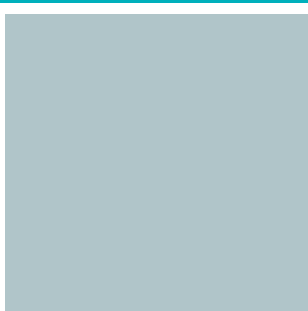*Key Factors in Establishing*
Single Windows for Handling Import/Export
Procedures and Formalities:

Trade Facilitation and the Single Window

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ESCWA

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA (ESCWA)

KEY FACTORS IN ESTABLISHING SINGLE WINDOWS FOR HANDLING IMPORT/EXPORT PROCEDURES AND FORMALITIES: TRADE FACILITATION AND THE SINGLE WINDOW

United Nations

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA (ESCWA)

KEY FACTORS IN ESTABLISHING SINGLE WINDOWS FOR HANDLING IMPORT/EXPORT PROCEDURES AND FORMALITIES: TRADE FACILITATION AND THE SINGLE WINDOW

United Nations
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Note: The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of ESCWA.

The opinions and recommendations expressed in this document do not necessarily reflect the views of ESCWA or the United Nations Secretariat.

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Preface

This publication was prepared by the Economic Development and Globalization Division (EDGD) of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) as part of its activities in the area of trade facilitation and Single Window. It represents an invitation to trade officials and policymakers in ESCWA member countries to reorganize their trade facilitation policies as a key feature in supply chain management and customs modernization programmes with a view to furthering economic development in the ESCWA region.

The publication draws on work conducted by an external expert, which was presented at the Regional Training Workshop on Requirements for the Establishment of Single Windows for Handling Export/Import Procedures and Formalities in the ESCWA Region (Beirut, 3-4 March 2011). The original text was modified significantly as a result of the discussions, deliberations and suggestions raised by participants at the Workshop and forms the basis of this study.

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Executive summary

The present report on single windows for trade facilitation was commissioned by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). This final document completes a four-months desk research, interview and questionnaire process, which was concluded with the Regional Training Workshop on Requirement for the Establishment of Single Window for Handling Export/Import Procedures and Formalities in the ESCWA Region, Beirut, 3-4 March 2011. The objectives of the report were to:

- Provide background awareness and learning materials for ESCWA member countries;

- Document and analyse the current status of single windows for trade facilitation;

- Identify best practices in the region;

- Provide policy recommendations for ESCWA and its member countries bearing in mind the outcome of the regional analysis.

What is a single window, and why is it used?

The reason for this exercise is to measure regional progress and preparedness for single windows in trade facilitation. The purpose of a single window is to provide a platform and processes for a paperless (electronic) exchange of trade information between participants in the trade process, largely accomplished through a single electronic lodgement. Pressure to implement single windows is building from several such sources as the World Trade Organization (WTO), which is aiming to have a mandatory inclusion of single windows in the final version of the Doha Round, probably due for signature by the end of 2011; from countries themselves who see trade expansion, efficiencies and increased revenue collection as benefits of a successful single window, and the global supply chains, who are demanding more efficient Government licensing and customs processes, together with faster, more efficient movement of goods through port and terminal operations to improve national import and export performance.

A single window is made up from an organic mixture of the collaborative efforts of all of the parties involved in a nation's international trade activities. It uses the latest ICT techniques; international data and messaging standards together with simplified, harmonized and remodeled information systems for data exchange, in order to replace traditional paper-based information. It also deploys sophisticated rules and procedures for funding, governance, business and marketing models, planning and project management, and for effective collaboration between all of the parties involved in the single window, at each of its stages.

In addition to the mixture of ingredients that collectively make up a single window, there are many sub-versions of single windows, each dedicated to the principle of "single submission" and reengineered processes, converting paper-based, manual processes to electronic messaging systems and processes. Countries experienced in single window practises have often gone through the various stages referred to within this report. They are the components or elements of a successful single window, represented and analysed later in this report, in a fashion that ensures that no important processes have been excluded from consideration. The ultimate national single window includes all of the information exchanged by traders; Government departments (including customs); maritime, air, road, rail and inland waterway transport systems; port and terminal operators; and a range of other participants in the trade process, including freight forwarders, customs brokers, shipping agents, banks and insurance companies. The management, or governance system, which oversees this major transition from paper and traditional business processes to electronics-based reengineered systems is the major challenge, in a comprehensive sequence of conversion and change management activities that are themselves serious challenges.

Diagram 1 illustrates the typical stages that are encountered on the way to a national single window. It should be noted that this is just one of many possible representations. Each economy plots its own course

based on local variables, resources, skills and experience, resources and political will, among other factors. Some of the world leaders in single window application to trade facilitation have now been active in changing and upgrading their systems since the mid- to late 1980s. This is not a trivial exercise, nor one that can be achieved without a permanent set of changes and dedicated infrastructure. But it is unavoidable if nations are to remain engaged in expanded and more efficient global trading activities. And the benefits are considerable and long-lasting. The reverse is also true: those economies that delay engagement in single window implementations will be increasingly subjected to powerful inhibitors to national trade efficiency and economic growth.

Conclusions

The regional economies that have, in the view of this report, made most progress, are:

1. United Arab Emirates.
2. Saudi Arabia.
3. Lebanon.

Other economies were ranked as follows:

- Some progress: Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar;
- Least progress: Iraq, Palestine, the Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Yemen.

Diagram 1. Road map for a collaborative national single window
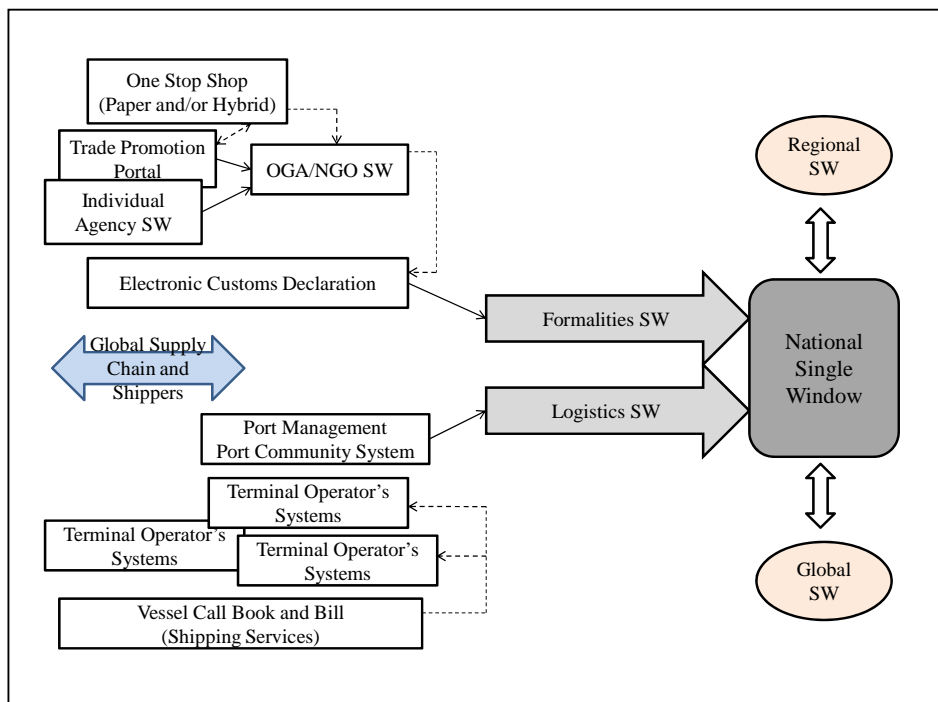
This ranking does not take into account any preparation and investments in planning for single windows. It only measures current, tangible results, so that it may be expected that the next version of this report will show considerable change, influenced by current planning and preparation activities.

This report expresses the view that, because of this widely varying set of local conditions and practises, the routes they may choose and many other local factors, the concept of best practice is extremely

difficult to identify and to measure. At the sub-single window level, it is slightly easier, but to compare the collective efforts of nations is to risk trivializing the work, resources and ingenuity that sometimes take small steps, and sometimes achieve breakthroughs.

Recommendations

There is no universal agreement on definitions nor, as explained above, are there easy ways to measure and monitor progress. This report is just a tentative first step. The need for capacity-building and awareness, education and training is clear. Even participants at the ESCWA workshop articulated the need. Regional leadership is another area that is currently lacking.

And it is in this area that ESCWA, as an objective and trusted third party, may be able to provide unique assistance to its member community. It is, therefore, recommended that ESCWA undertake the following:

1.	Develop a regionally specific generic blueprint and/or roadmap for implementing single windows in ESCWA member countries.

2.	Distribute the blueprint to member countries and keep track of progress through analysis, publications and workshops complemented by web-based, social media-based and/or e-mail feedback.

3.	Develop and host a forum programme aimed at evolving a generic governance programme for member countries for single window developments in the region.

4.	Refine the existing single window workshop programme to include more specific reports, more in-depth case studies, more precise evaluations and comparisons, including a set of single window "Readiness Guides and Check Lists" for member countries.

5.	Create a portfolio of strategic and tactical single window reference, education and training materials for member countries, for both the public and the private sector.

6.	Initiate a member countries education and training programme, ideally training the trainers, completed with testing, examination and certification processes.

7.	Take a leadership position in the region in helping to initiate a regional single window, in order to provide clear regional guidelines and self-sufficiency in single window developments.

8.	Establish a member countries steering committee for single window capacity-building, assistance with specific member countries implementations and further status report developments.

9.	Liaise with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) in order to expand their single window and standards materials and services for the benefit of ESCWA member countries.

ABBREVIATIONS

3PL	Third-party logistics (organizations)
4PL	Fourth-party logistics (organizations)
ACTF	Assistance for Customs and Trade Facilitation (USAID)
ADB	African Development Bank
AEO	Authorized economic operator (WCO)
AFTA	ASEAN Free Trade Area
AID	Agency for International Development
ANSI	American National Standards Institute
APEC	Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
ASW	ASEAN single window
ASYCUDA	A System for Customs Data and Administration
B/L	Bill of lading
B2B	Business-to-business
B2C	Business-to-consumer
B2E	Business-to-employee
BAPLIE	Bay Planning (EDIFACT message)
BoL	Bill of lading
BOLERO	Bill of Lading Electronic Reconciliation Organization
C/O	Certificate of origin
C2B	Consumer-to-business
C2C	Consumer-to-consumer
CAS	Customs Automation System (Bahrain)
CoO	Certificate of origin
CPGA	Customs and Ports General Authority (QATAR)
CRM	Customer relationship management
CSCMP	Council of Supply Chain Management Professionals
DFZ	Duty free zone
DISA	Data Interchange Standards Association (United States)
DPW	Dubai Ports World
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry (United Kingdom)
EAN	European Article Numbering (Association)
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
ECA	Egyptian Customs Authority
ECE	Economic Commission for Europe
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ECWA	Economic Commission for Western Asia
EDI	Electronic data interchange
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
ESCWA	Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
eTIR	Electronic Transport Internationaux Routiers
FCL	Full container load

FTA	Free trade agreement
GA	Government agency
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GCI	Global competitiveness index
GDP	Gross domestic product
GFPT	Global Facilitation Partnership for Transport and Trade
GOEIC	General Organization for Export and Import Control (Egypt)
GRN	Goods release note
GRN	Goods receipt note
GSP	Generalized system of preferences
HC	Harmonized code
HKSW	Hong Kong single window
HQ	Headquarters
HR	Human resources
HS	Harmonized system
IATA	International Air Transport Association
ICT	Information and communications technology
ID	Identity
IFC	International Finance Corporation
IMO	International Maritime Organization
INFORMS	Lebanese Government Portal for Information and Forms
IPR	Intellectual property rights
IRU	International Road Transport Union
ITC	International Trade Centre
ITSW	Information technology single window (United Kingdom customs)
JIT	Justin-time (inventory control)
KPI	Key performance indicators
LCL	Less-than-full container load
LPI	Logistics Performance Indicators
MENA	Middle East North Africa
MRA	Mutual recognition agreement
MTI	Ministry of Trade and Industry (Egypt)
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Area
NAJM	Arabic for star: Lebanese customs ASYCUDA implementation
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NSW	National single window
NTB	Non-tariff barrier
NTR	Normal trading relations (United States)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OGA	Other Government agencies
OIC	Organization of the Islamic Conference
OMSAR	Office of the Minister of State for Administrative Reform (Lebanon)
PDR	People's Democratic Republic (Laos)

PIA	Permit-ssuing agencies
PPP	Public-private partnership
PSI	Pre-shipment inspection
PWC	Public Warehouse Company
QCCSW	Qatar customs clearance single window
ROP	Royal Omani Police
RORO	Roll on/roll off
SAD	Single administration document
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SASO	Saudi Arabian Standards Organization
SCM	Supply chain management
SDT	Special and Differential Treatment (WTO)
SI	Systems integrator
SITPRO	Simplification of international trade procedures (United Kingdom)
SOP	Standard operating procedures
SPS	Sanitary and phyto-sanitary (WTO/WHO)
SQL	Structured Qqery language
SWIF	Single window implementation framework (ECE)
SWIFT	System for World-wide Interchange of Financial Transactions
TA	Technical assistance
TEU	Twenty foot equivalent unit
TIR	Transport Internationaux Routiers
TOR	Terms of reference
TV	Television
UN/CEFACT	United Nations Centre for Administration Commerce and Transport
UN/EDIFACT	United Nations EDI for Administration Commerce and Transport
UNCITRAL	United Nations Commission on International Trade Law
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNeDocs	United Nations electronic documents
UNESOB	United Nations Economic and Social Office in Beirut
UNLK	United Nations Layout Key
UNTDED	United Nations Trade Data Elements Directory
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WCO	World Customs Organization
WEF	World Economic Forum
WHO	World Health Organization
WTC	World Trade Centre
WTO	World Trade Organization
XML	Extensible markup language

I. IMPORTING AND EXPORTING: INTERNATIONAL SUPPLY CHAINS

The world continues to get smaller and its national economies ever more integrated with their trading partners. Many items we consume in our home country have been manufactured or processed in another country. In some cases, we consume sophisticated manufactured products that are the result of a process of collaborative procurement, manufacturing, assembly and distribution, shared between companies and corporations across several different countries. This parallel, sequential or synchronous joint effort is often referred to as a global (or international) supply chain. The point at which global supply chains physically intersect is normally at a maritime port, an airport or a road border crossing (the trade, transport and logistics junction). Import and export compliance requirements, comprising Government approvals, licenses and permits, together with customs clearance and inspections, are often known as formalities. The information which dictates the import/export formalities and trade, transport and logistics processes are increasingly being processed by an ICT-facilitated system, commonly known as the, usually electronic, single window. The electronic single window may be made up of separate functional systems or, increasingly, an integrated national single window. This global pattern of supply and consumption is as important to the nations which make up the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) community as to any other in the trading world, as are the lessons and the trends in trade, none more so than the single window. Diagram 2 below illustrates the general principles and interactions of the major sub-systems that comprise a single window.

Diagram 2. Main principles of a full-function single window for trade processing

Trade approvals and cargo release: Information demands and interactions between agencies

Legislating Agencies: Policy Bodies
- WTO
- UN Agencies
- OECD
- WCO
- G8/G20
- EU, NAFTA, APEC, ASEAN, ECOWAS, etc.
- Donors, Development Banks, AID Organisations

National Regulations and Port Processes
- *Import/Export/Transit/*
- *Transhipment/Re-export*
- *Maritime/Air/Road/Rail/Inland Waterways/ Dry Ports/DFZ*
- *Passengers/Cargo: Container, Bulk/General Cargo*

Trade Agreements: Trading Partners
- Treaties and Agreements
- Global Trade Treaties
- Regional Agreements
- Multilateral and Bilateral
- FTA
- Seasonal
- Special and temporary arrangements

Transport and Logistics: Transactions
- Port/Berth Booking/Billing
- Transport, Bay Planning
- Cargo Handling, Stevedores, Materials handling Equipment
- Storage, Inspection, Gate Processes
- Goods Release, Local Transport

Formalities: Compliance: Transactions
- Customs Declarations
- Annual, Volume, Transaction Licenses; Permits
- NGO Certificates of Origin
- Standards Compliance, MRA
- Payments

Logistics Agencies (examples)
- Shipping Lines
- Port, Port Authority
- Transport, Labour
- Inspection Agencies
- Container Handling, Storage
- Other Terminals (Bulk, Liquid, RORO, Passengers)

Cargo Manifest, Bay Plans Vessel, Container Declarations Packaging Declarations Container Instructions Ship's Papers

PO, Invoice, Packing List Bill of Lading Payments, Insurance Licenses, Permits Customs Declaration

Government Agencies (examples)
- Customs, Excise
- Food and Drug
- Health, Quarantine
- Economy, Trade, Transport
- Finance/Central Bank
- Defence, Security.
- Marketing/Promotion Boards

To ensure an effective deployment of a national single window (or a range of separate, functional, trade-related single windows, which may be considered to be a virtual national single window), a significant amount of business process simplification and reengineering (systems straightening) and information

technology adoption become vital, together with the application of key international standards, rationalization of trade legislation and a significant collaborative effort between the public sector and the private sector. The management and oversight of this collaborative effort demands a sophisticated governance effort. The single window is becoming a virtual national gateway to international trade. The more effective the role of the single window, the more efficient the complete import/export process becomes, leading to national competitive advantages and corporate and Government benefits, including employees and consumers. There is no universal single window model for an aspiring economy to copy that guarantees success: Each country will find its own route to the most appropriate national solution. But it is becoming evident that, to participate in global supply chains for national competitive purposes and for economic and employment growth, there is no alternative but to embark on a path to implement a national single window. Once again, this applies to the ESCWA countries as much as to any other trading community.

In order to place the single window into an international trade perspective, it may help to understand how an international supply chain is organized and functions. A supply chain[1] may be defined as "a system of organisations, people, technology, activities, information and resources involved in moving a product or service from supplier to customer. Supply chain activities transform natural resources, raw materials and components into a finished product that is delivered to the end customer. In sophisticated supply chain systems, used products may re-enter the supply chain at any point where their residual value is recyclable".

A. SUPPLY CHAIN OVERVIEW

The Council of Supply Chain Management Professionals (CSCMP) defines supply chain management as follows: "Supply chain management encompasses the planning and management of all activities involved in sourcing and procurement, conversion, and all logistics management activities. Importantly, it also includes coordination and collaboration with channel partners, which can be suppliers, intermediaries, third-party service providers, and customers. In essence, supply chain management integrates supply and demand management within and across companies. Supply chain management is an integrating function with primary responsibility for linking major business functions and business processes within and across companies into a cohesive and high-performing business model. It includes all of the logistics management activities noted above, as well as manufacturing operations, and it drives coordination of processes and activities with and across marketing, sales, product design, finance and information technology".

A typical supply chain begins with the ecological and biological regulation of natural resources, followed by the human extraction of raw material, and includes several such production links as component construction, assembly, and merging, before moving on to several layers of storage facilities of ever decreasing size and ever more remote geographical locations, and finally reaching the consumer. Many of the exchanges encountered in the supply chain will, therefore, be between different companies that will seek to maximize their revenue within their sphere of interest, but may have little or no knowledge or interest in the remaining players in the supply chain. More recently, the losely coupled, self-organizing network of businesses that cooperates to provide product and service offerings has been called the Extended Enterprise.
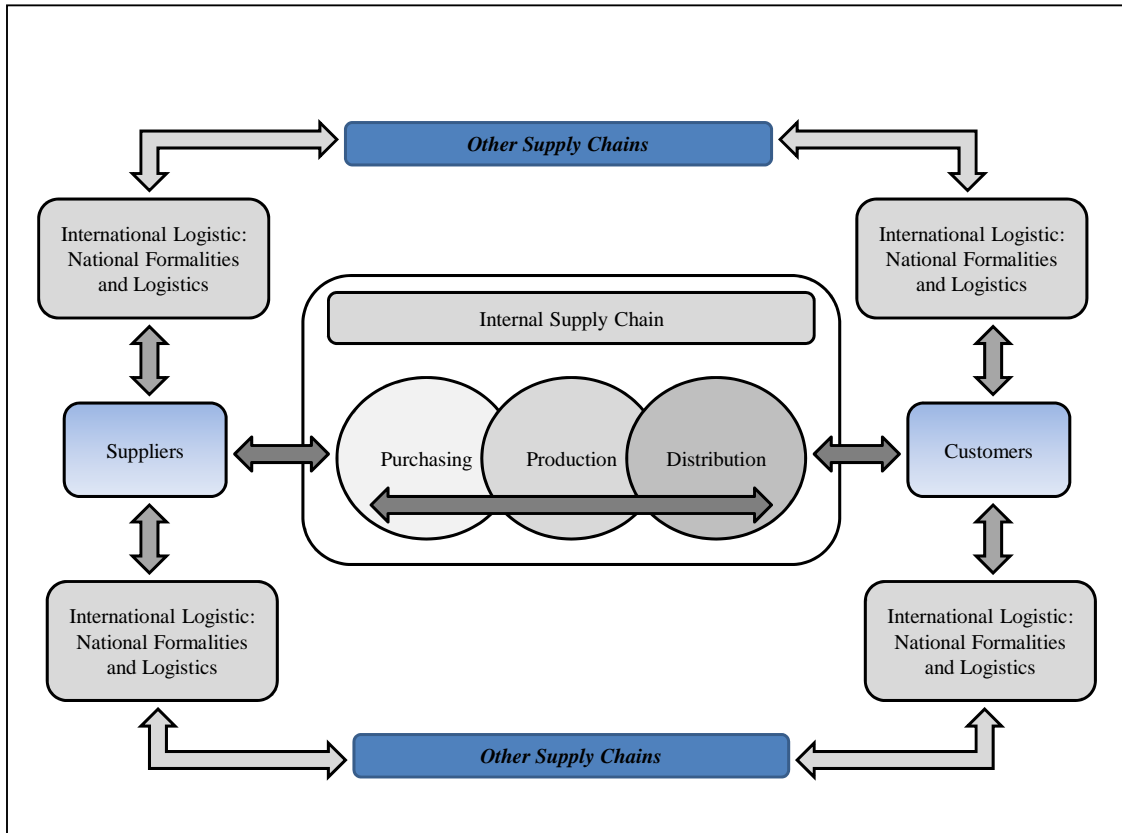
Diagram 3 represents an international supply chain concept, illustrating where supply chains intersect and interconnect and where formalities and trade, transport and logistics junctions coincide with the formalities function at the single window.

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[1] See: www.wikipedia: supply chain.

Diagram 3. Integration of global supply chains

B. SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT

The term supply chain management (SCM) was developed in the 1980s to express the need to integrate the key business processes, from end user through to original suppliers, original suppliers being those that provide products, services and information that add value for customers and other stakeholders. The basic idea behind SCM is that companies and corporations involve themselves in a supply chain by exchanging information regarding market fluctuations, production capabilities and key dates.

If all relevant information is accessible to any participating organization, every company in the supply chain has the possibility to, and can seek to help in, optimizing the entire supply chain rather than to sub-optimize based on a local interest. This will lead to better-planned overall production and distribution which can cut costs and give a more attractive final product, leading to better sales and improved overall results for the companies involved. Incorporating SCM leads to a new kind of competition on the global market where competition is no longer measured by company versus company but rather by a supply chain versus supply chain comparison.

The primary objective of SCM is to fulfil customer demands through the most efficient use of resources, including distribution capacity, inventory and labour. In theory, a supply chain seeks to match demand with supply and do so with the minimal inventory. Various aspects of optimizing the supply chain include liaising with suppliers to eliminate bottlenecks; sourcing strategically to strike a balance between lowest material cost and transportation, implementing just-in-time (JIT) techniques to optimize the manufacturing flow; maintaining the right mix and location of factories and warehouses to serve customer

markets; and using location/allocation, vehicle routing analysis, dynamic programming and traditional logistics optimization to maximize distribution efficiency.

