementation of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement, particularly those articles relating to: the accelerated use of digitalization for border processes; pre-arrival processing of electronic declarations; electronic documents, electronic certification, electronic payments; expedited shipments; and border agency cooperation.
 - The following main speakers for this session, CTI Chair, New Zealand, Australia, Singapore, and China, shared the benefits of increased digitalization of border processes for the SCCP, including paperless trade, as part of our efforts to implement customs elements of the WTO TFA.
 - The United States, Mexico, Japan, New Zealand, Korea, China, Chinese Taipei, Indonesia, Australia and the United Kingdom (guest) also participated in the discussion and shared their best practices and posed further questions to identify future opportunities as part of the SCCP's journey to implement the WTO TFA.
 - It was suggested that SCCP undertake a stocktake and gap analysis of members' implementation of the customs-related TFA provisions, and then design a programme of capacity-building activities for members to address the needs identified. An economy lead for this work will need to be identified.

3. Taking appropriate measures to prevent criminal exploitation of supply chains and to prevent the entry and import of illegal, dangerous, sub-standard or counterfeit COVID-19 vaccines and related goods.
 - The APEC Life Sciences Innovation Forum (LSIF) Planning Group Chair, the United States, Peru, Japan, Mexico, and the WCO were the main speakers for this policy discussion, and presented on what the SCCP can do to prevent the exploitation of supply chains, especially the import of counterfeit COVID-19 vaccines and related goods. They shared experiences in conducting successful operations to detect these goods.
 - Indonesia and New Zealand also shared their experiences in securing the supply chains of COVID-19 vaccines and related goods from counterfeits entering their borders.
 - Australia suggested that SCCP could embark on education campaigns for customs officials around the challenges that we are currently facing. While the challenges have always been there for customs administrations, they are more acute given the pandemic. For the very first time all economies are focused on the same commodities (counterfeit COVID-19 vaccines and related goods). The SCCP could pursue this work to ensure we can re-educate APEC customs officials and progress further as a united group. A lead for this work will need to be identified.

The MRT also committed to advance the implementation of the *Best Practice Guidelines for APEC Customs Administrations to Facilitate the Distribution of COVID-19 Vaccines and Related Goods*. At the SCCP2 meeting New Zealand presented the proposed next steps of this initiative to advance the implementation of the Best Practice Guidelines. Prior to SCCP2, New Zealand asked that SCCP members share these Guidelines with their respective frontline and operational colleagues, and informed the members of their intention to circulate a survey.

The survey will ask how the economies have been advancing the implementation of the Guidelines and also identify further opportunities for the SCCP to better support its members' implementation,

such as by organizing capacity building for members. Following on CTI Vice Chair's suggestion, (as noted above) New Zealand will also ask economies how the Guidelines can be applied to cover medical supplies.

New Zealand will pull together anonymized, high level data from members' responses to the survey, and include in the SCCP's report for the APEC Ministerial Meeting. SCCP will submit this report to CTI by 30 September 2021.

3. Main outcomes from most recent plenary meeting

Please provide in list format

Day 1

- The APEC SCCP Secretariat Program Director provided an update on progress during APEC 2021: the sub-fora renewal process and a report-back on the Committee on Trade and Investment's (CTI) assessment of the SCCP.
- The Chair outlined SCCP's outcomes for APEC 2021.
- The Chair presented the finalized draft SCCP Terms of Reference and Strategic Plan for the period 2022-2025.
- Japan and Mexico presented the final report of the *"Questionnaire on the Customs Management in New Normal after COVID-19."*
- Australia updated members on its Self-Funded Project (SCCP 01 2019S) *"The Future of Trade and Border Management to 2030"* which they plan to launch in September 2021. As part of this project Australia is currently building a digital dashboard with building blocks for members to consider as they face border management challenges in the future. The SCCP will engage with Australia how we can make best use of the digital dashboard to fulfil the following: 1) to keep track of innovations across both public and private sector to create synergy, and 2) to look for and respond to the various supply chain / border-related challenges using the dashboard
- New Zealand presented an update on their self-funded project *Customs Response to COVID-19 Trade and Recovery in the APEC Region: Lessons learnt and future opportunities*. They are currently drafting the toolkit containing a set of best practice measures to minimize future disruptions to supply chains in the event of a global crisis. New Zealand intend to circulate a draft to the SCCP shortly after the SCCP2 meeting.
- New Zealand presented an update on the *Best Practice Guidelines on APEC Customs Procedures to Facilitate the Distribution of COVID-19 Vaccines and Related Goods*. The SCCP and CTI endorsed the guidelines between April and May 2021. MRT committed to advance the implementation of the guidelines in their Statement on COVID-19 Vaccine Supply Chains in June 2021. The SCCP were encouraged to implement the guidelines in their respective economies.
- The SCCP held a policy discussion to advance the MRT's commitment to facilitate trade in medical supplies and essential goods. Details on this policy discussion can be found above under item 2 of the Convenor's summary report.

