



PACER Plus

Committee on Trade in Goods,
Rules of Origin & Customs Procedures

Fifth Meeting of the Committee on Trade in Goods, Rules of Origin and Customs Procedures (CTG.05)

Tuesday, 20 February 2024 Samoan Local Time

OUTCOMES SUMMARY

1. The fifth meeting of the Committee on Trade in Goods, Rules of Origin and Customs Procedures was held virtually on 20 February 2024 Samoan Local Time and chaired by Mr Luke Roper, Trade Adviser of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade New Zealand. The meeting was attended by the following Parties: Australia, Cook Islands, Kiribati, New Zealand, Niue, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. Nauru, Observer State, conveyed apologies¹.
2. The PACER Plus Implementation Unit was represented by Mr Alipate Tavo, Trade and Investment Adviser, Mrs Laisiana Tugaga, Operations and Secretariat Manager, Mr Poutasi Watson, New Zealand Short-Term Placement and Ida-Tifitifi Fuimaono, Executive Governance Coordinator.

Opening formalities and procedures

3. The Chair called the meeting to order, welcomed Committee Members and offered a Maori Mihi in Te Reo Maori (Maori language).
4. The meeting agenda was adopted as presented. The meeting further noted that the PPIU would produce the summary of meeting discussions to be circulated to the Committee for adoption.

Agenda Item 1: Status of Implementation of Chapters 2, 3 and 4 of the PACER Plus

5. The representative of the PPIU presented the meeting paper which provided an update on the implementation progress of the current financial year's (FY23-24) activities and expenditure to date.

¹ Annex 1 contains the Delegation List of the meeting.

6. The Parties provided further updates on national level activities as follows:

7. Australia:

- The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) offered to support an advanced workshop on Trade in Goods as a follow up to the introductory Trade in Goods workshop which was held in Suva, Fiji in July 2023. The PPIU thanked DFAT for offering to host the workshop acknowledging the support needed by the PPIU on this.

8. New Zealand:

- New Zealand requested for the PPIU to provide an update on the implementation of ASYCUDA and how Parties are faring. The PPIU advised that they have been liaising with UNCTAD on how ASYCUDA operations are in countries. It was noted that there are issues with operations in country which the PPIU encouraged Parties to bring up during the meeting if they wish. The PPIU further confirmed that under the current FY the UNCTAD activity supporting ASYCUDA implementation will be in its second phase up to December 2024.

9. Cook Islands:

- In terms of tariff commitments, these have not progressed further under HS2022. There were resource issues to meet the obligation and were unable to meet deadline of December 2023. The Cook Islands are working with the PPIU on how to progress commitments.
- The Cook Islands were able to complete their Rules of Origin (RoO) training in 2023 in Rarotonga and Aitutaki.
- There has not been any progress on the trade portal, but they note the activity in the current financial year.
- The Cook Islands noted that in accordance with the deadlines agreed at the last CTG meeting on transposition, Cook Islands work is to be completed by March 2024. However, they requested if their deadline could be pushed back to June 2024.
- On the ASYCUDA World project, the Cook Islands has been working with UNCTAD on activities outside of project, which has been raised with Alipate at the PPIU to be put forward for the new FY. The Cook Islands requested if there were any updates from UNCTAD regarding these activity requests.
- On the remaining activities for the current FY, the Cook Islands were happy to support what was presented and would need to consider who can attend the workshops.
- The Cook Islands proposed to hold the first workshop with Darren Molineux (DFAT) on HS transposition.

10. Kiribati

- Transposition on the tariff is nearly complete to be done in the next month or so. There is minor work left to be done. They are currently looking at rolling out ASYCUDA World to their Post Office, border agencies and ports.

11. Solomon Islands

- The Solomon Islands welcomed the National training on Rules of Origin and will be in contact with the PPIU to propose mid-April 2024 to hold this training.
- Regarding the Dialogue on Revenue Mobilisation, which is scheduled to be held in Nadi, Solomon Islands will participate through their Customs and Finance officers.
- Solomon Islands advised that they have already implemented HS2022 in June 2023.
- They confirmed that their Tariff commitments will be completed in June 2024 as LDC country and are working to ensure they meet their obligations on this.
- They welcomed the training on Trade Portals for National Focal Points scheduled for early June 2024 especially given new staff that have joined.
- Regarding support from the PPIU on legislation, there has been a change in leadership within the Customs Department and thus they will progress this work with the new Comptroller.
- Solomon Islands have submitted their request to PPIU for possible upgrade of the ASYCUDA system under the FY24-25 Annual Plan.

12. Niue

- Niue requested support for enhancements for ASYCUDA World and more onsite support for reviewing progress of implementation of ASYCUDA World and ASYPAX.
- Niue advised that they have been having ongoing power disruptions in the country which has affected the implementation of ASYCUDA World and business continuity.