Including the logistics and formalities functions as foreseen in the single window concept can, therefore, provide an accurate end-to-end product delivery and replenishment forecast, leading to significantly enhanced efficiencies and economies throughout the complete supply chain. Hence, the single window may be regarded as an integral component of the total international supply chain, requiring similar disciplines and rigour as the supply chain itself.

C. THE ROLE OF THE WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION AND THE SINGLE WINDOW

The World Trade Organization (WTO) has been deeply involved in global trade facilitation negotiations since the Doha Round of negotiations began with a Ministerial Conference declaration in 2001. Although these negotiations have not moved forward rapidly for a number of, largely, political reasons, the WTO effort has become increasingly intense since 2004. Specific trade facilitation arrangements, latterly including single windows, have been the subject of WTO-focused negotiations since then. Although there is still some international dissent, the Doha Round of recommendations may well be concluded during 2011, due partially to the fact that some major national elections fall due in 2012-2013 and that, consequently, conditions are currently right for concluding these matters and including them in a comprehensive trade facilitation agreement, together with a series of special and differential treatments (SDT) to cover the needs of developing countries under this new treaty.

Box 1. Trade facilitation

Trade facilitation looks at how procedures and controls governing the movement of goods across national borders can be improved to reduce associated cost burdens and maximize efficiency while safeguarding legitimate regulatory objectives. These cost burdens may be a direct function of collecting information and submitting declarations or an indirect consequence of border checks in the form of delays and associated time penalties, forgone business opportunities and reduced competitiveness. Note: The cost burden category may also include the impact of a range of illegal or unethical activities, occurring at various critical stages throughout the formalities and logistics functions.

Understanding and use of the term "trade facilitation" varies in the literature and amongst practitioners. Trade facilitation is largely used by institutions which seek to improve the regulatory interface between Government bodies and traders at national borders. The World Trade Organization (WTO), in an online training package, once defined trade facilitation as "the simplification and harmonisation of international trade procedures" where trade procedures are the "activities, practices and formalities involved in collecting, presenting, communicating and processing data required for the movement of goods in international trade".

In defining the term, many trade facilitation proponents will also make reference to trade finance and such procedures applicable for making payments as via commercial banks. For example, the United Nations Centre for Administration Commerce and Transport (UN/CEFACT) defines trade facilitation as "the simplification, standardization and harmonisation of procedures and associated information flows required to move goods from seller to buyer and to make payment".

Occasionally, the term trade facilitation is extended to address a wider agenda in economic development and trade to include: the improvement of transport infrastructure; the removal of Government corruption; the modernization of customs administration; the removal of other non-tariff trade barriers (NTB); and export marketing and promotion.

Nevertheless, in summary, trade is a largely private sector activity. Trade facilitation should mean, at its most fundamental level, "making trade easier".

The Doha Declaration provides the mandate for negotiations on a range of subjects. From the perspective of ESCWA and this report, trade facilitation and single windows are the most immediate items.

In Doha, ministers agreed to adopt around 50 decisions clarifying the obligations of developing country member Governments with respect to issues including agriculture, subsidies, textiles and clothing, technical barriers to trade, trade-related investment measures and rules of origin. The issues subject to negotiation under Doha include:

- Implementation;
- Agriculture;
- Services;
- Market access (non-agriculture);
- Intellectual property;
- Investment;
- Competition;
- Transparency in Government procurement;
- Trade facilitation;
- Anti-dumping;
- Regional agreements;
- Dispute settlement;
- Environment;
- E-commerce;
- Small economies;
- Trade, debt and finance;
- Trade and technology transfer;
- Technical cooperation;
- Least developed countries;
- SDT.

D. WTO TRADE FACILITATION MANDATE

The following chart summarizes the WTO mandate with particular reference to trade facilitation measures.

CHART 1. WTO TRADE FACILITATION MANDATE, OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

Objectives	Scope
✓ Expedite movement, release and clearance of goods	▪ Transparency and appeals
✓ Improve cooperation between customs and other Government agencies	▪ Import/export fees and formalities ▪ Freedom of transit ▪ Customs cooperation
✓ Enhance technical assistance and build capacity	▪ SDT ▪ Technical assistance

E. WTO SINGLE WINDOW: ONE-TIME SUBMISSION

The original sponsors of the WTO text which covers single windows were:

- Korea;
- Singapore;
- Thailand;
- Chile;
- European Community;
- Japan;
- Mongolia.

The current status of the single window draft (consolidated) negotiating text is contained in TN/TF/W/165/Rev.7-Article 10.4,[2] which is described by the following:

ARTICLE 10:

FORMALITIES CONNECTED WITH IMPORTATION AND EXPORTATION

4.   Single Window/One-time Submission

4.1   Members shall, [where practicable], [endeavour to] establish or maintain a single window, enabling traders to submit documentation and/or data requirement for importation, exportation or transit to a single entry point. [The single window shall undertake onward distribution of the aforementioned documentation and/or data requirements to the participating authorities or agencies]. After the examination by the relevant authorities or agencies of the documentation and/or data, the results shall be notified to the applicants through the single window in a timely manner.

4.2   In cases where documentation and/or data requirements have already been received by the single window, the same documentation and/or data requirements shall not be requested by [[other][participating]] or agencies except in urgent circumstances and other limited exceptions which are made public.

4.3   Members shall notify the Committee the details of operation of the single window.

[4.4   Members shall, to the extent possible and practical, use information technology to support the single window.]

[4.5   Members shall, where practicable, use relevant international standards [and practices] as a basis for the single window schemes.]

4.6   With regard to the scope of the participating authorities or agencies, and of the documentation and/or data requirements, Members [may] [are encouraged to] implement the single window in a progressive manner [[taking into account each Member's implementation capacity] [subject to their requesting for and receiving from other Member(s), the requisite technical assistance and capacity building]].

**Box 2. World Trade Organization trade facilitation deal
to reduce trade costs and boost trade: Lamy**

Director-General Pascal Lamy, in a speech at the World Customs Organization in Brussels on 24 June 2011, said that the implementation of the trade facilitation measures discussed in Geneva could reduce total trade costs by almost 10 per cent. "Every extra day required to ready goods for import or export decreases trade by around 4 per cent". This is why a trade facilitation deal in the Doha Round would be a "tremendous value for our trading communities and in particular for many of our small and medium enterprises". He commended the close cooperation between WTO and the World Customs Organization (WCO), particularly in technical assistance, and suggested further collaboration in using the "Made in the World" approach to measuring international trade flows.

A summary of the commitments that (many) WTO members wish to achieve before the end of 2011 is shown below.

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[2]   Official WTO negotiating text, March 2011.

CHART 2. WTO CHART AA: TRADE FACILITATION ACTIONS AND PRIORITIES

A. Implement right away	B. Time needed	C. Time and TA needed
A.1 Publication	A.2 Internet publication	C.1 Advance rulings
B.1 Interval between publication/entry into force	A.3 Enquiry point	G.1 Pre-arrival processing
B.2 Prior publication	A.4 Notification	G.4 Post clearance audit
D.1 Right of appeal	G.3 Risk management	J.2 Reduction of formalities
E.1 Import/rapid alert	G.6 Authorized traders	10.4 [Shouldn't there be a letter followed by dot and number?]Single window
F.1 Disciplines on fees	G.7 Expedited shipment	J.6 Eliminate PSI
G.2 Separation of release	J.1 Periodic review of formalities	L.7 Regional transit agreements
	L.6 Bonded transport	

Notes: TA stands for technical assistance.

PSI stands for pre-shipment inspection.

This introductory section has attempted to place the single window into context with contemporary supply chain initiatives and the attempts of the WTO to enable trade treaty participants and legislators to keep pace with these private sector initiatives. The next section examines the single window in more detail before discussing the current status of single window initiatives in the region and various recommendations to ensure adoption of individual initiatives in the ESCWA region.

F. SINGLE WINDOW BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Governments and the import/export, shipping, logistics and transport communities have established an exhaustive, but by no means complete, range of agency and country-specific regulatory and operational requirements for international trade. Nevertheless, to date there has been limited coordination between these groups, both at the national and the international levels. As a result, traders are faced with a confusing set of stringent, overlapping and onerous reporting requirements, often including redundant, repetitive and outdated or superseded regulations. These requirements come in the guise of forms, systems, data sets, data models, and electronic messages, not to mention personal voice communications, and unwritten, informal demands. Governments and trade have to develop and continuously maintain different systems to meet these myriad requirements. This adds onerous costs and overhead to all parties, both in terms of fiscal resources and the timeliness and accuracy of data. The problem has become more acute in recent years with the requirements for faster information delivery, often in advance of shipping, for security and other purposes, and the expanding requirements of data harmonization in international supply chains. The ability to handle data efficiently and swiftly has, in fact, become a key element in international competitiveness, especially in international supply chains.

A single window is designed to overcome this complex system of data submission and regulatory control. It is designed to sit at the national junction of national and international trade data exchange, thereby presenting a single point of access to all other relevant trade systems. While the primary objective is the single electronic submission of data, establishing a single window necessitates a major rationalization of current approaches and requirements to trade administration and operations, especially the reuse, and elimination of duplication, of existing data wherever possible, together with widespread e-Government applications and trade-related ministry and non-governmental organization (NGO) systems.

G. PARTICIPANTS IN THE SINGLE WINDOW ECOSYSTEM

It will become evident from later sections of this document that there are many different versions of single windows. For example, the concept of the single window is applied to many other IT application areas, particularly e-Government and banking systems. Generically, a single window is simply a system, sometimes described as a concept, process or environment, that enables individuals, businesses and Government organizations to submit information to, or through, a single point of access, now normally electronic. The single window evolved as a single physical office that was established to handle all formalities, compliance and payment processes. This was commonly known as a "one-stop shop", or "guichet unique". Initially, the trade or trade facilitation single window was applied to the trader's lodgement of customs declarations and ministerial licences and permits. This has also been called the formalities function or customs and OGA compliance functions. This concept has now been extended to include the complete trade, transport and logistics community so that, ultimately, all border crossings and all forms of cargo shipment are included in the single window system for the electronic exchange of all key public sector and private sector trade documents (messages), licences, permits and payments all through a single (possibly central) access point, although there are several alternative technology designs.

There is an increasingly specific list of single window definitions which will be deferred until later in this paper. As a preamble to these more formal definitions, it is useful to list the major types of organizations who are active in single window applications. These typically include:

- Importers, exporters (consignors and consignees);

- Trade professionals (freight forwarders, customs brokers and shipping agents);

- Shipping companies, airlines, road, rail and inland waterways, duty free zones, dry ports and multimodal cargo depot, and dry ports;

- Ports and airports, container terminals, bulk terminals, port gate operations and local port road and rail transport;

- Customs and OGA: These typically include all agencies that have a trade compliance responsibility, licensing, permit issuing and/or inspection responsibilities, principally including:

  ✓ Ministry of Trade (and Economy);
  ✓ Food and drug agencies;
  ✓ Ministry of Health;
  ✓ Ministry of Transport;
  ✓ Quarantine agencies;
  ✓ Ministry of Finance/Treasury/Tax and Excise/the Central Bank;
  ✓ Security agencies/defence organizations.

H. INTRODUCTORY DEFINITIONS OF THE SINGLE WINDOW

The number of parties referred to in the trade cycle in section G above suggests the potential for significant national, regional and functional variation in single window design and implementations. The following selected definitions further illustrate this variation. Note that there are no specific private sector definitions included in this selection. It is implied here that there is general private sector agreement with institutional definitions.

UN/CEFACT Recommendation No. 33[3] contains this broad definition of a single window:

"As specified in UN/CEFACT Recommendation Number 33, the Single Window concept refers to a facility 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. If information is electronic, then individual data elements should only be submitted once".

The United Kingdom Customs and Excise Organization has a single window plan known as the Information Technology Single Window (ITSW). The new-defunct United Kingdom Simplification of Trade Procedures Board (SITPRO) defined this concept as follows:

"A platform to allow traders to submit international trade-import, export or transit-data required by government departments or agencies once only through a single electronic interface thereby fulfilling all the regulatory requirements in respect of each transaction". SITPRO added the comment: "It is widely accepted that for an ITSW to deliver its full potential it has to embrace the way data is exchanged and processed between Government departments and agencies and how any licenses, authorisations or other documentation relevant to the free movement of a consignment is delivered back to the trader".

The World Customs Organization (WCO) provided the following definition: "A Single Window environment is a cross border, 'intelligent', facility that allows parties involved in trade and transport to lodge standardized information, mainly electronic, with a single entry point to fulfil all import, export and transit related regulatory requirements". A note to this definition adds: "The WCO members prefer to use the term Single Window 'Environment' because Single Window implementations are invariably a collection of interdependent facilities, regulatory requirements and cross border regulatory agencies' business processes". The WCO goes on to say: "The establishment of the Single Window Environment for border control procedures for conveyance, transport equipment, goods and crew is considered by Customs Administrations as the solution for the complex problems of border automation and information management involving multiple cross border regulatory agencies".

The Global Facilitation Partnership for Transport and Trade (GFPT) is a World Bank partner promoting the use of single window for cross-border crossings, particularly, but not exclusively, road crossings. Their single window definition states: "A Single Window is a facility that allows parties involved in international trade and transport to lodge standardized information and documents with a single entry point to fulfil all import, export, and transit-related regulatory requirements. If information is electronic, then individual data elements should only be submitted once".

I. BENEFITS OF THE SINGLE WINDOW

The intended benefits of single windows are aimed at key stakeholders in the formalities and goods movement communities, which typically comprise:

- Government and its various compliance agencies;
- Port, logistics and transport communities;
- Traders and their trade professionals (customs brokers, freight forwards and shipping agents).

These benefits may be categorized as follows:

1. *For the policymaker*

- To raise regional and national awareness of the potential of automated trade facilitation and the single window, and to help facilitate regional collaboration, integration and exchange of regional trade information.

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[3] See: www.unece.org/cefact/recommendations/rec33/rec33_trd352e.pdf.

2. *For the compliance authorities*

- More efficient and productive use of resources;

- Enhanced collections of fees, duties and penalties;

- More comprehensive, streamlined and automated business compliance to Government legislative and regulatory requirements, including the terms of international trade treaties;

- Enhanced risk analysis and management and improved security;

- Reductions in corruption and illegal trade activities, enhanced transparency and accountability.

3. *For the trader*

- Cost reductions through minimized clerical efforts, time taken to reduce and to eliminate delays, and more predictable, reliable and authoritative decisions;

- Faster goods clearance, exception handling and dispute resolution, leading to reduced inventory holding costs;

- Predictable and reliable consignment clearance and availability of advanced goods release information;

- Reduction in face-to-face meetings, greater transparency and reduced opportunities for rent seeking and corruption.

4. *For the logistics operator*

- Faster movement of goods through formalities and trade junctions, leading to better and more productive utilisation of resources;

- Reliable information on timing of goods movement, allowing accurate scheduling, allocation of resources and improved accuracy of information provided to clients;

- More productive and flexible use of human resources;

- The ability to accurately schedule goods collection and discharge times and locations;

- Better end-to-end audits of operation.

II. SINGLE WINDOWS ENHANCE AND FACILITATE TRADE

A significant amount of donor support, United Nations and development agency-funded work and other independent efforts have already been devoted to Government applications of single windows for formalities and regulatory compliance. This form of single window is designed to be the single information technology clearing house for all trade-related regulatory and compliance data. This includes trader's customs declarations, supporting documentation, import and export licences and certificates of origin. Additionally, many private-sector operated (although often part or wholly Government-owned) maritime ports already offer comprehensive logistics and transport information and communication technology (ICT) systems which complement the public sector formalities single window model. These systems, sometimes known as port community systems, include automated container bay planning and status systems, port community access and information systems, container track and trace (across the various individual port community systems), goods release note (GRN) systems, transport booking and gate management systems. An additional ICT port management system usually deals with vessel call book and bill and berth reservation and preparations. The most sophisticated of these port systems are integrated with the formalities single window so as to provide an end-to-end formalities and cargo movement system. This integrated system is called the national single window throughout this report.

The WTO single windows work plan was referred to earlier on in this document, within the specific context of trade facilitation. Trade facilitation[4] is a generic term[5] variously applied to the legislation, regulations, procedures and information technology implementations which integrate domestic supply chains with global supply chains.[6] ICT is demonstrably becoming progressively more important to effective trade facilitation. The objective of ICT in this context is to automate reengineered business processes by replacing the paper documents, original signatures, cash payments and face-to-face meetings involved in obtaining import and export approvals from GA, and from customs processes (formalities and/or regulatory requirements).

In parallel with the Government formalities and compliance applications of national trade processes, the single window is also entering the mainstream of trade facilitation techniques and information technologies by automating the documentary and manual preparations for arrival/departure and the physical movement of cargo, through maritime ports, airports, rail terminals, border crossings, duty free zones and inland (or dry) ports.

For the sake of simplicity, this report organizes the initial functional, procedural and technical overview into a number of key topics. Diagram 4 provides an initial look at the functional architecture of a contemporary ICT-based single window and the influences on its design and development.

The topics to be introduced in this section include:

- Trade treaties, trade law, regulations and business culture;

- Import, export, transit and transhipment cargo processes;

- Border control, compliance mechanisms, customs, OGA, permit issuing agencies (PIA) and NGOs involved in trade;

- Maritime and air ports, road and rail border crossings, inland waterways, duty free zones (DFZ) and inland/dry ports;

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[4] See annex which lists references and definitions of trade facilitation.
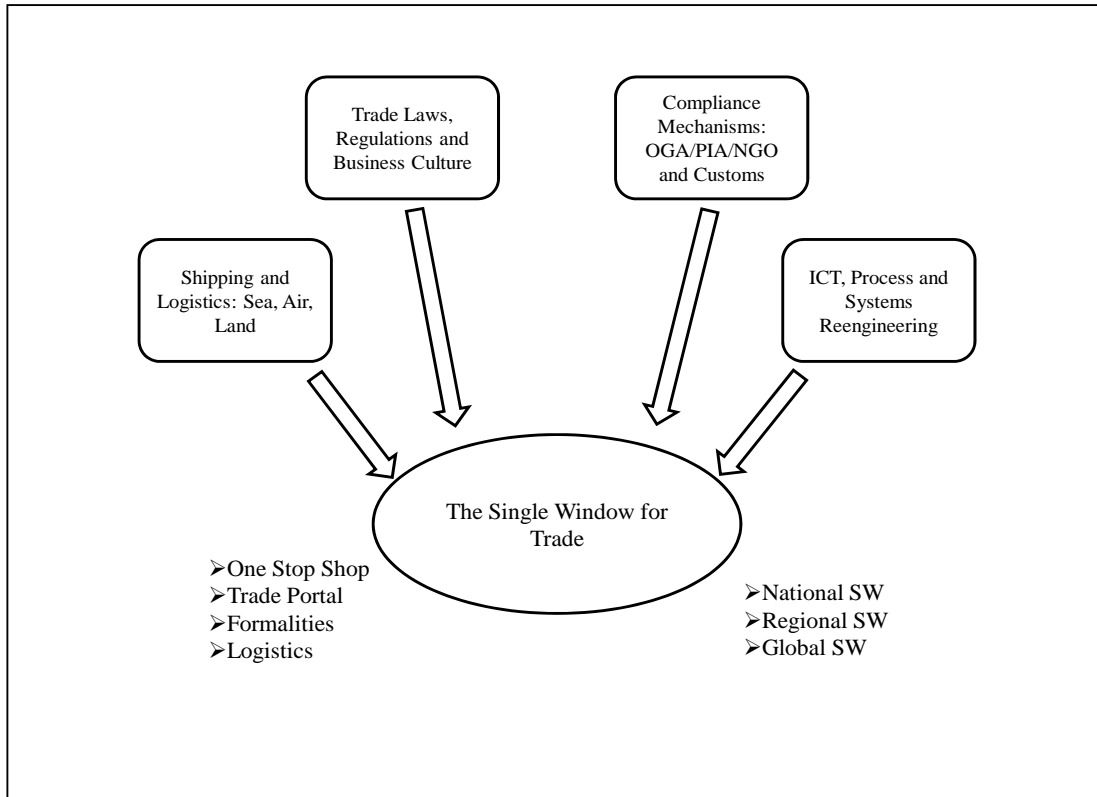
[5] "Making trade easier" might be the most practical definition. This report generally infers such a simple definition.

[6] See diagram 2: The main principles of a full-function single window for trade processing.

- ICT, data simplification, harmonization and modelling, data standards, reengineering and change management.

Later stages of this report address other key issues of the single window, especially governance, business models and funding/ownership.

Diagram 4. Intended functionality of single windows

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                                                                           │
│          ┌──────────────┐          ┌──────────────┐                       │
│          │ Trade Laws,  │          │ Compliance   │                       │
│          │ Regulations  │          │ Mechanisms:  │                       │
│          │ and Business │          │ OGA/PIA/NGO  │                       │
│          │   Culture    │          │ and Customs  │                       │
│          └──────────────┘          └──────────────┘                       │
│  ┌──────────────┐                              ┌──────────────┐           │
│  │ Shipping and │                              │ ICT, Process │           │
│  │ Logistics:   │                              │   and        │           │
│  │ Sea, Air,    │                              │   Systems    │           │
│  │    Land      │                              │ Reengineering│           │
│  └──────────────┘                              └──────────────┘           │
│                                                                           │
│                     ┌─────────────────────────┐                           │
│                    │  The Single Window for    │                          │
│                    │         Trade             │                          │
│                     └─────────────────────────┘                           │
│   ➢One Stop Shop                                                           │
│   ➢Trade Portal                               ➢National SW                │
│   ➢Formalities                                ➢Regional SW                │
│   ➢Logistics                                  ➢Global SW                   │
│                                                                           │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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A. MORE DETAILED DEFINITIONS OF A SINGLE WINDOW

Sections F to H of this report briefly defined and introduced the single window and its user and beneficiary communities. This section adds a little more detail to that introductory definition. However, in order to arrive at a more broadly applicable description, it may be helpful to first set it in a wider and historical context.

In addition to trade (facilitation), single windows are deployed in many banking and e-Government processes. The generic purpose of a single window is to provide a single point of, generally electronic, access and a single submission for a given purpose. This single submission may be lodged with a range of Government agencies, private sector organizations and even to individuals. The basic principles of single windows are built on this single submission of data; hence, it may be reused by the system wherever required without additional data entry. Other single window principles may include a single point of payment; a single point of decision-making; and a single sign-on for all databases and systems which comprise the single window. These definitions are only generally useful to an expert practitioner so we have broken down the definitions of a single window for trade, or trade facilitation, which is the focus of this study.

Single windows for trade facilitation ultimately have two broad functions: the first is usually designed to automate and seamlessly process all electronic lodgements for trade licensing and approvals and to automatically insert or transfer these approved data sets/data elements into the relevant, electronically lodged customs declaration message set. This type of single window is often known as a formalities single window. The term formalities applies to the administration, compliance and electronic information exchange needed by GA for lodging and approving import and export compliance (similarly for transit, transhipment and re-export). The ideal formalities single window design gives such traders and their agents as ministries of trade, agriculture, health, food security, and finance the ability to electronically lodge licence applications and also to electronically lodge customs declarations. This may be an integrated process or a set of separate processes: The single window design principles are non-specific; each case is subtly different. These processes may be achieved by using a range of end-user computer software or simply by completing and lodging downloaded forms from, for example, a national trade promotion website. There are many variations. The single window then connects the GA system to the lodged data and processes it for approval, rejection or further information requests. Customs declarations work in the same way (see diagram 1).