Day 2

- New Zealand presented an update on the APEC Customs Business Dialogue held in June 2021. The theme for the Dialogue was “enabling greater and inclusive participation of micro, small and medium enterprises in global trade.” New Zealand presented the key messages from the Dialogue.
- New Zealand also presented an update on another self-funded project *Guidelines for Paperless Trade*. This project proposal was endorsed at SCCP1. New Zealand is drafting the guidelines and will circulate a draft to SCCP members shortly after SCCP2.
- The CTI delegate from Japan presented an update on their virtual workshops titled *Best-Practices Sharing Workshop: Utilizing digital technology in the field of trade facilitation under the current COVID-19 pandemic and beyond*.
- Colombia participated as a guest and presented an update on *Interoperability and Risk Management: new paths for the Colombian Single Windows*.
- The SCCP held a policy discussion on MRT’s commitment to accelerate implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, particularly those articles relating to the accelerated use of digitalization for border processes; pre-arrival processing of electronic declarations; electronic documents, electronic certification, electronic payments; expedited shipments; and border agency cooperation.” Details on this policy discussion can be found above under item 2 of the convenor’s summary report.
- Chile provided the survey results on the updated APEC Customs Transit Guidelines.
- The APEC PSU presented an update on the APEC Supply Chain Connectivity Framework Action Plan Phase II. They went through the 5 chokepoints and how economies are addressing them through various initiatives.

Day 3

- The Chair announced the endorsement of the SCCP Strategic Plan 2022-2025.
- The SCCP held a policy discussion on the MRT commitment to prevent the exploitation of supply chains, especially the importation of counterfeit COVID-19 vaccines and related goods. Details on this policy discussion can be found above under item 2 of the convenor’s summary report.
- The SCCP held a final policy discussion on customs and gender to consider how the SCCP can contribute towards the La Serena Roadmap on Women and Inclusive Growth 2019-2030. The main speakers from this session were PPWE Chair, New Zealand Trade and Enterprise Trade Commissioner for Chinese Taipei, Banyan Global Advisor, Peru Customs Deputy National Superintendent, New Zealand Customs Service Principal Advisor, and the WCO Assistant Programme Manager and Lead on Gender Equality and Diversity.
- Thailand, as the host economy for APEC 2022, introduced the Chair of SCCP 2022, Mr Chaiyut Kumkun. Thailand’s policy interests for 2022 are 1. COVID-19 Trade Recovery and 2. Digital Trade Connectivity. Thailand is looking at two options- to host the SCCP either 1) physically, in Thailand or 2) virtually. This will depend on the COVID-19 situation. Thailand thanked New Zealand, the SCCP Chair and APEC Secretariat for a successful 2021 hosting year. Thailand committed to make active use of the Strategic Plan and continue many of the initiatives and projects that have been progressed this year.

- The APEC Secretariat announced that the United States, Australia, Japan, China, Thailand, and New Zealand will be the Friends of the Chair for 2022.

Some **action items** arising from the SCCP2 meeting that the SCCP will deliver are as follows:

- The SCCP Chair encouraged members to consider what they are already doing that may be able to be converted into a new SCCP initiative. There are projects underway in both SCCP and other fora that may contribute to our reporting to the November Ministerial Meeting. The Chair has asked that economies get in touch to compile this work together.
- The SCCP Chair has also asked economies to lead and facilitate a work programme to conduct a stocktake and gap analysis of the SCCP's TFA implementation progress and address any capacity building needs. This work can be captured in the SCCP's Annual Work Plan that focuses on achieving our vision, mission, priorities and objectives set out in the SCCP Strategic Plan 2022-2025.
- The SCCP will explore how SCCP could come up with its own statement that echoes the WCO's Compendium on Gender Equality and Diversity in Customs (2020), to suit the APEC customs context.
- New Zealand will circulate a survey to test how economies are implementing the Vaccine Guidelines, as well as to ask to what extent these Guidelines could be expanded to cover medical supplies and essential goods, as per the MRT Statement.
- The SCCP will engage with members regarding potential education campaigns for APEC customs officials to educate about the challenges we face, especially with respect to counterfeit COVID-19 vaccines and related goods. The SCCP will explore how to deliver this work.
- The SCCP will engage with Australia how we can make best use of the digital dashboard to fulfil the following: 1) to share and keep track of knowledge and innovations across both public and private sector to identify opportunities and synergies, and 2) to look for and respond to the various supply chain / border-related challenges together using the dashboard.