13. Vanuatu

- On remaining activities, they were unable to conduct the RoO training due to the cyclone. However, they plan to hold the training during the first quarter of the year (next month) with the support of Vanuatu's PACER Plus National Coordinator.
- Vanuatu has implemented HS2022.
- Solomon Islands requested whether the PPIU will provide assistance on the Transposition work on schedule of commitments for tariff, possibly in the form of a **template** for Parties to complete transposition work. The PPIU confirmed that all Parties attended the most recent transposition workshop which was held late November 2023 where support was provided by transposition experts in the region. The PPIU further advised that the DFAT expert, Mr Darren Molineux, has developed the 'Magic Spreadsheet' which assists Parties to complete their transposition work. The PPIU advised that DFAT suggested virtual workshops with Parties to go through the magic spreadsheet and encouraged Parties to take this offer up.

14. The PPIU confirmed that all issues presented by Parties during the discussion are covered under the FY24-25 activity proposals.

Action Items/Resolutions:

15. The Committee on Trade in Goods, Rules of Origin and Customs Procedures:

1. Noted the update on activity implementation under the current FY2023-2024 Annual Plan.
2. Provided updates on ongoing and remaining national activities under the current FY23-24 Annual Plan, during the meeting.

3. Recommended that this meeting paper be declassified for public release.

Agenda Item 2: Activity Proposals for FY24-25

16. The representative of the PPIU presented the paper conveying activity proposals for endorsement by the Committee.
17. Cook Islands and Solomon Islands confirmed submission of activities to the PPIU. The PPIU advised that the paper would be updated to reflect those proposals submitted after the deadline, before being conveyed to the Budget Committee.
18. Australia asked where the Short-Term Regional Advisers for the Trade Portal would be sourced from and flagged that the Australian Border Force (ABF) could assist with the Customs Projects if required.
19. The PPIU confirmed that the PPIU is working with United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the Oceania Customs Organisation (OCO) on the Trade Portal project and acknowledged the offer by Australia for support by the Australian Border Force.

Action Items/Resolutions:

20. The Committee on Trade in Goods, Rules of Origin and Customs Procedures:
 1. Approved the activity proposals presented under Components 1 and 2 for implementation under the financial year 2024-2025 Annual Plan.
 2. Approved the proposed timeline for implementation of activities under FY 2024-2025 period, in consultation with the PPIU.
 3. Agreed to submit the approved activity proposals to the Budget Committee and Joint Committee under the draft FY 2024-2025 Annual Plan.
 4. Agreed to declassify this meeting paper for public release once the Joint Committee approves the FY 2024-2025 Annual Plan.

Agenda Item 3: PACER Plus General Review

21. The representative of the PPIU presented the update on the General Review of the PACER Plus conveying apologies by the Review Consultants who were unable to join the committee meetings. The PPIU noted that the General Review is looking at the overall implementation of Parties of the Agreement and the role of the PPIU in supporting Parties to implement utilising the Development and Economic Cooperation Work Programme (DEC Work Programme). The PPIU noted two main findings of the report:
 - i. Specifically with regard to the CTG Committee, the report notes that it is progressing well in terms of implementation i.e. utilisation of ASYCUDA World producing trade data to monitor implementation of the Agreement which links to the broader work of the PPIU on Monitoring and Evaluation.
 - ii. The utilisation of the Committees has not been used efficiently for policy direction as opposed to approving activities under the Annual Plans.

22. The Chair noted the report's results around the utilisation of the Committees to progress discussions around substantive parts of the Agreement implementation, transparency of provisions and other obligations of the Agreement.
23. New Zealand asked Parties whether they had any issues around accumulation and certification and particularly on the utilisation of the RoO provisions.
24. Australia advised that they are hoping to include a component on accumulation and certification in the next advanced Trade in Goods workshop to demonstrate in real time how it works and how Parties can take advantage.

Action Items/Resolutions:

25. The Committee on Trade in Goods, Rules of Origin and Customs Procedures:
 1. Noted the progress of the General Review of the Agreement
 2. Provided feedback following the presentation of the General Review Team's preliminary report on the PACER Plus General Review.

Agenda Item 4: Any Other Matters

26. There were no matters raised by the Committee.
27. The Chair reminded Heads of Delegation to complete the post-meeting evaluation survey provided by the PPIU.

Close of Meeting

28. The meeting was closed with a prayer by the representative from Tonga.

Annex 1: CTG.05 Delegation List

Country	Contacts	Role/Title	Email address
Australia	Caroline Kempeneer	A/g Assistant Director, Pacific Regional Trade Integration & Private Sector Growth Section, DFAT	caroline.kempeneer@dfat.gov.au
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Observer State			
Nauru	Apologies		