CROSS BORDER FACILITATION MEASURES FOR DISASTER RELIEF

SECTIONS C1 – C4

(CONTINUATION FROM INTRODUCTION SECTION)
C. Guidelines to facilitate disaster relief

C.1. Immediate response priorities

The below section details procedures that can be used immediately after a sudden-onset natural disaster to effectively facilitate the cross-border movement of disaster relief goods and equipment. The aim of the recommended practices is to ensure cross-border regulatory agencies can rapidly apply predictable and pragmatic controls following a large-scale natural disaster.

Ideally, countries will have existing laws which facilitate the rapid cross-border movement of disaster relief and equipment. Where this is not the case, governments may issue an emergency decree in the days following a large-scale disaster which may include measures to facilitate rapid cross-border movement of disaster relief and equipment. A model emergency decree has been developed by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to provide specific rules for managing international assistance and can be used and adapted as required to provide the necessary legal foundation for the procedures that follow.2

Airport management

Airport operations are a critical part of the initial disaster relief effort. Airport authorities and managing operators can take a key leadership role in ensuring good coordination of aviation and humanitarian stakeholders. Considering that natural disasters often have direct impact on airport infrastructure and operations, airport authorities should undertake disaster preparedness planning and regular exercises.3

Airport authorities and managing operators are encouraged to ensure that:

- Comprehensive communications and coordination mechanisms are able to be activated immediately following a large-scale natural disaster;
- Key information about the operational status of airports is able to be disseminated rapidly;
- Air traffic control, security, safety and other critical functions are able to continue in post-disaster and immediate response operating conditions (including consideration of staffing needs and fallback processes and equipment in case of infrastructure damage);
- Partnerships and other surge-type arrangements are in place to support the post-disaster functioning of airports, such as arrangements for staff from other airports to work temporarily in affected airports to meet anticipated demand.

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3 For an example of disaster preparedness planning undertaken by airports, refer to DHL. Get Airports Ready for Disaster (GARD) program, available from https://www.dpdhl.com/en/sustainability/society-and-engagement/disaster-management/disaster-preparedness.html
## One-Stop-Shop and coordinated border management

As defined by UN CEFAC'T Technical Note, a One-Stop-Shop is “a physical location where multiple agencies have representative offices. An economic operator can perform all of their procedures (paper or electronic) within the same physical location. A One-Stop-Shop, in this context, does not refer to the technical solution which allows one to process all information concerning a transaction; it refers to the physical location where multiple procedures can be fulfilled, allowing traders to avoid time-consuming travel from one office to another.” Implementing a One-Stop-Shops can facilitate the arrival of goods during the disaster relief stage, especially if it is combined with Coordinated Border Management (CBM). CBM refers to “a cooperative approach by border control agencies (both at the national and international level) in the context of seeking greater efficiencies when managing trade flows, while maintaining a balance with compliance requirements.”

One-Stop-Shops mechanisms should include all governmental regulatory agencies involved in the cross-border movement of disaster relief items. It should also include other governmental regulatory agencies involved in approving international personnel to enter the country and in approving assisting actors to register as eligible actors able to benefit from expedited government processes. The procedures agreed to be implemented by One-Stop-Shops should be kept as simple and predictable as possible. The typical types of disaster relief items in Annex III will help governments identify which authorities may need to be included.

In the immediate days following a large, sudden-onset natural disaster government offices may remain closed (particularly if the capital is affected), so it is important that agreements for activating One-Stop-Shop and CBM procedures are agreed in advance to avoid delays. This may require legislation or clear specification through use of an emergency decree. If a One-Stop-Shop arrangement does not pre-exist the disaster, it is recommended to quickly put one in place as soon as there is a request for international assistance or acceptance of international assistance.

