



COMCEC

Standing Committee  
for Economic and Commercial Cooperation  
of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (COMCEC)



**Counter-Measures to Sustain Trade Facilitation  
During and After Covid-19 Pandemic  
In The OIC Member Countries**



**Standing Committee  
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of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (COMCEC)**

**COUNTER-MEASURES TO SUSTAIN TRADE FACILITATION DURING AND  
AFTER COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN THE OIC MEMBER COUNTRIES**

**COMCEC COORDINATION OFFICE**

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For further information, please contact:

COMCEC Coordination Office

Necatibey Caddesi NO:110/A

06100 Yüce-tepe

Ankara/TURKEY

Phone: 90 312 294 57 10

Fax: 90 312 294 57 77

Web: [www.comcec.org](http://www.comcec.org)

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

**AEO:** Authorized Economic Operator

**AfCFTA:** African Continental Free Trade Area

**AfDB:** African Development Bank

**AMDL:** National Agency of Logistics Development

**ANP:** Agence Nationale des Ports

**APRAM:** Professional Association of Shipping Agents & Shipbrokers of Morocco

**ASMEX:** Moroccan Exporters Association

**ASYCUDA:** Automated System for Customs Data

**ASYREC:** Automated System for Relief Consignments

**BAC:** Border Agency Cooperation

**CBSA:** The Canada Border Services Agency's

**CCSD:** Consumer-Centric Service Delivery

**CERS:** Canadian Export Reporting System

**CFCIM:** French Chamber of Trade and Industry

**CSA:** Customs Self-Assessment

**DGC:** Oman Directorate General of Customs

**ECOWAS:** African Union and the Economic Community of West African States

**EDI:** Electronic Data Interchange

**EFTA:** European Free Trade Area

**ERGP:** Economic recovery and growth plan

**ESP:** Economic Sustainability Plan

**FDI:** Foreign direct investment

**FGTAB:** Focus Group on Trading Across Borders

**FMM:** Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers

**GBTA:** Global Business Travel Association

**GDP:** Gross Domestic Product

**GVC:** Global Value Chain

**GST:** Goods and Services Tax

**GST/HST:** Goods and Services Tax / Harmonized Sales Tax

**ICC:** International Chamber of Commerce

**ICMS:** Integrated Customs Management System

**ILO:** International Labor Organization

**IMF:** International Monetary Fund

**ITC:** International Trade Centre

**KCS:** Korea Customs Service

**KITA:** Korea International Trade Association

**LDC:** Least Developed Countries

**MAEC:** Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation

**MAMPU:** Malaysian Administrative Modernization and Management Planning Unit

**MCIIP:** Industry and Investment Promotion

**MCINET:** Ministry of Industry, Trade, Investment and the Digital Economy

**MFDS:** Korean Ministry of Food and Drug Safety

**MITI:** Ministry of International Trade and Industry

**MPC:** Malaysia Productivity Corporation

**MSMEs:** Micro, Small and Medium Scale Enterprises

**NCFTP:** National Commission for Facilitation of Trade Procedures

**NNPC:** Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation

**OECD:** Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

**PEWASH:** Partnership for Expanded Water Supply, Sanitation, and Hygiene

**PPE:** Personal Protective Equipment

**RITCS:** Expansion of the scope of the Road Infrastructure Tax Credit Scheme

**RKC:** Revised Kyoto Agreement

**RMCD:** Royal Malaysian Customs Department

**SDT:** Special and Differential Treatment

**SMEs:** Small and Medium Enterprises

**SOLS:** Sultanate of Oman Logistics

**SOP:** Standard Operating Procedure

**SPS:** Sanitary and Phytosanitary

**TC:** Trade Community

**TFA:** Trade Facilitation Agreement

**TFAF:** WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility

**TFIs:** OECD Trade Facilitation Indicators

**UN:** United Nations

**UNCTAD:** United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

**UNTF Survey:** The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation

**UNWTO:** World Tourism Organization

**WCO:** World Customs Organization

**WFH:** Work from Home

**WHO:** World Health Organization

**WTO:** World Trade Organization

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In late 2019, the COVID-19 virus appeared in Wuhan, China. The virus was spreading so rapidly that in March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 as a pandemic. As we reach the middle of 2021, we have experienced different waves of the spread and mutations of the virus.

Policy makers have been taking quarantine measures in line with the socio-economic structure in their countries. It was both a supply and a demand shock. While production stopped, unemployment increased. In 2020, the world economy has declined more than 5 percent (IMF, 2021). The recession in economic growth of the OIC countries is very similar to the economic growth decline in the world economy. Employment declined due to closures and the decline in economic activity in 2020. The percentage working hour lost is around 8.8 percent in the world by ILO (2021). The same report suggests that labor market would not recover and the working hour losses would be around 3 percent in the world in 2021.

Various economic and financial support packages have been introduced in many countries in order to minimize the short-term problems of households and companies. While economic support rates to citizens are quite high in developed countries, these supports are limited in developing countries that caught by the crisis with high debt rates. Although some support measures were introduced by the OIC countries, they are significantly below the world average. Comoros, Libya, Mozambique, Syria and Yemen have not implemented income support and debt and contract relief programs. Among the OIC countries, Bahrain, Gabon, Malaysia and Egypt have provided the most generous supports to their citizens. Low-income countries of the region such as Afghanistan, Somalia and Gambia have implemented a very limited support scheme.

All the lockdown measures and restrictions such as closing down of ports and borders, limitations on air travel and delays in customs due to the pandemic resulted in a sharp decline in world trade. The fall in both exports and imports during the pandemic is much deeper compared to the global financial crisis both for the world and for the OIC countries. Commodity prices were low in 2019, followed by sharp declines in the first half of 2020 due to the halt of production and trade flows all around the world. Restrictions, lockdowns and travel bans as well as supply chain disruptions contributed to the decline in commodity prices. To overcome all these problems, trade facilitation is the key to ensure flow of goods, at least emergency goods between nations, while taking care of public health.

Before the pandemic, trade protection was on the rise. WTO (2019) suggests that between October 2018 and October 2019, WTO Members implemented 102 new trade-restrictive measures and the amount of trade coverage for the import-restrictive measures increased by 27% and recorded as the highest since October 2012. On the other hand, WTO Members also implemented 120 trade facilitating measures.

The initial response of governments during the pandemic were to impose trade restricting measures more than trade facilitating measures. Facing the initial problems in trade facilitation, international organizations as well as governments emphasized the importance of keeping goods moving via trade facilitation. They also mentioned that the tools of trade facilitation lie in

TFA, which presents the fundamentals for dematerializing the border process by keeping the physical interaction at the minimum at the borders.

Governments followed the recommendations and implemented trade facilitation measures for supply chains to continue to trade such as information availability, simplifying documentation requirements, utilizing digitalization for document requirements and streamlining border controls. In May 2020, the number of trade facilitating measures was more than the cost increasing trade restrictions introduced at the early stage of Covid-19.

The most recent figures suggest that starting from the outbreak of the pandemic until April 2021, the number of COVID-19-related trade measures implemented reached to 384 in the area of goods. Among them, trade facilitating measures were 248 (65%), while 136 of the new measures (35%) were trade restrictive. Countries support trade facilitation by keeping the measures they imposed in trade facilitating nature and cancelling trade restrictions to support the fight against COVID-19 around the world. Specifically, there have been reductions of tariffs on sanitizers, disinfectants, medical equipment and medicines/drugs. Exemptions from VAT and other taxes were observed in addition to tariff reductions. Moreover, exports constraints on surgical masks, gloves, medicine, disinfectants, and food products were gradually lifted.

Following the restrictive policies that governments imposed at the initial phase of the pandemic, international organizations/associations responded immediately to the crisis. They declared practical recommendation to keep goods flowing and to facilitate trade. Generally, they are in the same vein.

Digitalization of trade processes would be an opportunity for facilitating trade during the pandemic and preparing to the future. Some countries already adopted digital technologies for the custom processes such as single window introduced by TFA. Research shows that these kinds of measures enabled customs to cope with the crisis by facilitating trade. However, as it is valid in all trade facilitation tools, the benefits of digitalization of the trade-customs processes would magnify when they are utilized by all trade partners. Although developed countries already adopted the digitalization policy and tools, lack of infrastructure and the high cost occur as an impediment for lower income countries.

During the health crisis, like pandemic, the expediting of particularly emergency products (e.g. protective personal equipment, NII instruments, medicines, vaccinations) as well as relief and consignments goods is essential. Special treatment of goods and well-established measures for trade and transit of these goods would save lives. Therefore, a system for trade of these goods should be well-established. WTO provides the set of tools for this as well. Once again, coordination and cooperation of border agencies to reduce and streamline procedures play a key role.

Among the OIC countries, while some countries took the initiative to facilitate trade, some others applied the measures in the opposite direction to restrict the trade in certain products. As reported by the International Trade Centre (ITC), there are 15 measures implemented by nine OIC countries. These measures mainly require submitting additional documents, such as permits or certifications, or using specific transportation channel to trade in certain or all products. All measures were taken during March and April 2020, but nine of them are still active as of August 13, 2021.

With regards to the measures related to relief and essential goods, most of the OIC countries provided full or partial exemption on duties and taxes. The coverage of such goods may slightly differ across countries, but they are mostly related to supplies, materials and equipment normally used to combat COVID-19. Implementation of special customs procedures is another frequently adopted measure by OIC countries. These measures may include fast clearance, immediate release and direct delivery (with deferred payment), among others. A number of OIC countries facilitated trade by easing documentary requirements, by reducing the number of documents to be submitted or accepting the copies of the original documents. Apart from these measures, several other measures are also implemented, such as allocating specific refrigerated areas for essential goods and medicine or uninterrupted customs services

A diverse set of measures have been taken by the OIC member countries to support economic activity in response to the pandemic. The most frequently taken measure is related to reorganization of customs services' working conditions and customs control procedures, which is to facilitate customs procedures in a way to protect the customs staff and its operative capabilities. Easing of documentary requirements is another measure taken by some OIC countries. Accordingly, the requirement to provide certain commercial documents has been loosened or abandoned during the pandemic to ensure smooth flow of goods across borders and supply chain continuity. Deferral or reduction of payments associated with exports or imports of non-essential goods was implemented at varying levels by several countries. Some other OIC countries expanded risk management based physical examinations to reduce human interaction and ensure faster release of goods. In some countries, traders are encouraged to use only digital channels to complete their customs procedures. In addition to these measures, a diverse set of measures were implemented by OIC countries as a response to the pandemic, including taking special measure to facilitate transit trade for landlocked countries, better coordination with neighbor countries, and utilization of media channels to increase accessibility to updated measures and overall awareness on them.

In response to the pandemic, many governments around the world took certain measures to facilitate or restrict the flow of goods across the borders based on different considerations at individual country level. This report specifically focuses on three countries, namely Canada, The Republic of Korea and Sultanate of Oman that are believed to be more proactive in facilitating the trade as compared to others. It should be noted at the outset that the measures taken to facilitate trade do not represent fundamental changes on existing practices, but they typically address some pandemic related challenges faced by traders for more efficient flow of goods.

With the outbreak of the pandemic, Canada took mainly five critical measures to facilitate trade procedures. These are (i) Implementation of the e-Longroom initiative, (ii) Extension of timeframe for all payments due to the CBSA, (iii) Grace period for late accounting penalties, (iv) Extension of the period for submitting corrections for trade compliance, and (v) Temporary waiving of customs duties and sales taxes on all goods used in response to the pandemic. A summary of these measures is provided below.

The Republic of Korea communicated four trade facilitation measures to the WTO as a response to the pandemic, which are all temporary measures. These included (i) acceptance of copies of the certificate of origin, (ii) omitting document screening and visiting inspection in the process

of issuing certificates of origin, (iii) inclusion of certain health products in the list of tariff exemptions, and (iv) minimizing customs clearance procedures for protective masks.

In order to facilitate import and export operations during the pandemic, an efficient coordination mechanism is established among the related agencies including the General Administration of Customs of the Royal Oman Police, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, the Oman Numbering Centre, the Food Safety and Quality Centre of the Ministry of Agricultural Wealth, Fisheries and Water Resources and the Gulf Cooperation Council Standardization Authority (Oman News, 2020). This enabled the continuity of business and the smooth flow of import and export movements during the pandemic. As before the pandemic, the Single Window remained accessible 24/7 to all brokers, agents and traders, which enables remote clearance of products without a need to attend customs offices.

A survey questioner covering six domains is conducted to collect information in various kinds of institutions such as governmental bodies, research institutes, NGOs for all OIC member states. Six domains used for the assessment of effects of the COVID -19 pandemic on trade and related trade facilitation responses are as follows:

- A. Effects of COVID -19 on Trade and Customs
- B. Institutions and Capacity Building
- C. Trade Facilitation-Procedures
- D. Transparency and Cooperation-Coordination Enforcement
- E. Specific Trade Facilitation Measures for COVID -19 period
- F. Trade Facilitation Measures for post COVID-19 period

Specific indicators detail key domains. In order to make an assessment of the success and extend of responses as well as their post-pandemic effects, countries are divided into five categories, and prioritized minimum standards have been determined for those that need to be included in the indicator set determined for each category. According to the number of criteria met or the score level of the key criteria, the category rank of a country is determined. A Tier placement scheme is developed for each domain based on the criteria under each domain The five categories are from Tier 1 to Tier 5 in descending order, Tier 1 indicating the most successful/through response and Tier 5 the least successful/through response. To illustrate, if a country meets almost all of the criteria or has a score above 4 out of 5, then it will be placed in Tier 1.

Overall domain wise rankings of 27 OIC member states for various pillars on trade facilitation response and effect of COVID-19 suggest that majority of countries are doing below average in mitigating the effect of COVID-19 on trade. Seven countries (Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Cameroon, Kyrgyzstan, and Libya) are placed in Tier 2 while Turkey and Morocco are placed in Tier 1. Moreover, no single region is doing better than the others. The poor performance of all countries is due to low performance on two domains: Effects of COVID-19 on Trade and Customs (domain A) and Institutions and Capacity Building (domain B). The worst performance is observed in Institutions and Capacity Building while the best performance is

observed for Trade Facilitation-Procedures (domain C) followed by Transparency and Cooperation-Coordination Enforcement (domain D).

Case studies that are analyzed within this study are Morocco, Malaysia, Indonesia and Nigeria. Trade facilitation before the pandemic as well as during the pandemic are extensively analyzed.

Finally, by looking at the available data and information, it is not possible to argue that adequate and appropriate measures were not taken to reduce the impact of the pandemic on international trade. However, considering the relatively more successful and impactful interventions, a number of recommendations can be made for OIC countries to consider in times of crises as well as normal times to facilitate trade. Considering the relevance, nature and scope of each intervention for trade facilitation at different times, these recommendations are provided under separate headings as below:

- A. Recommendations for structural transformation
  1. Reform formalities and documentation requirements
  2. Invest in digital infrastructure
  3. Utilize the potential of private sector
  4. Improve customs risk management systems
- B. Recommendations for effective coordination, communication and partnership
  1. Establish national inter-agency coordination mechanisms
  2. Strengthen cross-border agency cooperation
  3. Improve publication and availability of information
  4. Expand regional and international partnership
- C. Recommendations for greater economic resilience through trade facilitation
  1. Develop national emergency trade facilitation plan
  2. Facilitate trade for emergency goods
  3. Sustain supply chains
  4. Support the continuity of the business

Considering the fact that the pandemic would last longer and preceded with other similar crisis, the OIC countries would cooperate to prepare an emergency plan for trade facilitation. It would be beneficial for all the OIC countries and would impeditment shortages during the crisis. It is much harder to take action during the crisis time. Whoever, there is no time to wait to act together to facilitate trade within the OIC region.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Starting from early 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic hit the World as a unique shock which has never experienced before and composed of both supply and demand disruptions in the globally integrated economy. In order to decrease the spread of the virus, physical distancing measures such as factory closures, border closures and other lockdown measures imposed. The resultant labor supply decline was the main reason of the supply shock, whereas demand shock occurred as an outcome of income decrease due to lockdown measures and layoffs.

One year into the pandemic, the total COVID-19 cases reached over 210 million, the total deaths exceeded 4.4 million lives<sup>1</sup> and with the mutations of the virus concerns are increasing. Even though the development and utilization of vaccines give hope, the distribution of vaccine around the world remains as a serious problem. In other words, there is still a high level of uncertainty regarding the duration and magnitude of the crisis.

The impact of the pandemic has been devastating for the world economy. The decline in World GDP is estimated to be as 5.4 percent (IMF, 2021). The countries in the OIC region affected from the crisis as deep as the World economy and the economic contraction is expected to be around 5 percent (IMF, 2021). To limit the impact of containment measures, the governments supported their citizens with income support and used expansionary fiscal and monetary policies. IMF (2021) states that the economic contraction would have been three times larger without these supportive policies adopted by the governments. Factory closures that started in China, lockdown measures, border closures and other containment measures disrupted global supply chains (GSC) and the global trade. Sharp declines were observed in commodity prices. The effects of the pandemic on global trade as well as on exports and imports of OIC countries were detrimental in all around the World amounting to 14 percent decline. Not only goods trade but services trade, such as tourism hit hard from the crisis

Overall, the pandemic has affected all the world and continued for more than a year. There has been a structural change in the world economy, which will bring providing some opportunities such as introduction of technology in business environment, working from home model, trade route shifts as well as threats such as poverty, unemployment and deterioration in global supply chains.

To alleviate the effects of pandemic in the world economy and keep border agencies working while taking care of public health, trade facilitation stands as the key policy. World Trade Organization defines trade facilitation as the simplification, modernization and harmonization of export and import processes. In an integrated world with global supply chains, where goods cross borders repeatedly, trade facilitation constitutes importance for decreasing trade costs and enabling small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to participate trade and consumers to access wide range of products with higher quality, increasing variety and lower prices. In other words, trade facilitation helps trade costs decline by reducing the non-tariff trade-barriers. All countries benefit from decreasing non-tariff barriers and acting together which is one of the main focused areas of the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) entered into force in 2017. Advanced countries started to implement the TFA immediately while it is a gradual process for

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<sup>1</sup> <https://covid19.who.int/>

other countries. In other words, the measures that would be used to alleviate the effects of COVID-19 on the economy are already introduced with TFA, however its implementation is limited among the developing countries.

The TFA of WTO contains many provisions for expediting the movement, release and clearance of goods, including goods in transit. Although the developed countries were already implementing TFA, they have taken extra trade facilitation measures to cope with the disruption to trade and lockdown restrictions as well as the export curbs introduced by many countries during the pandemic period. International organizations such as WTO, WCO, UNCTAD, OECD and other institutions responded immediately to the crisis and they provided trade facilitation recommendations to eliminate the effects of the pandemic on trade and production. Most of member countries of these organizations followed these recommendations and implemented trade facilitation measures for supply chains to continue to trade such as information availability, simplifying documentation requirements, utilizing digitalization for document requirements and streamlining border controls (OECD, 2020a). Although trade halted and trade restrictions introduced at the early stage of the pandemic, the number of trade facilitating measures increased significantly as of May 2020.

Many OIC countries have still been investing in their capacities to create more effective trade procedures and thereby to eliminate some of the impediments to trade.

The aim of this report is to put forth the effects of COVID-19 on the world economy and the economies of the OIC countries; to elaborate trade facilitation measures utilized to alleviate the effects of COVID-19 and to provide policy recommendations on trade facilitation specific to the OIC countries to eliminate some of the impediments of the pandemic to trade.

The methodology used in this study are extensive literature survey, desk study on best practices, survey sent to OIC countries and case studies of OIC countries. Reports of international organizations as well as other organizations and associations, papers by academicians that are specialized in trade facilitation field and opinion pieces from experts as well as country experiences are the fundamental sources of literature survey. Three countries, Canada, the Republic of Korea and Sultanate of Oman were analysed as best practices based on their expertise before the pandemics and the measures taken during the pandemics. A survey sent to countries and 27 responses received. An analysis carried on based on these responses. Finally, case studies are performed with Morocco, Malaysia, Indonesia and Nigeria. The measures taken by these countries for trade facilitation to alleviate the effects of the pandemic and to keep goods moving are analysed in detail. Based on these extensive analyses recommendation to facilitate trade during the pandemic are developed for OIC countries as a guide.

The remainder of the report is organized as follows:

Chapter 2 analyses the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the world economy with a specific emphasis to the OIC countries, in a comparative perspective and with the relevant statistics. The spread of the virus, the cases in the World and in the OIC countries and the containment measures taken are presented. The effects of the crisis on output, employment and government debt are discussed. The effects of the pandemic on global trade as well as on exports and imports of OIC countries are analysed.

The outcomes of all the containment measures and disruptions to trade were delays at the borders, long queues and postponements of clearance of shipments. Trade facilitation is the key policy to alleviate the effects of pandemic in the world economy and keep border agencies working while taking care of public health. The status of trade facilitation before the pandemic is discussed in Chapter 3 and the Trade Facilitation Agreement of World Trade Organization (TFA) is introduced. All the authorities put the implementation of TFA around the globe forth to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 on trade. During the pandemic some countries took new trade facilitation measures whereas some others restricted trade as presented in a timeline in Chapter 3. International institutions such as World Trade Organization (WTO), World Customs Union (WCO), the World Bank, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) responded immediately to the crisis and introduced recommendations to facilitate trade as summarized in Chapter 3.

Many OIC countries have been investing in their capacities to create more effective trade procedures and thereby to eliminate some of the impediments to trade. Chapter 4 presents the overall performance of OIC countries in facilitating trade before the pandemic and provide a snapshot of the major policy responses to the pandemic. In order to assess the performance of the OIC countries, a survey, composed of questions on trade facilitation measures taken as a response to pandemic has been prepared and sent to the stakeholders covering authorities, academicians and traders. The responses received are from ... individuals of 27 countries. The methodology of the survey and the analysis of the results are discussed in Chapter 4.

In response to the pandemic, many governments around the world took certain measures to facilitate or restrict the flow of goods across the borders based on different considerations at individual country level. Chapter 5 provides a desk-based study on three countries, namely Canada, The Republic of Korea and Oman. It should be noted at the outset that the measures taken to facilitate trade do not represent fundamental changes on existing practices, but they typically address some pandemic related challenges faced by traders for more efficient flow of goods.

Three OIC countries, namely, Morocco, Malaysia, Indonesia and Nigeria from 3 different regions of the OIC are analysed in detail in Chapter 5. Interviews with different stakeholders from these countries revealed the performance of these case studies in terms of trade facilitation measures as a response to the pandemic, as well as the desk studies executed for these three case study countries.

The literature survey, desk studies, the survey conducted among the OIC countries and the case studies performed in this project form the bases of the extensive policy recommendations provided for the OIC countries in Chapter 6.

Considering the fact that the pandemic would last longer, the vaccine may not be available to all the trading countries in the world and similar health crisis are expected in the near future due to the climate change, the policy recommendations provided in this project would be a medium-run handbook for the OIC countries for trade facilitation in crisis times.

## Chapter 2: Overview of the impact of COVID-19 Pandemic

In the aftermath of global financial crisis, a moderate recovery was expected in 2020 for the world economy. Though there were some impediments against the recovery such as the rise of protectionism, geopolitical tensions, social unrest, natural disasters, unprecedented global debt growth and a prolonged slowdown in productivity growth (World Bank, 2020; IMF, 2020).

In 2020, nothing happened as expected. In late 2019, the COVID-19 virus appeared in Wuhan, China. The virus was spreading so rapidly that in March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 as a pandemic. As we reach the middle of 2021, we have experienced different waves of the spread and mutations of the virus.

Policy makers have been taking quarantine measures in line with the socio-economic structure in their countries. It was both a supply and a demand shock. While production stopped, unemployment increased. Household consumption came to a standstill except for essential needs.

Various economic support packages have been introduced in many countries in order to minimize the short-term problems of households and companies. While economic support rates to citizens are quite high in developed countries, these supports are limited in developing countries that caught by the crisis with high debt rates.

Development of vaccine is the light at the end of the tunnel. However, the distribution of vaccine is particularly important. Although advanced countries try to vaccinate the majority of the population, access to vaccine of many developing countries is very limited. Social problems, continuing contagion and the economic problems would be the outcome of unequal distribution of vaccine around the world.

We do not know yet where we are in the crisis. However, the studies conducted in the field of health and the historical course of the Spanish flu, where COVID-19 is compared most, shows that we are far from the end of the epidemic. At this point, it is not possible to quantify the possible economic effects of the epidemic.

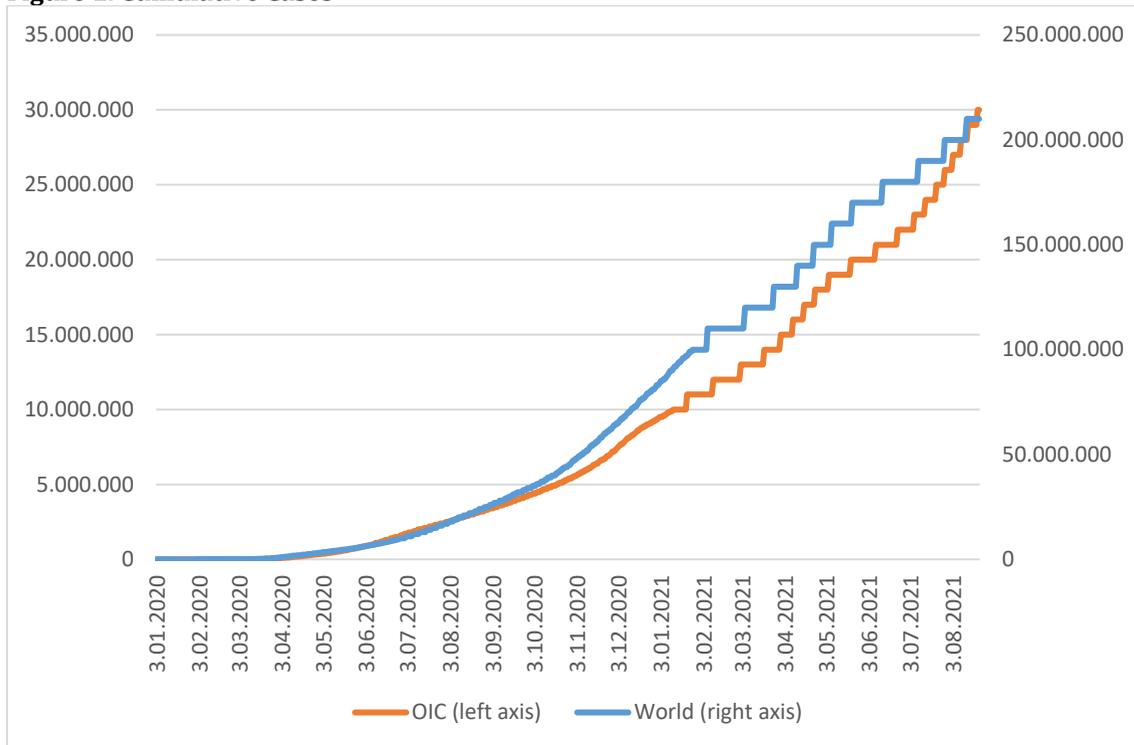
This chapter provides an overview of the impact of the pandemic on the global economy. First section discusses the effects of COVID-19 on the World economy. The impact of COVID-19 on trade and global supply chains are presented in Section 2. The pandemic era caused a structural change in the world on both the demand and the supply side. As a consequence, there would be positive and negative changes on the economy even after the end of pandemic, which are discussed in Section 3. Finally, Section 4 provides a general evaluation

### 2.1. COVID-19 and the World Economy

The number of COVID-19 cases and the mortality rate continue to increase rapidly all over the world and vary according to countries due to many reasons such as health infrastructure, demography, policy measures taken by governments and cultural characteristics. As of August 25, 2021, according to the data of the World Health Organization, the number of COVID-19 cases reached around 212 million and the number of deaths related to COVID-19 is around 4.4 million. It is important to note that these figures only show the official confirmed cases and the actual

numbers would be much higher (Bendavid et al., 2020 and Hortaçsu et al., 2020). Figure 1 shows the distribution of the cumulative number of COVID-19 cases in the World (right-axis) and in the OIC countries (left-axis).

**Figure 1. Cumulative Cases**

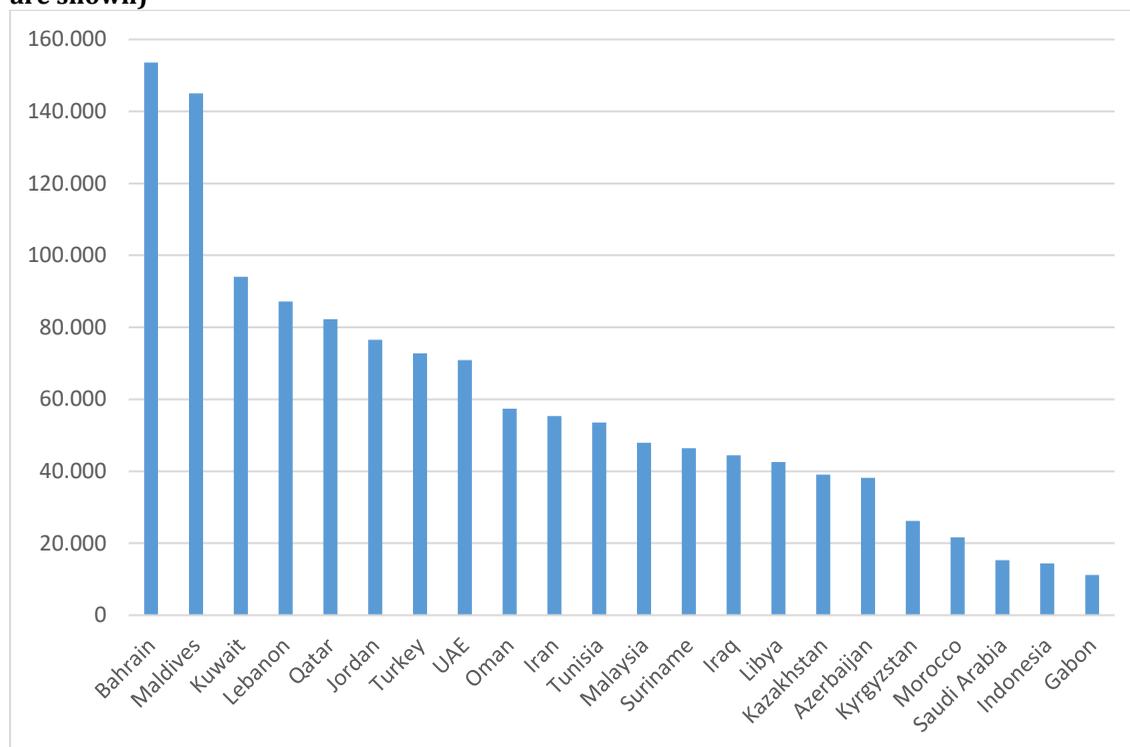


Source: World Health Organization, own calculations.

Figure 2 presents the total cases per 1 million population in the OIC countries (if it is higher than 10 thousand) as of August 23, 2021. Bahrain has more than 150 thousand cases per 1 million population, followed by Maldives with around 145 thousand cases.

The rapid spread of the COVID-19 epidemic and the fact that it is quite easy to spread from person to person caused the pandemic to strain the capacity of health systems in many countries. Iran, Italy, Spain, Britain and the USA are among the striking examples in this regard. In this context, many countries have taken various quarantine measures in order to make their health systems work again and to alleviate the burden, starting from the point that providing social distance would cause a decline in the number of cases (Eichenbaum et al., 2020).

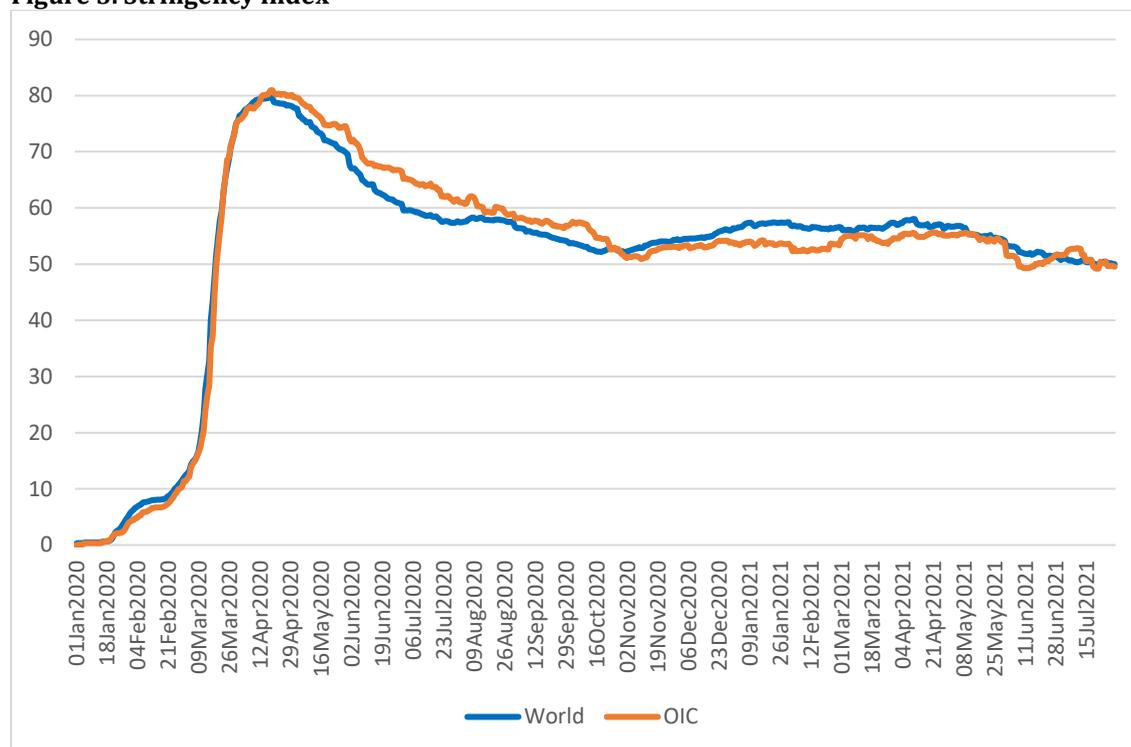
**Figure 2. OIC countries, total cases per 1 million population (only more than 10,000 cases are shown)**



Source: Worldometers as of August 23, 2021.

Hale et al. (2020) collects all the restrictions (quarantine measures) implemented around the world under eight headings: (i) closure of schools, (ii) closure of workplaces, (iii) cancellation of collective events, (iv) prevention of gatherings, (v) suspension of public transport, (vi) stay at home restrictions, (vii) prevention of domestic travel and (viii) prevention of international travel. The restrictions index, which is obtained by summing these restrictions, is formed with the data of 160 countries and updated regularly. The increase in the index represents the tightening of restrictions and the index ranges from 0-100. Figure 3 shows the aggregated form of the restriction index for the World and the OIC countries. In parallel with the WHO's pandemic announcement, all countries have applied quarantine to a significant extent. However, as of the second half of April 2020, countries started to loosen restrictions. The quarantine policies of the OIC countries are very similar to the other countries until April 2020. From April 2020 to October 2020, the measures are stricter than the world average. However, from October 2020 to June 2021, the measures taken in the OIC countries are lower than the world average. This fact is perhaps due to the cost of closures on the economy. Following the increases in cases, the governments in the OIC region imposed stricter restrictions compared to the world average.

**Figure 3. Stringency index**



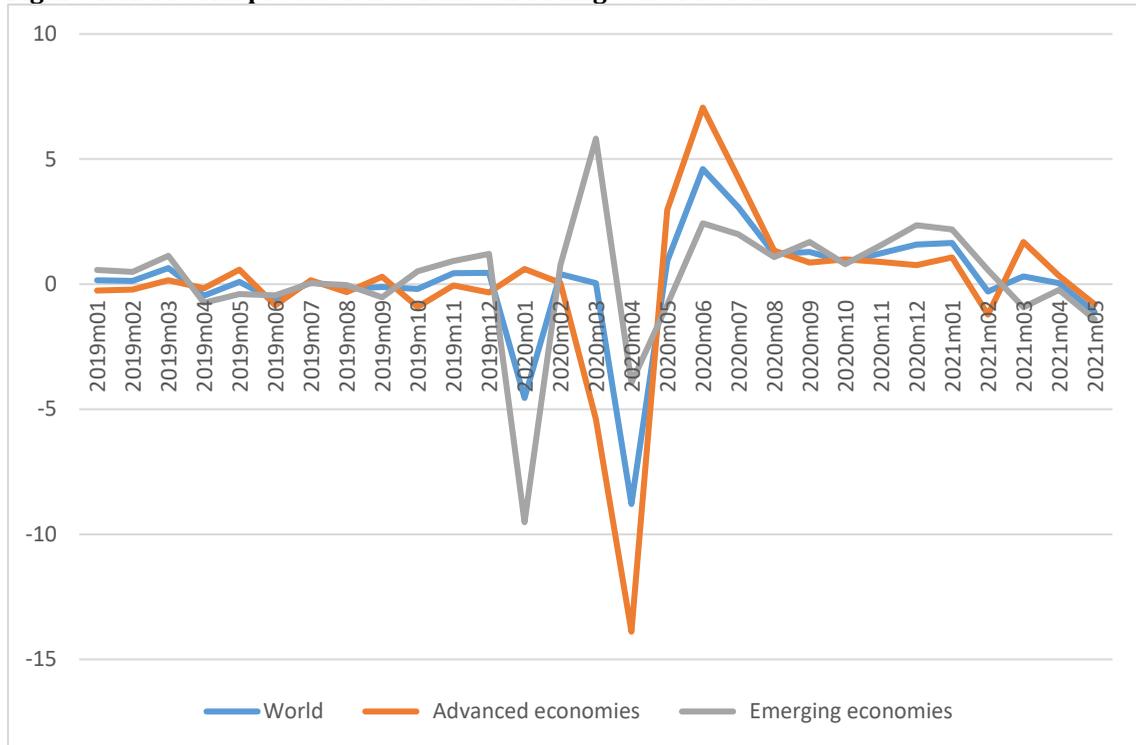
Source: Hale et al. (2020), own calculations.

The quarantine measures implemented in many countries also caused significant declines in economic activity. Figure 4 shows the monthly percentage change in the industrial production index in the world economy, advanced economies and emerging markets by the end of May 2021. Industrial production fell sharply in the first months of 2020 in emerging markets as the pandemic was originated from China. In the following months, the fell in industrial production index was more sharply in advanced economies. As Gourinchas and Hsieh (2020) argue, the cost of trying to correct the infection curve in the short term is steeping the macroeconomic recession curve. In other words, quarantine measures are carried out by sacrificing economic activity.

It is common to compare the recession in economic activity caused by the pandemic to the global financial crisis numbers. The sharpest decline in industrial production index during global financial crisis was around 3 percent. However, in March 2020, the industrial production index of the world declined more than 8 percent as illustrated in Figure 4.

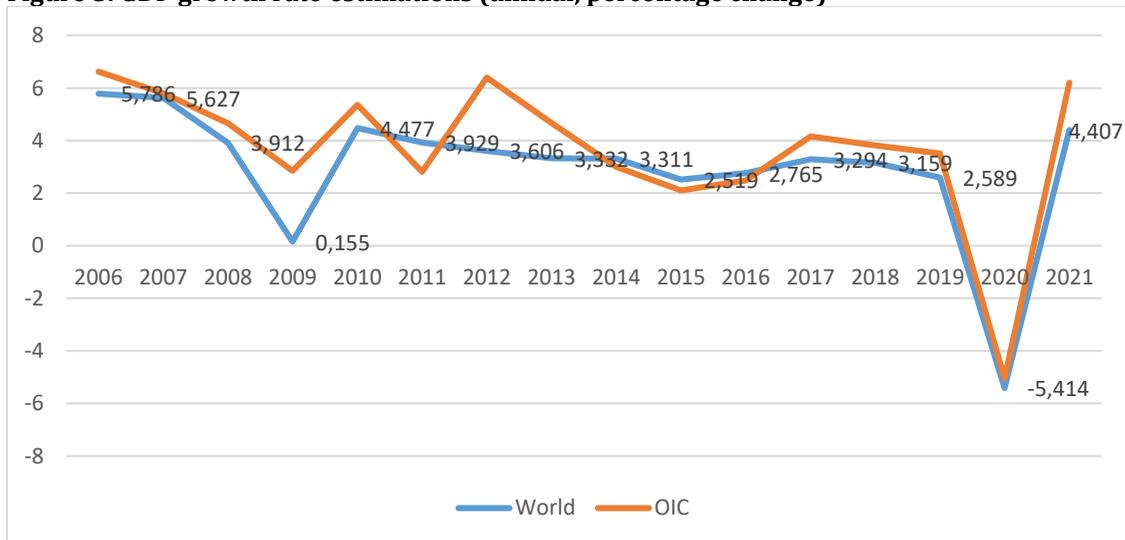
The latest estimations for GDP growth rate are available in IMF (2021). Figure 5 presents the average growth rates of the World and the OIC. The OIC countries were not affected as much as the World average from the global financial crisis. However, during the pandemic, 2020 estimations of IMF (2021) suggests that the impact of the pandemic on the average growth rates of the OIC countries is very similar to the impact on the GDP growth rates of the world average.

