ECOWAS COMMISSION
COMMISSION DE LA CEDEAO
COMISSÃO DA CEDEAO

Original

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Technical Expert to Support ECOWAS in the Implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement

I. CONTEXT

1. Trade and market integration are at the heart of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) aims and objectives. Article (3) of the Revised Treaty of ECOWAS stipulates the removal of trade barriers and harmonization of trade policies for the establishment of a Free Trade Area, a Customs Union, a Common Market and an eventual culmination into a Monetary and Economic Union in West Africa.

2. Trade facilitation is a critical catalyst for advancing the market integration and enhancing global competitiveness. By simplifying, modernizing, and harmonizing trade procedures, countries can reduce transaction costs, enhance efficiency, and create a more predictable trading environment. The World Trade Organization's (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), which entered into force in February 2017, represents a landmark global effort to streamline cross-border trade. These efforts are critical to unlocking the full potential of regional and global trade for economies and the people they serve.

3. The ECOWAS Commission is committed to supporting its Member States (MS) in realizing these benefits through effective implementation of trade facilitation measures. This is reflected in regional instruments such as the ECOWAS Common External Tariff, the ECOWAS Customs Code, and the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme which are designed to enhance consistency, transparency, and fairness for the trade community. This commitment aligns with Pillar 3 of the ECOWAS Vision 2050, which seeks to achieve "a fully integrated and interconnected economic region," and Objective 2 of the ECOWAS Commission's 4x4 Strategic Objectives, which focuses on "promoting and enhancing intra-community trade" through trade facilitation and the reduction of tariff and non-tariff barriers.

4. As of September 2022, all ECOWAS Member States have ratified the WTO TFA, signaling their commitment to trade facilitation reforms. Additionally, Annex 4 of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) further complements the TFA by codifying measures to facilitate seamless movement of goods and create a single African market. However, the full realization of these benefits requires coordinated efforts at both national and regional levels.

5. To promote a harmonized and sequential implementation of the various trade facilitation initiatives highlighted, the Commission is developing the Regional Trade and Transport Facilitation Strategy which will guide future interventions and ensure internal coordination. Furthermore, to tackle the issue of non-tariff barriers which continue to hamper the development of intra-regional trade and a better integration of the regional economy into the global trading system, the Commission is also developing an NTB elimination Policy and Strategy.

6. Both the WTO TFA and the AfCFTA identify National Trade Facilitation Committees (NTFCs) as the institutional platform for coordinating and implementing trade facilitation reforms. The TFA also recognizes the role of Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in implementation, encouraging regional arrangements to complement national efforts. To this end, the ECOWAS Commission aids Member States by enhancing understanding of the TFA, strengthening NTFCs, and equipping NTFCs with the tools needed to fulfill their responsibilities. This includes harmonizing practices among NTFCs through the establishment of a trade facilitation coordination body, the Regional Trade Facilitation Committee (RTFC), which promotes the NTFC's implementation of / compliance with international trade facilitation obligations.

II. OBJECTIVE OF THE ASSIGNMENT

7. The main objective of this assignment is to provide technical and coordination support for the implementation of the ECOWAS overall trade facilitation programme and its various components. Specifically, the assignment will aim at:
   - i Enhancing the institutional capacity of regional and national trade facilitation bodies.
   - ii Supporting the development of key strategic trade facilitation policies and strategies for the region
   - iii Ensuring institutional coordination among various trade facilitation stakeholders and organizations
   - iv Supporting the implementation of regional, continental and international trade facilitation instruments.
   - v Supporting the operationalization of existing trade facilitation tools
   - vi Supporting capacity building initiatives
   - vii Ensuring broad-based stakeholder engagement in the implementation of trade facilitation reforms.

III. DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Working under the overall guidance of the Commissioner for Economic Affairs & Agriculture at the ECOWAS Commission, and under the direct supervision of the Director of Trade Directorate, the consultant is expected to perform the following tasks :

A. Strengthening Institutional Capacity:

a. Support the coordination of the activities the ECOWAS Regional Trade Facilitation Committee as per its work plan including operationalization of technical sub-committees and implementation of their work plan.

b. Support the operationalization of NTFCs through the continuous roll-out of the ECOWAS TFWA NTFC Maturity Model in collaboration with relevant partners.
c. Support coordination of the activities of the Interdepartmental Trade Facilitation Committee.