The location/s of One-Stop-Shops should be considered carefully. Ideally, they will be located at key national air, maritime and road entry points; border entry points closest to the disaster affected sites; and/or key disaster response hubs for assisting actors and/or staging area locations. One-Stop-Shops may co-locate with government Emergency Operations Centers to encourage easy information flows and should ideally have access to internet, telephone, electricity and other communications services through stand-alone equipment such as electric generator in case networks are disrupted. It is recommended that One-Stop-Shops are supported with enough staff which may include re-deploying staff from other locations or duties. The contact details of One-Stop-Shops should be shared with assisting actors as soon as available so that pre-arrival notifications for disaster relief items can be submitted and immediate or conditional release granted where possible. Publishing likely locations, contact details and availability of IT systems for One-Stop-Shops as a preparedness activity before a disaster occurs is highly recommended. In some instances, a One-Stop-Shop mechanisms may be fully established in a neighboring country.

One-Stop-Shops can also support other services during the disaster relief phases including:

- Contact points for the main stakeholders involved in disaster relief;
- Requests for approval or registration of assisting actors so that they are eligible to receive support from governments for the prioritization of goods, equipment and personnel;
- Facilitate the handover of relief goods from non-registered assisting actors to registered ‘eligible’ actors if required;

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• Sharing contact details for Authorized Economic Operators (AEOs) or other similar authorized operator programs and other logistics and customs agent services.

In addition, for disaster relief entering through neighboring countries, it may be beneficial to implement a One-Stop-Border-Post, a facility in which “the traffic crossing the border need only to stop at one border post. In the One Stop Border Post the officials of neighboring countries work together in the same premises at the Border.”

Excellence in CBM is key to achieving the balance between adequate control and facilitating the rapid delivery of disaster relief. Examples of operational coordination include (but are not limited to):

- Aligned practices and work such as joint shipment inspections and checks (when these must occur) or allowing one governmental regulatory agency to conduct checks and registrations on behalf of another;
- Combined information, data collection systems, document submission procedures and intelligence sharing;
- Shared resources such as equipment and facilities;
- Coordination bodies such as working groups and inter-agency meetings.

Operational coordination for disaster relief must be supported by strategic, technical and regulatory coordination as well as appropriate legislation. Key scenarios for operational coordination that will require support and enabling instruments to be in place, include:

- **Coordination of duty, tariff, tax and other fee exemptions and waivers**

  Clear regulations and procedures for assisting actors to apply for exemptions and waivers from duties, taxes, tariffs and other fees are required to be communicated and implemented. These processes should be consistently applied across all different border entry points and should extend to demurrage, airport taxes, customs duties, value-added-tax and other costs as per national arrangements. Assisting actors will also require information if waivers and exemptions for taxes and duties and reduced fees for other charges apply for specific timeframes (such as during emergency declaration periods), to approved organizations and/or for particular goods and equipment. All relevant cross-border regulatory agencies need to be involved in these decisions and consistent communications to stakeholders.

- **Coordination of licensing**

  When licenses are required and cannot be waived, utilization of provisional or annual licenses may help to expedite processes. For example, required licenses may include import licenses for particular goods, operational licenses for certain equipment such as telecommunications, or licenses for particular activities such as for personnel to drive certain vehicles or provide certain services such as medical services. Acceptance of global licenses or permits is recommended and license requirements for disaster relief should be kept to an absolute minimum. Cooperation and coordination between governmental regulatory agencies should be used to simplify procedures and reduce requirements wherever possible.

- **Coordination of temporary admissions**

  Some disaster relief goods and equipment may require temporary admission only. These include non-consumable items such as medical equipment, generators, vehicles and search and rescue animals. The usage of ATA Carnets to expedite temporary admissions processes is encouraged, where applicable. Such processes should be clearly communicated to assisting

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actors along with timelines, extension process and the process for return shipping of the goods and equipment (re-export) that have been brought into the affected country under a temporary admission procedure.

- **Coordination for specialized relief equipment**

  A range of specialized disaster relief items and equipment may be critically needed following a sudden-onset natural disaster. Coordination mechanisms to expedite the import of such supplies and equipment is recommended. For example:

  - For **telecommunications equipment** the Tampere convention specifically aims to reduce regulatory barriers and guarantee the necessary privileges, immunities and facilities for relief personnel and organizations providing telecommunications assistance. To implement the convention, an advance list of telecommunication resources likely to be required and plans for their use should be developed along with the creation of partnerships amongst telecommunication actors.

