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1. Bureaucratic delays and "red tape" pose a burden for moving goods across borders. Trade facilitation - the expedition of the movement, release and clearance of goods - has therefore emerged as an important issue for the world trading system.

2. WTO Members concluded negotiations on the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) at the 2013 Bali Ministerial Conference, where they mandated the adoption of a Protocol of Amendment (Protocol) to insert the Trade Facilitation Agreement into Annex 1A of the WTO Agreement.¹ On 27 November 2014, the General Council adopted the Protocol and opened it for acceptance by Members.²

3. According to Article X:7 of the WTO Agreement, a Member formally accepts the Protocol by depositing an "instrument of acceptance" for the Protocol with the WTO. As stipulated in the Protocol, it shall enter into force in accordance with Article X:3 of the WTO Agreement. Namely, the Protocol shall take effect upon acceptance by two thirds of the Members for the Members that have accepted the Protocol; thereafter, the Protocol shall take effect for each other Member upon acceptance by it. The TFA entered into force on 22 February 2017 following its ratification by two thirds of the WTO membership. To date, 155 Members have deposited a valid instrument of acceptance.

4. The TFA contains provisions for expediting the movement, release and clearance of goods, including goods in transit. It also sets out measures for effective cooperation between customs and other appropriate authorities on trade facilitation and customs compliance issues. It further contains provisions for technical assistance and capacity building in this area.

Current as of: June 2024

¹ [WT/L/911](#); [WT/MIN\(13\)/36](#).

² [WT/L/940](#).