**Figure 4. Industrial production volume excluding construction**



Source: CPB Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis, World Trade Monitor

**Figure 5. GDP growth rate estimations (annual, percentage change)**



Source: IMF, World Outlook, April 2021.

Employment declined due to closures and the decline in economic activity in 2020 as shown in Table 1. The percentage working hour lost is around 8.8 percent in the world. The highest working hour losses occurred in lower-middle income countries with 11.3 percent. ILO (2021)

suggests that labor market would not recover and the working hour losses would be around 3 percent in the world in 2021.

**Table 1. Estimates of working-hour losses for 2020 and projections for 2021, world and by income groups (percentage and full-time equivalent jobs)**

	Percentage Working Hours Lost (%) Relative to Q4/2019			
	2020	Baseline 2021	Pessimistic 2021	Optimistic 2021
World	8.8	3	4.6	1.3
Low-Income Countries	6.7	1.8	3.4	1.1
Lower-Middle-Income Countries	11.3	2.6	4.7	1.2
Upper-Middle Income Countries	7.3	2.9	4.2	1.1
High-Income Countries	8.3	4.7	5.7	1.8

	Equivalent Number of Full-time Jobs (48/hours/week) Lost (millions)			
	2020	Baseline 2021	Pessimistic 2021	Optimistic 2021
World	255	90	130	36
Low-Income Countries	12	4	6	2
Lower-Middle-Income Countries	110	26	46	12
Upper-Middle Income Countries	90	36	50	14
High-Income Countries	39	22	27	8

Source: ILO

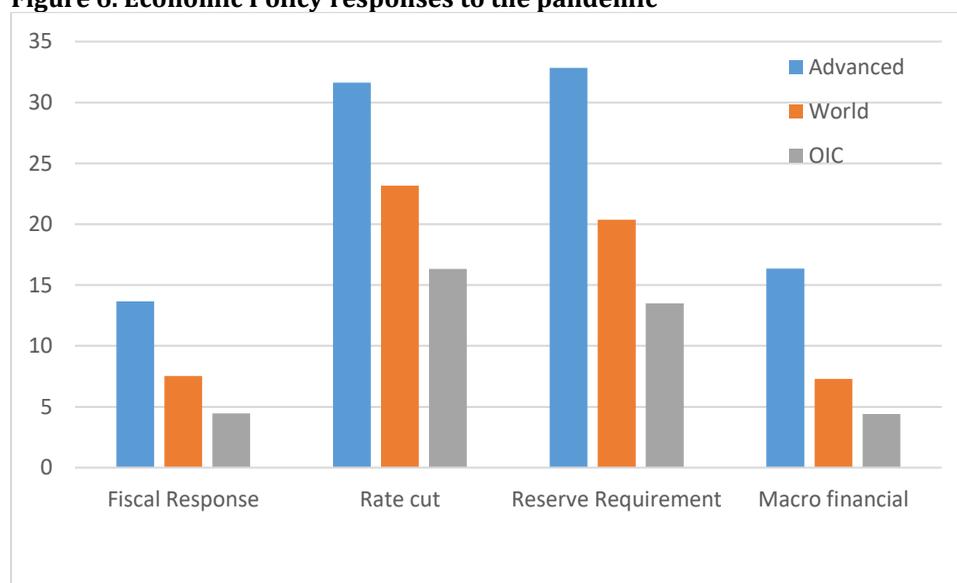
For labor market outcome, the ability to work from home (WFH) appear as an important factor. Working from home was encouraged, especially in developed countries, in large enterprises and in the public sector. Berg et al. (2020) finds that 1 out of 6 employees in the world and 1 out of 4 employees in developed countries can potentially work from home. Therefore, the decrease in employment is largely due to the unskilled labor force that cannot practice their jobs by WFH. There are many studies on the percentage of jobs that can be done remotely in different countries and they suggest that around 30 percent and 10 percent of urban jobs would be performed remotely in developed and developing countries, respectively (Gottlieb et al., 2021). The literature suggests that the low WFH ability is due to occupational composition and the

nature of tasks in developing countries. However, there are conflicting results on the impact of WFH on productivity (Etheridge et al., 2020; Barrero et al., 2020, Morikawa, 2020; and Bartik et al., 2020).

According to OECD (2020) estimates, the firms' profits declined by around 40 percent to 50 percent compared to business as usual profits during the pandemic. Some of the services sectors such as hospitality, entertainment and transport hit hard by the pandemic. Moreover, young firms affected more than the old ones. The serious problem is in small and medium enterprises (SMEs) who already were experiencing problems before the crisis to access to finance. The decline in profits of the firms, on the other hand, cause problems in terms of servicing their debts. Around one third of the firms would not cover even their interest expenses.

Soon after the crisis began, a discussion started on the huge consequences of the crisis and the appropriate response. From the point that the crisis can be both demand and supply oriented, policy makers announced fiscal and monetary policies support packages in order to reduce the negative effects of the epidemic and the constraints imposed on the economy and to relieve households, companies and financial markets. Elgin et al. (2020) compiles the amount of the announced support packages for each country in terms of fiscal policy and monetary policy (Figure 6).

**Figure 6. Economic Policy responses to the pandemic**



Source: Elgin et al. (2020) as of May 2021 update, own calculations. Average of the index.

While the GDP share of the fiscal package for high-income countries was 13.6 percent on average, the shares of fiscal policy packages in GDP were only 7.5 percent and 4.5 percent for the world and for the OIC countries, as of May 2021, respectively. When the monetary policy is examined, although the interest rates were already quite low on average in high-income countries<sup>2</sup> when the pandemic started, the decline of the interest rates reached to 31.6 percent.

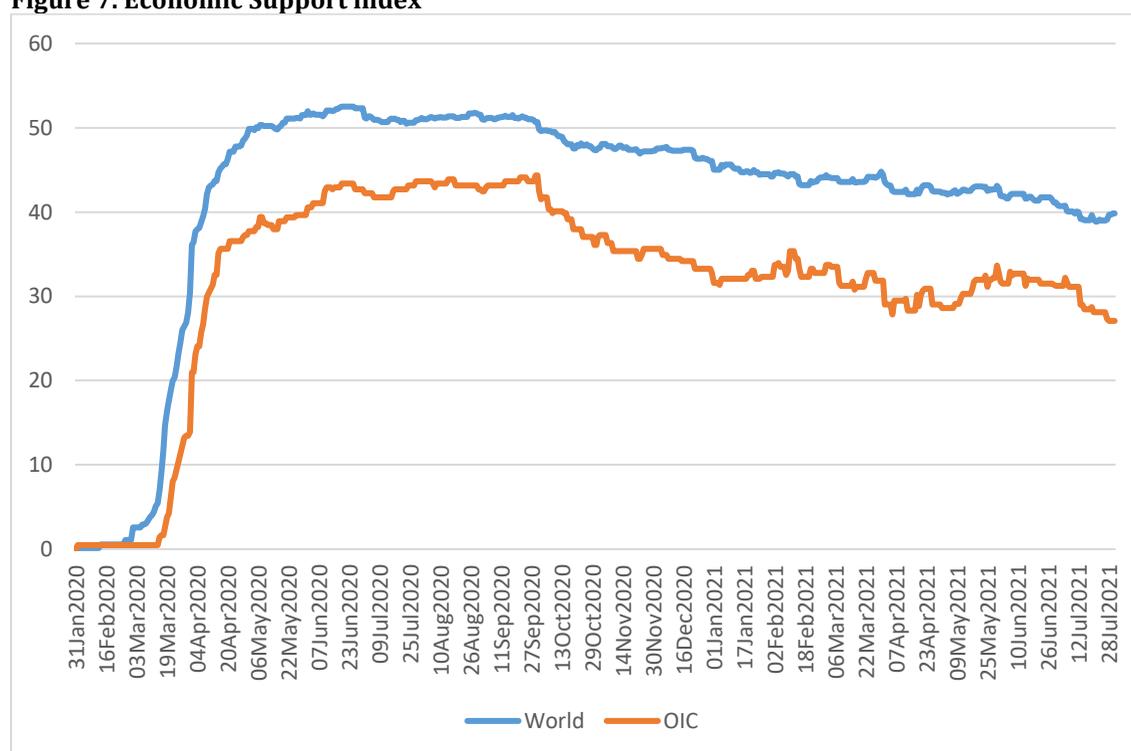
<sup>2</sup> Bahrain, Brunei, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates are both shown in the OIC countries and high income countries classification.

The rate cut was 16.3 percent in the OIC countries, as of May 2021. The low interest rates of developed countries since the global financial crisis mean that they cannot use the interest rate as an effective monetary policy tool in their monetary policy. Therefore, these countries used a significant amount of macro-financial policies (16.3 percent). In the OIC countries, on the other hand, the package of macro-financial measures announced is only 4.4 percent of GDP.

In other words, developed countries have effectively used their fiscal and monetary policies to support their economies and to contain the significant decline in production and demand due to restrictions, in the course of the pandemic. However, support packages announced in developing countries have remained limited due to various restrictions.

Figure 7 presents the economic support index for the world in comparison to the OIC countries. The index covers income support as well as debt and contract relief for households. It is apparent that although some support measures were introduced by the OIC countries, they are significantly below the world average. Considering the huge amounts of supports introduced by the advanced economies, this is as expected

**Figure 7. Economic Support index**



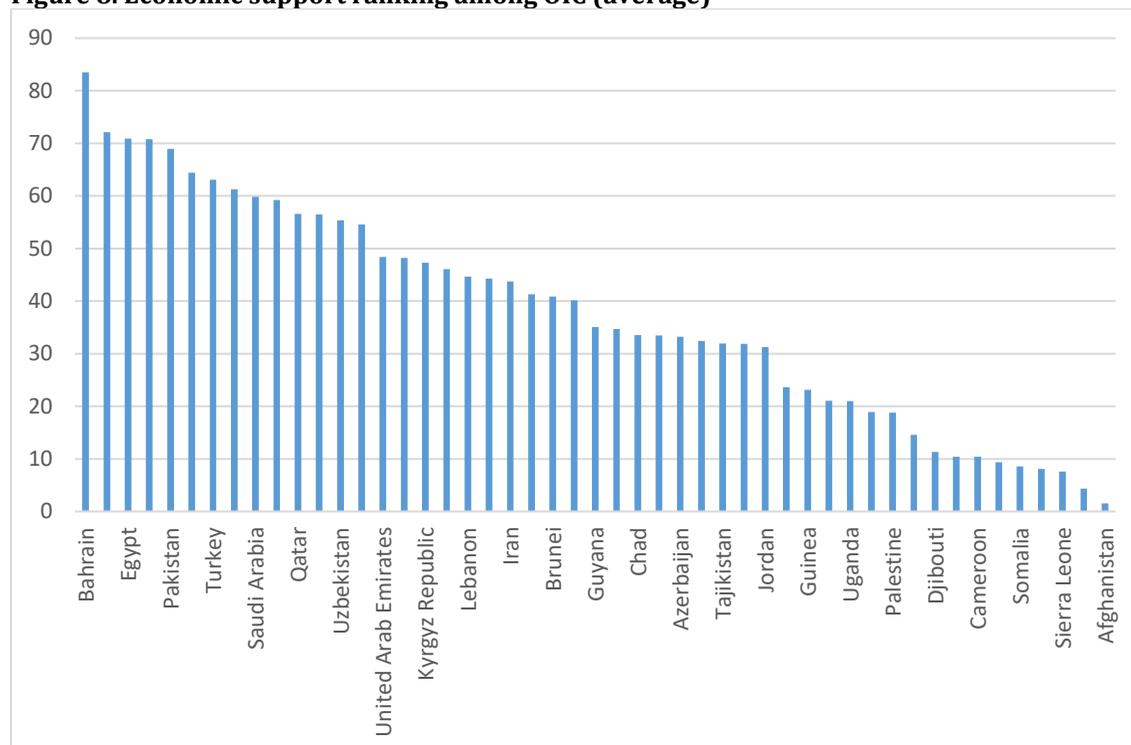
Source: Hale et al. (2020), own calculations. Economic support index covers income support and debt and contract relief for households<sup>3</sup>.

Figure 8 presents the ranking of the OIC countries in terms of the economic support. Comoros, Libya, Mozambique, Syria and Yemen have not implemented income support and debt and

<sup>3</sup> Cash payments to citizens who lose their jobs or cannot work by government will be recorded. Also, financial obligations for households (eg stopping loan repayments, preventing services like water from stopping, or banning evictions) that were freed will be recorded.

contract relief programs. Among the OIC countries, Bahrain, Gabon, Malaysia, Egypt and Pakistan have provided the most generous supports to their citizens. Low income countries of the region such as Afghanistan, Gambia and Somalia have implemented a very restricted support scheme.

**Figure 8. Economic support ranking among OIC (average)**



Source: Hale et al. (2020), own calculations. Average of the index from March 11, 2020 (WHO characterizes COVID-19 as a pandemic) to July 31, 2021.

The strict social-distancing policies implemented across the world involve the workplaces closures in order to limit interpersonal contact. According to ILO, the share of workers in the world living in countries with some form of closure of workplace measures in place amounted to 93 percent in January 2021. Economic support to those individuals losing their income became a necessity and despite the limited fiscal capacity, most of the countries have implemented income support to their citizens as shown in Figures 7 and 8, above.

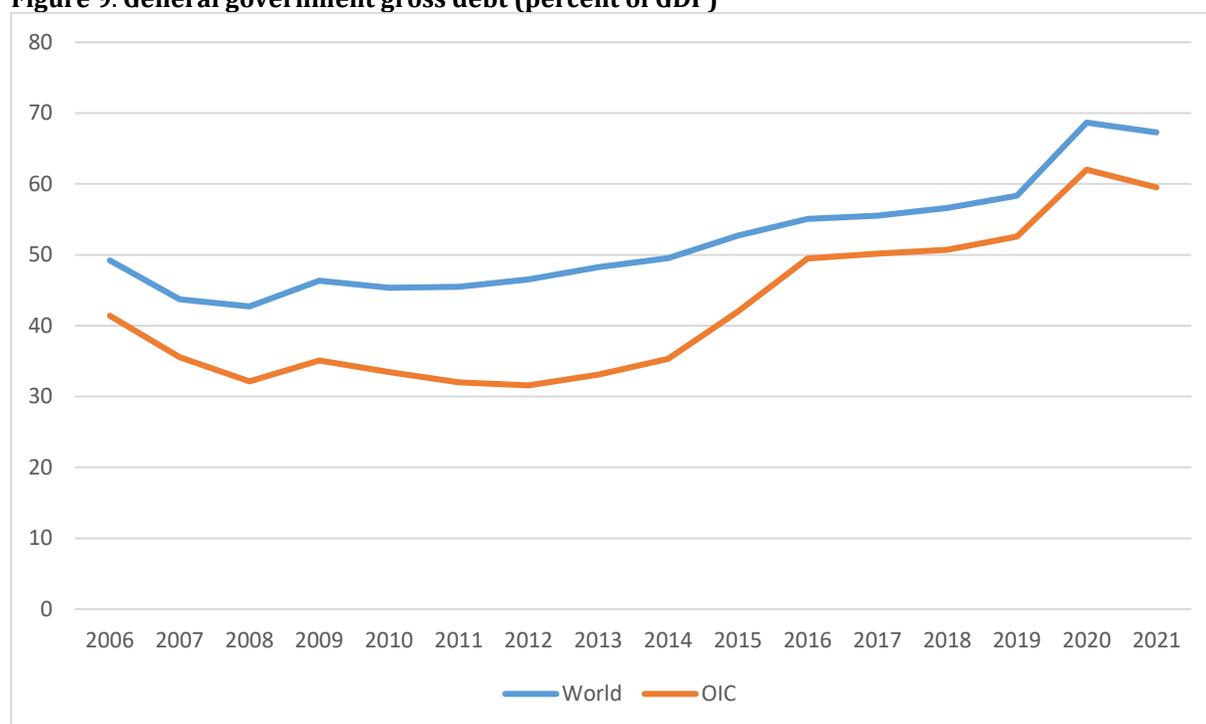
Compared to the early phase of the pandemic, restrictions became more targeted or sector-specific to keep the balance between measures and the economic support. Developing countries loosen their lockdown measures more compared to high income countries due to limited fiscal space.

Before the pandemic, global debt reached to 230 percent of GDP in 2019. The decline in sales of the firms increased the debt of corporates, whereas the stimulus packages cause a rise in sovereign debt stocks. As a consequence, vulnerability, especially in developing countries, increased. What makes developing countries more vulnerable is that their debt is sensitive to exchange rate and maturity, their credit ratings are low, and their financial markets are not deep

enough. Moreover, the fact that the tax base is not wide and the lack of effective tax management make it difficult to provide income support to those in need in these countries and to implement the fiscal policy against the conjuncture (Loayza & Pennings, 2020). The other side of the token is that these countries have limited fiscal space, restricting the economic support that they would provide to their citizens and increasing the poverty (Gourinchas and Hsieh, 2020). As a consequence of increasing risk in these countries, capital inflows remained limited. Especially in commodity exporting countries, these vulnerabilities and weak exports resulted in substantial currency depreciation (World Bank, 2021).

Figure 9 presents general government gross debt as a ratio to GDP. The figure indicates that there was a steady increase in general government gross debt figures as a percent of GDP since the global financial crisis both in the world and in the OIC region, on average. During the pandemic the increase in debt is estimated to be around 10 percent both for the world and for the OIC countries.

**Figure 9. General government gross debt (percent of GDP)**



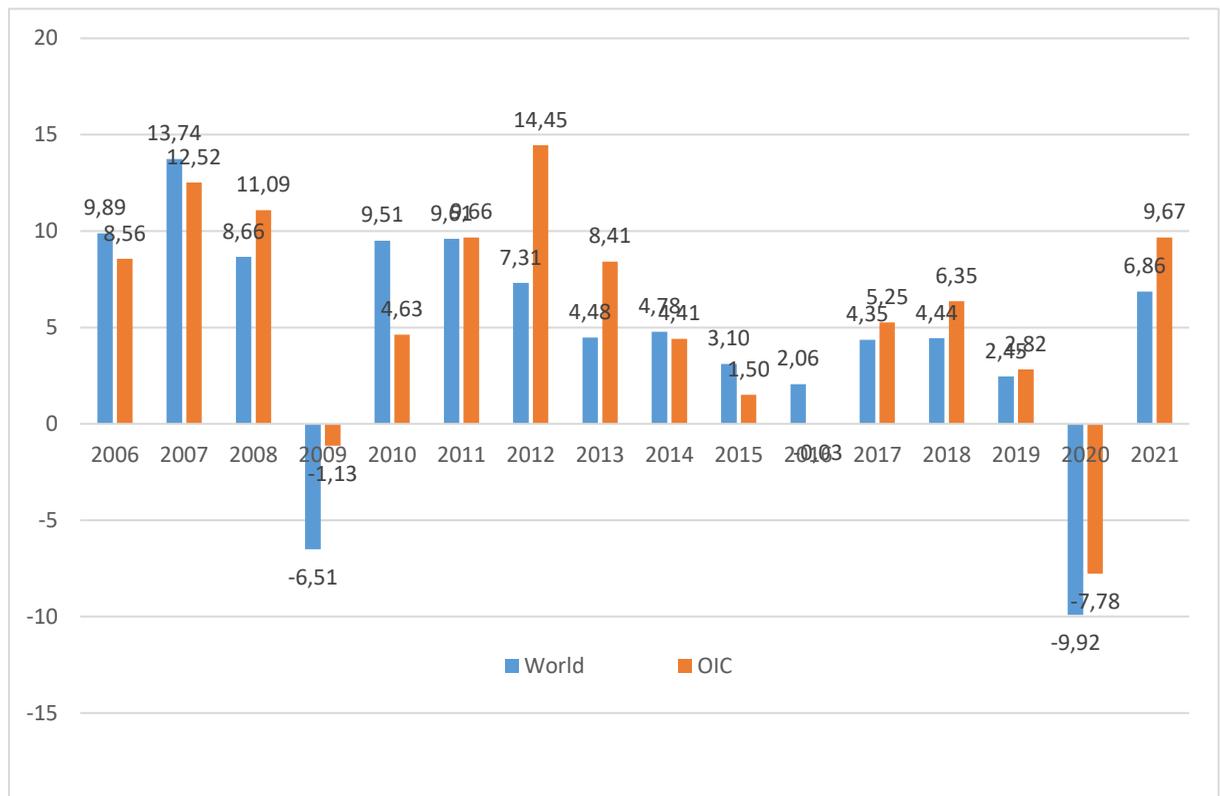
Source: IMF, *World Outlook*, April 2021.

## 2.2. COVID-19 and Trade

Since 2009, the world was experiencing a trade slowdown, following the demand decline following GFC. In 2019, before pandemic, trade was declining more due to weakening global growth, the protectionist policies and trade tensions. The expectation for 2020 was a recovery in economic growth and thereby increasing trade volumes. However, all the lockdowns and restrictions such as closing down of ports and borders, limitations on air travel and delays in customs due to the pandemic resulted in a sharp decline in world trade.

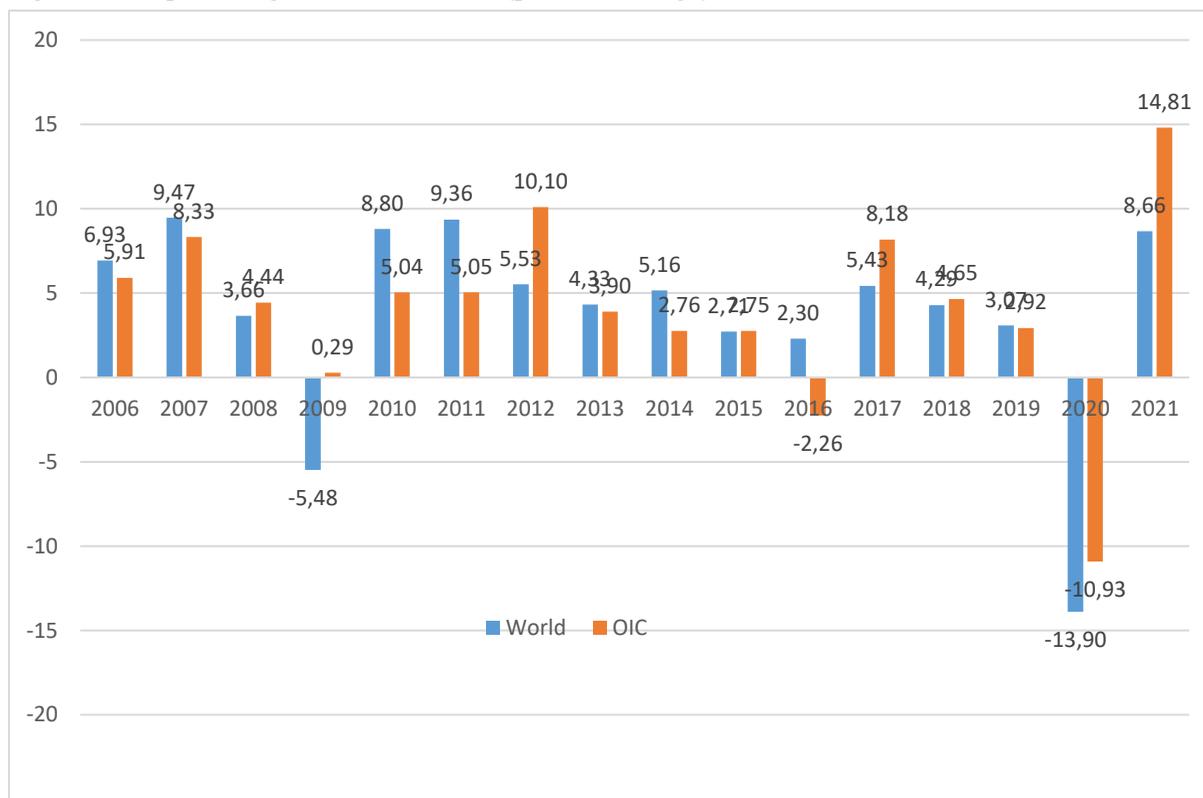
Figures 10 and 11 show the decline in import and export of goods and services, respectively, starting from 2006. The fall in both exports and imports during the pandemic is much deeper compared to the global financial crisis both for the world and for the OIC countries. IMF estimations suggest a recovery in 2021.

**Figure 10. Imports of goods and services (percent change)**



Source: IMF, World Outlook, April 2021.

**Figure 11. Exports of goods and services (percent change)**



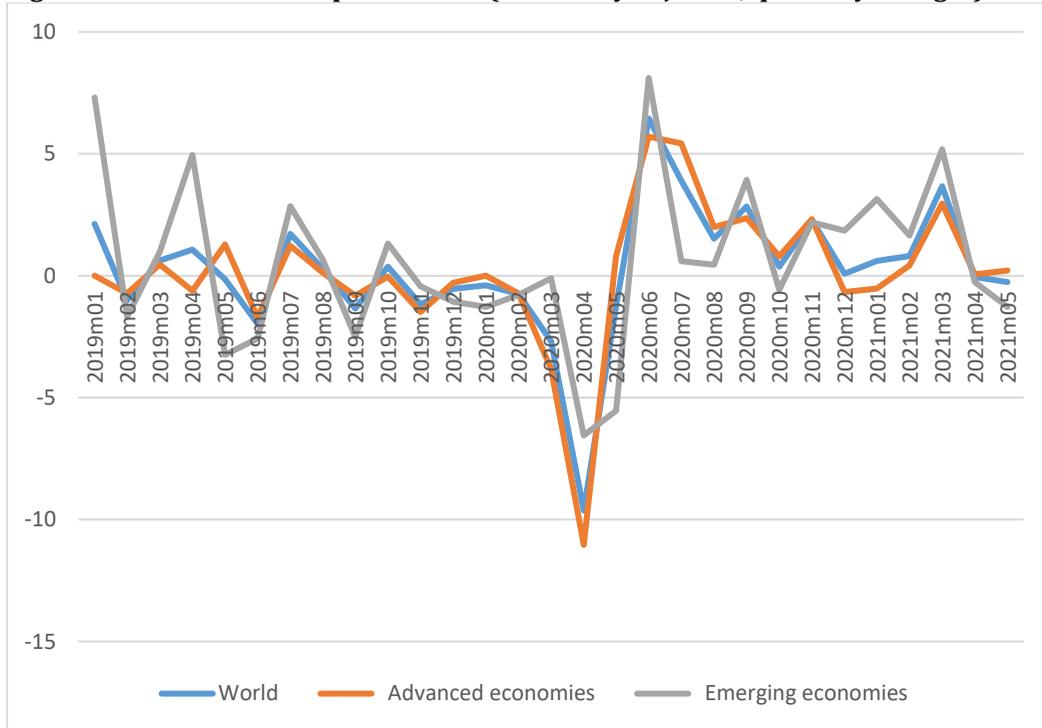
Source: IMF, World Outlook, April 2021.

Figures 12 and 13 present the monthly changes in imports and exports during the pandemic. The factory closures in early 2020 are the first supply side disruptions in global supply chains. The resultant shortages for intermediate goods as well as the lock down measures in the world led some companies to halt their production or cease operations altogether. Between March and June 2020, the world experienced a very sharp decline amounting to around 18 percent in exports and 11 percent in imports. In the second half of 2020 relative recovery was observed in goods trade.

Counter-Measures to Sustain Trade Facilitation During and After Covid-19 Pandemic in the OIC Member Countries

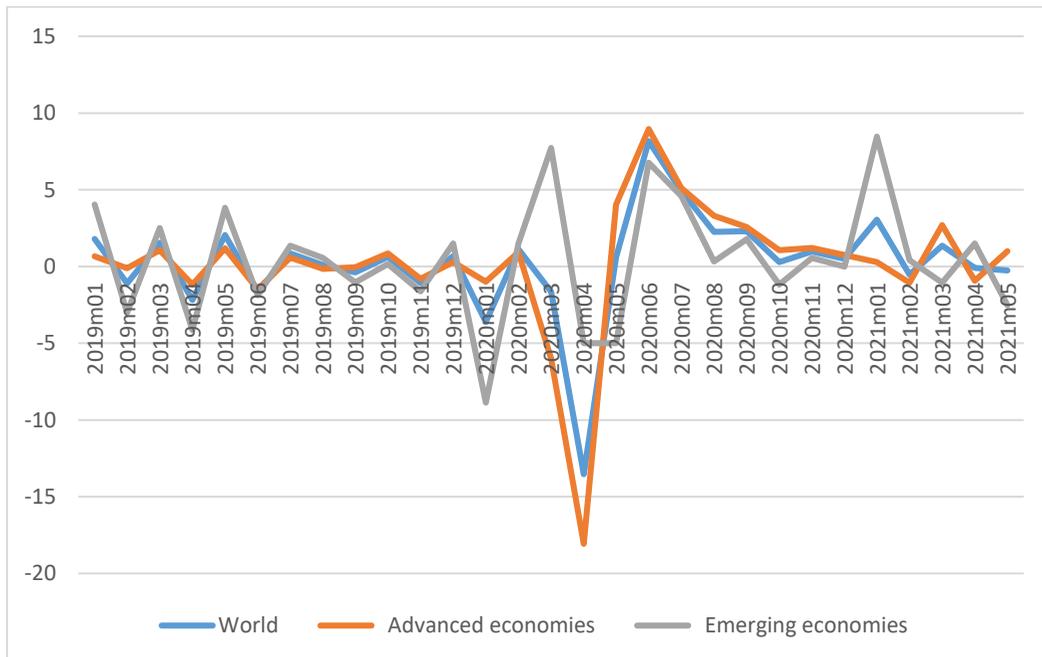


**Figure 12. Merchandise import volume (seasonally adjusted, quarterly changes)**



Source: CPB Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis, World Trade Monitor

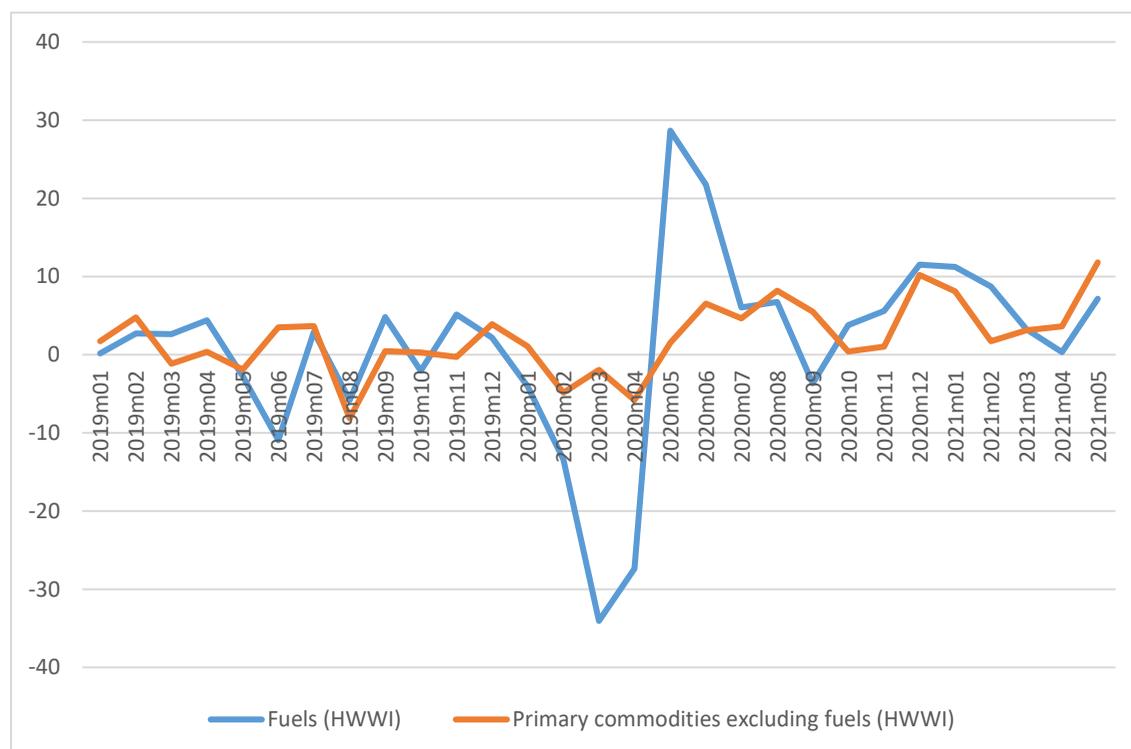
**Figure 13. Merchandise export volume (seasonally adjusted, quarterly changes)**



Source: CPB Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis, World Trade Monitor

Commodity prices were low in 2019, followed by sharp declines in the first half of 2020 due to the halt of production and trade flows all around the world (Figure 14). Restrictions, lockdowns and travel bans as well as supply chain disruptions contributed to the decline in commodity prices.

**Figure 14. Quarterly change in commodity prices (seasonally adjusted)**

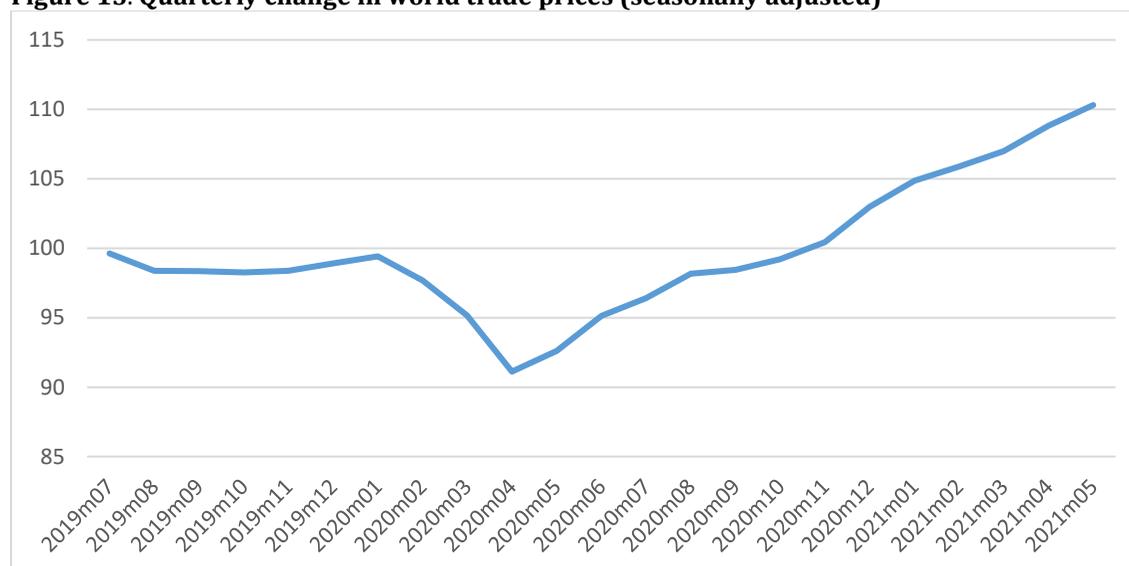


Source: CPB Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis, World Trade Monitor

Decline in fuel prices are particularly sharp and worth mentioning. In 2019, the fuel prices were already low and the producers increased their production to have a higher market share. However, the overall decline in fuel prices reached 21.5 percent in the first six months of 2020. The restrictions on travel and transport played a significant role in this decline, in other words it was a demand-driven decline.

Figure 15 presents the world trade prices. Compared to commodity prices the decline in trade prices was smoother due to the increasing food prices as a consequence of the difficulties in accessing food.

**Figure 15. Quarterly change in world trade prices (seasonally adjusted)**



Source: CPB Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis, World Trade Monitor

### 2.2.1 Global Supply Chains (GSC)

Global supply chains (GSCs) are defined as at least two steps of the production process with a value-added taking place in two different countries. The role of GSCs in the world trade has been decreasing in line with the trade slowdown for various reasons such as protectionism, automation, nationalism and the trade tensions between US and China (Espitia, 2021; Antràs and de Gortari, 2020). Government and companies have already started to make their plans to restructure GSC for supply-chain reliability. This is much easier in sectors such as food and beverages, while more difficult in sectors with more complex supply chains, such as pharmaceuticals or electronics.

As a consequence of the factory closures in China in the first months of 2020, shortages were started to occur in downstream industries. As exports of China contributes around 20 percent of all global trade in intermediate goods, the supply-chain contagion spread to other countries making intermediate inputs, harder and more expensive to obtain. This effect combined with national lockdowns and other restrictions serious supply disruptions occurred and resulted in declines in production globally.

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD, 2020) analysis shows the outcome of a decline in intermediate goods imports. To be specific, exports of intermediate inputs decline of 2 percent from China to automotive manufacturer countries would result in a decline of 7 billion dollars in automotive exports from these economies to the rest of the world.

### 2.2.2 Transport and travel cost

World Trade Organization (WTO, 2021) suggests that transport and business travel costs and costs of transportation time form 15 percent, 19 percent and 31 percent of trade costs in agriculture, retail and wholesale and manufacturing, respectively. Restrictions, travel bans and



lockdowns and the initial responses to the pandemic affected trade negatively through cargo transport services and other trade in services distributions. Although maritime and land transport continued their operations during the pandemic, air transport halted. In land transport, travel bans, border closures, sanitary measures and other controls caused significant delays. In other words, the importance of maritime transportation for trade rose during the pandemic. Due to the start of production in China and increasing consumer demand around the globe, container prices started to increase significantly (see Box 1 for recent problems in container shipping).

Another important component of trade cost is trade policy barriers which is estimated to account for 10 percent of trade cost (WTO, 2021). Trade policy barriers cover tariff and non-tariff measures, temporary trade barriers, regulatory differences and the costs of crossing borders. Moreover, the lack of investment facilitation, visa restrictions to traders and intellectual property protection which are other policies that affect trade are also included in the definition of trade policy barriers. During the pandemic, trade barriers increased for essential products with the imposition of export restrictions such as additional licences and controls imposed for medical supplies and pharmaceuticals.

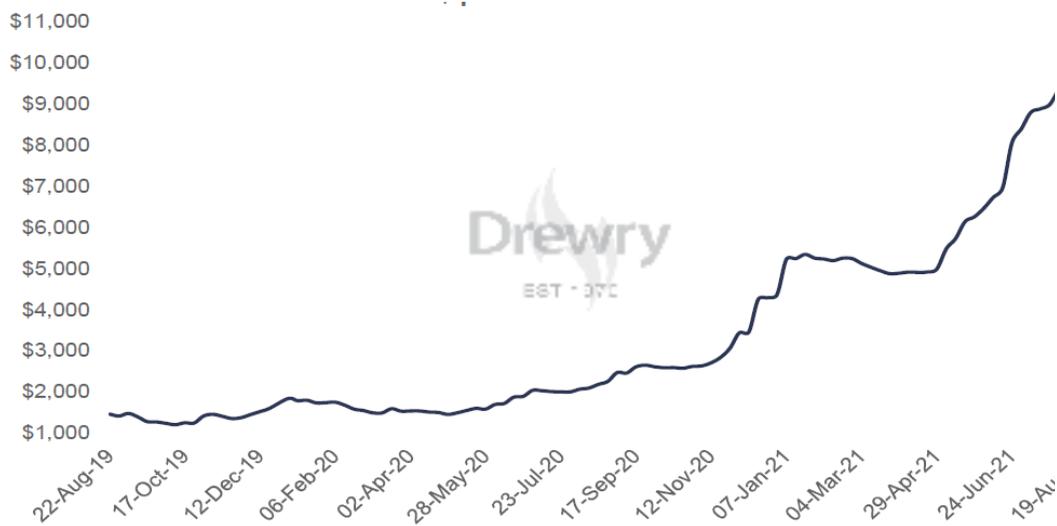
**Box 1. Recent Problems in Container Shipping**

There is a major problem in container shipping, which is the capacity constraints. Operational disruptions such as port labor shortages magnified the problem in the main U.S. West coast trade gateways. As a result, dozens of container ships have kept off-shore to upload and unload. The consequence of capacity constraint is the increase in global container spot prices, which reflect capacity tensions, as shown in Figure.