  - **Medical supplies, equipment and devices** require specific prioritization during importation processes. Adherence to cold chain conditions, expiry dates, labelling requirements and avoidance of prohibited, counterfeit and sub-standard items are essential but can complicate rapid cross-border facilitation requiring special attention. Often sensitive medical supplies will be clearly marked by assisting actors to help physical identification and prioritization. Waivers and exemptions from inspections, licenses and import permits for verified and trusted organizations based on appropriate risk management should be applied wherever possible. Assisting actors should also be advised if particular border entry points have necessary equipment and storage facilities for the handling of medical supplies and equipment. Cross-border regulatory agencies should also be prepared to process medical items in kits, such as surgical kits, cholera kits, etc. and detailed kit contents lists shall be available from assisting actors. All medicines imported should be approved and appropriately labelled for use within the affected State.

  - **Transport assets, equipment and vehicles** may be needed for relief operations and will require coordination amongst regulatory agencies to rapidly facilitate exemptions or waivers for any duty, tariff, tax, other fees and registration/licensing requirements which legislation should support. Acceptance of international insurance and license arrangements are encouraged. Assets could include vehicles, helicopters, forklifts, drones, etc. Use of temporary importation and registration procedures to quickly enable their use and operation in the affected country during the disaster relief phase is encouraged.

  - **Search and rescue equipment and animals** may require specific coordination and legal facilities amongst regulatory agencies to provide rapid importation.

  - **Emergency food** rations and supplies may also be needed by disaster affected communities and cross-border regulatory agencies should consider mechanisms to facilitate rapid importation of such food supplies.

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It is important to ensure coordination is not limited main border entry points but is also able to be implemented reliably and consistently at all border entry points.

**Paper based and other fallback procedures**

Flexibility and adaptability are required for cross-border regulatory agencies to facilitate disaster relief movements in a post-disaster operating environment. While electronic and automated processes can provide significant advantages, electricity and telecommunications may be disrupted following a disaster. Even if government agencies have contingency plans for electricity supply via generator and network-independent telecommunication systems, assisting actors in the disaster affected State and other stakeholders may not. Administrations shall hence plan for and activate fallback procedures to ensure that any necessary cross-border regulations and control procedures that cannot be waived or exempted for disaster relief shipments can be simplified and easily followed in the post-disaster operating environment.

Recommended fallback procedures include:

- Provisions that allow registered assisting actors and authorized operators to keep appropriate records of imports and exports until electricity and telecommunication services and capabilities of cross-border regulatory agencies are restored;
- Acceptance of paper-based documents and forms;
- Printing hardcopies of any required forms before a disaster so that they are readily available post-disaster;
- Acceptance of documents adhering to international standards (such as standard shipping documents, commercial invoices, etc.) that do not require adaption or reformatting to meet country specific requirements;
- Acceptance of documents in untranslated or unofficial translated form;
- Acceptance of the use of electronic signatures where required;
- Acceptance of copies, rather than original documents;
- Coordination and partnerships with neighboring countries to provide remote temporary assistance.

The use of separate control lanes for shipments identified as disaster relief will also help ensure that fallback procedures are limited only to disaster relief shipments. Use of such procedures can also be restricted to registered assisting actors deemed ‘eligible’ to minimize risk.

Fallback procedures should be reviewed regularly to ensure there are robust methods in place for the exchange and storage of cross-border regulatory agency information when usual systems are not operating.

**Identification and prioritization of needed disaster relief items**

To prevent bottlenecks at border entry points, cross-border regulatory agencies must have a plan in place to clearly identify and prioritize the most urgent requested disaster relief shipments and separately manage any other unrequested, low-priority goods. Typically, disaster relief goods will be labelled as ‘Humanitarian Aid – Not For Sale – Relief Goods’ printed physically on packaging and declared on documents such as packing list, gift certificate or proforma invoice. Disaster relief goods should also be labelled with the item contents and any applicable expiry dates. However, with more diversity of assisting actors and large volumes of disaster relief goods likely to arrive following a large-scale natural disaster, this labelling may not be sufficient to adequately identify and prioritize the most urgent items. Other systems that can be used jointly for identifying and prioritizing disaster relief goods and equipment include:
Prioritize relief consignments by using tariff codes to identify priority relief items

On request or acceptance of international assistance, the governmental agency responsible for disaster response should issue a preliminary list of priority goods, equipment and services needed based on initial rapid needs assessments.\(^\text{10}\) The items on the list can be quickly selected from a list of acceptable items developed before a disaster occurs as described in Section C2. The list should be communicated to all relevant cross-border regulatory agencies and assisting actors providing goods and equipment.\(^\text{11}\) The list should be used to prioritize, but not exclude, needed disaster relief items and equipment and should be developed in consultation with all first-responder agencies.