Both GAs and customs often deploy automated risk management systems within a single window environment, helping them to scrutinize only those lodgements which raise automatic alerts, or flags. An effective risk management system can reduce the proportion of physical inspections to a small percentage of total consignments, thus providing efficiencies, economies and time saving to traders and GAs alike.

The second type of single window is generically known as the logistics single window. In this case, the term logistics can be applied to maritime and inland waterway ports, airports, international road borders and international transport corridor operations, rail and multimodal terminal operations. The processes within the maritime port can be used as an analogy to cover all of these different logistics single windows. ICT systems may be shared between maritime ports and all other logistics gateways and terminals. Maritime systems, or port single windows, can themselves comprise two main functions: shipping services and cargo movement.

Shipping services is usually a separate port system that handles vessel arrival and departure operations including pilotage, berth allocation, arrival/voyage booking and billing, and the various certificates and ship papers covering vessel and crew, and non-cargo contents of the vessel.

Cargo movement refers to bulk, general cargo and container handling, labour (stevedores), container storage, physical inspection facilities for GAs and customs, where necessary, gate management, transport booking and road/rail onwards transport.

If these systems are linked together into a total port community system, it becomes possible for goods owners, freight forwarders and other legitimately interested parties to track and trace cargo through the complete port system, from arrival to departure and vice versa. Once again, the port single window is a significant tool for efficiencies, speed of cargo movement and vessel turnaround, and hence for significant economies.

Formalities single window and logistics single window may, and often are, implemented independently of each other, but when they are integrated into a single national single window, then efficiencies, savings and speed are optimized. Both types of single window also typically have facilities for electronic banking, insurance services and a range of other cargo and formalities requirements. Few countries have yet achieved a successful national single window implementation at this stage, and those who have are still in the process of linking up more users. This community connection is neither a simple nor a short-term activity, but the potential results offer considerable national trading, economic and employment advantages.

Diagram 5 below is intended to provide a visual road map of the components that make up the national single window. The information referred to is by the normal documentary name. Later sections of this

report help describe how electronic representations of these documents perform the same function, although faster and more accurately.

Diagram 5. Approvals and goods release: where the single window sits

National Laws and Regulations		National Laws and Regulations

	Customs and Excise	**Other Government Agencies (OGA)**	
Information From			**Information From**
✓Supply Chain ✓Trader ✓Customs Broker ✓Freight Forwarder ✓Shipping Agent ✓Banks, Insurers: •Declarations •Licenses	•Security, Border Protection •Process Customs Declaration •Intelligence, Risk Management •Pre-Arrival Clearance/Inspection •Post Entry Audits •Payment Processing •Duty/Drawback •Bond Arrangements	•Application Lodgement •Check Documents, Files •Intelligence, Risk Management •Quality, Compliance, •Standards, MRA •Process Payment, Issue License •Statistics •Inspection, Surveyor's Findings	✓Supply Chain ✓Trader ✓Customs Broker ✓Banks ✓Insurers •Lodgement •Invoice •Packing List •B/L •C/O

Single Window

	Customs and Excise/OGA	**Transport and Logistics**	
✓Shipper, ✓Forwarder: •Cargo Manifest •Cargo, Container, Packaging Declarations •Ship's papers	•Identify Container Location, Bay Plan-Vessel, Container Yard; •Check Customs Declaration for goods, cargo, container and packaging; •Check Cargo Manifest for Consignment details; •Select cargo for red/green channel •Inspection/surveyor processes; •OGA inspection •Payments •**Goods Release**	•Berth Booking and Billing •Cargo Manifest •Bay Plan: Shipper, Container Yard •B/L, Packing List •Goods Release •Delivery Note, Waybill •Proof of Delivery •Transport Booking •Gate Departure Procedure •Goods Delivery to Trader	✓Shipper ✓Freight Forwarder ✓Shipping Agent ✓Container Terminal ✓Customs, OGA ✓Gate ✓Domestic Transport
Information From			**Information From**

B. REGIONAL SINGLE WINDOWS

Over the past few years, the phenomenon of the regional single window has steadily emerged, an organizational and ICT design in which groups of trading nations plan to connect their national single windows to a collaborative regional single window. The European Union, the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) are among the leaders of this type of initiative, each of them having a somewhat different objective.

The European Union, for example, is attempting to optimize the efficiency of border crossings within the European trading community.

APEC is concerned with the implementation of a safe and secure supply chain. It includes the concept of an end-to-end supply chain track and trace system, to enable regulators to trace dangerous goods from manufacturer, or source, right through to the ultimate end user. It is probable that these techniques, when and where proven, can be applied to any harmonized system (HS) code or commodity type.

ECOWAS is concerned with controlling smuggling, hijacking and other illegal activities seeking to disadvantage ECOWAS national Government authorities, and national revenue losses along the international West African roads used for transporting goods between up to 14 West African countries.

ASEAN is attempting to introduce efficiencies in import and exporting between the ten ASEAN countries by deploying common formatted documents in each member country, using the concept of "my export is your import".

C. THE SINGLE WINDOW HIERARCHY

The concept of a trade facilitation single window is a somewhat elastic concept. Every country has a different customs, GA and PIA regime: For example, the United States has at least 40 GA/PIA and Australia 14. In the ASEAN region in 2009, Thailand had 28, Indonesia 38, the Philippines 55 and the Lao People's Democratic Republic 16, to take further examples. And since each ministry or NGO operates in a unique local fashion, under changing political dictates, there can be no single "one size fits all" model, and probably there will never be. However, it is possible to make general comparisons and observe some current best practices.

D. SINGLE WINDOW BASICS

There are four fundamental phases (technologists may disagree) of a successful single window initiative: planning, preparation, technology design and prototype, and implementation. Each of these phases may vary in complexity. They may, and indeed they usually do, overlap. The experience of each country and region (in the specific case of regional single windows) is necessarily different, but increasing global experience demonstrates a similar pattern. This experience teaches us that the planning, preparation and implementation phases are the more complex, more resource hungry, more costly (if properly accounted for) and more demanding of time and commitment of policymakers. While it is also true that technology policy and governance arrangements can be time-consuming (there are many models for a national single window), but ultimately however elaborate and sophisticated ICT designs for the single window may be, the ICT is fundamentally a single window enabler. It automates the processes that the single window stakeholders agree to implement as a part of the overall single window design. As a consequence, the single window ICT component could be described as the facilitating for trade process reform.

Many of the definitions for a single window combine business functionality, ICT design, and technology. This section intends to show that technology is not the only, and probably not even the most important, factor in a successful single window, although there is no doubting its importance. Organization, governance, project management and such human factors as leadership also play their part, as do marketing and support, as the user community grows.

At a certain stage of planning, more granular descriptions of the single window may be more helpful. For example, a single window comprises most, if not all of the following functions or design principles:

(a) A single point of access: The technology of a single window must facilitate communications between a community of other systems, but users must have dedicated access points, just like access to an e-mail service provider;

(b) A single sign on: No matter what system the user is permitted to access, a single use of user ID and password should be sufficient. The risk is that different sign on formalities may be needed for all of the connected systems in a trade community that would soon become an inhibitor to adoption. Similarly, if there are multiple users in an organization, each must have their own unique permissions to use specific system facilities. Hence, access, inter-operability, security and privacy are all ICT policies to be considered here;

(c) Single submission of data: So that no matter who and how many different users make use of the originally submitted data, it only has to be entered into the system by one nominated user. As this report illustrates later on, once the data elements of a shipping cargo manifest, for example, are entered into the single window, its (selected) contents are available to any authorized user. This prevents duplication, several types of error and transcription mistakes, multiple conflicting versions of information and associated mistakes, and is fast and efficient;

(d) A single point of decision-making: In this case, this means that each sign-on enables the user to apply for, and receive, licences and permits, to make, and obtain approval for, customs declarations, to track and trace consignment progress and location, estimate time for goods arrival and availability for collection, to book and confirm transport and to obtain goods release and gate in/gate out confirmations, as a minimum requirement;

(e) A single point of payment: GAs, customs, the port, shippers, the container handler, transport, freight forwarders, customs brokers and a range of messengers and intermediaries all have to be paid at some stage by cargo importers and exporters. A gateway to online banking facilities, operating all around the clock with a real time confirmation of transaction payments are the ultimate aim of this objective, thereby eliminating any delays in payments and proof of payment, and providing a much-needed transparency and elimination of rent-seeking opportunities.

Diagram 6. The lifecycle of a single window
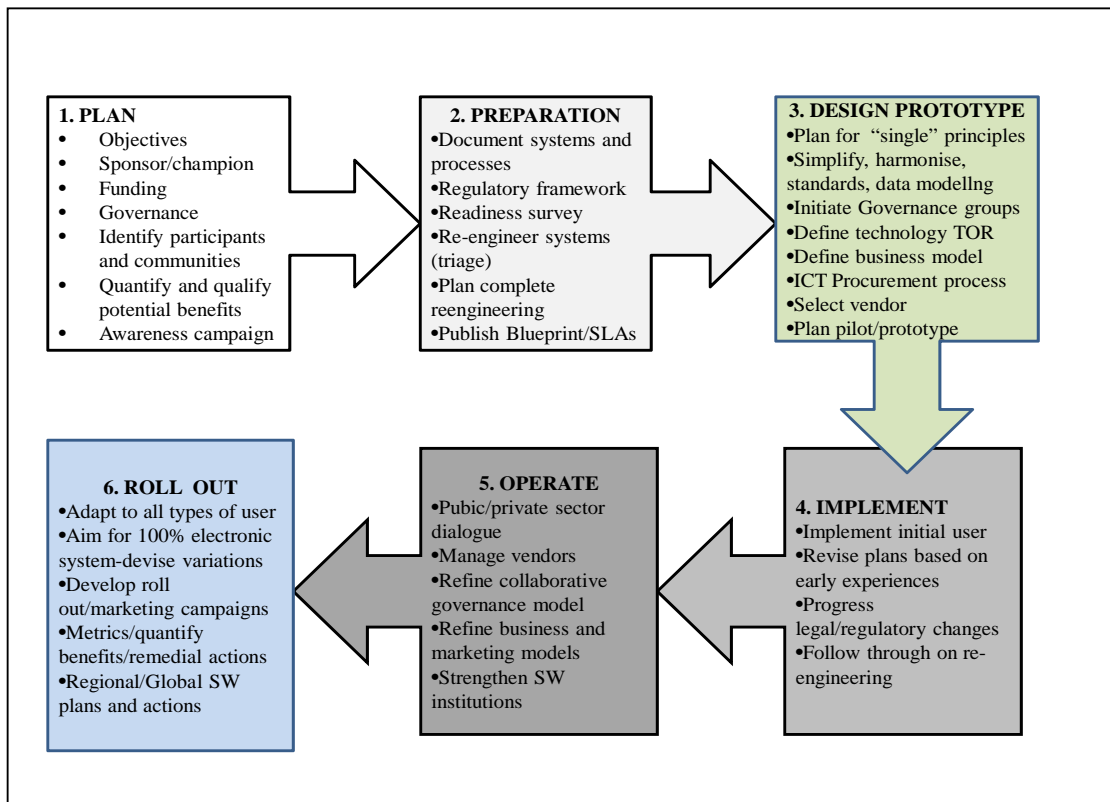
There are technical and operational difficulties in implementing these basic design rules, together with significant policy and regulatory reform issues. But they are ultimately essential for a fully functioning single window. These issues usually pose only moderate demands on the technology providers but, in practise, ICT-facilitated changes take a long time to properly implement because of their multi-agency implications, policy conflicts, political commitment and understanding of their needs and implications.

There is no rocket science to single windows ICT. It uses perfectly standard hardware, communications and operating systems. There are now several single window vendors offering standards-based or proprietary versions of single window for different applications. Single window software technology is also, in most cases, in common usage. For example, the data handling concepts used in messaging systems for single windows were introduced during the mid-1980s. The message standards themselves have been in continual development for even longer. Arguably, the biggest change over this time has been the substitution of extensible mark up language (XML) for hard coded message translation, and

web services together with the wide range of middleware which enables disparate systems and application systems to "talk" to each other. The move from proprietary software to open source systems has also had its impact, providing more mix-and-match choices with increased potential for integrating "best of breed" software modules with legacy products and the older vendor systems, and more rapid prototyping and development. These evolutionary forces enable single window planners to be more specific in their policy issue demands. An example of ICT policies, which are becoming important to new single window implementations, increasingly including upgrades and partial or complete replacements of original ICT systems, include inter-operability,[7] standards, privacy, identity management, access and digital inclusion, security, intellectual property rights (IPR), archiving and electronic records management, data mining and customer records management (CRM). No doubt, cloud computing and green/sustainable ICT will also soon be included in this policy menu.

Single window is not created in an initial rush of enthusiasm and innovation by a small group of specialists. It is a whole-of-trade community system and inclusive of many separate initiatives, usually spread over a period of several years at least. After some analysis of current international experience, diagram 7 represents a typical single window life cycle. The diagram will be discussed in some detail in much of the remainder of this report, but the eleven-stage model, as illustrated, covers the major functions that make up a national, regional, and even a global single window. To reiterate a previous statement: Each implementations is different, but the complete functionality of a typical national initiative is adumbrated by this diagram, from the one-stop-shop through to a full-function national single window, and beyond.

Diagram 7. Single windows evolution
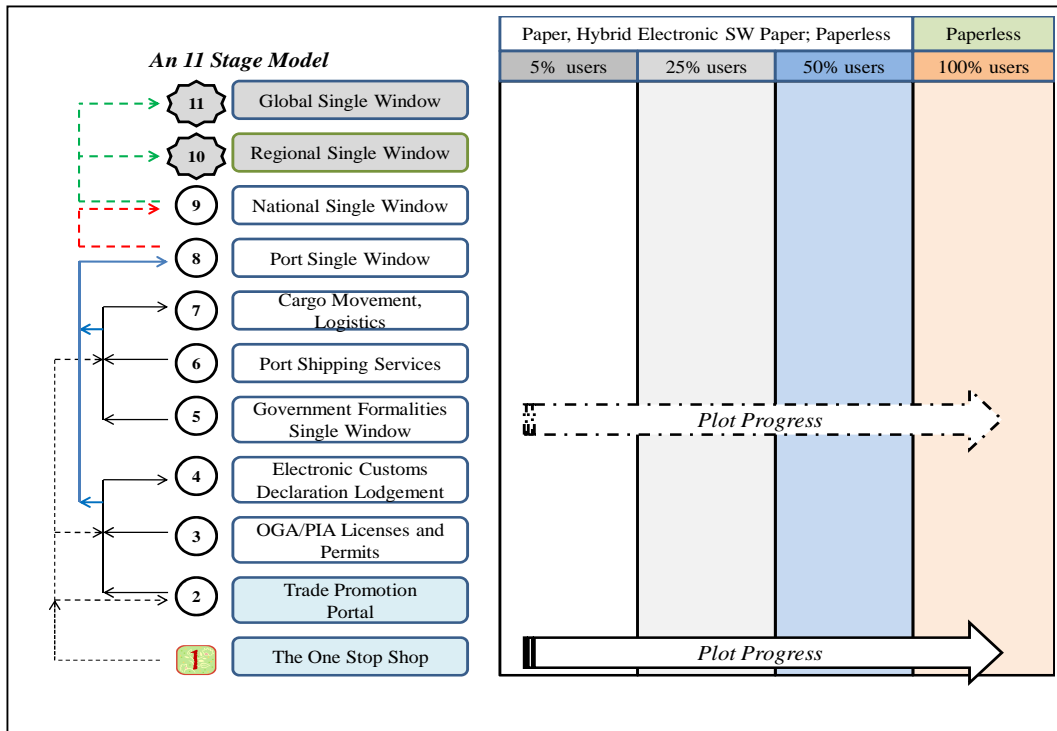
This broad heading includes such issues as national economic and trade policy, which, in part, determines customs tariffs and a national trade licensing regime (technical controls operated and overseen by GA and PIA, often with the cooperation of customs for the actual physical inspection procedures). It also includes such international treaties as the WTO agreements, which include separate agreements on such issues as rules of origin and certificates of origin processes, sanitary and phyto-sanitary (SPS) regulations. Additionally, there are such regional trade agreements as those of the European Union, the North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA), the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and ECOWAS, among others. Then there are free trade agreements (FTA), multilateral and bilateral trade agreements,[8] and other agreements concerning the generalized system of preferences (GSP) and the United States normal trade relations (NTR), for example. The number of international rules and local regulatory and legislative interpretations seem to increase daily.

Most of these agreements are aimed at harmonizing or minimizing customs tariffs and reducing the number of trade licenses which may originally have been intended for local revenue generation or industry/regional protection. Under WTO accession, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade[9] (GATT), Articles V, VIII and X are aimed at reducing customs fees, at reducing, and eventually eliminating, non-tariff barriers (NTB); at reducing the costs of red tape and ensuring transparency in trade transactions. These GATT articles are most specifically designed to eliminate corruption and extra facilitating, informal payments from the principals involved in the trade process. Other treaty obligations include agreements on smuggling, on intellectual property rights (IPR) protection and various other issues affecting the introduction of a global "level playing field" for trade, which some call free trade and others fair trade.

In addition to the ramifications of international trade treaties, there are local regulatory impacts which need to be reflected in national trade-related legislation, and in legislating the technologies that enable international trade transactions to be automated. This is not limited to customs law and associated decrees. For example, it needs to include an electronic transactions law, electronic commerce laws, electronic banking laws, electronic (digital) signature laws, consumer protection, privacy and security laws and many other technology policy-related pieces of legislation. Once these are enacted, then individual ministry regulations need to be changed to enable ministerial and agency processes to be integrated into changed enabling regulations.

One specific trade treaty (or family of trade-related measures) concerns the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law[10] (UNCITRAL). Many national trade and e-commerce legal and regulatory codes conform to this international agreement. This type of legal framework is a vital precursor to the legitimization of national trade single windows, whether they are for formalities, logistics or an integrated national system.

F. COMPLIANCE AND BORDER CONTROL: CUSTOMS PROCESSES

An increasing number of GA and PIA are now involved in ensuring compliance with the local enactments and ramifications of trade treaties at every level. These agencies include customs, ministries of finance and treasury, health, quarantine agencies, food safety and consumer protection, transport, trade,

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[8] See: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_bilateral_free_trade_agreements for an overview of free trade agreements at multilateral and bilateral levels. There are literally hundreds of such agreements with more being added on a regular basis. These are in addition to the well-established WTO rules and agreements.

[9] See: WTO/GATT. http://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/gatt_e/gatt_e.htm.

[10] See: www.uncitral.org.

immigration, security and often several others. Indonesia, for example, has 37 GA/PIA[11] that have trade regulatory compliance responsibilities. This complexity of overlapping ministries and their responsibilities and the morass of trade treaties, laws, regulations and agreements serve, in combination, to make trade facilitation more complex, difficult, time-consuming and expensive, which is the exact opposite of the intention. The reduction, or even elimination, of tariffs on trade may seem to be a politically desirable outcome, but the costs of compliance and the additional time and effort often cost more than the intended saving in costs, not to mention the potential for reduced procedural transparency and additional complexity of computer software systems and databases.

Customs and revenue authorities are often seen as the cause of many, some would say all, of the national trade process problems, which is some way from the truth. Traditional customs authorities are the national choke point for clearance and inspection of goods entering or leaving the country. Their activities are closely legislated; they are often mandated to act on behalf of other agencies in ensuring compliance with trade legislation, which is commonly reinterpreted in a national customs law. They not only have a duty to inspect and evaluate information provided by traders on official forms which accompany goods entering or leaving the country, they also have a duty to ensure compliance with customs law and that of permit issuing and licensing agencies. This is performed by means of physical inspections of goods, once again representing other agencies according to their mandate. In addition, they have to collect all customs revenues as determined by law and processing fees for their services, in addition to fines and penalties. The more complex customs law is made by the overlapping trade agreements concerned, the more complex, time consuming, expensive and potentially less transparent is the customs process.

G. Technical and compliance agencies: Government Agencies
and Permit Issuing Agencies

The measures adopted to protect national trade and industries, and to comply with trade treaties and the host of international agreements, are reflected in the proliferation of licences, and in the number of agencies that issue them and are entitled to carry out inspections. Thousands of specific goods, uniquely codified by the harmonized classification system, are subject to controls, exemptions and exceptions.[12] As mentioned earlier, the variety of agreements[13] being signed and implemented, while aimed at reducing the numbers of controls and tariffs, is at the same time introducing complexity and uncertainty. Multiple agencies are involved in issuing licences, permits and certificates of origin. Some of these agencies may also have provincial operations which further complicate matters. Few of these agencies are fully automated. Most of them operate hybrid ICT and paper-based processes, dependent on multiple original paper copies, multiple signatures, multiple authorizing stamps, even fiscal stamps in some cases. All accept cash payments, with resultant concerns about lack of transparency. The challenge to single window designers and to ICT practitioners in this field is to identify the processes and to suggest ways to introduce efficiencies. The sub-text is to specify plans to automate these processes in such a way as to ultimately link all formalities and logistics systems into the customs automation systems so as to create a transparent, paperless, cash-less and signature-less formalities system.

Logistics is an even more complex issue since it comprises a hybrid mix of public sector and private sector operators and agencies, as will be seen in a later section of this report.

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[11] The number of GA involved in trade can be quite modest. For example, Australia has 14 GA/PIA involved in trade. These include: departments of trade and industry, transport, infrastructure, customs and finance, agriculture (quarantine), health and statistics. On the other hand, Nigeria has a total of over 90 GA/PIA, at least 50 per cent being involved in trade processing. It is claimed that 19 of these agencies are active on port premises. Each has its own business processes and, to a lesser extent, its own computer-based system for lodgement, approval, clearance and inspection.

[12] Often known as "prohibitions and restrictions" in the ESCWA region.

[13] See: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_bilateral_free_trade_agreements for an overview of free trade agreements at multilateral and bilateral levels. There are literally hundreds of these agreements with more added on a regular basis. These are in addition to the well-established WTO rules and agreements.

The interdependence of technical controls (GA and PIA), customs systems, international trade treaties and national trade policies and regulations, and transport and logistics in trade facilitation is irrefutable. ICT is becoming the glue to facilitate the necessary reengineered, automated processes that lead to transparency, efficiency, reduced time and costs and ultimately to national competitive advantage. However, for this to take place, a collaborative arrangement between all parties to be involved in the particular design and function of a single window needs to be agreed and compliance arrangements put in place.

H. PORTS, TRANSPORT AND LOGISTICS

The challenges of transport, warehousing and containerization; of integration with the port community's ICT systems; of a holistic, collaborative cargo management system using consignment track and trace methods may not be easy to visualize, but are, nevertheless, vital to trade facilitation and national single windows. Additionally, the complexities of the landlocked country which comprise approximately 15 per cent of all countries, need to be assimilated into this strategy. Furthermore, transit, transhipment and a range of re-import and re-export categories are rarely addressed within trade facilitation topics, apart from a general acknowledgement of the broad issues.

Box 3. Non-cargo formalities and regulatory compliance

It is often assumed that import and export processes apply exclusively to cargo, either container-based, bulk, liquid, general cargo or services (see box 1 on trade facilitation). In fact, an important amount of customs and other GA/PIA effort goes into ensuring compliance of the containers themselves, which are formally imported and exported along with the relevant cargo. This effort is also applied to product packaging, as with timber or plastic outer cases, the vessel which carries the cargo, and the vessel's fuel, supplies, officers and crew together with a significant amount of such details concerning the crew as health certificates, visas and the like. The International Maritime Organization (IMO) has observed that there exist more than 60 international shipping conventions and that there can be more than 80 separate documents (ships papers) submitted to a port of arrival and departure in order to obtain permission to enter/depart a port. The non-cargo trade approval regime is often overlooked but is a vital factor in trade facilitation and single window design. These observations also generally apply to other modes of cargo carriage and transport.

