

## **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS HIGHLIGHTED BY THE 6<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE TRADE WORKING GROUP**

The Trade Working Group of the COMCEC has successfully held its 6<sup>th</sup> Meeting on September 17th, 2015, in Ankara on the theme of “*Establishing Well-Functioning National Trade Facilitation Bodies (NTFBs) in the OIC Member States*”. During the Meeting, the participants have discussed some crucial policy issues that were also featured in the Analytic study submitted to the working group meeting, the policy questions, and the policy questions sent to the Member States by the COMCEC Coordination Office. After considering these issues, and underlining the importance of establishing well-functioning National Trade Facilitation Bodies (NTFBs) in the Member States, the working group came up with the policy recommendations below.

The Member States of the Trade Working Group are kindly invited to convey their comments, observations, and criticisms regarding this document to the COMCEC Coordination Office by **November 4th, 2015** at the latest. Any comments received after this date will not be able to be incorporated into the Document. After incorporating the Member States’ contributions, this document will be submitted to the 31st Ministerial Meeting of the COMCEC to be held on 23-26 November 2015 in İstanbul, as an outcome of the 6th Trade WG Meeting.

### **Policy Advice I: Extending assistance to the member states for establishing/maintaining NTFBs**

#### **Rationale:**

National Trade Facilitation Bodies involve several stakeholders with various, and sometimes conflicting interests and expectations. Bringing together all these stakeholders around a set of goals and managing their interests require significant human and institutional capacity. Both the analytical study and responses of the member states to the policy questions reveal that many member states require technical assistance to cope with these challenges vis-à-vis the NTFBs. Both the member states that are at a relatively advanced stage and have considerable experience in terms of operating such coordination bodies as well as relevant international organizations may provide trade facilitation-related technical assistance to needy member states. On the other hand, several member states need financial assistance for the establishment, proper functioning, and sustainability of NTFBs in their respective countries. Thus, possible resources to meet this financial need should also be identified.

## **Policy Advice II: Involving the private sector in the activities of the NTFBs**

### **Rationale:**

A well-functioning NTFB should involve and manage a range of stakeholder needs and interests. In particular, addressing trade-facilitation related needs and problems of the private sector and ensuring the continued involvement of the private sector in all appropriate fields of activity bear utmost importance for its relevance and sustainability. The public sector must maintain conditions that are conducive to continued private sector, particularly SME involvement and engagement. NTFBs must be able to flexibly respond to the changing needs of the private sector in order for private sector actors' commitment to be assured and to retain their relevance. The responses of the member states to the policy questions reveal that many of them have already launched instruments to enable the private sector to convey their needs to the relevant public sector authorities. Yet member states may still work on ways and means to further enhance private sector participation at every level.

## **Policy Advice III: Establishing effective communication systems within the framework of the work of the NTFBs**

### **Rationale:**

Transparency and accountability are two important factors that ensure the legitimacy of an organization. An effective communication system would first and foremost provide transparency with regard to the work of the NTFB. Furthermore, effective communication is also essential to keep all stakeholders informed of inter alia the NTFB's meetings; its work and progress made; new documents introduced by the NTFB; upcoming events; and best practices. Thus, effective communication systems impact the degree of participation and commitment as well as the perceived legitimacy and transparency of the NTFB's work. This can be achieved through several means, many NTFBs rely on their website; however newsletters, mailing lists, and provision of seminars may also be employed.

## **Policy Advice IV: Designing Performance Evaluation Criteria for the Existing NTFBs**

### **Rationale:**

While establishment of well-functioning NTFBs is highly important/ a priority, setting performance evaluation criteria for assessing the effectiveness of the existing NTFBs in the OIC Member Countries is highly necessitated. The performance evaluation criteria may include internationally accepted benchmarks to facilitate transparent and sound performance evaluation of NTFBs. In this respect, similar to the global indexes such as World Bank's World Logistics Performance Index, Performance Evaluation Criteria for NTFBs may also have specific items such as time and cost of trade operations.

***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 projects 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, the Member Countries can utilize the COMCEC Project Funding and the COMCEC Coordination Office may finance the successful projects in this regard. These projects may include organization of seminars, training programs, study visits, exchange of experts, workshops and preparing of analytical studies, needs assessments and training materials/documents, etc.