Items and equipment included on the list can be mapped against national tariff code classifications. Publishing a list of the correct national tariff codes for the items and equipment on the list will help ensure priority goods and equipment can be easily recognized through customs declarations.

Nearly 212 economies currently apply the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System (also known as the HS).\(^\text{12}\) The HS chapters 98 and 99 can be used to set additional national provisions. States may wish to make use of chapters 98 and 99 to further distinguish disaster relief items for easy identification, prioritization and tracking.

Identify priority relief consignments using customs procedure codes

Alternatively, dedicated national customs procedure codes can be created and assigned to disaster relief consignments. The codes may be released specifically for a disaster response with a predetermined applicable timeframe dependent on the scale of the emergency. However, this process may be more difficult to administer than the use of national tariff codes and may only be applied on a consignment basis.

Additionally, prioritization must also be given to consignments from registered or ‘eligible’ assisting actors and donors from which the affected State has agreed to accept assistance. An Importer ID can be assigned to these eligible assisting actors and donors. Consignments sent by/to these entities should be granted priority processing.

Acceptance of pre-arrival information and pre-arrival processing

To quickly process relief shipments, the pre-arrival processing and risk management of disaster relief consignments based on advance electronic information and documents followed by immediate release upon arrival is highly recommended. Disaster relief consignments assessed as low risk should be released immediately upon arrival whenever possible. In cases where existing legislation does not allow for pre-arrival processes, an emergency decree can be used to establish this.

Cross-border regulatory agencies should review and specify a reduced list of information requirements to process and provide immediate release for disaster relief goods and equipment, taking into consideration different commodity types. Information required to be submitted should be simplified and aligned with international standards to reduce differences in information requirements among

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\(^{10}\) This priority list should be revised depending on shifting needs and as a relief operation progresses through relief and recovery phases


\(^{12}\) The HS is a multipurpose international product nomenclature developed by the World Customs Organization. It comprises about 5,000 commodity groups; each identified by a six-digit code, arranged in a legal and logical structure and is supported by well-defined rules to achieve uniform classification. Refer to World Customs Organization, *What is the Harmonized System*, available from [http://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/nomenclature/overview/what-is-the-harmonized-system.aspx](http://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/nomenclature/overview/what-is-the-harmonized-system.aspx)
sending, receiving and transit countries. It is recommended to publish the information requirements publicly for easy reference.

In cases where the national legislation requires mandatory submission of pre-arrival/pre-departure information with certain time limits (i.e. minimum 5-days in advance), these requirements should be waived or reduced for disaster relief consignments in recognition of the urgent nature of these movements.

Where immediate release cannot be granted conditional release is encouraged (also known as subsequent clearance). Under conditional release, final classification of goods, assessment of value, tax exemptions and other transactions can occur after the goods are physically released for use in disaster relief operations.

**Emergency registration process for assisting actors and donors**

While many international and domestic assisting actors will have established relationships and programs in high disaster risk countries and will likely already be registered as a legal entity and approved to operate and import goods to the affected country, it is highly recommended to put in place a fast-tracked registration process for new international and domestic assisting actors and donors. This is especially important for ‘green lane’ expedited cross-border movement processes to be applied to registered, ‘eligible’ assisting actors and donors from which the affected State has accepted assistance. The activation of such processes should be linked to the request or acceptance of international assistance.

The emergency registration process should be straight forward and simple but still contain appropriate checks required by the affected State to manage the disaster relief operation appropriately. Many governmental agencies may be closed or working with a highly limited number of staff due to disaster impacts, so emergency registration processes should also avoid the involvement of multiple agencies or high-level government approval that may be difficult to obtain in the post-disaster operating environment. The registration may be limited to certain geographic areas or periods of time (such as restricted to a period of disaster or state of emergency declaration). The application process for registration should also be able to be completed at any established One-Stop-Shop.