Container shortage problem exists not only in US but all around the world. During normal times there is a sequence of the downswing and the upswing of capacity. However, in 2020 empty containers were not available at the places that they would be utilized. The source of the problem, on the other hand, is policy measures related to the pandemic such as travel bans and lockdown measures causing the operational constraints on logistics. In other words, containers are not moving as fast as in normal times, loading and unloading times increased and the controls at the customs take more than the usual.

To overcome the problem, operators are increasing the capacity, and repositioning back empty containers.

**Figure 16. Global container spot prices (\$ per 40 ft container, Drewry World Container Index)**



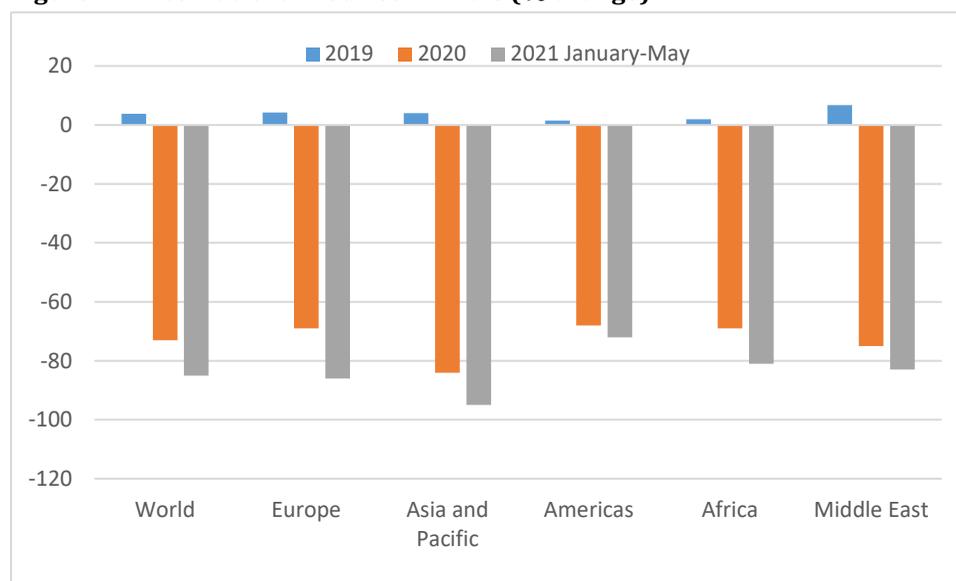
Source: Drewry Maritime Research.

### 2.2.3 Trade in Services

Tourism exports is an important revenue item for many countries constituting 10 percent of output and one in four of net jobs created in the last five years (ILO, 2021).

Tourism is the first and most effected sector from the lockdowns, travel bans and restrictions. Tourist arrivals declined by 85 percent in May 2021 according to UNWTO. The distribution of tourist arrivals across regions suggest that similar trend has experienced all around the world (Figure 17).

**Figure 17. International Tourist Arrivals (% change)**



Source. UNWTO

Business travels halted during the pandemic and all international business travels has been cancelled according to Global Business Travel Association (GBTA) survey and videoconferencing tools are utilized instead. It is early to judge if this will be a long-term shift.

The impact of restrictions on the education services are limited compared to tourism sector due to the availability of distance education opportunity and tools. However, the threat is that foreign student would not prefer to continue their education in foreign countries such as US and UK, who receive substantial revenue out of education exports. The American Council on Education forecasted the decline in international student enrolment as 25 per cent.

### 2.3. Post COVID-19 period: opportunities and threats

Changes in demand, supply chain, working conditions, consumer and firm behaviour would have long-run consequences. Although some of these would be opportunities for the economy, the others would be threats.

### 2.3.1 Labor Market

One of the major changes during COVID-19 period in all around the world is the introduction of working from home practice to the labour market. Due to closures and other stringency policies, working from home practice became common in both developed and developing countries depending on the type of job. Although there is large variation across industry and occupation, 37 percent of jobs are estimated to continue from home (Dingle and Neiman 2020 Adams-Prassl et al. 2020). The positive outcome of working from home appeared as minimal interruption that the workers face as well as time and money spent for commuting are saved. Many companies, financial services in particular, realized that WFH practice would decrease the spending of the companies substantially without a decline in productivity. They have already started to announce that they would like to continue WFH practice after C-19 period and they have already started to make their medium and long-term plans accordingly.

Regarding WFH practice although it is beneficial in some ways for the workers as well, there are some difficulties. Closure of day cares and schools increased the burden on women as they have to take care of their kids while working from home. Moreover, working all alone at the same place brought health problems such as depression and physical problems due to the lack of daily activity.

Another major threat that the labour market is facing is the increasing unemployment. With the COVID-19, the closures affected firms financially and the vulnerable companies either closed their business or decreased the number of employees. Technological and structural changes that occurred as a consequence of the COVID-19 era will transform the skill and occupation demand of the 'post-COVID-19' labour market. There would be a decline in in-person low-wage service occupations.

The change in the production process towards automation in many industries during COVID-19 era would be permanent. Acemoğlu and Restrepo (2017) discuss that the utilization of robots recently caused a decline in per capita employment in the US. Less-educated workers and those in routine manual jobs have experienced the largest losses.

The policy makers would need to focus on activation programs in order to update the relevant skills of the unemployed workers for the new job openings (Chernoff and Warman 2020).

### 2.3.2 Economic Support Programs

In many countries, specifically in advance countries, there are support programs for firms. As the new waves of COVID-19 are experienced, these support program still constitute importance. The exit strategy from these supports needed to be designed with care. Policy makers should take attention to the fact that there would be zombification if these support mechanisms save the firms which should no more exist in the economy.

As a response to the pandemic, it may be the case that consumer preferences have changed permanently and as a consequence, some firms and even some sectors will become obsolete. The economic support programs would finance such obsolete firms continuously, thereby create unsustainable "zombies". In addition, there is excess liquidity and growing corporate debt burden which increase concerns regarding zombie firms (Jordá et al.2020). In other words, exit

strategy from the support programs should be carefully designed to allow those obsolete firms exit the market and allow resource reallocation to healthy firms and new sectors (Beck et al. 2021). Coordination among national and international institutions as well as communication with the market is essential for the well-designed exit strategy. Both banks and the market participants should take the necessary actions in a timely manner.

On the financial sector side, the guarantees provided to firms by the governments would lead banks to lend to risky firms. Policy makers take the losses that would arise on banks' balance sheets following the economic support exit strategy. As a consequence, undercapitalization problem would lead bank failures after the pandemic. Regulators and supervisors should take the necessary actions at this stage.

### **2.3.3 Global Supply Chains**

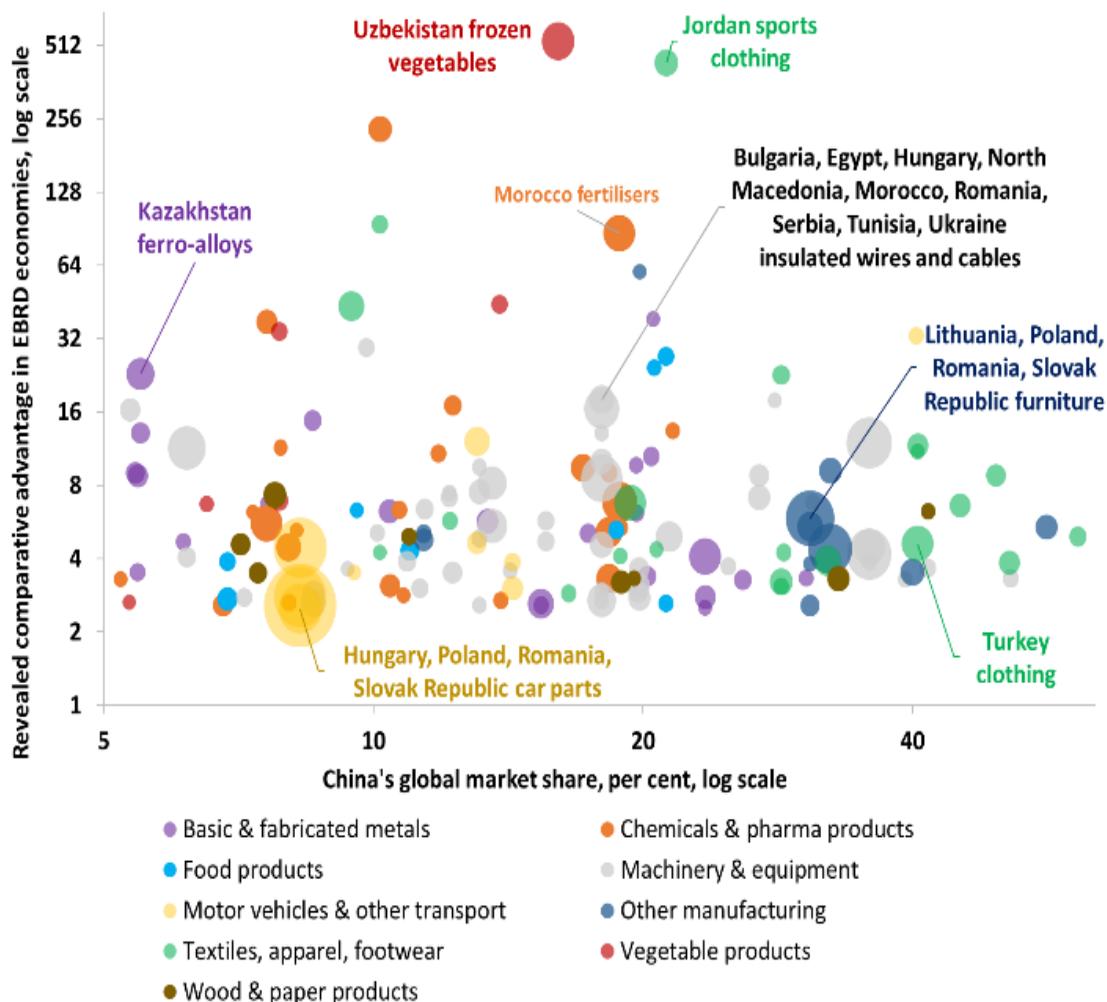
During the pandemic, the supply shock spread to the other countries quickly due to the major role of China in GSCs.

A response of the firms to this would be to form regional supply chains closer to the end user by reshoring parts of the GSC, in the medium term. In this respect, decoupling from China decision would be supported by rising wages in China compared to other Asian countries, rule of law and China-US trade war. The other candidates would be Thailand, Mexico, Vietnam or India. However, this would be very complicated, time consuming and costly. Countries like Vietnam and Thailand are also dependent on China regarding inputs and they are lack of the necessary infrastructure. Moreover, companies that operate in China also sell their product in the huge Chinese market.

Another response would be to increase the supplier diversity to avoid the disruptions due to a particular threat to a producer or a region. Even before pandemic there has been a shift in GSCs towards the countries with lower trade barriers to avoid the negative outcome of rising protectionism. Following the pandemic crisis, increasing resilience and sustainability would be the other motives for the reformation of GSCs.

In the medium term there would be unintentional consequences of the structural shifts of GSCs. Developing countries may not benefit from GSCs through industrialization and they would not benefit from automation and other technological developments as they would be out of GSCs and they have technological constraints. However, there would be opportunities for some countries to take more investment during the diversification of the supplier bases as stated in Javorcik, 2020. Figure 18 shows the countries that would take advantage if companies reconsider their global value chains.

Figure 18. Countries that would take advantage of rethinking of global value chains



Source: Javorcik (2020);

Notes: Based on 4-digit HS codes. Bubble size indicates the absolute export volume in US\$ millions. Restricted to lines with  $RCA \geq 3$  and export volume of more than US\$ 500 million.

### 2.3.4 Productivity

The impact of new WFH practice of labor market productivity is an ongoing discussion and the research until now have mixed results. The impact of COVID-19 on total factor productivity, on the other hand, an issue not researched widely.

There has been a significant halt in education due to school and childcare closures in all around the world and it is common knowledge that this would have long run consequences on human capital, total factor productivity and welfare of the affected children (Fuchs-Schündeln et al. 2020b).

Research and development spending declined both in the public sector due to lack of resources and in the private sector due to uncertainty. The reshaping of global supply chains during the pandemic would be detrimental for innovation and knowledge spill overs across countries.

The positive expectation for total factor productivity is from the increased use of digital technologies. During the pandemic, there has been an acceleration in the digital transformation of the global economy (Martín and Moder, 2020)

### **2.3.5 Ecommerce**

During the pandemic, there has been an extension in e-commerce towards new companies, types of products and consumers. The main motive behind this acceleration was that ecommerce enables social distancing as well as accession to full product variety. Moreover, consumption through e-commerce changed towards necessities during the pandemic from high-tech products, toys and books (OECD, 2020). As a consequence of digitalization new business models emerge in response to the new consumer needs. The restrictions on physical interactions and supply chain deteriorations of COVID-19 brought new logistic solutions such as using drones or robots for delivery and new business functions as a consequence of the survival motivation.

### **2.3.6 Vaccine**

The light at the end of the tunnel is the utilization of newly developed vaccines. However how the vaccines will be distributed around the world is a major problem. Vaccines are developed in advance countries and the citizens of those countries have been started to be vaccinated in 2021. The availability of vaccines to the developing world is very limited which would have large economic costs to all the countries including the advance countries. The major trading partners of the advanced economies are the developing countries who are not vaccinated. Therefore, the detrimental economic conditions during the continuing COVID-19 period will have negative consequences to advanced economies. Çakmaklı et al. (2021) suggest that the relative costs of advanced economies rise in proportion to their trade partners from developing countries who could not access to vaccines.

### **2.3.7 Preparedness for the next pandemic**

It has been a long time before COVID-19 that the world faced with such a wide-spread pandemic. Moreover, it was the first time that the world experienced broad lockdown measures to prevent the spread. However, the researchers suggest that COVID-19 is the first but will not be the last pandemic. Therefore, preparedness for the next pandemic is vital for all the world.

For the next pandemic, mitigation and adaption should be the main tools. To improve resilience, investment is vital. There should be a redesign in transportation, education, city planning, working conditions and social safety nets. Forward looking analysis and a pre-designed strategy is essential before the next pandemic approaches.

International policy coordination stands as the key in the next pandemic. Perhaps, the strategy to mitigate and to improve resilience should be the outcome of an international effort. Van Bergeijk (2021) suggest that for a well-functioning world economy, global public goods are

necessary. He suggests that World Health Organization needs to be enhanced with new duties and activities and the existing institutions such as IMF, OECD and the World Bank would work to design the economics of delivery of these goods.

### **2.3.8 Poverty**

The most important long-term effect expected of COVID-19 in the world economy is the increase in poverty. Sumner (2020) estimates global poverty to increase for the first time since 1990, and depending on the poverty line, this increase may represent a return of about ten years. Moreover, in some regions, negative impacts would lead to poverty levels similar to those recorded 30 years ago. The World Food Program warned that COVID-19 would increase the number of people suffering from acute hunger to 265 million.

There is a close connection between the access to education during the pandemic and the long-term increase in poverty. The school life of 1.7 billion children worldwide (more than 90 percent of the global total) has been disrupted due to lockdown measures (Berglöf et al. 2020). Although distance education continues in developed countries, there is a risk that children who cannot go to school due to the epidemic may not be able to return to education in poor countries.

In fact, in poor countries, it means more for children to go to school than to get an education. Millions of children (and their families) access food through school. Moreover, aid to poor countries declined during COVID-19, which will cause and increase in the number of children and individuals who will go hungry. This situation is actually a global economic and social emergency Berglöf & Farrara, 2020.

## **2.4. General Evaluation**

COVID-19 is the biggest crisis the world has had to deal with in recent history. The COVID-19 crisis affects both developed countries and developing countries around the world. There are varying rates of quarantine practices all over the world in order to lower the infection curve. Developed countries offer support packages to both households and companies in order to reduce the negative impact of quarantines. However, developing countries are more vulnerable to this crisis. High debt and low credit ratings limit the financial areas of these countries. At this rate, poverty will increase significantly in many developing countries.

The pandemic crisis is both a supply driven and demand driven shock. Global supply chains were significantly affected. Factory closures and labor shortages resulted in intermediate goods shortages all around the world. Pandemic is still going on and the negative effects on the economy will not be eliminated in the short run. Bankruptcy of the firms, lower economic activity, rising unemployment, disrupted supply chains, rising budget deficits, increasing corporate and sovereign debt and loss of school time would be the problems that will be discussed in the medium run.

Disruptions global supply chains as a result of the lockdown measures had negative consequences on trade. Global trade decline and in 2020 was more than the decrease during the global financial crisis. Moreover, there was a sharp decline in commodity prices in the first half of 2020.

The effects of the pandemic on OIC countries were as significant as the world average. The amount of the economic activity decline is estimated to be around the world averages. Moreover, goods and services exports and imports fall sharply in 2020.

The crisis is not over. The virus mutations have caused new peaks in cases in 2021. Now it spreads even faster. Some countries imposed even extensive lockdown measures which will be reflected in 2021 economic losses. New border closures travel bans have introduced. There are delays at the customs affecting trade negatively. There are serious problems in container shipping due to lack of empty containers. Summer is approaching but tourism is expected to be halted this year as well.

A sustainable recovery would only be possible by coordination and cooperation of governments. Coordination within the government played an essential role to provide a quick respond to the pandemic and to gather the parts of the government that are related to containing the pandemic and protecting people. Cooperation of governments, on the other hand, would allow flow of information, which is essential for all economic activities, trade in particular. Cooperation and coordination would enable trade facilitation which is a catalyzer for economic activity. Extensive discussions on trade facilitation with recommendations from the international institutions will take place in Chapter 3.

The light at the end of the tunnel is vaccine. Some of the developed countries were very successful in vaccination. They have vaccinated more than half of their population like UK, Italy, France, Germany, Portugal, Spain and Israel. However global coordination is necessary to make it available to developing non-vaccine producer countries. Some developing countries could not reach to vaccines and even their health staff are still exposing to the high risk. Global cooperation is essential to provide equal distribution of the vaccines around the world to prevent the risk of spread and economic risk in all around the world.

During the pandemic crisis, the structural change in the economy and the policy responses would consider the threats such as future health crisis, global warming and poverty. The best outcome from this crisis would be developing a global response for emergencies such as the pandemic and be ready to the next generation of the crisis. The pandemic was the first one but scientists warn us that this would only be the beginning.

### Chapter 3: Trade Facilitation Related Responses to the Pandemic

Trade facilitation is defined as the simplification, modernization and harmonization of export and import processes by the World Trade Organization (WTO). In an integrated world with global supply chains, where goods cross borders repeatedly, trade facilitation constitutes importance for decreasing trade costs and enabling SMEs to participate trade and consumers to access wide range of products with higher quality, increasing variety and lower prices. Moreover, trade facilitation is particularly essential for perishable products and high-tech parts due to their time sensitivity. In other words, trade facilitation helps trade costs decline by reducing the non-tariff trade-barriers.

All countries benefit from decreasing non-tariff barriers and acting together. From this perspective, Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) entered into force in 2017 (the main articles of TFA is summarized in Table 2).

**Table 2. Overview of the contents of Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA)**

<i>Section 1</i>	<i>Contains provisions for expediting the movement, release and clearance of goods, including goods in transit.</i>
Article 1	Publication and availability of information
Article 2	Opportunity to comment, information before entry into force and consultations
Article 3	Advance rulings
Article 4	Procedures for appeal or review
Article 5	Other measures to enhance impartially non-discrimination and transparency
Article 6	Disciplines on fees and charges imposed on or in connection with importation and exportation and penalties
Article 7	Release and clearance of goods
Article 8	Border agency cooperation
Article 9	Movement of goods intended for import under customs control
Article 10	Formalities connected with importation, exportation and transit
Article 11	Freedom of transit
Article 12	Customs cooperation
<i>Section 2</i>	<i>Contains special and differential treatment (SDT) provisions that allow developing and LDC Members to determine when they will implement individual provisions of the Agreement and to identify provisions that they will only be able to implement upon the receipt of technical assistance and support for capacity building.</i>
Category A	Provisions that the Member will implement by the time the Agreement enters into force (or in the case of a least-developed country Member within one year after entry into force)
Category B	Provisions that the Member will implement after a transitional period following the entry into force of the Agreement
Category C	Provisions that the Member will implement on a date after a transitional period following the entry into force of the Agreement and requiring the acquisition of assistance and support for capacity building.

Source: <https://www.tfafacility.org/trade-facilitation-agreement-facility>

Advanced countries started to implement the TFA immediately while it is a gradual process for other countries. According to WTO statistics the implementation status of TFA is presented in Table 3.

**Table 3. Status of implementation table**

Implementations percentages (%)	All	Developing	LDCs
Category A	39%	59.7%	27.8%
Category B	5.9%	8.5%	5.8%
Category C	1.9%	2.2%	3.3%

Note: Developed countries implemented the TFA immediately.

Source: <https://tfadatabase.org>

In other words, before the pandemic the tools for trade facilitation was ready. However, the implementation of TFA was limited.

Moreover, trade protection was on the rise before the pandemic. WTO (2019) suggests that between October 2018 and October 2019, WTO Members implemented 102 new trade-restrictive measures and the amount of trade coverage for the import-restrictive measures increased by 27% and recorded as the highest since October 2012. On the other hand, WTO Members also implemented 120 trade facilitating measures as reported by WTO (2019).

### 3.1 Trade facilitation measures as a response to pandemic

The pandemic affects trade negatively in many channels. The major problems are

- (i) Export bans or restrictions to products related to managing the pandemic
- (ii) Disruptions in the transport and logistics
- (iii) New protocols, additional border controls, and new documentation requirements for shippers and traders.
- (iv) Stringency measures: border closures, channeling traffic through fewer border crossings; health controls at the borders and other border controls
- (v) Fewer personnel working at the customs and other key points
- (vi) Production decline in GVCs due to factory closures and lockdown measures.

The outcomes of all these disruptions to trade have been delays at the borders and long queues, thereby the negative effects on clearance of shipments.

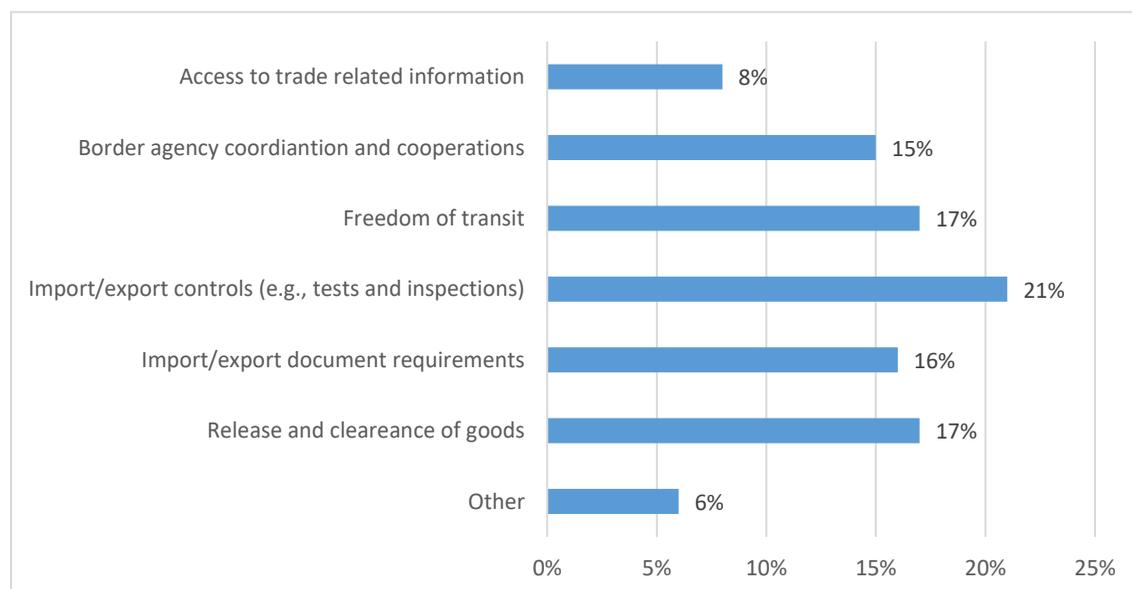
#### 3.1.1 Problems and Developments in Trade Facilitation during the Pandemic

In March 2020, the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility (TFAF), International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) and the Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation (the Alliance) initiated an online survey of 3 questions focusing on less cumbersome and more cumbersome trade

processes they experience as well as the trade process that would have the most positive effect (WTO/ICC/Global Alliance, 2020).

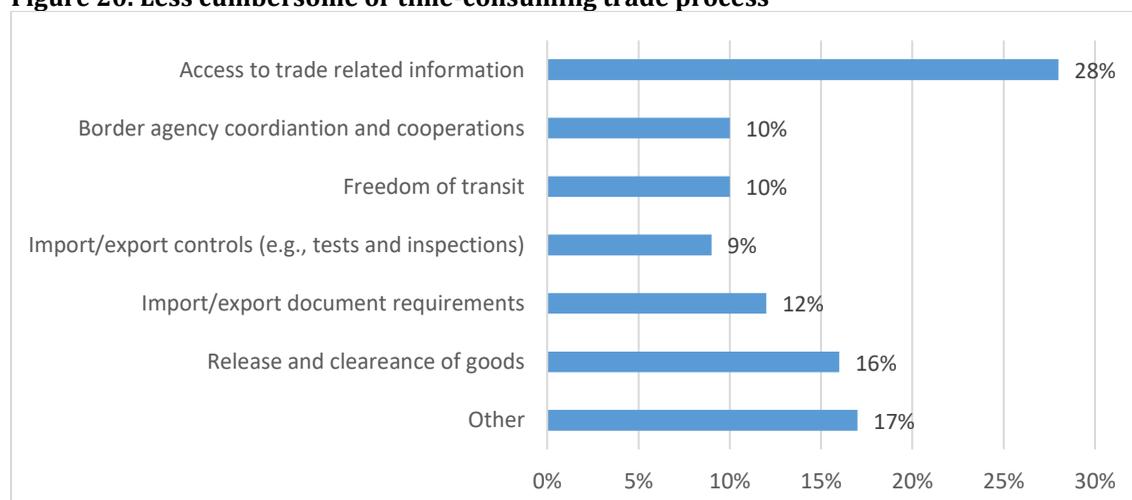
The results of the survey suggest that import/export controls (e.g. tests and inspections) are the most cumbersome trade processes that they face at their operations by the 521 respondents of this question (Figure 19). Freedom of transit, in least developed countries, occurred as an essential problem as well. Access to trade-related information, on the other hand, made their work much easier as identified by most of the 308 participants that were responding the less burdensome or time-consuming trade process question as indicated in Figure 20.

**Figure 19. More cumbersome or time-consuming trade process**



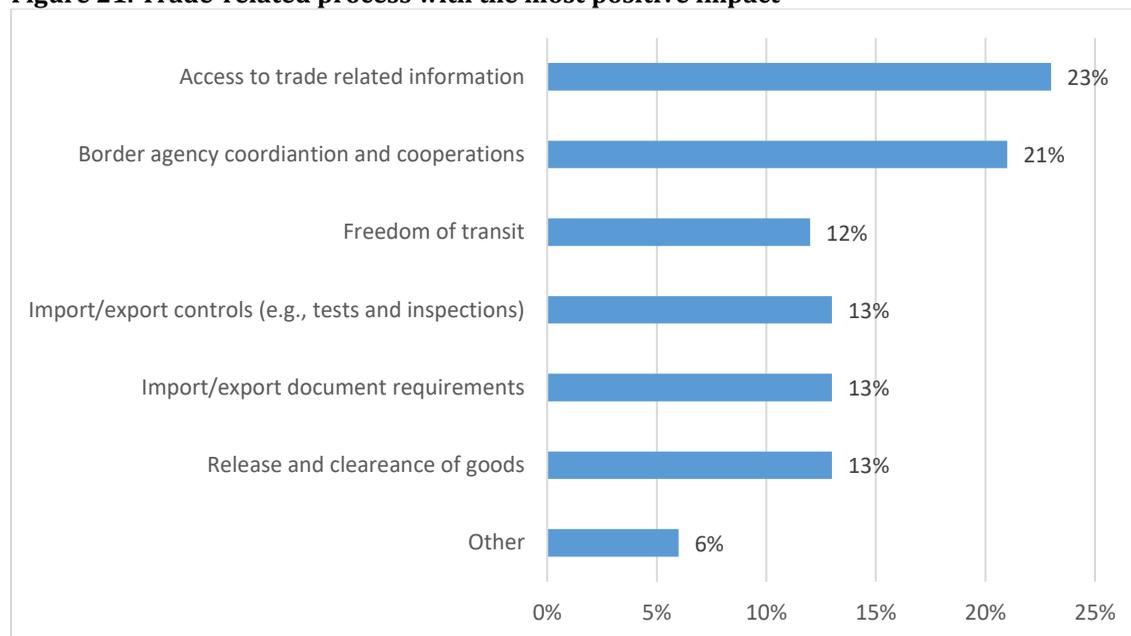
Source: (WTO/ICC/Global Alliance, 2020)

**Figure 20. Less cumbersome or time-consuming trade process**



Source: (WTO/ICC/Global Alliance, 2020)

**Figure 21. Trade-related process with the most positive impact**



Source: (WTO/ICC/Global Alliance, 2020)

Finally, almost half of the 202 respondents of the survey stated that information access as well as cooperation and coordination of border agencies would have the most positive impact to facilitate trade at that initial period of the pandemic (Figure 21).

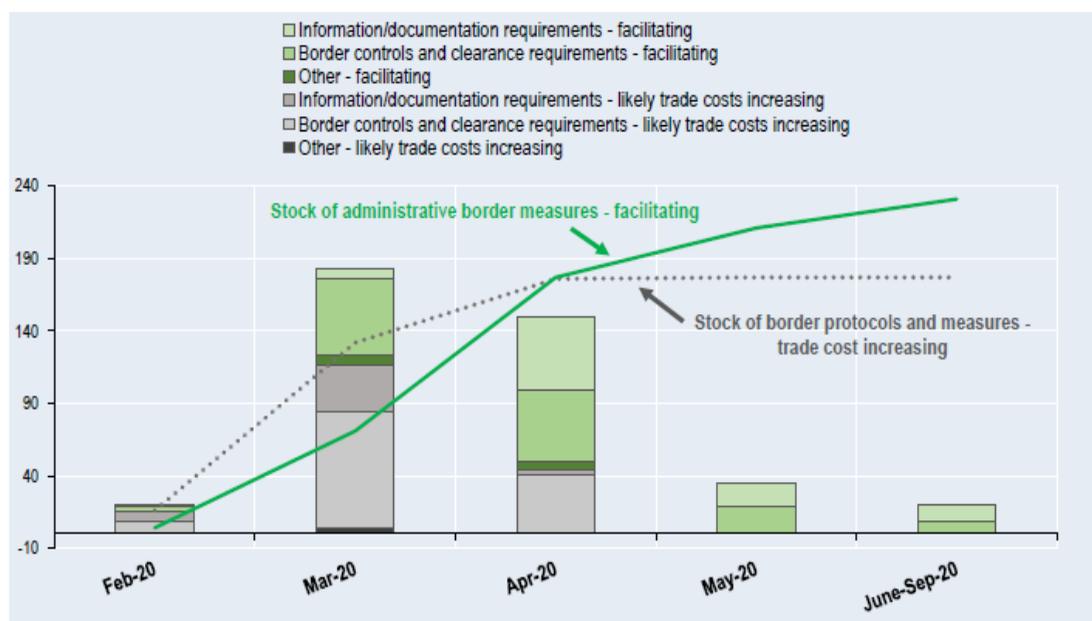
### 3.1.2 Developments in Trade Facilitation during the Pandemic

Figure 22 presents the pandemic related trade restricting/facilitation measures for February-September 2020 period. The figure clearly shows that the initial response of governments were to impose trade restricting measures (dotted lines) more than trade facilitating measures, supporting the survey results that are discussed in the previous section.

Facing the initial problems in trade facilitation, international organizations as well as governments emphasized the importance of keeping goods moving via trade facilitation. They also mentioned that the tools of trade facilitation lies in TFA, which presents the fundamentals for dematerializing the border process by keeping the physical interaction at the minimum at the borders.

Governments followed these recommendations and implemented trade facilitation measures for supply chains to continue to trade such as information availability, simplifying documentation requirements, utilizing digitalization for document requirements and streamlining border controls (OECD, 2020a). In May 2020, the number of trade facilitating measures was more than the cost increasing trade restrictions introduced at the early stage of COVID-19 (Figure 22). Measures facilitating trade reached 147 while measures restricting trade was 109 according to WTO as of April 2020.

**Figure 22. Getting goods across borders has been made easier since April 2020**



Source OECD (2020a)

Note: The information covers COVID-19-specific border measures in 125 jurisdictions across all regions (32 OECD economies, other 9 G20 members and other 84 jurisdictions outside the OECD area) between 1 February and 15 September 2020. Measures across more than one category can be reported for the same jurisdiction.

The most recent figures in WTO (2021) suggest that starting from the outbreak of the pandemic until April 2021, the number of COVID-19-related trade measures implemented reached to 384 in the area of goods. Among them, trade facilitating measures were 248 (65%), while 136 of the new measures (35%) were trade restrictive (Table 4). It should be noted that some of the measures introduced as a response to the pandemic, but extended afterwards. Among trade facilitating measures, 60 percent is related to the reduction or elimination of import tariffs and import taxes.

Although countries implemented new measures as a response to the pandemic, they have been repealing them since then. WTO (2021) suggests that among the COVID-19 related measures that were terminated until April 2021, 21 percent of were in trade-facilitating nature, while 54 percent were trade-restrictive. This trend implies that countries support trade facilitation by keeping the measures they imposed in trade facilitating nature and cancelling trade restrictions to support the fight against COVID-19 around the world. Specifically, there have been reductions of tariffs on sanitizers, disinfectants, medical equipment and medicines/drugs. Exemptions from VAT and other taxes were observed in addition to tariff reductions. Moreover, exports constraints on surgical masks, gloves, medicine, disinfectants, and food products were gradually lifted.

Overall, between February 2020 and April 2021, the trade coverage of COVID-19-related measures in trade-facilitating nature implemented reached around USD 291.6 billion. On the other hand, trade-restrictive measures were around USD 205.8 billion.

**Table 4. COVID-19 trade and trade-related measures since the outbreak of the pandemic**

	Facilitating	Phased-out	Restrictive	Phased-out	Total
Import	148	43	13	4	161
Export	84	7	114	65	198
The	16	3	9	5	25
Total	248	53	136	74	384

Source: WTO (2021)

To sum up, during the pandemic, the initial response of the countries were to impose more trade restrictive measures compared to trade facilitating measures. However, following the recommendations of international organizations/associations and academics, they repealed some of the trade restrictive measures and increased the number of measures that are in trade facilitating nature. Naturally, the outcome is the recovery in trade in goods.

The number of new measures unrelated to pandemic are 131, of which 61 are new trade-facilitating measures on goods and 70 new are trade-restrictive measures as of April 2021. Trade coverages of these pandemic unrelated measures are much higher compared to pandemic related measures, although the number of pandemic unrelated measures are much smaller compared to the pandemic related measures. Trade coverage of the new import-facilitating measures unrelated to pandemic are around USD 445 billion, while the trade coverage of import-restrictive measures are around USD 127.1 billion. WTO (2021) interpret these amounts as “a return to the regular trend identified since 2009”. This is an important outcome as it indicates a reduction in bilateral trade tensions in the world.

### Medical and Food Products

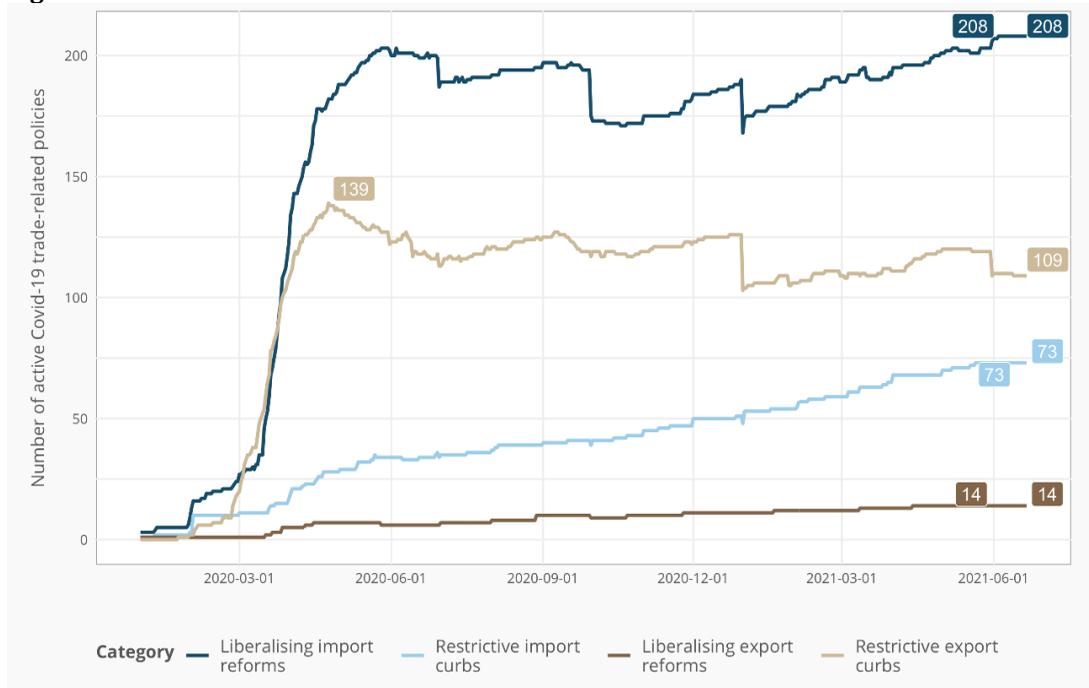
Although facilitation of trade is important in all sectors, medical and food products carry special importance during the pandemic. They are the essential products for human life. In emergencies medical and food products have priority and need to be facilitated at customs. However, to make them available in the domestic economies, government sometimes restrict their trade.

Evenett et al. (2020) constitute a new database on trade policies of governments during the pandemic period against medical and food products. Their findings suggest that trade policy activism inclined in February 2020. Barriers to imports removed while export restrictions introduced in order to make them available in the domestic market during the initial period of the pandemic. Medical products related measures constitute two-thirds of all trade measures taken. Across countries the duration, speed, extent and type of the measures are heterogeneous.

Figure 23 presents the evolution of Active COVID-19 related policies for medical sector starting from 1 January 2020. As of April 2020, the number of import reforms (facilitation) outweighed the number of new export restrictions. In June 2020, the number of import liberalizing policies against medical products in the world reached to 196, while the number of policies restricting imports remained at 137. The latest numbers are from June 2021 indicating that the number of liberalizing import reforms are 208, while import curbs increased to 73. On the exports side, the

number of new measures liberalising export reforms declined to 109, while export curbs stayed at 14.

**Figure 23. Evolution of Active COVID-19 Related Policies for Medical Sector**



Source: Evenett et al(2020), updated on 1 July 2021.

Notes: The purpose of this chart is to plot the evolution over time of the number of governments that have imposed import and export policy changes since 1 January 2020. For four types of trade policy intervention, the chart depicts the total number of customs territories with policies in force in a given month.

Figure 24 indicates the number of measures that were imposed on imports and exports against food sector since the beginning of 2020. The highest number of imports facilitating policy changes introduced reached to 31 by the end of June 2021, while the number of import curb and export curb policies increased during the pandemic reaching 23 and 25, respectively in time. Following in the increase in the cases due to mutations of the virus in January 2021, there is also a sharp decline in the number of imports facilitating policy changes. However, during the first half of 2021, there has been a gradual increase in trade facilitating measures.