B. Support the development of key strategic trade facilitation policies and strategies for the region:

d. Support the development of a regional Trade and Transport Facilitation Strategy.
e. Support the development of the ECOWAS Policy and Strategy for the Elimination of Non-tariff Barriers.

C. Support the implementation of regional, continental and international trade facilitation instruments

a. Support NTFC in the implementation of WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement in line with the orientations of the Regional Trade Facilitation Committee
b. Support NTFC in the implementation of trade facilitation provisions of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)

D. Ensuring institutional coordination among various trade facilitation stakeholders and organizations

a. support coordination of ongoing trade facilitation programmes and projects implemented by partners in the region including Trademark Africa, GIZ, ITC, World Bank, AGRA, etc .
b. support coordination and engagement with regional private sector and civil society organizations such as FEWACCI, FOPAO, FEBWE, WACTAF OWIT, Shippers Councils, etc.

E. Support capacity building programmes

a. Coordinate the implementation of the training programme on export readiness for SMEs in Member States, in collaboration with relevant partners.
b. Support organization of awareness workshops on trade facilitation in Member States

IV. DELIVERABLES AND TIMELINE

The deliverables of the assignment are as follows:

- At least one meeting of the Regional Trade Facilitation Committee is organized.
- Key activities of the RTFC and its technical sub-committees are implemented.
- Draft NTB Elimination Policy and Strategy is developed.
- At least 3 capacity building workshops on export readiness for SMEs are organized.

- At least 5 NTFCs are supported for the implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement and the AfCFTA in collaboration with partners.
- At least two meetings of the Interdepartmental Trade Facilitation Committee are organized.

V. EXPECTED DURATION AND LOCATION

The expected duration of the assignment and implemented is over a period of 8 months. The consultant will be based at the ECOWAS Commission's headquarter in Abuja – Nigeria.

VI. QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

Qualifications and skills

Advanced university degree (i.e. Master's degree) in International Trade, Law, Economics or any other related field.

Professional Skills and Expertise

- Minimum of 5 years of relevant professional experience working on trade issues, including trade policy and trade facilitation.
- Experience working with the ECOWAS Commission or any other international institution on trade issues
- Experience in project management. Demonstrated ability to design, implement, and monitor trade facilitation projects is desirable.
- Experience in regional integration and development, or related areas is an asset.
- Strong established network within relevant government agencies (e.g. Ministry responsible for Trade, Customs), international organizations and national and regional private sector organizations.
- Excellent communication, presentation, and report-writing skills.
- Experience in facilitating workshops and training sessions.
- Strong networking skills, with a proven ability to build and maintain positive relationships with diverse stakeholders, including government and private sector actors.

Language

The individual consultants shall be fluent in English, French or Portuguese Language (reading, writing, speaking) and the practical knowledge (reading, writing, speaking) of the other of the ECOWAS Official language (English, Portuguese or French) would be an advantage.

V- Application Package

The application package should include:

- A signed Expression of Interest with a letter including the date of availability,
- A detailed Technical Proposal including, the Consultant's recent Curriculum Vitae providing details on professional experience and similar missions, a certified copy of the minimum diploma required, and evidence of conducting similar

development in the past.

Submission of applications

Applications should be received at the latest on October 7, 2025, at 11h00 am (GMT+1) by the ECOWAS Procurement Division at the following address:

- ECOWAS Commission, 101 Yakubu Gowon Crescent, Asokoro District, PMB 401, Abuja 900103, Federal Capital Territory, Federal Republic of Nigeria.
- Or by email at the following addresses: sbangoura@ecowas.int, With the following in copy (cc): ikkamara@ecowas.int; ksofola@ecowas.int; yderra@ecowas.int.

VI- Method of selection

A Consultant will be selected in accordance with the ECOWAS Procurement Code (selection of individual consultants).

VII. CONTACT

For further information, please contact Mr. Kolawole Sofola, Director – Trade at ksofola@ecowas.int.