New assisting actors and donors may also work through partnerships (such as implementing partnerships) with other already registered and approved ‘eligible’ assisting actors, instead of needing to register to provide requested or accepted assistance. However, working through other actors should not be a mandatory requirement.

States should establish criteria for the basis of decisions regarding the acceptance or rejection of registration applications by international assisting actors and communicate these decisions clearly.

**C.2. Other mechanisms to improve cross-border movement of disaster relief goods and equipment**

This section details other recommendations to improve cross-border facilitation measures for disaster relief goods and equipment that are equally important but may not be considered immediate priorities during the initial disaster relief phase. The activities in this section generally require more pre-planning and consideration.

**Prepare list of acceptable disaster relief items and equipment**

While each disaster will result in variations to the goods, equipment and services needed based on initial impact assessments and needs, it is recommended that States consider developing a list of acceptable relief items and equipment likely to be needed and whether they can be easily sourced in
large quantities from manufacturers within the country or support from international assisting actors and donors is likely to be required. The typical types of disaster relief items and equipment listed at Annex III along with reference to disaster relief item catalogues compiled by several international organizations and United Nations entities can provide guidance.\textsuperscript{13} Consideration should be given to community preferences for items to be distributed to households and any compatibility requirements for equipment.

Preparing a list of acceptable disaster relief items and equipment in advance before a disaster will help make sure assisting actors and donors provide appropriate support as well as help reduce the arrival of large quantities of inappropriate unrequested donations. The list prepared should be broad enough to contain items and equipment that may be needed following a variety of disaster types and disaster scenarios guided by the risk profile of the country. Multiple lists for each major disaster hazards could be created. Additionally, the list may define likely needs during disaster relief and recovery phases (although recovery needs are often more difficult to predict). While considering local context and community preferences gathered from past disasters, the list should also align with common international relief item specifications and existing regional stockpiles wherever possible to facilitate rapid sourcing and supply chain management. Selecting disaster relief items and equipment that don’t align with existing regional stockpiles held by assisting actors may significantly slow the sourcing and delivery of relief items and equipment.

If a list of acceptable disaster relief items and equipment is prepared in advance of a disaster then the governmental agency responsible for disaster response can quickly select the items and equipment on the list needed following a particular disaster event based on the initial needs assessment. Preparing the acceptable relief items and equipment list ahead of time should expedite this process. Associated national tariff codes or customs procedure codes can also be mapped in advanced.

It is important that the list is developed referencing applicable international standards\textsuperscript{14} and that all governmental agencies, international and domestic assisting actors and local stakeholders are consulted to ensure that it is inclusive of all needs. The list should also be made available to international and domestic assisting actors and other stakeholders to aid their preparations. The list should also be flexible to adaptation to accommodate developing technology, emerging good practices and evolving community preference and needs for disaster relief items and equipment.

\textbf{Develop unrequested donation plan}

The influx of unrequested donated goods following a disaster is a common occurrence. The reasons for receiving unrequested donations are many and varied and include spontaneous donations from well-meaning international businesses and individuals including diaspora citizens living overseas, businesses dumping expired, near-to-expired and/or unusable stocks, donations in excess of that needed, donations not suitable to the context that cannot be used, etc. Unrequested donations are often goods...


\textsuperscript{14} For example, the SPHERE standards. Refer to SPHERE, \textit{What are humanitarian standards}, available from https://spherestandards.org/humanitarian-standards/
not conforming to common relief item specifications, often arrive with incomplete paperwork, unsuitable packaging and lack a clearly identified consignee.\textsuperscript{15}

These unrequested goods can overwhelm points of entry causing bottlenecks and preventing the priority disaster relief items and equipment from rapidly reaching those in need. Without a plan to manage unrequested donated goods, priority disaster relief items and equipment may be delayed.