**Figure 24. Evolution of Active COVID-19 Related Policies for Food Sector**

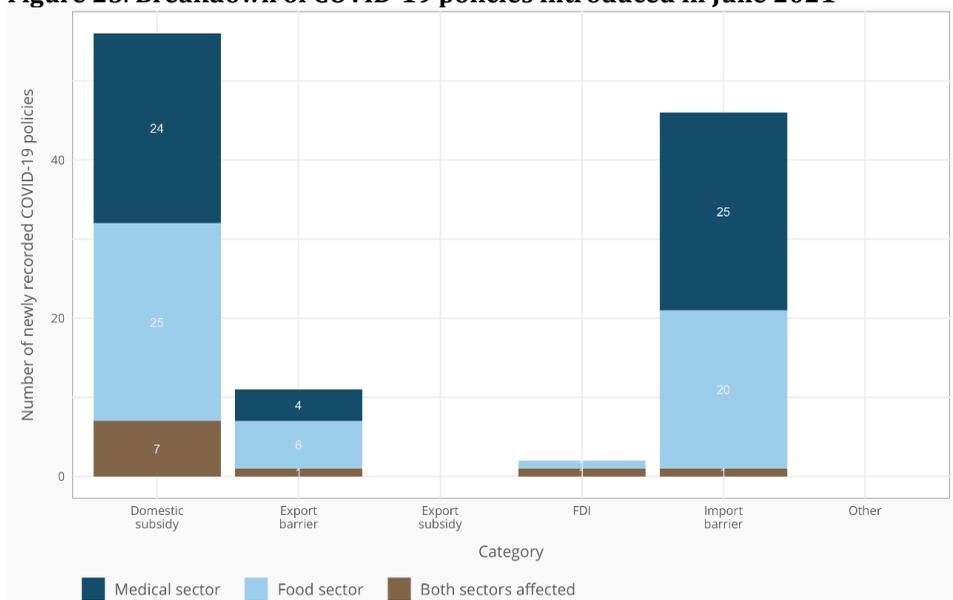


Source: Evenett et al. (2020), updated on 1 July 2021.

Notes: The purpose of this chart is to plot the evolution over time of the number of governments that have imposed import and export policy changes since 1 January 2020. For four types of trade policy intervention, the chart depicts the total number of customs territories with policies in force in a given month.

Figure 25 summaries the total number of policy interventions documented in June 2021. Sum of the number of trade liberalizing interventions is 58, while the number of restricting interventions add up to 57.

**Figure 25. Breakdown of COVID-19 policies introduced in June 2021**



Source: Evenett et al (2020), updated on 18 February 2021.

*Notes: For four different types of trade policy interventions affecting the essential goods sectors, the purpose of this chart is to summarize the total number of policy interventions documented between 22 January 2021 and 18 February 2021.*

Comment by ES: Although the medical sector and food sector were correct two choices under this sub-section...The Problems and Developments under this sub-section need to be more clearly elaborated. The issues seem mixed.

### **3.1.3 Recommendations to Facilitate Trade by International Organizations**

Following the restrictive policies that governments imposed at the initial phase of the pandemic, international organizations responded immediately to the crisis. Following the restrictive policies that governments imposed at the initial phase of the pandemic, international organizations responded immediately to the crisis. They declared practical recommendation to keep goods flowing and to facilitate trade. Generally, they are in the same vein. In this section all the recommendations will be summarized. UNCTAD recommendations will form the basis as they serve as the broad recommendations of all the international organizations. Thereafter, all the other international organizations additional or in-depth recommendations will be presented.

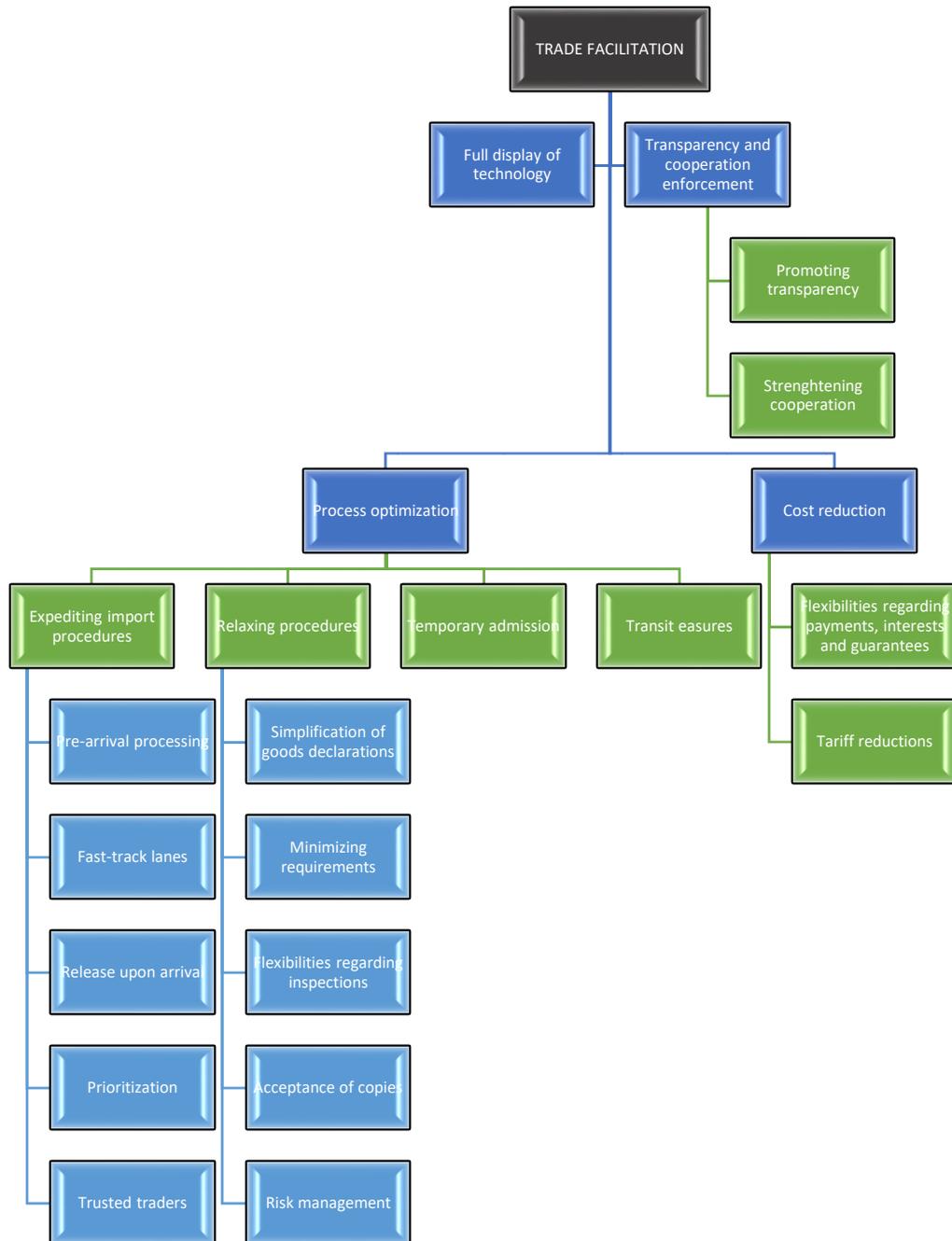
#### ***UNCTAD Recommendations***

In order to facilitate trade during the pandemic UNCTAD provided its recommendations in March 2020 (UNCTAD, 2020) under 4 main categories; process optimization, cost reduction, transparency and coordination enhancement and full display of technology. All these recommendations are based on TFA and Figure 26 provides a summary.

The first category of these recommendations, process optimization, is about speeding up and streamlining the process as a response to the pandemic. In order to expedite the import procedures, before arrival of goods all the necessary documentation and goods declaration would be submitted and processed by the Customs. Goods would be treated via green lanes and outside the custom offices without time limitation. Customs can release goods prior to the submission of the goods declaration. Priority should be given to the clearance of relief consignments. Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) would utilize the benefits provided to them for faster clearance such as providing further facilities.

During the pandemic, relaxing procedures is in line with TFA as long as it is complemented with risk management. A simplified or incomplete goods declaration would be accepted conditional on completing them within a specified period. To minimize paperwork, all the responsible border agencies would coordinate. Electronic copies of the required documents would be accepted. However, it is essential that relaxing of the procedures should be complemented with effective risk management and post-clearance audit systems. In other words, while low risk cargos would be expedited, high risk cargo would be the focus of the Customs. For pandemic related medical goods, to expedite shipments setting a risk criterion is recommended to National Risk Management Unit. Moreover, collaboration of Customs and the public health and safety agencies would ensure the smooth movement.

Figure 26. UNCTAD recommendations to facilitate trade during the pandemic



Source: UNCTAD (2020b)

Temporary admission of pandemic related goods would be possible by using inventory of the goods as well as re-export document instead of Customs document. Relief consignments and possessions of disaster relief personnel should be facilitated by the authorities according to Revised Kyoto Agreement (RKC). Therefore, transit of pandemic related goods should be proceeded without examination. During the pandemic, transit coordinators and the Customs Convention on the International Transport of Goods under Cover of TIR Carnets (TIR Convention), which is a multilateral, mutually recognized system enabling goods to be shipped globally, constitutes an essential role. Utilizing this system would minimize physical contact with the removal of physical checks, expedite shipping through green lanes, and enable digital solutions.

Reducing costs is the second main category of the UNCTAD recommendations to facilitate trade. Deferral of tariff payments, interest and guarantees would expedite the good delivery as the binding liquidity problem discarded. Moreover, relief consignments should be treated as free of import duties and taxes.

The third main category of UNCTAD trade facilitation recommendations for the pandemic period is transparency and cooperation enhancement supporting the idea that they have mutually reinforcing effects. The results of WTO/ICC/Global Alliance, (2020) survey that is mentioned at the beginning of this section suggest that accurate information would be the most effective tool coping with the crisis. All the international institutions such as WCO, WTO, UNCTAD, OECD, IMF, IRC, UNECE and World Bank provide online up-to-date information through the dedicated pages on their website. Coordination is the key response to cope up with the mitigation policies and economic consequences of the pandemic. WCO also emphasize the role of cooperation of international organizations, non-governmental organizations and the private sector for the management of humanitarian emergencies, and for providing them relief consignment related necessary information.

Full display of technology is the last category of recommendations by UNCTAD. Utilizing digital technologies is essential to expedite goods trade with minimum physical contact. TFA recommend utilizing a Single Window system which would enable traders to submit documents and data requirements one time through a single-entry point and just one time. Moreover, the UNCTAD ASYCUDA<sup>4</sup> provides stakeholders to exchange data and documentation electronically and thereby expedite goods trade with minimum physical contact. Furthermore, ASYCUDA was improved with the integration of the Automated System for Relief Emergency Consignments (ASYREC) which enables the expedition of imports of relief consignments via the recognition of organizations in UN relief operations. In addition, Customs authorities are enabled by ASYREC to have a more accurate overview of incoming relief consignments. On the other hand, multilateral cooperation is necessary for LDCs to access the digital technologies.

### ***OECD Recommendations***

OECD (2020a, 2020b) document recommendations of OECD for trade facilitation. They are broadly in the same vein with UNCTAD recommendations. OECD (2020b), specifically, emphasizes two of them: coordination and information availability. OECD supports that supply

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<sup>4</sup> ASYCUDA is developed by UNCTAD as a computerized Customs management system covering most foreign trade procedures such as manifests, Customs declarations, accounting procedures, transit and suspense procedures.

chains would continue to work efficiently if early warning system across borders designed in a coordinated manner. By the help of these posts, traders would adjust their routes in a timely manner. Moreover, efficient information dissemination between ports would enable the temporary challenges by redirecting goods to other check points for clearance and warehousing.

There is an important point that OECD emphasize. For an efficient coordination across borders, utilizing alike automation and streamlining of border processes would be helpful to prevent choke points. OECD (2020a) estimations suggest that increasing transparency, automation or border agency co-operation would result in an increased trade around 1 percent to 4 percent in agro-food, pharmaceuticals, and manufacturing goods.

### ***The World Bank Recommendations***

World Bank (2020a and 2020b) recommendations are also similar to those of UNCTAD and OECD, though there are specific highlights that worth to emphasize here:

- A new accreditation program (like Authorized Economic Operators) where traders are ranked according to their compliance reports would be launched to enable expediting shipping of pandemic related goods. Special measures would be designed to expedite the pandemic related goods by Customs and Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) agencies, jointly in collaboration.
- Essential pandemic related products that are produced under similar processes and thereby need less controls at the border would be determined by SPS agencies of partner countries.
- Pandemic related products that are pre-tested in home countries that fulfill the import requirements and thereby need less controls at the border would be determined by border agencies of partner countries.
- The National Trade Facilitation Committees would determine service standards and precise inspection procedures for pandemic related products, thereby private companies would plan their trade in line.

### ***World Customs Organization Recommendations***

World Customs Organization responded to the crisis immediately on 17 March 2020 by inviting its members to share best cases to cope with the crisis. The Secretariat emphasized the critical role of Customs administrations to continue to goods trade facilitation in order to limit the effect of pandemic in the world. The importance of coordinated response of governments to continue the work of supply chains were one of the major points highlighted by WCO to its members.

An important issue highlighted by the WCO Private Sector Consultative Group was about the availability of empty containers. As movement or handling/unloading of containers become cumbersome due to lockdowns, there is a significant decline in the number of empty containers available to traders. The problem would cause a cessation in all container trade, which constitutes more than 80 percent of all trade.

WCO published specific recommendations under four headings: (i) facilitation of relief and essential supplies, (ii) supporting the economy and sustaining supply chain continuity, (iii) safeguarding the staff at the Customs and (iv) protecting the society. Many of the

recommendations of WCO coincides with other international organizations recommendations broadly, as well. Below particular and specific recommendations of the WCO that were not specified by other organizations will be summarized.

- Countries would establish crisis teams to enhance the performance of Customs. Necessary measures would be taken to work with enough personnel even during the lockdowns and ensure a 24/7 Customs clearance system.
- Helpdesk for solving challenges faced by traders would be established.
- Customs would support the end-to-end supply chain continuity as well as movement of goods within the country.
- The restrictions on containers would be eliminated.
- Customs would extend Authorized Economic Operator<sup>5</sup> (AEO) certifications and continue the monitoring mechanism.
- Penalties imposed for delays as a result of late arrival of documentations from home countries would be waived.
- When re-export of temporarily imported goods is not possible as a result of emergency, Customs would facilitate ATA carnet holders.
- Personal protection equipment should be provided to staff by Customs.
- An emergency hotline should be established for staff to report their COVID-19 symptoms.
- Social distancing measures would be applied and working from home would be enabled when possible.
- Digital technology utilization of traders should be encouraged by Customs.

Overall, all the international organizations support the idea that TFA serves the necessary tools for trade facilitation. However, implementation of TFA by an individual country would limit the benefits. In order to maximize the benefits of TFA, countries and trade partners need to implement TFA together. Moreover, there are some pandemic specific practical recommendations of the international organizations as summarized above. They would be useful in the short-run, until the countries prepare the necessary infrastructure for TFA implementation.

### **3.1.4 Recommendations to Facilitate Trade by Other Organizations/Associations**

Apart from international organizations, non-governmental organizations and private sector associations mainly related to transport, which is the building block of trade, released recommendations and guidelines.

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<sup>5</sup> Countries who run an Authorized Economic Operator programme provides accreditation to trade operators conditional on assuring the safety standard. The benefits provided to AEO holders are various trade facilitation processes.

International Air Transport Association (IATA) released guidelines<sup>6</sup> specific to air transportation during the pandemic. Major guidelines are listed as below:

- Dangerous goods (including alcohol-based sanitizers) guidance for Operators
- Quick reference for ground handling during COVID-19.
- Guidance for Vaccine and Pharmaceutical Logistics and Distribution
- Comprehensive “take off” guidance covering separate guidance documents for airports, aircrafts, crew and cargo
- Comprehensive “Safely Restarting the Aviation Industry” guidelines to assist aircraft operators and their supply chain partners.

Global Express Association (GEA) released recommendations based on the facts that (i) consumers prefer online shopping, (ii) customs border processing capacity declined, (iii) there are delays at the borders regarding clearance, (iv) the impact of delays at the borders are more significant for SMEs and (v) governments would utilize the feedback from the private sector. GEA (2020) summarized recommendations under 8 headings:

- WTO’s TFA should be fully implemented
- “Express” services are key shipments that needs to continue uninterrupted.
- Air cargo operations need to be liberalized
- To air cargo review to continue their operation, they need to be supported by providing special airport hotel plans without exposure to the public.
- Express delivery services need to be exempted from travel restrictions
- Trade costs need to be declined
- Humanitarian relief needs to be a permanent strategy
- Key stakeholders of trade need to collaborate to decline trade disruptions during a crisis in a multilateral and multi-agency manner

International Road Transport Union (IRU) released recommendations for truck drivers during COVID-19 and recommendations for border crossing operations during the pandemic as summarized below:

- TIR system, particularly e-TIR system with seamless and paperless border crossing, would be utilized.
- Cross border customs cooperation as well as cooperation with other national border agencies would enhance trade.
- Discriminatory measures should collectively be prevented.

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<sup>6</sup> The details are available on <https://www.iata.org/en/programs/covid-19-resources-guidelines>

- Green lanes for freight transport should be established.

International Maritime Organization (IMO) released a joint statement with WCO. They emphasized the importance of the global value chain during the pandemic and recommended two important issues:

- Coordinated and proactive approach needs to be built
- Communication, coordination and cooperation between all involved on global and national levels is necessary

IMO released a joint statement by UNCTAD supporting collaborative action to encourage the countries about keeping ships moving, ports open and cross-border trade flowing as well. In the same statement the below issues are emphasized for trade facilitation:

- Facilitating crew changes
- Key worker designation,
- Pragmatic approach to extensions and waivers
- Digitalization

All these organizations provide suggestions for trade facilitation through removing the restrictions to transportation services. They are generally very specific and <https://www.tfafacility.org/COVID19-trade-facilitation> presents all of them in a easily reachable manner.

### **3.2 Trade facilitation measures in post COVID-19 period**

Due to the expectations on the changing structure of the economy and trade in the world, some of the measures taken as a response to pandemic would be permanent.

During the pandemic some countries took trade facilitation measures whereas some others restricted exports. Evenett et al. (2020) suggest that a total of 110 export curbs measures were taken against medical goods and medicines. However, 68 of those export curb measures have no phase-out date. This brings the question of long-term scarring and the protectionism policies that were started to be implemented even before the pandemic. The authorities recommend trade facilitation. If the governments still want to utilize export restrictions, they should be in a temporary nature in order not to disrupt global value chains.

Digitalization and working from home practice became leading outcomes of the pandemic and would act as an opportunity for Customs and traders. During the pandemic period, the role of digitalization to limit the physical contact appeared as essential. Before the pandemic single window application started to be utilized in Customs of developed countries in particular. Although the system brings efficiency to the customs processes, it is costly, and it necessitates infrastructure and qualified personnel. Utilization of single window like systems by developing countries would increase the benefits of the developed countries as well. Therefore, support by international organizations and raising funds would be possible to develop these systems in developing countries as well.

Vaccines are developed and vaccination started all around the world. Facilitation of trade is an issue for near future. However, the essential issue for trade appears as the uneven distribution of vaccines around the world. Mostly developed countries that are also the vaccine producers, vaccinated most of their population. However, in many countries access to vaccines would not be possible in the near future. The new discussion is about the vaccine passports which would be a threat for trade facilitation. Trade partners of the developed countries are not able to vaccinate their citizens. Therefore, the vaccine passport regulations would bring new impediments to trade and increase the burden at the customs.

### 3.3. General Evaluation

The pandemic hit the global economy significantly. The measures as a response to the pandemic, such as lockdown measures, border closures and factory closures resulted in a sharp decline in trade during the initial period of the pandemic. Moreover, many governments imposed export restriction to pandemic related goods in order to increase their availability in the domestic market. All these increased the essential role of trade facilitation processes around the globe. Thereby, essential medical goods and food would be ensured around the world in a timely manner at lower costs. Necessary inputs will be provided for industrial production and agriculture. Overall, trade facilitation ensures employment and economic growth all around the world by supporting the flow of global supply chains.

Facilitating trade and the measures taken to streamline trade procedures would expedite the goods trade, including goods in transit. To decrease the physical contact at the borders for protecting the health of traders, border personnel and the society, while keeping the necessary controls at the borders for health and security would be possible with the introduction of trade facilitation reforms.

All the international organizations and experts in the field support that the best tools to facilitate trade is provided in WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, where the main principles were summarized in Table 1. However, the benefit of TFA will be multiplied if trade partners follow TFA due to global supply chains.

Measures taken for enabling all the stake holders to access the necessary information appeared as vital in the current crisis. Increasing transparency, cooperation and coordination between the borders are essential to be able to allow necessary trade-related information to flow across borders.

Digitalization of trade processes would be an opportunity for facilitating trade during the pandemic and preparing to the future. Some countries already adopted digital technologies for the custom processes such as single window introduced by TFA. Research shows that these kinds of measures enabled customs to cope with the crisis by facilitating trade. However, as it is valid in all trade facilitation tools, the benefits of digitalization of the trade-customs processes would magnify when they are utilized by all trade partners. Although developed countries already adopted the technology, lack of infrastructure and the high cost occur as an impediment for lower income countries.

During the health crisis, the expediting of pandemic related goods and relief and consignments goods is essential. Special treatment of goods and well-established measures for trade and



transit of these goods would save lives. Therefore, a system for trade of these goods should be well-established. WTO provides the set of tools for this as well. Once again, coordination and cooperation of border agencies to reduce and streamline procedures play a key role.

Nowadays, the climate change and the outcome of it is frequently discussed. Unfortunately, it is expected that we would face these kinds of crisis in the recent future as an outcome of climate change. Therefore, setting of a system to respond the crisis and building the necessary regulations for facilitating trade in crisis times is vital for each government and for all the world.

## Chapter 4: Assessment of Trade Facilitation Measures Taken by OIC Countries

This chapter provides a comprehensive assessment of trade facilitation measures taken by OIC countries in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It starts with an overall assessment of trade facilitation performance of OIC countries before and during the pandemic based on internationally available sources and databases. Then, it presents the methodology and results of an online survey conducted specifically for the purpose of this research project. The analyses in this chapter are particularly critical in identifying alternative measures and policy recommendations for OIC countries to sustain trade facilitation during and after the pandemic.

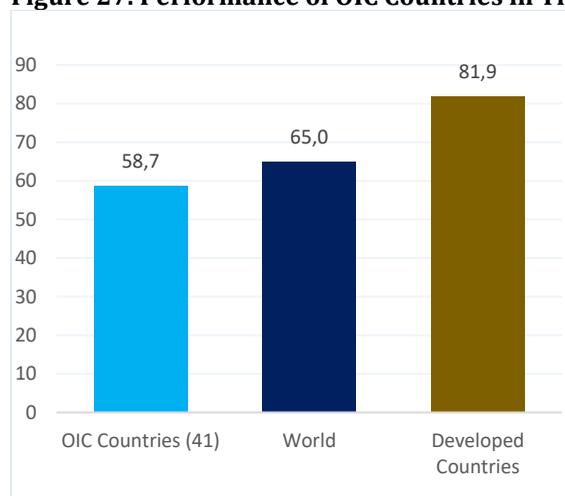
### 4.1. Trade Facilitation Measures in OIC Countries

There is a greater recognition on the importance of trade facilitation across the globe. It helps to reduce trade costs and benefit from increasing interconnected global economic activities. Many OIC countries have been investing in their capacities to create more effective trade procedures and thereby to eliminate some of the impediments to trade. This section will review the overall performance of OIC countries in facilitating trade before the pandemic and provide a snapshot of the major policy responses to the pandemic.

#### 4.1.1 Evaluation of Prevailing Trade Facilitation Measures

There are two major global sources to assess and compare the existing performance of OIC countries in key dimensions of trade facilitation. **The first one is the UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation** (formerly known as the Global Survey on Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade Implementation) and **the second one is the OECD Trade Facilitation Indicators**. These two sources provide information for the majority of OIC countries and allow us to make a comparison with other major country groups across years.

**Figure 27. Performance of OIC Countries in Trade Facilitation, 2021**

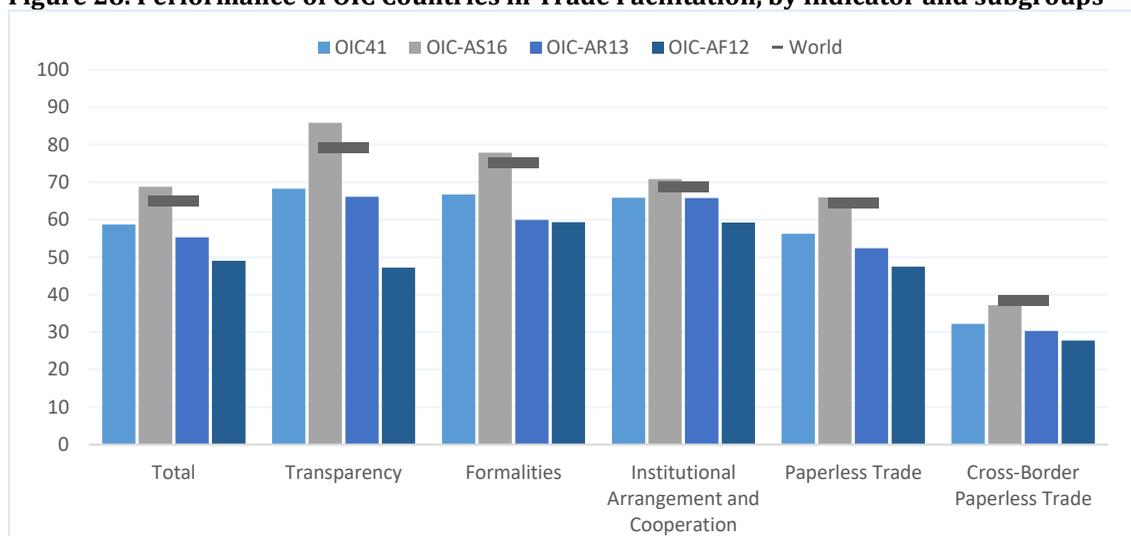


Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2021 Results.

The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation (hereafter, UNTF Survey) is being conducted every two years since 2015. The latest survey results are available for the year 2021. The 2021 UNTF survey covers 41 OIC countries (16 from Asia region, 13 from Arab region and 12 from Africa region). Figure 27 shows the average score for OIC countries in comparison with the averages of the world and developed countries. Overall score of OIC countries is 58.7 (out of 100), which is below the world average of 65.0 and well below the average of developed countries (81.9). Evidently, existing arrangements towards facilitating trade in OIC countries are relatively weaker as compared to non-OIC countries, which highlights the need for exerting greater efforts to take measures in facilitating trade.

There are five main subcategories of the UNTF survey. To provide a greater insight on the performance of OIC countries, Figure 28 presents the survey results for different indicators disaggregated by OIC regional groups. On aggregated values, only the OIC-Asia region performs better than the world average. In terms of regional performances at individual categories, OIC countries in the Asia region continue to demonstrate better scores as compared to the world averages in all subcategories except cross-border paperless trade category. On the other hand, OIC countries in the Arab and Africa regions attain lower scores than the world averages in all categories. OIC countries have the lowest score in cross-border paperless trade category, but the world average is also the lowest in this category. Overall, the OIC countries in the Asia region perform above the OIC average and the OIC countries in the Africa region perform significantly below the OIC average.

**Figure 28. Performance of OIC Countries in Trade Facilitation, by indicator and subgroups**

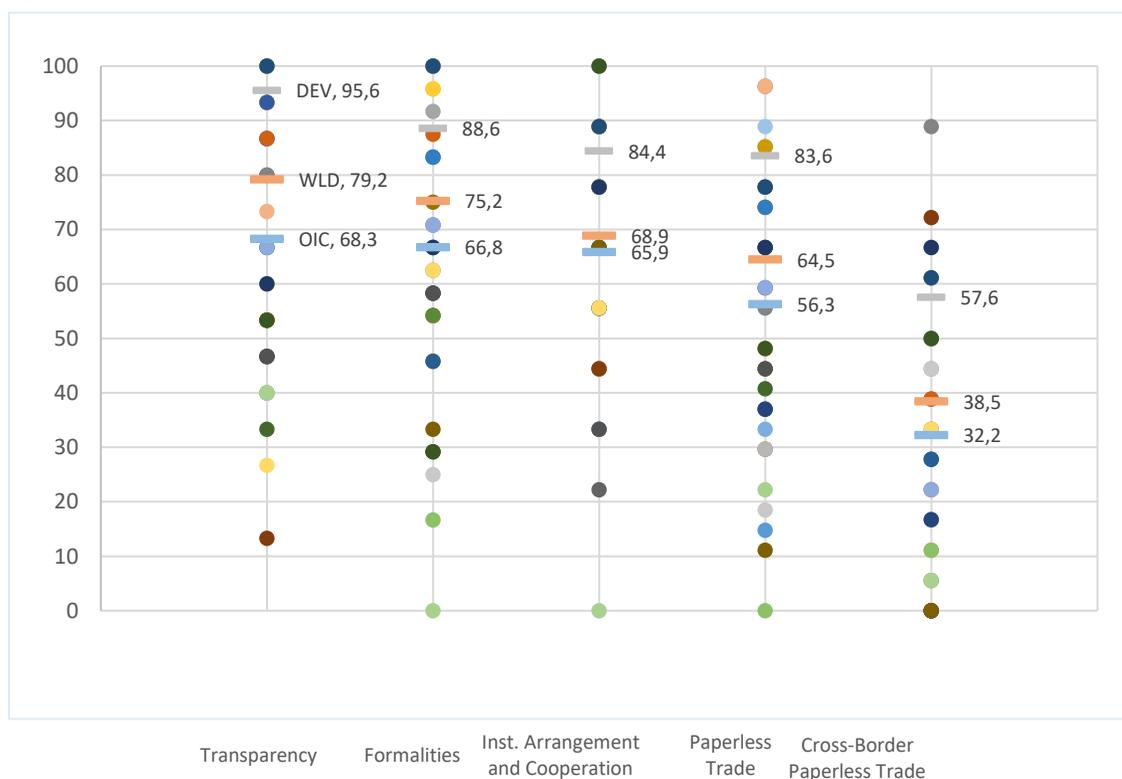


Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2021 Results.

Although Figure 28 provides some insights on potential heterogeneity within the OIC countries, to get a more in-depth understanding on how individual OIC countries differ in terms of their trade facilitation performance, Figure 29 presents the distribution of OIC countries in five categories of the UNTF survey, along with the average scores of the OIC world and developed countries. In all categories, there are OIC countries with relatively higher scores, even above the average of the developed countries, but there are also

countries with very low scores reaching as low as zero, reflecting the great diversity and heterogeneity within the OIC. For example, Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan and Senegal get higher scores than the average of developed countries in cross-border paperless trade but Comoros, Maldives and Somalia attain zero score. In formalities category, there are nine OIC countries (Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Morocco, Mozambique, Saudi Arabia and Turkey) doing better than the developed countries and there are ten OIC countries (Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Mozambique, Niger, Syria, Saudi Arabia and Tunisia) doing better than developed countries in terms of institutional arrangement and cooperation. Similarly, seven OIC countries (Azerbaijan, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Mozambique, Morocco and Turkey) outperform developed countries in paperless trade and six OIC countries (Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Malaysia, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and Turkey) perform better than developed countries in terms of transparency. Afghanistan, Senegal, Somalia, Gabon and Comoros are some of the OIC countries that require significant efforts to improve overall trade facilitation performance in most categories.

**Figure 29. Performance of OIC Countries in Trade Facilitation, by country and indicator**

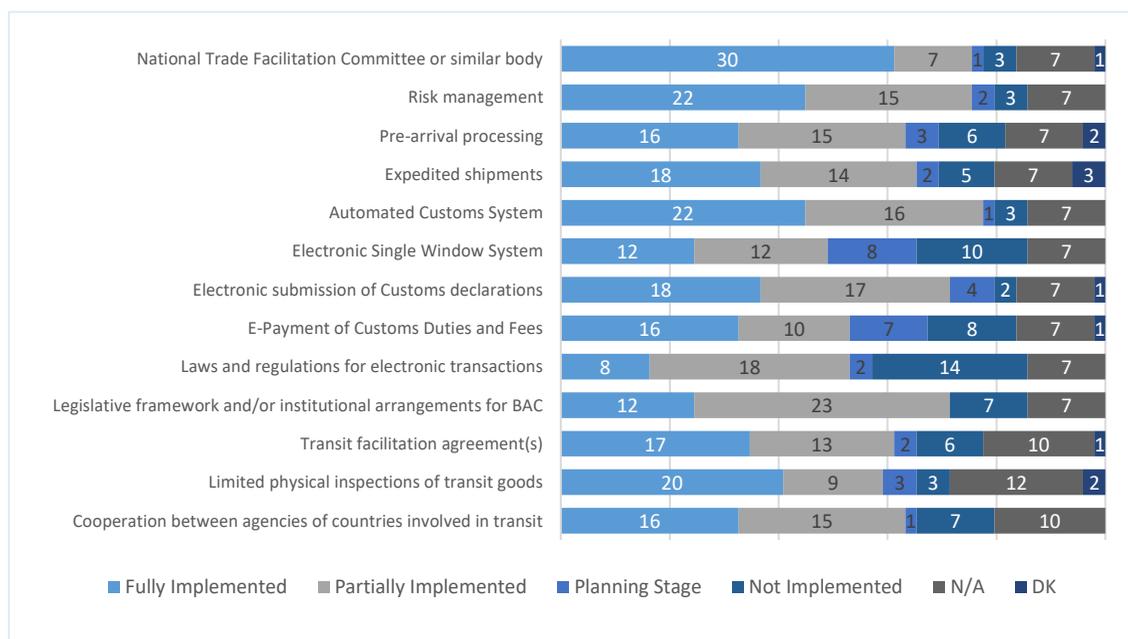


Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2021 Results. DEV: Developed countries, WLD: World

The UNTF survey provides a composite value of trade facilitation based on 58 different survey questions. Figure 30 shows the distribution of OIC countries in implementing selected trade

facilitation indicators, which are considered to be particularly important. Out of 41 OIC countries responding to the survey, 30 OIC countries have national trade facilitation committee or similar body and 10 other OIC countries are in process of planning or initiating the establishing such a body. 22 OIC countries have full risk management practices, 16 OIC countries implement pre-arrival processing and 18 OIC countries implement expedited shipments. In terms of digital applications, 22 OIC countries have automated customs systems, 12 OIC countries have electronic single window system, 18 OIC countries accept electronic submission of customs declarations and 16 OIC countries accept e-payment of customs duties and fees. 17 OIC countries have transit facilitation agreements and 16 OIC countries cooperate with the agencies involved in transit trade. When compared with the situation prior to the pandemic, a significant improvement is observed. In most indicators, the number of OIC countries that have fully or partially implemented certain trade facilitation practices increased by around 50% as compared to the 2019 survey results. Nevertheless, significant bottlenecks prevail in critical indicators of trade facilitation.

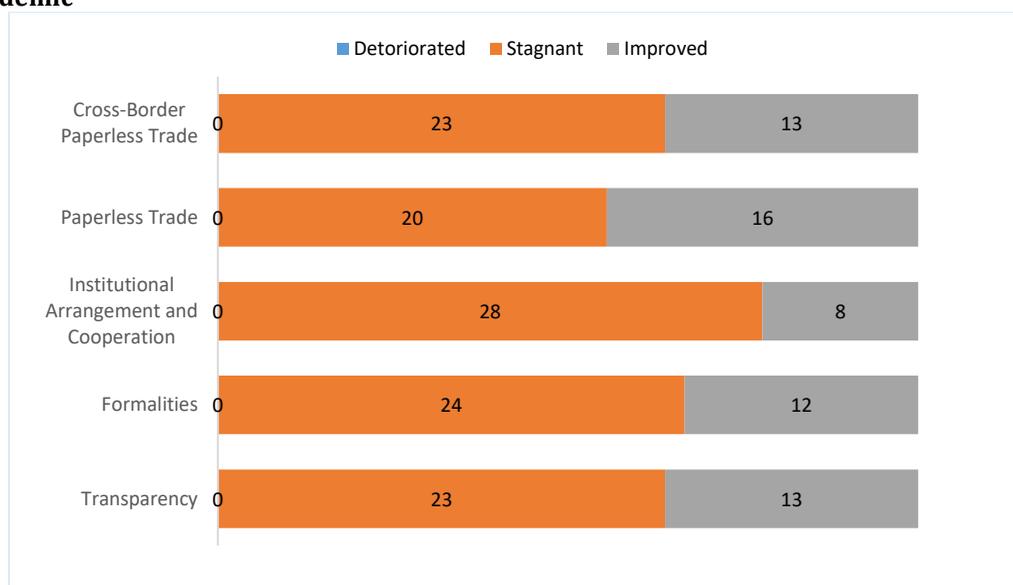
**Figure 30. Performance of OIC Countries in Trade Facilitation, by country and indicator**



Source: *The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2021 Results*

The comparison of the performance of OIC countries measured in 2019 and 2021 would provide some further insights on the response of the OIC countries to the pandemic in relation to trade facilitation. Figure 31 presents the number of OIC countries that experienced a deterioration, no change or improvement in main categories of UNTF survey. While there is no single OIC country that experienced a deterioration in its trade facilitation score, it is promising to observe that 16 OIC countries improved their scores in paperless trade, 13 OIC countries in transparency and cross-border paperless trade, 12 OIC countries in formalities and 8 OIC countries in institutional arrangement and cooperation.

**Figure 31. Change in the Performance of OIC Countries in Trade Facilitation following the Pandemic**



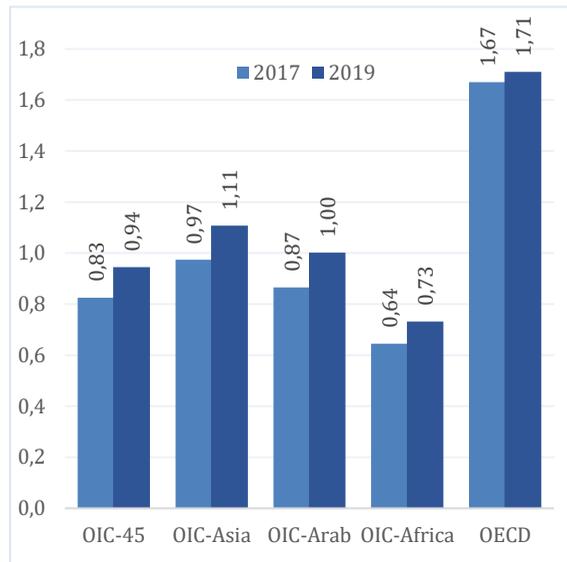
Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2021 Results

**As the second major source, the OECD Trade Facilitation Indicators (TFIs) database** provides information for a greater number of OIC countries, which is updated every two years since 2013 and the latest data available is for the year 2019. The database covers a wide spectrum of border procedures for more than 160 economies (including 45 OIC countries) to help governments improve their border procedures, reduce trade costs and increase trade flows under eleven (11) main categories. The index ranges between 0 and 2, with higher values indicating better performance in trade facilitation.

Figure 31 compares the aggregate performance of OIC countries and its subgroups in 2019 with the previous values in 2017 as well as the average values for the OECD countries. The average performance of 45 OIC countries improved from 0.83 in 2017 to 0.94 in 2019 but remain significantly below the average of the OECD countries (1.71). Among the subgroups of the OIC, the countries in the Asia group attain the highest score with 1.11, while this score is 1.00 for the countries in the Arab region and only 0.73 for the countries in the Africa region, reflecting the heterogeneity among the countries and regions within the OIC.