4. Private sector engagement in 2021

Please provide a list of private sector engagement(s) in 2021

ACBD

On 18 June 2021, the SCCP held the APEC Customs Business Dialogue virtual meeting with a focus on enabling greater and inclusive participation of micro, small to medium enterprises in global trade. The Dialogue included representatives from the private sector and the APEC Business Advisory Council. The first panel discussion focused on exporter challenges, while the second panel discussion focused on regulator response to those challenges.

A2C2

SCCP members were invited to attend the 13th APEC Alliance for Supply Chain Connectivity (A2C2) meeting which took place on 18 August 2021. A2C2 is a public private mechanism for stakeholders of both public, private sectors to formally engage in APEC's supply chain work, providing key guidance and technical inputs through active engagement and recommendations to CTI on prioritization within the supply chain work. The Chair's Assistant attended on behalf of the SCCP Chair and gave a remark

on how the SCCP's works fit into the A2C2's objective and activities, to contribute to moving goods and services seamlessly, quickly and inexpensively through the region.

SCCP2

Private sector engagement was a theme that was constantly highlighted throughout the SCCP2 meeting. The SCCP identified that collaboration with and active outreach to the private sector are key to facilitate the trade of medical supplies, encourage adopting technology and IT infrastructure to digitalize customs procedures, and to prevent the entry of counterfeit COVID-19 vaccines and related goods.

The SCCP will continue to explore collaboration and engagement opportunities with the private sector through its various projects and initiatives. The SCCP has agreed to work on creating greater efficiency through strengthened partnership with the private sector to in the SCCP Strategic Plan 2022-2025.

5. Cross-fora collaboration in 2021

Please provide a list of cross-fora collaboration in 2021

The SCCP invited the Policy Partnership on Women and the Economy (PPWE) to the second plenary meeting to discuss how the SCCP can contribute to the La Serena Roadmap for Women and Inclusive Growth Implementation Plan. We will invite their input on the SCCP statement on women and customs when this is pursued.

Also present throughout the SCCP2 meeting were our ABAC representative, colleagues from the CTI (CTI Chair, CTI Vice chair, and CTI Japan delegate), APEC LSIF, and APEC PSU.

Prior to the SCCP2 meeting, the SCCP Chair's Assistant had an opportunity to attend and speak at the A2C2 on behalf of the Chair, and the Chair attended and spoke at the APEC Workshop: Border Agency Cooperation (WTO TFA Article 8) organized by CTI US delegate. The Chair shared the SCCP's work relevant to these fora.

The SCCP will continue to look for opportunities for cross-fora collaboration.

6. Was quorum¹ reached at the most recent plenary meeting?

Please advise how many economies participated in the most recent plenary meeting.

Yes - all 21 economies participated at the second SCCP plenary meeting. This is the highest quorum in the last years.

7. Taking into consideration the forum's Assessment Report, what is your Forum doing to maintain/increase its relevance to APEC member economies and increase participation from its members?

Please provide a brief list of planned efforts to increase participation from members

The SCCP Chair prepared a rich agenda for both plenary meetings, inviting different guests and stakeholders in both the public and private sector, and held substantial discussions on each of the themes for APEC 2021, including advancing the MRT Joint Statement 2021.

¹ Quorum requires 14 economies or more. Quorum is measured by member economies (not including private sector) participating. Remote participation is counted.

The APEC region continues to feel the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. For most APEC economies, overcoming the pandemic is their priority. The SCCP agendas and various workshops focused on economic recovery, trade facilitation of vaccines, medical supplies, and essential goods, and implementing digital trade measures.

The virtual nature of the SCCP meetings have also made it more accessible for officials and guests to attend the meetings.

8. Decision points needed from CTI

Please add any additional decision points needed from CTI

- Seek CTI's endorsement of the Sub-Committee on Customs Procedures Convenor's Report.
- Note the SCCP's endorsed Strategic Plan 2022-2025. *Attached.*

APPENDIX A

FORUM'S CONTRIBUTION TO CTI'S OBJECTIVES

Appendix A provides examples of work that contributes to CTI's objectives

Support for the Multilateral Trading System

Initiatives that support:

- The multilateral trading system as embodied by the World Trade Organization (WTO) including the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference
- The implementation of WTO Agreements / Decisions

Regional Economic Integration

Initiatives that support:

- Achievement of *the Putrajaya Vision 2040* and development of its Implementation Plan/Action Agenda
- Eventual realization of the Free Trade Area of the Asia Pacific (FTAAP)
- Next Generation Trade and Investment Issues
- Internet and Digital Economy, E-Commerce and Digital Trade
- Global Value Chain Cooperation and Development
- MSMEs' Internationalization
- Environmental Goods and Services/Green Growth
- Services, including implementation of the APEC Services Competitiveness Roadmap
- Investment
- Market Access and reducing impact of Non-tariff Measures
- Intellectual Property
- Business Mobility through e.g. APEC Business Travel Card