Good practices to help reduce and manage unrequested, low-priority donated goods include:

- Develop and implement a proactive communications plan and ‘key messages’ to request financial donations instead of donated goods;\textsuperscript{16}
- Work with key transporters, customs agents/brokers and other supporting private sector economic operators to develop a plan to reduce the arrival of unrequested donated goods;
- Do not provide priority facilitation services, exemptions or waivers for duties, taxes and other fees to unrequested donations;
- Identify additional storage areas for separating and temporary storage of unrequested donations for sorting and processing later;
- Develop national protocols for the disposal of unrequested donations that cannot be used.\textsuperscript{17}

**Ensure accessible processes, procedures and contact points**

In the immediate aftermath of a disaster, the operational environment can be highly pressurized and taxing on all stakeholders. One of the key challenges faced by all is access to information. Cross-border regulatory agencies must ensure they have protocols and systems in place to share information and provide updates easily and rapidly.

Overall coordination for the disaster will be the responsibility of the State and appointed national disaster management coordinating body, but other governmental agencies including cross-border regulatory agencies also need to establish focal points for clear communications and coordination.

It is important that cross-border regulatory agencies have contact lists of stakeholders, broadcast channels (such as email mailing lists), national trade information portals and websites and other structured channels of engagement from the onset of a disaster.\textsuperscript{18} For example, in the Mozambique Cyclone Response in 2019, several different text messaging groups were set up to ensure quick and smooth flow of information to relevant stakeholders. This was a simple mechanism that enabled communication at a critical moment of the response. One-Stop-Shops can also assist greatly with sharing of necessary information between governmental agencies, assisting actors and other stakeholders. Publishing clear procedures and simple visual diagrams that explain the roles of governmental regulatory agencies and who is responsible for what processes and procedures is


\textsuperscript{18} States may also share information via the Global Disaster Alert and Coordination System (GDACS) and the Virtual On-Site Operations Coordination Centre (OSOCC), available at https://vosocc.unocha.org/
considered good practice. National Trade Information Portals can be set up in advance with disaster relief page sections to share information rapidly, including correct procedures and relevant national tariff codes for priority relief items. Sharing names, contact details and links to industry associations, customs brokers and other logistics service providers is also very helpful for assisting actors, although assisting actors should follow their own due diligence and services procurement procedures.

It is critical that communications, messages and clear procedures should be consistent between cross-border regulatory agencies and border entry points to avoid confusion. Assisting actors also appreciate having access to dedicated contact points that can clearly explain procedures and answer questions.

Compliance programs

Many governments are utilizing rapid ‘green lane’ customs clearance processes for authorized economic operators (AEOs) or other similar authorized operator programs. AEOs are accredited organizations that have been recognized as complying with supply chain security standards that reduce the risk of prohibited or restricted goods entering the county. Use of AEO or other similar authorized operator programs and associated Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) programs are encouraged. In countries where such programs exist before a disaster, assisting actors can consider working with AEOs or other similar authorized operators to help speed the customs clearance processes. However, this can involve additional costs and should not be a mandatory requirement for international or domestic assisting actors. There is an administrative burden and associated costs for assisting actors to apply for AEO programs, so emergency registration processes that can be rapidly activated and completed during the disaster relief phase should also be available as outlined in Section C1.

Pre-positioning of disaster relief items

International and domestic assisting actors and other first responder agencies may already have pre-positioned disaster relief supplies and equipment in storage sites in country before a disaster strikes. It is these pre-positioned supplies that are most frequently used and distributed first in the initial 0-15 days after a disaster before newly imported supplies are available and utilized. Replacing or replenishing used pre-positioned supplies, so they are available for any future disaster is a critical activity. The cross-border facilitation measures for disaster relief goods and equipment during the disaster relief phase should be extended to replenishment shipments for pre-positioned supplies, even if these shipments arrive some time after the disaster relief period.