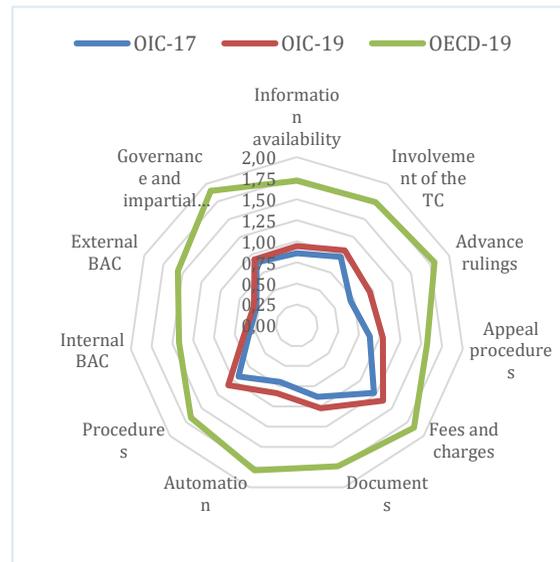
In the similar vein, Figure 32 compares the average performance of OIC countries in 2019 with the previous values in 2017 as well as the average values for the OECD countries for the eleven subcategories of the OECD TFIs. During 2017-2019, OIC countries managed to improve their trade facilitation scores in all categories, particularly in advance rulings. Yet, the difference between the OECD and OIC countries remain huge. OIC countries attain the highest score in fees and charges (1.36), followed by procedures (1.08). The lowest scores are related to external (0.56) and internal border agency cooperation (0.63).

**Figure 32. Average Performance of OIC Countries in Facilitation Trade - OECD TFI**



Source: OECD Trade Facilitation Indicators. Data covers 45 OIC MCs, including 14 in the Asia Group, 16 in the Arab Group and 15 in the Africa Group.

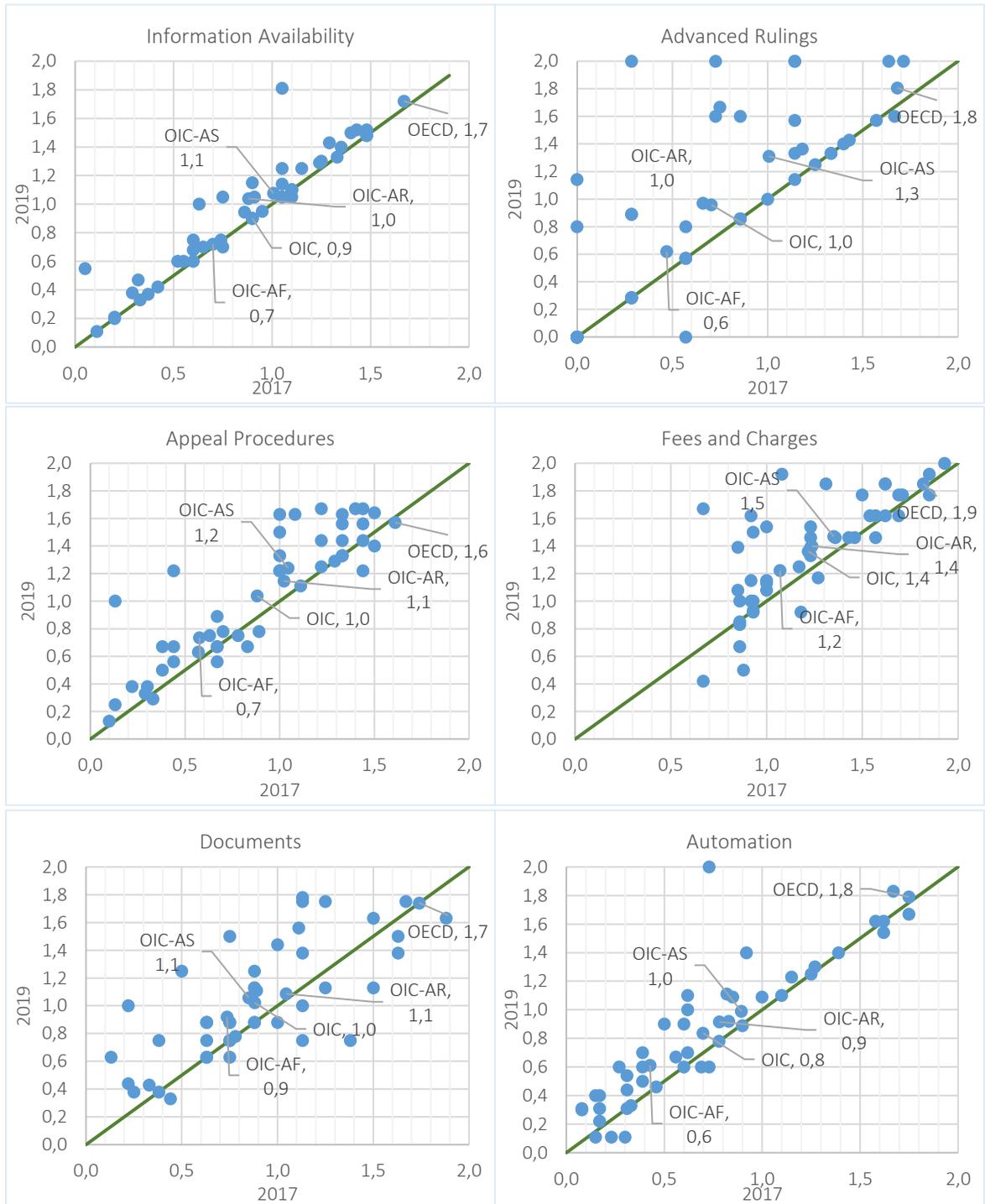
**Figure 33. Average Performance of OIC Countries in Sub-Categories of OECD TFIs**



Source: OECD Trade Facilitation Indicators. Simple average of 45 OIC MCs. BAC: Border Agency Cooperation; TC: Trade Community

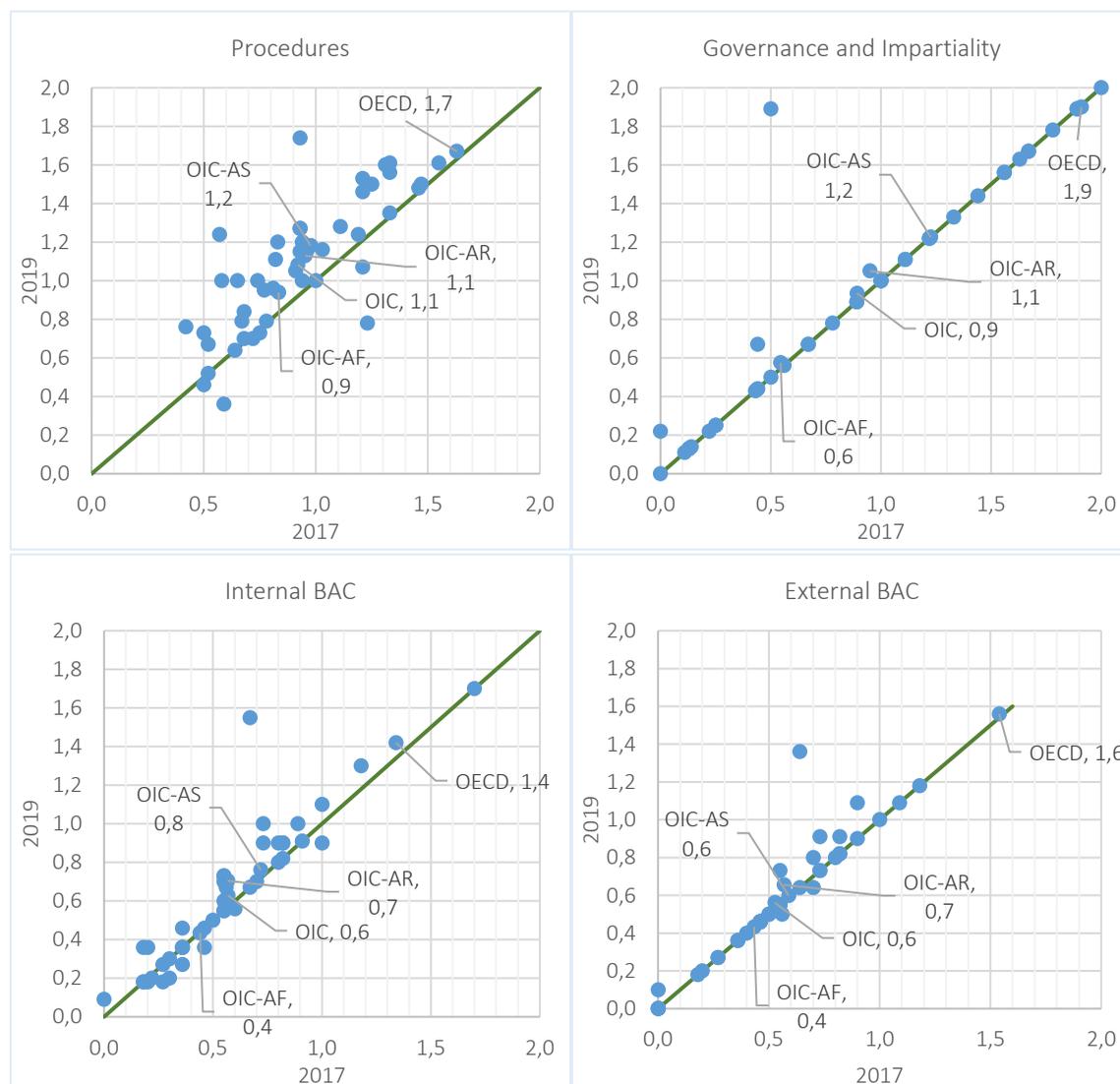
Due to significant heterogeneity within the OIC, comparing the individual countries based on the scores they received in 2019 as compared to 2017 provides greater understanding on their performance improvements. In this regard, Figure 33 and 34 compares the individual country performances for all OIC countries under eleven categories of the TFIs. Countries above the 45-degree line are the ones that improved their performance in 2019 as compared to the previous evaluation in 2017. Similarly, if they remain below the line, their performance gets worsened in that specific indicator. The figures also provide the average scores obtained by OIC-Asia, OIC-Arab and OIC-Africa subgroups as well as OIC and OECD averages for greater insight. As a general observation, in almost all indicators, OIC-Asia countries perform better than OIC-Arab countries, which in turn performs better than OIC-Africa countries.

**Figure 34. Average Performance of Individual OIC Countries in Subcategories of OECD TFIs**



Source: OECD Trade Facilitation Indicators. Simple average of 45 OIC MCs.

**Figure 35. Average Performance of Individual OIC Countries in Subcategories of OECD TFIs**



Source: OECD Trade Facilitation Indicators. Simple average of 45 OIC MCs.

In terms of information availability, almost all OIC countries improved their scores, where there are enquiry points to respond to reasonable inquiries and relevant trade information are made available mainly through internet. In this category, Oman and Comoros attained the highest improvements, but the performance of other OIC countries remained largely around the previous values. Accordingly, average score of OIC countries increased from 0.86 in 2017 to only 0.94 in 2019.

Advanced rulings are broadly related to prior statements by the administration to requesting traders concerning the classification, origin and valuation method. Many OIC countries made

significant improvements in terms of advanced rulings. Accordingly, as compared to other categories, the average performance of OIC countries showed the highest improvement in this category by increasing from 0.70 in 2017 to 0.94 in 2019. Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Jordan, Morocco, Qatar and Saudi Arabia made the most improvement within the OIC during the period under consideration. Moreover, Brunei Darussalam, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Morocco and Qatar get the highest score of 2 in advanced rulings.

In appeal procedures, some improvements have been observed in several countries, but many others could attain only slight improvements or even deterioration. Particularly, Mozambique and Bangladesh attained the highest improvements. Average performance of OIC countries increased from 0.88 in 2017 to 1.04 in 2019. In terms of fees and charges, the majority of OIC countries improved their scores by ensuring greater disciplines on the fees and charges imposed on imports and exports. This enabled the average score of OIC countries to increase from 1.22 to 1.36. Oman and Tajikistan showed the highest increment in their index value.

There are three indicators that are related to formalities, namely documents, automation and procedures. In all these indicators, average performance of OIC countries improved at the same magnitude, and except few OIC countries, the majority of OIC countries improved their trade facilitation scores. With regards to simplification of trade documents and their harmonisation in accordance with international standards, it increased from 0.88 to 1.02 during the period under consideration, where Tajikistan attained the highest improvement from 0.7 to 1.7 and Jordan witnessed the largest deterioration from 1.4 to 0.8. In terms of automation, which covers trade facilitation measures related to electronic exchange of data, use of automated risk management, automated border procedures and electronic payments, a similar pattern is observed and OIC countries increased their average index value from 0.70 to 0.84. Oman made a remarkable progress by attaining the top score of 2.0 in 2019 as compared to 0.7 in 2017. Finally, the formalities related to procedures, such as streamlining of border controls, single windows and authorised operators, the majority of OIC countries experienced improvements and overall score of OIC countries increased from 0.92 in 2017 to 1.08 in 2019. Again, the country with highest increment was Oman, which raised its score from 0.9 to 1.7 and attained the highest score within the OIC.

Governance and impartiality index is related to customs structures and functions, accountability and ethics policy in facilitating trade. No substantial change is observed in overall performance of individual OIC countries, except Oman, which increased its score from 0.5 to 1.9. Average score of OIC countries remained narrowly increased from 0.89 in 2017 to 0.94 in 2019, while OECD average was 1.9 in 2019.

Internal and external border agency cooperation is another critical aspect of trade facilitation, which could significantly contribute to making cross-border trade and logistics faster, cheaper and more predictable. Comprehensive report by COMCEC (2016) provides an in-depth analysis on improving the border agency cooperation among the OIC member states for facilitating trade. Despite the important recommendations made to improve the border agency cooperation among the OIC countries, no significant improvement is observed in both internal and external border agency cooperation. Except Oman, no significant change is observed in the remaining OIC countries. Accordingly, only a limited increase in the average scores of internal and external border agency cooperation is observed from 0.57 to 0.63 and from 0.53 to 0.56, respectively.

Therefore, border agency cooperation remains the weakest component of trade facilitation in OIC countries, which requires particular attention.

#### 4.1.2. Trade Facilitation Measures Taken during the Pandemic

While the next section will provide a comprehensive analysis on the trade facilitation measures and actions taken by OIC countries in response to the pandemic, this subsection will provide a brief overview of such measures reported by major global sources. There are several attempts to collect trade policy responses to the pandemic mainly by international organizations. **WTO report** measures taken by its members in response to the pandemic under the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA). In this database, there are no specific measures that OIC countries have notified the WTO in response to the COVID-19 under the TFA. Another major source is the COVID-19 Temporary Trade Measures database of International Trade **Centre (ITC)**. It includes around 350 trade policy responses to the pandemic. These are not all related to trade facilitation, such as import or export bans, but there are a significant number of measures taken to facilitate or restrict trade in response to the pandemic. **Finally, the World Customs Organization (WCO)** report on practices of the member countries in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which includes customs related policy measures for 31 OIC countries.

Table 5 shows the OIC countries that have taken measures to facilitate the flow of certain goods in response to the pandemic. There are seven measures implemented by four OIC countries to facilitate trade during the pandemic and four of the measures are still active. These measures are mainly related to formalities in fulfilling the documentation and fee requirements. The list probably does not cover all the measures implemented by OIC countries to facilitate trade, but there is unfortunately no other global repository to obtain more comprehensive list of measures.

While some countries took the initiative to facilitate trade, some others applied the measures in the opposite direction to restrict the trade in certain products. Table 6 provides a list of measures implemented by OIC countries towards this direction. It should be noted again that the measures presented in Table 6 are only related to trade facilitation indicators and do not cover tariff and quota related restrictions. There are 15 measures implemented by nine OIC countries. These measures mainly require submitting additional documents, such as permits or certifications, or using specific transportation channel to trade in certain or all products. All measures were taken during March and April 2020, but nine of them are still active as of August 13, 2021. Moreover, these measures affect all countries, except the measures implemented by Egypt and Jordan, which affect only China.

**Table 5. Measures Facilitating Trade during the Pandemic**

Enacting Country	Type of Measure	Affected Products	Measure	Status
Algeria	Exceptional measures to facilitate imports	medical supply products	Exceptional measures to facilitate import of medical goods and certain other products.	Active
Burkina Faso	Exceptional measures to facilitate imports	certain consumer and pharmaceutical products	The government facilitates imports of consumer and pharmaceutical products.	Active
Indonesia	Suspension of certification requirements	onions and garlic	Temporary elimination of import certification requirements on imports of onions and garlic.	Terminated
Indonesia	Suspension of certification requirements	mask and personal protective equipment	Temporary elimination of import certification requirements on imports on certain products	Terminated
Indonesia	Certification requirements	sugar	Temporary Suspension of Mandatory Indonesia National Standard for White Crystal Sugar.	Active
Indonesia	Certification requirements	flour	Temporary Exclusion to the Addition of Fortifying Substances to Wheat Flour.	Active
Saudi Arabia	Duties on imports are postponed	all imports	The collection of customs duties on imports is postponed for a period of 30 days, or against the submission of a bank guarantee, for three months.	Terminated

Source: International Trade Centre, *The Database on COVID-19 Temporary Trade Measures*.

**Table 6. Measures Restricting Trade during the Pandemic**

Enacting Country	Type of Measure	Affected Products	Measure	Status
Albania	Licensing or permit requirements to export	medicines and medical devices	Prohibition of export of medicines and medical devices.	Active
Bahrain	Licensing or permit requirements to export	face masks, face shields	Ban to export of all types of protective face masks without prior permission.	Terminated
Bahrain	Licensing or permit requirements to export	disinfectants and hand sanitizers	Export licenses for disinfectants and hand sanitizers.	Terminated
Egypt	Prohibitions/restrictions of	garlic, carrots and green ginger	Imports of garlic, carrots and green	Active

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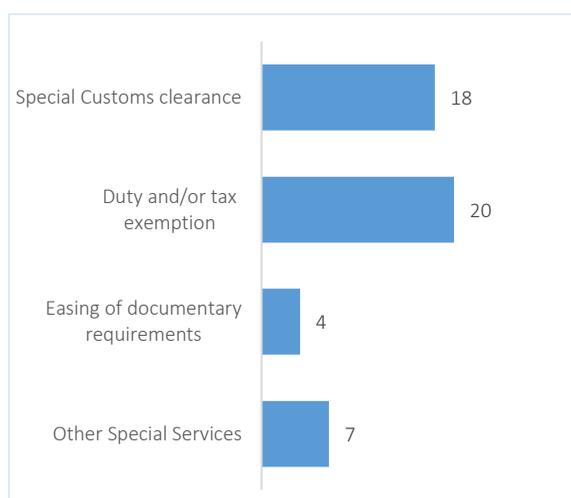


	imports for SPS reasons		ginger from China would be temporarily suspended.	
<b>Indonesia</b>	Certification requirements	Live Animals (Pet animals and Mammals)	Certification requirement for the import of live animals from countries not free from COVID-19.	Active
<b>Jordan</b>	Prohibitions/restrictions of imports for SPS reasons	animal and plant-based products	Ban for all animal and plant-based products from China.	Active
<b>Morocco</b>	Licensing or permit requirements to export	personal protective equipment, medical supply products	Introduction of export license for certain products.	Active
<b>Turkey</b>	Licensing or permit requirements to export	masks, personal protective equipment	Turkey regulates the export of masks and personal protective equipment.	Active
<b>Turkey</b>	Licensing or permit requirements to export	lemons	Turkey has subjected lemons to export control amid a rising domestic demand	Terminated
<b>Turkey</b>	Licensing or permit requirements to export	cologne, ethyl alcohol, disinfectant and hydrogen peroxide	Export restrictions on cologne, ethyl alcohol, disinfectant and hydrogen peroxide.	Terminated
<b>Turkey</b>	Licensing or permit requirements to export	ventilators and other COVID-19 medical equipment	Export restrictions on ventilators and other COVID-19 medical equipment.	Terminated
<b>Turkey</b>	Certification requirements	testing kits	Introduction of import authorization for COVID-19 testing kits.	Active
<b>Turkey</b>	Licensing or permit requirements to export	personal protective equipment	Temporary export authorization for certain PPE and meltblown fabric due to the COVID-19 pandemic.	Active
<b>Turkmenistan</b>	Requirement to pass through specific port of customs; transport restrictions	all imports	All imports of goods will be carried out by Turkmen freight carriers.	Active

<b>Uganda</b>	Prohibitions/ restrictions of imports for SPS/ TBT reasons	used textile products and used footwear	UNBS has suspended the importation and clearance of used textile products and used footwear	Terminated
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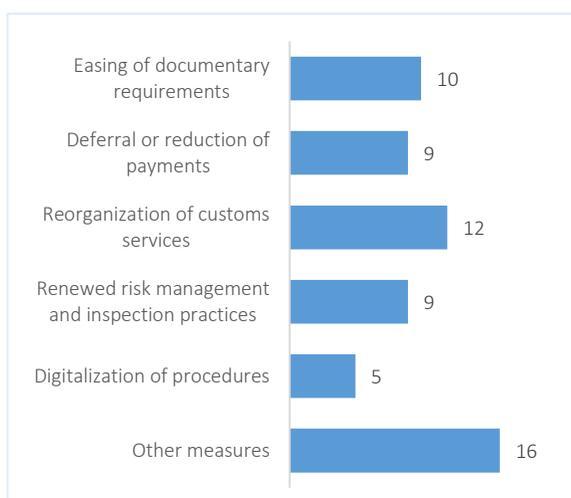
Source: International Trade Centre, The Database on COVID-19 Temporary Trade Measures.

**Figure 36. Measures to Facilitate the Cross-border Movement of Relief and Essential Supplies**



Source: WCO (2020a).

**Figure 37. Measures to Support the Economy and Sustaining Supply Chain Continuity**



Source: WCO (2020a).

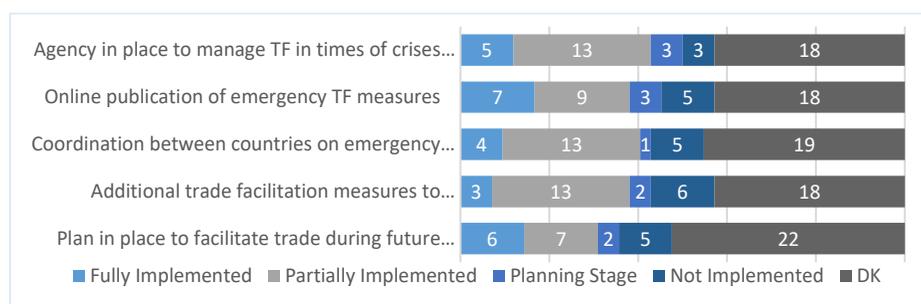
Finally, WCO (2020a) provides information on customs related practices on 31 OIC countries. It provides information on policies related to facilitation of the cross-border movement of relief

and essential supplies as well as supporting of the economy and sustaining supply chain continuity. With regards to the measures related to relief and essential goods, most of the OIC countries provided full or partial exemption on duties and taxes. The coverage of such goods may slightly differ across countries, but they are mostly related to supplies, materials and equipment normally used to combat COVID-19. Implementation of special customs procedures is another frequently measure adopted by OIC countries. These measures may include fast clearance, immediate release and direct delivery (with deferred payment), among others. A number of OIC countries facilitated trade by easing documentary requirements by reducing the number of documents to be submitted or accepting the copies of the original documents. Apart from these measures, several other measures are also implemented, such as allocating specific refrigerated areas for essential goods and medicine or uninterrupted customs services (Figure 36).

WCO (2020a) also reports on the measures implemented towards supporting the economy and sustaining supply chain continuity. A diverse set of measures have been taken by the member countries to support economic activity in response to the pandemic. The most frequently taken measure is related to reorganization of customs services, which is to facilitate customs procedures in a way to protect the customs staff and its operative capabilities. Easing of documentary requirements is another measure taken by some OIC countries. Accordingly, the requirement to provide certain commercial documents has been loosened or abandoned during the pandemic to ensure smooth flow of goods across borders and supply chain continuity. Deferral or reduction of payments associated with exports or imports of non-essential goods was implemented at varying levels by several countries. Some other OIC countries expanded risk management based physical examinations to reduce human interaction and ensure faster release of goods. In some countries, traders are encouraged to use only digital channels to complete their customs procedures (Figure 37). In addition to these measures, a diverse set of measures were implemented by OIC countries as a response to the pandemic, including taking special measure to facilitate transit trade for landlocked countries, better coordination with neighbouring countries, and utilization of media channels to increase accessibility to updated measures and overall awareness on them.

Before concluding the analysis, it is noteworthy to discuss the results of new questions included for the first time to the UNTF survey in 2021. The latest version of the survey includes five new questions on trade facilitation in times of crises. There are only 5 OIC countries that assigned an agency/organization to implement and manage trade facilitation measures in times of crises and emergencies, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. While there are 7 OIC countries that publish emergency trade facilitation measures online, border agencies only in 4 OIC countries coordinate emergency trade facilitation measures with other countries or regional organizations. According to the survey results, only 3 OIC countries implemented additional cross-border paperless trade measures to facilitate trade in times of crises and emergencies. When it comes to preparedness for building up resilience and safeguarding from future crises, only 6 OIC countries indicated the availability of adequate trade facilitation measures for such purposes.

**Figure 38. TF Measures in Times of Crises**



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2021 Results

Above analysis provide an important perspective on major policies adopted by OIC countries based on various sources. It is very likely that a greater number of OIC countries implemented measures to facilitate trade, but such information may be missed or omitted in major international sources. Yet, above analysis is quite noteworthy in understanding the major trends in policy preferences and priorities in OIC countries towards facilitating trade.

## 4.2. Survey design and sample

In the study, six domains of indicators are developed to measure the trade facilitation responses of the OIC member countries. Specific indicators detail key indicators as a whole. In order to make an assessment of the success and extend of responses as well as their post-pandemic effects, countries are divided into five categories, and prioritized minimum standards have been determined for those that need to be included in the indicator set determined for each category. According to the number of criteria met or the score level of the key criteria, the category rank of a country is determined. The five categories are from Tier 1 to Tier 5 in descending order, Tier 1 indicating the most successful/through response and Tier 5 the least successful/through response. To illustrate, if a country meets almost all of the criteria or has a score above 4 out of 5, then it will be placed in Tier 1.

Concerning the limitation of Survey Study, the survey is distributed to a wide-network of experts in each OIC country, however, in some cases, the participation rate is relatively low. Since the results of the study are based on the responses of member countries to the survey, in some exceptional cases the actual ranking may differ.

**Six domains** used for the assessment of effects of the COVID -19 pandemic on trade and related trade facilitation responses are as follows:

- A. Effects of COVID -19 on Trade and Customs
- B. Institutions and Capacity Building
- C. Trade Facilitation-Procedures
- D. Transparency and Cooperation-Coordination Enforcement
- E. Specific Trade Facilitation Measures for COVID -19 period

## F. Trade Facilitation Measures for post COVID-19 period

A survey questioner is developed to collect information from related institutions' representatives in 49 countries. The questioner is given in Supplement A. The criteria set for the assessment of the OIC member countries for each domain is given in Panel I of 7.

The structured survey including queries as to the presence/absence of the key criteria and presence/absence and weakness/strength of specific criteria was conducted in various kinds of institutions such as governmental bodies, research institutes, NGOs for all OIC member states.

A Tier placement scheme is developed for each domain based on the criteria under each domain. The Tier placement scheme is given in Table 7. Domain-wise rankings of 27 OIC member states for which survey response could be obtained for strategic policy frameworks is performed based on the overall Tier placement scheme given in Panel II of Table 7.

**Table 7. Criteria Set and Tiers**

I	Key Criteria for Trade Facilitation Activity	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4	Tier 5
<b>A</b>	<b>Effects of COVID-19 on Trade and Customs</b>	A score of 4 or higher out of 5	A score between 3 and 4 out of 5	A score between 2 and 3 out of 5	A score between 1 and 2 out of 5	A score less than 1 out of 5
1.	Border/checkpoints closures during COVID-19 pandemic					
2.	Health checks at the borders during COVID-19 pandemic					
3.	Fewer customs personnel during COVID-19 pandemic	A score of 4 or higher out of 5	A score between 3 and 4 out of 5	A score between 2 and 3 out of 5	A score between 1 and 2 out of 5	A score less than 1 out of 5
<b>B</b>	<b>Institutions and Capacity Building</b>					
1.	Status and organizational structure of current trade related bodies					
2.	Set-up of additional new intra-agency body					
3.	Establishment of new institutionalised mechanism to support domestic inter-agency co-ordination					
4.	Introduction of amendments on the existing legal or administrative framework to facilitate customs procedures					
5.	Intensified assessment of the prevailing trade related measures to identify and address the emerging obstacles in trade procedures					
6.	Reconfiguration of authority and responsibilities allocated among the relevant agencies/entities					
7.	Development and utilization of a roadmap at the beginning of the COVID-19 period for a collective response to potential trade related challenges during the pandemic					
8.	Increased allocation of financial resources for the trade facilitation related measures					
9.	Development of alternative to increase awareness among the trade related					

- stakeholders on the new policies and procedures regarding trade facilitation
10. Initiation of capacity building programs to increase the competence of employees or to reinforce their knowledge in the field of facilitating
  11. Initiation of special measures to improve e-commerce infrastructure and to encourage firms for its wider usage

**C Trade Facilitation-Procedures**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Pre-arrival completion of customs formalities and quick removal of the goods is possible</li> <li>2. A working 24/7 customs clearance system</li> <li>3. Availability of special counters/green lanes</li> <li>4. Early release of goods (prior to the submission of the goods declaration)</li> <li>5. Acceptance of electronic documents for import/export/transit formalities</li> <li>6. Border agencies equipped with digital infrastructure to facilitate remote working/inspection</li> <li>7. Electronic payment of all trade-related taxes</li> <li>8. Acceptance of digital certificates and signatures</li> <li>9. Simplified goods declaration (on the condition that missing information would be completed in a specified period)</li> </ol> | <p>A score of 4 or higher out of 5</p> <p>A score between 3 and 4 out of 5</p> <p>A score between 2 and 3 out of 5</p> <p>A score between 1 and 2 out of 5</p> <p>A score less than 1 out of 5</p> |
|--|--|

**D Transparency and Cooperation-Coordination Enforcement**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Publication of emergency trade facilitation measures on websites of relevant governmental agencies or national trade repository portal</li> <li>2. Utilization of social media to communicate traders on relevant emergency trade facilitation measures</li> <li>3. Availability of customs hotlines of major trading partners</li> <li>4. Efforts to coordinate emergency trade facilitation measures with other countries or regional organizations</li> <li>5. Sharing of information regarding emergency trade facilitation measures with international organizations (WTO/WCO/ITC)</li> <li>6. Electronic exchange of customs declarations and other relevant documents between home country and other countries</li> <li>7. Easy download of required documentation from customs webpage</li> </ol> | <p>A score of 4 or higher out of 5</p> <p>A score between 3 and 4 out of 4</p> <p>A score between 2 and 3 out of 4</p> <p>A score between 1 and 2 out of 4</p> <p>A score less than 1 out of 4</p> |
|---|--|

**E Specific Trade Facilitation Measures for COVID-19 period**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Inspections and release of relief consignment c outside the Customs office</li> <li>2. New agreements with neighbouring countries to facilitate transit trade</li> <li>3. Special trade facilitation measures to micro, small and medium enterprises to facilitate trade</li> <li>4. New bilateral cooperative arrangements regarding trade facilitation</li> <li>5. New international/regional cooperative arrangements regarding trade facilitation</li> <li>6. Measures against pandemic leading to the suspension or removal or cancellation of pre-pandemic any trade facilitation measures</li> </ol> | <p>A score of 4 or higher out of 5</p> <p>A score between 3 and 4 out of 4</p> <p>A score between 2 and 3 out of 4</p> <p>A score between 1 and 2 out of 4</p> <p>A score less than 1 out of 4</p> |
|---|--|

**F Trade Facilitation Measures for post COVID-19 period**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Remote working practice will continue in customs</li> <li>2. Measures with respect to the utilization of digitalization taken will continue in customs</li> <li>3. Additional physical measures for trade facilitation that were introduced will continue</li> <li>4. The new status and organizational structure of current trade-related bodies will be permanent in the post pandemic era</li> <li>5. Additional new intra-agency body introduced will be permanent in the post pandemic era</li> <li>6. The new or additional legal or administrative framework developed will be permanent in the post pandemic era</li> <li>7. The new cooperation agreements (bilateral/regional/international) will be permanent in the post pandemic era</li> <li>8. The new communication strategy will be permanent in the post pandemic era</li> </ol> | <p>A score of 4 or higher out of 5</p> <p>A score between 3 and 4 out of 4</p> <p>A score between 2 and 3 out of 4</p> <p>A score between 1 and 2 out of 4</p> <p>A score less than 1 out of 4</p> |
|--|--|

**II Overall Tier Placement**

- |               |   |
|---------------|---|
| <b>Tier 1</b> | 5 or more Tier 1 placements out of 6 <i>or</i> at least 4 Tier 1 placement and 2 Tier 2 placements across domains A to F        |
| <b>Tier 2</b> | 5 placements out of 6 higher than or equal to Tier 2 <i>or</i> 4 Tier 2 placement and 2 Tier 3 placements across domains A to F |
| <b>Tier 3</b> | 4 placements out of 6 higher than or equal to Tier 3 <i>or</i> 3 Tier 3 placement and 3 Tier 4 placements across domains A to F |
| <b>Tier 4</b> | 3 placements out of 6 higher than or equal to Tier 4 <i>or</i> 3 Tier 4 placement and 3 Tier 5 placements across domains A to F |
| <b>Tier 5</b> | 3 or more Tier 5 placements out of 6 across areas A to F. Tier 5 placement has priority over all others                         |

### 4.3.1 Assessment of trade facilitation measure on trade and COVID-19

Table 8 presents domain wise average score along with the tier placement of a country in each domain for 27 OIC member states for which the survey data could be obtained. The domains A to F are described in Table 7. The average score is calculated as the average of each item score under that domain. The items of each domain can be found in the survey questionnaire forms in Supplement A (see also Table 7 and Table 8). Columns 4 to 8 of Table 8 give the tier class of each domain, which is obtained using the criteria in Table 7. For domain D the evaluation is based on “Exists” (score of 1) and “Does not Exists” (Score of 0), while for other domains all items have an average (averaged over all responses) score between 0 and 5 and domain score is obtained as average of all item scores.

Based on the criteria given in Panel I of Table 7, each domain in Table **Hata! Başvuru kaynağı bulunamadı.**8 has its own indicators. Domain A has 3 indicators, domain B has 11 indicators, domain C has 9 indicators, domain D has 7 indicators, domain E has 6 indicators, and domain F has 8 indicators.

A particular domain is put in Tier 1 (the highest rank tier) if the domain’s average score over the indicators is 4 or higher out of maximum of 5. Placements for Tier 2, Tier 3, Tier 4 and Tier 5 are similarly made using the criteria and indicators in Table 7. As the survey takes averages over all responses for a particular country, we set a rule for the “satisfactory score” for each indicator. For all domains, a score above 2.5 is assumed as satisfactory assuming maximum score of 5 and minimum score of 0. Given the scores for indicators, the Tier placement is made using the criteria given in Table **Hata! Başvuru kaynağı bulunamadı.**7. In general, the higher the score of each domain in a particular country, the domains of that country are assigned higher Tier. In contrast, the lower the score is, the lower rank Tier is assigned to that domain in each country. However, there is not a one-to-one correspondence between the average score and the overall tier placement, because the overall tier placement is based on counting rules given in Panel II of Table **7Hata! Başvuru kaynağı bulunamadı.**. A country may be placed in a low Tier even though it has a higher-than-average score in a domain, if the majority of its scores are low. A list of 27 participating countries by their tier class is given in Table 9. According to the results given in Table 9, 2 countries (Turkey and Morocco) could be placed in Tier 1, seven countries in Tier 2 (Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Cameroon, Kyrgyzstan, and Libya), 11 in Tier 3 (Azerbaijan, Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Malaysia, Maldives, Nigeria, Senegal, and Sudan), four in Tier 4 (Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and Uganda), and three in Tier 5 (Chad, Lebanon, and Tunisia). Most countries are placed in lower tiers for three domains: Institutions and Capacity Building (domain B), Effects of COVID-19 on Trade and Customs (domain A), and Specific Trade Facilitation Measures for COVID-19 period (domain E).

