



Rules of Origin in International Trade: Techniques and Applications for the Arab Region

22-23 December 2016, Marrakesh, Morocco

Information Note

The issue of rules of origin (RoO) has become key and increasingly critical in negotiating Regional Trade Agreements (RTAs). While RTAs are considered liberalizing, RoOs could effectively become trade policy instruments and a tool for implementing discriminatory practices. For example, there is evidence that PAFTA rules of origin are used not only to counter trade deflection, but also to protect local industries, which constrains intra-regional trade opportunities.

In this regard, there is a need to take stock of RoO regimes in Arab countries to understand to what extent RoOs negate the liberalizing effects of Pan-Arab Free Trade Agreement and various other FTAs and to identify how best RoOs regimes can be reformed, drawing on international best practices. This is particularly important at the current juncture, where discussions on the Arab Customs Union have been intensifying, several FTAs to which some Arab countries are parties have been consolidating, and several Arab countries are negotiating deeper integration agreements with the EU.

Against this background, ESCWA, jointly with the ITC, is initiating an assessment of the RoO regimes in Arab countries, with a view to identifying weaknesses and shortfalls based on better performing models around the world and developing recommendations tailored to Arab countries and the evolving landscape of regional trade agreements.

A. Objectives of the meeting

ESCWA has been actively involved in supporting Arab countries in trade negotiations and impact assessments. The objective of this workshop is to discuss issues involved in negotiating specific ROOs in RTAs, particularly in the context of PAFTA, the ACU and revised Pan-Mediterranean ROOs, with a view to improving the capabilities of member country government officials, and ultimately removing unduly restrictive RoOs that are already in place or designing RoOs that would support international trade and investment, as well as the emergence of regional value chains, to the greatest extent possible.

B. Participation and registration

The meeting will be attended by representatives of ministries of trade in Arab countries and experts from ESCWA, ITC, and WCO.

D. Documentation, methods of work and official languages

The working languages are French and Arabic. Simultaneous interpretation will be available to and from both languages. Participants from ministries of trade are expected to participate actively in the EGM and speak about their experience in issues related to RoOs

E. Travel arrangements

The meeting will take place in Jardin De L'Agdal Hotel & SPA, Avenue Mohammed VI, Marrakech, Maroc, Marrakech 40000, Morocco, Phone, 212 5244-59500,

- Participants should contact the Moroccan Embassy in their respective countries to arrange for their own entry visa.
- ESCWA will take care of the booking room in the Hotel, according to the confirmation of the participant, the participant may call directly the hotel for shuttle from the airport to the Hotel.
- ESCWA and ITC will cover the participation of **the invited experts**. Other participants are expected to attend at their own expenses.

F. Correspondence

All correspondences related to the meeting should be addressed to:

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