Continuous improvements from lessons learned

In order to improve the cross-border facilitation measures for disaster relief goods and equipment States are strongly encouraged to continuously review the mechanisms they have put in place. Particularly after disaster events or exercises, systems and procedures should be examined to identify improvements that can be made. Involving all cross-border regulatory agencies, assisting actors and other stakeholders is key to this process to ensure that mechanisms and procedures are working

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19 World Trade Organization, Protocol Amending the Marrakesh Agreement Establishing The World Trade Organization, Decision of 27 November 2014
21 The SAFE Framework of the World Customs Organization defines an AEO as “a party involved in the international movement of goods in whatever function that has been approved by or on behalf of a national Customs Administration as complying with WCO or equivalent supply chain security standards. AEOs include inter alia manufacturers, importers, exporters, brokers, carriers, consolidators, intermediaries, ports, airports, terminal operators, integrated operators, warehouses, distributors” available from http://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/facilitation/instrument-and-tools/frameworks-of-standards/safe_package.aspx
C.3. Operational readiness

This section outlines key recommendations to enhance the operational readiness of cross-border agencies to facilitate the movement of disaster relief goods and equipment in the first 0-15 days after a large-scale natural disaster.

**Capacity building and simulation exercises**

Capacity building requires political will, commitment, engagement and ownership of the process by all stakeholders and at all levels. Capacity building efforts should be based on an assessment and analysis of capacity building needs and may include many different activities such as briefings, technical and ‘soft-skills’ trainings, workshops, mentoring, practice simulations, reviews of processes and systems, etc.

The ability for governmental regulatory agencies to carry out allotted functions to facilitate the movement of disaster relief goods and equipment as suggested in these Guidelines should be considered when identifying and planning capacity building efforts.

Capacity building in this area should also be enhanced, and needs tested and identified through regular desk top exercises, simulations and drills as well as reviews of past disaster responses. A wide selection of key stakeholders covering the full end-to-end export-to-import process should be involved in simulation and training activities to build and test coordination procedures and the effectiveness of links between entities. Regulatory agencies as well as assisting actors and private sector representatives should be involved to help to identify operational bottlenecks and possible solutions. Performance measurement and ‘time-release’ type studies for disaster relief consignments can also support identifying issues and where procedures may require improvement.

Exercises and simulations should be regularly scheduled. Larger, complex exercises can be planned less frequently (for example, every 2-3 years) while smaller, more simple exercises should be undertaken more regularly (for example, quarterly). Scheduling simulations and exercises annually before key disaster seasons commence is encouraged. The regular active participation of cross-border regulatory agencies in simulations and exercises organized by other governmental agencies and assisting actors is also highly recommended to ensure all steps and stakeholders involved are considered.

**Scalability considerations**

The ability for cross-border regulatory agencies to scale-up or scale-down (increase or decrease) their capacity to facilitate a large influx of disaster relief goods and equipment following a large scale natural disaster relies on careful planning of alternatives, back-up solutions and reserves. These plans are critical to operational readiness. Using inter-agency working groups and other similar forums to develop and guide scalability planning is highly encouraged.

Cross-border regulatory agencies must have such plans in place for accessing extra staff if and where needed considering the likely post-disaster operating environment. Having staff contact details ready and the mechanisms to quickly set rosters and rotate needed staff to critical locations should be considered. Back up and reserves of essential equipment for cross-border regulatory agencies to be able to operate also need to be carefully planned and maintained by respective agencies for operational readiness.

Additional specific considerations for marine and airport operators include:

- Cargo handling equipment for loading and unloading;
- Electricity supply and telecommunication services;
- Reserve fuel supplies;
- Facility entry and exit points, for example truck access routes;
- Additional storage areas for loose, palletized and container cargo;
- Firefighting and safety equipment;
- Cargo inspection equipment, including x-rays;
- Cold chain capabilities;
- Alternative ports if main ports are inoperable.

Logistics Capacity Assessments (LCAs) have been undertaken for over 100 countries and compiled by the global Logistics Cluster coordinated by the World Food Programme. They contain baseline information about logistics infrastructure, processes and regulations, markets, and contacts for a country and aim to ensure that the logistics information required to inform decision making for disaster relief operations is available to enhance humanitarian logistics preparedness, response and coordination. LCAs provide a useful reference of baseline information for scalability planning for disaster relief. Cross-border regulatory agencies, national disaster management coordinating bodies, international and domestic assisting actors as well as private sector actors should assist in maintaining up-to-date information and amending the LCAs as required. Useful information may also be available through minimum preparedness actions undertaken by UN Resident/Humanitarian Coordinators and humanitarian country teams following the Emergency Response Preparedness planning guidance from the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC).