**Table 8. Summary of Indicators for Trade Facilitation Measures**

Code	Criterion	Score	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4	Tier 5
<i>Afghanistan</i>							
A	Effects of COVID-19 on Trade and Customs	3.67		✓			
B	Institutions and Capacity Building	0.14					✓
C	Trade Facilitation-Procedures	4.00	✓				
D	Transparency and Cooperation-Coordination Enforcement	4.43	✓				
E	Specific Trade Facilitation Measures for COVID-19 period	5.00	✓				

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F	Trade Facilitation Measures for post COVID-19 period	5.00	✓		
<b>Algeria</b>					
A	Effects of COVID-19 on Trade and Customs	3.50		✓	
B	Institutions and Capacity Building	2.45			✓
C	Trade Facilitation-Procedures	3.56		✓	
D	Transparency and Cooperation-Coordination Enforcement	4.00	✓		
E	Specific Trade Facilitation Measures for COVID-19 period	5.00	✓		
F	Trade Facilitation Measures for post COVID-19 period	3.25		✓	
<b>Azerbaijan</b>					
A	Effects of COVID-19 on Trade and Customs	2.00			✓
B	Institutions and Capacity Building	2.09			✓
C	Trade Facilitation-Procedures	4.71	✓		
D	Transparency and Cooperation-Coordination Enforcement	3.77		✓	
E	Specific Trade Facilitation Measures for COVID-19 period	3.00		✓	
F	Trade Facilitation Measures for post COVID-19 period	3.23		✓	
<b>Bahrain</b>					
A	Effects of COVID-19 on Trade and Customs	3.83		✓	
B	Institutions and Capacity Building	2.50			✓
C	Trade Facilitation-Procedures	4.00	✓		
D	Transparency and Cooperation-Coordination Enforcement	3.71		✓	
E	Specific Trade Facilitation Measures for COVID-19 period	5.00	✓		
F	Trade Facilitation Measures for post COVID-19 period	3.75		✓	
<b>Bangladesh</b>					
A	Effects of COVID-19 on Trade and Customs	2.50			✓
B	Institutions and Capacity Building	2.00			✓
C	Trade Facilitation-Procedures	3.61		✓	
D	Transparency and Cooperation-Coordination Enforcement	3.29		✓	
E	Specific Trade Facilitation Measures for COVID-19 period	3.33		✓	
F	Trade Facilitation Measures for post COVID-19 period	3.56		✓	
<b>Brunei Darussalam</b>					
A	Effects of COVID-19 on Trade and Customs	1.67			✓
B	Institutions and Capacity Building	1.82			✓
C	Trade Facilitation-Procedures	3.22		✓	
D	Transparency and Cooperation-Coordination Enforcement	3.29		✓	
E	Specific Trade Facilitation Measures for COVID-19 period	2.50			✓
F	Trade Facilitation Measures for post COVID-19 period	2.50			✓
<b>Burkina Faso</b>					
A	Effects of COVID-19 on Trade and Customs	1.67			✓
B	Institutions and Capacity Building	0.82			✓
C	Trade Facilitation-Procedures	1.39			✓
D	Transparency and Cooperation-Coordination Enforcement	1.43			✓
E	Specific Trade Facilitation Measures for COVID-19 period	2.08		✓	
F	Trade Facilitation Measures for post COVID-19 period	1.69			✓
<b>Cameroon</b>					
A	Effects of COVID-19 on Trade and Customs	2.33			✓
B	Institutions and Capacity Building	3.00		✓	
C	Trade Facilitation-Procedures	4.00	✓		
D	Transparency and Cooperation-Coordination Enforcement	4.00	✓		
E	Specific Trade Facilitation Measures for COVID-19 period	5.00	✓		
F	Trade Facilitation Measures for post COVID-19 period	3.00		✓	
<b>Chad</b>					
A	Effects of COVID-19 on Trade and Customs	0.00			✓
B	Institutions and Capacity Building	2.45		✓	
C	Trade Facilitation-Procedures	0.61			✓
D	Transparency and Cooperation-Coordination Enforcement	0.93			✓
E	Specific Trade Facilitation Measures for COVID-19 period	1.67		✓	

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F	Trade Facilitation Measures for post COVID-19 period	2.62		✓	
<b>Indonesia</b>					
A	Effects of COVID-19 on Trade and Customs	1.92			✓
B	Institutions and Capacity Building	2.52		✓	
C	Trade Facilitation-Procedures	4.56	✓		
D	Transparency and Cooperation-Coordination Enforcement	5.00	✓		
E	Specific Trade Facilitation Measures for COVID-19 period	3.54		✓	
F	Trade Facilitation Measures for post COVID-19 period	4.16	✓		
<b>Iran</b>					
A	Effects of COVID-19 on Trade and Customs	0.00			✓
B	Institutions and Capacity Building	2.18		✓	
C	Trade Facilitation-Procedures	3.67	✓		
D	Transparency and Cooperation-Coordination Enforcement	3.57	✓		
E	Specific Trade Facilitation Measures for COVID-19 period	2.50		✓	
F	Trade Facilitation Measures for post COVID-19 period	3.25	✓		
<b>Iraq</b>					
A	Effects of COVID-19 on Trade and Customs	2.67		✓	
B	Institutions and Capacity Building	2.64		✓	
C	Trade Facilitation-Procedures	1.11			✓
D	Transparency and Cooperation-Coordination Enforcement	3.43		✓	
E	Specific Trade Facilitation Measures for COVID-19 period	5.00	✓		
F	Trade Facilitation Measures for post COVID-19 period	5.00	✓		
<b>Jordan</b>					
A	Effects of COVID-19 on Trade and Customs	2.17		✓	
B	Institutions and Capacity Building	2.82		✓	
C	Trade Facilitation-Procedures	4.72	✓		
D	Transparency and Cooperation-Coordination Enforcement	5.00	✓		
E	Specific Trade Facilitation Measures for COVID-19 period	2.92		✓	
F	Trade Facilitation Measures for post COVID-19 period	2.50		✓	
<b>Kyrgyzstan</b>					
A	Effects of COVID-19 on Trade and Customs	1.50			✓
B	Institutions and Capacity Building	3.32		✓	
C	Trade Facilitation-Procedures	4.50	✓		
D	Transparency and Cooperation-Coordination Enforcement	4.50	✓		
E	Specific Trade Facilitation Measures for COVID-19 period	4.17	✓		
F	Trade Facilitation Measures for post COVID-19 period	4.56	✓		
<b>Lebanon</b>					
A	Effects of COVID-19 on Trade and Customs	3.33		✓	
B	Institutions and Capacity Building	0.73			✓
C	Trade Facilitation-Procedures	3.22		✓	
D	Transparency and Cooperation-Coordination Enforcement	3.14		✓	
E	Specific Trade Facilitation Measures for COVID-19 period	0.00			✓
F	Trade Facilitation Measures for post COVID-19 period	0.00			✓
<b>Libya</b>					
A	Effects of COVID-19 on Trade and Customs	2.67		✓	
B	Institutions and Capacity Building	2.27		✓	
C	Trade Facilitation-Procedures	3.67		✓	
D	Transparency and Cooperation-Coordination Enforcement	3.43		✓	
E	Specific Trade Facilitation Measures for COVID-19 period	3.33		✓	
F	Trade Facilitation Measures for post COVID-19 period	3.00		✓	
<b>Malaysia</b>					
A	Effects of COVID-19 on Trade and Customs	3.00		✓	
B	Institutions and Capacity Building	3.09		✓	
C	Trade Facilitation-Procedures	3.89		✓	
D	Transparency and Cooperation-Coordination Enforcement	4.29	✓		
E	Specific Trade Facilitation Measures for COVID-19 period	1.67			✓
F	Trade Facilitation Measures for post COVID-19 period	2.75		✓	
<b>Maldives</b>					

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A	Effects of COVID-19 on Trade and Customs	2.17		✓	
B	Institutions and Capacity Building	1.86			✓
C	Trade Facilitation-Procedures	3.61	✓		
D	Transparency and Cooperation-Coordination Enforcement	3.57	✓		
E	Specific Trade Facilitation Measures for COVID-19 period	0.83			✓
F	Trade Facilitation Measures for post COVID-19 period	2.25		✓	
<b>Mali</b>					
A	Effects of COVID-19 on Trade and Customs	1.67			✓
B	Institutions and Capacity Building	1.36			✓
C	Trade Facilitation-Procedures	2.22		✓	
D	Transparency and Cooperation-Coordination Enforcement	2.14		✓	
E	Specific Trade Facilitation Measures for COVID-19 period	1.67			✓
F	Trade Facilitation Measures for post COVID-19 period	4.50	✓		
<b>Morocco</b>					
A	Effects of COVID-19 on Trade and Customs	3.33		✓	
B	Institutions and Capacity Building	4.18	✓		
C	Trade Facilitation-Procedures	4.89	✓		
D	Transparency and Cooperation-Coordination Enforcement	4.14	✓		
E	Specific Trade Facilitation Measures for COVID-19 period	4.17	✓		
F	Trade Facilitation Measures for post COVID-19 period	3.62		✓	
<b>Niger</b>					
A	Effects of COVID-19 on Trade and Customs	1.00			✓
B	Institutions and Capacity Building	2.55		✓	
C	Trade Facilitation-Procedures	1.56			✓
D	Transparency and Cooperation-Coordination Enforcement	3.71	✓		
E	Specific Trade Facilitation Measures for COVID-19 period	3.33	✓		
F	Trade Facilitation Measures for post COVID-19 period	1.38			✓
<b>Nigeria</b>					
A	Effects of COVID-19 on Trade and Customs	1.83			✓
B	Institutions and Capacity Building	3.32	✓		
C	Trade Facilitation-Procedures	2.83		✓	
D	Transparency and Cooperation-Coordination Enforcement	3.93	✓		
E	Specific Trade Facilitation Measures for COVID-19 period	3.75	✓		
F	Trade Facilitation Measures for post COVID-19 period	4.50	✓		
<b>Senegal</b>					
A	Effects of COVID-19 on Trade and Customs	1.80			✓
B	Institutions and Capacity Building	1.95			✓
C	Trade Facilitation-Procedures	3.78	✓		
D	Transparency and Cooperation-Coordination Enforcement	2.94		✓	
E	Specific Trade Facilitation Measures for COVID-19 period	2.17		✓	
F	Trade Facilitation Measures for post COVID-19 period	3.10	✓		
<b>Sudan</b>					
A	Effects of COVID-19 on Trade and Customs	1.67			✓
B	Institutions and Capacity Building	1.27			✓
C	Trade Facilitation-Procedures	4.00	✓		
D	Transparency and Cooperation-Coordination Enforcement	3.00	✓		
E	Specific Trade Facilitation Measures for COVID-19 period	2.50		✓	
F	Trade Facilitation Measures for post COVID-19 period	3.25	✓		
<b>Tunisia</b>					
A	Effects of COVID-19 on Trade and Customs	1.67			✓
B	Institutions and Capacity Building	0.00			✓
C	Trade Facilitation-Procedures	4.33	✓		
D	Transparency and Cooperation-Coordination Enforcement	2.57		✓	
E	Specific Trade Facilitation Measures for COVID-19 period	0.00			✓
F	Trade Facilitation Measures for post COVID-19 period	0.62			✓
<b>Turkey</b>					
A	Effects of COVID-19 on Trade and Customs	4.00	✓		
B	Institutions and Capacity Building	3.00		✓	

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C	Trade Facilitation-Procedures	4.50	✓		
D	Transparency and Cooperation-Coordination Enforcement	4.43	✓		
E	Specific Trade Facilitation Measures for COVID-19 period	4.58	✓		
F	Trade Facilitation Measures for post COVID-19 period	4.00	✓		
<b>Uganda</b>					
A	Effects of COVID-19 on Trade and Customs	1.67		✓	
B	Institutions and Capacity Building	0.73			✓
C	Trade Facilitation-Procedures	3.22	✓		
D	Transparency and Cooperation-Coordination Enforcement	1.43		✓	
E	Specific Trade Facilitation Measures for COVID-19 period	0.83			✓
F	Trade Facilitation Measures for post COVID-19 period	2.75		✓	

**Table 9. Tier Placements**

**TIER 1**

Turkey  
Morocco

**TIER 2**

Afghanistan  
Algeria  
Bahrain  
Bangladesh  
Cameroon  
Kyrgyzstan  
Libya

**TIER 3**

Azerbaijan  
Brunei Darussalam  
Indonesia  
Iran  
Iraq  
Jordan  
Malaysia  
Maldives  
Nigeria  
Senegal  
Sudan

**TIER 4**

Burkina Faso  
Mali  
Niger  
Uganda

**TIER 5**

Chad  
Lebanon  
Tunisia

**Non-Participant OIC countries**

Benin	Mozambique
Comoros	Pakistan
Djibouti	Palestine
Egypt	Qatar
Gabon	Saudi Arabia
Gambia	Sierra Leone
Guinea	Somalia
Ivory Coast	Sultanate of Oman
Kazakhstan	Suriname
Kuwait	Togo
Mauritania	Yemen

Each country's response strength to enhance trade facilitation is assessed on the basis of six domains given in Panel I of Table 7, where each country's score for these domains is given in columns 3 to 8 of Table 10. The column 9 provide an average score of all domains for each country. Columns 10 to 12 gives a score based on Principal Component Analysis (PCA,) rank of each country based on the PCA score, and overall Tier class of the country, respectively. The overall tier class of each country is determined based on the criteria in Panel II of Table 7.

Table 10 gives a general picture of overall domain wise rankings of 27 OIC member states for various pillars on trade facilitation response and effect of COVID-19. Domain wise, majority of countries are doing below average (11 countries in Tier 3, 4 in Tier 4, and 3 in Tier 5) in mitigating the effect of COVID-19 on trade. Seven countries (Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Cameroon, Kyrgyzstan, and Libya) are placed in Tier 2 while Turkey and Morocco are placed in Tier 1. Moreover, no single region is doing better than the others. However, looking at the results, it could be inferred that two regions, i.e., Asia and Arab countries are doing better than the third region, i.e., Africa. If the performance is counted country-wise, Turkey tops the ranking in all countries, followed by Morocco. Chad is doing worst exclusively in all domains. The poor performance of all countries is due to low performance on two domains: Effects of COVID-19 on Trade and Customs (domain A) and Institutions and Capacity Building (domain B). The worst performance is observed in Institutions and Capacity Building while the best performance is observed for Trade Facilitation-Procedures (domain C) followed by Transparency and Cooperation-Coordination Enforcement (domain D).

**Table 10. Ranking of OIC member states by indicators for trade facilitation**

No	Country	Score A	Score B	Score C	Score D	Score E	Score F	Avg. Score	PCA Score	Rank	Tier Class
1	Turkey	4.00	3.00	4.50	4.43	4.58	4.00	4.09	5.00	1	Tier 1
2	Morocco	3.33	4.18	4.89	4.14	4.17	3.63	4.06	4.96	2	Tier 1
3	Kyrgyzstan	1.50	3.32	4.50	4.50	4.17	4.56	3.76	4.55	3	Tier 2
4	Bahrain	3.83	2.50	4.00	3.71	5.00	3.75	3.80	4.52	4	Tier 2
5	Indonesia	1.92	2.52	4.56	5.00	3.54	4.16	3.62	4.39	5	Tier 3
6	Afghanistan	3.67	0.14	4.00	4.43	5.00	5.00	3.71	4.38	6	Tier 2
7	Algeria	3.50	2.45	3.56	4.00	5.00	3.25	3.63	4.33	7	Tier 2
8	Cameroon	2.33	3.00	4.00	4.00	5.00	3.00	3.56	4.23	8	Tier 2
9	Jordan	2.17	2.82	4.72	5.00	2.92	2.50	3.35	4.05	9	Tier 3
10	Nigeria	1.83	3.32	2.83	3.93	3.75	4.50	3.36	4.00	10	Tier 3
11	Iraq	2.67	2.64	1.11	3.43	5.00	5.00	3.31	3.89	11	Tier 3
12	Malaysia	3.00	3.09	3.89	4.29	1.67	2.75	3.11	3.69	12	Tier 3

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13	Azerbaijan	2.00	2.09	4.71	3.77	3.00	3.23	3.13	3.58	13	Tier 3
14	Libya	2.67	2.27	3.67	3.43	3.33	3.00	3.06	3.49	14	Tier 2
15	Bangladesh	2.50	2.00	3.61	3.29	3.33	3.56	3.05	3.44	15	Tier 2
16	Senegal	1.80	1.95	3.78	2.94	2.17	3.10	2.62	2.82	16	Tier 3
17	Sudan	1.67	1.27	4.00	3.00	2.50	3.25	2.61	2.78	17	Tier 3
18	Iran	0.00	2.18	3.67	3.57	2.50	3.25	2.53	2.75	18	Tier 3
19	Brunei Darussalam	1.67	1.82	3.22	3.29	2.50	2.50	2.50	2.70	19	Tier 3
20	Maldives	2.17	1.86	3.61	3.57	0.83	2.25	2.38	2.58	20	Tier 3
21	Niger	1.00	2.55	1.56	3.71	3.33	1.38	2.25	2.48	21	Tier 4
22	Mali	1.67	1.36	2.22	2.14	1.67	4.50	2.26	2.25	22	Tier 4
23	Lebanon	3.33	0.73	3.22	3.14	0.00	0.00	1.74	1.65	23	Tier 5
24	Uganda	1.67	0.73	3.22	1.43	0.83	2.75	1.77	1.47	24	Tier 4
25	Tunisia	1.67	0.00	4.33	2.57	0.00	0.63	1.53	1.23	25	Tier 5
26	Burkina Faso	1.67	0.82	1.39	1.43	2.08	1.69	1.51	1.17	26	Tier 4
27	Chad	0.00	2.45	0.61	0.93	1.67	2.63	1.38	1.00	27	Tier 5

**Note:** Score A is score for Effects of COVID-19 on Trade and Customs, Score B is for Institutions and Capacity Building, Score C is for Trade Facilitation-Procedures, Score D is Transparency and Cooperation-Coordination Enforcement, Score E is for Specific Trade Facilitation Measures for COVID-19 period and Score F is for Trade Facilitation Measures for post COVID-19 period. Rank is the rank according to Average Score. The scale of Score A to Score F ranges from 1 to 5. The Avg. Score is the average of the Scores A, B, C, D, E, and F. The ranking is based on the principal components scores (PCA Score) with one component. PCA Score is scaled to range between 1 and 5. Listed countries are restricted by the availability of survey data administrated via interned based survey data collection. Tier class has been determined according to the classification given in panel II of Table 7.

## Chapter 5: Best Practices and Case Studies

In response to the pandemic, many governments around the world took certain measures to facilitate or restrict the flow of goods across the borders based on different considerations at individual country level. This report will specifically focus on three countries, namely Canada, The Republic of Korea and the Sultanate of Oman, that are believed to be more proactive in facilitating the trade as compared to others during the pandemic. After reviewing the general properties of the actions taken by these countries, this chapter proceeds with more comprehensive analyses on four case studies selected from three geographic groupings of the OIC, namely Malaysia and Indonesia (Asia Group), Morocco (Arab Group) and Nigeria (Africa Group). The case studies provide an in-depth assessment of trade facilitation measures taken in response to the pandemic in order to present a wider perspective on policy issues and challenges faced by OIC countries during crisis times. While the analyses on best practices rely solely on desk-research, the analyses on the case studies also include survey and interviews. Therefore, the structure and content of best practices and case studies differ.

### 5.1. Best Practices

Even though all countries around the world took various measures to address the challenges posed by the pandemic, some countries were relatively more pro-active than others in taking targeted measures to facilitate cross border trade in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This section reviews the measures taken by one OIC and two non-OIC countries as best practices, namely Canada, the Republic of Korea and Oman. It should be noted at the outset that the measures taken by these countries to facilitate trade do not represent fundamental changes on existing practices, but they typically address some pandemic related challenges faced by traders to attain a more efficient cross-border flow of goods. The overall objective is to review the existing tools and mechanism towards facilitating trade, and encapsulate the measures taken in response to the pandemic.

Among the three selected countries, Canada has been a long-standing supporter of trade facilitation at global level and pays great attention to the promotion and implementation of related measures by all countries. Its efforts during the pandemic were basically towards ensuring a smoother flow of goods across borders. Trade facilitation measures in Korea mainly targeted smooth flow of intermediate goods for its manufacturing industry to avoid interruption in industrial activities and associated unemployment. In the case of Oman, priority was to enable access to essential goods by further improving the logistics infrastructure in line with its long-term objectives to become a logistics hub.

#### 5.1.1 Canada

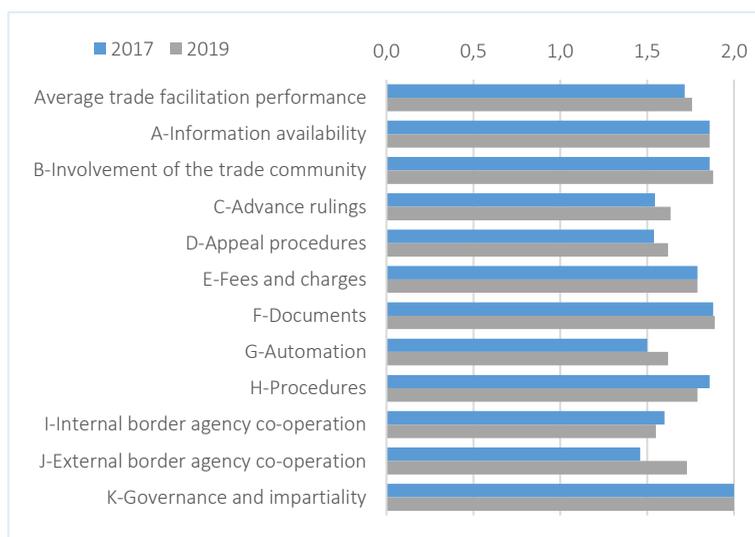
##### 5.1.1.1. Existing Tools and Policies in Trade Facilitation

Canada has been taking effective, transparent and streamlined procedures to facilitate cross-border trade. It made significant investments to modernize its border regimes to expedite the flow of goods without compromising on non-trade objectives such as security. Canada views trade facilitation as a win-win for all countries and as a natural complement to market access

negotiations. Accordingly, it has been active in promoting the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement and submitted over 35 textual proposals, together with some other countries, on specific measures of the trade facilitation related articles of the GATT for their further improvement. In this regard, Canada has been a co-sponsor of binding advance rulings for tariff classification, border agency coordination and separation of release of goods from clearance procedures. (Government of Canada, 2021a).

Canada had already well-advanced streamlining customs procedures in place before the COVID-19 pandemic. A number of measures towards facilitating trade initiated before the pandemic include the Customs Self-Assessment (CSA) program, Electronic Data Interchange (EDI), the single window initiative and the CBSA Assessment and Revenue Management (CARM) project. The CSA program is designed for low-risk, pre-approved importers, carriers and registered drivers. It simplifies many of the import border requirements so that to process low-risk.

**Figure 39. Performance of Canada in OECD Trade Indicators**



Source: OECD Trade Facilitation Indicators.

EDI is a standardized way of electronically exchanging information between and within businesses, organizations, government entities and other groups. These standards specify the formats, character sets, and data elements used in the exchange of business documents and forms. The Canada Border Services Agency's (CBSA) Single Window Initiative streamlines the sharing of commercial import data between the Government of Canada and the import community. Along with the CBSA, there are nine participating government departments and agencies representing 38 government programs. Finally, the CARM project is a multi-year initiative that is designed to transform the collection of duties and taxes for goods imported into Canada. Through CARM, the CBSA is expected to modernize and streamline the process of importing commercial goods. The project is expected to be completed during spring 2022. Canada has also the oldest authorized economic program in the world.

In this connection, Canada was ranked among the top countries in facilitating trade. In OECD TFIs, it attained a score of 1.76 out of 2 in 2019 (Figure 37). Similarly, it attained an average score of 83.9 in the UNTF Survey, putting the country among the best performing countries in several dimensions. **According to the Doing Business indicators of the World Bank**, Canada ranked 51<sup>st</sup> in trading across border index, with average time to export and import not exceeding 3 hours in terms of border and documentary compliance (Table 11).

**Table 111. Trading Across Borders Index in Canada (2020)**

<b>Time to export: Border compliance (hours)</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>Time to import: Border compliance (hours)</b>	<b>2</b>
Cost to export: Border compliance (USD)	167	Cost to import: Border compliance (USD)	172
Time to export: Documentary compliance (hours)	1	Time to import: Documentary compliance (hours)	1
Cost to export: Documentary compliance (USD)	156	Cost to import: Documentary compliance (USD)	163

### 5.1.1.2. Trade Facilitation Measures during the Pandemic

With the outbreak of the pandemic, Canada took mainly five critical measures to facilitate trade procedures. These are (i) Implementation of the e-Longroom initiative, (ii) Extension of timeframe for all payments due to the CBSA, (iii) Grace period for late accounting penalties, (iv) Extension of the period for submitting corrections for trade compliance, and (v) Temporary waiving of customs duties and sales taxes on all goods used in response to the pandemic. A summary of these measures is provided below.

**Implementation of the e-Longroom initiative (permanent):** The Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) has implemented the Electronic Longroom (e-Longroom) initiative, an email and digital stamping service offered at some CBSA offices. It created a new process for providing electronic copies of release documents to the CBSA, thereby further reducing the paper burden. Unlike the other measures taken against the pandemic, the e-Longroom process is not a temporary measure but will remain in place even after the pandemic to facilitate trade for all goods. There are currently 26 locations offering the E-Longroom service. CBSA plans to expand it to 100 offices by the end of 2021. Expected benefits of the initiative include simplified import process, reduced paper burden and decreased cost of doing business (WTO, 2020c). The initiative is also connected to the Article 10.1: Formalities and Documentation Requirements and Article 10.2: Acceptance of Copies of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA).

**Extension of timeframe for all payments due to the CBSA (temporary):** Goods imported into Canada are generally subject to the Goods and Services Tax (GST), at a rate of 5%, as well as applicable customs duties, which vary by product and country of origin. Typically, payments owing for customs duties and the GST on imports are due on a monthly basis (WTO, 2020a). In order to provide cash flow and liquidity support for importers, Canada announced on 27 March 2020 that it will defer payment deadlines (customs duties and GST on regular imports, re-assessments, penalties, etc.) for March, April, and May to 30 June 2020. Importers are required to submit accounting declarations for imported goods released on minimum documentation

within the required timeframes (Customs Notice 20-11).<sup>7</sup> This measure provided benefits in terms of additional flexibility to traders and alleviated burden on businesses experiencing financial hardship. After its expiration, businesses with difficulty in remitting taxes and customs duty can still contact the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) and CBSA to make a request for the cancellation of penalties and interest, and/or for a flexible payment arrangement with the CRA (Government of Canada, 2020).

**Grace period for late accounting penalties (temporary):** The CBSA is provided a 53-business days grace period for late accounting penalties. Clients did not have to submit an application to have late accounting penalties waived. This applied to transactions released from March 11 to May 26 2020 (Customs Notice 20-10). It provided benefits in terms of additional flexibility to traders and alleviated burden on businesses experiencing financial hardship.

**Extension of the period for submitting corrections for trade compliance (temporary):** Canada has extended by 30 days the period of 90 days for submitting corrections following a CBSA trade compliance verification where errors were found (Customs Notice 20-09). This means that importers now have 120 days to file corrections requested by the CBSA verifications of trade compliance with the Tariff Classification, Valuation and Origin programs. The measure remained effective during 18 March – 11 November 2020. However, requests may still be sent by e-mail to the CBSA to seek an extension to the 90-day filing period. The aim was to provide additional flexibility to traders and help alleviate administrative burden for the traders.

**Temporary waiving of customs duties and sales taxes (temporary):** To ensure the flow of vital medical supplies in response to the COVID-19 crisis, Canada is temporarily waiving customs duties and sales taxes on all goods used in response to the pandemic imported by or on behalf of public health agencies, hospitals, testing sites, and first response organizations (e.g., police, fire and local civil defence groups, including medical response teams), as well as public or private care residences (WTO, 2020a). The action is effective 16 March 2020. Canada is also waiving customs duties on certain goods for all importers, including personal protective equipment, in order to support efforts to combat the spread of COVID-19 (WTO, 2020b). The Certain Medical Goods Remission Order (COVID19) is effective 5 May 2020 until further notice. Key categories of products covered by the measure include diagnostic test kits, face and eye protection, gloves, protective garments, disinfectants/sterilization products, medical devices, thermometers, wipes, and medical consumables, and other goods (e.g., soap). To facilitate availability of these goods, their customs clearance will be expedited where possible (Customs Notice 20-19). The Government of Canada later in December announced the temporary relief of Goods and Services Tax / Harmonized Sales Tax (GST/HST) for importation of certain face masks and face shields (Customs Notice 20-34).

In addition to these five measures, the Government of Canada took some other measures to facilitate cross-border transactions. On September 30, 2020, the CBSA launched the Canadian Export Reporting System (CERS), a web-based self-service portal for exporters to electronically submit their export declarations, bulk data uploads and monthly summary reports (Government of Canada, 2021b). It presented new updated information on importation of COVID-19 Vaccines and Drugs (Customs Notice 20-36). On 16 December 2020, it introduced temporary electronic

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<sup>7</sup> The customs notices published by the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) can be accessed from <https://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/publications/cn-ad/menu-eng.html>.

procedures for Canada Border Services Agency's Trade Programs to reduce paper burden. The temporary measures will include electronic submission of Duties Relief Program applications, Drawback claims, Single and Blanket B2 Adjustments and Voluntary Disclosure requests. Yet, the requirement remains to keep a hard copy of all electronically submitted documents and associated supporting documentation (Customs Notice 20-37). It is also noteworthy to mention that Canada introduced the Canadian COVID-19 Capabilities Directory to show what Canada has to offer in the fight against COVID-19 to potential buyers around the world. The directory is to help match export-ready Canadian firms supplying medical supplies, digital health services and other pandemic related goods and services with international partners. Finally, the Government of Canada has been proactive in promoting and encouraging other countries to take measures to expedite customs procedures and facilitate trade in essential goods in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>8</sup>

Overall, the measures taken by Canada serve the purpose of facilitating the flow of not only essential goods, but also other advanced measures to provide traders greater flexibility in fulfilling the customs procedures without major impediment. Its commitment to trade facilitation at global level was reflected in its actions during the pandemic. This was evident not only in its actions at its borders, but also in its strong engagements at WTO level.

## **5.1.2. Republic of Korea**

### **5.1.2.1. Existing Tools and Policies Trade Facilitation**

The Republic of Korea demonstrated a remarkable economic performance since 1970's and became a highly diversified and industrialized economy and a critical actor in international trade. With its timely interventions to upgrade and modernize its customs procedures, it was able to provide effective solutions to overcome the challenges associated with rapidly growing trade volume. Korea's trade facilitation efforts are appreciated at international level and the Korea Customs Service (KCS) considered at the cutting edge of international best practice (WTO, 2017). Since the Trade Automation Act was enacted in 1991, significant progress has been made in automation and digitalization of trade procedures in the country. As a part of the e-Government agenda of the country, the Ministry of Knowledge Economy and the Korea International Trade Association (KITA) have carried out a project to build e-Trade (paperless trade) services and introduced the uTradeHub, a new concept of a national e-Trade network for conducting and facilitating exportation process.<sup>9</sup>

Another key pillar of trade facilitation and perhaps the most remarkable application was the UNI-PASS system developed by the KCS. It was the world's first 100% electronic clearance portal system and customs single window for automating export/import customs, tax collections, investigations, audits and any other related administrative processes (UNESCAP, 2020). It is composed of 77 modules and has five subordinate systems: a Single Window (SW) system; a clearance management system; a cargo management system; an information management system; and an administration system (Cho and Nam, 2016). It is a 100% Paperless, 24/7 non-

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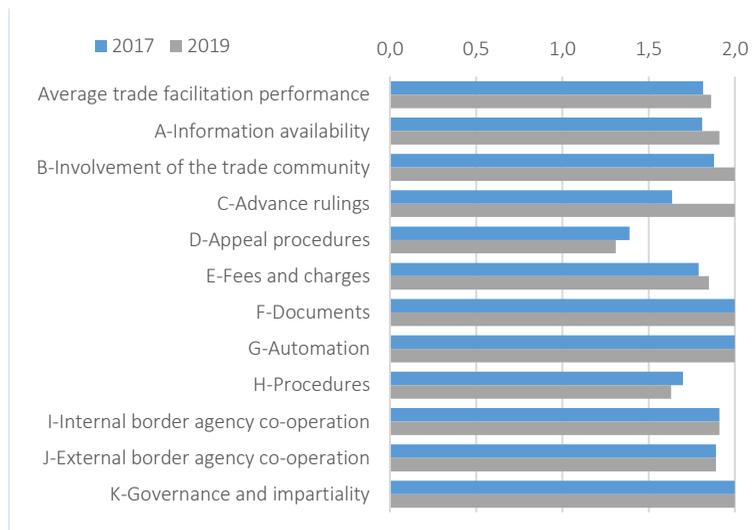
<sup>8</sup> See <https://www.tradecommissioner.gc.ca/campaign-campagne/commerce-international-COVID-19-international-trade.aspx?lang=eng> for various statements of Government officials on this matter.

<sup>9</sup> See [www.utradehub.or.kr](http://www.utradehub.or.kr) for more detailed information on uTradeHub.

stop system that is connected to 40 import/export related agencies and 260 thousand trading companies via Single Window. UNI-PASS is considered one of the fastest and safest e-customs systems among the 180 WCO member states where import clearance and export clearance requires only 1.5 hours and 1.5 minutes respectively. It enables the KCS to electronically process 430 million declarations and 50 million travellers per year. It created 3.5 billion USD in economic effect in the public and private sector while maintaining the same number of customs staffs for the past 30 years in contrast to 18 times increase in trade amount. It promotes trade facilitation through integrated Risk Management system (KCS, 2021). The system is ranked in the first place in the category of customs clearance of World Bank’s Doing Business for six consecutive years during 2009-2014 and recognized as a best practice. 10 Countries have taken the UNI-PASS system as model in the establishment of electronic Customs systems, including four OIC countries namely Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Cameroon.

In this connection, Korea has been ranked among the top countries in trade facilitation indicators. According to the OECD TFIs, its average score was 1.86, the third highest score among the participating countries (Figure 40). It was also ranked first in the 2019 Global Survey of Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation. According to the Doing Business indicators of the World Bank, Korea ranked 36<sup>th</sup> in trading across border index, with latest statistics on time and cost related to exports and imports provided in Table 12.

**Figure 40. Performance of Korea in OECD Trade Indicators**



Source: OECD Trade Facilitation Indicators.

Estimates of gains from its trade facilitation by 2020 are estimated to attain 2.2% of GDP (US\$29 billion) and 8.2% of exports (US\$52 billion) (WTO, 2017).

**Table 12. Trading Across Borders Index in Korea (2020)**

<b>Time to export: Border compliance (hours)</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>Time to import: Border compliance (hours)</b>	<b>6</b>
Cost to export: Border compliance (USD)	185	Cost to import: Border compliance (USD)	315
Time to export: Documentary compliance (hours)	1	Time to import: Documentary compliance (hours)	1
Cost to export: Documentary compliance (USD)	11	Cost to import: Documentary compliance (USD)	27

### 5.1.2.2. Trade Facilitation Measures during the Pandemic

Even though the Republic of Korea ranked among the top countries in major international rankings, the unprecedented challenges of the pandemic have pushed it to undertake additional innovative measures to facilitate trade and sustainable growth. According to the COVID-19 Temporary Trade Measures database of International Trade Centre, Korea implemented six restrictive trade policies and one liberalizing policy. It temporarily restricted export of melt blown filters (masks), filtering respirators and masks and the export ban still continues for masks. It also applied import bans for the wild animals. On the other hand, Korea has temporarily waived tariffs on the import of surgical and sanitary masks.

The Republic of Korea communicated four trade facilitation measures to the WTO as a response to the pandemic, which are all temporary measures. These included (i) acceptance of copies of the certificate of origin, (ii) omitting document screening and visiting inspection in the process of issuing certificates of origin, (iii) inclusion of certain health products in the list of tariff exemptions, and (iv) minimizing customs clearance procedures for protective masks (WTO, 2020c).

One of the first response was to accept a copy instead of the original document of the certificate of origin to impose preferential tariffs. It was initiated in March 2020 and valid until further notice. It covers all products and sectors with the expected benefit of reducing paper burden (WTO, 2020c). The KCS released a special guideline regarding simplified procedures for Free Trade Agreement (FTA) claims to help firms facing difficulties in obtaining certificates of origin from different countries during the pandemic and extended the retrospective claim period by an additional one year. It has also allowed the importers to make the payments of customs duties within a year of the declaration date, instead of the 15-day limit prior to this guidance (EY, 2020; UNESCAP, 2020). The other measure was related to omitting document screening and visiting inspection in the process of issuing certificates of origin in case companies recognized by the KCS as excellent companies in export safety management. This was initiated in April 2020 and valid until further notice with the expected benefit of simplified procedures related to import process (WTO, 2020c).

There were two other majors that were implemented for 3-4 months only to simplify the import processes for the COVID-19 related health products. The Government of Korea included surgical and protective masks, hand sanitizers and thermometers in the list of tariff exemptions for self-use of small quantities of goods. Accordingly, medical and surgical masks, melt blown and the raw material for mask production became 0% duty rate temporarily from 18 March 2020 to 30 June 2020. Prior to this temporary relief, the MFN rate was 10% for the masks and 8% for melt blown (EY, 2020). They are also exempted from the license requirements of the Korean Ministry of Food and Drug Safety (MFDS) It also minimized customs clearance procedures for protective masks imported for the purposes of relief, donation and free distribution to employees by companies, by implementing the "24-hour mask clearance system" throughout 34 regional customs offices nationwide. They were previously requiring permits by the MFDS and taking a long period of time (KCS, 2020).

Most of the responses was designed to minimize the impacts of initial shocks to trade flows. It took measures to speed up customs clearance procedures by establishing Customs Clearance

Support Centres for COVID-19 at major Customs offices across the country with a view to maintaining the global supply chain by facilitating the movement of inbound and outbound raw materials. The KCS provided uninterrupted services to provide speedy clearance for sanitary products, medical devices/equipment and raw materials imports for domestic manufacturers (KCS, 2020). Additional measures taken by the KCS and the Government of Korea were as follows (WTO, 2020c; ITC, 2021; KCS, 2020; EY, 2020; UNESCAP, 2020; Fu, 2020):

- Establishing Customs Clearance Support Centres for COVID-19 at major Customs offices to accelerate customs clearance procedures to avoid interruption in global value chains
- 7/24 customs services for speedy clearance of sanitary products, medical devices/equipment and raw materials imports for domestic manufacturers
- Making efforts to address delays at airports and seaports by allowing cargo of essential raw materials to be transported directly to manufacturing plants without having to enter the terminal upon arrival
- Resolving clearance delays in domestic movement of exported raw materials in partner countries by the help of customs attaches and customs hotlines
- Preparing the “UNI-PASS Emergency Response Manual” to prevent disruption due to the absence of system administrators and the closure of offices
- Designating support teams for emergency clearance of raw materials at several Customs offices in preparation for a temporary surge in the import of raw materials
- Adopting a series of tax relief measures for companies importing raw materials for domestic production, including extension of payment of duties and instalment payment of duties, and mitigating customs investigations, foreign exchange inspections and origin verification for them.
- Setting an appropriate density ratio for each division and performing telecommuting by actively utilizing flexible working hours to prevent infection of custom officials.
- Providing loan/guarantee for export activities by the Korea Trade Insurance Corporation (KTIC). The KTIC will offer lower insurance/guarantee fees for small- and medium-sized export companies. It will also offer export stable funds and support on earlier account receivable collection.
- Striving to expand mutual recognition of the AEO system, which is designed to simplify customs clearance processes and provide other cost-saving benefits for certified companies in certain countries.
- Deferring customs duty investigations, payment reminders and forced collections for major industries affected by the pandemic, particularly related to 25 automobile parts to compensate for shortages of Chinese parts for SMEs caused by the pandemic.
- Taking measures to support the shipping industry by lowering port fees and increasing the proportion of bonds for shipping companies

Overall, the trade facilitation measures of the Republic of Korea during the COVID-19 were built upon its transparency in trade regulations and its already successful digitization of customs. It gave particular importance to preventing value chain disruption, which has significant repercussions on overall economic activities as well as employment in the country. The advanced customs system has enabled the smooth coordination of cross-border trade of essential supplies and intermediate goods despite strict border restrictions. This should encourage OIC countries to accelerate their efforts for digital transformation of customs.

### 5.1.3. The Sultanate of Oman

#### 5.1.3.1. Existing Tools and Policies in Trade Facilitation

Being located on the eastern edge of the Arabian Peninsula, Oman historically remained central for traders travelling between the Indian subcontinent, the Arab world and East Africa. Therefore, facilitating trade has been a key policy issue to benefit from its geographical location. Accordingly, the logistics sector has been a critical component of Oman's economy and a critical enabler for various businesses to thrive. Recognizing its economic importance, Oman initiated the Sultanate of Oman Logistics Strategy 2040 (SOLS 2040) to take advantage of its 2,092 km coastline to become a global logistics hub and a leading logistics provider (Oxford BG, 2019). The government is investing heavily in the logistics related infrastructure projects, such as ports (Duqm and Sohar), free zones (Sohar, Duqm, Salalah and Al Mazunah), industrial estates, roads, airports (Sohar, Muscat, Salalah, Adam and Dhoqum) and rail network (Al Shammakhi et al. 2018).

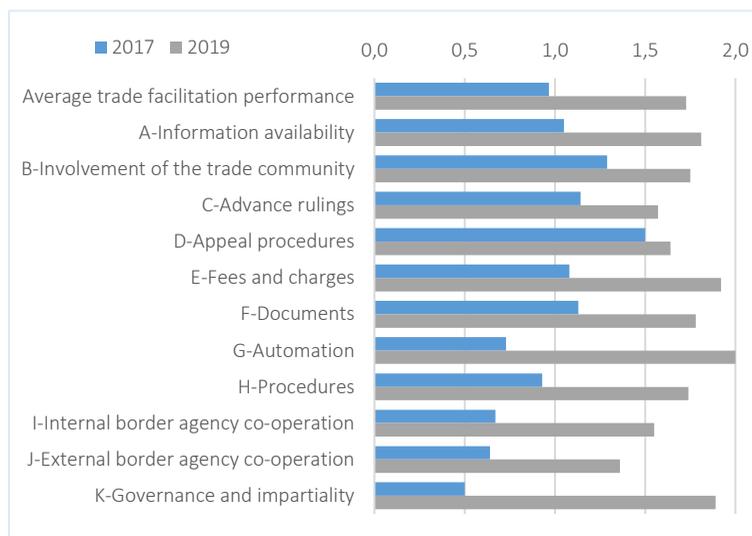
In order to improve the efficiency of customs procedures, it introduced one stop shop, pre-clearance and bonded storage. It initiated its single window service called Bayan in January 2016. The system intended to contribute to the sultanate's target of reducing sea port clearance times from 7.2 days to 1.5 days by 2020. Customs processes in the air transport segment have already fully transitioned to Bayan, with paper documentation discontinued in April 2018 (Oxford BG, 2019). In Oman, 90% of the goods are cleared within an hour of their arrival at the Omani ports through the Bayan system and 22% of the goods are cleared even before their arrival at the ports (Al Matani, 2020).

Over the past few years, the Sultanate has been taking proactive steps towards realizing the WTO TFA, which are also in line with its logistics strategy of SOLS 2040. In this connection, the DGC has implemented post clearance audit of goods, aimed at accelerating the movement of cargo through the borders during May 2019 (Oman Observer, 2019). Post Clearance Audit investigates the accuracy of customs data after a cargo has been released by consolidating the information provided by some users. Audit results are also used to develop the risk management system according to specific scientific criteria to target dangerous goods. Thereby, the traders will enjoy the advantage of rapid release of goods and easing of customs restrictions.

Similarly, the DGC introduced advance rulings program for customs in July 2019 to facilitate trade by accelerating the clearance process at all points of entry. This will allow traders to apply for advance ruling before the import or export procedures, relating to the origin, classification or valuation of the goods. The authorities expect to reduce costs, improve clearance times, and increase confidence in Oman's logistics infrastructure among trading partners (DGC, 2019). The implementation of authorized economic operators (AEO) of Oman was initiated in 2017. There are many advantages offered by Oman Customs to authorized economic operators, which include fast border clearance, reduced number of inspections, international accreditation, and prioritized inspection and clearance at customs stations (WCO, 2020b).

