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## **Opening Speech**

**by Mr. Sven Alkalaj**  
**Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations**  
**Executive Secretary of the United Nations**  
**Economic Commission for Europe**

**for the Official Launch of the UNECE**  
***“Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide”***

**Thursday 25 October 2012**  
**Room VIII, Palais des Nations**

**Ambassadors,  
Excellences,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Dear Friends,**

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the official launch of the UNECE Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide.

During recent decades not only have we registered a constant growth of global trade, reaching today over 22 trillion USD; we have also witnessed an extraordinary increase in the share of trade coming from developing and transition economies, who now account for 47% of global exports. This is the highest level recorded since such data began to be collected in 1948.

At the same time, international competition has increased and production processes have become more and more global, that is to say fragmented across countries. With the lowering of trade tariffs and the dismantling of quota systems, companies are increasingly dependent on the efficient, fast and reliable movement of goods. In countries where the trade environment is more favourable - in terms of formalities, procedures, and the related exchange of information - they are better positioned to take advantage of new opportunities, to grow and to create new jobs.

This is what Trade Facilitation is all about, helping countries and companies to benefit from these opportunities by putting in place: **simple, fast and secure trade**.

I would like to give you some examples:

Ten years ago, Senegal started a wide initiative for paperless trade in the country. Since then, a Single Window was established, which allows traders to submit trade information and documents at a single entry point, electronically. At the same time, the amount of customs revenue collected doubled, reaching more than 1 billion USD per year - and the time to clear goods at the border decreased from 18 to 9 days.

In Asia, Thailand launched a trade facilitation reform programme with the vision of becoming a world-class logistics hub for Indochina. In a few years, this program allowed Thailand: i) to save 1.5 billion USD in logistic costs each year; ii) to decrease export costs by 30% per container; iii) and to reduce the time to export from 24 to 14 days.

According to OECD, every extra day required to ready goods for import or

export reduces trade by around 4%. This gives us an idea of the concrete benefits that trade facilitation can deliver to governments, traders, and consumers in all countries.

Ladies and gentlemen, the cases of Senegal and Thailand are representative of what has happened in many other developing countries that have implemented this type of reform. Trade Facilitation has become a vitally important topic for international trade and economic development. It has also gained prominence in the international political agenda. The negotiations for a WTO agreement on Trade Facilitation are at the heart of the Doha Round. And trade facilitation is also a key part of many wider technical assistance programmes, such as Aid for Trade.

I would like to recall that UNECE, through its Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business - UN/CEFACT, is one of the key international organizations supporting Trade Facilitation. For more than 50 years, our policy recommendations, standards and tools, have offered solutions that are now intrinsic features of the global infrastructure for trade. They make global trade easier, faster and cheaper, and will support countries in implementing the measures currently reflected in the WTO Trade Facilitation negotiating text.

Today I am proud to introduce you to our Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide, which provides a comprehensive link to all of these Trade Facilitation instruments developed by UNECE and other key international organizations. It's an innovative tool that will help countries simplify cross border trade. Using this Guide, policy makers and implementors will be able to identify available measures and possible paths for dealing with issues like: How to reduce delays at the border? How to set up a Single Window for exports and imports? How to use modern information technologies for trade facilitation? - among many others. The Guide also includes case stories to illustrate how developing and transition economies have succeeded in dealing with such issues.

My staff will provide you with an overview of the Guide momentarily, so I will leave it to them to provide further details.

To conclude, I would like to take this opportunity to thank, in particular, the experts from UN/CEFACT who provided guidance and input to the Guide during its creation -- as well as the other numerous experts from international organizations, national entities, and the private sector that helped us to develop the Guide. And of course, I would like to thank the Government of Sweden that, through its Development Cooperation Agency – Sida, generously funded this important project.

Let me say that I believe this Guide will be a valuable tool for both national reformers and international negotiators engaged in Trade Facilitation efforts, and thus will support a better and more inclusive international trading system in the future.

Thank you.