The topic of maritime[14] logistics covers shipping and berth operations, port operations, port terminals, container handling operations, various storage yards and such inspection operations as customs, quarantine and health departments, transport and gate operations together with physical facilities and liaison arrangements for traders and trade professionals. This complex, multi-party type of operation is often a mystery to all but the most experienced and expert public-sector officials and therefore treated as a purely private-sector issue, even though the Government may regulate the industry. Government is responsible for port, airport and road infrastructure and for international agreements concerning transport and logistics. It is becoming clear, as the benefits and need for single windows become better understood, that transport and logistics should be viewed as a vital, strategically important trade-facilitating industry, inseparable from other aspects of trade facilitation and single windows. The challenge is to convince Governments that they should be an equal and active partner in logistics planning, in order to integrate their competencies into a national, integrated trade facilitation framework, namely the national single window. For the public sector, it may be culturally uncomfortable to work with the private sector, even simply to consult with them, but it is ultimately economically hazardous not to do so.

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[14] Other such cargo terminals as airports, inland waterways, road, rail and multi-modal terminals and border crossings, inland/dry ports and duty free/free trade operations all have similar functions but operate differently because of the carriage type variations and geographic differences in addition to regulatory and legal differences.

<div style="border:1px solid black; padding:10px;">

Box 4. TIR: goods transit across national borders

The Transit Internationaux Routier or the International Road Transport (TIR) Convention was originally adopted under the auspices of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE). Currently, there are 68 parties to the Convention. The TIR system is now operational in 57 countries, one country is proceeding through the admission process, a further three countries have entered the negotiation phase and another six countries have expressed interest in joining the system, according to the International Road Transport Union (IRU). The TIR Convention established an international customs transit system with maximum facility to move goods:

- In sealed vehicles or containers;

- From a customs office of departure in one country to a customs office of destination in another country;

- Without requiring extensive and time-consuming border checks at intermediate borders;

- At a cost-effective price;

- While, at the same time, providing customs authorities with the required security and guarantees.

The TIR system not only covers transit by road, but a combination is possible with other modes of transport, for example, rail, inland waterway and even maritime transport, as long as at least one part of the total transport is made by road.

To date, more than 40,000 international transport operators have been authorized by their respective competent national authorities to access the TIR system, using more than 3.2 million carnets per year.

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The final diagram in this section attempts to show the increasing functionality between the different stages of single windows, placed within a framework of a conceptual, generic single window design. To reiterate a recurring theme throughout this report: Every country is different, subject to different circumstances, priorities and pressures. There is no single model for all countries, nor can there ever be. But the functions that need to be catered for are universal. The technology can combine or miss out several of these, but the following diagram contains an inventory of the ultimate functionality required, at least at the conceptual design level (see also diagram 8).[15]

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[15] For another view of single windows lifecycle issues, see the ECE work on the topic, available at: www.unece.org/cefact/Single WindowImplementationFramework.pdf.

Diagram 8. Conceptual overview of a national single window ecosystem
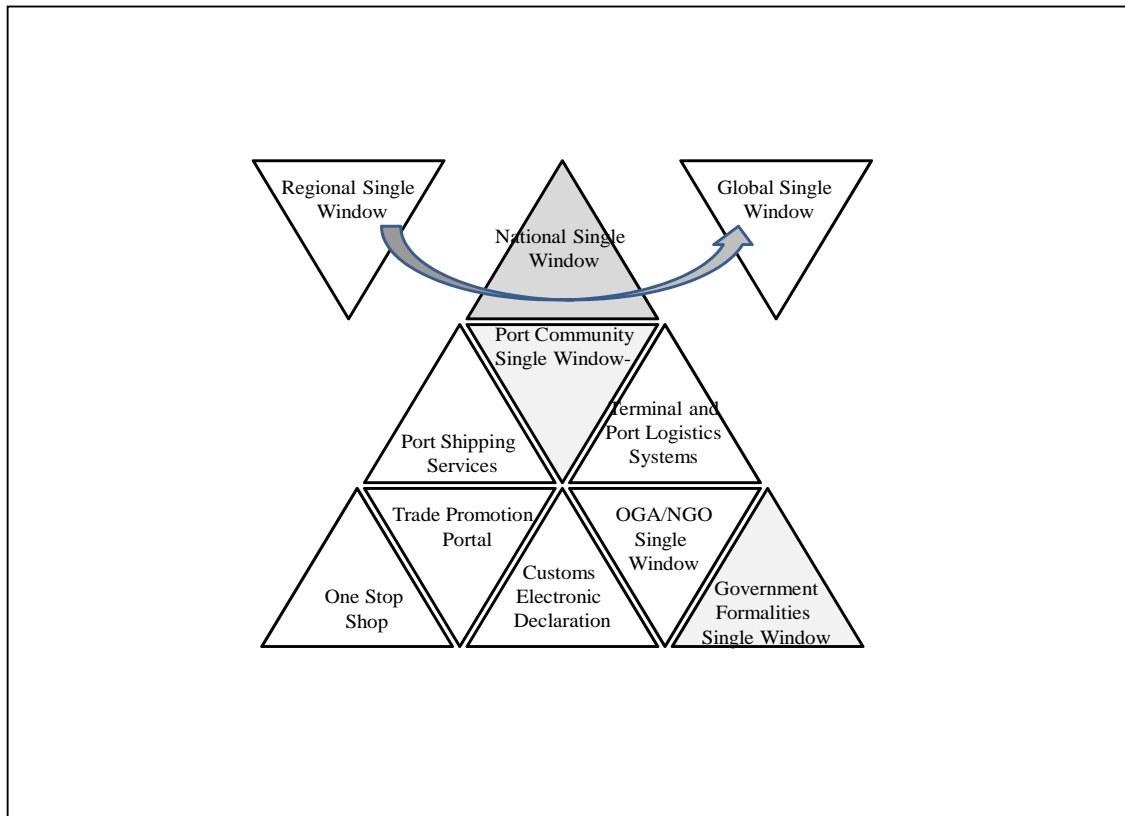
I. ICT AND PROCESS-CHANGE MANAGEMENT (REENGINEERING)

There is a golden rule to process reengineering: Do not automate a bad business process. This is excellent, common sense advice. The inference is that non-automated systems have evolved in such a way that to automate the document creation, decision-making and record keeping is merely to automate an older, less efficient means of completing a transaction. Therefore, the reasoning goes, it is better to document existing systems and theoretically remodel, or reengineer, them so as to operate in the most efficient way before designing an automated system to replace the traditional or legacy system. However, in real life, that option may not exist. You do not always have a choice. Nevertheless, it is tempting to recite this mantra.

One of the key preparations for a single window is to analyse and to reengineer processes, to align them with other systems in order to interconnect or to interoperate, to simplify them – and only then to automate them. In practice, some of the most important systems will already be automated in part, occasionally in full.

The key is to simplify and to automate processes making maximum use of ICT. The following is a basic set of guidelines and an introduction to priorities and key actions necessary for the successful application of ICT to the single window function, crucially, not simply to customs processes, nor the formalities aspects of single windows.

1.   *Simplify processes* by eliminating all but the most important steps in the process.

2.   *Perform inessential tasks offline*: Where a step or a process can be moved from the critical path[16] of trade facilitation, it should be removed and performed off line, or asynchronously with other, key processes.

3.   *Eliminate paper from processes wherever possible and replace with ICT techniques*: Paper is the enemy of efficiency and transparency.

4.   *Never automate present processes*: that merely makes parts of an unsatisfactory system faster. See rule 5.

5.   *Redesign tasks to optimize the impact of ICT*: Reengineer with the idea in mind that ICT will perform all possible steps in the process.

6.   *Eliminate signatures, stamps and chops/seals from the process*: These instruments encourage face-to-face dealings, which take time, encourage subjective judgements and lead to the potential to influence priority decisions and judgements in exchange for favours.

7.   *Eliminate personal interactions from processes,* except in the much-reduced number of cases where selectivity criteria determine that a meeting is necessary.

8.   *Rules-based processes and risk management*: Where a step has formerly involved judgement and significant amounts of physical inspection, utilize computer-based risk management techniques. In this case, the computer will choose transactions to inspect and will, in the case of customs, select channels (green, red, and others) based on:

- *Risk management profiles*, as determined by the lead agency and in consultation with the trading community;

- *The proportion of transactions* that will be subjected to physical inspections under a risk management regime; for instance, 10 per cent of all consignments will be inspected (Note: The approved proportion of inspections should also be subject to risk management techniques. For example, if red channel is targeted for 10 per cent inspection, around 80 per cent of that proportion should be a document-only inspection, 15 per cent a physical inspection of a limited sample and only 5 per cent should be subjected to a complete inspection);[17]

- *A predetermined proportion* of computer-selected random checks.

By following rules-based selectivity (risk management), not only will the time to complete a task be reduced but decisions will become consistent, transparent and fair.

9.   *Speed up processes*: Wherever possible, reduce the time taken to perform a task, either by simplifying, removing part of the process, or the use of automation.

10.   *Cost reductions*: Bear in mind that the objective of the exercise is not just to simplify and reduce time taken: it is also to reduce costs, both formal and informal.

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[16] Critical path stands for the irreducible number of steps in a process or task and is a project-planning term. Note: The term "offline" as used here does not mean to degrade its use of ICT but to perform the operation asynchronously to others.

[17] This principle should be applied to all inspections resulting from customs processes, PIA controls and standards inspections. Risk management is not limited to customs processes; it is broadly applicable across all approval and inspection regimes.

11.   *Reduce and keep on reducing*: Reduce the number of steps in a task, reduce the number of participants in all tasks and reduce the number of (electronic and paper) documents and messages necessary to complete a task. Continuously re-evaluate systems with this aim in mind.

12.   *Eliminate cash and cash payments from the process*: Isolate payment processes from the approval and clearance process. Introduce electronic means of payment including:

- Electronic funds transfer;
- Credit and debit cards;
- Direct debits.

13.   *Balance bank statements and audit trails* against electronic credits and debits to ensure that payments exactly balance against official fees. Subject audit trails and accounts to periodic external audit. Note: If any resultant imbalance is found to be due to the imposition of informal taxes, a clear regime of disciplinary action and penalties should be invoked and applied.

Thereafter, the process of data modelling, standards mapping and the final process of reengineering takes place. This is a specialist process and may make use of a combination of electronic data interchange (EDI) techniques, XML routines and/or the use of such common UN/CEFACT mapping tools as United Nations electronic documents (UNeDocs) and the WCO data model and associated mapping tools, among several other commercially available tools. For more detailed information on these processes, see the ECE and UN/CEFACT[18] websites listed in the footnote and in the annex to this report.

It has long been argued that if you are going to computerize a process, it is best to also reengineer the underlying business processes in preparation for automation. There is no question that this is what should be done where possible. But take the example of a traditional quarantine department in a ministry of agriculture. They will likely have many branch offices spread around the country and at all the ports of exit and entry to the country. Their job may cover regulation of all plant, animal and drug products manufactured within the country from imported materials, and imported or exported to foreign markets. Plant and animal products may be live or fresh; they may comprise processed products based on plant or animal products. Their departmental regulations may be based upon ministerial instructions or national laws, based in turn upon such treaty obligations as WTO or a range of regional trade agreements, bilateral trade agreements or FTAs. Each separate agreement has its own set of rules, which may change dynamically. Each may be influenced by other such agreements as the World Health Organization (WHO). For example, bird flu caused the introduction of a series of special regulations to restrict trading in live poultry, eggs, and others. There are many other examples. Complicating factors may include mutual recognition agreements (MRA) with selected economies, as part of, or separate from, regional trading or bilateral FTAs. This means that, if an exporting country has stipulated that a product has been inspected and certified as "fit for purpose" in the exporting country, then the terms of the MRA state that, subject to certain such conditions as the number of days since the inspection certificate was issued, transport and packaging conditions, and no new alerts, among others, then those goods may be accepted without normal incoming inspection and certification. A certificate of compliance against standards and the MRA may then be issued, which should be satisfactory to customs, and which will then permit the import to be collected for delivery to the importer.

At best, these are only partly automated processes. Ideally, all imports should be subjected to a risk management process and only identified risks inspected. This would represent a reengineered system and could be automated. But it is extremely difficult to arrange and agree such a fundamental change in practice, which would in any case require a substantial change to the quarantine regulations. In practice, this could take years to achieve so the best that can be achieved is to create an electronic file of certified import approvals so that their details may be inserted into an electronic customs declaration by the single window, in order to speed up the formalities process.

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[18]   See: www.unece.org/cefact/recommendations/rec33.

Reengineering and automating this complete process can take years so that ideology must occasionally take a back seat to pragmatism. In time, the new, partly automated system will be the only system that most quarantine officers know, which will make the next step easier. Hence, although it is counter-intuitive to automate a legacy or old-fashioned process, it may be all that can be done. Bearing in mind the overall objectives of the single window, it is better to make a small improvement than to do nothing at all and wait for that improvement to evolve naturally. This will not happen. At times, it is important not to let the perfect be the enemy of the good.[19]

The example of the quarantine dilemma illustrates problems faced by many other Government departments. They are overwhelmed by regulations and clerical processes; under-computerized and underpaid. The department may also earn much of their revenue, or employee's wages, through face-to-face engagement with traders, so there is another disincentive to change. These challenges take a long time to surmount. Even though it may be possible to install a computer system in a few months and even possible to design a simple system to partly automate a process, it could take a considerably longer time for the department to adopt the new system. Hence, the need in the single window planning phase to understand this type of problem before specifying ICT, and in properly preparing for it.

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[19] Attributed to Voltaire.

III. COMMON TASKS INVOLVED IN ESTABLISHING A SINGLE WINDOW

A complete single window implementation lifetime, including all preparation and planning is likely to spread over several years, decades even. This will also be true of ESCWA regional and individual member country initiatives. Many of the most advanced examples of single windows have evolved in the Asia Pacific region. Some of them go back 25 years or so-and virtually all of them are still in a state of continuous modification and development, much of which does not impact the ICT infrastructure. The ICT planning, specification, procurement and pilot or prototype implementation can comfortably be completed in 12-18 months, maybe even less. This should mark the end of the planning phase but usually represents the beginning, not the end of the single window implementation.

Single window is intended to integrate all participants in the trade process, which typically includes:

- The national customs, taxation and revenue authorities;

- All GA with licensing, permit issuing and inspection responsibilities for international trade and specific commodities;

- Such trade certification organizations as pre-shipment (or destination) inspection, post-arrival inspection, certificate of origin issuance, among others;

- Trade promotion and control agencies, providing licensing, quality and quantity oversight over such selected commodities as sugar, coffee, cocoa, rice, wheat, fruit, timber, and more;

- Customs brokers, freight forwarders and shipping agents (trade professionals);

- Shipping, air, road and rail transport organizations;

- International maritime ports and airports;

- Border crossings, inland ports, dry ports, duty free zones and processing areas, among others;

- Container handlers, container consolidators and terminal operators;

- The maritime harbour, bulk storage and general cargo freight logistics and stevedore communities;

- Cargo storage, handling and logistics communities, including road and rail facilities;

- Express freight, postal, messenger and courier companies;

- Financial, banking and payment/settlement services;

- The maritime and trade insurance industry;

- The import/export trader community and their global supply chain counterparts.

In order to fully understand the role, operations and business processes of all major participants in the potential single window, it is, at some stage, necessary to compile information which will help in ICT and reengineered business processes which may be facilitated by the single window. It is not necessary to gather this information before commencing ICT specification or implementation. But, ultimately, it will be needed. A national single window vision document and blueprint/roadmap should spell out the detailed work plan at a very early stage in the planning process. The following is a generic "laundry list" of actions and may vary dramatically by country, by type and objectives of the single window, by local conditions and with priorities. However, without a clear and comprehensive background study of processes and systems of all participants in the trade process, not just customs, GA and PIA, mistakes are inevitable. Any mistakes made through lack of preparation may seriously prejudice single window business outcomes and its technology design, performance and utilization. Note: The previously mentioned UN/CEFACT single window implementation framework (SWIF) initiative could be helpful with some of the following tasks.

A typical work plan would include:

1.	A submission to Government and key private sector organizations on the fundamentals, need, type, functionality and anticipated outcomes from a national single window.

2.	A submission to Government and key private sector organizations on the recommended governance body for the planning, oversight, design and implementation for the national single window.

3.	Following Government and private-sector approvals, the production of a credible national blueprint/roadmap for achieving a successful single window.

4.	This may be followed by a series of supporting exercises, designed to fill in the details necessary to fully understand the implications of single window implementation, together with a series of options and decisions to be made in order to achieve a successful implementation, including:

- A list of pre-requisites for the single window, necessary to articulate the existing trade processing scenario, such as:

  ✓	The numbers of potential participants in the ultimate single window;

  ✓	Volumes and peak loads of trade licensing, permits, customs declarations, approvals, inspections and the various documents, payments and signatures in current processes;

- A comparative best practice trade processing operational model.

Note: Based upon the principles of pre-arrival clearances for inspection agencies and customs, and post-arrival inspection on customer's own premises, together with the principles for best practices single window design:

  ✓	A single point of access;
  ✓	Single sign on;
  ✓	Single entry of data;
  ✓	A single point of decision-making;
  ✓	A single point of payment;

- A summarized gap analysis between the major GA and enterprise existing systems and best practice concepts, leading to an evaluation of the potential benefits of implementing a single window;

- A single window readiness survey to help assess the amount of work necessary to prepare all agencies and trading partners ability and willingness to participate in the national single window. This exercise should also help to prioritize GA status and the time and resources needed to bring them to a state of full readiness;

- A logical and functional ICT systems design, non-specific and non-proscriptive but sufficient to enable potential vendors to apply their own particular experience and unique insights to the challenges of a single window systems architecture;

- A practical implementation plan and timescale, including the ICT component;

- An initial plan for implementation, prioritizing key agencies and private sector organizations, detailing assumptions on recruitment/marketing methods, incentives, pricing and

marketing/business planning, promotion and socialization and a set of performance indicators, sufficient to monitor progress against plans.

5.   Pre-requisites for ICT specifications (terms of reference (TOR)): The overwhelming proportion of pre-ICT implementation tasks requires knowledgeable local trade practitioners and some expert knowledge and advice. This requires a different approach to the normal ICT TOR. The basic principles of this type of TOR concern acquiring and documenting a clear understanding of the objectives for the single window, current processes and systems, reengineering and change management of key systems, and only then selection or design of technology. As a consequence, before vendors can complete a considered response to a set of TOR, they will need considerable background information on current and planned trade processing operations. These should include:

- An appreciation of the laws and regulations covering the complete formalities and trade, transport and logistics processes;

- A gap analysis of the differences between the present legal and regulatory environment for trade processing and the new environment necessary to facilitate a paperless lodgement, clearance, risk management and payment system;

- An inventory of all major trade processing GA ICT systems. Note that this includes customs and a range of separate GA and PIA in addition to certificate of origin (CoO) issuing agencies, inspection agencies and commodity promotion/single desk agencies;

- A supporting outline description of the selected trade process of the formalities of GA and PIA operational systems and business processes;

- An additional inventory of all major typical trader, transport and logistics operator systems, particularly those concerning touch points or hand offs to other systems, which will need to interoperate with the single window;

- An appreciation of other trader, transport and logistics systems, sufficient to create a conceptualized joined-up information flow and a sources-and-uses-of-data matrix, or chart;

- A comprehensive, flexible plan for GA/PIA process reengineering, change management and ICT-based automation;

- A proposed and approved set of service level agreements (basic process and time taken) from each of the GA and cargo management, transport and logistics organizations to be involved;

- A complete list of a typical day/week/month licence approvals and customs declarations. These details should include peak loads for both import and export, and for inspections and exceptional treatments of trade processes;

- An introduction to some of the current operational problems, such as non-automated departments or part-automated departments. Note: This should include such items as the conflict between product descriptions and HS systems for identifying tariffs, customs regime, appropriate trade process regulations, and others. It may also include the regulatory environment governing authorized signatures, GA/PIA fees and charges, and more;

- It should also include clear identification of the preponderance of signatures, multiple signatures for multiple documents, signature substitutes (for instance coloured dots as a masquerade for an actual, identifying signature), multiple cash and cheque payments, multiple receipts and the time

taken to obtain receipts, multiple hand-off documents which allow movement of goods between the jurisdications of various authorities, among others;

- Other issues to be considered include conflicting hours of agency operations. Container ports, for instance, might operate day and night, customs hours can vary but are often normal working hours, GA/PIA are similar, banks may be even less. The open-availability window for dealing with these multiple agencies may total less than 30 per cent of a working day.

Box 5. Data collection: current trade processing practices

An important preparation task for any single window initiative is to map all current business and administrative processes involved in the formalities and/or the logistics functions. This will entail describing the documentary and business processes and computer systems involved in the preparation of all trade documentation. The numbers (and number of "original" signature copies) and types of documents (with samples and examples where possible), signatures required (and signature facsimiles or substitutes), stamps (and chops), fiscal stamps and payments all need to be recorded. The time taken for the individual process, the authority and organizations involved, any delays and any informal payments demanded also need to be recorded where possible.

It is of crucial importance to calculate the complete time taken to prepare the formalities documentation, the time to process the documentation package and typical variants, and direct and indirect, and informal, costs. The distribution of documents is also of specific interest, as is filing of documents and signatures, copies, and more. Only when all these facts have been collected, agreed and documented is it possible to analyse the process, to map the impact of ICT and then to redesign systems.

This activity is also known as process mapping. Note that the single window planning team is principally interested in those processes that directly impact trade clearances. There are many other processes that are essentially internal to customs and other trade process participants, and systems and processes which do not materially impact the trade process.

To reiterate the introductory statement to this comment: Single windows involve preparation, ICT and implementation. ICT is a relatively straightforward component and may not occupy too much time relative to the context of the overall single window planning and implementation. In practices, many of the activities listed here are already easily researched or already documented, or partially documented. Many of them can be undertaken in parallel or overlap each other. Not all needs to be done before selection of the ICT component. But ultimately, however and whenever they are done, they are unavoidable.

A. SOURCES OF INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE

It will be evident that a wide variety of skills and knowledge are necessary to successfully implement and roll out a single window to a complete trading community. Experience to date suggests that the stages illustrated in the eleven-stage model at diagram 6 and, more broadly, the main tasks outlined in this chapter and chapter II of this report can each take years to complete. A full implementation of such a functional single window as a one-stop shop, a trade portal or a customs single window can take three to five years, most of the time being used up by trading partner recruitment, or the education, training, connection, testing and productive use of the single window by each trader and end user. And this does not necessarily include the time to convince all trading partners to join the initiative. The most mature single windows, as Singapore, have now been in operation for more than 20 years, and they are still adding functionality, upgrading technology and adding new users.

As this report has so far emphasized, each situation is different. But there are islands of commonality, especially in ICT design, business analysis, process simplification, data modelling and standards and the basic principles of single window governance, among other topics. Guidance on procurement, ICT policies, ICT and information standards are now freely available; suggested metrics, training and education modules are also becoming available, although full language coverage is by no means complete.

The leading sources of funding, advice and assistance include the World Bank, European Union, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and other national aid agencies, various such development banks as the Asian Development Bank, the African Development Bank, among others, and many multilateral and bilateral donors which comprise the principal external funding agencies for customs and single window initiatives. Not all of these agencies have the necessary capacity, resources, expertise or experience in single windows. WTO is aware of the needs of countries but does not become directly involved in implementation; they may be helpful in initial consultation. WCO is a member-only organization: While it is willing and anxious to help, it only directly supports members and will only release its standards to members, who are almost invariably national customs authorities. Additionally, WCO charges for materials it supplies to non-members, as opposed to the United Nations agencies which publish all relevant materials on the web, free of charge.