Trade Facilitation and Connectivity

Initiatives that support:

- Supply Chain Connectivity, including implementation of Phase II of the Supply Chain Framework Action Plan (SCFAP II), GVC Blueprint 2.0
- Trade Facilitation, including work that supports implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement
- Connectivity
- Regulatory Cooperation and Convergence

Inclusion

Initiatives that support:

- Implementation of the Action Agenda on Economic, Financial and Social Inclusion

APPENDIX B

Extracts from 2021 Ministers Responsible for Trade Statement & the 2020 Declaration on Facilitating the Movement of Essential Goods by the MRT

Facilitating the Movement of Essential Goods

Export Restrictions and Prohibitions

- Each APEC economy will ensure that any emergency trade measures designed to tackle COVID-19 are consistent with WTO rules.
- Each APEC economy will ensure that any trade measure introduced in response to COVID-19 is notified in accordance with relevant WTO obligations.

Non-Tariff Barriers

- APEC economies are encouraged to work together to identify and resolve any unnecessary barriers to trade in essential goods.

Trade Facilitation

- Each APEC economy, consistent with its obligations under the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation, should expedite and facilitate the flow and transit of essential goods.
- APEC economies remain committed to enhance coordination, efficiency and transparency of the border clearance of essential goods, and full implementation of the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation, to help facilitate trade.
- Each APEC economy should endeavour to expedite the release of essential goods upon arrival, including adopting or maintaining procedures allowing for submission of import documentation and other required information, such as manifests, in order to begin processing prior to the arrival of goods.
- Each APEC economy will endeavour to facilitate the entry, transit and departure of air cargo containing essential medical supplies.
- APEC economies are expected to abide by the International Health Regulations (IHR) (2005)

Tariffs

- APEC economies take note of ABAC's recommendation for economies to take tariff liberalisation measures for essential medical supplies

APEC Ministers Responsible for Trade Meeting Joint Statement 2021

Medical supplies:

Today, we are pleased to announce a standalone statement on COVID-19 Vaccine Supply Chains (Annex 1), which outlines our approach to ensuring the trading environment supports the safe and efficient distribution of COVID-19 vaccines and related goods. We welcome the *Best Practice Guidelines for APEC Customs Administrations* as an operational and practical contribution to help facilitate the distribution of COVID-19 vaccines and related goods. To continue APEC's strong work in responding to the challenges of COVID-19, APEC economies will also agree to consider how to facilitate trade in medical supplies such as those included in the World Customs Organization (WCO) COVID-19 list,² and report to us before our APEC Ministerial Meeting in November.

Digital:

... we will accelerate implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, particularly those articles relating to: the accelerated use of digitalisation for border processes; pre-arrival processing of electronic declarations; electronic documents, electronic certification, electronic payments; expedited shipments; and border agency cooperation.... We agree to embed digital trade facilitation measures taken by APEC members during COVID-19. We task officials to report on progress when we meet again at the APEC Ministerial Meeting in November

² [World Customs Organization: HS classification reference for Covid-19 medical supplies](#)

APEC MRT Statement on COVID-19 Vaccine Supply Chains (Annex 1)

Vaccines statement: Review Mechanism:

The APEC Secretariat will make a summary report on the actions implemented by economies under this initiative by the APEC Ministerial Meeting in November 2021

- use the WCO-WHO list of COVID-19 vaccines and related goods as a reference for facilitating trade. APEC economies will expedite the flow and transit of all COVID-19 vaccines and related goods through their air, sea and land ports. We will expedite their release upon arrival, including by providing for advance electronic submission and processing of information to enable immediate release upon arrival.
- advance the implementation of the *Best Practice Guidelines for APEC Customs Administrations to Facilitate the Distribution of COVID-19 Vaccines and Related Goods*. We agree to embed the trade facilitation measures implemented during the pandemic, including digitising customs procedures, expediting the flow of goods across borders, and boosting coordination between traders and border agencies.
- While WTO rules permit export restrictions or prohibitions in certain circumstances, we emphasise economies who adopt such measures with respect to COVID-19 vaccines and related goods will evaluate their ongoing necessity as COVID-19 conditions change, in order to ensure they remain targeted, proportional, transparent, temporary, and do not create unnecessary barriers to trade.
- We will consider voluntary actions to reduce the cost of these products for our people, particularly by encouraging each economy to review its own charges levied at the border on COVID-19 vaccines and related goods.
- We will take appropriate measures to prevent criminal exploitation of supply chains and to prevent the entry and import of illegal, dangerous, sub-standard or counterfeit COVID-19 vaccines and related goods. This could include further implementing the *APEC Roadmap to Promote Global Medical Product Quality and Supply Chain Security and related toolkit*.