As a result of these proactive interventions toward facilitating trade, the Sultanate became one of the first countries fulfilling all requirements of the Trade Facilitation Agreement of the WTO in 2020. It reflects the readiness of regulations, legislation and business environment in the Sultanate and its keeping pace with global economic developments. Its rapid advancement in trade facilitation is particularly visible in OECD TFIs. As shown in Figure 41, the Sultanate made impressive improvement in many sub-indicators, particularly in governance and impartiality, automation, information availability and internal border agency cooperation. Its average score increased accordingly from 0.97 in 2017 to 1.73 in 2019.

**Figure 41. Performance of Oman in OECD Trade Indicators**



Source: OECD Trade Facilitation Indicators.

According to the Doing Business indicators of the World Bank, Oman ranked 64<sup>th</sup> in trading across border index. It requires further improvement in improving time and costs associated with cross-border transactions (Table 13).

**Table 13. Trading Across Borders Index in Oman**

<b>Time to export: Border compliance (hours)</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>Time to import: Border compliance (hours)</b>	<b>39</b>
Cost to export: Border compliance (USD)	279	Cost to import: Border compliance (USD)	244
Time to export: Documentary compliance (hours)	7	Time to import: Documentary compliance (hours)	7
Cost to export: Documentary compliance (USD)	107	Cost to import: Documentary compliance (USD)	124

### 5.1.3.2. Trade Facilitation Measures during the Pandemic

In order to facilitate import and export operations during the pandemic, an efficient coordination mechanism is established among the related agencies including the General Administration of Customs of the Royal Oman Police, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, the Oman Numbering Centre, the Food Safety and Quality Centre of the Ministry of Agricultural Wealth, Fisheries and Water Resources and the Gulf Cooperation Council Standardization Authority (Oman News, 2020). This enabled the continuity of business

and the smooth flow of import and export movements during the pandemic. As before the pandemic, the Single Window (BAYAN ICMS) remained accessible 24/7 to all brokers, agents and traders, which enables remote clearance of products without a need to attend customs offices.

The major initial responses taken by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MCIIP) and Oman Directorate General of Customs (DGC) included (DGC, 2020; WCO, 2020a; ITC, 2021; Oman News, 2020):

- The requirement to provide original certificates of origin has been suspended.
- Documents accompanying goods will be considered as original documents without collecting the normally required guarantee.
- Customs continues to manage the risks for all imports, exports and transit movements. However, the need for medium risk (yellow lane) physical submission documentary check has been suspended. Risk management will continue using only two lanes, Green or Red.
- Customs has enhanced its risk profiling to include measures against possible counterfeit imports and exports of products designed to combat COVID-19
- In accordance with the Oman Supreme Committee for dealing with the crisis, Customs is enforcing measures to ban the export of certain medical equipment from the Sultanate related to suppression of COVID-19
- The service of issuing validity certificates, health certificates and re-export certificates for food products is transformed into an electronic service through the Bayan customs system, which were issued on paper prior to the pandemic.
- Customs will not require the importer or his representative to be present during any physical examination of goods during this period
- The Oman Numbering Center started to process the issuance of base numbers (Vassi) for trailers and vehicles in accordance with the best international practices, which reduced time and stages of providing the service and facilitated the numbering process for manufacturers and importers of this type of trailers.
- Approval of the receipt of all previous paper requests and transactions via e-mail is initiated, which are studied, audited and approved by placing the electronic stamp and the serial number.
- All imports designated for the Oman Ministry of Health will be exempted from customs duty during the pandemic.
- Exports of masks, hand sanitizers, onions, garlic, flour and wheat are prohibited.
- The number of employees has been reduced by 30% of the total number, through a structured schedule of shifts, so that work continues 24 hours. The employees were educated in various ways about the prevention methods of the virus. The rest of the employees were assigned to work from their homes.
- The reception of individuals and companies at Customs premises has been suspended. All import and export queries are conducted through the Bayan support call centre which operates 24/7, or via a dedicated e-mail.
- On the Gulf conformity certificates issued for some products such as low-voltage electrical appliances that have the conformity mark and the Gulf tracking code, the validity of the expired certificates was extended between for a period of 3 months.

- The Omani Standards Store has been launched in cooperation with the Gulf Standardization Organization to facilitate the search process and obtain all Omani specifications.

Oman also explored and improved direct importing practices to reduce import time and ensure the supply of essential goods in times of crisis (Al Matani, 2020). Facilitating direct import of all kinds of goods, foodstuffs, vegetables, fruits, meat and others in refrigerated containers enables easy access to such commodities through Omani ports, this in turn promote the Sultanate's role as re-exporting and distribution hub to GCC countries, the Middle East and North Africa markets (Oman Observer, 2020). Such practices also help to reduce the price of essential goods, whose prices were actually supposed to increase during the pandemic. Recently, Hutchison Port Sohar introduced an online e-tracking service that updates vessel and gate schedules, tracks container shipments, and allows parties to exchange documents, payments, and data during the pandemic. This enabled drivers not to wait for the physical documents before being able to pick up cargo (GATF, 2020).

Overall, the policy objectives of the Sultanate during the pandemic were primarily in line with its long-term goal of achieving an efficient logistics infrastructure and becoming an important trade hub. The measures taken during the pandemic further facilitated the trade flows and ensured smooth and expedited procedures for traders. This in turn enabled the customers to have uninterrupted access to essential goods during the crisis times.

## 5.2. Case Study 1 - Morocco

### 5.2.1. Overview

Morocco's geographical position gives the country a considerable strength in its trading activities since it has coasts for both Mediterranean Sea and Atlantic Ocean. It also has borders with Algeria and disputed Spanish Islands. In addition, Morocco's location has a strategic outlook and has a gatekeeper position in the intersection of Mediterranean and Atlantic. Its economy has wide array of connections among Africa and Europe with its service and manufacturing economy. It is an open economy and the share of imports in GDP is almost 50 percent of GDP. Morocco made trading across borders easier by further developing its single window system and thus reducing border compliance time. The country has utilized AEO programme and part of Agadir Mutual Recognition Agreement. The country signed Bilateral Trade Facilitation Agreement with the United States - the world's most powerful economy- which makes Morocco as the first country in African its region to endorse joint principles on investment and information communication technology services trade with USA.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, Morocco has been making preparations for a Free Trade Agreement with European Union since the early 2010s.<sup>11</sup> All those gives a unique position for the country to be examined in terms of trade facilitation measures.

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<sup>10</sup> See the document for further information available at:  
[http://www.sice.oas.org/TPD/USA\\_MAR/Trade\\_Fac\\_Agreement/USA-Trade%20Facilitation%20Agreement.pdf](http://www.sice.oas.org/TPD/USA_MAR/Trade_Fac_Agreement/USA-Trade%20Facilitation%20Agreement.pdf) (Entry date: 20th of April, 2021)

<sup>11</sup> See the document for more information available at:  
[https://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2015/april/tradoc\\_153336.pdf](https://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2015/april/tradoc_153336.pdf) (Entry date: 20th of April, 2021)

## 5.2.2. Governmental Organization

During the oil crisis of 1970s, Morocco experienced a serious crisis as many other developing economies which created a room for a reform package (generally known as Washington Consensus) in parallel to the views of several national and international institutions; namely, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, U.S. Treasury Department etc. The package involved policies towards macroeconomic stabilization, economic opening for trade and investment and free market policies. As a result of this package, Morocco developed and established National Commission for Facilitation of Trade Procedures (NCFTP) in order to promote trade facilitation in 1986 with the legislation on Prime Ministerial level.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation is responsible for designing and implementing country's foreign policy and the Minister of Foreign Trade coordinates and organizes NCFTP and its meetings. The Foreign Trade Ministry of Morocco has a wide range of stakeholder including both public and private bodies. A comprehensive list of those stakeholders is given in Table 14.

**Table 14. Trade-related Public and Private Stakeholders in Morocco**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
<b>Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation (MAEC)</b>	Responsible for the implementation of Morocco's foreign policy In charge of coordination and communication of trade facilitation group
<b>Ministry of Industry, Trade, Investment and the Digital Economy (MCINET)</b>	Responsible for the design and implementation of government policy in the field of industry, trade, and new technologies
<b>Customs and Indirect Taxes Agency</b>	Traditionally responsible for collecting customs duties and taxes, fighting against illicit trafficking, and controlling goods and people across borders,
<b>Ministry of Equipment and Transport</b>	Facilitating trade by enhancing transport infrastructure
<b>National Agency of Logistics Development (AMDL)</b>	Facilitating trade by implementing government policies designed to offer incentives to operators in the field of logistics activities
<b>Agence Nationale des Ports (ANP)</b>	The authoritative and regulatory body of the new Moroccan port system which is essential for trade
<b>Chamber of Industry and Services</b>	Responsible for representing the interests of commercial, industrial, and service companies in their districts
<b>French Chamber of Trade and Industry (CFCIM)</b>	Association working to promote economic relations between France and Morocco
<b>Moroccan Exporters Association (ASMEX)</b>	Representing and promoting the function and role of Moroccan exporters
<b>Professional Association of Shipping Agents &amp; Shipbrokers of Morocco (APRAM)</b>	Network of partners with a mutual desire to contribute to the development of this profession and industry

With regard to its mission, NCFTS have the main objectives as given below:

- Reducing the time of import and export operations

- Reforming for and adopting to international procedures, documents and standards
- Enhancing the infrastructure related to digital data gathering and analysis regarding foreign trade
- Introducing new and simplified procedures for facilitating trade
- Providing guidance for trading agents
- Defining rules and procedures for dispute resolution concerning trade facilitation

Upon this brief overview of the country's governmental organization, in the next section we will outline the measures taken regarding trade and trade facilitation.

### **5.2.3. Trade and Trade Facilitation**

There have been several trade facilitation measures in Morocco and the country might be counted as one of the best countries particularly in Africa. Some of those measure is to be outlined here in order to better understand the current situation in the country, especially before the COVID-19 pandemic has arisen.

Morocco has been a part of Bali Agreement and NCFTP is responsible for implementing the measures in this agreement. Furthermore, NCFTP is in charge of the optimum functioning of PortNet which is a single window system designated for all trade activities. In parallel to its mission, NCFTP has also implemented some simplifying and rationalizing measures regarding customs, ports and banking procedures so that import and export operations could be easier. For example, NCFTP Committee took the lead in designing and implementing the National Plan for Procedures Facilitation in 2006. Within this plan, there were 14 projects drawn out and all those projects were successfully held.

One of the main achievements is the strong participation of the stakeholders in trading system coordinated by the Committee. The stakeholder approach is well-functioning and internal initiatives has taken properly. The government mostly owns and perceives successful trade facilitation is vital for its sectoral reforms. Furthermore, laws and legislations regarding trade facilitation have been addressed in transparency. The measures to be taken is commonly shared with stakeholders and public to perceive positive and negative responses of relating bodies.

### **5.2.4. Trade Facilitation Measures during Pandemic**

The main measure taken against pandemic for facilitating trade in Morocco was stated as dematerialization of trade procedures. According to this, The Ministry (Ministry of Industry, Trade and Green and Digital Economy of Morocco) has dematerialized the procedure for filing and issuing the Customs Franchise Request (DFD) via the PortNet platform (the trade Single Window). Since its launch in April 2020, the dematerialized of the DFD has made it possible to process more than 6000 requests in 2020 via the PortNet.

In addition, several other actions relating to the simplification and facilitation of foreign trade procedures and formalities were implemented in 2020, via the national single window for foreign trade PortNet, in particular:

- Dematerialisation of the Voucher to be delivered,
- Dematerialisation of the Exit Voucher for ports and (customs clearing areas) MEADs.

- Dematerialization of the phytosanitary certificate.

It was noted that the facilitation measures taken during the pandemic have been enforced by ministerial decisions and regulations. Several webinars and virtual meetings were organised to communicate on the measures taken by the government in trade facilitation, mostly in French and Arabic. Big efforts to ensure the availability of this information have been put in several websites and social media. An inter-ministerial committee was established in order to communicate on its decision using website and social media and TV.

In order to monitor and measure the effectiveness of the trade related measures; regular coordination meetings took place so the government could assess the implementation and effectiveness of the measures. The Government officials expressed that an important focus was given to risk assessment especially in customs clearance and standardisation.

Morocco has sustained its cooperation and consultation with international organizations given below:

- The Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation was the main partner in implementing the electronic phytosanitary certificate
- Organisation of Islamic Cooperation
- Arab League
- World Trade Organisation

In addition to these, it is pointed out that the recognition of the phytosanitary certificate with United States and Netherlands and other European Countries has contributed to all measures related to trade facilitation.

### **5.3. Case Study 2 - Malaysia**

#### **5.3.1. Overview**

Malaysia, an upper middle-income country, has transformed itself since the 1970s from a producer of raw materials into a multi-sector economy. It is an open economy where the GDP share of exports are around 65 percent and 75 percent, respectively. The country has always been regarded as a business-friendly environment with its business and international trade facilitation measures by encouraging foreign direct investment. The private sector has been well-developed and free market policies has been implemented properly for the economic development of the country. The privatization policies were introduced by 1986 and complete liberalization of manufacturing sectors has been achieved in 2003. Malaysian government has a strong emphasis on export-oriented economic growth. For all those reasons, trade has been a focal point across the country.

Malaysia has a special task force called PEMUDAH to facilitate trade. Malaysia has an operational electronic single window system. Malaysian customs have established an AEO program and signed mutual recognition agreements with Japan, Hong Kong and The Republic of Korea. In addition to these, Malaysia has implemented temporary elimination of import tariffs on several goods that are highly essential for tackling the impact of the pandemic.

### 5.3.2. Governmental Organization

The main body for facilitating business in Malaysia, called PEMUDAH, was established in 2007 as a special task force. This task force includes both public and private stakeholders and directly reports to the Prime Minister of the country. It also contains the Technical Working Group on Trading Across Borders (TWGTAB-formerly known as Focus Group on Trading Across Borders (FGTAB)) which is the main mechanism regarding trade facilitation. The main objective of PEMUDAH is to facilitate business environment by proactive public and private partnership with “no more than necessary” measures and regulations. Transparency approach has been developed and as a principle, there is zero tolerance for corruption.

PEMUDAH and TWGTAB has wide array of public and private stakeholders as in Table 15.

**Table 15. Trade-related Public and Private Stakeholders in Malaysia**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
<b>Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI)</b>	Government ministry responsible for determining the policies and direction to achieve the goals of International Trade and Industries
<b>Ministry of Transport</b>	Government ministry responsible for transporting activities which are vital for effective trade facilitation
<b>Malaysia Productivity Corporation (MPC)</b>	Leading organization in productivity enhancement for global competitiveness and innovation necessary for effective international trade
<b>Royal Malaysian Customs Department (RMCD)</b>	Responsible for administrating and regulating collection of revenue and trade facilitation through enforcement of and compliance with applicable law to spur economic growth, maintain national security and public welfare
<b>Malaysian Administrative Modernization and Management Planning Unit (MAMPU)</b>	Responsible for modernizing and reforming the public sector in the areas of administrative reforms
<b>Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers (FMM)</b>	Largest private-sector economic organization in Malaysia, representing over 3500 manufacturing and industrial service companies

MITI and Captains of Industry have been co-chairing TWGTAB since its establishment. The main aim of the TWGTAB is to facilitate trade in Malaysia by having a particular emphasis upon cross-border trade. Its mission might be outlined as follows:

- Reducing the paperwork, documents and time for effective trading
- Reducing the cost of trading activity
- Digitalizing all trade-related operations and processes

With the appropriate lead of PEMUDAH and TWGTAB, Malaysia have achieved a long way in trade and trade facilitation.

### 5.3.3. Trade and Trade Facilitation

Malaysia has been recognized as one of the most business-friendly countries in the world. It was ranked eleventh in Doing Business Report 2015. TWGTAB has a central position in this

achievement with some of its successful policy measures implemented in the last decade. Those measure can be summarized as follows:

- **Standard Operating Procedure (SOP):** It has been implemented to improve inspection during import-export processes since 2014. The responsible body is RMCD.
- **Authorized Economic Operator Program (AEO):** It is a programme that allows accredited companies who have fulfilled eligibility criteria to enjoy the benefits of auto release for their import-export operations, self-assessed declarations and deferred tax payments. The responsible body is RMCD.
- **Consumer-Centric Service Delivery (CCSD):** This initiative aims at reducing the burdens during customs clearance and control and improving customs service delivery and process capability. The responsible bodies are MPC and MAMPU.

Beyond those, PEMUDAH and TWGTABhas been actively participating in trade facilitation issues in Malaysia with several different initiatives. Stakeholder approach has been engaged with new policy measures and public and private parties have been introduced in the decision-making processes related to trade facilitation in Malaysia. Also, Doing Business indicators is proactively monitored by those institutions and ongoing improvements have been addressed on certain bottlenecks.

#### 5.3.4. Trade Facilitation Measures during Pandemic

After the pandemic had emerged, there have been important measures taken by the Malaysian government to facilitate trade in the country and to increase the awareness of the society about pandemic.

Some of the main measures taken include:

Trade facilitation:

- i. Provide for pre-arrival processing of the goods declaration and immediate release of the goods upon arrival.
- ii. Immediate release and clearance of essential goods
- iii. Close collaboration with other Government agencies to facilitate trade and movement of goods across border; and
- iv. Coordinated inspections / examinations by Customs and other Government agencies.

Society:

- i. Support Government policies and measures by providing immediate release of essential goods for public consumption and critical goods for medical or health purposes to mitigate the effects of COVID-19.
- ii. Collaborate with security agencies in providing support for lockdown operation; and
- iii. Collaborate with border agencies and National Security Council (NSC) to determine effective measures to quarantine returning Malaysians during the lockdown.

Even though there have been some positive results of those immediate measures, the COVID-19 pandemic affected the imports and exports activities worldwide as well for Malaysia. It has also been pointed out that there have been some positive and negative results of remote working practices in the country. Positive effects might be outlined as contributing to the efforts in decreasing physical contact, maximizing the utilisation of information technologies for physically and/or manually performed activities and improving the quality of life for employees by having more time and flexibility to think creatively. In contrast, negative effects can be summarized as decreasing of productivity for the works requiring access to physical resources, coordination problems for large working teams and the rising importance of self-discipline since there have been no physical monitoring because of the remote working practices.

The RMCD has also highlighted that during the pandemic, the health authority has imposed additional procedures for health check (e.g., truck drivers crossing the borders). Implementation of these additional procedures have somehow impacted the customs clearance process by consuming extra time for release.

There have been several governmental bodies effectively implementing the trade facilitation measures. The relevant governmental bodies are as follows:

- The Trade Facilitation Cluster Working Group (TFCWG), established in 2015 under the National Logistics Task Force (NLTF), is the National Trade Facilitation Committee of Malaysia. The Working Group was established under the National Logistics and Trade Facilitation Master Plan (2015-2020). The Working Group, coordinated by Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI), is co-chaired by MITI and Royal Malaysian Customs Department (RMCD) and comprises Members from both the Government and private sector. Various efforts have been undertaken by the TFCWG to strengthen Malaysia's position as a preferred regional logistics hub.
- MITI also conducts stakeholder consultations through the following working groups - Technical Working Group on Trading Across Borders (TWGTAB) (working group under PEMUDAH, 2007, a Special Task Force to Facilitate Business) and TFCWG. The consultations are held regularly, once every two months, and when there are urgent issues to be addressed.
- Likewise, the Department of Quarantine and Malaysian Inspection Services (MAQIS) has its own formal consultative mechanism, which is the Coordination Committee for Quarantine, and Inspection and Trade Facilitation Committee, conducted twice a year, apart from additional public consultations (when necessary).

All those governmental bodies have also implemented a coherent communication strategy so that Malaysian society can embrace the measures taken. For example,

- RMCD has a variety of information channels such as Customs Website, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. The traders can also address their complaints or raise any issues which is related to trade facilitation through Customs Call Centres (CCC) which is operating 24 hours during working days. On top of that FAQ has been developed and can be accessible in Customs website. The Customs Website is provided in dual languages to our stakeholders and clients.
- The Technical Working Group on Trading Across Borders (TWGTAB) is also a platform for industry to raise trade facilitation issues during the pandemic. Apart from the regular consultations, industries can raise their issues directly to MITI as and when necessary.

- MITI Hotline and RMCD has a Customs Call Centre for traders to address general inquiries and it is operating 24 hours. In addition, traders can also obtain information from MITI and RMCD's websites and interactive social media platforms.

On international side, there have been two significant developments to better share information, experience, and impact evaluation techniques regarding COVID-19 pandemic. Two international agreements were signed by the Malaysian government as given below:

- ASEAN Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on the Implementation of the Non-Tariff Measures on Essential Goods; and
- ATIGA Sub-Committee of Rules of Origin (SCAROO), special measures were taken concerning matters involving the Certificates of Origin during the outbreak of the COVID-19.

All those agreements have helped mitigate the negative effects of pandemic on international trade. The government have increased close cooperation with the organizations, namely, WCO, WTO, APEC and ASEAN.

To conclude, all the efforts and measures taken during the pandemic have some positive effects such as:

- i) Digitalisation procedures/facilitation have sped up the processing while reducing physical interaction.
- ii) Exemption duties /taxes for essential medical supplies aid in reducing tax burden.
- iii) The traders stand guided with the Customs Law and Regulation and maintain the level of compliance in whatever means. During the pandemic, RMCD has issued administrative guideline to the traders in dealing with the situation; and
- iv) The traders have an opportunity to address their views and comments to improve the Customs administration through electronic media. The views from traders would be analysed and are very useful to improve the customs procedures.

For the post pandemic era, it is believed that this pandemic situation will lead to permanent measures which include the digitalisation and remote working practices as to facilitate trade in the future. It is very important for the Government to adapt the new normal in service delivery system including consistency in providing trade facilitative customs procedures during the post pandemic era.

## **5.4. Case Study 3 - Indonesia**

### **5.4.1. Overview**

Indonesia is the world's largest island country and located in Southeast Asia and Oceania between the Indian and Pacific oceans. It has over 17000 islands which gives it a unique position for trade and trade routes. It has a GDP of over 1 billion USD accompanied by a rapid trade growth. With its economic volume and geographical position, it is an important country to investigate in terms of trade facilitation measures during pandemic. The country is a member of ASEAN, WTO, G20, APEC, IORA, WCO, UNESCAP, and other international/ regional cooperations..

## 5.4.2 Governmental Organization

In terms of facilitating trade, Indonesia has established an official coordination body, namely the National Committee on Trade Facilitation (NCTF) in 2018 in full compliance with WTO context. Indonesia NTFC is an official coordination body that reports to the Coordinating Minister for the Economic Affairs through the Decree of the Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs No. 199 of 2018 on May 11, 2018.. In addition, there are some other cross-sectorial mechanisms to facilitate trade and logistics. The most important one is Task Force on Trade Facilitation which was established in 2005 in full compliance with WTO context.

This task force has wide array of public and private stakeholders and beyond others, some of those stakeholders mostly related to trade facilitation is given in Table 16.

**Table 16. Trade-related Public and Private Stakeholders in Indonesia**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
<b>Ministry of Trade</b>	The major body that coordinates multilateral cooperations and responsible for coordination in trade facilitation issues
<b>Ministry of Finance</b>	Responsible for customs and all technical aspects of trade facilitation issues
<b>Ministry of Coordinating Economic Affairs (KEMENKO)</b>	Responsible for economic development
<b>National Planning Agency (BAPPENAS)</b>	In charge of advancing national development plans and budgets
<b>Ministry of Transportation</b>	Governing and regulating transporation in Indonesia
<b>Ministry of Information and Communication</b>	Responsible for telecommunication and information technology sector through the whole country
<b>National Standards Agency (BSN)</b>	Institution appointed for developing national standardization
<b>Chambers of trade and industry (KADIN)</b>	Influential NGO for trade and trade facilitation with its wide array of members
<b>Indonesia Port Corporations (PELINDO)</b>	State-owned corporations for the operations of ports in the country
<b>Export Import Bank (EXIMBANK)</b>	Responsible for financing companies to facilitate imports and exports in Indonesia

Like any other agencies relevant to economic matters, Indonesia NTFC reports to the Coordinating Minister for the Economic Affairs. TF do convene regularly, moreover under the COVID-19 pandemic situation.

## 5.4.3. Trade and Trade Facilitation

There are many measures taken to facilitate trade in Indonesia.. Among others, some of those measures are:

- a. establishing National Logistic Ecosystem (NLE)
- b. simplified rules of trade and trade restrictions in one institution
- c. cooperation between trade agencies to reduce the time cost to get trade permit
- d. tax incentives for export-oriented SMEs
- e. simplified trade mechanism regarding online submission of Declaration of Origin

Ministry of Coordinating Economic Affairs (KEMENKO) is effective in trade and its facilitation measures that works in coordinating relevant institutions.. According to the Presidential Decree No 8 Year 2015, several Ministries relevant to economic affairs, such as Ministry of Trade, Ministry of Industry, Ministry of Finance, etc, are under coordination, synchronization, and control of Ministry of Coordinating Economic Affairs (KEMENKO). Until the establishment of NCTF, TF had managed to represent itself as a foundational body and thus given pace to have a institutionalized body for trade facilitation in Indonesia..

#### 5.4.4 Trade Facilitation Measures During Pandemic

There are several authorities involved in implementing trade facilitation measures during the COVID-19 period such as LNSW (National Single Window Agencies), DGCE, and Ministry of Trade and in cooperation with other Ministries and Agencies. Each authority has specific duties and roles to simplified and accelerated trade. At the beginning of the pandemic, Customs has a role to ensure that goods related to counter COVID-19, such as hazmat suits, masks, and hand sanitizer is given a customs duties exemption. Customs also develop a new procedure to provide trade facilitation, such as online submission of Declaration of Origin. Customs also collaborate with other authorities to implement NLE. Furthermore, there are collaborations across multi-agencies, such as Customs, LNSW, Ministry of Trade, Ministry of Health, National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB), and National Food and Drug Agency (BPOM) during the pandemic.

Based on Statistics Indonesia data, the total exports have decreased since March 2020 and reached their lowest in May 2020. But from June to the end of 2020 the number kept increasing. This is what happens to the imports also. The officials noted that there were important measures taken during COVID-19 pandemic to overcome this decrease in trade volume at the beginning of the pandemic. Some of most significant ones are as follows:

- a. Ministry of Finance Regulation No. PMK-34/PMK.04/2020 regarding Customs and/or Excise as well as taxation facilities on imported goods used to countermeasure COVID-19.
  - Importation of goods originating from abroad, Bonded Logistic Center (PLB), Bonded Zone/Warehouses, Free Trade Zone/ Special Economic Zones, KITE Facility Receiving Company, used for COVID-19 countermeasure (73 items) for both commercial and non-commercial purposes may be granted the following facilities:
    - exemption on import duties and excise
    - non-imposition of PPN (VAT) and/or PPnBM (Sales Tax on Luxury Goods)
    - exemption of PPh Article 22 (import income tax)
  - Importation of consigned goods and passenger goods will be granted exemption facilities.

- All submission of import applications granted exemption facilities can be done through the Lembaga National Single Window (LNSW) portal.

b. Exemption of Excise for Ethyl Alcohol used for social purposes and raw/supporting materials to produce the non-excisable final product. In the context of prevention and control of COVID-19 outbreak, exemption of excise duties for ethyl alcohol shall be given to manufacturers or storage companies based on orders from government agencies or non-governmental organizations related to COVID-19 countermeasures.

c. Ministry of Finance Regulation No. 45/PMK.04/2020 which allows for the online submission of the Declaration of Origin.

In addition to this, Customs have been developing digitalization processes since before the pandemic, the system has been proven effective to monitor the implementation of trade-related measures.

To aware the public, officials pointed out that there have been several communication strategies. For example, the rules and procedures regarding trade and customs are available to the public in the INSW portal and also on the Customs website since before the pandemic. The customs website is available in Indonesian and English. Customs also provides a contact centre which is available to communicate using Indonesian and English. When there are new rules or regulations implemented, customs will publish the information via social media, such as Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and Website.

In terms of international cooperation, government officials expressed that Indonesia has no new signed agreements, but Customs always ensure that information regarding emergency trade facilitation measures are shared with international organizations and efforts are made to coordinate emergency trade facilitation measures with other countries or regional organizations. Customs is actively participating in WCO, WTO, and ASEAN as well.

To conclude, government officials noted that many trade facilitation measures were implemented during COVID-19 and effectively simplified and expedited trade procedures and mechanisms. All of the measures are fulfilling their role effectively and efficiently. For the post pandemic period, they emphasized that some measures will be continued, such as digitalization and collaboration between agencies. On the other hand, measures like remote working practices can only be implemented in some offices depending on their work pattern.

## **5.5. Case Study 4 - Nigeria**

### **5.5.1. Trade Facilitation Measures during COVID-19 Pandemic in Nigeria**

The outbreak of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has unleashed severe economic consequences and badly hit all countries around the globe. The effect of this pandemic is proven to be the strongest in human history. According to the reports of the World Trade Organization (WTO, 2020) the merchandise trade shrunk by 5.3 percent in 2020 while the International Monetary Fund (IMF, 2020) reports that the world gross domestic product (GDP) contracted by 4.4 percent in 2020. In Africa, the continental growth before the outbreak of COVID-19 was projected to rise from 2.9 percent in 2019 to 3.5 percent in 2021. This projected expansion was predicated upon the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) agreement signed by fifty-four African countries in 2018 with a commencement date of 1 January 2021. The

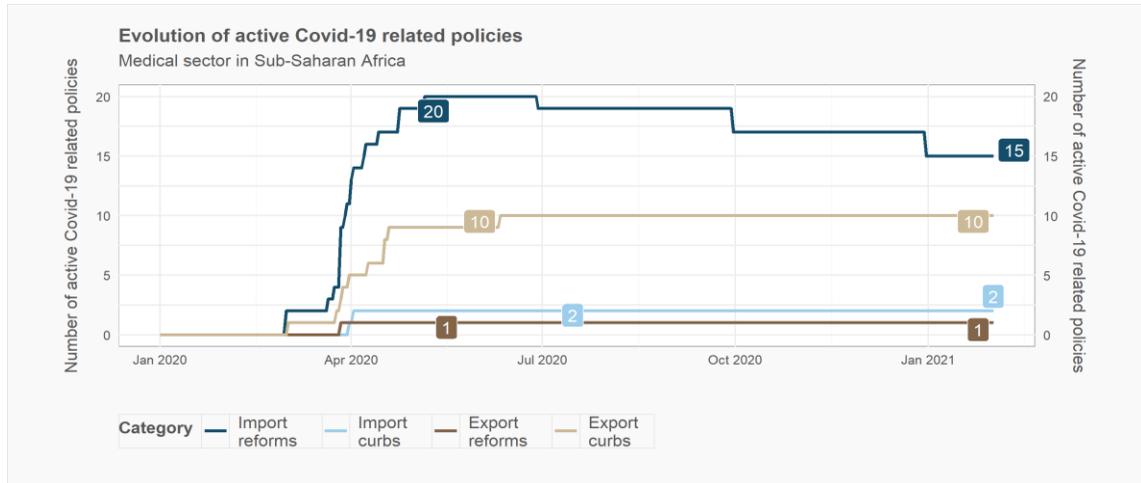
implementation of AfCFTA has the potential to stimulate trade volumes in the continent up to 25 percent by 2040 (United Nations, 2020).

Despite a renewed interest in facilitating intra-regional and cross-border trade outlook across Africa, the need to manage the novel COVID-19 pandemic adopted by almost all African countries have continued to take a massive toll on the continent through lockdowns and freezing of economic activities, resulting in a significant decline in the volume of trade especially cross-border trade and investments, fall in commodity prices, massive job losses, and supply chain disruptions in all Africa's oil-exporting countries, tourism-dependent countries, and resource-intensive countries as well as widening inequality in the continent. As recently reported by the African Development Bank (AfDB) through its President, Dr. Akinwumi A. Adesina, the contraction of the continent-wide growth by 2.1 percent in 2020 as a result of the pandemic, has pushed an estimated 30 million Africans into extreme poverty and about 39 million Africans may likely slip into extreme poverty by 2021. Out of this figure, the populations with lower levels of education, few assets, and workers in informal sector are hit hardest. The overall inflows of foreign direct investment (FDI) shrunk by 20-40% (UNCTAD, 2020).

Given the effects of the pandemic and total lockdown as demonstrated by a significant decline in revenue to finance the budget and curtail the rising health expenditure in Africa, Africa had to take drastic actions through African Union Trade Agency to facilitate trade. At the early stage of managing the pandemic, the importation to Africa shifted towards the personal protective equipment (PPE), medical supplies, and food products. Figures 1(a) and (b) present the plots of the evolution of active COVID-19 related policies on essential goods sectors (food sector, agri-food sector, medical equipment, medical consumables, and medicines sector, including vaccines) for Sub-Sahara African since 1 January 2020 to February 18, 2021. The plots depict the total number of policies active in each month for different categories of trade policies. From the charts, the import reforms on essential goods sectors are much more active in Sub-Saharan Africa than export reforms given the importance of acquiring medical and food products during the management of the pandemic. Export restriction policies applied in managing the pandemic have constituted a significant blow to trade in Africa through a fall in commodity prices and hence income. This suggests that Africa's participation in the global supply chains particularly during the pandemic is limited to buying of some essential goods processed and transformed in the EU, the UK, the US, and China. Even before the pandemic, the integration of Africa into global supply chains is limited to the importation of some intermediate goods that are further transformed and processed on the continent with a significant portion of African value added. As computed based on the EORA-MRIO database, Banga et al. (2020) reveal that the value-added of Africa used in the production of exporting goods in major export players is very high. For example, the EU used \$313 billion of African value-added to produce its exports, the US used \$27.3 billion, the UK used \$20.8 billion and China used \$20.2 billion, while only \$14 billion (account for 2.8% of the global exports value-added) is embedded in African exports.

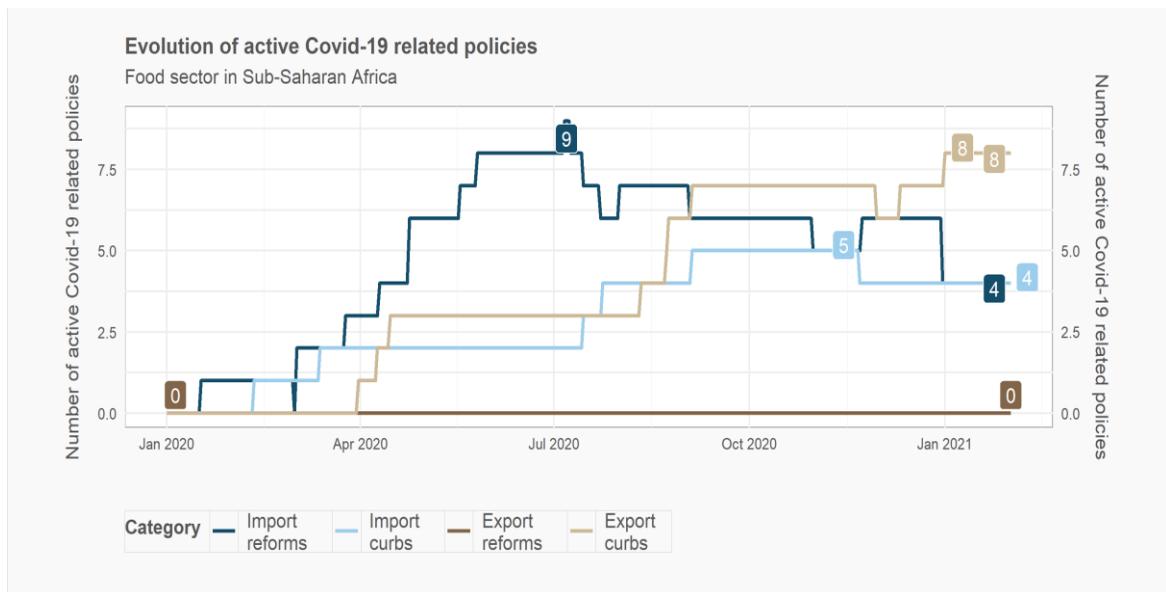
Comparatively, the number of active COVID-19 related policies on essential goods sectors, particularly the medical sector and food sectors in Sub-Saharan Africa are quite opposite of those in Europe and Central Asia. As shown in Figures 39-40 and Figures 41-42, while in Sub-Saharan Africa, the number of active COVID-19 related policy reforms regarding the imports of medical and food supplies are higher with virtually very few active related policies to curb imports of these goods, the number of active COVID-19 related policy reforms regarding the exports of medical and food supplies is higher in Europe and Central Asia.

**Figure 42. Evolution of active COVID-19 related policies on medical sector in Europe and Central Asia**



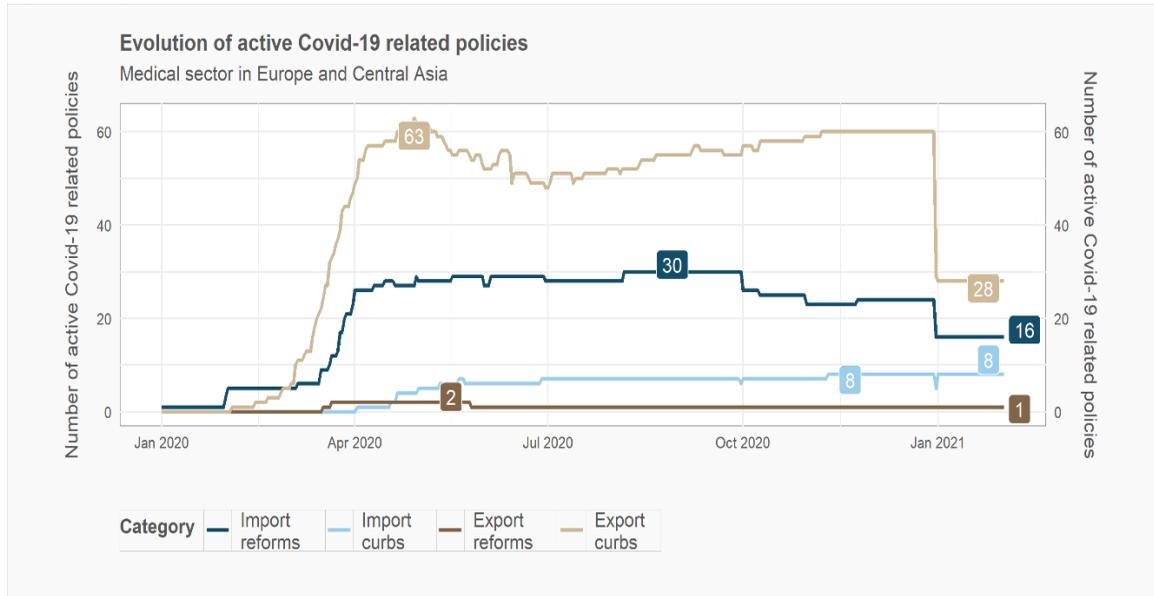
Source: European University Institute, Global Governance Program

**Figure 43. Evolution of active COVID-19 related policies on food sector in Europe and Central Asia**



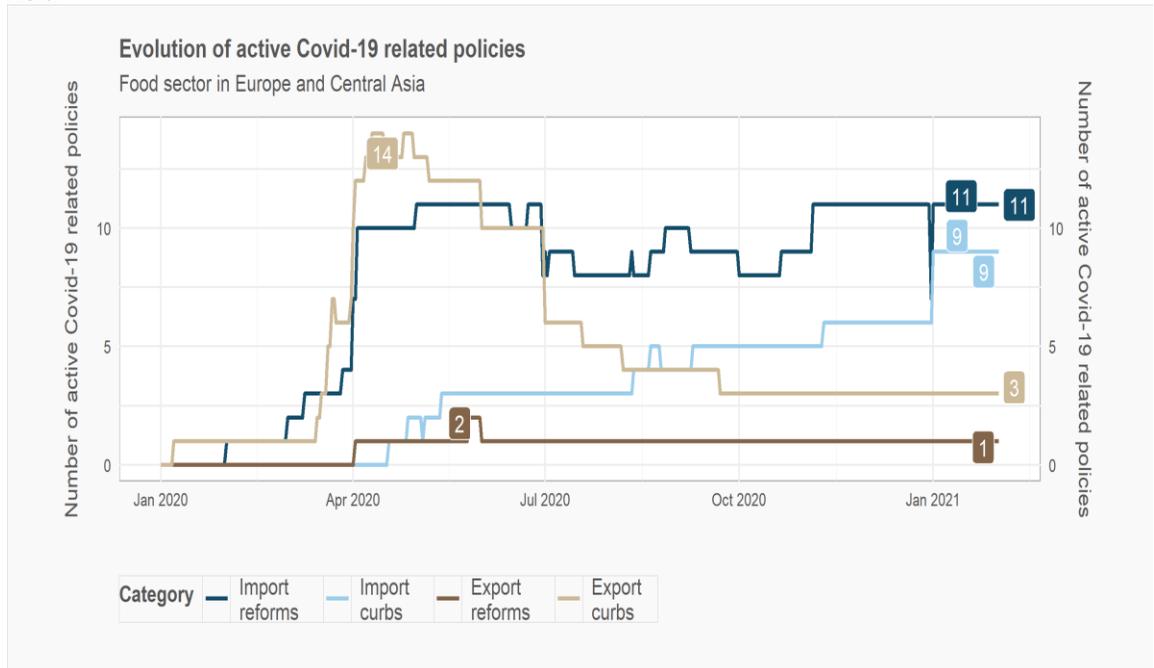
Source: European University Institute, Global Governance Program

**Figure 44. Evolution of active COVID-19 related policies on Medical sector in Europe and Central Asia**



Source: European University Institute, Global Governance Program

**Figure 45. Evolution of active COVID-19 related policies on food sector in Europe and Central Asia**



Source: European University Institute, Global Governance Program

Nigeria is the largest economy on the continent of Africa. In 2019, the GDP of Nigeria was worth 410 billion US\$ while the GDP per capita was about 2.4 thousand US\$. The country had total

exports worth 62,399,742.74 in thousands of US\$ and total imports worth 43,011,523.21 in thousands of US\$ recording a positive trade balance of 19,388,219.52 in thousands of US\$. Furthermore, in 2019 Nigeria was ranked 25th largest economy in the world in terms of GDP (current US\$) and 140th economy in terms of GDP per capita (current US\$). In terms of total exports, Nigeria was ranked 47th in the world and 50th in total imports across the world. According to the Economic Complexity Index (ECI), Nigeria is the number 150 most complex economy in the world. In 2020, the Nigerian economy retracted due to the COVID-19 outbreak, reporting a negative growth balance of 4.3 percent, compared to 2.2 percent in 2019. The country has been hit hardest by the novel COVID-19 pandemic due to unabated heavy reliance on oil as its main source of foreign exchange earnings and government revenues. With all intents and purposes, the country remains vulnerable to the attendant implications for crude oil price upheavals in the international crude oil market as clearly demonstrated in the COVID-19 pandemic. The revenues of the Nigeria declined significantly following a perpetual fall in prices of crude oil to as low as 12 USD per barrel in April 2020. This was traceable to a shortage in demand for oil resulting from economic lockdowns and export restrictions placed on the movement of the people and goods across the world.