Other more traditional sources of information and knowledge, directly or indirectly available, include:

- National customs brokers and freight forwarder organizations;

- National transport, logistics, port and airport organizations;

- Chambers of commerce and peak industry bodies;

- Major global supply chains;

- Universities and international education and training organizations;

- Trade facilitation and trade simplification organizations, the local offices of the European Article Numbering (EAN) Association;

- National ministries of trade, industry, economy, and others;

- Such common sources of information as other single windows organizations and web-based knowledge management facilities.

There is one group of international organization outstanding in the dissemination of information and standards about single windows and paperless trading, namely the agencies of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), which are the following:

- The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP);
- The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA);
- The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA);
- The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE);
- The United Nations Economic Commission for Latin American and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

These United Nations agencies, led by ECE which has the mandate for standards for electronic trade, have for some time been developing initiatives to help countries to develop their trade facilitation, EDI and single window initiatives. For example, ECE maintains a database of single window initiatives, a complete database of United Nations EDI for Administration Commerce and Transport (EDIFACT)/CEFACT standards and the current United Nations standards for single windows, UN/ CEFACT Recommendation No. 33 and a comprehensive library of trade facilitation standards and recommendations.[20] Additionally, ECE has collaborated with ESCAP to develop training materials on business process simplification.[21] A further ECE/ESCAP collaborative venture is their trade facilitation capacity-building programme.[22]

A combination of these resources will help provide in-depth education on many of the topics covered by this report, as will United Nations agencies follow up educational and capacity-building exercises.

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[20] See: www.unece.org.

[21] See: www.unescap.org/tid/projects/bpasw.asp.

[22] See: www.unescap.org/unnext/.

B. BEST-PRACTICE SINGLE WINDOWS

This report has consistently made the point that there is no such thing, yet, as best practice single windows. There is a range of more mature and experienced single window examples. There are also examples of non-performing single windows, including many of the flaws that are exhibited by major ICT and business process-based initiatives. There is ample evidence to demonstrate that, the more ambitious and expensive the project, the higher the likelihood of failure. A single window is analogous to a complex piece of machinery, with many moving parts. It only needs one faulty part to stop the whole thing from working. Hence, the emphasis in this report for a step-by-step, evolutionary approach to a national single window.

The starting point for an examination of some national experiences should be the ECE website.[23] It is recommended that personal follow-up is taken to update the entry in the repository and to ask questions that can relate experience planning update purposes in other countries. The model for comparing ESCWA member countries contained in this report may prove useful in evaluating international experience.

Some examples that demonstrate the importance of careful planning, top-level sponsorship, adequate funding and good governance include Felixstowe, in the United Kingdom, for an integrated "provincial" version of a national single window; similar examples exist in Germany, France, the Netherlands, and Scandinavia. In virtually every case, maritime ports led the initiative, collaborating with customs authorities.

There are several examples in Asia. Singapore is well known. Japan, Korea and Taiwan are in the forefront. Generally, Asian single windows have been led by customs and OGA before some sort of port and logistics integration. Singapore and Hong Kong started the movement since both had the benefits of open ports, minimum customs intervention and a single trade approvals authority, which demonstrates the advantage of a non-stop shop as a starting point.

There are a number of later starters in Asia. China has concentrated on port developments, hence it exhibits "islands" of best port practices. The ASEAN countries are almost all participating in individual single window developments, starting with customs automation, and a single administration document (SAD), both national and ASEAN-wide. There is a long way to go although many ASEAN countries have been working on customs automation for more than ten years and on a local variety of single windows for as many as five years. Except Singapore, Indonesia is leading the pack in the development of a full national single window although they have adopted a strategy of providing full single window facilities to only a small number (just over 100) of authorized economic operators (AEO).[24]

Australia and New Zealand both have mature single windows, integrating customs and OGA. However, port single windows are at an earlier stage of development and full integration with formalities single windows is still some time away.

Good examples of smaller countries single windows are typified by Mauritius who has a version of a national single window in operation, as does Tunisia.

Some West African countries have opted for a port-based single window as their first priority. With the exception of Ghana, who is the most advanced in the region, all of these port single windows are at a very early, as yet unproven, stage. It also remains to be seen what sort of reactions the local customs authorities might take in response.

Single windows for border crossings are exemplified by the Global Facilitation Partnership for Transport and Trade (GFPT). The European Union also has a similar initiative. For details and progress visit their websites.[25]

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[23] See: http://www.unece.org/cefact/single_window/welcome.htm.

[24] See: www.wcoomd.org, World Customs Organization Authorized Economic Operators.

[25] See: www.worlbank.org/GFPT and http://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/resources/documents/customs/policy_issues/e-customs_initiative/ind_projects/swannexv.pdf.

IV. TRENDS AND DEVELOPMENTS IN ESTABLISHING ESCWA REGION SINGLE WINDOWS

Since 2004, the World Bank Group, through its subsidiary, the International Finance Corporation (IFC), has conducted an annual survey of key business efficiency indicators covering almost all of the international trading nations, currently comprising 183 economies in total (2010). The indicators currently tracked by the Doing Business project are:

- Starting a business;
- Dealing with construction permits;
- Employing workers;
- Registering property;
- Getting credit;
- Protecting investors;
- Paying taxes;
- Trading across borders;
- Enforcing contracts;
- Closing a business.

These indicators are summarized into an overall ease-of-doing business index, with economies ranked from 1 (highest, or easiest to do business) right through to 183. This index averages the country's rankings on the ten topics addressed, each made up of a variety of indicators, giving equal weight to all topics. While every topic discussed in this report is important to national economies, we are mostly concerned here with factors which directly affect the global trade process, referred to in Doing Business 2010 as trading across borders. Chart 3 below shows an overview of the general Doing Business Index and the ranking of trade efficiency as estimated by the trading-across-borders analysis, by ESCWA country in descending order of the trading-across-borders index.

CHART 3. SUMMARY OF ESCWA MEMBERSHIP TRADE RANKINGS

ESCWA ranking	Economy	Ranking		Comments
		Overall index	Trading across borders	
1	United Arab Emirates	33	5	
2	Saudi Arabia	13	23	
3	Egypt	106	29	
4	Bahrain	20	32	
5	Qatar	39	41	
6	Jordan	100	71	
7	West Bank and Gaza	139	92	
8	Lebanon	108	95	
9	Kuwait	61	109	
10	Syrian Arab Republic	143	118	
11	Yemen	99	120	
12	Oman	65	123	
13	The Sudan	154	142	
14	Iraq	153	180	

The annual Doing Business rankings are, out of practical necessity, mostly based on secondary and tertiary sources. The rankings themselves are the result of part-subjective and part-collaborative judgements, usually indirectly based on input from the local trading community. The published data and indices are signposts, not absolutes. Clearly, every care is taken to ensure accuracy of data and consensus on rankings but, as the annual report gains increasing international credibility and focus, such issues as national prestige

and political imperatives inevitably begin to insidiously influence the data that finds its way into the final published results. In some countries, the small panel of consulting firms or business advisors who originally made up the often voluntary data-collection team have, to some extent, become subject to national, institutional overview. It is no longer uncommon for national oversight committees to review and, in some cases, to challenge the results for their particular field of interest.[26] Hence, although Doing Business may reliably be regarded as a source of international trade data comparison, it is generally not regarded as a source of information for informed policymaking, at least, not without significant primary source material as backup.

A. TRADE DOCUMENTS

Chart 4 illustrates the numbers of documents required by customs and GA for the national export process. The heading "number of documents" can be misleading, hence the use of the adjective "nominal". Export processes are generally simplified from an administrative perspective, as far as is possible, bearing in mind trade treaty obligations, regional trading partner agreements and multilateral FTAs. However, when a country reports, say, five documents required for imports, they do not include:

- Numbers of copies, often four per document type;

- Numbers of original ("wet") signatures;

- Numbers and copies of payment receipts;

- Numbers of informal documents or letters, or local practice documents, for example, it might require an original letter and ID document, plus copies, to prove the power of an attorney to act on a trader's behalf, as customs brokers and freight forwarders often do during the goods clearance and release process.

CHART 4. (NOMINAL) DOCUMENTS FOR EXPORTING AND IMPORTING, ESCWA MEMBER COUNTRIES

Numbers of trade documents needed for exporting and importing							
Documents needed for exporting				Documents needed for importing			
Fewest		Most		Fewest		Most	
United Arab Emirates	5	Jordan	7	United Arab Emirates	4	Lebanon	7
Saudi Arabia	5	Syrian Arab Republic	8	Saudi Arabia	5	Qatar	7
Bahrain	5	Kuwait	8	Bahrain	6	Jordan	7
Lebanon	5	Oman	10	West Bank and Gaza	6	Syrian Arab Republic	9
Qatar	5	Iraq	10	Egypt	6	Yemen	9
West Bank and Gaza	6			The Sudan	6	Kuwait	10
Egypt	6					Oman	10
The Sudan	6					Iraq	10
Yemen	6						
Kuwait	8						

B. CUSTOMS CLEARANCE AND THE SINGLE ADMINISTRATION DOCUMENT

The most important primary trade efficiency reform or system/message change in the formalities process is to replace the complexity and uncertainties that accompany the multiple types of customs declarations, often known as regimes, and their licence/permit attachments. This is now widely achieved by use of a single reengineered document, or message type, known as the single administration document (SAD). The SAD is a summary of key data elements from a range of trading documents, licence and permit applications and approvals, certificates of origin, and so on. In fact, a typical export needs the submission of the following documents, originals only, multiple, perhaps four copies of each, original signatures on each copy, often known as "wet ink" signatures:

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[26] This is the case more often than not because the Government officials concerned do not have a clear grasp of the purpose or the methodology of the survey programme.

- Commercial invoice;
- Packing list;
- Bill of lading;
- Completed customs declaration, including all requisite permits and licences;
- Certificate of origin;
- Surveyor's approval.

Note: The intention of the SAD is to replace all of these documents with a single form or message type which contains summaries of these documents and comprises, normally, less than 50 data elements. A data element is a UN/CEFACT definition for an irreducible item of data used in UN/CEFACT messages for single windows and automated trade processes and many other data-processing purposes.

In addition, there is a logistics requirement for such land transport documents as the bill of lading, manifest and proof of delivery. There are also specialized bay planning and container loading instructions and shipping needed to complete the arrival, port and container yard right through to departure processes. In practice, even for a fairly straightforward export transaction, there could be around 15 documents needed, in multiple copies with multiple original signatures and multiple payments. The parties involved in this export process may include:

- Trader;
- Customs broker;
- Freight forwarder;
- Messengers;
- A selection of GA;
- Customs;
- Surveyors and inspection agencies;
- Road transport;
- Port authority;
- Stevedores;
- Container handler;
- Shipping company.

In fairness to the more advanced countries, many of these documents (more correctly, message sets) are either part- or wholly-automated for single window processes. The customs declaration and other GA documents, in those circumstances, may have been simplified and combined with other documents (SAD) and, ultimately, converted to EDI formats and processes. But that only applies to a relatively small proportion of exporting countries, although many are in transition and virtually all other countries are at some stage of planning for automated trade processing for a trade single window of one form or another.

Another complication is the different number of forms or message sets for the formalities and for the logistics functions. For example, some countries may have a SAD for customs and another type of SAD for the shipping and port processes, but their content can vary with:

- Import, export, transit, transhipment, re-export and other customs regimes;

- Container type: full container load (FCL), comprising a single commodity type or HS code; less than full (LCL) container load, implying a part-filled container or a container with a mix of commodity types or HS codes; a refrigerated container (reefer) or an empty container, or even a damaged container or one requiring special treatment elsewhere before its reuse is permissible;

- Container, bulk, general cargo, liquid/petroleum, crew/passengers, and so on;

- Commodity type: There can be literally thousands of different commodity and HS codes, implying different treatment by the authorities and, to a lesser extent, by the logistics operators;

- Packaging: container, pallet, wooden crate, polythene wrap, and more;

- Type of departing vessel: maritime vessel, aircraft, rail, road, river or water, among others;

- Type of port: maritime, airport, border crossing, multi-modal terminal, duty-free zone, inland/dry port, and others.

C. GOODS MOVEMENT THROUGH THE CARGO ARRIVAL PROCESSING SYSTEM

CHART 5. TIME TAKEN FOR EXPORTING AND IMPORTING GOODS (DAYS), ESCWA MEMBER COUNTRIES

Time taken for exporting goods				Time taken for importing goods			
Fastest		Slowest		Fastest		Slowest	
United Arab Emirates	8	Qatar	21	United Arab Emirates	9	Syrian Arab Republic	21
Bahrain	14	Oman	22	Bahrain	15	Oman	25
Egypt	14	West Bank and Gaza	25	Egypt	15	Yemen	25
Syrian Arab Republic	15	Lebanon	26	Saudi Arabia	18	Lebanon	35
Saudi Arabia	17	Yemen	27	Jordan	19	West Bank and Gaza	40
Jordan	17	The Sudan	32	Kuwait	19	The Sudan	46
Kuwait	17	Iraq	102	Qatar	20	Iraq	101

The measurement of time for goods to pass through the logistics gateway, whether maritime or airport, or any other type, conforms to no universal definition. In maritime ports, the concept of container dwell time is probably the most accurate and widely adopted, but even here there are various alternate definitions and a range of local complicating factors. The simplest definition of container dwell time is from vessel "line over" or formal arrival time at the berth. Others include "tied up" or the time when the ship is fully secured at berth. In practice, arrival time is the time recorded in the ships log and reported to the port and various port and Government authorities.

D. COSTS OF CARRYING GOODS IN ESCWA MEMBER COUNTRIES

CHART 6. COSTS OF CARRYING GOODS FOR EXPORT AND IMPORT (US$), ESCWA MEMBER COUNTRIES

Export container costs					Import container costs			
Least		Most			Least		Most	
United Arab Emirates	593	Bahrain	955		United Arab Emirates	579	Kuwait	1 217
Saudi Arabia	681	Kuwait	1 002		Qatar	657	West Bank and Gaza	1 225
Jordan	730	Lebanon	1 060		Saudi Arabia	678	Jordan	1 290
Qatar	735	Yemen	1 129		Egypt	823	Yemen	1 475
Egypt	737	Syrian Arab Republic	1 190		Bahrain	995	Syrian Arab Republic	1 625
Oman	821	The Sudan	2 050		Oman	1 037	The Sudan	2 900
West Bank and Gaza	835	Iraq	3 900		Lebanon	1 203	Iraq	3 900

V. SINGLE WINDOW STATUS OF ESCWA MEMBER COUNTRIES

This section aims to identify the current usage of single windows for trade facilitation in the economies covered by ESCWA; to produce a publication on current status and regional best practices, and to hold a debrief on the topic. Thereafter, to develop strategies to encourage further take-up of single window techniques and technologies throughout the region and to explore the regional potential for collaboration and to move toward a regional joint venture involving several, if not all of the regional economies.

A. RESEARCH AND REPORT METHODOLOGY

Publications on the regional status of single windows are limited. Hence, the methodology began with a considerable desk research element, followed by a region-wide distribution of a basic, introductory questionnaire, which, in turn, led to a two-day workshop for member States in Beirut in March 2011. Country delegate debriefs on the topic were a crucial part of the workshop. The findings on which this section of the report is based were extracted from these debriefs, earlier research and questionnaire results. They have also been editorially complemented by selected comments on the draft report, circulated following the workshop exercise.

Box 6. Best-practice single windows

Wide consultation has disclosed the consensus that there currently is no such thing as best practice in single window implementation and operation. Every country/economy is different for a number of reasons: size of economy and population, geography and location, trade patterns, trading partners, infrastructure, logistics facilities, legal and regulatory background, business culture, financial capacity, political will, and more.

No single model or mode of operation fits all cases, nor even comes close. The best fit for any particular country examining their options is the most advanced functional model that operates in a similar context, which is not necessarily best practice.

The model on which these assessments are made is based on a diagram used earlier in this report (diagram 8). It illustrates a possible sequence and interrelationships between the components of the more sophisticated single window models, national and regional single window.

The following is a section of comparative metrics illustrating the status of individual countries in the ESCWA region at each of the major steps in establishing a national single window. Where possible, we have attempted to identify the following stages in setting up and operating a national single window:

1.   A one-stop shop.
2.   A trade promotion portal.
3.   Electronic customs declarations.

4.   A single window for GA licences and permits. Note: Where an individual GA has set up an internal or a shared, with another or several other agencies, single window, this will be noted as a significant, contributory step on the road to setting up a full OGA single window.

5.   A Government formalities single window. Note: This is typically a national system for customs and all OGA for lodging and obtaining licences and permits and for submitting electronic customs declarations so that they can, in combination, provide a single lodgement for traders, submitted at a single point of access.

6.   A maritime port shipping system providing electronic facilities for booking ship calls, booking berths and for making all accommodation and logistics arrangements in advance of the arrival of the vessel.

7.   Similar book and bill arrangements for airports, road and/or rail border crossings and inland waterway passage, where appropriate.

8.   Provision of an electronic port community system enabling them to connect and interoperate their ICT systems in order to ensure that all port services can be reserved, scheduled, carried out and integrated for the cargo of each individual vessel.

9.   An integrated maritime (and/or airport, border crossing and inland waterway cargo) book and bill (shipping services) and port community system (a maritime or logistics single window).

10.   A combined formalities and maritime/logistics single window, namely a national single window.

11.   A regional single window. Note: At present, there is no such requirement or arrangement within the ESCWA region.

12.   A global single window. Note: At present, there is no such requirement or arrangement within the ESCWA region, or anywhere else in the world.

     In addition to the above twelve categories of single window components, the proportion of traders using the particular component or sub-single window will be assessed, so as to begin to set up an objective-relative performance indicator. There is no point in establishing a single window unless it is to be used: The more it is used, by more entities, then the more likely the national benefit. If only a proportion of a trader and Government community use a single window, then it is a hybrid of traditional and electronic methods whose benefits cannot properly be assessed.   This usage proportion will be measured by symbols approximating to varying degrees of progress, which are as follows:

	No apparent progress
	Limited progress
	Some improvement
	Significant progress
	Transformation effectively completed

     By combining these measures, we should be able to provide a reasonable comparison between the progress within and between ESCWA countries, using a simple methodology, capable of being updated on a regular basis and able to measure and compare progress in an objective fashion. The proposed summary chart is illustrated below. The column on single window status will contain the symbols which, in the opinion of the reviewers, best reflects the current status.

Economy name		
ESCWA country single window ranking 2011		
Single window stage	Single window component	Single window status
1	One-stop shop	
2	Trade promotion portal	
3	Electronic customs declaration (EDI)	
4	OGA/NGO single window	
5	Integrated formalities single window	
6	Port shipping services	
7	Port community portal/network	
8	Port/logistics single window	
9	National single window	
10	Regional single window	
11	Global single window	

Notes and explanations on factors considered for ranking:

1. The term one-stop shop is traditionally applied to a single location, or office, where all Government trade licences, permits and payment for licences and various port charges may be made. In practice, this rarely happens, due to staffing limitations, bank working hours, and the availability of decision-makers for signatures, among others. So a one-stop shop is not always a single visit set of transactions as a single window is meant to be. Nevertheless, it is organizationally a good first step and provides a starting point for an organic development of customs and OGA single windows.

One practical development which can evolve from a one-stop shop is the design of common, standardized forms for all ministerial and NGO licence and permit forms. This is the precursor to simplification and harmonization of processes and an eventual substitution for paper forms and signatures (and payments) by electronic means, using United Nations layout keys, UN/CEFACT standards and data modelling principles at various steps along the way.

2. The trade promotion portal can be complementary to a one-stop shop or to the early stages of single windows. Ideally, it contains a database of all trade laws, recent updates and legal precedents, registers of trade consultants, freight forwarders, customs brokers and shipping agents, trade finance and insurance firms and sources of practical information on international trade. They often contain a database of trade opportunities, trade partners, and others. Trade portals can be networked from such organizations as the International Trade Centre (ITC),[27] The World Trade Center (WTC),[28] or may be specially developed for a nation or a region. It may not be limited to trade but also offer visa information, tourist assistance, travel and accommodation advice, and so on. From the perspective of the single window, it should, ideally, be the central location from which licence and permit application forms may be downloaded. At later stages, these forms may be completed electronically on web forms obtainable from the trade portal host system, and lodged electronically as an early stage of a formalities or OGA single window.

Note that many of the functions of this trade portal may be carried out separately by various ministries or NGOs, in which case the portal would automatically redirect the web enquiry to the relevant site.

3. An electronic customs declaration involves the electronic lodgement of an electronically created, customs reengineered short form of customs declaration.[29] The SAD or electronic form may be lodged electronically over an EDI-capable network service, customs own private network, a secure website or through one of a series of service bureau or partners of the national customs specifically appointed for this purpose. This is often known as a customs single window, which is rather misleading since traders could only ever go to customs to submit their declarations. It is more accurately described as a customs or trader direct entry or distributed entry declaration lodgement service.

4. The OGA/NGO single window, in is purest form, is an electronic version of the one-stop shop (see note 1) and is meant to work in much the same way as the customs EDI network. The main difference is that there is no internationally recognized SAD format for OGA purposes although these are a few models for NGO certificate of origin submission[30] based on the United Nations layout key.[31] Note that a complete regulatory and legal reform, harmonization and integration with trade processes is a key element in introducing a single window, either formalities, national or logistics.

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[27] See: Intracen: http://www.intracen.org/.

[28] See WTC: http://www.wtc.com/.

[29] See: European Union Single Administrative Document (SAD): http://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/customs/procedural_ aspects/general/sad/index_en.htm. Note that the concept of an SAD is now widely applied to Government administration, for instance, a port community SAD, and is not limited to customs usage.

[30] See an example based on the United Nations Layout Key (UNLK) at: http://www.nttfc.org/coo.asp.

[31] See: http://www.unece.org/cefact/recommendations/rec01/rec01_ecetrd137.pdf.

5.   An integrated formalities single window is a functional combination of the customs declaration (direct entry) service and the OGA/NGO single window to form a combined electronic single window for the single access, submission and decision-making concerned with Government compliance formalities.   A key ingredient of this national single window is an effective governance body, providing high calibre management and leadership. These cannot be outsourced to vendors.

6.   Port shipping services are the computer system by which shipping companies may pre-book berths and unloading/loading, provisioning and engineering services before the vessel actually arrives at the port. Pilotage, navigation, tugboat and cutter services, emergency services and clearance of all relevant ships papers (but not cargo related) may be made through this type of system. Similar systems exist for other such transport modes as airports, road/highway border crossings, inland waterway junctions, inland/dry ports and duty free zones.

7.   The port community system (or portal, or network), at its simplest level, enables such organizations outside the port community as transport operators, traders, freight forwarders, service providers, port suppliers, and others to communicate with the various systems which comprise the port network, and are interconnected (interoperable) through the port community system.

8.   The port/logistics single window is an upgraded version of the port community system which enables interoperability between the port and terminal operator systems and also the development of community applications. For example, the port community system might operate an identity management system which enables authorized parties to access certain systems and specific types of data or specific data elements. For example, this could lead to a privileged user system which enables them to access relevant data on a cargo manifest, submitted by the shipper to the container terminal, a member of the port community system. The privileged user, for example, a nominated freight forwarder, whose identity has been established and confirmed by the system, could then, through the port community system, track the progress of specific containers holding consignments for which they are legitimately responsible. This facility allows freight forwarders to provide advance information to customs and to OGA for cargo clearance purposes, to internal port transport for cargo movement, to external transport operators to schedule cargo collection and delivery to traders, and to banks for payment of fees for customs, NGO and logistics fees.

       Traders are now beginning to demand such facilities in return for their full cooperation in the formalities processes and to help single window operators to deliver and test improvements, and to patronize ports where such systems are available.