C.4. Modernization with standards and information systems

The modernization of information systems and adoption of global standards provide potential to improve efficiencies in every part of the supply chain as goods are moved across borders, including for disaster relief. Automated systems can reduce manual mistakes and increase time and cost efficiencies. Using common data and information system standards can benefit the completeness and accuracy of data as well as interoperability and the ease of data-sharing between systems. This can reduce operating costs and better manage trade risks as well as enable easier performance measurement and analysis of time-release data to identify and inform improvements needed.

While some cross-border regulatory agencies have adopted computer-based systems to some degree, there is considerable diversity in how agencies operate systems, what the regulatory requirements are, and which government agencies are involved in border control procedures. In some least-developed countries, computer-based systems may also be highly undeveloped and not regularly used. Improvements can benefit disaster relief and result in better product identification and prioritization, transparency, risk management, clearance and improved anti-counterfeit and safety recall capabilities enhancing compliance and safety. These kinds of modernization initiatives are an important part of establishing state-of-the-art processes for all cross-border trade as well as benefiting disaster relief efforts. They are long-term goals and require significant planning so should not be expected to be created during the initial phase after a disaster but can be used if already in existence.

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**Systems supporting simplified workflows**

While internet and electricity reliant IT systems may be unavailable immediately following a large-scale natural disaster, it may still be possible to implement the simplified workflow process in the post-disaster operating environment following the fallback procedures discussed in Section C1.

There are a range of computerized cross-border regulatory agency management systems that can help simplify process workflows and also assist the cross-border facilitation of disaster relief. Key capabilities of such systems include identifying products and organizations to be given priority treatment, recognizing priority consignments, processing pre-arrival information to release goods without delays using appropriate controls and audit and reporting features.

**Single Window mechanisms**

A ‘Single Window’ is “a facility providing trade facilitation that allows parties involved in trade and transport to lodge standardized information and documents with a single entry point to fulfil all import, export, and transit related regulatory requirements Individual data elements should only be submitted once electronically.” Single Window mechanisms crystalize many other trade facilitation measures that can help streamline formalities at the border. For assisting actors, Single Windows are critical to reduce the time needed for various approval processes including tax and duty exemptions for disaster relief consignments, which often involve multiple regulatory agencies. The preparatory phases of putting in place a Single Window including the coordination between governmental regulatory agencies, streamlining data requirements, establishing a single national data set aligned to international standards and establishing the enabling legal environment can all benefit the facilitation of disaster relief goods in the long term. Even if a Single Window facility is not available electronically on-line because of a disaster, the inter-governmental agency cooperation created is beneficial.

Private sector platforms such as Single Submission Portals can also assist in expediting border clearances as they can act as an interface between assisting actors and regulatory agencies at the border.

**Business continuity management**

Business continuity management is “a risk management process designed to ensure the continuity of a business’s key activities in the case of a major disruptive event (e.g. an IT systems breakdown or an epidemic of illness among staff). It involves identifying the key activities of a company [or organization], the resources needed to deliver them (e.g. personnel, systems, plant and machinery), and the major risks affecting these resources; a strategy must then be developed to restore key activities as soon as possible.”

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24 One example is the the Automated System for Relief Emergency Consignments (ASYREC) add-on software that has been developed and is available for implementation to ASYCUDA and other systems. The ASYREC add-on allows immediate recognition of organizations involved in UN relief operations and allows these entities to expedite imports of humanitarian relief cargo and for customs authorities to have a more accurate overview of incoming relief consignments. Refer to UNCTAD, *Smoothing the way for humanitarian aid: the UN’s life-saving ASYREC partnership*, 2018, available from [https://unctad.org/en/pages/newsdetails.aspx?OriginalVersionID=1673](https://unctad.org/en/pages/newsdetails.aspx?OriginalVersionID=1673).


possible after any disruption.”

Making plans to maintain business continuity is critical for any modern organization. Business continuity planning includes but is more extensive than the fallback procedures recommended in Section C1.

A diverse range of advice and tools exists to support business continuity planning for governmental regulatory agencies. All cross-border regulatory agencies are encouraged to make and regularly review business continuity plans to maintain services following a disaster and be able to help facilitate rapid disaster relief to affected populations.