Nigeria as a member of the WTO since 1 January 1995, is also a party to the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), which is the US trade act that grants products from 40 sub-Saharan African countries (including Nigeria) duty-free access to the US market, and signed a Joint Declaration on Cooperation with the European Free Trade Area (EFTA) on 12 December 2017. Nigeria has bilateral investment agreements with 31 countries, 15 of which are in force. The country also has double tax treaties with 13 countries and is a signatory to 21 investment-related instruments, and nine memoranda of understanding agreements. As for the regional trade agreements, Nigeria is a founding member of the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and a member of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCTA). Morocco has utilized the AEO program and is part of the Abidjan-Lagos road corridor (RCI, Ghana, Togo, Benin, and Nigeria) belonging to the ECOWAS region, which is a transport corridor forming a part of the wider Dakar-Lagos Corridor and is a major part of the Trans African Highway Network within the ECOWAS region. Nigeria has also developed an organic National Single Window System.

### **5.5.2. Governmental Organization**

In Nigeria, the Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment is the main body saddled with the responsibility of facilitating business. The ministry is to work closely with other relevant national authorities/key national partners such as the Nigeria Custom Service, the Nigeria Immigration Service, Nigerian Shipping Council and other federal government ministries, parastatals, and agencies. The Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment also works closely with the Nigerian Association of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Mines, and Agriculture (NACCIMA) to promote and protect trade and provide network for national and international business opportunities in the country. NACCIMA was established in 1960 as an umbrella organization for all affiliate member chambers in Nigeria. The main objective of NACCIMA is to ensure that a conducive environment is created for the pursuit of commerce, industry and all other forms of economic activities. It also champions business course through advocacy role and promotes free enterprise by influencing public policies.

The trade-related public and private stakeholders in Nigeria and their main functions are summarized in the table provided below:

**Table 177. Trade-related Public and Private Stakeholders in Nigeria**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Primary Function</b>
<b>Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment (FMITI)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Responsible for the coordination and communication of trade facilitation policies</li> <li>- Responsible for the design and implementation of government policy in the field of industry, trade, and investments</li> </ul>
<b>Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs (FMFA)</b>	Responsible for the implementation of the Nigeria's foreign policy
<b>Nigerian Custom Service (NCS)</b>	Responsible for collecting customs duties and taxes, fighting against illicit trafficking and controlling goods across borders,
<b>Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS)</b>	Responsible for the control of persons entering or leaving Nigeria, the issuance of travel documents to Nigerians, and residence permits to foreigners in Nigeria
<b>Nigerian Association of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Mines, and Agriculture (NACCIMA)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Creating a conducive environment for the pursuit of commerce and industry as well other economic activities that are of interest to the private sector</li> <li>- Promoting, protecting, and developing all matters affecting business</li> <li>- Providing national and international business opportunity network</li> <li>- Facilitating trade through its advocacy role and influencing public policy that promote free enterprises.</li> </ul>
<b>Nigerian Shippers' Council (NSC)</b>	Government agency responsible for protecting exporters and importers as well as their goods in Nigeria
<b>Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI)</b>	Responsible for representing the interests of commercial, industrial, and service companies in their locations
<b>Nigerian Export-Import Bank (NEXIM)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide export credit guarantee and export credit insurance to investors.</li> <li>- Provide credit in local currency to support exports and lend to exporters who need to import foreign inputs to facilitate production.</li> </ul>
<b>Federal Ministry of Transport (FMT)</b>	Federal Government Ministry responsible for transportation activities, which are vital for effective trade facilitation

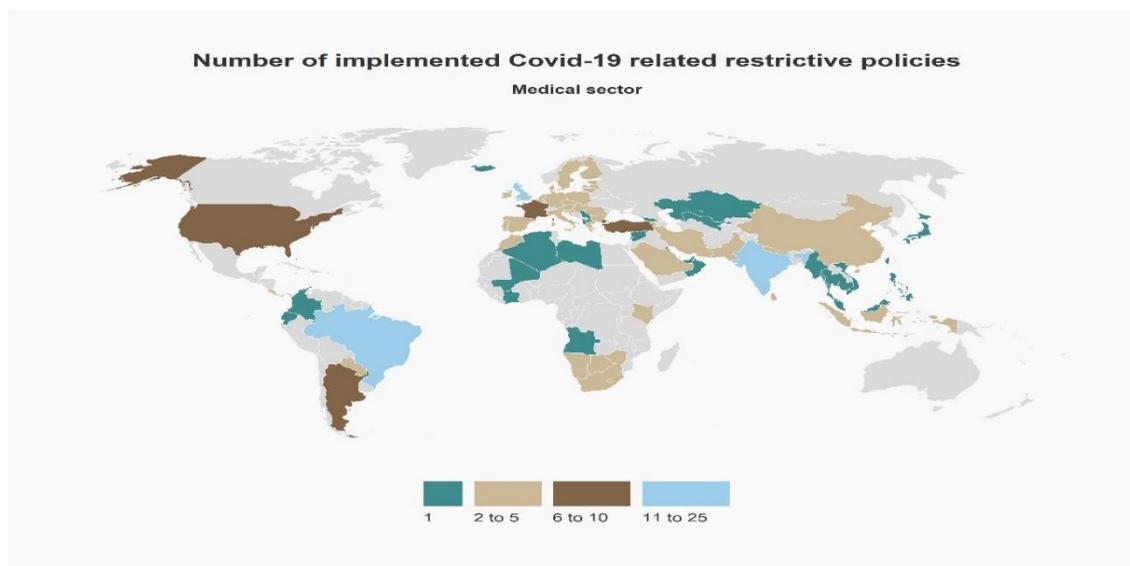
Source: Authors' Compilation

### 5.5.3. Trade and Trade Facilitation

In response to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, Nigeria had to apply various restrictive measures to limit the movement of the people and goods across its borders and closed Ports of Entry. Although trade in some essential goods was given consideration with a mandatory health check by cross-border crews. The total restrictive measures have disrupted trade activities in Nigeria such as delays at border posts, increased smuggling activities, shortening of working

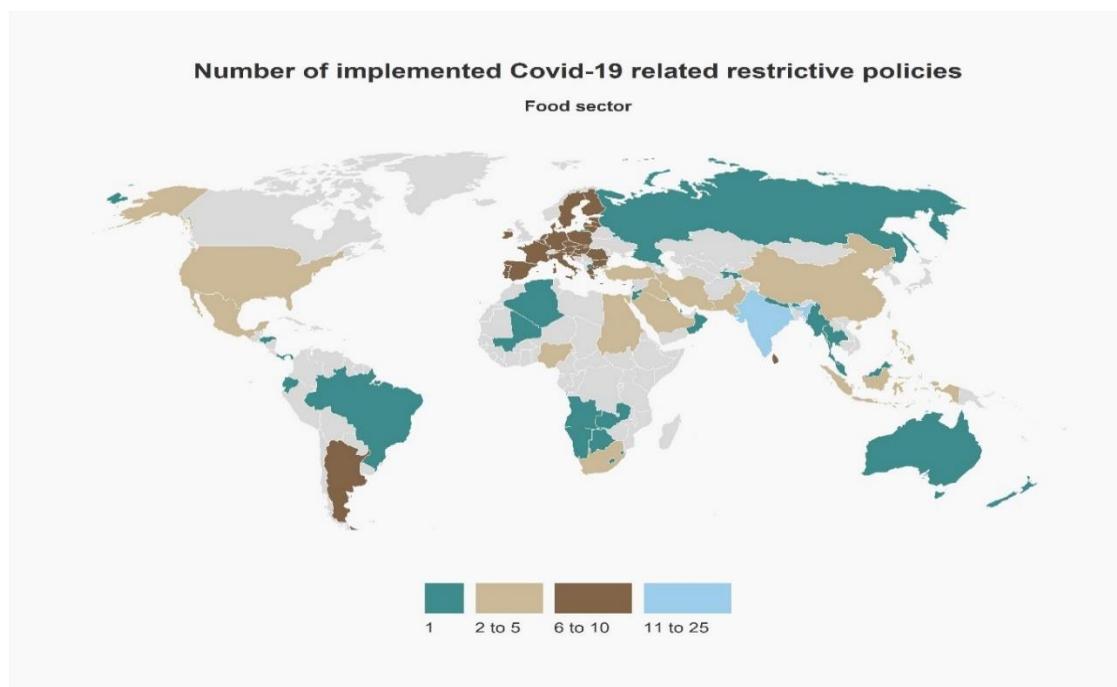
hours, prohibitions of importation and exportation of some goods, long procedure of standard and regulatory approval for COVID-19 goods etc. This is because most of the things used in Nigeria are mostly dependable on foreign producers. Figures 46 and 47 present the number of implemented COVID-19 restrictive policies on the medical sector and food sector for the world. As can be seen, Nigeria implemented about 2-5 restrictive policies in the food sector between 1 January 2020 and 18 February 2021 while no noticeable restrictive policy measure is implemented in the medical sector. This shows that the shutdown of manufacturing facilities and export restrictions applied by the Nigeria's trade partners like China, India, the US have affected the country access to medical supplies during the pandemic.

**Figure 46. Number of implemented COVID-19 related restrictive policies on medical sector**



Source: European University Institute Global Governance Program

**Figure 47. Number of implemented COVID-19 related restrictive policies on food sector**



*Source: European University Institute, Global Governance Program*

Another setback caused by the pandemic and total lockdown to trade is in the area of technological implementation vis-à-vis ICT in trade, as a lot of companies and government institutions are still struggling to adapt to the technical tools in facilitating remote working practices. However, with the commencement of the AfCTA trade agreement, the Nigeria's borders were reopened in January 2021 with huge bureaucratic bottlenecks in processing and clearing goods out of the border and also in documentation issues relating to health requirements.

As a step to holistically develop a clear economic plan as a national economic resilience response to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, Nigeria launched the Economic Sustainability Plan (ESP) on 30th March 2020. This plan leverages on the potential gains from trade to facilitate economic recovery and growth plan (ERGP) of the country by maximizing the emerging opportunity for value chains in agriculture and manufacturing as well as supporting micro, small, and medium scale enterprises (MSMEs) to create more jobs while keeping the existing ones safe and reducing poverty and inequality in the post-COVID-19 era (See ESC, 2020). To achieve the targets of the plan, the government injected a stimulus package of 2.3 trillion naira, i.e. 21.3 percent of the total expenditure of the revised 2020 budget of the Federal Government, and ensure a close working collaboration with the State Governments and the private sector as a surest way to facilitate trade by reducing trade costs in a manner that is consistent with private sector development. Therefore, each Minister of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is assigned with the responsibility of supervising the implementation situated in the Ministry where he/she heads through a Ministerial Implementation Committee headed by the Minister while the aspect of monetary measures is supervised and implemented by the Central Bank of Nigeria.

As contained in the plans, to foster quick economic recovery and build resilience in a post-COVID-19 economy, immediate fiscal and monetary measures have to be taken to facilitate trade by supporting the private sector and health sector as well as accelerating infrastructural development. The measures taken (See ESC, 2020) are as follows:

#### **5.5.4. Fiscal Measures**

- (i) Activation of the provisions of the Finance Act 2020 in support of the growth of MSMEs
- (ii) Provision of targeted tariff reduction and trade finance facilities to support some strategic imported good. This will serve as a boost to economic activity
- (iii) Giving support to strategic industries affected by the pandemic such as the hospitality, road transport, and aviation sectors
- (iv) Structuring and launching of a Tax Resolution and Settlement Unit
- (v) Extension of deadlines and suspension of penalties for filing tax returns
- (vi) Giving some incentives to employers in order to retain and recruit more staff during the pandemic
- (vii) Conversion of the World Bank REDISSE program to support COVID-19 interventions in various States of Nigeria
- (viii) Provision of fund for the procurement of raw materials and equipment required to boost local drug production during the COVID-19
- (ix) Promotion of strategic investments to stimulate the manufacture of generic medicines across the country.
- (x) Provision of intervention fund for health infrastructure worth 86 billion naira and development of incentive package for frontline healthcare workers as a way to accelerate the fight against the pandemic
- (xi) Establishment of agencies such as the Partnership for Expanded Water Supply, Sanitation, and Hygiene (PEWASH) and National WASH Action Plan to enforce rapid improvement in WASH activities in urban and rural areas and strengthen WASH governance institutions and service provision.
- (xii) Expansion of the scope of the Road Infrastructure Tax Credit Scheme (RITCS) and acceleration of the construction of 794.4km approved roads and bridges under RITCS to facilitate intra-trade trade across the country Nigeria.

#### **5.5.5. Monetary Measures**

- (i) Provision of 1 trillion naira loan to manufacturing and production companies to boost local products across the Nigeria's critical sector
- (ii) Unification of exchange rates as a strategy to maximize naira returns to the Federation Account Allocation Committee from foreign exchange inflows
- (iii) Management of the exchange rate system in a more sustainable manner that encourages trade and investments in Nigeria

- (iv) Invoking of partial risk guarantees for the Nigeria's SMEs.
- (v) Granting of additional moratorium of 1 year on the CBN intervention facilities given to traders and investors in Nigeria
- (vi) Reduction of interest rate on intervention facilities from 9% to 5% to facilitate and boost trade
- (vii) Provision of target credit facility worth 100 billion naira for affected MSMEs by the pandemic
- (viii) Granting of regulatory forbearance (i.e. relaxing the regulatory laws) to banks in order to restructure terms of facilities in affected sectors.
- (ix) Directing oil companies and oil service companies to sell foreign exchange to the CBN rather than the NNPC as a strategy to improve foreign exchange supply to CBN with the aim of facilitating trade.

Other measures to mobilize external support and funding include:

- (i) To mobilize external support and funding by engaging with multilateral and donor agencies to ensure adequate funding of the plans. In this case, the following funds are mobilized from the multilateral and donor agencies: IMF - \$3.4 billion; World Bank - \$2.5 billion; AfDB - \$0.5 billion, African Export-Import Bank - \$0.5 billion, and IsDB - \$113 million.
- (ii) Seeking of moratorium from other partners on bilateral and multilateral debt
- (iii) Arranging for securing commercial debt relief
- (iv) Presidential Task Force on COVID-19 in Nigeria to revise quarantine protocol

Furthermore, at the level of national partnership, Nigerian Customs Service, Nigerian Immigration Service, Chambers of Commerce, Chambers of Industry, and Nigerian Shippers' Council were charged to closely work with the Ministry of industry, trade and investment to assist traders and foreign bodies with information on changes in trade and trade-related issues during the pandemic. These relevant national authorities/key national partners all support trade activities by transmitting effective risk communication, which is an important measure to control the pandemic. Moreover, organization like the Chambers of Commerce, Chambers of Industry, and Nigerian Shippers' Council took a measure to reduce the membership fee rate for all members knowing that the COVID-19 lockdown has crippled businesses and nothing was coming forth for anyone. They also led campaigns informing the society about COVID-19 and measures to keep businesses floating. In this case, they assist their members to introduce online transactions to facilitate trade.

#### **5.5.6. Post-COVID-19 Trade Facilitation Measures in Nigeria**

In line with the trade facilitation measures set out by the WTO through Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) and signed by major countries in the world, it is observed that most of these measures are yet to be fully implemented in Nigeria. Implementation of these measures is critical to trade facilitation in the post-COVID-19 era. Therefore, to overcome the challenges posed by the pandemic, post-COVID-19 trade facilitation reforms need to focus on the following measures:

- (i) Enhancing e-commerce by digitizing, streamlining border procedures, and automating border processes. This will help to speed up processing and reduce face-to-face interactions. In this case, all paperwork related to trade, including declaration, assessment, payment duties, clearance of goods, digital certificates, and signatures should be carried out electronically without person-to-person interactions.
- (ii) Enhancing easy accessibility and transparency of all COVID-19 related policy formalities to traders, particularly MSMEs who are hit hardest by the pandemic.
- (iii) Ensuring that the standard formalities are expedited to reduce not only physical contact but also the movement of goods and making space and time for additional COVID-19 related controls and sanitary measures. This is necessary for perishable goods and time-critical medical products needed to manage the pandemic.
- (iv) Creating a room for international co-operation in risk management, given the differences in technological capacity among countries. What this implies is that sharing inspection and control results among border agencies helps to facilitate cross-border trade. Many countries in Europe, Central Asia, Asia-Pacific, North America, Latin America have introduced this measure to keep cross-border trade flowing.

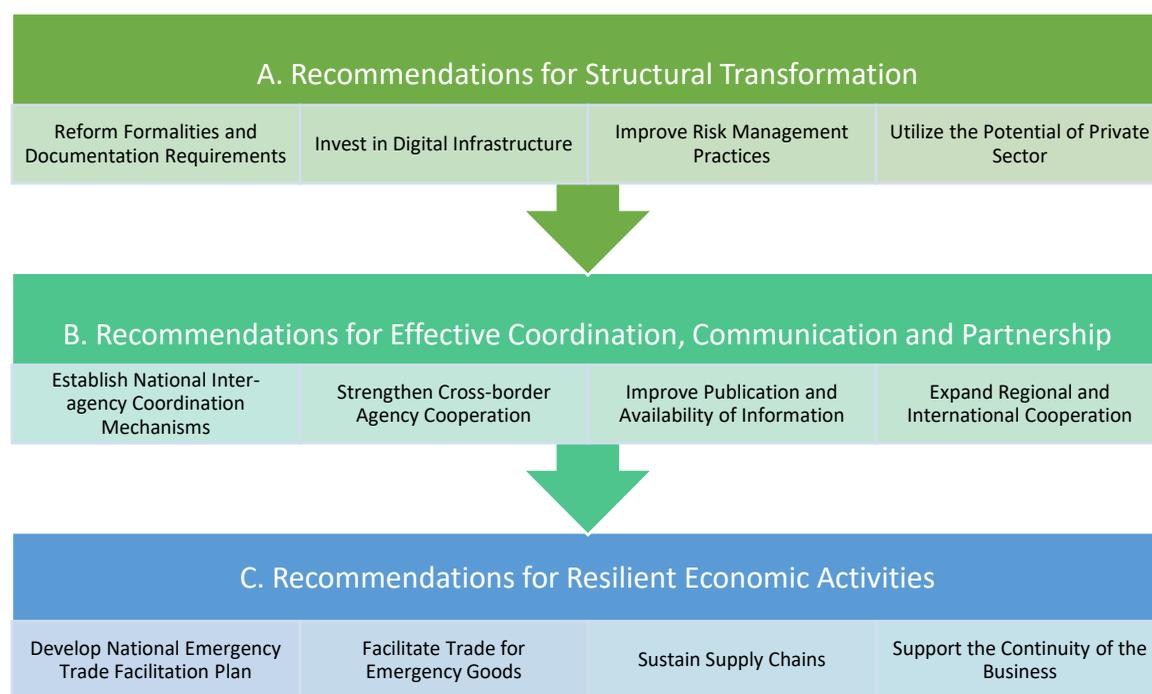
Strengthening of the national trade single window system already developed in Nigeria to facilitate trade especially online. This measure offers traders with important information regarding tariff search, arrival of vessels, regulatory guidelines, tracking of trade transaction status online, online payment of transactions through e-payment facilities, referencing of important information on different government agencies in trade matters, etc.

## Chapter 6: Policy Recommendations

The review of literature and analysis of available data and information revealed that the measures taken towards alleviating the impacts of the pandemic on trade flows had several major properties. These usually target the facilitation of flow of essential goods and supplies needed to fight the pandemic through tax and duty exemptions, deferred or late payment of import taxes, reduced inspections, post-clearance audit, easing of documentary requirements and permitting immediate delivery. Another specific focus in trade facilitation was on the sustainability of the supply chain. In order to ensure that the domestic manufacturing industries remain intact, special measures were taken for the smooth flow of the intermediate goods needed for the production processes. Some countries have taken measures to set up or better utilize existing digital channels for customs formalities, while some others allowed for deferred payments and submission of documents to reduce the impact on traders' ability to meet formal requirements. Needless to say, measures towards protecting customs personnel from the pandemic by reduced working hours and human interactions as well as the use of non-intrusive technology for search and control were among the major policy responses.

By looking at the available data and information, it is not possible to argue that adequate and appropriate measures were not taken to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on trade. However, considering the relatively more successful and impactful interventions, a number of recommendations can be made for OIC countries to consider in times of crises as well as normal times to facilitate trade. Considering the relevance, nature and scope of each intervention for trade facilitation at different times, these recommendations are provided under three separate headings.

**Figure 48. Recommendations to Improve and Sustain Trade Facilitation in OIC Countries**



### A. Recommendations for Structural Transformation

In order to achieve long term efficiency and resilience, it is critical to invest in existing capacities and have higher standards of customs procedures and practices. Such structural interventions allow countries to provide a higher quality of services to traders and present greater resilience to shocks in times of crises. In this connection, four main recommendations are made as follows.

1. **Reform Formalities and Documentation Requirements:** One of the most critical components of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) is the simplification, reduction or even elimination of formalities connected with imports, exports and transit trade. There are various measures and instruments to facilitate trade by better regulating the formalities. OIC countries are encouraged to review formalities and documentary requirements for import, export and transit trade, including using international standards and single window systems, to achieve efficiency and increase transparency by taking advantage of new technologies. Considering the relevant WTO TFA articles, several recommendations are given on how to facilitate trade through reforming formalities and documentation requirements.
  - a. **Simplification of formalities and documentation requirements:** Formalities and documentation requirements are some of the restrictions preventing efficiency at

borders. Sometimes, these requirements are outdated and do not substantially contribute to efficient management of customs. Therefore, OIC countries should periodically review their formalities and documentary requirements and adapt better and less burdensome practices. The primary objective of these periodic reviews should be to achieve the rapid release and clearance of goods and to reduce compliance costs and time for traders.

- b. **Use of customs brokers:** A customs broker or customs brokerage service can help traders to complete some customs formalities faster and ensure that their import shipments meet all of the requirements set forth by the customs authorities. However, this service should not be mandatory, as it may not necessarily be an efficiency improving service for all companies. It may instead be a burden for some traders.
- c. **Common border procedures and uniform documentation requirements:** The procedures and documents required for the release of the goods should not differ depending on the border points in a country. The traders should be required to comply with the same procedures and submit the same documents for the same goods regardless of the point of entry to a country, even though some further considerations can be made depending on the means of transport and risk management principles. To accept international treaties and standards or to sign bilateral or regional binding agreements would support the compliance.
- d. **Rejected goods:** Customs authorities have the right to reject the import of goods only on the basis of non-compliance with technical or SPS requirements. In such circumstances, the relevant authorities should allow importers to re-consign the goods or return them to the exporter. This would prevent wastage of resources due to confiscation of goods at ports or warehouses or their disposal.
- e. **Temporary admission of goods:** There are imports and exports for specific purposes, including temporary import, goods imported for inward processing and outward processing, requiring special treatment by customs in the form of fewer formalities and documentary requirements. These include temporary importation of goods for a predefined purpose and export within a specific period, such as goods imported for exhibition. Goods imported for further processing and goods that are temporarily exported should also receive special treatment to improve efficiency.

2. **Invest in Digital Infrastructure:** Trade facilitation measures with the help of digital infrastructure significantly assist in streamlining border processes and reduce interpersonal interactions. Application of single window greatly utilizes the opportunities provided by digitalization and it enables significant improvement in trade procedures. In this connection, several recommendations are made to develop digital infrastructure related to customs procedures to facilitate trade as follows:

- a. **Supportive IT infrastructure:** Advancing supportive IT infrastructure for automation of customs and other border agency procedures has demonstrated its importance during the pandemic.
  - b. **Acceptance of digital copies:** Obtaining and preserving the original copies of supporting documents needed to import, export and transport goods can severely increase the burden on traders. Considering the availability of new technologies enabling easy authentication of the submitted documents, custom authorities are encouraged to accept paper or electronic copies of the required documentation. This is particularly advised when another government agency already holds the original copy of a document submitted by a trader.
  - c. **Single window:** With the advancement in digital technologies and their widespread availability, significant increase in efficiency are observed in many areas. As an electronic facility, Single Window allows traders to submit trade-related regulatory requirements at once and at a single-entry point. This form of digital trade facilitation reduces the regulatory burden for traders when completing import, export and transit-related procedures. There is already a growing interest in the implementation of the single window and the OIC countries are encouraged to develop single window systems to facilitate trade.
  - d. **E-Signature:** Initiate or improve the regulations that enable traders to use e-signatures on documents currently requiring wet ink signatures
  - e. **Financial incentives:** Reduce taxes and tariffs on information and communication technology related goods to expand the access to digitally enabled services by all stakeholders
3. **Utilize the Potential of Private Sector:** Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) are used as a tool to finance public projects by using private sector funding, expertise and capacity. Moreover, PPP would enable private sector to help public services, in particular for trade facilitation, during COVID-19. In this connection,
- a. PPPs would be utilized in infrastructure such as ports and improvements to rail and road networks which are the necessary building blocks of trade facilitation;
  - b. PPPs would be utilized in specific trade facilitation tools such as a Single Window system, an Authorized Economic Operator System, a National Trade Facilitation Body, trade and transit corridors, and coordinated border management.
4. **Improve Customs Risk Management Systems:** In order to expedite shipping of goods and to prevent long delays at the borders, utilizing risk management is essential. In other

words, while low risk cargos would be expedited, high risk cargo would be the focus of the Customs. In this context, the authorities are encouraged to:

- a. Facilitate the ATA carnet holders, if re-export of temporarily imported goods is not possible as a result of emergency,
- b. Extend Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) certifications and continue the monitoring mechanism,
- c. Establish a risk management committee and set risk criteria in times of emergency to expedite shipments of critical products (such as medical products).

## **B. Recommendations for Effective Coordination, Communication and Partnership**

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Due to the multistakeholder nature of trade procedures, an indispensable aspect of improving trade facilitation is effective coordination, communication and partnership with all relevant stakeholders. In this connection, the following recommendations are made:

- 1. Establish National Inter-Agency Coordination Mechanisms:** Countries that are relatively more successful in responding to the pandemic are those that established effective coordination mechanisms across relevant authorities. Therefore, it is recommended to establish and strengthen effective coordination mechanism among relevant national institutions, including representatives of business and public authorities such as chambers of commerce, ministries in charge of foreign trade, finance and statistics, among others, based on the following considerations:
  - a. Authorize this agency to advice and set up binding rules and procedure
  - b. Design special measures to expedite the pandemic related goods by Customs and Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) agencies
  - c. Release necessary information in coordination with all stake holders
  - d. Report regularly to the committee on the implementation and impact of the recommendations made
  
- 2. Strengthen Cross-Border Agency Cooperation:** Crises that have repercussions at regional and global level require effective communication and coordination among relevant agencies across borders. This facilitates responding to a crisis in a more coordinated manner with greater efficacy. The measures to be taken during and after COVID-19 require the taking of solid measures to facilitate the flow of goods in and out. One of the external practical tools is the signing of bilateral agreements or signing MOU with the neighbouring countries or the transit countries or the most important trade partners to harmonize and coordinate many factors related to trade facilitation. This also increases the security and

safety measures to be required during this special period. In this connection, the following recommendations are made:

- a. Coordinate with partner countries on risk management to avoid delay in customs due to prolonged physical inspections
- b. Establish a consultation mechanism between the relevant authorities of the partner and transit countries to identify and address trade disruptions that affect the trade in essential goods
- c. Design early warning systems across borders in a coordinated manner to enable traders to adjust their routes in a timely manner
- d. Disseminate information in an efficient way between ports redirecting goods to other check points for clearance and warehousing to cope with problems
- e. Utilize similar automation systems for customs across borders.
- f. Determine essential pandemic related products that are produced under similar processes across trading partners by SPS agencies of partner countries.
- g. Determine the pandemic related products that are pre-tested in home countries fulfilling the import requirements and thereby need less controls at the border-by-border control agencies of partner countries.
- h. Consider the implementation of the recommendations made by the relevant international organizations in promoting or guiding cross-border cooperation among member states.

**3. Improve Publication and Availability of Information:** An effective trade facilitation regime requires prompt publication of trade-related information in a non-discriminatory and easily accessible manner.

- a. Establish trade portals and websites to allow for more transparent dissemination of trade rules and regulations for importation, exportation, and transit,
- b. Establish enquiry points to answer reasonable enquiries of traders and other interested parties

**4. Expand Regional and International Partnership:** There are multiple regional and international organizations striving for more effective trade procedures. Cooperating with them in improving national capacities and aligning national policies with international partners would allow a more successful trade facilitation.

- a. **Partnership with international community:** Members of international organizations such as OIC, WCO, WTO and UN security Council have a right to ask for

help, guidance, technical and training assistance or a special session. Moreover, international institutions would support developing regulatory or advisory tools such as new treaties or new recommendations for the cross-border related measures and international standards.

- b. **Becoming party to trade and trade relation treaties:** Becoming party to relevant international and regional instruments and organizations either governmental or non-governmental such as IATA and ICAO and adopting their recommendations would be beneficial for trade facilitation.
- c. **Exchange of experience and newly introduced measures -regulation platform:** During the pandemic, countries struggle with different problems and implement unique policies to cope with the pandemic related problems. Setting up an exchange of experiences platform among the OIC countries would be beneficial for all the countries. COMCEC would be the host of such an initiative.

### C. Recommendations for Greater Economic Resilience through Trade Facilitation

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The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates that countries should have adequate preparations for any shock or emergency to minimize supply chain disruptions and sustain economic activities. This is particularly strategic in the case of emergency goods, whose unavailability may have significant impact on lives and livelihoods. In order to strengthen resilience and become more prepared for future shocks, the following recommendations are made:

1. **Develop National Emergency Trade Facilitation Plan:** COVID-19 pandemic is not the last crises and other national disasters will occur globally. OIC members as well as COMCEC could develop a template national emergency trade facilitation plan and then prepare itself in advance.
  - a. **Establish a national committee** comprising related governmental and non-governmental representatives to identify the possible interventions needed in times of emergencies.
  - b. **Prepare legislations to quickly implement more flexible approaches for expediting standard formalities and customs procedures:** During the pandemic, relaxing procedures is in line with TFA as long as it is complemented with risk management. Depending on the circumstances, it is recommended to:
    - i. Accept simplified, incomplete or summary declaration,
    - ii. Admit essential/emergency goods temporarily by using inventory of the goods as well as re-export documents instead of customs documents,
    - iii. Accept TIR carnet to simplify transit and transshipment procedures,

- iv. Waive the penalties imposed for delays as a result of late arrival of documentations,
- v. Accept electronic documents even if hard copies are required normally.

**2. Facilitate Trade for Emergency Goods:** Demand for certain goods and supply materials may increase at crisis times enabling the authorities to intervene swiftly. It is imperative to eliminate any obstacles that may be faced in their cross-border transfer. This will improve the capacities of relevant authorities to take effective actions to reduce the effects of a crisis on an affected population. In this connection, the following measures are recommended to facilitate trade for emergency goods:

- a. Reduce or eliminate tariffs and other trade restrictions on goods,
- b. Reduce or eliminate other taxes, including value added tax, income tax, etc., to enable affected populations to have access to the essential goods at more affordable prices,
- c. Set up appropriate warehousing facilities to store and distribute the emergency goods without any damage,
- d. Take measures to accelerate immediate clearance and release of emergency goods at customs taking into consideration the risk management principles,
- e. Establish fast lanes and minimize the need for physical inspection to facilitate immediate clearance of essential goods,
- f. Use automation, electronic data processing and e-payments to avoid physical contact during the clearance process,
- g. Procure, deploy and use non-intrusive technology equipment at customs clearance process,
- h. Announce the customs houses where the required customs clearance process for emergency goods are cleared faster with the additional customs and trade facilitation measures,
- i. Avoid disruptions in the production of essential goods as a result of supply chain discontinuity, which may be halting production of essential goods domestically or in foreign countries and hindering the effective response at regional or global level,
- j. Publish information materials on the classification of emergency / essential goods and train customs officials to differentiate swiftly between essential and nonessential goods,
- k. Whenever appropriate, enable cross-border transmission and processing of crisis related data to allow researchers to identify the root causes of the crises and provide solutions,

1. Establish and implement authorized economic operator (AEO) program.
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3. **Sustain Supply Chains:** Global economic activities are highly interconnected with sophisticated supply chains across borders. In times of crisis, significant disruptions may occur in value and supply chains. In order to prevent major interruptions in global value chains during such periods and minimize their economic consequences, the following recommendations are made:
    - a. Simplify procedures and regulations for exports of intermediary goods,
    - b. Refrain from imposing export prohibitions, barriers or additional taxes on goods (including essential goods) to preserve the ability of firms in other countries to operate smoothly,
    - c. Speed up customs procedures to reduce processing times and related administrative burdens in accordance with national laws and regulations,
    - d. Implement pre-arrival processing and maximize the use of fast tract lanes for critical inputs and time essential/emergency goods,
    - e. Ensure smooth operation of air, land, sea and rail transportation for effective functioning of logistics networks,
    - f. Provide regular updates on rules and procedures related to customs formalities for greater transparency and predictability,
    - g. Expedite the clearance of importation of critical equipment and raw materials and apply risk-based post-clearance audit for controls whenever needed,
    - h. Allow the electronic submission of data prior to the arrival of goods, and reduce on-site inspection only of those goods that are identified as high risk through the risk assessment mechanism in place.
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4. **Support the Continuity of the Business:** Firms and businesses with international engagements may suffer from crises. Special measures may be needed to minimize the impact of crises on firms' operational capacities to protect the economy from bankruptcies and failures. Moreover, the likelihood of smaller firms of becoming exporters and integrating into global value chains increases when trade costs fall. Accordingly, the following recommendations are made:
    - a. Allow importers and exporters to defer duties, taxes and fees until they achieve self-resilience,
    - b. Reduce or eliminate fees and charges associated with trade licenses required under national regulation,



- c. Extend time frames for filing claims and appeals relating to trade procedures and disputes,
- d. Maintain effective communication channels with business representatives to better understand the challenges they face and design appropriate policy interventions,
- e. Help firms that are hit hardest, mainly small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), which benefit from trade facilitation proportionately more than larger firms,
- f. Provide support in finding new markets for exporters and take measures to reduce the costs for SMEs in integrating into global value chains,
- g. Facilitate and encourage cross border e-commerce to take advantage of global expansion of online shopping by allowing electronic payment of proportionally applied fees and charges.

## Chapter 7: Conclusion

The pandemic has evolved as the deepest crisis that was experienced in the World for decades. COVID-19 crisis and the containment measures hit the global supply chains and the global trade significantly. Trade facilitation is an essential tool that would help recovery from the crisis which the duration and magnitude is uncertain.

In the initial phase of the crisis, restrictions to trade were temporarily imposed to maintain sufficient amount of pandemic related goods in the domestic market. International institutions and governments intervened to the situation and the importance of decreasing trade barriers and acting together emphasized with various joint declarations and reports.

Fulfilling the requirements of the Trade Facilitation Agreement of WTO is always mentioned to be the best policy response by international institutions and experts. Some of the TFA requirements would be easily implemented whereas some others would be costly and time consuming and would require infrastructure for developing countries. Additional practical recommendations that would be taken immediately are provided by the international institutions and other organizations and associations to the developing countries as well.

An important point to mention is about acting together, in other words giving a coordinated and cooperated response. The measures implemented by a single country is not enough. The benefits multiply when trade partners impose trade facilitation measures as well. This is not that easy to practice as the associated costs are considered. Developed countries would help and guide their trade partners and their global supply chains to fulfil the requirements of some trade facilitation measures.

COVID-19 was an unexpected crisis and it was the first one. The world was unprepared and during the initial phase of the pandemic there were shortages in essential goods such as medical goods and medical devices as well as food products, globally. These limitations were both due to the rise in demand as well as the supply disruptions. However, it is not possible to undermine the export restrictions imposed by the countries.

The responses to the COVID-19 pandemic should not be considered as a onetime emergency. Researchers support the idea that in the recent future the world would be exposing similar crisis frequently. Therefore, setting up the emergency plans for trade facilitation for the crisis period is vital in order to decline the loss that the world economy would undertake and to minimize the shortages around the world.

Cooperation and collaboration across the borders is necessary for the flow of the goods at the customs. Although there has been more than one year since the pandemic starts, the restrictions peak following the increases in cases. By the end of 2020, there has been virus mutations observed which caused the cases to increase in many countries. Once again, trade disruptions started to occur due to the problems at the borders and at the customs. The delays in customs resulted in container trade to slowdown and now there is a shortage of containers in the world. Some countries-imposed export restrictions once more. It is necessary to emphasize that some of the restrictions are not temporary but permanent.



In some of the countries, some trade facilitation programmes such as Single Window and Authorized Economic Operators were started to be implemented before the pandemic. Both programmes require an infrastructure in terms of digitalization and security. Those countries benefited from using these programs and it has been observed that in those countries, at customs, time to export and import is much faster even during the pandemic.

The OIC countries were not far away from the international practices of trade facilitation before the pandemic. In many countries there has already been digitalization, single window programmes and authorized economic operator programmes. However still their average performance was below the World averages. Although there are differences in performances within the region, trade facilitation in terms of cross border paperless trade and formalities were much lower from the World average for all the regions.

During the pandemic, while some OIC countries took the initiative to facilitate trade, some others applied the measures in the opposite direction to restrict the trade in certain products. Specifically, some of the OIC countries required submitting additional documents, such as permits or certifications, or using specific transportation channel to trade in certain or all products. The measures were generally against trade facilitation in all the countries.

Considering the fact that the pandemic would last longer and preceded with other similar crisis, the OIC countries would cooperate to prepare an emergency plan for trade facilitation. It would be beneficial for all the OIC countries and would impeded shortages during the crisis. It is much harder to take action during the crisis time. Whoever, there is no time to wait to act together to facilitate trade within the OIC region.

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