9.   The national single window is the combination of a formalities single window and a port/logistics single window, thereby enabling a holistic, integrated national compliance and logistics management service, and high levels of service to their clients, the traders.

10.   A few regional single windows and/or international single windows are in prototype stages; others are just in the planning stage. Most are designed for the use of groups of geographically adjoining trading partners; some are for private-sector or public-sector trade and such related political purposes as APEC. In general, their single window purposes are not clearly stated.   All are finding the process of political agreement between nations who otherwise compete in trade to be difficult and time consuming. However, the technology works, even though the architecture, process, purpose, timescale and governance of the group single window is not yet clear.

11.   As for global single windows, there is no unambiguous evidence that plans for a global or true international single window to emerge in the immediate future. Nevertheless, planning progress for regional single window is proceeding apace. It seems inevitable that this will lead to a global single window at some stage of the 21st century.

The following ESCWA countries are now ranked separately according to the factors outlined in the previous section.   Countries/economies are treated in alphabetic order.   No particular importance or relevance is applied to this sequence. It is merely selected as an administrative convenience. Note that the ranking and status selected is an approximation at best. Input has largely been based on desk research, with very limited input from individual countries. Indeed, basic definitions of the selected categories of single windows are not yet agreed upon, nor easily understood by non-specialists, which adds confusion to an exercise such as this. Nevertheless, it is a first step. It is to be hoped that these results will become more refined with increased familiarity of the topic and with more direct involvement of individual countries in such future events as the ESCWA single window workshop.

1. *Bahrain single window status*

With a population of about 1,039,300 and an area of only 750 km^2, the Kingdom of Bahrain is by far the smallest of all GCC States. The country has the lowest oil and gas reserves among the Gulf nations. At current rates of production, the onshore oil reserves of Bahrain are estimated to be exhausted within 15 years. Hence, the Government is striving to diversify its economy by emphasizing on banking and financial services, which currently account for about 25.5 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP), and by rapidly converting to an e-economy, which is the current background to its e-customs and single window plans.

Bahrain now aims to have more than 90 per cent of its key services available online. With a high demand for ICT products and services in the private and public sectors, its ICT market is expected to reach US$180 billion by 2012.

Complementary comments to the draft report from the Bahrain delegation reveal that Bahrain is now in the process of planning and implementing a customs and OGA single window based on the Webb Fontaine Trade Word Manager portal.[32]

According to a website entry which overlapped this report, Bahrain customs will be replacing its customs automation system (CAS) with a platform for customs, OGA and ultimately elements of a port single window. The new system will include sophisticated risk management facilities and will make use of contemporary international standards.

The website goes on to say that the new system will enable full automation of all customs procedures, including:

- Advanced submission of electronic customs declarations and manifests;

- Manifest management;

- Declaration processing;

- Warehouse and transit processing and management;

- Attachment of scanned electronic documents;

- Secure e-payments;

- Integration and processing of all regulatory agency documents with customs clearance documents;

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[32] See www.webbfontaine.com. Note: Webb Fontaine is a Swiss-based corporation with local offices in such places as Nigeria and Dubai. The original business model of the company was to provide support and added functionality to ASYCUDA installations but is now spreading its efforts into the wider single window market place.

- Comprehensive risk management across multiple agencies using artificial intelligence;

- Real-time intelligence information;

- Automated fraud detection;

- Integrated valuation checks upon declaration submission;

- Complete customs process monitoring and feedback.

The potential benefits of the customs electronic system are claimed as all Bahrain stakeholders involved in trade, logistics and customs clearance will now be able to collaborate seamlessly using a common trade platform. The potential benefits for Bahrain traders, logistics businesses and GA include:

For traders and the business community:

- Faster customs processing and clearance;
- Lower transaction costs through reduced delays;
- Increased transparency and consistent application of rules;
- Reduced time to market for goods;
- Efficient and more effective deployment of resources;
- Greater competitiveness of businesses.

For GA:

- Enhanced security and risk management;
- Increased efficiency through targeted deployment of resources;
- Accurate and increased revenue collection;
- Greater transparency for transactions;
- Increased trader compliance;
- More trader-friendly environment leading to increased foreign investment;
- Integration and timely flow of information between GAs;
- Improved business intelligence.

Bahrain did not complete the ESCWA questionnaire nor did it submit a written presentation at the workshop. Subsequent to the workshop and debrief session, the Bahrain delegation submitted details of their single window planning, which have been included here. It should be noted that, as discussed elsewhere in this report, the comments supplied do not comprise a status report of implementation progress, rather it is a more detailed look at plans. The rankings tables are based on actual implementation progress so we would expect to see a significant change to status and ranking assessment following the next assessment exercise in 2012 or 2013.

Bahrain	URL/Web references
Government	http://www.bahraingovernment.com/
Customs	http://www.customs.gov.bh
Maritime port	http://www.gop.bh/pdf/PortsBook_191008.pdf
Airport	http://www.bahrainairport.com/bia/
Chamber of commerce	http://www.bahrainchamber.org.bh/en/Default.aspx
Trade promotion	http://bh.countrysearch.tradekey.com/trade-promotion-services.htm
Single window	n/a

Summary

This assessment is largely based on inference from secondary sources. The encouraging aspects include the plans for electronic customs declarations and a somewhat more opaque statement about setting up a single window. The weakness in the single window plan is the absence of any statement about creating or even thinking of planning for an OGA electronic licensing initiative. On the other hand, the arrangement that two container ports are to be managed by Moller-Maersk provides confidence for future port ICT systems and provides an impetus to create a future port/logistics single window.

As a consequence of the input from the ESCWA project, the Bahrain single window status is assessed as follows:

Bahrain		
ESCWA country single window ranking 2011		
Single window stage	Single window component	Single window status
1	One-stop shop	○
2	Trade promotion portal	○
3	Electronic customs declaration (EDI)	◔
4	OGA/NGO single window	○
5	Integrated formalities single window	○
6	Port shipping services	◑
7	Port community portal/network	◔
8	Port/logistics single window	○
9	National single window	○
10	Regional single window	n/a
11	Global single window	n/a

2. *Egypt single window status*

Egypt has been working on trade process reform since the late 1990s. Their principal trade reform project was assisted by USAID in 2002, known as Assistance for Customs and Trade Facilitation (ACTF). The objectives of this technical assistance programme were:

- Standards;
- Inspection;
- Import and export procedures;
- Enhancement of customs and trade facilitation services;
- Port services.

Achievements from this programme included:

- Improvement in policy frameworks for trade and investment;
- Increased private-sector competitiveness;
- More opportunity for business expansion;
- A reduction in average import clearance time by customs;
- Simplification of customs procedures;
- Development of an electronic customs declaration system (an internally developed system);
- A reduction in the number of disputes between traders and customs;
- An increase in the percentage of electronically transmitted and processed customs declarations.

By 2011, Egypt was ranked 21st out of 183 countries in the IFC 2011 Doing Business report. It also ranked 92 out of 155 countries in the biannual World Bank LPI study.

Customs now conform to the GCC customs union agreement on customs law within the GCC.

As indicated by LPI results, Egypt is perceived to have more problems in logistics than in customs formalities. In the current USAID round of assistance,[33] the following objectives have been articulated:

- Improved regulatory control of cross-border trade;
- Improved attention to export standards;
- Reduction of cargo movement time through Egyptian ports;
- Improved risk management techniques for imports;
- Improved control and reduction in counterfeit products within the Egyptian economy;
- Improved IPR enforcement;
- Improved food safety system.

Therefore, it has to be assumed that there are currently no tangible single window plans in Egypt.

Although there has been an Egyptian SAD for some time,[34] its use is still not widespread. Partly as a result, the average time that exporting and importing companies spend on preparing documents and customs clearance is eleven days. An increase in the usage of SAD would reduce paperwork and time spent in non-value added activities, hence a formalities single window or an OGA single window would be a significant productivity enhancement.

The port system in Egypt is complex and extensive, with 15 main commercial ports. About 5.1 million TEU[35] were handled through Egyptian ports in 2010, of which 3.3 million were transhipment containers and 1.8 million were domestic cargo. The main ports, by traffic volume, are Alexandria, Damietta, and Port Said, jointly handling 85 per cent of Egypt's cargo tonnage and 92 per cent of its containerized trade. Alexandria is the most important port, handling about 60 per cent of Egypt's trade. Damietta and Port Said handle the majority of transhipment container traffic. Significant problems in the maritime services sector in Egypt include a low productivity of stevedoring operations and an average dwell time of 21 days in Egypt's three main commercial ports of Alexandria, El Dekheila, and Damietta. The main causes of this delay are long document preparation times for importers and brokers, customs clearance procedures, quality control inspections, and a high rate of physical customs inspection. Egypt has ICT systems and some procedures covering the movement of cargo, especially in the larger ports. An EDI system that links all stakeholders inside the port, which is to say a port community system, has recently been implemented in Alexandria and Damietta. EDI and track and trace systems are in use, but not widely. Overall, there is room for significant adoption and ICT-induced improvement throughout the port system.

Egypt	URL/Web references
Government	http://www.egypt.gov.eg/english/
Customs	http://www.customs.gov.eg
Maritime port	http://www.rafimar.com/ports/index_ports.htm. See: Dekheila Port and Alexandria Port. Damietta Port and ports Said and Suez (at both ends of the Suez canal).

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[33] See: http://gsearch.info.usaid.gov/search?access=p&q=trade+facilitation+in+egypt&btnG=GO&site=lpa_collection&entqr=0&ud=1&sort=date%3AD%3AL%3Ad1&output=xml_no_dtd&oe=utf8&ie=latin1&client=default_frontend&proxystylesheet=default_frontend.

[34] Internal IFC working paper.

[35] TEU stands for twenty-foot equivalent unit. One TEU is the cargo capacity of a standard intermodal container.

Egypt	URL/Web references
Airport	http://www.egypt-cairo.com/egypt_air_cargo.html
Chamber of commerce	http://www.tradeegypt.com/infoBank/EgyptianChambersofcommerce.asp
Trade promotion	http://www.eepc.gov.eg/wps/wcm/connect/eepc_en/home_en
Single window	http://exportcontrol.org/library/conferences/2516/Egypt.pdf

Summary

As a large, developing economy, Egypt is working hard to modernizes, but efforts to date appear to have been somewhat uncoordinated. There appears to be no programme which will progressively introduce a complete single window infrastructure for trade at this time. Having said that, a last minute set of comments on the state of Egypt's readiness for single windows for trade facilitation was received with a request for inclusion in this report. While this latest information makes no difference to comparative single window implementation status rankings, it does illustrate some of the planning steps that GA, particularly customs, need to go through before they can implement an effective single window for trade facilitation.

Supplementary comments of Egypt's preparedness for single window

Egypt has been working on trade process reform since the late 1990s. The main players include:

- Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI), which sets and overseas the rules and regulations that govern foreign trade (trade policy sector) and controls the inspection process (General Organization for Exports and Imports Control (GOEIC));

- Ministry of Finance and mainly Egyptian Customs Authority (ECA);

- Ministry of Transportation that includes the Ports Authority (sea and land only);

- Airports Authority.

Over this period, a series of Government-initiated programmes has taken place with the help and support of different international donors for specific as well as cross-sectoral agencies (Export and imports control authority, customs, transportation, and others). Amongst other areas, these programmes assisted in enhancing:

- Standards;
- Inspection;
- Import and export procedures;
- Enhancement of customs and trade facilitation services;
- Port services.

Achievements from this programme included:

- Improvement in policy frameworks for trade and investment;
- Increased private-sector competitiveness;
- More opportunity for business expansion;
- A reduction in average import clearance time for inspection (GOEIC) and customs (ECA);
- Simplification of customs procedures;
- Development of an electronic customs declaration system (an internally developed system);

- A reduction in the number of disputes between traders and customs;
- An increase in the percentage of electronically transmitted and processed customs declarations.

Specific initiatives are taking place between ECA and GOEIC. An SAD is being initiated by ECA and includes the inspection data managed by GOEIC. One result has been that the average time for the export process has been reduced to a few hours and the average time for importing is within 48 hours, provided that legal documents are presented on time. For further information, see earlier comments on SAD.

MTI has recently initiated a TradeNet programme that represents single window approach for traders. The codename for the programme is EgyTrader. The programme will be based on the best practices of the Singapore Trade Net and Trade Exchange systems mostly developed by Crimson Logic with the help of ITC.

Further details on Egypt's TradeNet (EgyTrader):

Lead agency: MTI;

Origin of initiative: Sokhna Port, 2004, now under private-sector ownership (DP World);

Business lead: GOEIC, supported by a technical and steering committee, still under recruitment.

A subcommittee has also been established that represents the business community dealing with the foreign trade and associated services. Representatives from ECA and, soon, port logistics will join the team.

Other participants: Government agencies

- The Controlling Agency of Egypt; GOEIC; Prime and System owner. GOEIC is an affiliate to the MTI of Egypt. Other controlling agencies for such matters as health, agriculture, and veterinary operate under the supervision of GOEIC for the foreign trade inspection and control processes. GOEIC also controls/issues the exports/imports business register;

- ECA, an affiliate to the Ministry of Finance;

- Ministry of Transportation;

- Other GAs to follow as the initiative progresses.

Private sector

Selected exporting councils;

Users:

- Importers/exporters, chambers of commerce;
- Freight forwarders/carriers;
- Third or fourth Party Logistic companies (3PL/4PL);
- Port/terminal operators (Egyptian Ports Authority);
- Other trade communities/portals, warehouse operators.

Executing entity

A tender will be developed; call for bidding and the awarded company(s) will assume the responsibility.

Implementation: Starting fourth quarter 2011.

Structure and functionality

In Egypt, prior to the implementation of EgyTrader, the situation ranges from no or partial automation to full automation in different authorities dealing with foreign trade. Integration between these authorities depends very much on the location. One single port, namely Sokhna, which is privately operated as a public-private partnership (PPP), has full integration. Other ports range from partial to no integration at all. This results in increase in cost, time and number of documents. Manual and automated operation also varies from one port or authority to another. The ultimate objective is to reach the same status as Singapore.

Historical roadmap

Egyptian customs use a French legacy system for partial automation of customs declaration forms.

Customs contracted a local experience company to develop the main customs system that covers most aspects of customs activities.

The first ICT automated port in Egypt was Sokhna, which is now owned by Dubai Ports (DPW).

In 2004, GOEIC started a full automation programme (client-server-based system).

In 2004, GOEIC built the Foreign Trade Data Warehouse system, which is the source for all foreign trade data for ministries, business and other GA.

In 2009, GOEIC established an e-learning platform for internal use and ready to be applied for internet users.

In 2010, GOEIC some e-Government services with the business community.

In 2010, TradeNet initiative was started.

Fourth quarter of 2011, planned commencement of TradeNet (EgyTrader).

3. *Iraq single window status*

No questionnaire responses were received from Iraq, nor were any workshop presentation materials. The following is based on interpretation of publicly sourced materials.

Much of the work currently taking place in Iraq is, understandably, preparatory and planning in nature. In particular, it is dedicated to repairing and upgrading infrastructure. Hence, for example, in the case of trade facilitation, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) signed a memorandum of understanding with the United Nations, the Government of Iraq and related trust fund organizations to adopt and implement the UNCTAD System for Customs Data and Administration (ASYCUDA) in October 2008. There has been no announcement on any progress in that direction since that date. Preparatory work for the customs modernization project was carried out under the aegis of USAID and endorsed the GCC Customs Modernization Plan.

Logistics is an important part of trade infrastructure. Maritime ports, on the one hand, are concentrated in one area and are dominated by the oil and petroleum trade. Land borders, on the other hand, are extensive, which makes border trade facilitation measures more important. There is no land border single window in Iraq. As a matter of fact, there are no border single windows in the whole Mashreq sub-region. Moreover, there is no regional border management agency, no integration of cross-border cargo processes for import, export or transit. These initiatives are of vital importance to Iraq because of its access to the land borders and traditional trade routes, in addition to air and some sea routes to Iran, Jordan, Kuwait,

Saudi Arabia, Syrian Arab Republic and Turkey, in addition to Mediterranean countries and the European Union.

So there is need and evident potential for every aspect of single windows, but currently, very little practical and tangible progress.

Iraq	URL/Web references
Government	http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/6804.htm#gov
Customs	http://www.iraqcustoms.org/english/index.asp
Maritime ports	http://www.iraqports.com/
Airports	http://www.mapsofworld.com/international-airports/asia/iraq.html
Chambers of commerce	http://www.iraq.alloexpat.com/iraq_information/chambers_of_commerce_iraq.php
Trade promotion	http://www.iraqitic.com/iraqiTIC_federation_en.php
Single window	n/a

Summary

There is clearly more information necessary to complete a meaningful report on Iraq. It is to be hoped that these findings will rapidly be updated on first circulation of this report.

Iraq		
ESCWA country single window ranking 2011		
Single window stage	Single window component	Single window status
1	One-stop shop (some ports only)	◯
2	Trade promotion portal	◖
3	Electronic customs declaration (EDI)	◯
4	OGA/NGO single window	◯
5	Integrated formalities single window	◯
6	Port shipping services	◯
7	Port community portal/network	◯
8	Port/logistics single window	◯
9	National single window	◯
10	Regional single window	n/a
11	Global single window	n/a

4. *Jordan single window status*

Jordan has a relatively small land area, served by one major port, Aqaba. The port of Aqaba lies at the top of the Red Sea. Aqaba is the only commercial port in Jordan, receiving about 1,350 commercial ship-calls annually. The port of Aqaba comprises the main port, container port, specialized ports and the oil terminal. Jordan has several international borders with neighbouring economies, which are Iraq, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Syrian Arab Republic.

In the World Bank LPI, Jordan scores 2.89 on a scale of one to five, with five being the highest score. Overall, Jordan ranked 52 out of 150 countries and second in the MENA region. The logistics indicator, in which Jordan performed the best, is timeliness of shipments reaching their destination. Jordan was ranked 77 in 2011, down from 74 in 2010, in the IFC Doing Business 2011 trading-across-borders indicator.

Jordan	URL/Web references
Government	http://www.jordan.gov.jo/wps/portal
Customs	http://www.customs.gov.jo/English/default.shtm
Maritime ports	http://www.jma.gov.jo/index.html
Airports	http://www.aircraft-charter-world.com/airports/middleeast/jordan.htm
Chambers of commerce	http://www.jocc.org.jo/index_en.php
Trade promotion	http://www.kishtpc.com/global_jordan.htm
Single window	n/a

Trade facilitation initiatives

The Government of Jordan adopted an updated trade strategy in 2009, supervised by the National Committee for Transport and Trade. The Committee is chaired by the Minister of Transport and includes the following OGA/NGO:

- Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation;
- Ministry of Industry and Trade;
- Ministry of Public Works and Housing;
- Ministry of Finance;
- Ministry of the Interior;
- Jordan Customs;
- Jordan Chamber of Industry.

This governance body operates through a technical committee, which includes representatives from the following bodies:

- Private sector;
- Executive Privatization Commission;
- Jordan Chamber of Commerce;
- Jordan Enterprise.

Much of this transport and trade strategy deals with customs modernization and trade facilitation.

Jordanian customs

Jordan has been working on document simplification, automation, and risk management with the help of the Customs Administration Modernization Program funded by the United States. Customs has been able to upgrade customs declaration processing to the web-based ASYCUDA World system, allowing traders to submit their declarations electronically. In the process, customs has introduced several such new risk management enhancements as the elimination of a mandatory 30-minute waiting period for green lane declarations, the implementation of a risk-based inspection regime of post-destination clearance for pre-

approved traders called the golden list,[36] in addition to reducing the number of containers subject to physical inspection to 30 per cent. Online submissions of customs declarations for privileged declarants have reduced customs clearance times by two days for exporters and three days for importers. Note: This does not include logistics time for cargo movement and goods collection.

Customs installed an ASYCUDA system in 1999, which is now in the early stages of a customs declaration-based single window. The upgraded ASYCUDA World installation has recently been upgraded to a WCO V3 database in preparation. Jordan Customs reportedly submitted a request for change to WCO in February 2011. No details have been provided.

ASYCUDA now provides customs clearance facilities at five border crossings; they are planning for nine crossings in total. The single window is being piloted at one border crossing as of the ESCWA workshop date in March 2011.

Further work on customs processes

The Government of Jordan has recently initiated additional customs reform by further streamlining procedures across OGA and other entities that would routinely be involved in border inspections and customs procedures, in a bid to improve the logistics aspects of cargo movement across borders and through other cargo terminals. This has helped identify other such inhibitors to trade efficiency as customs procedures at border crossings, particularly related to the following:

- Import documents: complex compliance procedures requiring unnecessary information and superfluous documents;

- Unclear requirements for proof of origin;

- Standards: product compliance;

- Valuation: arbitrary customs valuation/ acceptance of such commercially available information as the transaction value in the commercial invoice;

- Determination of preferential treatment;

- Multiple authorizations and fees.

These difficulties continue to cause higher than necessary administrative costs and unpredictability in clearance processes, requirements and time, leading to increased investments in trader inventory and higher costs to consumers.

Donor activity

USAID, the Millennium Challenge Corporation and the European Commission are the main donors working in the field of customs reform in Jordan. This has now led to a further focus on customs and trade facilitation, namely:

- Plans for complete implementation of the single window programme;
- Removal of remaining Government of Jordan obstacles to imports and exports;
- Upgrade and integrate customs ICT;
- Train and strengthen the capacity of customs and other border officials;
- Enhance the partnership between customs and the private sector;
- Assist other agencies that have border-control responsibilities.

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
[36] The trade and transport facilitation programme also aims to facilitate trader access to the current "Golden List", which, once a company's application is accepted, provides such benefits as a reduction of physical inspections, improved transit time through borders, and higher guarantees on customs duties. Currently, there are only 20 companies on the Golden List, with 15 applications pending approval.

Summary

The Jordanian single window is a customs electronic declaration single window and apparently does not include OGA/NGO licensing and permit lodgement and approvals to date. It is still at an early, pilot implementation stage. No references are available on either the Jordanian Ministry of Trade and Industry or Jordan Customs websites at the moment.

From the publicly available literature, there is some confusion regarding what is a customs direct entry system and what is a single window. This will need to be resolved as the single window initiative broadens and the need for multi-interest governance becomes clearer.

Jordan		
	ESCWA country single window ranking 2011	
Single window stage	Single window component	Single window status
1	One-stop shop (some ports only)	◯
2	Trade promotion portal	◕
3	Electronic customs declaration (EDI)	◕
4	OGA/NGO single window	◯
5	Integrated formalities single window	◯
6	Port shipping services	◯
7	Port community portal/network	◯
8	Port/logistics single window	◯
9	National single window	◯
10	Regional single window	n/a
11	Global single window	n/a

5. *Kuwait single window status*

In October 2009, Kuwaiti officials made a presentation at a WTO trade facilitation workshop. They confirmed that they were not yet in compliance with several WTO future trade facilitation requirements, especially the need for a single window. They identified the following needs to enable them to meet compliance criteria:

- Coordination between stakeholders;
- Establishment of legally binding legislation;
- Preparation of a cadre of technical trained personnel (capacity-building);
- Establishment of infrastructure (ICT, governance and skilled resources);
- Reactivating the partnership between GA and the private sector.

Kuwait	URL/Web references
Government	http://www.e.gov.kw/sites/kgoEnglish/Portal/pages/portalmain.aspx
Customs	http://www.customs.gov.kw/english/home.aspx
Maritime ports	http://www.kpa.gov.kw/NR/exeres/4F69AF5A-A835-46BF-8475-F5282348AB1C.htm
Airports	http://www.azworldairports.com/airports/a1880kwi.cfm
Chambers of commerce	http://www.kuwait-info.com/a_economy/industry_KCCI.asp
Trade promotion	n/a
Single window	n/a

Further discussions revealed a significant lack of trust between the private sector and customs and their OGA counterparts. Both groups displayed concern and complain about a lack of transparency in processes. The private sector appears to have some doubts that the public sector has the capacity or the will to implement a single window in such a fashion as to benefit all parties. The tenor of the discussions illustrates yet again the need for a competent and objective governance body to oversee the introduction of a single window, and the difficulties of finding such an entity.

