

## **THE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS HIGHLIGHTED BY THE 9<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE TRADE WORKING GROUP**

The COMCEC Trade Working Group (TWG) has successfully held its 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting on March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2017 in Ankara, Turkey with the theme of “*Single Window Systems in the OIC Member States.*” During the Meeting, Trade Working Group, made deliberations for policy approximation among the Member Countries regarding developing Single Window Systems. The Room Document, prepared in accordance with the main findings of the analytical study conducted specifically for the 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the COMCEC Trade Working Group titled “*Single Window Systems in the OIC Member States*” and the answers of the Member Countries to the policy questions sent to the COMCEC Trade Working Group focal points by the COMCEC Coordination Office. During the Meeting, the participants agreed on the policy recommendations included in the Room Document. The existing document includes these policy recommendations highlighted during the Meeting.

***Policy Advice 1: Strengthening Single Window efforts in OIC Member States by developing integrated Single Window strategies that reflect national and regional requirements and actively engage the stakeholders in this process***

A strategy process leading to a concise strategy document is a crucial step in the process of developing a Single Window. Decisions that are taken in the early phases stages of a Single Window initiative shape the planning, design and development of the system. A Single Window is a long-term commitment to a transformation from a large number of stakeholders. Therefore, these stakeholders, and in particular so the trading community, should be closely involved in the design phase. The trading community’s perspective ensures that the Single Window caters to their needs as much as the needs of the government agencies. The consultative bodies, such as trade facilitation committees, should be integrated into the business strategy development process. Moreover, regional perspective should be considered while designing the Single Window Systems.

The Single Window strategy should rest upon the identification of business and technology requirements and define priorities as well as clear objectives and measurable performance indicators to guide the Single Window project. Once the Single Window is operational it is necessary to continue measuring its performance and set qualitative and quantitative performance for service delivery. A cost and benefit analysis should be conducted while preparing visions and strategy documents.

***Policy Advice 2: Improving the effectiveness of Single Window projects by identifying and implementing necessary changes in the laws and regulatory framework and operational practices***

### **Rationale:**

A Single Window is a major transformation of the way how the government agencies operate and interact with the trading community. Such a transformation requires changes in regulatory framework that applies to the import, export and transit of goods and in operational practices and business processes. Single Windows can only successfully deliver results if these changes are clearly identified and acted upon in an expedited manner. This requires strong political support to bring about changes across government agencies and departments.

The analysis of agencies’ current practices and procedures (AS-IS status) is the starting point for changes as it allows for the identification of prevalent and potential operational bottlenecks. These business processes must be re-designed (TO-BE status) to speed up, simplify and

coordinate the processing and interaction. The legal, regulatory and administrative procedures need to be aligned in accordance to the re-designed processes. In this respect, in order to promote paperless or no paper trade, it is of utmost importance that the legal framework for e-documents and digital signature are in place at the national, and where applicable, supra-national level.

***Policy Advice 3: Prioritizing flexibility, scalability, safety and interoperability of IT architecture of Single Windows Systems***

**Rationale:**

Single Windows leverage operational changes and IT to achieve improvements to the accessibility, costs and quality of services. The Single Window IT architecture has to be consistently integrated with the business objectives and fully support the functional requirements of the stakeholders that are part of the Single Window environment. All stakeholders need to understand early in the design process how the IT architecture contributes to the delivery of the Single Window objectives and its costs implications.

The IT architecture must be flexible and scalable to accommodate rapid changes of the IT development, diverse technologies, to integrate new technological evolutions and to deliver new services over time. Furthermore, the Single Window IT architecture should have the ability to integrate and support diverse IT systems and applications. Therefore, interoperability, meaning the ability to provide collaborative, networked and interconnected business processes, should be taken into consideration while defining the IT architecture of Single Window Systems. High availability and business continuity is one of the most important aspects of the Single Window System. For ensuring the high availability and business continuity, the IT infrastructure of Single Window Systems needs to be designed to be protected from human and natural disasters with a fault tolerant system and off-site data backup.

***Policy Advice 4: Promoting cross-border interconnectivity and interoperability of the national Single Window Systems in the OIC Region towards establishing Regional Single Window Systems***

**Rationale:**

For many years, Single Windows systems were national efforts. With the increasing number of national Single Windows, there is a growing potential to leverage more benefits for the trading and transport community by fostering cross-border exchange and regional Single Window Systems. Such regional approaches aim at the electronic and automatic exchange of information among participating countries.

The main challenges for Regional Single Window Systems initiatives are, the lack of interconnectivity, interoperability and harmonized data and processes among national Single Window Systems. In this respect, while further encouraging national Single Window Systems, it is necessary to support cross-border projects amongst OIC Member countries that already operate a Single Window.

These projects can focus on the exchange of selected documents within clearly determined business processes, such as the Certificate of origin within OIC Member countries that are member of a free trade area or customs union. Such projects will encourage the alignment to common standards for data and information exchange.

***Instruments to Realize the Policy Advices:***

- ***COMCEC Trade Working Group:*** In its subsequent meetings, the Working Group may elaborate on the above mentioned policy areas in a more detailed manner.
- ***COMCEC Project Funding:*** Under the COMCEC Project Funding, the COMCEC Coordination Office calls for project proposals each year. With the COMCEC Project Funding, the Member Countries participating in the Working Groups can submit multilateral cooperation projects to be financed through grants by the COMCEC Coordination Office. For the above-mentioned policy areas and their sub-areas, the Member Countries can utilize the COMCEC Project Funding and the COMCEC Coordination Office may finance the successful projects. The projects may include seminars, training programs, study visits, exchange of experts, workshops and preparing analytical studies, needs assessments and training materials/documents, etc.