Kuwaiti single window preparation as at March 2013

The Kuwaiti response to the ESCWA questionnaire provided the following information:

The Ministry of Trade and Industry[37] is responsible for providing trade licence and permits; Kuwaiti Customs is responsible for up-to-date customs regulations. They also confirmed laws regulating the need to present both hard copy and electronic lodgments of licensing and permit applications and approvals. A customs-based, or customs-centric, single window is under development and will be implemented during 2013. Similarly, port community/single windows are currently under development but not yet implemented.

The single window debriefs provided by the Kuwaiti delegation contained the following, liberally translated:

"The General Administration of Customs is seeking to raise the level of their services by developing an automated link with the GA involved in international trade, assumed to be a single window. Note: Kuwaiti customs automation is based on a PWC MicroClear[38] system".

The following Kuwaiti entities and OGA are scheduled to participate in the Kuwaiti formalities single window:

1. Kuwait Ports Corporation.
2. Public Authority for Industry.
3. Kuwait Municipality.
4. General Administration of Civil Aviation.
5. Ministry of Trade and Industry.
6. Environment Public Authority.
7. Ministry of Health.
8. General Directorate of Fire.
9. Ministry of the Interior.
10. Chamber of Commerce and Industry.
11. Central Bank of Kuwait.
12. General Authority for Civil Information.
13. Public Authority for Agriculture and Fisheries.
14. Ministry of Health.
15. Kuwait Petroleum Corporation.
16. Environment Public Authority.
17. Ministry of Transportation.

The Kuwait Ports Corporation has, apparently, already piloted a connection between customs and their own port management system. The following are regarded as the next priority (category 1):

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
[37] See (Arabic language only): http://www.moci.gov.kw/wps/portal.

[38] See: Public Warehousing Company (PWC, also known as Agility) and its MicroClear system, implemented in customs and third-party logistics supply chains, available at: www.pwclogistics.com.

- Public Authority for Industry;
- Kuwait Municipality;
- General Administration of Civil Aviation;
- Ministry of Trade and Industry;
- Environment Public Authority.

Priority 2 participants will be connected through a network provided by the Central Agency for Information Technology. They include:

- Ministry of Health;
- General Directorate of Fire;
- Ministry of the Interior;
- Chamber of Commerce and Industry;
- Central Bank of Kuwait;
- General Authority for Civil Information;
- Public Authority for Agriculture and Fisheries.

Kuwait		
ESCWA country single window ranking 2011		
Single window stage	Single window component	Single window status
1	One-stop shop (some ports only)	◯
2	Trade promotion portal	◯
3	Electronic customs declaration (EDI)	◗
4	OGA/NGO single window	◗
5	Integrated formalities single window	◯
6	Port shipping services	◯
7	Port community portal/network	◯
8	Port/logistics single window	◯
9	National single window	◯
10	Regional single window	n/a
11	Global single window	n/a

6. *Lebanon single windows status*

Customs provide a facility for lodging electronic customs declaration over a secure Internet connection via its ASYCUDA NAJM (or star) system.

Lebanon	URL/Web references
Government	http://www.lebanongovernment.org/
Customs	http://www.customs.gov.lb
Maritime ports	http://www.lebweb.com/dir/lebanon-ports
Airports	http://www.beirutairport.gov.lb/
Chambers of commerce	http://ccib.org.lb/Home/index.aspx
Trade promotion	http://www.idal.com.lb/
Single window	n/a

Lebanon customs have been one the outstanding regional beneficiaries of international donor efforts over the last 20 years or so. Periodic conflict and geographical location has made this a necessity to keep Government revenues flowing in the most challenging of fiscal circumstances. However, it has resulted in a customs policy that sees a high dependence on customs revenue and the enforcement mentality of customs which is almost the opposite of that required for successful single windows, where collaboration is the key. So, although the Lebanese customs ASYCUDA system and its associated work processes and disciplines have produced the desired results for Government, it is possible that, in time, it could prove to be a an inhibitor to a local collaborative approach to a national single window.

Customs present performance statistics are exemplary. See diagram 9 below, taken from a Lebanese customs presentation at ESCWA in March 2011.

There is now a nascent effort to construct a single window for OGA, but it appears likely to start life as a one-stop shop before morphing into a single window, which is itself a prerequisite for a formalities single window. The authority overseeing this effort is the office of the Ministry of State for Administrative Reform (OMSAR). It is undertaking a harmonization project, intended to align Government forms (INFORMS).

To summarize, there is currently no single window in Lebanon, but the NAJM (Star) Customs ASYCUDA system is being upgraded to provide a customs single window functionality. OMSAR is in the early stages of preparatory work for an OGA single window. When both of these are fully operational, then the next step will be a national single window.

Diagram 9. Lebanese customs key performance indicators, 1997-2009

Metrics \ Year	97	98	99	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09
Green Line (%)	9	29	35	43	61	72	69	69	70	67	64	60	61
Effective Tariff Rate (%)	15	20	23	20	16	24	24	20	18	17	16	15	19
Clearance (Days)	4.7	3.9	3.7	3.4	2.7	3.0	3.1	3.0	3.7	4.4	3.3	3.6	3.1
Inspection (Days)	1.9	1.3	1.3	0.9	0.6	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.5
NOOR (Customs) Declarations (%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	50	60	100	100	100	100	100	100

The Government-owned port authority has a basic book and bill shipping system. The privately operated container port of Beirut has a high-quality container bay planning and container track and trace system, gate management and transport booking system. There is a fairly basic port community system but no logistics single window.

Lebanon		
ESCWA country single window ranking 2011		
Single window stage	Single window component	Single window status
1	One-stop shop	◯
2	Trade promotion portal	◑
3	Electronic customs declaration (EDI)	◕
4	OGA/NGO single window	◔
5	Integrated formalities single window	◯
6	Port shipping services	◔
7	Port community portal/network	◑
8	Port/logistics single window	◯
9	National single window	◯
10	Regional single window	n/a
11	Global single window	n/a

7. *Oman single window status*

Oman	URL/Web references
Government	www.omanet.om/english/government
Customs	http://www.rop.gov.om/english/dg_customs.asp
Maritime ports	http://e-ships.net/country/Oman.htm
Airports	http://www.omanairports.com/
Chambers of commerce	http://www.chamberoman.com/index.aspx
Trade promotion	http://www.ociped.com/
Single window	n/a

Oman is located on the coast, with seven port customs offices. Customs is part of, and reports to, the Royal Oman Police (ROP). Two of the main ports operate sophisticated container ports and 3PL operations. It shares land borders with Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen. Part of the border between Saudi Arabia and Oman is demarcated. A great deal of Omani customs efforts are dedicated to border management and security. Smuggling and unreported transit traffic are a focus for revenue collection and border control. Oman has eleven customs border management posts and two airport customs posts (Oman Air operates a cargo monopoly) in addition to significant Post Office customs control efforts. Oman also operates an inland port (a dry port) shared between the ports of Muscat and Salalah.

The need for ICT in customs, and the possibility of single windows, has only recently been raised. There is a state-of-the-art port community system in use at the Sohar port, which is not being used by ROP.

So far, the ROP Oman customs service has operated a conventional, paper-based system although the internal operations are well automated and a good website is maintained. It is currently going through a consulting exercise to determine ICT requirements and what approach should be taken towards implementing a single window. All the indications are that the initial implementations will be a customs-centric, electronic declaration system and that a formalities and OGA/NGO single window facility is still some time away.

Based on the above, it is presumed that Oman has no immediate plans for single windows although it is believed that the situation might change quite soon.[39]

Oman		
	ESCWA country single window ranking 2011	
Single window stage	Single window component	Single window status
1	One-top shop	◯
2	Trade promotion portal	◖
3	Electronic customs declaration (EDI)	◯
4	OGA/NGO single window	◯
5	Integrated formalities single window	◯
6	Port shipping services	◖
7	Port community portal/network	◯
8	Port/logistics single window	◯
9	National single window	◯
10	Regional single window	n/a
11	Global single window	n/a

8. *Palestine single window status*

Palestine is separated into the landlocked West Bank which borders with Jordan and Israel and the coastal Gaza Strip bordering with Egypt and Israel. Border control emphasizes on border crossings although maritime and air transport constitute an important cargo niche.

Palestine	URL/Web references
Government (National Authority)	http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palestinian_National_Authority
Customs	http://palestine.visahq.com/customs/
Maritime ports	http://www.aspf.org.eg/members/palestine/index.aspx
Airports	http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yasser_Arafat_International_Airport
Chambers of commerce	http://www.palestinechamber.org/
Trade promotion	http://www.paltrade.org/en/projects/index.php
Single window	n/a

Palestine customs installed an ASYCUDA World system in 2009, having operated an earlier ASYCUDA system since 2000. The national single window programme[40] was launched during the ASYCUDA World preparatory phase, in 2008, under the aegis of the Office of the Prime Minister.

The first stage was a diagnostic which revealed the following:

1.   Confusion and duplication of laws and regulations.

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[39] Note: Crimson Logic quoted in a 2009 presentation that they had a joint venture with Oman. No further mention of this arrangement was revealed.

[40] Known as the Al Siyadeh programme.

2.   Lack of communication between border management ministries and departments.

3.   Rivalries between border management ministries and departments.

4.   A large amount of diverse, complicated and duplicated procedures in the area of trade operations and passengers movement.

5.   Delays in collection and payment of revenues.

6.   Lack of available and accurate records.

7.   Lack of organized intelligence.

8.   Few computer systems used either for information storage or processing.

The project is divided into three phases, with the objective to complete installation by July 2012.

Phase 1: Policy development: education, policy discussion, report and recommendations;

Phase 2: Development: structural development, legislation, standard operating procedures (SOP), IT systems, training development;

Phase 3: Implementation: training, piloting and implementation.

Governance is to be overseen by working groups, comprising:

- Representatives from relevant ministries;
- Representatives from the private sector;
- Representatives with expertise in border management.

The roles of the working groups are:

- To produce recommendations required to introduce the single window for border management;
- To identify the key stakeholders affected by the introduction of a single window;
- Design and deliver education programmes for stakeholders;
- Draft and negotiate with stakeholders the detailed single window policy;
- Prepare final draft reports for presentation to the steering committee.

The Phase 1 report on policies produced the following results:

- There will be a new administration for the borders through the Border Management Authority with a single presence at the frontiers and a specific administrative and functional structure working on behalf of all ministries/departments;

- Functional policy will remain the responsibility of ministries/departments. Administrative policy will be the responsibility of the new administration. The relationship between the new administration and other related ministries/administrations will be legally formalized and implemented by means of memoranda of understanding and service level agreements;

- International standards appropriate to Palestine and introducing a compliance management approach to border management will be legally adopted.

The following steps are planned for Phase 2, 2011:

- Drafting of new legislation;
- Drafting standard operational practices;
- Detailing business user requirement and establishing an ICT development project;

- Establishing basic intelligence requirements (information parameters and standards);
- Management education and training;
- Developing a single window communications function.

The central technology of the customs single window initiative is the single file or single administration document which, in electronic terms, replaces the legacy-style paper work that has been necessary to obtain customs clearance and goods release.

Palestine		
	ESCWA country single window ranking 2011	
Single window stage	Single window component	Single window status
1	One-stop shop	◯
2	Trade promotion portal	◯
3	Electronic customs declaration (EDI)	◖
4	OGA/NGO single window	◯
5	Integrated formalities single window	◯
6	Port shipping services	◯
7	Port community portal/network	◯
8	Port/logistics single window	◯
9	National single window	◯
10	Regional single window	n/a
11	Global single window	n/a

Summary

Implicit in this detailed plan is that the Palestine version of a single window is explicitly to support the customs operation. It may be possible to bundle in an OGA version of a single window as part of the overall customs-centric single window development process, but it is essentially just the first step towards an integrated national single window.

Clearly, border crossings are the priority, with limited maritime and air cargo components, hence the customs emphasis. Also, the special security and geographical requirements of Palestine determine real priorities. Nevertheless, the results of the Al Siyadeh programme will provide important lessons for other special-circumstances economies.

9. *Qatar single window status*

Qatar was not represented in the ESCWA workshop presentations nor did they submit a response to the ESCWA questionnaire; hence, the information that follows is taken from the knowledge of various individuals and from public sources.

Qatar	URL/Web references
Government (National Authority)	http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5437.htm
Customs	http://www.customs.gov.qa/
Maritime ports	http://logisticsweek.com/news/2011/02/qatar-ports-management-company-and-qatar-navigation-sign-operation-and-management-agreement/

Qatar	URL/Web references
Airports	http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_airports_in_Qatar
Chambers of commerce	http://www.qatarchamber.com/
Trade promotion	n/a
Single window	n/a

Crimson Logic, a Singapore-based provider of e-Government solutions and services,[41] was awarded a contract in 2008 by the State of Qatar to design and implement a nationwide e-Government system to automate and streamline the customs administration system. Currently, in the late phases of pre-implementation, the system will simplify procedures to bring about "hassle-free trade clearance for the local trading community and their international trading partners".

The Qatar Customs Clearance Single Window (QCCSW) project, granted by GA ictQATAR, with support from the Customs and Ports General Authority (CPGA), will provide a single electronic interface linking the trading community with up to 13 relevant ministries and GA. This will facilitate data exchange for cargo clearance, encourage a seamless cross-border trade flow and reduce time spent on paperwork.

Qatar originally planned to launch a customs-centric single window by the end of 2010. There is no confirmation of the current launch date.

The new customs system employs a method of classification, by separating declarations according to the importance of inspections needed (selectivity). Qatar is set to reduce customs inspection to just 5 per cent of total imports – a target set by the Maritime Customs of the country. Importers will be able to save time and efforts as clearance procedures will now be conducted virtually (electronically). Consignment clearances will also be greatly reduced from a period of a few weeks to a few minutes, preventing overcrowding and demurrages in Qatari ports. This utilization of international best practices will benefit economic development and promote foreign investment in the country.

Customs claim that the objective of the new system is to create an environment of cooperation between the customs department and the private sector. Unified customs procedures in the single-window system for all customs checkpoints will be a highlight of the new system. The system will allow for faster approvals online from GA involved in customs clearance.

The ministries involved are:

- Public Health;
- Economy and Finance;
- Interior;
- Foreign Affairs;
- Defense;
- Environment;
- Business and Trade;
- Municipality and Urban Planning;
- Energy and Industry;
- Culture, Arts and Heritage;
- Awqaf and Islamic Affairs.

Others entities involved include:

- The Civil Aviation Authority;

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[41] Largely derived from press releases at the time of the announcement in 2009.

- Qatar Airways;
- Radio and TV Corporation;
- Qatar Chamber of Commerce and Industry;
- Qatar Company for Ports Management.

Summary

The Qatari approach to a single window appears to be a full Asian-style formalities single window. It has yet to be seen how accurate that conclusion might be, how it works, how long it takes to involve all OGA and traders and for the benefits to become apparent. But that is true of all new trade initiatives. For the time being, this looks to be, on the surface, one of the most comprehensive and important efforts in the ESCWA region.

The chart containing the following overall national single window assessment is based on actual achievements so that planning activity, no matter how comprehensive and thorough, is not counted.

Qatar		
	ESCWA country single window ranking 2011	
Single window stage	Single window component	Single window status
1	One-stop shop	◯
2	Trade promotion portal	◯
3	Electronic customs declaration (EDI)	◒
4	OGA/NGO single window	◒
5	Integrated formalities single window	◒
6	Port shipping services	◒
7	Port community portal/network	◒
8	Port/logistics single window	◯
9	National single window	◯
10	Regional single window	n/a
11	Global single window	n/a

10. *Saudi Arabia single window status*

The global economic crisis has further widened the competitiveness gap between the Gulf countries and the rest of the Arab world, according to the Arab World Competitiveness Review 2010. In the overall ranking of 139 economies, Qatar was placed 17th, Saudi Arabia 21st and Kuwait 35th. The United Arab Emirates is the only economy in the region that has reached the most advanced innovation-driven stage of development because of its diversified structure. It is placed 23rd within this group and 25th overall.

The rankings are calculated from both publicly available data and the Executive Opinion Survey, a comprehensive annual survey conducted by the World Economic Forum (WEF) together with its network of partner institutes, which are leading research institutes and business organizations, in the countries covered by the study. The competitive strengths of the Arab world lie in sound and transparent institutions, macroeconomic stability and business sophistication, the study said.

Saudi Arabia	URL/Web references
Government (National Authority)	http://www.saudinf.com/main/c6.htm
Customs	http://www.customs.gov.sa/CustomsNew/default_E.aspx

Saudi Arabia	URL/Web references
Maritime ports	http://www.ports.gov.sa/arabic/default.cfm
Airports	http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_airports_in_Saudi_Arabia
Chambers of commerce	http://www.saudia-online.com/chamber.htm
Trade promotion	http://www.sedc.org.sa/e/abtsedc_services.asp
Single window	n/a

The countries will need to accelerate efforts in raising the efficiency of their labour markets, furthering the development and stability of financial markets, and reforming education.

The latest report said that GCC countries have reached levels of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on a number of such categories of the index as institutions, infrastructure, as well as efficiency of goods, labour and financial markets. North Africa outperforms the Levant region in terms of infrastructure, macroeconomic stability, market size and innovation.

The competitiveness analysis in the Arab World Competitiveness Review is based on the Global Competitiveness Index (GCI) developed for the WEF by Xavier Sala-i-Martin and introduced in 2004. The GCI, core methodology of The Global Competitiveness Report, is based on twelve pillars of competitiveness: institutions, infrastructure, macroeconomic environment, health and primary education, higher education and training, goods market efficiency, labour market efficiency, financial market development, technological readiness, market size, business sophistication, and innovation.

The World Bank Logistics Performance Indicators for 2009 illustrated that Saudi Arabia, number two in ESCWA, and United Arab Emirates, number one in ESCWA, are currently leading the ESCWA region in performance terms, including customs formalities and logistics. In the seven major headings in 2009, their scores were as follows:

LPI category	Saudi Arabia	The United Arab Emirates
Customs Clearance	2.91	3.5
Trade and transport related infrastructure	3.27	3.8
Ease of arranging competitively priced shipments	2.80	3.5
Competence and quality of logistics services	3.33	3.5
LPI Overall rating	3.22	3.6
On time goods delivery	3.78	3.95
Ability to track and trace	3.32	3.6

Note: 5=high, 1=low.

In the 2010 combined IFC Doing Business and World Bank LPI ranking, the comparisons were:

Overall ranking ESCWA region	Economy	Ranking		Comments
		Overall LPI ranking	Trading across borders	
1	United Arab Emirates	33	5	
2	Saudi Arabia	13	23	
3	Egypt	106	29	
4	Bahrain	20	32	
5	Qatar	39	41	
6	Jordan	100	71	
7	West Bank and Gaza	139	92	

Overall ranking ESCWA region	Economy	Ranking		Comments
		Overall LPI ranking	Trading across borders	
8	Lebanon	108	95	
9	Kuwait	61	109	
10	Syrian Arab Republic	143	118	
11	Yemen	99	120	
12	Oman	65	123	
13	The Sudan	154	142	
14	Iraq	153	180	

Single window progress

In 2005, Saudi Arabia implemented an EDI system for customs electronic declarations. This was based on a Singapore TradeNet, now known as CrimsonLogic, system, originally planned for implementation in the late 1990s, but, for a period, unable to be used by customs because their technology preparations were not complete at the time. The Saudi customs computer system is an in-house developed and supported system.

Saudi Arabia has now implemented a single window system at the port of Jeddah, complete with buildings containing technology that enables brokers and traders to visually check progress of transactions. The single window is essentially a hybrid paper/electronic one-stop shop where all departments are now co-located, providing a single location for brokers and traders to lodge and collect licences, permits and customs declarations.

GA, services and banks present at this one-stop shop are, currently:

GA:

- Saudi Food and Drug Authority;
- Animal and Plant Quarantine;
- Presidency of Meteorology and Environment;
- National Commission for Wildlife Conservation and Development;
- Public Security Agency;
- Ministry of Information;
- Traffic Police Department.

Services:

- Al Amjad Tyre Testing Lab;
- Saudi Specialized Laboratories Co.;
- HEMAYA Security Services Co.;
- International Trademarks World Co.;
- CAD International Trademarks Co.;
- Electrical equipment testing lab;
- Quality assurance lab;
- SASO (Saudi Arabian Standards Organization).

Commercial Banks:

- National Commercial Bank;
- Al Rajhi Bank;
- Others.

Summary

Possibly the most important outcome of the single window is the progress made and future plans of regulations and legislation determining departmental processes, reengineered processes and the management of changing processes. The governance of this project may later be extended to fully automating this one-stop shop and integrating an automated one-stop shop, namely an OGA single window, with the customs EDI system into a true formalities single window.

Jeddah port already has a modern shipping services and logistics system but does not yet have a true logistics single window, but the pathway is clear and illustrates an innovative approach to the design and implementation of a true national single window in the ESCWA region.

Saudi Arabia		
ESCWA country single window ranking 2011		
Single window stage	Single window component	Single window status
1	One-stop shop	◗
2	Trade promotion portal	◗
3	Electronic customs declaration (EDI)	◗
4	OGA/NGO single window	○
5	Integrated formalities single window	○
6	Port shipping services	◗
7	Port community portal/network	◗
8	Port/logistics single window	○
9	National single window	○
10	Regional single window	n/a
11	Global single window	n/a

11. *The Sudan single window status*

The Sudan	URL/Web references
Government (National Authority)	http://www.sudan.net/government.php[42]
Customs	http://www.customs.gov.sd/English/index.html
Maritime ports	http://www.aspf.org.eg/members/sudan/index.aspx
Airports	http://www.sudanair.com/en/cargo.php
Chambers of commerce	http://www.fpcci.com.pk/chambers/sudanesechambers.asp
Trade promotion	http://www.atfp.org.ae/english/useful/National/sudan.htm
Single window	n/a

In October/November 2009, the Sudan carried out a WTO-based assessment, placing specific emphasis on the single window and its potential. An European Union-funded external consulting firm undertook a study to assist in these deliberations,[43] sponsored by the Ministry of Foreign Trade.

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[42] Note: Recent political events have caused some uncertainty in the structure and makeup of the national Sudanese Government. The same holds true for some other national institutions at this stage.

[43] See: www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/tradfa_e/...e/sudan_nov09_e.doc.

There is currently neither a single window nor an electronic customs lodgement declaration system although the current ASYCUDA++ system, soon to be upgraded to an ASYCUDA World system, has these capabilities.

The Government has adopted the principles of the single window but is initially focusing on Red Sea borders rather than the complete geographic scope of the country.

The strategic plan for the Sudan customs includes a single window for customs declarations and a one-stop shop for OGA. The first, paper-based, one-stop shop was launched in January 2011 at the Port of the Sudan.

Preparation

- No coordinated awareness or training for all users has been undertaken at this stage. Capacity is a problem for the Sudan;

- No published materials have been made available for users and operators of a single window;

- No governance body or arrangements have been made at this stage;

- No national single window blueprint or road map, arrangements for OGA, reengineering, legislative and regulatory change have been initiated;

- Egyptian ports are assisting Sudanese Red Sea ports in port management and port community software awareness, including an executive port visit to Alexandria, but no decisions or installations have yet been made.

Summary

Political issues are clearly pre-occupying much of the energies of the Sudan at the moment. While they now have an initial assessment and understanding of the WTO version of a single window, it is essentially a customs declaration-centric approach at this stage, and limited to one port. There are currently no effective shipping services systems, port logistics and port community systems nor a logistics single window. It would appear that the Sudan needs significant donor assistance for the next stages of its single window initiatives.

The Sudan		
ESCWA country single window ranking 2011		
Single window stage	Single window component	Single window status
1	One-stop shop	◯
2	Trade promotion portal	◯
3	Electronic customs declaration (EDI)	◖
4	OGA/NGO single window	◯
5	Integrated formalities single window	◯
6	Port shipping services	◯
7	Port community portal/network	◯
8	Port/logistics single window	◯
9	National single window	◯
10	Regional single window	n/a
11	Global single window	n/a

12. *Syrian Arab Republic single window status*

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has been assisting the Syrian Arab Republic in their WTO trade facilitation preparations since 2006. Their current technical assistance programme is scheduled to be completed in 2011.

In March 2009, the Syrian National Agricultural Research Policy Centre issued their Policy Brief No. 31: Trade Facilitation and Its Expected Impact on Arab and Syrian Trade. The Brief contained the following, in reference to WTO trade facilitation discussions:

Trade facilitations in the Syrian Arab Republic

The Ministry of Economy and Trade in the Syrian Arab Republic has recently exerted a big effort to simplify and facilitate goods movement. However, there are many such obstacles which should be treated as reforming foreign trade rules. As for trade systems in Syria, they are considered somehow complex and the Ministry of Economy and Trade is working on simplifying and modernizing them, but legislations like trade and companies law were updated recently.

As for customs administration, this administration has performed a distinct effort during the last three years. The most important one is the achievement of issuing a new customs rule number (38) in 2005, in addition to issuing tariff adjustments to be harmonized according to scientific bases.

The Syrian Arab Republic position on trade facilitation

The Syrian Arab Republic and other Arab countries recognize possible benefits gained by implementing trade facilitation procedures that include enhancing the competitiveness of Arab economies, increasing intra-Arab commercial exchange, and taking advantage of these benefits. Also, they realize the costs of trade facilitations procedures. In this regard, the Syrian Arab Republic welcomes proposal (D) which focuses on consistency between commitments, on one hand, and costs, finding resources to implement any likely result, and providing financial or technical recourses for capacity-building of developing and less-developed countries, on the other hand.

The Syrian Arab Republic has affirmed the necessity to increase cooperation and coordination between international and regional organizations to provide technical aid to Arab countries and support their capacity-building in trade facilitations.

In this regard, on 13 November 2006, the Ministry of Trade and Economy issued a decision including the facilitation and efficiency of a trade directorate. Its mission is specified to identify needs and priorities of facilitation and efficiency of trade in Syria and to facilitate trade by regular simplification of procedures and used documents in Syrian foreign trade, both exports and imports. Trade procedures include all activities and formal practices which are related to collect, offer and treat required data for goods movement which enter in international trade, in addition to coordinate with the international relation directorate about technical aid topics and capacity-building in trade facilitation provided by international and Arab organization.

New recommendations to facilitate and accelerate good movements in the Syrian Arab Republic

- Modernizing foreign trade systems;

- Developing, training and qualifying human resources in banks and customs department;

- Providing necessary infrastructure to such customs clearance processes as laboratories and storing courtyards;

- Simplifying customs procedures and increasing working hours in customs departments;

- Publishing economic and customs legislations periodically and comprehensively;

- Modernizing harbours, increasing efficiency of its services, and extending its stores;

- Improving services provided by industrial and trade chambers to members through:

  ➢ Raising awareness about agreement and development advantages;
  ➢ Publishing legislations and decrees;
  ➢ Cooperating with international organizations;
  ➢ Preparing studies for current and future situations for all related economic sectors.

Single window readiness

Syrian customs installed an ASYCUDA system in 2005 and is due to upgrade to an ASYCUDA World system in 2011/12. This is the first tangible sign of preparation for a single window in Syria.

Syrian Arab Republic	URL/Web references
Government	http://www.syriagate.com/Syria/Government/Ministries_And_Establishments/
Customs	http://syria.visahq.com/customs/
Maritime ports	http://www.portarea.com/en/port/choose-port-location/ports-in-syria.html
Airports	http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_airports_in_Syria
Chambers of commerce	http://www.fedcommsyr.org/index-e.html
Trade promotion	http://www.syriatradecenter.com
Single window	n/a

Summary

The Syrian Arab Republic has not yet embarked on the single window route. The country is still in the pre-preparatory stage.

Syrian Arab Republic		
ESCWA country single window ranking 2011		
Single window stage	Single window component	Single window status
1	One-stop shop	◯
2	Trade promotion portal	◯
3	Electronic customs declaration (EDI)	◯
4	OGA/NGO single window	◯
5	Integrated formalities single window	◯
6	Port shipping services	◯
7	Port community portal/network	◯
8	Port/logistics single window	◯
9	National single window	◯
10	Regional single window	n/a
11	Global single window	n/a

13. *United Arab Emirates single window status*

The section on Saudi Arabia references to the performance of both Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in the IFC Annual Doing Business Report and the World Bank LPI, in which the country stands out as the leading performer in the ESCEWA region. Particular mention is made of the efforts of the Emirates at reforming trade regulations, reducing the number of documents required for import and export and the harmonization of data and simplification of trade documents themselves. This is no accident: Two series of events have made major contributions to this result.

The first event involves the development of port information systems, of port community systems and of the logistics single window. Ever since the late 1980s, Dubai ports have been using EDI as an efficiency tool. They were among the very first to deploy EDI vessel and container terminal bay planning messages (UN/EDIFACT BAPLIE) and have continued with major deployments use of both port and shipping messages. The development of the DP World Port management group of companies and their global outsourcing contracts have spread their competence and experience of ICT in the port and shipping community and has undoubtedly been a major force behind the current developments of Dubai Trade, the United Arab Emirates trading portal (Dubai national single window). Not only have they integrated their port and shipping systems and the port community into a logistics single window, they have also developed an end-to-end cargo and consignment tracking system, enabling traders, brokers and freight forwarders to keep a close eye on delivery targets and performance. This ICT and process innovation helps the port and the port community to properly utilize their fixed and human assets, and traders to maintain and to plan on a commercially viable and predictable inventory level.

United Arab Emirates	URL/Web references
Government	http://www.uaeinteract.com/government/ministry.asp
Customs	www.customs.ae/
Maritime ports	http://portfocus.com/united_arab_emirates/dubai/index.html
Airports	http://www.airport.ae/UAE-airports.html
Chambers of commerce	http://www.fcciuae.ae/en/
Trade promotion	http://www.adcbuae.com/directory/trade_promotion_council.html
Single window (trade portal)	http://www.dubaitrade.ae/

Summary

The United Arab Emirates holds important lessons for regional single window initiatives. If an economy has to await the successful outcomes of customs single window initiatives before any other trade reforms can take place, then it may take many years before national benefits become evident. But if customs and logistics work on their respective single windows asynchronously, in parallel, then the benefits of the most successful, or the first to reach a useful maturity, can be applied to early adopters. In this case, as with the United Arab Emirates, logistics is the first beneficiary. No doubt customs will soon match these results, but they are achieved in collaboration with, not as a pioneering prelude to, logistics single windows. The key message set and business practice that results from customs' use of a port logistics single window is an automated manifest acquittal, which helps customs to automate their goods inspection selectivity and goods release systems.

Customs in the United Arab Emirates spent many years in specifying and developing their own build of a customs system, based on input from a variety of specialists and consultants from a range of different countries, and customs ICT models. The consensus is that the resulting system does adequately

reflect that effort and illustrates the validity of the emerging trend for the development of customs ICT systems.

National customs authorities share a serious technology problem. They do not generally have a cadre of experienced customs officers that are also ICT specialists. So customs authorities tend to either buy a bespoke system, based on an integrated product that meets a proportion of customs needs: a compromise against the perfect specification. They, and the vendor, then often spend a considerable time in developing and then modifying the system to meet customs exact requirements, once customs ICT staff has learned enough about the vendors systems to be able to articulate their real needs. There is a long list of customs authorities that have taken this approach and then abandoned the attempt in order to develop their own system.

Over the past 20 years or so, the vendor community, recently joined by new technology ICT vendors, have been evolving a different approach. They are concentrating upon particular parts of such customs needs or niche applications as payments, security communications, customs management systems, risk management, database management, and data mining, among others. This provides a modern customs ICT management with the opportunity to specify broad requirements, to hire a systems integrator (SI) and then to instruct the SI to assemble a best practice assembly of these newer and cheaper sub-systems. The overall debate is known as "build or buy". The approach is being resisted by conservative customs authorities and by legacy vendors but is nevertheless gaining credence because of more immediate results and less overall cost. We are beginning to see the same sort of trend in single window systems, especially as PSI organizations begin to actively seek alternate sources of revenue now that their traditional revenue sources look to be drying up under new WTO recommendations.

The United Arab Emirates is a classic case study of a successful logistics-led national single window. No doubt, customs in the country are playing their part, but their next generation of ICT may be developed in a much less traditional manner.

United Arab Emirates		
ESCWA country single window ranking 2011		
Single window stage	Single window component	Single window status
1	One-stop shop	◯
2	Trade promotion portal	◑
3	Electronic customs declaration (EDI)	◑
4	OGA/NGO single window	◑
5	Integrated formalities single window	◑
6	Port shipping services	◕
7	Port community portal/network	◕
8	Port/logistics single window	◕
9	National single window	◔
10	Regional single window	n/a
11	Global single window	n/a

14. *Yemen single window status*

Yemen installed ASYCUDA in 2003 and has now upgraded to an ASYCUDA World system which is being used for electronic lodgement of customs declarations. Their single window system, based on ASYCUDA World, is still in the planning phase. Reports are that the first implementation will be a customs-centric single window with a direct trader input and using web-based input or a direct connection. Current systems are paper-based and will require comprehensive reengineering and single window-related

disciplines in order to meet the initial goals of a single window. A form of, paper-based, one-stop-shop is currently in use. The port customs office is likely to be a development and pilot focus.

Yemen	URL/Web references
Government	http://www.al-bab.com/yemen/gov/gov.htm
Customs	http://www.customs.gov.ye/
Maritime ports	http://www.portofaden.com/contacts.htm
Airports	http://sanaa.airport-authority.com/
Chambers of commerce	n/a
Trade promotion	n/a
Single window (trade portal)	n/a

Summary

Yemen is currently in a pre-preparation phase for its first stage of a single window, the customs electronic declaration sub-set. We have not received any input on the details of preparation. The ranking below reflects that status.

Yemen		
ESCWA country single window ranking 2011		
Single window stage	Single window component	Single window status
1	One-stop shop	◯
2	Trade promotion portal	◯
3	Electronic customs declaration (EDI)	◯
4	OGA/NGO single window	◯
5	Integrated formalities single window	◯
6	Port shipping services	◯
7	Port community portal/network	◯
8	Port/logistics single window	◯
9	National single window	◯
10	Regional single window	n/a
11	Global single window	n/a

VI. CONCLUSIONS: RECOMMENDATIONS

Section V contains the first ESCWA region-specific attempt at evaluating progress on single windows for trade facilitation. It is freely admitted that the methodology might not, or might not yet, be appropriate to the general status of single window development in the region, but it is important to start somewhere, and this effort represents a starting point. Future versions of this report will be better informed and more appropriate as a result of this first attempt, no matter how irrelevant or inaccurate initial results may seem to some. It is part of the single window learning and capacity-building process; future versions will build on the experience and feedback from this report.

One of the primary aims of this research and report was to identify best practice in the region. The initial conclusion is, that although there are a number of regional economies that have made good progress, some have made great strides in implementing single window. These may be considered to be good models for some of the regional economies. However, the wide variations between conditions in individual countries in the region make the concept of best practices so complex and difficult to apply that the conclusions would have virtually no relevance. The best that can presently be done is to assess progress in current individual national contexts, taking into account the starting point for single window in the country, modified by stability, financial and resource capacities, current legal codes, business practices, trade patterns and needs, the size of the economy, geographical factors, infrastructure factors, and so on.

One important factor that is difficult to measure and to compare is the amount of effort and resource that has already gone into planning for a national single window, or one of the more function-specific (sub-) single windows described during this report. Until there is an actual usable implementation of a single window, by the trading community, or by selection of traders, there is no practical means of comparison. There are several examples of the ironies this conceals. Singapore is, rightly, broadly acknowledged to be the leader in single window applications, technology and adoption. But, in fact, Hong Kong started on the planning process some time before Singapore but was unable to muster the collaborative effort that ultimately set Singapore's formalities apart for several years. Some time later, Hong Kong's, now very successful, single window was launched, but as a logistics single window at first. And both Hong Kong and Singapore were preceded by the port of Felixstowe in the United Kingdom and, to a lesser extent, some other European ports, that has been running a collaborative port-specific logistics and customs/formalities single window since the late 1980s.

Hence, it seems realistic to ignore what comes, or came, before since there appears to be no achievable fair and objective way to measure the preparatory investment in time, resources or costs. This leaves us with purely pragmatic attempts at the measurement of tangible progress. The simple symbols which are used in this report to reflect this pragmatic evaluation indicate an assessment of progress towards a national single window during the first quarter of 2011. Note the use of the term national single window. This is the benchmark and means of comparison, but, in itself, best practice. Other measures are possible, but the leading single window countries, including the European Union, are all moving towards this integrated, comprehensive ideal.

A. RANKING FACTORS

Several basic measurements have been made, based on evidence:

- From publicly available sources, usually websites and sometimes amplified by single window and customs system consultants and practitioners;

- From completed questionnaires, submitted by six out of fourteen regional economies prior to the workshop;

- From brief presentations by national representatives present at the ESCWA workshop in Beirut, March 2011;

- From feedback to Q and A sessions following these presentations.

This information was then examined and assessed for levels of trader and customs/OGA and port communities' adoption, at:

- 0 per cent;
- 25 per cent;
- 50 per cent;
- 75 per cent;
- 100 per cent.

The twelve headings under which assessments were made are discussed in the section on research and report methodology. To briefly summarize, these headings are:

Stage A 1:

- A one-stop shop;
- A trade promotion portal;
- Electronic customs declarations;
- A single window for Government agency licenses and permits.

Stage A 2:

- A maritime port shipping system;

- Similar arrangements for airports, road and/or rail border crossings and inland waterway passage, where appropriate;

- A port community system.

Stage B 1:

- A Government formalities single window.

Stage B 2:

- A logistics single window.

Stage C:

- A combined formalities and maritime/logistics single window, namely a national single window.

Stage D:

- A regional single window.

Stage E:

- A global single window.

Note: Regional and global single window are not yet relevant to the ESCWA region and have been excluded from these rankings. See diagram 10 for an illustration of these components.

Diagram 10. Component systems and clusters comprising a national single window
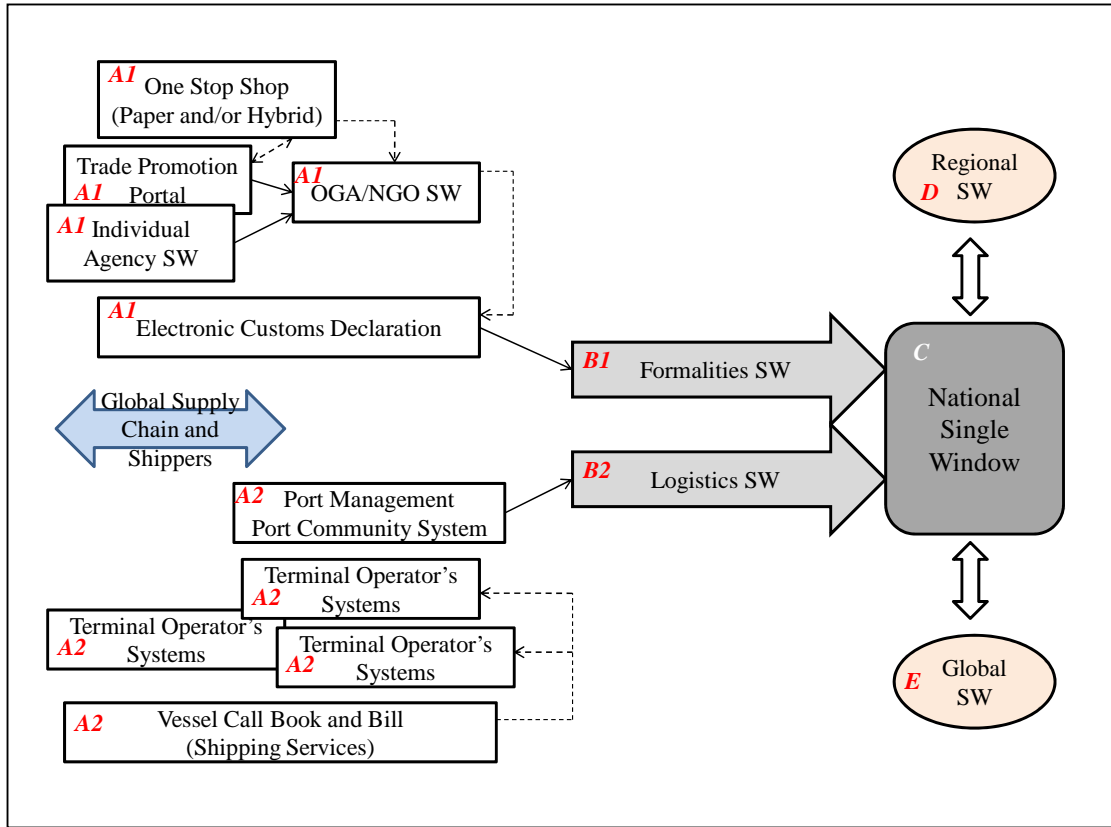

B. SYMBOLS: NUMERIC RANKINGS

The following symbols have been used as an estimate for the factors described above, for each separate economy.

○	No apparent progress
◔	Limited progress
◑	Some improvement
◕	Significant progress
●	Transformation effectively completed

So the first attempt at estimating progress reflects an assessment of tangible technical progress (note previous remarks about preparation and planning). To complete the assessement, an attempt at quantifying take-up, or the proportion of users making productive use of the system, needs to be made. For the sake of simplicy, the following percentages (%) have been converted into a points system and then used in order to compute an overall national ranking.

Symbol	Stage of development	Assessed %	Points
	No apparent progress	0	0
	Limited progress	25	25
	Some improvement	50	50
	Significant progress	75	75
	Transformation effectively completed	100	100

C. RESULTS OF ASSESSMENTS

Report sequence	Nation/economy	Total points	Ranking in points table	Comments
1	Bahrain	100	6	
2	Egypt	150	4	
3	Iraq	25	=10	
4	Jordan	50	=7	
5	Kuwait	50	=7	
6	Lebanon	175	=2	
7	Oman	50	=7	
8	Palestine	25	=10	
9	Qatar	125	5	
10	Saudi Arabia	175	=2	
11	The Sudan	25	=10	
12	Syrian Arab Republic	0	=13	
13	United Arab Emirates	400	1	
14	Yemen	0	=13	

D. RECOMMENDATIONS

This project illustrated a number of such region-wide challenges as obtaining contacts and information on national plans and progress, and negotiating the difficulties of precise and mutually-agreed definitions. There is, as yet, no broad, unanimous set of definitions for single windows, a situation that is even more evident in the ESCWA region, which, in general, has started on the single window path later than many of the other regions of the world.

Some regional characteristics have a strong, albeit indirect, influence on progress. Collaboration between all potential participants is a sine qua non for successful single window initiatives, but local business and public sector cultures in the region make this a difficult proposition. The level of interpersonal and institutional trust necessary to work collaboratively on such an enterprise, which is the norm in European and North American and some Commonwealth countries, is underdeveloped in this part of the world. One example is the relationship between customs and traders. It is clear that many customs and GA executives have only a limited trust of private-sector firms and organizations, preferring instead to legislate and to regulate compliance. This form of relationship is, self-evidently, counterproductive to such successful collaborative ventures as a national single window. It has impacts on regulations and legislation, reengineering, change and change management, risk management, inspection, delegation of authority and, most importantly, governance issues.

Clearly, the problem of funding is ever present but, increasingly, donors and international development agencies, development banks and trading partners are willing to help. Funding is no longer the key problem. If anything, regional leadership is now the most important challenge.

And it is in this area that ESCWA might be able to provide the most valuable service to its member community. If members accept that ESCWA comes unencumbered with the baggage of history in the region

and can be seen as a neutral, objective partner who can help members to negotiate the technological demands of international trade treaties, much like WTO and WCO, and help the region as a whole to balance it against the individual needs of countries, their traders and their global supply chains, it can fulfil an invaluable role. On the assumption that this might be seen as a reasonable proposition, it is therefore recommended that ESCWA carry out the following:

1.   Develop a generic blueprint and/or roadmap for implementing single windows in the region.

2.   Distribute the blueprint to member countries and keep track of progress through analysis, publications and workshops.

3.   Develop and host a forum programme aimed at evolving a generic governance programme for member countries for single window developments in the region;.

4.   Refine the existing single window workshop programme to include more specific reports, more in-depth case studies, more precise evaluations and comparisons, including a set of single window Readiness Guides and Check Lists for member countries.

5.   Create a portfolio of strategic and tactical single window reference, education and training materials, for both the public and the private sector, for member countries.

6.   Initiate an education and training programme for member countries, (ideally training the trainers), complete with testing, examination and certification processes.

7.   Take a leadership position in the region in helping to initiate a regional single window, in order to provide clear regional guidelines and self-sufficiency in single window developments.

8.   Establish a member countries steering committee for single window capacity-building, assistance with specific member country implementations and further status report developments.

9.   Liaise with ESCAP and ECE in order to expand their single window and standards materials and services for the benefit of ESCWA member countries.

These are initial suggestions, proposed in order to stimulate discussion and agreement. If the most important recommendations are adopted and acted upon, ESCWA can fill a serious vacuum in the region and fulfil a new and vitally important role for its member countries.

Annex

The following reference sources are intended mainly for technical aspects of single window implementation, which has largely been glossed over in this status report.

Summary of UN/CEFACT Recommendations, Updated February 2011. Available at: http://www.unece.org/cefact/recommendations/rec_index.htmal l.

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE): Summary of UN/CEFACT Trade Facilitation Recommendations, UN 2006. Available at: http://www.unece.org/cefact/recommendations/rec_summary.pdf.

Recommendation 18: Facilitation Measures Related to International Trade Procedures. Available at: http://www.unece.org/cefact/recommendations/rec18/rec18_ecetrd271e.pdf.

Economic and Social Council for Western Asia. Review of EDI-Based Trade and Transport Operations. Roundtable on ICT as an enabler for economic development, Beirut, 29-30 April 2004. Available at: http://www.escwa.un.org/wsis/meetings/apr04/docs/transp_E.pdf.

Trade and Transport Facilitation Assessment, A Practical Toolkit for Country Implementation, The World Bank, June 2010. Available at: http://www.gfptt.org/uploadedFiles/43bcb2bc-67ef-460b-965b-a31a594f3073.pdf.

Export Performance and Trade Facilitation Reform, The World Bank, April 2010. Available at: http://www.wto.org/english/res_e/reser_e/gtdw_e/wkshop09_e/portugal_e.pdf.

Trade facilitation plays a significant role in improving trade growth and competitiveness within the context of the global supply chain. This report sheds light on the requirements for establishing the Single Window system for trade facilitation. Having defined the Single Window system, the report provides comprehensive information on the compliance of national trade policies with trade treaties, trade law and trade regulations. It also analyses initiatives in ESCWA member countries to establish the Single Window system with a view to highlighting best practice across the region. The report concludes with a number of policy recommendations addressed to ESCWA member countries and to the Commission.

ESCWA